

November 2008



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good news from the Chairman

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Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



A DaC driver is out of work for 18 months after being trapped under his own cab by a hit and run driver!

On behalf of those DaC drivers who collected their own Call Sign last month and paid £1.24 for the privilege, the Post Office presents £500 to the LTFUC children's Xmas party...





NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Possibly one of my least useful articles, but I haven't done it before and it completes this mini series on airport terminals. Don't think I've ever had a Gatwick but here are the terminals, especially as a number of BA flights have moved from Heathrow. Hope you have better luck than me...

Gatwick Departure Terminals for British Airways

Destination	Carrier	Term.	Code	Tel #
All flights except below	British Airways	North	BA	0844 493 0787
Inverness	British Airways	South	BA	0844 493 0787
Isle of Man	British Airways	South	BA	0844 493 0787

Gatwick Departure Terminals for Easyjet EZY (Tel. No. 0871 7500100)

Destination	Terminal	Destination	Terminal
Ajaccio	North	Las Palmas	North
Alicante	North	Mahon	North
Athens	North	Malaga	North
Bastia	North	Malta	North
Berlin Schoenefeld	North	Montpellier	North
Corfu	North	Murcia	North
Faro	North	Mykanos	North
Funchal	North	Paphos	North
Geneva	North	Rhodes	North
Gibraltar	North	Sharm El Sheikh	North
Heraklion	North	Tenerife (South)	North
Hurghada	North		
All Other EasyJet Flights	South	All Other EasyJet Flights	South

Gatwick Departure Terminals for Airlines except BA and Easyjet

Airline	Term	Code	Tele.	Airline	Term	Code	Tele.
Adria Airways	North	JP	020 7437 0143	flyLAL Lithuanian Airlines	North	TE	01293 579 900
Aer Lingus	South	EI	0870 876 5000	Flystar Astraeus	North	AEU	01293 819 800
Afriqiyah	South	8U	0870 242 2267	Ghana International Airlines	South	G0	020 7100 1165
Air Algerie	South	AH	020 8750 3300	Karthago	South	KAJ	
Air Baltic	South	BT	0870 607 2772	KD Avia	South	KD	0871 423 5741
Air Comet	North	A7	020 7290 7887	Kibris Turkish Airlines	North	YK	020 7930 4851
Air Malta	South	KM	0845 607 3710	Malev	North	MA	0870 909 0577
Air Namibia	North	SW	0870 774 0965	Meridiana Airlines	South	IG	0845 355 5588
Air Southwest	North	WOW	0870 240 8202	Monarch Airlines Charter	South	MON	0870 066 1472
Air Transat	South	TS	020 7616 9187	Monarch Airlines Sched.	South	ZB	0870 040 5040
Air Transat	South	TS	020 7616 9187	Montenegro Airlines	South	YM	
Air Zimbabwe	South	UM	020 7399 3600	Northwest Airlines	South	NW	0870 507 4074
Atlas Blue	North	8A	020 7307 5803	Norwegian. no	South	DY	01279 680 500
Aurigny	South	GR	0871 871 0717	Olympic Airways	South	OA	0870 606 0460
Azerbaijan Airlines	South	J2	0870 760 5757	Oman Air	South	WY	0870 7707 319
Belavia Belarusian Airlines	South	BRU	020 7393 1201	Onur Air	South	OHY	
BH Air (Balkan Holidays)	South	BGH	0845 130 1114	Pakistan Intn. Airlines	South	PK	0800 587 1023
bmi	South	BD	0870 60 70 555	Qatar Airways	South	QR	020 7896 3636
British Jet	South	FHE	0800 091 4444	Rossiya Airlines	South	FV	
Brussels Airlines	North	SN	0870 735 2345	Ryanair	South	FR	
Bulgaria Air	South	FB		SAS	South	SK	0870 607 2772
Centralwings	South	C0	+48 22 558	SATA International	South	S4	
Clickair	North	XG	00 800	Sterling (now bankrupt)	South	NB	0870 787 8038
Continental Airlines	North	CO	0845 607 6760	TAP Air Portugal	South	TP	0845 601 0932
Croatia Airlines	South	OU	020 8563 0022	Tarom	North	RO	020 7224 3693
Cubana	South	CU	020 7537 7909	Thomas Cook	South	TCX	0870 111 1111
Daallo Airlines	North	D3		ThomsonFly	North	TOM	0870 190 0737
Delta Air Lines	North	DL	0800 414 767	Ukraine Intn. Airlines	South	PS	01293 596 609
Emirates	North	EK	0870 243 2222	US Airways	South	US	0845 600 3300
Estonian Air	South	OV	020 7333 0196	Virgin Atlantic Airways	South	VS	0870 574 7747
Eurocypria	South	ECA		Virgin Nigeria	North	VK	0844 412 1788
First Choice Airways	North	FCA	0870 750 0001	Wizz Air	South	W6	+48 (0)22 351
Flybe	South	BE	0871 700 2000	XL Airways	South	XLA	0870 169 0169
flyglobespan	South	GSM	0871 987 1687	Zoom Airlines	South	OOM	0870 240 0055

See www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/extras for "What's On" at Earls Court, Olympia, ExCel and O2.

from the editor's desk

LTI and the TX4

Hello again, it's been a strange month! The last issue of *Call Sign* was first to break with the news that the PCO had agreed that LTI's remedial work on the batch of early TX4s deemed to be in danger of self-igniting, was the answer to the problem and that once the affected cabs had been fixed, they could return to work. News that M&O were going to work around the clock in order to get cabs back to work as quickly as possible was also welcomed.

However, *Call Sign* has received many calls from concerned drivers, who at the time of writing were not only still waiting for the work to be done, but still patiently waiting to be told *when* their cab was going to be started on.

In years gone by, LTI were never known for their exemplary treatment of drivers – ie their customers. However, it has to be said that in recent years that has greatly improved although still probably not up to the standard you'd expect from a major vehicle retailer. This was their chance to show how much they care about public relations.

I accept that this recall is a huge undertaking and at an estimated £4million, it is going to wipe out any profit from the sales of what must be their best cab ever. Most drivers who have bought the TX4 have agreed that it leaves every other taxi they have driven a long way behind. Many – perhaps quite astonishingly – have even accepted that these things happen and just want to move on.

So what have LTI done? More to the point, what haven't they done? Well, LTI claim they are doing the recall in VIN order, but according to every single one of the calls I referred to earlier, these drivers cannot get a clue from LTI regarding their position in that queue so they can at least have an idea as to how much longer they will have to wait. That isn't good enough. There are even suspicions that some garages have managed to jump the queue. If so, that would delay the ordinary bread and butter drivers. That too, if correct, is not good enough.

Mercedes Benz isn't a fly-by-night company and financially could wipe the floor with Manganese Bronze. That isn't what most drivers want, but after spending around £35,000+, they want to be treated with respect, but more importantly as a valued customer. That isn't what is currently happening.

Call Sign has asked LTI for a comment explaining the current situation. It can be found on page 27 and is regarding the situation as of 28 October 2008...

Cyclists

The last time I mentioned cyclists on this page, one driver phoned and threatened me, as he didn't like my comments. The



brave man refused to give his name. Well sorry, but if anything, they are now worse than ever with those stopping at traffic lights being looked on as freaks by their compatriots!

At a time when the Mayor is contemplating allowing them to make a left turn even if the lights are red (did anyone realise that they couldn't??), I must tell a story that happened to me recently.

I was approaching a pedestrian crossing where the car in front had stopped to allow several young ladies to get across. I stopped behind him, when suddenly shooting through at top speed on the inside was the usual cyclist with the regulatory uniform of Tour de France type top and shorts that appeared to have been painted on. He had no intention of even slowing down let alone stopping, but got closer than even this dimwit thought he was going to and as one of the women held her hand out thinking she was going to be hit, her handbag became tangled up in the handlebars of the bike. Both the cyclist and the woman fell to the ground although, thankfully, neither was badly hurt save for a few grazes.

The woman was crying, while the cyclist never even asked how she was; he was just swearing at her and threatening to take her to court if his bike was damaged. Sadly it seemed to be ok.

Both the driver of the car in front and I told the cyclist what we thought of him, but he could not have cared less. The temptation was to drive over his bike but the woman that had been hit talked us out of it. The cyclist then got up, gave a one-finger salute and drove off. Unusual? No, most cyclists are just lucky that they get away with it and give the good ones a bad name.

Meter increase

Thankfully, the price of diesel seems to be dropping almost as quickly as when it went up. There was a time when it looked as though TfL would have to give us a mid term increase purely because there is an agreement regarding the cost of fuel once it gets around the 154p a litre mark. No group would have deserved it more.

But that was then and as the price heads

downwards, our biggest problem has moved from fuel costs to just finding passengers to pick up. Mondays and Tuesday are pretty ropery with Wednesdays to Fridays a bit better. But there is no doubt that much of the work we once claimed, is moving over to private hire.

Any passenger who has made the move, if honest, will admit it is purely because of the price and that PH still cannot match our service – although Addison Lee are now saying that their fleet is as big as ours. Their big advantage is that the PH company owners don't worry about the drivers. They get a proportion of the fare and cannot argue. That's why their fares to corporates are so keen, they offer fixed prices that bear no relation to what the drivers get.

We still seem to be holding our own to a certain degree, but I can't help but wonder what effect next April's fare increase is likely to have on our business. By the very nature of it and by the time the *Evening Standard* slag us off for getting an increase each year, we automatically lose some clients but usually get them back. This year, in all probability, we will not only be officially in recession but will be looking at huge unemployment figures as well. If we go in for the fare increase we undoubtedly deserve, we are going to get an almighty kick in the teeth from clients and we could possibly lose many of them forever.

As usual, your comments – agree or disagree – are welcome.

Anniversary time

I can't allow this time to pass without congratulating two organisations celebrating anniversaries. Firstly, the *LTFUC* who celebrated their 80th anniversary recently with a formal dinner at the House of Commons. *Call Sign* was there and it was a magical experience with a backdrop of such majesty as to make it almost akin to Alice in Wonderland. To the Fund, sincere congratulations.

The second organisation is *Dial-a-Cab*, who on 22 November 1988 became the first taxi organisation in Europe and only the third in the world to begin transmitting trips via data dispatch. That too is worthy of a congratulation. Both stories are detailed further inside this issue.

Surprise return?

Could it be Sir John Stevens is about to make a surprise return as Met Police Commissioner? Stranger things have happened...

Hope to see you all again next month when it will almost be Christmas! Dear oh dear... where has 2008 gone!

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Doom and gloom – and a bit more doom!

You don't need me to explain the current economic situation, you only have to open a newspaper, turn on the television or radio and once you've either read, watched or listened to the latest news, you don't know whether to cut your throat or jump out of the window!

We all know things are not as they should be, but the media like to make things even worse by frightening the life out of everyone. Consequently, the public are too frightened to spend money just in case they lose their job, or any savings they've acquired that they might need in the future. So they only spend what they have to and the economic situation worsens.

Some of the big High Street outlets recently announced their figures for the current financial year and all made a profit - albeit less than last year. But what did the media do? They never concentrated on the companies making a profit, they went into hysterics about lower profits than last year. I could understand if these High Street stores suddenly showed losses, then everyone could justifiably be concerned, but for goodness sake they were still in profit.

I like to watch the 10 o'clock news in the evening and either BBC or ITV recently announced they were re-introducing something they had in the early nineties - announcing job losses on a daily basis. "*We now take you to Newcastle where 500 job losses were announced today... now on to Norfolk where 83 job losses were announced at a Turkey farm!*" Goodness me, it's right that the public be kept aware of what is happening in the country, however, William Joyce - the man known in WW2 as Lord Haw Haw - would have been proud of what our media is achieving and the hysteria it is provoking.

There is not any question that some of the top bankers in the world have mismanaged their business, so much so that Governments around the world have stepped in to bale them out and rightly so, however, I wonder if the same would be done for Dial-a-Cab if ever we were to have financial difficulties?

Because London is the financial capital of the world, the slow down has taken its toll here and particularly in our industry where all the large financial institutions seem to have an account with us. Consequently, they are all looking at costs from every aspect of their respective organisations and their *Ground Transportation* budget comes in for particular scrutiny. They are all looking at our charges and there is not any question that they are endeavouring to move as much work as they can from taxis into cars as they are seen as a cheaper alternative. But I can assure you, they sell cheap but deliver more expensively in large amounts of the time.

The problem we also face is that if things



do get any worse and people lose their jobs, some of them will seek refuge in the Private Hire / minicab industry where they can obtain a job and a licence almost immediately and as we are all aware, they cater for a large transient workforce. That in turn will enable the minicab industry to grow and present us with an even greater problem as they confront us with larger fleets.

At the time of writing, OPEC have announced a cut their production of around 5% in order to stop the price of a barrel of oil dropping, while in the longer term begin its increase. They obviously prefer the \$150 a barrel we encountered some months ago rather than at \$70 - and why wouldn't they? All cheaper pricing does is reduce our inflation and help the remainder of the world out of any recession!

Good News

Anyway, writing the above makes me as bad as the media that I have just criticised, so I'll give you some good news in an attempt to ease the pain. I have learned this week from two of our accounts - one in

Great Winchester Street and the other at Canada Square - that they will not be going out to tender as they should, but will both be extending our contract for a further year. I hope you agree with me that in this climate, that is certainly good news.

Payments

We have decided to streamline the way in which we pay our members. As you are aware, some are paid weekly, some fortnightly and some even monthly and this puts some strain on our Administration Department. In this day and age, we are all looking to make operations slicker and of course to save costs in the process. Consequently, we have decided that everyone will be paid twice a month on the same day. If this is as smooth an operation as we hope, then we will be in a position to publish the two payment days in the month well in advance - probably for the whole year - so everyone will be able to plan for the future.

At the same time we will be stopping subscriptions on a two-weekly cycle instead of a monthly one, so instead of paying £124 per month you will be paying £62 per fortnight, but there will only be two subscription stoppages per month. We intend to introduce this system in April next year, so everyone can be ready to cater for the new system well in advance.

2007 AGM

Finally, just to remind you the 2007 AGM will be at the Brewery in Chiswell Street on Sunday 8 February 2008 at 11am. This is an electable AGM, so I hope to see as many of you as possible there on the day.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab



Moving home

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HAVE TFL LOST OUR MONEY?

Many older drivers can often be heard talking of the old days when to renew your taxi licence cost just 15pence once every three years. The more careful among us at that time may have put away 5p each year, but on the whole, most seem to cope quite well! It's also worth pointing out that overhauls were free – albeit with many drivers afraid to take their taxis to Penton Street because of the perceived iron fist. This was back in the days when the PCO refused permission for cabs to have tape decks added to their medium wave only radios, in case some naughty drivers played pornographic recordings to their passengers!

Those days have gone and some say drivers are treated better, but if so we certainly pay a heavy price for the privilege, with huge licence renewals and passing costs, together with CRB disclosures. Not to mention that we used to pay HMG a fraction of what cars paid in road tax! Nowadays we pay a fortune into TfL's coffers in return for... well in return for what?

Other than being addressed as sir or madam (occasionally) we pay through the nose for everything we get from TfL / PCO. And what did they do with the money they needed from us to keep Penton Street operating? They invested £40million of it with failed Icelandic bank, Kaupthing. Many of you probably knew it better as small but successful independent UK bank – and former DaC client - Singer and Friedlander. In 2003, Kaupthing started buying up shares in S&F and just two years later - in 2005 - took control... and with it the accounts of many UK councils attracted by something for nothing with their higher-than-UK interest rates. But surely the idea of TfL charging so much was so that they could invest in improving the cab trade rather than just trying to gain interest?

Although Mayor Boris Johnson has promised to attempt to obtain redress for the lost deposits of all the London authorities who had placed their money there rather than wasting it on filling in pot-holes, which after all, would eventually return anyway, success isn't guaranteed.



Richard S. Fuld Jr
– perhaps he can help out!

Those that use public transport will know of the huge above inflation fare rises hoisted on a public who can only complain and then pay up, yet now it

turns out that they had £40million stashed away somewhere near the north pole! Now fares really WILL go up!

Of course, if we could all be more like Richard S. Fuld Jr, the Lehman chief exec who was grilled before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in the USA and asked a few simple questions such as how come a compensation scheme paid him around £180million between 2000 and 2007 – yet Lehman's were on the verge of going kaput?

And how was it that the same failed company were about to make "special payments" – well quite special – worth some ten million quid for two executives who were sacked and around three million smackers for another exec who left voluntarily? Did I mention that 4 days later Lehman's were no more and set off the biggest financial calamity most of us have ever seen?

Ah well, perhaps TfL will recoup the money by doubling our licence and passing fees. Unless Richard S. Fuld Jr fancies helping us out...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign online



Dial-a-Dream Online Auction



Dial-a-Dream needs your help in trying to raise money in conjunction with seven other charities. Take a look at the web site www.celeb2nds.com. It's a new site started by two computer men who want to help give money back to charities via the expertise they've gained whilst establishing their own computer company.

You can bid for items, or if you have a gift from a celebrity that you would like to donate for an auction (you must be able to prove it is genuine, perhaps with a letter of authenticity) we would love to collect it. So please have a look at www.celeb2nds.com.

A lot of our recent dreams have been repetitious or parents would prefer no publicity due to not wanting people to know of their suffering. We would never go against these wishes as our only aim is to make the child's dream a reality. Sadly it could be their last...

You can read about Dial-a-Dream's work at www.dial-a-dream.co.uk.

Please help us, thank you.

Tom Whitbread
Chairman, Dial-a-Dream

TAXI

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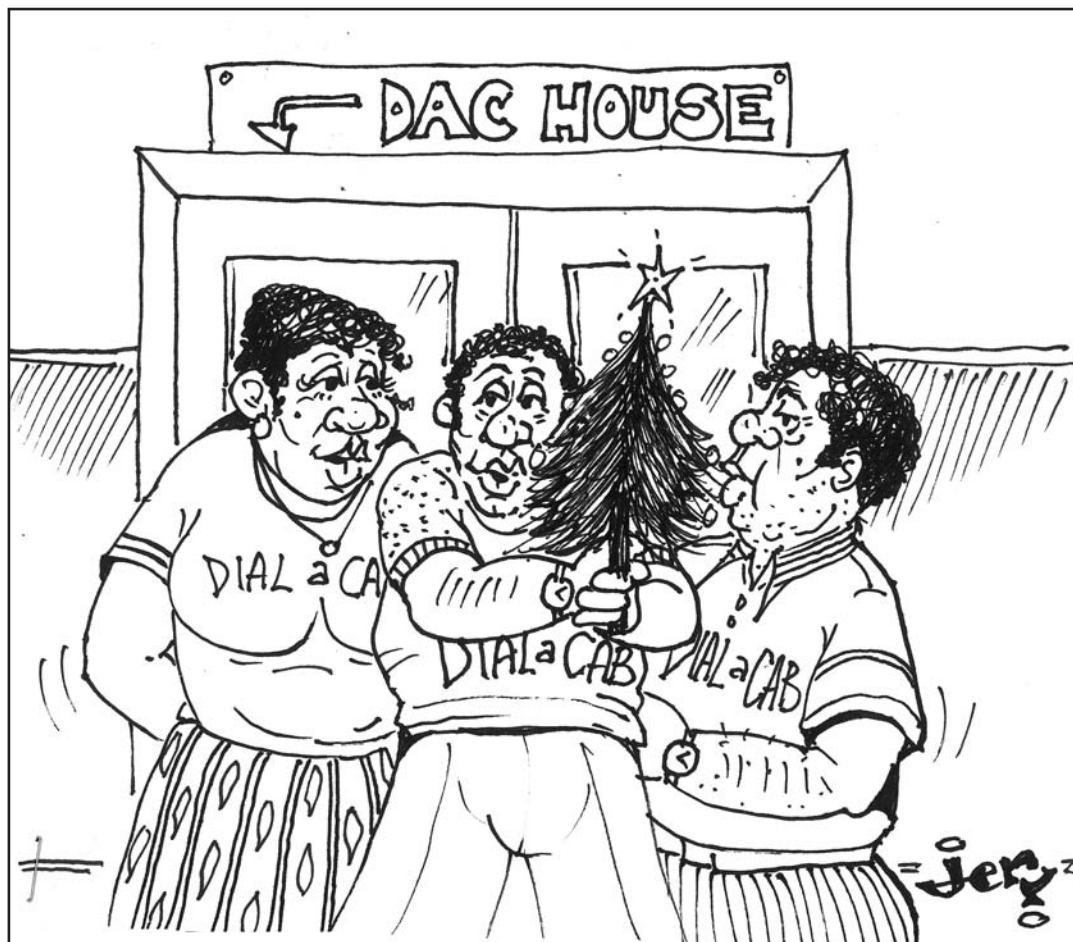
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Jer y's World



Last month these wonderful Dial-a-Cab people brought us a set of Spurs football shirts to Uganda. Now they say they have given us something even more valuable than Spurs tops - a magic plant - and that it has more chance of scoring a goal!

Geely's Li Shufu: Electric Taxis for London

Li Shufu, Chairman of Geely, the Chinese car-maker that owns 23% of Manganese Bronze in addition to the larger half of the partnership with LTI in Shanghai, has spoken of his idea of bringing an electric taxi to London.

Whilst the suggestion was still on paper, Li Shufu had already spoken to London Mayor, Boris Johnson, during the Beijing Olympics.

However, the suggestion seems to clash with LTI's own plans of developing a plug-in electric taxi in London in time for the 2012 London Olympics following a research and development agreement with Tanfield Electric Vehicles to develop all-electric plug-in taxis.



Li Shufu: We will bring electric taxis to London!

Tanfield's Chief executive Darren Kell had previously told **Call Sign**:

"Our partnership with LTI will create a unique and highly marketable zero emissions vehicle. By integrating our cutting edge battery and drive train technology

into the class-leading TX4, we can offer a truly global product that answers many of the issues raised by urban private passenger transport - rising fuel costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions."

But Geely plans to develop its own plug-in hybrid and electric cars which could suggest possible in-fighting between Geely and LTI with the winner taking all.

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Late deals and special price for DaC members.

Every November, our thoughts turn to Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday as a tribute to those who lost their lives because of enemy action at home and abroad. This year, the events on the weekend of 8 – 9 November leading up to the anniversary date of Tuesday 11 November, are even more pertinent as it marks the ending of hostilities of WW1 – known forever as *The Great War*.

It has been estimated that WW1 caused some 40 million casualties, of whom around 20 million died. There were 60 million European soldiers involved in the four years of fighting between 1914 to 1918 at the Western Front, Gallipoli and in the Middle East.

The war began on 28 June 1914 when the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, Retaliations followed and within a month, much of Europe was in a state of open warfare.

Although the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed on 28 June 1919, officially ended the war, the Allied powers have had an armistice with Germany in place since 11 November 1918 – ninety years. Which takes us to November 2008.

If you want to trace a relative who died during British conflicts, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission have a dedicated database of 1.7 million people. Go to www.cwgc.org.

While the Great War will be remembered more for this year's poignant anniversary, we must never forget World War 2 either. Here are two short memoirs of three civilians who perished during the 1939 – 1945 hostilities.

On the 90th anniversary of the ending of the Great War...

WEAR YOUR POPPY WITH PRIDE



At the going down of the sun, and in the morning... we will remember them.

returned for another bomb attack on East Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Two auxiliary firemen from Ryde, Leading Fireman Herbert Dewey and FF Colin Weeks were having a tea break provided by the WVS after a number of hours putting out a big fire in Marvin's yard. They died after the mobile canteen van they were standing next to took a direct hit. Their names are placed on the National fire service memorial at the junction of Carter lane and Peters Hill EC4, along the names of hundreds of their fallen colleagues. Mr Churchill proclaimed the NFS as heroes with dirty faces.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning... we will remember them.

Lest we forget, please wear your poppy with pride and support the British Legion...

Richard Potter (T51)

****At 16.54 on 27th March 1945 at 88 Kynaston Road Orpington, Mrs Ivy Millichamp, 34, was standing in her kitchen putting the kettle on when the last V2 rocket landed nearby demolishing her house. Her husband Eric, who had been in the front room at the time, recovered her body soon afterwards. She is buried locally at All Saints Church and on her headstone it reads: The last person in Britain to be killed by enemy action.*

****On the night of 5th May 1942, the enemy*

Call Sign Presents its 'Cock-Up' Money!

As we wrote last month, never in the history of Dial-a-Cab's in-house magazine had so many written in about the mag itself – or the lack of it! At one point there were over 200 emails waiting on Editor Al's PC, not to mention the fact that his phone was burning with subscribers all asking the same question: "Where is my **Call Sign**!"

We now know that they had all been posted – over 2000 of them – just as they are every month, but on this one month the Post Office advised an incorrect price stamp, with the result that hundreds of DaC drivers had to not only go to their sorting office to collect the mag, but were charged an extra £1 on top of the 24p underpayment!

The Post Office did the decent thing and held their hands up. As a result, **Call Sign** was given £500 compensation – after first being offered a derisory £32, which we refused – and we decided to present it towards The London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's Xmas party at the Grosvenor House in January. The donation was addressed not as coming from **Call Sign** but from **The Drivers of Dial-a-Cab**.

Because so many drivers had also called **Nuala** and **Val** in Driver Services when the mag failed to arrive, we asked them to present the cheque to **David Lessman (D19)** who is the LTFUC Chairman. Unfortunately Val was out of the office, but a smiling Nuala presented the cheque.

David told us: "This donation is very much appreciated and will be a big help in putting on our yearly party where around 600 children and their carers will have a wonderful day out. So can I thank all the DaC drivers who refused the option of getting their £1.24 back when it was explained that the money would come to the Fund. As a result, we have had the whole £500."

Call Sign would like to thank our printers, PJB, who kindly gave us the £500 to save us waiting for the Post Office.

Ron Yarbrough
Call Sign online



Nuala presents David Lessman with a £500 cheque on behalf of the drivers of Dial-a-Cab



Keith Reading

Professional Toastmaster /
Master of Ceremonies

Telephone: 01279 465938
Mobile: 07774 860374
Email: kgr.2@virgin.net

Graduate of the
Professional Toastmasters' Academy

Hello all you PCN warriors and welcome to the latest *State of the War* address!

I was recently left in a state of shock when a Parking hearing, which had been arranged by PATAS (Parking and Traffic appeals services) on behalf of Westminster's Evil Empire, wasn't cancelled! Those of you that have been following the war so far will know that Westminster's *modus operandi* is to arrange Parking hearings at New Zealand House a few months ahead and then to cancel the PCN with only days left before the hearing, whilst at the same time hoping that your resolve will fail and you'll pay before then!

You'll also remember that they once, with only a week to go, sent me a bundle of photos and documents that they were going to use as evidence against me only to send a cancellation three days after that! Holding your nerve is vital.

And so it was when the evidence arrived, along with my regular post, to be used against me on a PCN issued on May 22nd 2008 in Greek Street whilst on a credit ride picking up from Soho House. "No problem," thought I whilst looking forward to the *communiqué* advising me that the 10:15am hearing on Wednesday 15th October had been cancelled. But when no such notification had arrived with just 2 days to go, I phoned PATAS to confirm the appointment and was told that the hearing was indeed going to proceed as scheduled! Westminster flexing some muscle? Who'd have thought it!

My first stop was the lovely Nuala in Driver Services! She has in the past for previous PCNs, kindly provided me with a letter on DaC headed paper confirming that I was indeed on a credit ride at the time (this may have been a complete waste of Nuala's time as Westminster's tactics in the past and the events that I'm about to tell you of would suggest. If so, sorry Nuala)! That done, off I went to New Zealand House armed with said letter along with the relevant payslip showing completion of the job and a crib sheet filled with copious angles of attack, including the obvious - cab was occupied, credit ride, clients expect us outside yada yada yada! Plus little snipes about Westminster's inconsistencies regarding the way they issue PCNs, the fact that pedicabs can literally line a whole street without any recourse and that there are no reasonable alternatives that will allow us to provide a good service to our clients!

When entering New Zealand House, an impressive building housing at least a dozen companies, there were two pretty receptionists. I went to the blonde as she was just about edged it on looks and was told to walk behind the reception desk to the lifts where I should select the first floor. I walked into the PATAS office, which contained eight or nine small interview rooms, each containing a computer and microphones fitted flush to the desk. The PATAS receptionist was not only not pretty, but also very stern in expression and with a voice devoid of warmth! She asked me to switch my phone off and gave me a sheet advising that the PATAS representative was a qualified lawyer, independent of all

Picked up many PCNs in Soho? Martin Hizer (M47) seems to collect them for lunch as he appeals and waits for them to be cancelled. But a recent one took him all the way...

Martin's Arbitration Victory!



Martin Hizer - successful arbitration appeal

authorities and TfL.

They advised that hearings would start within 15 minutes of the booked time and sure enough, some 4 minutes later I was called. I got myself into full-on arguing mode and was invited to sit down. The Adjudicator introduced himself warmly by name and started to reel off the preamble as per the sheet given to me by 'smiley' at the reception!

He started by confirming my name and address and then reading from his notes, confirmed that the registration of my cab was indeed the one seen on May 22nd. His demeanour suggested to me that he was thinking along the lines of "What are those scallywags at Westminster trying to pull now?" He then, reading from my appeal, asked if I was setting down and I corrected him and told him that I was picking up to which he replied: **"You were filmed for 126 seconds, which is six seconds over the two minutes allowed; appeal upheld!"**

I was stunned! It felt like my (distant) memories of sex! Anticipation, a slight adrenaline rush and then bang... premature adjudication and a feeling of anticlimax!

Not including the preamble, the whole thing took no more than 90 seconds! I even told him that whilst I felt grateful, I was almost disappointed as I was looking forward to making my argument!

Although I can't tell you if the other Adjudicators would have been as sympathetic, if my one was anything to go by, they are on our side. So I say again, please, please, please stop paying your PCNs and start appealing before it stops being worthwhile to retain our Soho accounts.

Every one you pay justifies them issuing another 50! If everybody does this we can bring their system down!

Be Lucky! Be Strong

Martin Hizer (M47)

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I am pleased to report that after the first week of servicing this account, it could not have been better. Coverage by drivers has been excellent and if it continues like that during the busier times, then I see no reason for any changes to be made to the current set up.

The new five team members we have put in place in the Call Centre have also performed exceptionally well, considering it is the first time that any of them have been required to handle such a complex account. We are all very pleased with their achievements.

For those who are interested, the HoC and HoL labour intense account and instructions come into the Call Centre via fax or phone. There are various departments with the Commons and the Lords, who both have their own account allocated. Each fax-booking request will have numerous numbers of cabs and it's the teams' responsibility to calculate the route to find the mileage and then work out the fixed price before the trip information can be entered in our dispatching system.

It may all sound very straightforward and it would be if we were sent their requests within the time frames we requested. We had originally asked for the bookings early to give our team sufficient time to enter the trips into the dispatch system. All trips are entered as a TBA (to be advised) booking. The various departments phone when their department finishes work and the team then fire the TBA bookings into the system. What has been happening - and did so before when we were the preferred supplier - was that calls were received for ASAP cabs when we had not received any information prior. The pressure put on the team to get the trips priced and out to the fleet is enormous.

On occasions, even when the information is sent early because of the workings of the Commons and Lords, if one rises before the other then trips have to be adjusted as most of the passengers don't go. We simply have to recalculate the trips and put in additional ones for those passengers going later. With the best will in the world, these trips can take much longer to dispatch, plus we are carrying out the work twice.

This is the type of pressure our team are under that you, the driver, would probably never ever be aware of. But as I said, we have handled the situation so far and we will be reviewing it at our first review meeting.

We have had a few very minor problems with a couple of drivers. One was when the passengers felt the driver was unhappy about doing their particular trip and said they did not want grumpy drivers picking them up. Their reason for saying this was because the driver did not talk to them throughout the journey. I hasten to add that the trip went to Sidcup and Chislehurst and the driver lives in Sidcup. Who wouldn't be happy doing a trip like that! Another one we had on a more important note, was a delay in picking up because the driver was waiting in the wrong place. It was the driver not viewing his full trip details that caused it. Please remember when doing one of these trips, all the pick-up information is there for you and may not be on the first page of trip information. If for any reason you do not get the full details, contact the Call Centre immediately.

We have selected the work to be dispatched into SE75. It is offered with the destination and fixed price showing and each trip can be

How the House of Commons Account Operates...



rejected. If for any reason trips are unmatched, after two minutes they will go straight to the *BID* zone. Drivers are not permitted to book into SE75 with their *going home* facility already on and neither must they book into SE75 and then put their *going home* facility on. Drivers who are on their *going home* can *BID* for trips and will only be offered trips going to

their home zone or one of its back up zones.

You will see trips in C1. Disregard them, as they are the same ones as in SE75.

Whilst the zone is non-physical, drivers must be within 10 minutes of the pick-up address before they are permitted to book in. If this is abused, then the rank status will be altered to ensure fairness to all drivers. Controllers have been given the task of monitoring where drivers are when they book in, so please do not put yourself in a position to be reported to Allan Evans. All the trips carry a 15-minute waiting time before the price becomes a meter reading.

Everything has been done from within the Call Centre to give both the HoC and HoL the best possible service. It is up to the fleet to back this up by covering their trips promptly and giving them an efficient and friendly service. In doing so, I hope we can service them for another 30 years.

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

ELEMENTARY MY DEAR DAC DRIVERS

1. Although a prolific novelist, **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** is remembered more for his creation of **Sherlock Holmes** than anything else.

2. The French are lovers of ratiocination - the ability to think rationally. Accordingly, there are to be found in that nation, many admirers of the works of Conan Doyle.

3. **Call Sign** is a taxi mag, so what are we going on about?

Well, just a little tale from the past involving all three...

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, following his arrival in Paris, had taken a taxi from the station to his hotel. On arrival, he was about to exit the cab when the driver said to him:

"Merci, Monsieur Conan Doyle."

"How do you know who I am," asked Doyle curiously?

The taxi driver explained his logic.

"There was a notice in the paper that you were arriving in Paris from the South of France and I knew from your general appearance that you were an Englishman. It is evident that your hair was last cut by a barber of the South of France. By these indications I knew it was you."

"That is extraordinary. You had no other evidence to go upon," asked Doyle?

"Nothing," added the driver, "except for the fact that your name is on your luggage!"

From A Thesaurus of Anecdotes by Edmund Fuller (Garden City Publishing Co. Inc, 1948)

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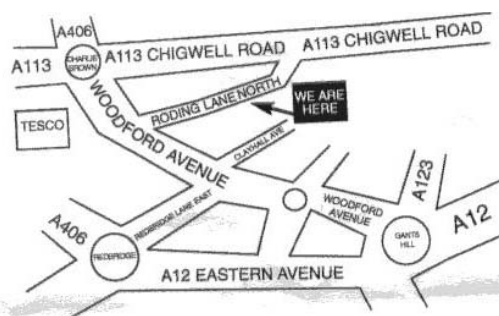
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Dial-a-Cab driver **Peter Arnold (F40)** had just finished a Friday evening shift and at around 01.00 had reached his Rotherhithe home. It hadn't been the greatest night on record, but he'd worked a long shift and had close to £200 on him. Peter takes up the shocking story:

"It was just after 1am and I'd pulled up outside my home. As we all do, I just gave a brief glance outside before opening the door and getting out. It looked ok as it usually does, so I got out and had just put the Chubb key into its lock when suddenly out of nowhere, four black guys with hoods pulled up high, surrounded me. For that second, all I felt was total confusion, I just couldn't work out what was happening.

Suddenly one called out: "Just give us the money!" I was still feeling shocked and couldn't move. Then one of the others said: "Don't mess about... just shoot him!" It was then that I realised one of the four had a handgun pointed at my chest. Almost in a trance, I just held the money-bag out, they took it and ran off. In addition to the cash, there was my phone, an iPod and my licenses etc.

But it was afterwards that I felt an even greater shock when it hit me that two or three seconds later and my front door would have been wide open with my wife and youngest daughter fast asleep in bed. Who knows what these animals could have done?

I went inside, dialled 999 and the police were there within minutes. Although I hadn't told my wife, Samantha, about the gun initially, I knew she'd find out so I had to tell her. It had a devastating effect on her. I just can't get

"Don't Mess About - Just Shoot Him!"

DaC driver held up at gunpoint outside his front door...



Peter Arnold - robbed at gunpoint outside his home

it out of my head that there are people out there who are ready to do things like this. You read about it in the papers, but just can't believe it can happen on your own front doorstep.

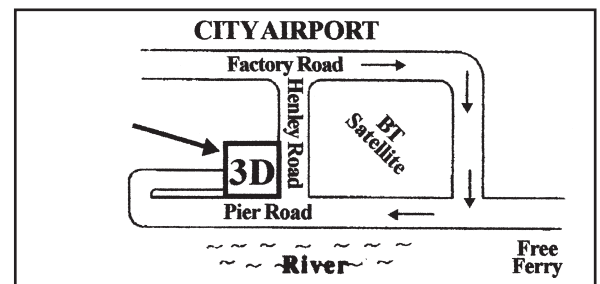
According to a police officer, I was probably followed when it looked as though I was heading away from town and going home. It is a tactic used more and more.

Talking about it to our drivers has been a big help and quite therapeutic. The PCO were also very nice and sympathetic when I went for another badge and bill, but now I have to put it behind me and just get on with it.

But to everyone on DaC, please be careful when you are getting out of the cab at home. Make sure it's clear, don't just give a cursory glance..."

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The Mercedes Vito... Why is it here?

The Mercedes Vito Taxi has been around for a few months now and I still can't see the point of KPM developing such a vehicle. Compared to the Mercedes Viano that PH use, it's inferior and I can't but think it's a converted van, which it is. *Purpose built* means very much in this day and age in relation to customer service and the Vito doesn't look like a taxi - it's a token. I am all for choice, but I want to see better value for money and better reliability, to me this is not a viable alternative. There will always be an initially good take up of these alternative vehicles with the driver who wants to be different, but it's still down to M&O to improve the TX4. The quicker they start importing from China at a more competitive price, in a proper factory with proper parts, the better. In the modern age, building a cab with a 50-year-old chassis that does 23 MPG in a factory that's hardly been modernised with bits of left over production cars, simply won't do. Even though the Mercedes Vito is here, I feel my choice to buy a taxi is no better. LTI say they are not going to import new cabs from China, but this is the same company that said they had no intention of bringing out a new cab - one month before the launch of the TX4.

Firm hand of the law!

I hadn't had a set in my cab for a number of years, but you guessed it, I buy a new taxi and I have had two in five months! The first was my fault when I reversed into one of those low-lying half canons they have everywhere to stop you driving on the kerb. The second was when I was hit in the side by a foreign coach driving around Parliament Square after he was forced wide by a car on his inside. I stopped right outside the Houses of Parliament and received the usual short thrift from the coach driver. I called on the assistance of the law after he said he hadn't got

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...



time for this and threatened to drive off. A bobby outside the House saw I was having a spot of bother and radioed up one of his colleagues who came over. The foreign driver obviously had little respect for his own taxi drivers, I just stood back and listened to the coach driver saying: "He's just a cab driver," to which the PC replied: "He might just be a cab driver, but it takes him three years to get his licence and these blokes are better drivers then people give them credit for. Now have you got your driving licence?"

I took 90 minutes to get statements and exchange details, but I have to say the PC was extremely helpful and thorough. Having an accident is bad enough, but when it's a foreign vehicle it's much worse and even though the cab trade gives the law a bad rap sometimes, the Met Police did a very good job that day and that PC was a credit to the force.

Insurance Claims

Recently I had to make a holiday insurance claim with Drakefield insurance of SW20 after having lost some property in a hotel bedroom. I had a very good idea where my property went because it happened whilst I was at breakfast. There was no forced entry to the room and an employee of the hotel had been in my room - even though I had no evidence. I put in the claim for the items lost and a week or so later received a letter from them telling me I was entitled to nothing. Little surprise really, but this was one of the reasons why: *Personal belongings are not covered if they are left at any time unattended and must be left in a hotel deposit box.* And there's me thinking that insurance companies based their premium on risk! Having an item stolen whilst you are there, or someone breaking into a hotel safe deposit box - I'm turning up my collar and saying in my best Harry Hill voice - "Well, what's the chance of that happening ah!"

Richard Potter

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M&O Servicing

Following the article in last month's Call Sign that LTI had discovered the cause of the 12 under bonnet fires across the UK, it has been decided that their main agent, Mann & Overton, will be undertaking all the TX4 upgrades. The following comes from the M&O (London) Service Department...

Due to the current situation regarding under bonnet fires in a limited number of early TX4 vehicles, we have been forced to suspend until further notice our service and warranty repair operations at the M&O London premises in Brewery Road N7. This is to allow our workshop facilities to be entirely devoted to completing as fast as possible, the required rework for around 700 customers who have had their Hackney licences suspended by the PCO.

We still welcome accident body repair work and you can be assured that all other departments of M&O remain fully operational and continue to be open for business as usual from 9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Thursday, until 5pm on Fridays and until 12-noon on Saturdays.

We sincerely apologise for and regret any inconvenience caused to any of our customers who are now requested to contact any of the five Mann & Overton/LTI Approved Service and Warranty Dealers situated in Greater London for their service and warranty repair needs.

Should any customer have recently purchased a new TX4, their free first 10,000 miles service can also be provided by one of our service dealers, most of whom can also provide their free first mid-term SGS inspection. Only the five Mann & Overton Service Dealers can offer these free of charge services. Your chosen service dealer will contact Mann & Overton for prior authority to proceed.

The list of approved Mann & Overton / LTI Service Dealers in Greater London is shown below. Thank you for your patience and understanding...

Camberfield Taxi Services Ltd, The Ham, Brentford Phone 020 8568 9643.
Coachline Taxis Ltd, 1 Hampton Street, London, SE17 Phone 020 7277 2200
Frankum and Kaye Ltd, 38 Crawley Road, Wood Green, N22 Phone 020 8889 5537
Northwest Taxi Eng, Unit 3, 20 Cumberland Road, Stanmore Phone 020 8206 0006
Putney Bridge Taxis 62 The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6 Phone 020 7736 8818

The late **Daphne Joan Lines** was a great friend of LTFUC Committee members **Susan Angel** and her sister **Lilian Julier**. It was through them that she came to know the taxi trade and the *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children*. She'd come along and give a hand at various functions and outings. Even when her health deteriorated, she would still come along and watch from the back of Susan's taxi.

Daphne had a bad start in life and was put into care at the age of five, living in various children's homes. But Susan says that at the age of 16, she came to live with 'Auntie' and finally got the love and care that all children need and deserve. She managed to turn her life around into a very clever, caring, no-nonsense individual with a wicked sense of humour. She was nicknamed The Duchess - a name that stuck as it suited her so much. Although married for many years, she was never blessed with children; however, she never forgot her roots and wanted other children to have a better childhood than she had. So it came as no surprise to learn that she had bequeathed £12,000 to the LTFUC.

At around the same time, the LTFUC had received an appeal from the **Dockland Scout Project**, who were in urgent need of four boats that could be especially equipped to enable *special needs* children to sail on the river and Susan, Lilian and all the Committee felt this to be a very worthy cause for Daphne's legacy to go to.

On a warm and sunny Saturday 11th October 2008, the committee of the LTFUC were delighted to visit the Dockland Scout Project marina to make the official presentation of the four new boats to Richard Hart, District Commissioner of the *Dockland Scout Project*. The four boats were appropriately named Daphne Lines, Duchess,

LTFUC HELPS THE SCOUTS AFTER £12,000 LEGACY



The Mayor of Tower Hamlets with LTFUC Chairman David Lessman and Life President Bill Tyzack - who had the added honour of having one of the boats named after him

Taxi (the safety boat) and a fourth named after Dial-a-Cab's **Bill Tyzack (C06)**, who is the LTFUC's Hon. Life President. Three of the boats proudly display the Fund's logo.

We were delighted to welcome the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, **Councillor Muhammed Abdullah Salique** who said it was a privilege to be attending such a worthwhile cause and how wonderful it was of Daphne Lines to have












achieve her wish."

The LTFUC committee were delighted that they were able to use Daphne's legacy for such a good cause during their special 80th anniversary year. More photos can be seen on our website at: www.ltfuc.org.uk.

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

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Twenty years ago, on November 22 1988, then-Chairman Ken Burns – now number two in the LCDC – ordered a switch to be flicked and sent Dial-a-Cab on a one-way trip to the future. Data Despatch had arrived and DaC became the third taxi company in the world behind one in Houston and another in British Columbia, Canada to dispose of voice and begin using data transmissions. It now seems very commonplace to see data terminals in cabs – even in mini-cabs – but in 1988 there were a lot of people sweating on the outcome.

Many of the staff from terminal manufacturers MDI in Canada, were standing and looking at a DaC control room that suddenly had Visual Display Units appearing out of nowhere when we were used to seeing paper dockets floating around from telephonists to voice dispatchers.

Phil Kirby, who was dispatching, looked nervous as he kept repeating to drivers that we hadn't gone live yet.

Then Ken Burns gave a prepared speech over the airways, a switch was flicked and everyone in the dispatching centre gathered round a VDU, which showed drivers that had managed to sign on. The list grew by the minute and Ken was seen to visibly relax as it became obvious that the majority of drivers had taken note during the

20 Years Ago: DaC Shocks The World With Data!



It may be a bit grainy but it represents some of our history. Phil Kirby explaining to drivers what was about to happen on November 22 1988

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

Kupkake's Korner



No one cares...

August 2008 was the month I recall,
the poorest I ever remember,
I had my back against the wall...
praying for September!

Long lines of cabs at Paddington,
Saint Pancras and the Cross,
the cost of fuel rose on and on...
and no one gave a toss!

Soho streets were shut to us
with road works everywhere,
get stuck behind a bendy bus
and no one seems to care!

We've paid our fees and income tax,
we're 'fit and proper' persons.
But we're not allowed to fight them back,
despite the Laws' perversions....

The rickshaw scum sit on our ranks
as if it's their legal right!
The touts still work the City bars...
well into the night.

We're told we are an icon;
'London's Heritage' and all that stuff.
Yet we get help from no one,
I say enough's enough!

Kupkake 2008

classes set up prior to data.

Everything was running as well as hoped and DaC had become the first radio taxi organisation in Europe to operate via data transmission.

Unfortunately, as the day went on, the system began to slow down until it just ground to a halt and we returned to voice. An MDI investigation was to show that while the system could handle infinite amounts of work, no one at MDI in

Canada had thought to test the effect of so many drivers signing on together!

Five months later DaC went live again – this time with no ceremony. Ken Burns told drivers to stand-by and actually called a last minute job on voice that had crept through! Then he told telephonists to put their lines on "busy" and just said: "Ok, let's go." The switch was pulled and the rest is history... we have been live ever since.

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— LLP —



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Allen Togwell's Marketing Place



Life in the young days of Master Allen Togwell

Every day during the week I penned this piece, stories in the press have got grimmer and grimmer with the news of banks and businesses collapsing worldwide, including the UK with 40,000 job losses from Investment Banking alone. How soon, I wondered, before those in our trade - many already suffering from the recall of their TX4s - feel the brunt of it all? And especially those who have come into the cab trade since the last recession 16 years ago and who only know what it's like to work through a period of economic buoyancy. How will they cope should, as is predicted when winter kicks in, a severe recession really strike? How will they adapt to following empty cab after empty cab searching for a fare or sitting on ranks that appear to stretch for miles only to eventually get a local, whilst PH get fat on work that was once ours?

Those that have experience of working through kipper seasons of old and took the adjustment in their stride, such as for example during the infamous *winter of discontent* in 1974 and the *three day working week*, are of my generation and of an era when a fare of any description was appreciated, when those in the trade knew the meaning of camaraderie, when we helped each other without question or seeking recompense, when we didn't nick a fare that was meant for the cab behind and when somebody hailed us we stopped and took the fare gladly - irrespective of the destination and at the end of the journey we said 'thank you' and meant it.

Most of the cabmen that had a badge during that era did the Knowledge as I did when the PCO was in Lambeth Road and were of an age when keeping your hair combed, trousers pressed and shoes polished was the norm. It was also a generation that had clear memories of seeing London scarred by bomb damage, food rationing and being de-loused from head to toe at school. Going to public baths for your weekly scrub and for the wireless to work, it needed a regular visit to the local accumulator shop. An age when money was tight, food scarce, particularly in my family where I was one of eleven and what food was put in front of us we ate without comment. A time when the leftover of Sunday's roast was Monday and

sometimes Tuesday's stew and pie; mash and eels was considered a staple diet. Obesity through over eating was unheard of, particularly amongst children and I couldn't imagine anybody, irrespective of class, throwing away food as is common today.

Deprivation was rife, in fact I was 15 years of age before I got my very first birthday present and that was from a close friend. My first pair of long trousers was bought second hand from Chapel Market. And holidays for many consisted of the odd day out in a charabanc to Southend. Yet for all this deprivation and hardship, did it make people - particularly the young - bitter, jealous or resentful? Or give them an excuse to carry knives and mug old



The young Allen Togwell - can you spot the pocket hanky even then!

ladies? No. What we never had we didn't miss. But what many of us did have was a secure home, a loving family, genuine caring neighbours and close friends. And a philosophy as we grew older that you only get out of life what you put into it.

Everybody, of course, is much better off today and rightly so, but I am not convinced they are any happier. Money is obtainable if one is prepared to work; food is plentiful, too plentiful by the looks of the backsides and girths of many who sit behind the wheel of a cab. And above all, so is choice. And it is choice, in my opinion that is the cause of so many problems. How often do we hear the phrase *spoilt for choice*?

When I was young there was rarely any choice. If it was enjoyment you were seeking, then apart from the pleasure of being with your mates, simple things such as going to the park, a picnic, a visit to the cinema or concert hall were appreciated, visiting relatives or collecting things, plus with a little ingenuity you made things that kept you constantly amused. One thing for sure, I cannot remember ever being bored.

Today everybody expects everything to be obtainable with absolutely no effort whatsoever, even food shopping can be delivered to

your door after a few clicks on a PC. As for the young; £100 trainers, designer jeans, mobile phones, laptops, iPods, computer games and Disney holidays etc. Anything new is not just wished for, but expected. And why not when it can be bought - whether you can afford it or not - with that little piece of plastic in your backpocket. Credit card spending in the UK for last month alone was £8 billion. The mind boggles, especially when those being chased to pay it back are suddenly scratching to earn a living.

In many respects I don't regret not growing up closer to this century, amongst a society that is possessed with a selfish pursuit of wealth and that believes the winning of millions on the lottery as being the only means of happiness. Most people seem to have so little time for others, even when, to quote Harold Macmillan: "You have never had it so good."

The future...?

So what will happen when things are not so good, if the credit crunch really does start to bite and bite hard? Will those in the cab trade for example who have taken so much for granted for so long and because of it, ignored the need to promote their business, will they finally come to their senses and consider it's time for a change of attitude? To maybe smarten up their appearance and let the public know they appreciate their custom, even if it's only getting off their backsides to open and close doors?

It's said that people's lives are often altered by adversity. Meaning a serious downturn in the economy, albeit hopefully a temporary one, could well be the saviour of our trade if it forced everyone to sit up and take notice.

There is an old quote: "A bend in the road is not the end of the road...unless you fail to make the turn." I considered that an apt saying during a long-ago period of adversity. I know from experience how easy it is to give up, lose self esteem and get into a rut instead of making that turn and adapting. Unfortunately, driving a cab is not the easiest of occupations to self motivate and I can understand why so many cab drivers look so miserable and their appearance reflects the way they feel - disinterested. In my case, for all the negatives, a major positive was the fact that I had a badge and a metal clothes rail on which hung a dozen suits, shirts and ties. A church mouse maybe, but a smart one all the same.

Joining Dial-a-Cab was a saviour. The two-way voice system, for many an irritant, was like having much-needed company alongside me in the cab. Customers regularly commented on how smart I looked driving a cab in a three piece suit. My self-esteem grew and my policy of taking the first trip offered made me appreciated by our circuit and our customers - as well as my bank manager! When we changed to Data Despatch, I again took the first trip offered, I couldn't see the point of wasting valuable time by rejecting trips. When you are on the point of a station rank you don't reject the trip, so why do it any other

continued on page 17

HOW CAN YOU HELP THOSE WITH HIV IN LONDON?



Not a subject that **Call Sign** normally delves in, but nevertheless the problem is there – and you could be part of a solution alongside *The Food Chain*.

Every Sunday morning, teams of volunteers get together at six borrowed kitchens across London to plan, prepare, cook and deliver meals to some of London's growing population of people who are living with HIV. With over 650 meals to deliver - The Food Chain has been providing its meal service every Sunday for 20 years - the Charity is always looking for volunteer drivers to get more meals to more service users. Can any Dial-a-Cab drivers help?

The Food Chain was started at Christmas 1988 by a group of friends who sought to bring a smile, as well as a hot meal, to those they knew were unwell with Aids and HIV. From that tiny start, the charity has grown over the years to deliver meals right across London, as well as other nutritional services such as grocery boxes, emergency hampers and nutritional advice. With kitchens in Kentish Town, Highbury, Stepney Green, Bermondsey, Tooting and Hammersmith, there is probably one quite near to you. And remember The Food Chain Sunday Service is entirely staffed by volunteers – almost 1,000 in total.

These are the words of one Food Chain service user: **"I had not eaten properly for weeks before I got my first meal from you. I had been so ill and felt too weak to cook. I could not believe the wonderful food you sent for me and my daughter and I thank everyone."**

The Food Chain makes a great difference to the lives of its service users, but there are many more people living with HIV in London that need the nutritional support The Food Chain Sunday Service can pro-

You can deliver the food in your car or cab - what is important is that you are helping those who need that help

vide. But to make this possible The Food Chain needs more help – could that be you?

It isn't difficult to recruit volunteers to help with cooking on a Sunday, but it is hard to find drivers with their own vehicles willing to

give up part of their Sunday to help out. The Food Chain is particularly keen to expand the number of people in east London who receive Sunday meals, but they can't do that without more volunteer drivers.

Volunteer Food chain drivers work with a volunteer navigator to deliver hot and cold meals to 8 - 10 service users from 11am to 3pm. Dial-a-Cab drivers probably wouldn't even need the navigator other than as a helper! The Food Chain asks all volunteers to make a commitment of one Sunday a month, though which Sunday is up to you. It's not a big commitment, but it will make a big difference to how many people The Food Chain can reach with its meal service. The Food Chain will reimburse fuel costs should that be a deterrent to volunteering.

Food Chain drivers need to be reliable, organised, have a UK valid driving licence and insurance and access to a vehicle large enough to fit you, a hot and cold box and a navigator. If that sounds like you (and your taxi?) and you are interested in making a difference to the lives of some of London's HIV population, please consider calling The Food Chain.

More information about what The Food Chain does and a copy of their volunteer application form can be found at www.foodchain.org.uk. If you would like to speak to someone about what volunteering involves, then you can also contact The Food Chain's Volunteer Administrator at chris.gurney@foodchain.org.uk or call 020 7354 0333.

Allen Togwell's Marketing Place (continued from previous page)

time? I was called *Wells Fargo* by some controllers because of the amount of deliveries I was always willing to do in the City - deliveries that everybody else rejected. I often accepted as many as a dozen separate deliveries in one go and at £1.75 fixed price per trip, it was collectively twice as much as going to the flyers, but in less time, no dead mileage and I was still in the city. We all know that any job can take us into a better one. So why cherry pick? A practice that to this day I still do not understand why so many of our members need to do it, wasting valuable time and jeopardising future business in the process. Which leads me on to the real subject of this article.

House of Commons

As you all are aware, after a very short absence we have regained the HoC and HoL account. Having previously given 27 years of unbroken service to these two very prestigious institutions, they decided it was time for a change and chose to use the services of a competitor. We left on very good terms, insisting that should they ever need our assistance, we would be only too pleased to oblige. We

were also confident that whoever took this account from us were going to find it extremely difficult - in fact almost impossible - to match the service we had given, let alone improve on it. We now have the account back and it is for everybody at DaC to prove they made the right choice. That especially applies to you on the sharp end by taking the very first trip that is offered to you. And incidentally, not just with this account but every account. For months there has been constant warnings of a recession and as always with this trade, it's been met with the usual shrugging of the shoulders, cloth ears or head burying. Accept it or not, now is the time to act. You are in the service industry, so do exactly that, give a service and by that I mean when the client wants it, NOT when you feel like giving it. Every minute you spend cherry picking is another minute the client is waiting on the phone asking when their cab is going to arrive. And when that cab is urgent, each minute seems like an hour. And every minute that client is waiting on the phone, you are giving them the time to think about whether they would get a better service with a com-

petitor or worse still, with a PH company. Cherry picking does not do you, the clients or the future of your Society any good. If DaC was my company, I would make every trip *As Directed and Non Rejectable* and within a month you would all be thanking me for increasing your earnings. Plus we would be able to put a sales generating statement into our sales portfolio that we've not been able to do in 55 years of trading - and because of it kept a major competitor in business.

Finally, since the start of the recent economic downturn, there has been an increase in Credit Card and Cash work. In an endeavour to promote this business further, we have produced a stock of the Dial-a-Cab cash telephone number - 0207 253 5000 - that can be affixed onto your cab below the DaC logo. Those members wishing to advertise this number on their taxi can do so by visiting our fitting bay at Roman Way.

**Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing**



Notice of 2008 Annual General Meeting...

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

IT'S AGM TIME AGAIN!

The 2008 AGM will be held as in recent years at The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1 on Sunday 8, February 2009 at 11:00hrs.

This year, the AGM includes the election of officers and any nominations must be received at Dial-a-Cab House on or before 09:00hrs on Friday 14 November.

If you do intend standing for election at the meeting and would like to offer *Call Sign* readers information about yourself and how and why you believe you could benefit the Society, then please let *Call Sign* have your details together with a photograph by midday on Thursday, 13 November. These will then be published

in the December issue. The Editor requests that in order to be fair to everyone, you keep the maximum number of words to around 300.

Members wishing to put forward rule changes or propositions are also reminded that they should be returned, together with the names and signatures of the 25 proposers, by Friday, 14 November 2008.

Questions or comments that members wish to have published regarding the CV of any individual standing for election or rule changes and propositions will be published in the January issue of *Call Sign*.

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

Taxi Sales Slump...

On a day when Bank of England supremo Mervyn King told the world what it already knew, that the UK was going into recession, companies like Argos proclaiming they were in for the worst Christmas in memory and the world's financial markets heading for meltdown, all that was left was for those who many believe know how the future goes – London's taxi drivers – to tell anyone prepared to listen how bad things were getting!

So there couldn't have been much doubt which way *Manganese Bronze Holdings* interim trading figures would go. With drivers finding conditions ever tougher on the road, LTI's parent company announced that sales had fallen by 37.5% to 1,628 in the nine months to September. John Russell, the MBH Chief exec, said:

"We sell 75-80% of our taxis to individual operators and have noticed sales clearly flagging as taxi drivers become alarmed and defensive about the price of mortgages and petrol."

MBH have driven their break-even point down to 2000 vehicles this year by reducing operating costs, but are unlikely to go beyond that in current trading conditions. What they – and the drivers – could certainly have done without was the TX4 recall. This will figure strongly in the company's full-year results with the total cost expected to reach £4m.

Even though the current poor showing of the pound against the euro was making VM engines from Italy more expensive, John Russell was still optimistic about the MBH long-term outlook and gave promising Chinese figures in their joint venture deal with Geely in Shanghai, which is scheduled to begin full production later this year. He said the company had already signed memoranda of agreements for over 8,000 vehicles and expects to turn that number into sales in 2009.

Analysts anticipate a loss of between £6 - £7million. The group paid an interim dividend of 2.25 pence and will take a decision on the level of final payout at the end of the year.

Following the announcement, shares took a battering losing more than 25% in early trading, but later clawed much of it back. A recent sale of 200 TX4s to Bahrain has helped push the price up.



John Russell: "Sales clearly flagging"

Boris: I Will Rephase Traffic Lights

In the February 2008 issue of *Call Sign*, Boris Johnson – then just a Mayoral candidate – answered DaC driver's questions. In response to **Alex Constantinou (N05)**, Boris said he would get rid of the half yearly check if elected. It seems that promise is on the verge of coming true.

And in answering a question from **Bernie Silver (G08)** about traffic congestion, the soon-to-be Mayor responded: "TfL have deliberately installed more traffic light schemes, which they themselves admit are reducing road space and slowing down traffic. We have to focus on getting London moving."

He has now followed that statement up and informed *Call Sign* that he intends rephasing the traffic lights where they stay on red too long. His office said: "By rephasing, we will get the City moving again. Hi tech facilities will assist pedestrians to cross the road safely." These could include count-



Bernie Silver asked about traffic in February - now the Mayor is acting on it

down clocks informing pedestrians how many seconds before they can cross and speed up the crossing process.

He has now ordered TfL to look at the lights sequences and to improve the traffic flow that at some junctions such as The Mall / Trafalgar Square, Strand westbound by Charing Cross Station and Gloucester Place where it crosses Marylebone Road, cause

traffic to almost come to a standstill.

According to TfL, they will be able to get an average of two extra seconds for each light change and whilst that sounds like nothing, according to the RAC, it would make a significant difference. The motoring organisation added that correct phasing would mean that travelling at a steady speed could mean vehicles catching more lights on green.

It was around two years ago that then-Mayor Ken Livingstone began the process of rephasing, so that pedestrians had far more time than vehicles and the reverse process has now begun with over 150 rephasings already completed – one of them being at Tower Bridge Road. However, we have also been told that the whole process could take up to 6 years with changes being completed at 1000 a year.

The Mayor's office has also agreed to allow motorcycles into bus lanes from January.

DAC DRIVER'S WIFE CAUGHT IN CREDIT CARD SCAM!

A Dial-a-Cab driver living in Kent has told **Call Sign** how his wife has been targeted in a relatively new scam involving credit cards. We have agreed to keep his name hidden as understandably, the incidents have greatly upset his wife.

"Having said that," the driver explained, "we still wanted to warn others on DaC to look out for this scam that involves fraudulent credit card applications! These low-lives are making multiple applications for credit cards in your name via the internet; they only need your name address and date of birth and can make the rest up. They make a visit to your local postal sorting office and ask them to hold your mail, using the excuse that they are going away for a few weeks or even that the new puppy is chewing up the post! Then they return after the two weeks are up and collect the new credit card(s) in your name - complete with a pin number."

The driver continued: "We believe there have now been three attempts to defraud my wife in this way. Two have been definitely spotted, whilst a third attempt is suspected. My sorting office said I was the fourth person they knew of within just a few days to be caught! The Electoral Register or Companies House will suffice for obtaining relevant details - they don't need a signature. Everything else can be fictitious i.e. bank details, mothers maiden name and occupation. The crooks make multiple applications because the more cards they apply for, the more money they can make. One company has given my wife a limit of £5,000 and another £16,000. Not bad for a part time school dinner lady!"

He ended with the warning: "Be careful; if you don't see any mail for a few days (if you are like me, there's always something) contact the post office or have a word with your postman..."



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

Out And About In Denver

Democratic National Convention (continued)

In my September **Call Sign** article, I mentioned the *charm school* for cab drivers preparatory to the recent Democratic Convention held here in Denver. I need to explain that in more detail. Tourism is an important portion of Colorado's economy and the City of Denver maintains an active Tourist and Visitor Bureau. Among its activities is publishing a wonderful booklet of information - maps, historic sites, etc. And the bureau exerts much effort to attract conventions all year round.

The Visitor's Bureau organized a program called **Go the Extra Mile** to acquaint the taxi drivers so they would be informed as the *goodwill ambassadors* I mentioned last time.

Attracting the Democratic Convention was a concentrated effort, not only involving the Visitor's Bureau, but also the Mayor and Governor of Colorado. Once Denver was selected as the site of the convention Homeland Security and other Federal agencies became involved in planning such things as street closures and how to reinforce and supplement local law enforcement, all of this was coordinated with the National Democrat Committee.

One of our major auto manufacturers provided a fleet of *hybrid* Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) for the convention. A fleet of *people mover* vans was brought in as well as 200 extra buses for moving delegates and attendees.

The Public Utilities Commission permitted Denver's three taxicab companies to add additional cabs during the convention. Mistakenly, I assumed that with all these extra vehicles, the use of taxis would not be as great as it turned out to be. For several personal reasons, I planned to avoid the business downtown as much as possible. Instead I chose to work my computer dispatch system to take care of the regular customers outside of the downtown area. As it turned out, I could have made considerably more money had I worked the convention business as many cab drivers did. On the other hand, the demand for cab service was so much greater than normal, that I was able to keep the wheels turning and the meter running wherever I was in the metropolitan area. Regular customers did not receive a good service. Some had to wait three to five hours for a cab!

Several times the destination of my trips was downtown and a few of these were delegates. Only one of those trips was complimentary of Denver's cab service. More than one complained about drivers not knowing the city

and streets. One even complained about drivers who spoke broken English and who had to ask how to spell the names of streets so they could enter the destination into a GPS navigation system.

Such remarks refreshed my appreciation for your London Knowledge program.

More than once I was asked what I thought of the Convention? Each time I responded:

"My old daddy used to warn me never to discuss race, religion or politics. Trying to answer your question would violate all three of those, wouldn't it?"

That caution kept me out of trouble. But one incident somewhat distressed me, though. I took an older lady home from the grocery store with several bags of groceries. She insisted on giving me nearly three times the amount shown on the meter. She explained that was what she was charged going from her home to the store. And she was afraid to complain to the driver about the roundabout route he was driving.

My reaction was that driver was taking "Go the Extra Mile" too far...

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

LTFUC TAKE OVER

PHOTOS: A

There are celebrations and there are celebrations! The *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children* taking over the **House of Commons** for the climax of their 80th birthday celebrations, undoubtedly provided an evening to remember.

Included in the invitation was an offer for an official guided tour of the magnificent seat of British government and many – dressed in all their finery – took up the option.

Then came the main celebrations beginning with a **Dial-a-Cab** sponsored Champagne reception followed by dinner in the *Members* dining room. Not every evening of this magnitude provides food to match, but on this occasion the *roast rump of Dorset lamb* was nothing less than superb, served along with the House of Commons own wines – a *Chardonnay* and a *Pinot Noir* – which were kindly sponsored by **KPM and Mercedes Benz**.

Host for the evening was Ilford North MP **Lee Scott**. He does much for the licensed taxi trade and made a very humorous speech about who usually sits where among the three main parties.

Realising that by following Lee Scott's humorous lead, the Chief Superintendent of the City of London Police, **Bill Tyzack (C06)**, wasn't quite as shy and literally brought the "Fund activities."

Next came what was supposed to be a toast by the Fund, but instead, helpers and children of the LTFUC. However, Brian as making a **speech** to the Fund rather than a toast. Never short of a sentence or two, the dinnering a friendly dig at the lady Mayor of Westminster as well there was dancing to follow or he might say.

David Lessman (D19) gave a moving and often humorous speech.



Fund Chairman David Lessman with wife Sandra and Mike Son



The LTFUC committee pose in the Members Dining Room



Ilford North MP Lee Scott chats with Editor Alan



DaC HR Manager
John Rogers and Sky
newsreader Sacha
Twining



Brian Rice makes the toast to the Fund and children

ER "THE HOUSE!"

LAN GREEN

our he would be on a loser, **Alex Robertson**, police, kept his toast to the Queen very short. who is the Hon Life President of the LTFUC, "House" down with some of his stories of past

DaC Chairman **Brian Rice** to the Committee, driver, when toastmaster **Ashley Powell** announced an a toast, he briefly swallowed hard and got on ers were in fits of laughter at his stories – includer who fortunately had a sense of humour! It's just still have been speaking!

ten amusing response to Brian's speech and to a

huge round of applause, was quick to point out that none of the Fund's activities would work without the assistance of the drivers.

Then it was onto the entertainment – sponsored by **Doug and Audrey Sherry** – held next door in the *Strangers* dining room dancing to Belissima – who can often be seen entertaining at events sponsored by JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, Rothschilds and many others. They also provided the music at Elton John's AIDS Foundation and the birthday party of Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich.

For those preferring the quieter life such as the LTDA contingent led by **Bob Oddy** – sporting a huge smile all evening – together with **John Thomas**, **Barry Hooper** and - you couldn't make it up – **Steve McNamara**, there was the magnificent *Pugin Room* where drinks were available.

The Fund also wanted to thank **Michael and Cheryl Holland** for sponsoring the printing and **Call Sign**, who provided the photographer for the trade press at no cost.



The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Louise Hyams, makes a speech



Editor's wife Linda with Chentha, wife of Roman Way Manager Dana

Remembering Laurie Rooke...

The death of Dial-a-Cab driver **Laurie Rooke (G32)** left many very shocked family and friends. According to DaC Chairman **Brian Rice**, he couldn't remember attending a funeral where there were so many people gathered. He estimated those who had gone to pay their respects as numbering close to three hundred.

Certainly many drivers knew Laurie, but having been with DaC for so many years he also knew many of the girls who work behind the scenes at DaC House and who were also at our previous homes of Brunswick House and Shirland Road. Two of those friends – **Denise Zemma** and **Lorraine Carruthers** – asked **Call Sign** if they could leave their personal tributes to Laurie...

Laurie was my friend of 32 years. He belonged to this rare species called real friends, always willing to help and listen. He put the people he loved first and had this knack of making you feel a lot better when you felt sad or under the weather. He lived life to the full and touched many people's lives along the way. This was reflected in the number of people who came to pay their respect at his funeral.

We shall miss that lovely smile of yours Laurie, and your corny jokes, and having to listen to some obscure rock band! Most of all we shall miss YOU.
Au Revoir (and not Adieu)

Denise

I knew Laurie for just over 30 years and he was one of the best friends you could ever wish to have, the type of person you could count on at all times. He supported me and my family through sad times, tough times and also happy times - such as being Godfather to my daughter.

Laurie was a fun person who always had a joke to tell and loved among many other things motorbikes - well all sorts of motor vehicles having once owned a fire engine - going for a pint and music, having introduced me to bands that I would probably never have had the pleasure of knowing. Laurie was a big character who leaves a huge void in the lives of those left behind, especially those who were in his inner circle and in particular his wife Josie, sons Alan, Dean and Jack, grandchildren Harry and Charlotte, his mum and dad and 2 brothers.

Lots of love Laurie, God bless...

Lorraine

And from all the drivers who knew Laurie, rest in peace. You will be greatly missed...



Hit and run traps Carlo beneath his own taxi...

For those of us who are self-employed, staying healthy and able to continue working is essential. Even a few days off work due to illness can make things difficult. Imagine then, being involved in a serious accident, undergoing surgery and being unable to work for almost 2 years!

Such was the case for **Carlo Sorrentino (V46)** who suffered multiple leg injuries and extended hospitalisation after a hit and run driver left him for dead...

Carlo takes up the story:

"It was 00.45 hours on March 31st 2004 and I was only a few streets away from home when my cab developed a lighting problem, which I knew I could fix easily. I stopped under a street light and sorted the problem in minutes. As I was about to close the cab bonnet, a car ploughed into the back of the cab, forcing it forward and running me over, trapping the lower half of my body under the front of my cab.

As I was screaming for help, the car driver came up to me asking if I was alright and then ran off, leaving his smashed up vehicle by the roadside and me for dead.

Two fire engines, an ambulance and the police were quickly on the scene. Meanwhile, I could feel myself losing consciousness. Words can't express what my wife and daughter must have felt as they came running from our house. It looked like a scene from BBC TV's *Casualty*.

It took 45 minutes to free me from under the wrecked taxi. I was taken to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, where the doctors and nursing staff were fantastic.

My injuries involved a *double quadriceps rupture*, meaning the big muscles in my legs that straighten them to keep you upright and standing, were ripped off their anchorages at the bones.

I was in hospital for four weeks and in plaster casts from hip to ankle, unable to put any weight on my legs. I then spent a further eight weeks at home, my wife doing absolutely everything for me. The only thing that kept me from going mad was visits from my cab-driving friends.

Eventually, the plaster casts were removed and that's when the pain *really* started and it was difficult even to stand. I literally had to learn to walk again.

Dac driver injured in hit and run accident!



Out of hospital but a long way from recovery
Inset: Carlo now and close to normal



It was 18 months before I got back to work, and then only for a few hours a day due to the pain in my legs. Steadily and over time, I built up my endurance and am still doing so. It was around this time that my wife Francesca developed cancer, undergoing 12 months of chemo treatment. So it was my turn to nurse her through another difficult time.

So now I say a big 'thank you' to my wife and children who helped me get through these

All this time, the police were trying to trace the errant driver. They eventually arrested and charged him with driving with undue care and attention and failing to stop after an accident. **At the second court hearing, he changed his plea to guilty and received a four month prison sentence, £500 fine and 12 month driving ban. Unable to pay the fine, he spent an extra day at Her Majesty's accommodation!**

tough times.

On a lighter note, I recently joined Dial-a-Cab and it has made a big difference to my working day. I now enjoy going to work and meeting other drivers.

It may sound trite, but believe me it's true; if you have your health, you have won the Lottery!

Nobody knows what is around the corner..."

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Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350

Call Sign

November 2008

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Web Site: www.dac-callsign.co.uk

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

Design: Aldan Publications,

Tel: 07958 300 428

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Following my resignation from the LCDC as Membership Secretary and Treasurer, many DaC subscribers have enquired regarding the reasons for my departure in May. I will now clarify my position to scotch any unfounded rumours.

It was reported in the August / September issue that I had resigned following a statement that I had made in support of *The Badge* typesetter, **Terry Bezant (W87)**, with regard to a dispute. Terry Bezant was a founder member of the LCDC and had produced *The Badge* in a very professional manner for approximately eighteen years, at a reasonable cost. For the first six years he was not paid at all!

Terry was reliable and ensured that the publication was proofread correctly and that *The Badge* was a credible taxi trade publication. Pictures were not stretched or compressed as they presently appear. All text was correctly framed and font sizes were consistent. *Terms and Conditions* at the foot of adverts were legible.

Following a power struggle within the committee where certain members wanted to use *The Badge* to fight their own little wars - principally against **DaC** - a decision was taken to replace Terry Bezant because he had remained loyal to both the Editor, **Alan Fleming** and to the principles upon which the LCDC was founded and for this he was summarily dismissed and Alan's position was made untenable.

Subsequent to Terry Bezant's dismissal, standards dropped and the resulting decline was a huge embarrassment and not acceptable to me. I could no longer put my name to *The Badge*.

Prior to my resignation, an agency based in Brighton was deducting commission from all existing *Badge* advertising revenue. I had an issue with this, as advertising could have easily been taken in-house, greatly reducing losses in the production of *The Badge*.

In the past, former Chairman and Secretary,

Dave Cohen (E94) was the LCDC Membership Secretary and Treasurer for many years before suddenly resigning along with former LCDC Chairman, Alan Fleming. Now for the first time, Dave gives the reasons for his sudden departure...

Why I resigned from the LCDC



Dave Cohen

Allan Kelly handled advertising and following the end of his leadership, I took over the task at very little cost to the LCDC members. This was a simple job, of which I have had former experience. Revenue from advertisers was coming in at a much faster rate, whereas the Brighton agency was taking up to three months to pass on any advertising income, minus their commission.

Another bone of contention was the treatment of Alan Fleming who had submitted a perfectly reasonable claim for representing a Club member at the PCO.

Alan, who was a stalwart of the LCDC for many years, was also asked to stand down in favour of the younger, **Grant Davis**. In return

and in recognition of his work, Alan was given a lifetime presidency.

Some weeks after taking on his new role, Alan received a request to represent an LCDC member at the PCO. When he submitted his perfectly reasonable expense claim, it was reduced, leaving him with a financial shortfall.

This petty behaviour brought to my attention what life was to become like under the new Management Committee. Evidently, the knives were out to rid the Committee of the long-standing experienced Officers. Therefore, after some serious consideration, I decided enough was enough and decided to resign from the Management Committee and the LCDC.

The other reason, which led to my final decision, was due to my length of service as a subscriber on Dial-a-Cab. I have been a subscriber since April 1970. I feel that I have a loyalty to London's premier radio circuit. For some obscure reason, I was often castigated by a fellow Committee Member for being a subscriber to DaC.

In my opinion, the long-serving Committee members have been treated abysmally by those who seem to have an agenda of their own. However, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all LCDC members good luck in the future.

Dave Cohen (E94)

Crisis Volunteering at Christmas

Drivers are urgently needed to volunteer their services to help homeless people in London over the festive season as part of Crisis Christmas. It runs from Tuesday 23 December till Tuesday 30 December 2008.

Transporting guests and volunteers will be an integral part of **Crisis Christmas** and help ensure the smooth running of the event. Nine temporary centres will be set up in London by Crisis, the national homelessness charity, as part of the Christmas activity. The centres will provide vital companionship and hot meals for homeless and vulnerably housed people as well as essential services like health checks, housing advice, training and further education opportunities.

During the event, Crisis requires up to 70 drivers a day to transport guests and volunteers between centres and various pick up points in the London area. Some will be based in each of the centres and some will be allocated to the Transport Pool at the Operations Centre.

Volunteer drivers must be 25 or over with a full clean driving licence, held for over 2 years and obviously be confident handling large vehicles in central London. The vehicles generally used are Transit vans, Luton box vans and 3.5 flatbed, which can all be driven with a full driving licence. There is also a 7.5 ton truck that needs to be driven, which

comes under a particular category. Older licences (pre-January 1997) allow you to drive this category but post-1997 licences require a test.

Most driving requirements are during weekdays in November and December, however, there may be a need for weekend drivers from mid-December onwards during set-up. Please note that some lifting of goods will be necessary during loading and unloading. Crisis will organise MIDAS training for all relevant drivers.

Claire Richardson, a volunteer driver during COC, told **Call Sign**: "We would encourage all drivers with a clean driving licence to take part in **Crisis Christmas**. It is very rewarding and you are also helping some of the most marginalised people in society to rebuild their lives. If you do have some free time over Christmas and want to do something positive, then volunteering for the transport office at **Crisis Christmas** would be a good idea."

Leslie Morphy, Crisis CEO, said: "Crisis Christmas would not be possible without the help of the 6,500 volunteers who generously donate their time and skills over the Christmas week. Volunteer drivers will play a key part in the process, so if you know anyone with relevant skills and experience, please spread the word!"

To find out more about volunteering call: **0207 426 3874**, email **volunteering@crisis.org.uk** or apply online: **www.crisis.org.uk/volunteering**.

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies and Gents,

Suspended taxis

Before I update you on a few issues that have recently occurred, I must firstly mention the problems that many of you have encountered with early TX4's (56 and 07 registrations). These taxis were suspended indefinitely by the Public Carriage Office on Friday 19th September and through no fault of your own, you were then unable to do the job you were qualified for.

Talking to many of you since then, it appeared that whilst demand far outstripped supply, some garages that could still offer rented taxis were wildly profiteering from your misfortune. Every one of us needs to work to pay our bills, but reports of 'N' registration taxis offered out at two hundred and sixty pounds (£260) per week were not unfounded and quite honestly these people should be ashamed of themselves. As a working driver myself, I would be more than happy to publicise the names of the garages that have made small term profit from your misfortune. Maybe they will live to regret it in the long term when eventually things get back to normal and they have unused taxis on their forecourts that they wish to rent out. Please let me know if you feel you were charged or offered cabs at inflated prices.

By the time you read this, most - if not all of the taxis - should have had the remedial work completed and should be back on the



road. Can I ask all relevant members to inform Driver Services of the dates and duration that you were actually unable to use the radio, so that they are able to correctly adjust your subscriptions.

Incorrectly booking-in...

You will see from the latest complaints results listed in this edition of *Call Sign* that despite many terminal messages and warning in the magazine, a small number of drivers are still booking-in to physical ranks and zones incorrectly to gain an unfair advantage. Please remember that the GPS tracking system is regularly monitored and drivers that are in breach of procedure rules will be called to task - no more warnings will be given.

Drivers also complain that there are certain regular trips in outer zones that they feel may not be allocated in an equal manner. Be sure that outer zones are being monitored; reports are now being run and if it can be proved that there is a specific driver who books in to a particular zone very early because he or she may have prior knowledge of the trip and accepts the trip on a regular basis, it will also lead to a complaint.

Aggrieved drivers rightly bring most of these types of complaints to our attention and it is my job to investigate the problem in a fair and just way. Please remember that in a Complaints hearing, you are judged by your peers and none of us want to be 'turned over'.

Credit cards

Finally, can I once again remind you that to ensure payment for a credit card trip, please remember these two important points:-

1. If you are unable to swipe the card through the terminal, do not agree to undertake the journey.
2. If you cannot print out a receipt through the terminal at the end of the journey, you must obtain a signed manual receipt that clearly shows the imprint of the card details and expiry date.

Allan Evans

DaC Compliance Officer
Allane@Dialacab.co.uk

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

ASK GARY...

Question from Steve Hassan (P95)

I read with interest the article in the September *Call Sign* on the *Camden rip-off merchants*, as I was one of those caught when the new u-turn restriction at the top of Southampton Row started. I still have details and sent off an email to Camden requesting my money back as the signage was now agreed to be inadequate. Needless to say they declined to reimburse me, even though I quoted **Bob Stafford's (N75)** PCN details from the article. Camden state that the charge has been paid in full so they are not responsible, as the charge was not contested at the time. Where should I go from here? Surely if the signage is wrong and agreed to be so, then Camden should be charged with extortion?

Gary's answer:

It is certainly an interesting position for a local authority to adopt that money is not required to be reimbursed where there has been a tacit admission that it was taken incorrectly in the first place. The concept in law allowing a public body to act in a certain manner is that they exercise any function within the limits of that power. Obviously, to demand and then accept a charge that is then shown to be unlawful and thereafter to refuse to reimburse that money means the Council are then acting in a manner that we lawyers call ultra vires, or outside their power. In a perfect legal world, all drivers affected would march off to the High Court with applications that the actions of the Council be reviewed, that they be held to be so unreasonable that no reasonable Council could act in such a manner and that the money should be returned at the order of the Court. Obviously this would be a massively expensive exercise and disproportionate to the actual level of charges so realistically I couldn't suggest that this route be taken.

However, there is a more practical route that can be followed where somebody finds themselves in a dispute with a Local Authority. The Local Government Ombudsman has power to deal with Council's when they act in a manner where they are at fault. Clearly this is just such a case. The first thing to do is to formally complain to the Council, I suggest that this be done in writing and that a copy of all correspondence is kept.

The complaint to the Ombudsman should be within twelve months of your matter for complaint arising. The Ombudsman has real teeth as the powers for them to request documents are the same as those enjoyed by the High Court. There is no charge for their service and Council's almost inevitably follow their recommendations. I suspect that the mention of such a complaint, together with a liberal requesting of everybody's name who has been involved in the decision making process, should yield a favourable result.

A useful link to them is at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/pdf/howcompccouncil.pdf>.



Gary Bromelow
Saunders Solicitors

* Steve's ticket is under a year and he'll be trying Gary's advice...

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

Children suffering from a range of chronic debilitating illnesses and life limiting conditions have enjoyed a three-day trip of a lifetime to *Disneyland Resort Paris*. This is the 15th consecutive year the event has set out from *Canary Wharf*, one of the charity's sponsors. Organised by a dedicated team of Committee members - part of *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* - 100 taxis set out accompanied by police outriders, medical teams and back up support. The *City of London Police* provided a motorcycle escort and remained with the convoy throughout the 3 days, supported by the *Met police* and some officers from the *French Gendarmes*. *Ambulances*, *paramedics* and the *AA breakdown service* also came along, ensuring any unforeseen problems could be sorted out, leaving nothing to stand in the way of making the dreams of these children become reality. As the taxis began to arrive with their passengers having been collected from various points around London, the *Big Breakfast* send-off with 500 people in attendance began.

M&O were on hand to give each child and driver spending money, with *The Marriott Hotel West India Quay* providing packed lunches for the outward journey.

At 7.30, the *Band of the Blues and Royals* played a fanfare to announce the arrival of *The Lord Mayor of London*, *Alderman David Lewis* and his *Sheriffs*, together with their Ladies, at Eastwintergarden, Canary Wharf to an atmosphere of great excitement.

After a thank you to everyone involved in making the trip possible - including many of the sponsors present - the Lord Mayor went outside to cut the ribbon to mark the beginning of the journey to Disneyland Paris. Office workers stopped in their tracks to watch the convoy leave.

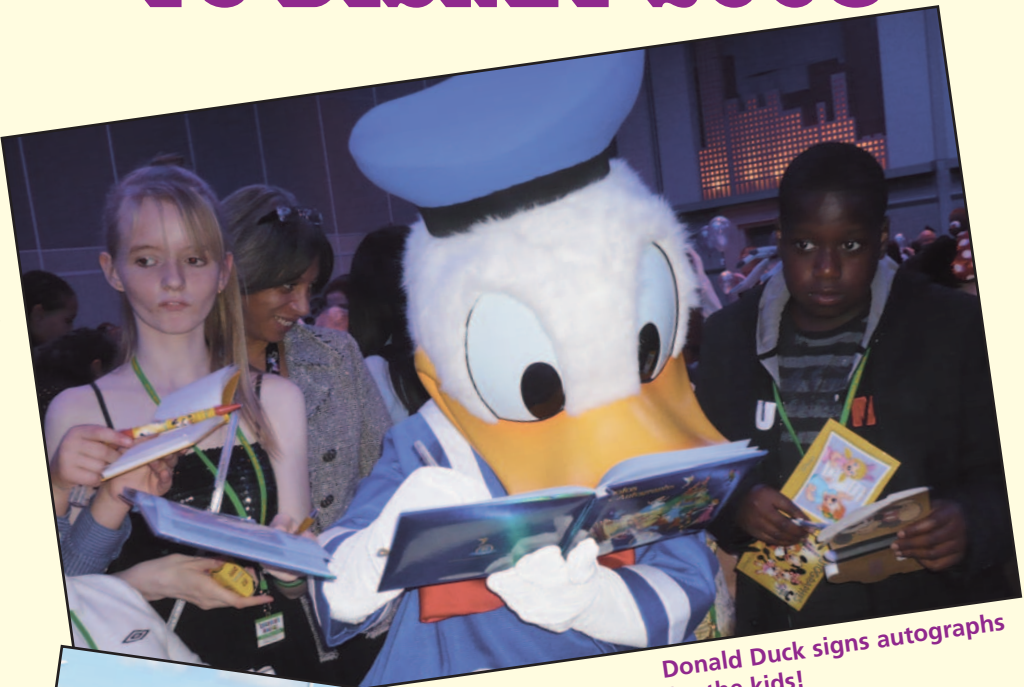
At sunny Dover, the convoy boarded a *P&O Ferry* over to Calais. Each year *P&O* are generous in their support for the trip and once on board, a welcome message came over the tannoy. As drivers, helpers and children were busy making friends and getting to know each other, a calm sailing saw us soon arrive in France. A refuelling stop at a motorway service area at *Assevillers* brought forward another surprise as *clowns* waved to welcome the convoy. The refuelling operation on the trip is amazing to see with committee members dressed in white space suits and wellies! In the time it takes to refuel, the convoy and guests use the service area facilities and this year were welcomed with refreshments which had been organised by the director and staff of the group who operate the service areas, *Groupe Eliance*. Then onto the last leg of the journey...

We arrived at the hotel, then it was dinner and an early night ready for the Park! Saturday morning dawned bright - the Disney Committee had pulled out all the stops to order good weather! As I walked around the park, all I could see was excitement on the faces of our group - and not just the children! Taxi drivers were seen on many of the rides with their "family" - some looking a little green after going on *Thunder Mountain*!

After a great day in the park, the children had even more excitement to come as they attended a *Gala Dinner* at the *New York Hotel* with Disney characters, face painters and a disco.

Speeches were made with presentations to the Committee. For some drivers, there was a special presentation in recognition of the fact they had made every single trip over the 15 years of taking children on this, their trip of a lifetime. They had given up 75 days work and driven over 9000

DAC ON THE MAGICAL TAXI TOUR TO DISNEY 2008



Donald Duck signs autographs for the kids!



Some of the DaC drivers on the trip

unpaid miles. All those involved in supporting the trip including the police, ambulance and the *AA* also received a gift. Without their backup, the trip would not be possible and their hard work ensures everything runs smoothly. All too soon, the evening was over and the tired but happy children returned to their hotel.

Sunday morning was another beautiful day; passengers were in their cabs once again with food provided by *Waitrose Supermarkets* and the trip home began. Friendships began on the Friday but all too soon it was time for everyone to bid each other farewell. It is impossible to

relay in a *Call Sign* report exactly how much this trip means to the children and their carers. London's taxi trade can be proud of the big-hearted cabbies that drive the families on this trip.

The Disney Organising Committee chaired by Phil Davis (F10) are very grateful to everyone who has helped makes this trip possible for the 15th time. The smiles on the faces of the children make it all worthwhile. The diary date for next year is 2nd October...

Sandie Goodwin

TX4 RECALL - LTI GIVE UPDATE

Details as of 28 October 2008

LTI have continued to investigate the under bonnet fires that occurred on early build TX4s. These investigations have provided further insight into the root causes of the fires. Sufficient evidence has been gained for LTI to update the range of solutions designed to stop the type of under bonnet fires that have been experienced in the 12 early build TX4s. These comprise the following:

Replace the Exhaust Gas Recirculation pipe; Install a heat shield over the Exhaust Gas Recirculation pipe; Install a formed steel cover to encase the NVH pad. This will prevent the NVH pad detaching from the bulkhead and provide additional shielding from heat sources in the engine bay; Thoroughly inspect all pipe runs and wiring for evidence of unusual wear and replace as necessary.

The revised rework plan will commence on TX4s from VIN 200540 and LTI has confirmed to the PCO the details of this change point. TX4s with a VIN prior to 200540 were built with a different design of NVH pad and will be subject to the original rework programme, which was due for completion week commencing 27 October 2008. This latest rework programme meets the approval of the Public Carriage Office.

LTI will continue to employ the services of

Sigma who are based at M&O to supplement LTI and M&O personnel and will utilise 30 ramps and an appropriate number of technicians to conduct the rework. Planning and trialling of the process has commenced and LTI are targeting an increased capacity of 300 per week when the process is stable, the technicians are trained and parts supply is able to support this rework rate. LTI will liaise with the PCO over the coming days to finalise the duration of the revised rework plan with which it is anticipated all suspended TX4s will be reworked by **12 November 2008**.

Once the rework has been completed in London the driver will be issued with a certificate, updated from the certificate issued for the original rework, the design and content of which has been agreed with the PCO. The certificate will certify that the rework has been completed to LTI's technical and quality standards.

The revised rework plan will also be implemented in respect of all other TX4s. LTI will continue its efforts to complete the work on all TX4s as quickly as possible and will keep the PCO fully informed of its progress. Now that LTI have further insight and sufficient evidence into the root causes of the fires, LTI can now progress discussions to look at where

responsibility lies for the losses that various parties (including LTI) have suffered. In the event that any person believes that they have suffered loss as a result of the recent events we suggest the following practical actions: -

Record and keep evidence of all losses; do what you can to reduce losses (sharing / hiring a taxi etc); consider who has actually caused the losses to occur; wait until the losses have come to an end (or at least can be determined) before making a claim so that if recoverable, some of the losses are not missed by making a claim too soon.

In any letter of claim, set out in as much detail as possible the following: -

Details of the vehicle affected including the Vehicle Identification Number ("VIN"); the circumstances of the claim (eg date and time the vehicle is alleged to have been out of use, any alleged losses, how they were calculated and documentation in support); servicing history; what efforts were made to minimise losses; receipts of purchase.

Once again LTI would like to thank drivers for their patience during this difficult time and can assure them that all possible progress is being made to get them back to work as soon as possible.

It's tough out there...

As my friends will agree, I'm not usually short of something to say but sometimes find it difficult to think of a topic to write about. My DaCman Glen, in his less kind moments, might say that I am *never* short of something to say. So for a change, I will report on some of Glen's recent reflections on the economic situation and other matters. It may be more correct to describe them as ramblings rather than reflections...

Like many other taxi drivers, he is complaining about the lack of work and tough times out on the streets and often feels free to give me his own analysis, but this really is too grand a word for his thought process. "We've had it pretty good for a while and although it is bad now, it is just part of the usual economic cycle and will pick up again," is one of his comments. Well I just hope that it is not the *Kondratiev cycle*, which lasts from 50 to 60 years.

"Now that the government has spent huge sums helping out banks that are in trouble, perhaps the Treasury can direct funds to taxi drivers who are also feeling the pinch," is one of his wild suggestions. Although most commentators put the blame on lack of regulation and poor banking practice, Glen, in his taxi driver's wisdom, claims that there has been too much regulation, which has caused the problems. To back this up, he draws my attention to a report four years ago that found many poor people were being excluded from the banking system. The government then urged banks to give equal access to everyone and not to close branches in deprived areas. This, says DaCman, would be like the taxi trade

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

Back Seat *Driver*



being told to spend as much time looking for passengers in Peckham as we do in Chelsea, so the fault could be too much, rather than too little government control - and too many directives.

Surely he can see that a large part of the problem stems from the huge greed of the bankers? "Yes," he says and at last we reach a point of agreement. And then he goes and spoils everything. "But I am also greedy; that is why I buy diesel at the cheapest place possible. Other people are also greedy when they choose credit cards offering the best deals, or deposit accounts offering the highest interest rates."

So I ask: "What about the massive bonuses paid to executives, which they keep even if they move to another job before the long term results of their failures can be seen?" He even has an answer to this.

"Well, you could say that a better system

would be not to pay cash bonuses but to give long term stock options based on the share price and profitability of the bank." Yes, I agree, that does sound more sensible - and he then says that this was the type of system in place at Lehman Brothers!

Sometimes I find him so infuriating. "Either earn more or spend less," he glibly says, but if there is no work on the streets or you are in a job where you have been made redundant and have mortgage commitments and children to feed, then his pronouncements provide no comfort and are quite heartless. This is not really the Glen who can be so kind and generous, just his brain suffering from the harsh times out on London's streets.

What he is distinctly short of is a solution to the massive problems, but then he is not that different from many other commentators or politicians. I would like to say that I sympathise with all those drivers and families who are experiencing hardship at the moment (but not if it is because you are spending money on unnecessary items such as bottled water, organic veg, lottery tickets, private school fees or quack homeopathic treatments).

I may even, in the new *make do and mend* atmosphere now sweeping London, go in for do-it-yourself manicures! We women stand by our men in hard times...

Till then...

Love Poppy xxx

We have seen over the past few weeks the state of England go down once again to a country that waits until we are in a crisis before politicians stop fighting at the trough of free gifts and do the job they are paid so handsomely to complete.

At a time when taxi work is rapidly in decline, we have nearly-new taxis bursting into flames. These are taxis that owners need to be fit and on the road for the maximum number of hours, so they can earn a decent wage. These taxis were allowed to catch fire for weeks - if not months - before the makers saw fit to do a recall and try to ascertain what the problem was that endangered the lives of passengers and drivers.

I saw a few of these taxis after they'd burnt out and it sent an ice-cold shiver down my spine when I saw the damage that could be inflicted within minutes - the flame that shot through the dashboard and melted the steering wheel and the immense heat that melted the meter housing so that it dripped molten plastic down onto the driver's seat and armrest.

Even when they were recalling the taxis and rubberstamping their paperwork to allow them to go back on the road, they still didn't know what was causing the problem. So drivers were going back on the road worrying about the lack of work and whether they'd be able to pay their weekly bills, with the added worry of whether their engine would burst into flames.

Then we have drivers who are putting money away each week or month into a pension fund, expecting that when they reach retirement age they will be able to live in a comfortable fashion. But once again the politicians, bankers and city dealers have put paid to that by some decidedly dodgy dealings. We should have seen this coming; how many times have you picked up these dealers from the city or the island, out of their minds on drink (or something else)? These same dealers with their loud mouths and foul language who think that dropping their trousers in the middle of a main road is the height of comedy. These are the people who now want us to feel sorry for them because they have lost their jobs. It's on a par to feeling sorry for some greedy estate agents who have suddenly found it hard to sell one house in two weeks - now it's payback time.

It was only a few weeks ago the government were saying there was no money to be found to help the elderly with heating problems through the winter, or to purchase drugs that could help ease the pain for cancer sufferers.

Strange investing habits?

Yet suddenly, when the friends of politicians are in trouble - those same friends who pump money into the coffers of the political parties - and need bailing out, then money is no object. Billions of pounds are suddenly found, but will that make sure that these bankers become more prudent? Of course not, they will still waste money on far-flung parties. I wonder who will be the next to lose his job, but be given a million pound golden payoff?

Over the past year, have you had occasion

Another batch of views from Tom. These do not necessarily reflect the views of Call Sign or DaC...

The World According to Tom Whitbread



to contact your local council and complain about a service they should have been providing but could not fulfil those obligations due to cutbacks and lack of cash? Then suddenly you read they had thousands, if not millions, tied up in bankrupt Icelandic banks. Perhaps I don't see things as others do, but if the money is from British tax payers, why it is not invested in British banks where it can provide more jobs for British people? Do politicians not realise that the more people you put out of work in England makes less income tax you are able to collect? So if you keep allowing migrants to come into the country, where are you going to find the money to house them, provide them with medical treatment or educate their children?

Due to the problem with the postage of *Call Sign* magazine two months ago, some of you may have missed my suggestions for helping out with the problems we are now encountering.

Get rid of these useless plastic hobby-bobbies and use the money to hire competent typists (not two finger typists who the PC correct idiots say we must employ) to type up the paperwork for serving police officers. The officers would arrest a felon, take them back to the station, dictate his statement and other paperwork to a competent stenographer and the time saving would be enormous. You could then use police officers on light duties to do the interviews and ongoing paperwork. Maybe then we would not need a big advertising campaign to introduce a non-urgent telephone number for the police (0300 123 1212). We already have one. But when you dial 999 and tell the police operator that two thugs are breaking down your front door to

steal property and inside the building are young men and women who could get injured by them, the police turn up 8 hours later. That is after a further telephone call to ask if it is urgent. That is fact.

So why do we as licensed taxi drivers have to suffer, to the point that we do not think that we are getting any protection from the police, banks or politicians? Well it is our own fault because we either voted for the party in power, did not give the party we voted for enough verbal support to convince others of the advantages if they changed their vote, or we were just too lazy to get off our backsides and vote. And if that is the case, then we cannot complain if we are badly treated while we sit around just talking and the PC correct and human rights brigade are out there organising themselves to feather their own nests. They know that if they can bring in stupid new laws and create non-existent jobs, it will take the sensible taxpaying individuals years to overturn them. That's why we're in such a mess!

In the Borough I live, Hackney, we have been told that the European court are not following up on taking shopkeepers to court for using the old, tried and tested pounds and ounces. But Hackney PC workers are still wasting taxpayer's money by taking a Ridley Road stallholder to court for not using the metric system. This is a Borough up to its neck in debt, with a Mayor that swanned off to the Olympics with about 30 of his colleagues just wasting more money. So to try and recoup this waste of money, they have to make up the shortfall. So it's more CCTV cameras and traffic wardens out to catch any taxi driver who might stray into a wrong bus lane or stop to help an elderly disabled passenger into her flat with shopping.

If you believe I shouldn't be voicing my opinions in this taxi driver's magazine, then you are wrong because all these points come back to stopping you earning a decent living for you and your family. You must remember that a licensed taxi is a luxury item to the normal working public, so it is on top of the list for being given the elbow due to lack of money. So when the city dealers who are losing their jobs are gone and their employers are looking to cut back further on expenses, if a private hire company offers them a better deal, they'll take it.

It's no good shouting about how much it

continued on page 29

YELLOW BADGES: THE GAME IS UP!



The game will soon be up for Yellow Badge drivers stealing All-London driver's work

Last month's **Call Sign** broke one of its longest standing rules when it published an anonymous letter. We have always believed that if you want to make a point, then you should have the courage to stand beside it.

Published under the heading of *Yellow Badges Beware*, the letter writer – I now know her name and she is the wife of a long-standing DaC driver – suggested that not only were Yellow Badge drivers working in central London, but that she also knew the details of several of them. I am going to keep both her and her husband's name out of the mag, as I don't know how well she knows the YB drivers. Her legitimate claim is that they are taking our work.

Now she has written to **Call Sign** again and attached a response from Simon Bugey, the PCO's *Senior Driver and Operator Policy Manager*. She told us:

Dear Alan,

Thank you for publishing my letter *Yellow Badges beware*. You were correct in assuming that I know of more than one Yellow Badge driver who is actively working in London. I do, in fact, know of two who work in London 6 nights a week. They boast about their earnings when they are on a south London rank and to add insult to injury, both have SatNavs in the cab so they do not get lost. However, I have not blown the whistle on either of them because I am sure that if they continue, they will get caught in the end. I'm pleased the PCO are taking the problem seriously and looking at other forms of identification so that anyone can distinguish if the driver is a Yellow Badge or a Green Badge. I have also spoken to Bob Oddy of the LTDA, he was advertising in TAXI for new sightings of a Dartford licensed cab that had been seen regularly working in central London.

Mr Oddy confirmed that the PCO / TfL and the police were aware of the Yellow Badge problem and because it was getting worse, they are taking sightings of Yellow Cabs in London more

seriously.

Now you have published my letter, if any Yellow Badge driver that is working in London reads it, they might think twice before going in again and taking rides that are not theirs to take. My advice to yellow badge drivers who want to work in London is to get on your bike, do

the full Knowledge and earn the right to work there.

Simon Bugey then responded:

Dear Mrs *****

The PCO takes the issue of suburban taxi drivers working outside of their licensed area very seriously and any driver caught doing so will have his licence suspended for one month for a first offence, with a longer period of suspension or revocation if he offends again.

However, as I am sure you will appreciate, policing this problem is extremely difficult as it is hard to identify such drivers. We are therefore looking at alternative forms of identification that would make it easier for the public, compliance officers and police alike to know whether the driver is a suburban or All London driver.

If you have specific details of a suburban driver plying for hire outside of his licensed area, please let me know and I will ensure that we act on it or pass the information to the police as appropriate.

Simon Bugey

In Call Sign's view, a suburban driver has no more right to work in central London than a minicab has and as the writer says, the Knowledge of London is available to anyone happy to spend the time doing it. The fact that they drive the same vehicle as us is not relevant. They are not All-London taxi drivers and I support this woman's campaign...

Alan Fisher

The World According To Tom Whitbread *(continued from previous page)*

costs you to run a licensed taxi, some companies could not care less which vehicle it is, so long as it has a wheel on each corner and eventually gets them from A to B.

There are more and more migrants driving private hire cars, these people do not have a decent grasp on the English language, which enables their employers to exploit them by paying meagre wages. If they pay below average wages, then they can go into our clients and give them good rates for journeys.

We used to be regarded as the best in the world at our chosen profession, but now many companies are looking for any way to save money and are not worried about the shortest route or the safety of the vehicle they are travelling in, just that they arrive at a lower price than a taxi. If you are still unsure if this is the case, look which shops are getting more customers - Aldi and Lidl - and see who are losing customers - Marks & Spencer. Others that are thriving are the £ shops and in Dalston we even have a 98p shop! These

always have a steady stream of customers.

So don't just think of today, as taxi drivers have been doing for years, burying their heads in the sand and saying don't worry it will just go away. No, it won't! You only get back what you put in, so without your input to make officials do what you want and to stop them wasting your hard earned cash, make your voice heard.

Will any of the garages start to drop their prices as drivers extend the length of time between services and hold onto small repair jobs? No, the big garages are still looking at £120 an hour labour charges - and that includes the mechanic's tea break!

Theatre tickets

The only good news I've been given over the past few weeks is that some of the theatres have been offering Dial-a-Cab taxi drivers free seats to some of the best shows in town. As I have said before, these seats can have a value of £50 or more. But of course you still get the greedy ones. These drivers go in and try to grab as many tick-

ets as possible to take aunts, uncles and neighbours, thus depriving other hard working taxi drivers of a free night out. And of course those aunts, uncles and neighbours are not going to tell passengers and visitors to London if a current show is good or bad. So the show does not get the audience it should and closes. The fallout is that you do not get the passengers coming out of that theatre OR any free tickets.

This is exactly what I was saying earlier in this article; the greedy driver's motto of grab what you can and pull up the ladder because I'm alright. Those drivers do not think of the future, it was exactly the same when minicabs were first introduced and it is those same drivers who today claim that minicabs are stealing our work. No, no, no! It is the taxi trade who did not want to do the bread and butter work over the past twenty years that lets private hire thrive.

Have a good month and I hope you earn enough to cover all of your bills.

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member

Alan Jones (R40) has been on Dial-a-Cab for more years than he cares to remember – so much so that he is remembered more for the habit of shouting his callsign down the microphone in the days of voice, rather than whispering a gentle hello as befitted the gentleman's circuit!

But now, in the days of data transmission where silence in the cab comes along with the territory, Alan once again had reason to shout when telling **Call Sign**: "RED 40! My daughter's getting married!"

After settling back down in his cab seat, he told us of his pride at seeing his gorgeous daughter Nicky walking down the aisle when marrying new hubby John Richards.

"The day went unbelievably well," Nicky added. "It was just so special to have my dad, who I love with all my heart, by my side. I was so proud! We also used one of the lovely **London Legend** Limousine Taxis that advertised in **Call Sign** and that helped the day go so magically.

Much of that was thanks to all the love and support that mum and dad have

RED 40! My Daughter's Getting Married!



Nicky looking stunning with dad Alan
Inset: Nicky and John along with mum and dad



organisation of the wedding. I feel so lucky..."

To Nicky and John Richards and of course the RED 40 family, we send our congratulations...

MERCS: CALL SIGN WAS RIGHT!

In Berkeley Square recently, I saw this PH vehicle complete with roundel in the rear window and an identical looking flash along the side to that the Merc taxi has – except that it read Eurocab.

The driver saw me taking the photo and called out to me. He had both thumbs up and said: "We all look the same now!"

The **Call Sign** Editor said they would end up being confused with taxis and I fear he was right...

John Hudson (W34)



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W101 debate goes on...



Pat Keefe

Two months back, long-time Dial-a-Cab driver **Pat Keefe (G01)** – who has been with the circuit since 1972 - told **Call Sign** readers that he believed DaC should stop using W101 as a calling point for Mayfair work, as the rank involved – that of the *Edwardian Radisson Mayfair* in Stratton Street – meant 'putting on' at a hotel that Pat (and others since) claimed were selling airport trips to the highest bidders. Even worse perhaps was the fact that while most of those "bidders" were cars, some licensed taxis were also paying to jump the rank. Memories of the infamous "Cumberland Willie" came flooding back! Keith Cain took Pat's suggestion to a Board meeting and the rank was disbanded soon after.

Then last month, **John Smithen (C03)** entered the debate with what many considered a shocking turn of events. His suggestion was to contact the hotel, explain our concerns and offer to improve on the deal they had with the cars? We took that as offering to pay commission for jobs. He added that it was better than driving around empty.

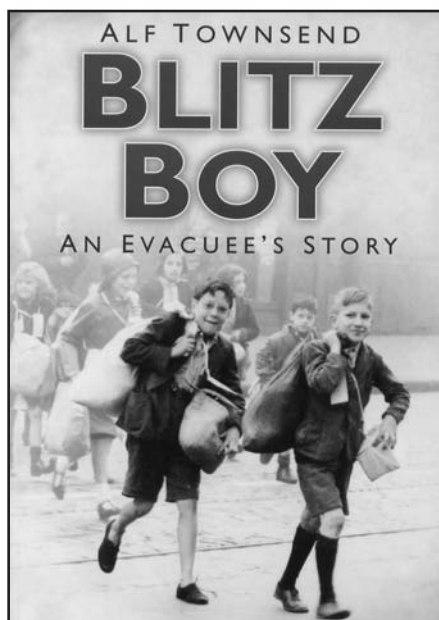
Now Pat Keefe has come back and has told **Call Sign**: "Firstly I would like to thank the Editor for reprinting my letter in part in October's **Call Sign** as I understand that some members did not receive September's copy due to the Post Office error in advising the wrong postage. Secondly, a big thank you to the BoM who acted as fast as they did - not wanting to be seen as supporting a "bent" hotel so far as taxis are concerned. Allan Evans, as well as being a Board member and working cab driver, gave a good summing-up of the situation when he said that as a driver himself, he was happy to take the rough with the smooth, but would not be taken for a fool.

This is the view that I hope is taken by the vast majority of DaC drivers, but there's always the exception. In last month's *Mailshot* pages, we had a view expressed by John Smithen that said if we couldn't beat em... we should join em! Well John, I'm glad we have a forum such as **Call Sign**, with an editor who lets anyone write in with differing views so long as they are prepared to put name and call sign at the bottom of the page.

I do happen to know how much the PHVs and our own fraternity are paying at this hotel, but I do not want it to go into print, as quite honestly the amounts are embarrassing. So to John and anyone else who thinks it's worth paying exorbitant commission to do what is rightfully our own work, please don't do it while your fellow DaC drivers are sitting on any ranks. You may think some of us are stupid some of the time, but were not all stupid all of the time...

Pat Keefe (G01)

BLITZ BOY



Former Dial-a-Cab driver **Alf Townsend** seems to have crossed the huge divide from being a one-trip pony to a writer capable of getting books published on a regular basis.

His third effort, **Blitz Boy (The History Press £12.99)** leaves the cab trade far behind and takes a look at Alf's life as a youngster during the second world war, when along with thousands of other children he faced evacuation to a part of the country perceived as being safer than war-torn London. In Alf's case, that was out to Penryn in Cornwall.

Many who went through the evacuation program, such as former DaC driver and **Call Sign** writer Sam Harris, had happy memories of their time with the family they had been evacuated to. Alf Townsend's experience was the opposite, with his foster mother beating Alf regularly and addressing him throughout his stay as "you boy" - hardly giving him a feeling of being wanted. She made it very clear that it was the 8s:3d (41p) a week that was keeping him there.

Eventually Alf moves on and is reunited with his mother, although they stay in the west by moving to Newquay.

This isn't a book about the war, it's about a young London kid who isn't as dumb as some might have thought. Much of it is entertaining as he gets into scraps with the local yobbos as he shows them that because he was evacuated, that didn't make him soft!

A large section of the book also looks at life back in the capital after his return. It must have been a shock to most adults let alone a kid to see the war-ravaged city that once had been so full of life – especially as he had also become used to living by the seaside.

Alf's friendly writing style makes *Blitz Boy* a nice read. Perhaps in an age of digital photography, more of an effort to sharpen the many photos might have been made, but it does succeed in taking the reader back to the war torn Britain of the 1940s..

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Last month's **Call Sign** told the astonishing story of the PCN DaC driver **John Shakeshaft (P52)** received in Moscow Road, W2. The document contained the usual stills, which indisputably showed John's taxi parked on a double yellow line. What the stills didn't show was the fact that a passenger was getting out and two others getting in! Fortunately there was a 90 second CCTV clip available that showed the passenger movements.

John showed the document to us, we watched the CCTV and contacted **Westminster Parking Services** complaining on behalf of John. The PCN was cancelled almost immediately.

Then just a few days after the issue came out, yet another DaC driver - **Will Jones (B38)** - sent us a copy of a PCN he received in the same area - this time round the corner in Westbourne Grove.

He had brought his passenger from Heathrow but as he stopped to drop him off, he said he only had Euros. Before Will could say he'd stop outside a cash machine, the passenger had bounded across the road after spotting an ATM on the other side. Whilst Will was ok to set down where he was, there was no waiting but Will had no choice other than to wait for the returning passenger. That was shown on the CCTV as being under 3 minutes later.

In the meantime, the heavens had opened and as Will's passenger returned, he jumped back into the cab and asked to be taken the

Ridiculous PCNS - How Many More...?



Will Jones

few hundred meters to his door. The CCTV shows the passenger jumping straight back into the passenger compartment, so it was obviously the same person.

Yet the Westminster CCTV operator felt that Will's action as a licensed taxi driver deserved a PCN. Like the John Shakeshaft CCTV footage, there is no doubt that the camera was

being manually controlled.

The spokesperson at Westminster told **Call Sign**: "Our policy is two minutes observation by a camera unless we see evidence of setting down, when we give five minutes to complete."

Yet the person we spoke to maintained that he could see why the ticket was issued although he did agree to cancel the PCN. We have since spoken to the person at the top and he has agreed that **Call Sign** can spend some time in a Westminster CCTV centre where we can watch and see why CCTV operators believe taxi drivers are incorrect in stopping. We'll be looking to see if they give PCNs to buses if the passenger takes too long to get off!

Our report will appear in a future **Call Sign**. In the meantime, please do not send PCNs to us. If you believe a PCN has been incorrectly issued, appeal, then appeal again and if necessary and you believe you are right, take it all the way to the Haymarket and the Arbitration service, as more and more drivers are doing. Read Martin Hizer's Arbitration report in this issue...

Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund

Some dinner and dance tickets still available...

Dear Friends

Have a treat before Christmas and help raise money for those less fortunate than ourselves. We are the only charity in the Taxi trade that supports quite a few other taxi charities and we have always tried to give them as much money as we can. We understand times are hard, but if you think how much it costs you to have an evening out, then you will see our dinner will be a big treat.

So this is just a reminder that there are some tickets left for the charity's **annual dinner dance**, on **29th November 2008 at The Crowne Plaza Docklands**. We are also pleased to say that we have been given free parking.

Tickets are £60 each; this includes a complimentary drink on arrival, four-course meal and half a bottle of wine per person. There's dancing to a live band and great prizes to be won.

Remember, all money raised will be donated on the night to the Taxi Charities listed below.

So don't be the one to miss out on a great evening. Contact me at the above address...

Best wishes

Russell Poluck MBE (T55)

Hon Chairman
**'5 St Brides Avenue Edgware
Middlesex HA8 6BT: Tel/Fax: 020 8952
1357
Mobile: 07850 056 765: Email: brussel-
la@talk21.com**

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These charities will benefit: The Albany Taxi Charity Fund for Children with special needs, The London Taxi Fund for Underprivileged Children, The Southend Taxi Fund for Underprivileged Children, The London Taxi Fund for War Disabled and The East London Cabbies Outing...

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Clacton + ref dump BG out of FA Vase!

Clacton 4 Bedfont Green 1



Lee just fails to get to the penalty

Dial-a-Cab driver and Bedfont Green goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, says it was one of the most uncomfortable grounds he has ever played at – almost sending a shiver through him!

"I'm used to hearing the occasional swear word," he told **Call Sign**, "in fact if you can't take it, then you're in the wrong business! But this was over and above anything I had heard before. I was pleased to get away from there, but sad that we are now out of the FA Vase."

Clacton, cheered on by a large crowd took the lead after just 2 minutes with their first counter-attack. Then on the quarter hour, **Lee Pearce** made a great save to parry the ball skywards. There appeared to be no jostling but the referee blew his whistle and awarded a phantom penalty that was just out of reach of Lee's diving hand to make it 2-0. The referee appeared to let the minority of jobs in the crowd make his decisions for him and duly booked BG players at their demand! The second half saw a Clacton freekick fired into the far top corner. The quality of strike, however, was marred by the fact that a Clacton player in the wall decided to grab **Lee Morley's** wedding tackle as the free kick was taken! Morley immediately protested to the referee - who instantly showed him a red card! A BG penalty from **Jon-Barrie Bates** narrowed the scoreline before Clacton scored a flattering fourth.

Better news; a 5 – 2 win over Ash Utd on 28 October took BG up to second in the league just one point behind the leaders. Looks like promotion is a good possibility...

Report and pic: Stewart Cook

DaC driver Steve Shaller (R75) wonders aloud...

SO JUST WHO IS A PROFESSIONAL?

I have been a Licensed London Taxi Driver for almost 38 Years and on Dial-a-Cab since 1979, all but for two years. Moreover, I have also been CRB cleared. This led me to believe that I was – and am – a professional.

But recently I countersigned a photograph for a friend who was applying for a passport renewal on which the Home Office – who run the Passport Office – stated that Licensed London Taxi Drivers are NOT professionals.

So the question must be just exactly who are the "professionals?"

I went onto the internet and did some research into this one and got some amazing results. There are some fifty professions accepted by the Passport Office. Taxi drivers, as I have said, are notably absent. Would you believe the list includes chiropodists, insurance agents, park attendants (including the ones who have a torch in one hand and a joint in the other), travel agents and my favourite, photographers – even the ones who shoot page 3 girls! These are all among those accepted as professionals?

Brian Rice, the Chairman of our Society, when he states his position would qualify as a Professional. The very same person, if he were not Chairman but a mere cab driver,



ver, would not. Can it get more absurd!

We have cab drivers that have been honoured by the Queen with the MBE, OBE and BEM etc. They are, nevertheless, just taxi drivers. Would they be any less respectable or professional had these honours not been bestowed upon them?

The sad truth is that taxi drivers do not speak with plums in their mouths and were – most of us anyway – born within the sound of Bow Bells. They do not, however, have their snouts in the trough, nor refer to their mates as my honourable friend. Moreover, you would be pushed to find cab drivers who have achieved the level of sexual or financial notoriety that some of our more "distinguished" professionals have.

I believe the time has come for our trade to be "professionalised." That way, when a taxi driver achieves his bill or license, he automatically becomes a professional. May I suggest the IOKAT: The Institute of Knowledge and Topography?

And a PS to any cab driver who is wondering whether a lady who rents out her charms – ie a brass – is a professional, the answer is no...!

Steve Shaller (Red 75)

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The Heritage Motor Museum at Gaydon

What on earth does a motor museum on the M40, just a few miles south of Coventry, have to do with London taxis? Well more than you might imagine at first...

We all know that Coventry has long been the place where the factory that manufactures London's unique, purpose built PCO specification taxis, is situated. They began with the FX3 and followed up with the FX4 and its variants. Up to the time of writing, the TX1, TX2 and TX4 have followed along. The company has changed its name over the years; firstly known as Carbodies, then London Taxis International - all the while owned by Manganese Bronze Holdings plc. However the factory is still in Holyhead Road, Coventry, just before the Alvis Bridge - another name from the past.

Once in the **Heritage Motor Centre**, dedicated to British motor industry products - and believe it or not there still is a British motor industry even if it is for the most part now owned by Japanese, German and American companies - you will find an LTI TX1 on display as a London taxi. This has no meter or any form of plate and though it is a TX1, it somehow looks like a sad replica rather than the real thing.

Yet I can remember a good few years ago being invited there by LTI to the launch of an FX4 variant - I think it was an update of the Fairway series - when also on display was the Lucas electric taxi prototype, a pre-World War 2 Morris saloon that had been used as a taxi

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

FIFTY GREEN YEARS...

complete with roof mounted illuminated sign, a Bell Punch clockwork taximeter, as well as a Morris Oxford and an FX2 Hire car - the 'civilian' version of the FX3 complete with a door closing off the otherwise open luggage bay. All these have gone from the display. I was told that many of the former exhibits had been sold or stored to make room for other cars and conference facilities.

Is the Heritage Motor Centre worth a visit all the way from London? Well I'm sorry to say not really, even though the café serves large portions of good food; the gift shop has a few bargains and the staff are very helpful. For my money the Motor Museum in Coventry is far better with a wider range of exhibits. But neither compare to Beaulieu in the New Forest, which has the added advantage that it is also near



The Bell Punch taximeter

to the sandy beaches of the south coast.

Finally, as a former ODRTS driver, the message is always the same; keep your radio on, even though the work is not what it has been, you never know when you are going to get that extra special, good ride that only seems to me to exist on the radio.

Be lucky, and be careful...

Sunset Strip

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

CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



Good news came through in the past few weeks; the fine wines that I have recently started to import has been awarded a certificate from the French authorities declaring that it is 'organic'. The certificate declares 'Vin Issu de L'Agriculture Biologique - certifié ECOCERT'. And that is a right result because I know just how expensive a bottle of organic wine can be in supermarkets and I can import 3 types of organic wine to the UK to sell at a much cheaper price than the supermarket chains and independent off licences!

Here is a brief description of the 3 wines:

Domaine Red - Traditional full-bodied 100% syrah accompanies red meat, but its strength is particularly suited to game;

Trobadour - This light bodied fruity red wine is ideal to accompany poultry, or Asian or Oriental cuisine, or enjoyed as an aperitif. This one is best slightly chilled to

enhance flavour;

Domaine White - This medium-sweet wine can be enjoyed with Thai or Chinese cuisine and is a superb dessert wine, but of course it can also be enjoyed as an aperitif.

The really good thing about the wine being organic is that there is so much information available on the internet these days about the health advantages of consuming organic produce, that it really sells itself.

The biggest study into organic food and drink taken recently by Professor Carlo Leifart, the co-ordinator of the European Union-founded project, has found that it is more nutritious than ordinary produce and may help to lengthen people's lives.

The study found that organic produce contained as much as 40% more antioxidants, which scientists believe can cut the risk of cancer and heart disease, the UK's biggest killers. They also had higher

levels of beneficial minerals such as iron and zinc.

Well, if that doesn't help to sell our wine, then how about this - all the above 3 wines are available from me in mid-November for half the price you would expect to pay in your local supermarket!

I shall be setting up a few 'pick up points' in the City and West End in November and December, so if you would like a more healthy option with your Christmas lunch this year, send me an email to:

woodford19@btinternet.com for more details and to arrange collection.

Hic!

Be lucky, be careful et à bientôt...

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

Last months **Call Sign** ran an article that asked serious questions of the taxi lost property system. It began by explaining how Dial-a-Cab driver **Stanley Roth (Y53)** had handed in a wallet containing £345 he had found in the back of his taxi to a London police station. Not having received a reward by the last day of April, he correctly assumed that the wallet had not been claimed by the owner and had legally become his. But it had gone missing from the police station...

He naturally complained and the police launched an investigation, which they claimed was hampered due to the length of time that had elapsed and that the CCTV pictures had been deleted. They also said that items they would have expected to locate, they were unable to, as they had apparently been removed. These included the original entry into the lost property book that recorded Stanley as handing the wallet in. Fortunately, Stanley still had his original copy and added how "convenient" it was that all the relevant records had disappeared, along with the CCTV pictures. Stanley ended by asking what incentive there was to be honest?

Now a high level police officer has responded. She told Stanley:

"I appreciate your views in respect of the loss of the money, but would state that the

HOW SAFE IS THE TAXI LOST PROPERTY SYSTEM?

The Metropolitan Police Service respond...



Stanley Roth

MPS have not tried to 'wipe their hands' of the matter. A criminal and misconduct investigation has been undertaken to detect any wrongdoing. I would agree that it is unfortunate we have been unable to substantiate that

a theft has occurred. An officer has been disciplined in respect of record keeping and conducting property checks, but there simply is insufficient evidence to prove a case of theft against any one person. I can assure you that a full and transparent investigation was undertaken and agree that the conclusion is somewhat frustrating.

Although my enquiries have now concluded, I consider that owing to the nature of the circumstances of this case, that the details including your letter should be sent to the Superintendent at the original police station for further consideration as to any additional action he may wish to take."

Perhaps **Call Sign** has got it wrong, but had it been the other way round, wouldn't the PCO have then been involved? Perhaps they should act on Stanley's behalf and insist that someone from the MPS should pay Stanley the £345 that is now rightfully his...?

Never happier than when having a moan, Chas Kissin has...

AN OCCASIONAL CHAS GRUMP

By the time you read this, we could be over the credit crunch, still with it, deep into recession, just going into it - and possibly freezing our nuts off or frying to a frazzle due to climate change!

The truth is that not all the experts agree with each other. Like most of you, the only university I attended - and still do - is the University of Life and as such feel qualified to throw in my tuppence worth into the pot. Those of you who read my original columns know my thoughts on global warming already and I'm at present buying up all the 60-watt clear light bulbs that I can find. In addition, when the harshness of winter sets in, I will not be wearing an extra jumper and turning down the central heating. We, as human beings and top of the food chain, are more important than the polar bear, whose only job is to sit on top of a *Fox's Glacier Mint*.

As for the financial situation we find ourselves in, this in my opinion, is due to the greed of the bankers. I bet you thought banks were somewhere to keep your money and if possible to borrow from. Wrong! They are a business with shareholders, whom they are answerable to if they don't make a profit. The investment banks are like book-makers - and playing with your money. They are betting long or short term, using your money and hoping to sell any losses on to another institute. And still they make money.

At one time in the 1980s, there was a thing called the *Mexican Debt*, which was sold on and on, yet the debt was never repaid or diminished. In the 18th century, there was the scheme known as the *South Sea Bubble* where speculators bought shares in the company, but eventually there were so many shares they became worthless. Eventually the bubble burst and people went broke overnight.

Much the same happened in the early 1990s with a golden chain letter being sold on. The idea was simple. An investment of £10 could net you £10,000. All you had to do was sell a list on to two people, add your name and send the £10 to the person at the top of the list. Eventually, half the country was left trying to sell the list to the other half. The originators earned money - the majority of "investors" still have the list tucked away somewhere.

And so history repeats itself, with the *sub prime* mortgage fiasco; this time taking not just the man in the street but large banking institutions as well. The city whizz kids here and on Wall St, sold mortgages to all and sundry, even offering 120% of the value of the property. Who would not be tempted? But when the repayments were not met, the banks did no more than package them up neatly and sell them on to other institutions. It was the *South Sea Bubble* all over again. Property they did not own, with money that was not theirs, just a box of smoke and mirrors. And so, like Humpty Dumpty, they came tumbling down. But this time we are all affected in some way.

History has a way of repeating itself in one way or another, and if we are still here, the world having neither frozen, flooded or burnt to a frazzle by 2030, it will all happen again...

Chas Kissin (P99J)



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at - callsignmag@aol.com**

TX4 or Merc?

I picked up the *Call Sign* you left in the office for me. Cheers! The one you sent is still languishing deep in the bowls of the post office in Hornchurch, after they refused to deliver it because there was not enough postage on it, although they delivered the little card to tell me I could collect it! Work that one out.

Anyway, are you still getting a TX4 after the problems with the early (56) model? I think it's absolutely scandalous that drivers could lose everything they have worked for because, once again, LTI have messed up big time. I drive an 04 TX2, which has been a brilliant cab. The few faults I had were soon rectified by KPM, however friends I know who have a TX4 would gladly watch them catch fire and immediately call the fire brigade after they've burnt out!

So the Mercedes Vito looks like a van, but how long can the trade keep being sold lame ducks by LTI? The charges for some services on the TX4 are £400 and £500, which is scandalous in my opinion. So it may be that now is the time to give the Merc a go, what with its cheaper running costs, servicing and better mpg. It could actually save the London trade from dying under a mountain of debt brought on by a poor vehicle. The only thing is the price - £35,800, about the same as a gold spec TX4. I wonder where that figure was worked out - in Bethnal Green or Coventry!

Terry Wright (P39)

I don't believe I've ever heard of Mercedes servicing being described as cheap! ...Ed

Engine league table?

I was interested to read your opinion on the new Mercedes Taxi. I would like to offer a different view. Up until about six years ago the cab trade had a very good Nissan engine. After introducing the TX2 Ford engine and telling us that they will be in taxis for the next ten years, within a few years they had changed it for an Italian engine, which I've no doubt no one in Italy has ever heard of! Italian cars are known for their looks and speed, not for their reliability. I am a *Which* Magazine subscriber and the Italian makes are always near the bottom of any league table with the Japanese makes always top. I understand that you don't like the look of the Mercedes cab, but what I want to know is why should taxi drivers spend £35,000 on a vehicle with an unproven engine, rather than a tried and tested one?

It seems to me that LTI will not learn their lessons; they are getting ready to give us an electric taxi in combination with another obscure company as well as a

Hydrogen taxi in four years time. Recently I was in a Toyota Prius. This vehicle does about fifty miles to the gallon and as yet Toyota have had not one single incident of a battery failing in the UK. Why LTI would never consider this type of engine is beyond me. I will be interested in your comments on the matter.

Nicholas Fielding (O52)

Thanks for your letter Nicholas. I cannot give authoritative comments as my knowledge on engines is rather limited. As Editor of Call Sign, I can but give my views - the prime one being as you've stated, that I do not want to drive a taxi that can be easily mistaken for a minicab. Other than that, I remember hearing that the TX4 engine was also matched to a Chrysler 5 speed auto gearbox - hardly an unknown company! I also believe that so far as the Ford Duratorq engine was concerned, that wasn't down to the performance of the TX2, but more towards the way Ford saw their side of the contract.

So far as the TX4E and hydrogen cabs are concerned, I think we have to understand that the numbers involved are very small, so fitting them to a taxi body might not be that easy and could well frighten off many companies already operating in that field ...Ed

TX4 fires - a letter to my MP (from Barry Spear Y16)

Dear Mr Hurd.

I am a licensed taxi driver and I want to explain the current situation I am in. I own a TX4 taxi, which is only 20 months old and still under warranty. Back in June, one of these vehicles was destroyed by fire. Since then at least 6 more have been destroyed by fire and the news has finally reached the media.

The Public Carriage Office ordered TX4s with VIN numbers between 200000 and 200500 to be checked by the manufacturers, London Taxi International. My taxi, like many others, was checked last Thursday or Friday and given a clean bill of health with the service record book being stamped as proof. At 8pm last Friday, the PCO took the step of taking all 56 registered TX4s off the road. The reason for this being that the manufacturers could not give them assurances that they knew how the fires had started. This in my view is like the CAA asking Boeing for an assurance that one of their planes would never crash. To date, I have not received any correspondence from the PCO and any facts I have found out are from the media and third parties. I would like to ask why this was not investigated when the first cab was destroyed? As a result, I have been unable to work for 3 days and due to the number of drivers affected, it is impossible to hire another cab. I believe that the



PCO and TFL have over reacted because when the bendy buses were going up in flames, they were not taken off the road even though there could have been 100 people on the vehicle.

Even today, drivers ringing the PCO were told that if their cab was checked last week they were able to continue working by uninformed members of staff. Insurance companies are telling drivers their insurance is invalid for hire and reward.

The PCO in my view is full of Red Ken's cronies and Mr Johnson should review this department of TFL and heads should roll.

Today was the first time in my 38 years of working that I had no job to attend. My pride has taken a setback in the last few days, but as you can see from this letter I will not bow down to the cronies of the PCO. I will expect compensation from TFL or LTI because whilst 1000 cabs are off the road, the minicab touts and rickshaws will be thriving with no enforcement from the powers to be. I hope you can look into this matter with the utmost urgency.

Barry Spear

Barry's MP is Nick Hurd (Ruislip - Northwood) ...Ed

Who knows what?

I am the owner of one of the currently suspended 56's. Can you could help me? I know you have a lot of connections within the trade and hear much of the news. Obviously there is a long way to go before this latest situation is resolved, but it now feels particularly difficult to obtain true information regarding the cause and rectification of the problems affecting the TX4. Do you know now of any drivers that have organised any sort of group to try to get to the truth of the problems? Or individuals who may know more than LTI are letting on or even have inside info yourself? If you do, I'd be very glad if you could let me know.

I used to say that my cab went like a rocket. It seems more apt to say like a Hindenberg air ship now!

Paul Willett (V12)

I know what you mean Paul and by now you will have heard of any such groups in addition to having had your cab fixed. But in the same vein, I must emphasise that any group contemplating legal action could be placing all TX4 drivers in a terrible position and I don't think I would want to be part of that. That isn't to say that they should not be compensated, but taking a risk of putting a company out of business would not help those with a warrantee that suddenly became useless ...Ed

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So what was it all about?

Re the problems with 56 reg TX4s; at first a message went out on our screens saying 56 plate TX4s were being suspended because LTI couldn't locate the cause. We on DaC are lucky because we get messages on our screens, but that night I saw about ten 56 plate TX4s driving around. I don't believe for one moment these drivers would risk their Bills by driving the cab if it had been suspended, so I had to assume they were unaware of the situation. I pulled up beside one and asked the driver if he had heard? His reply was that he had not been informed by the PCO, TfL or LTI to take his cab in or ordered off the road. He said it was taxed, insured and plated by the PCO and as a result he believed he was legally allowed to ply for hire until informed by any of them. He said he would keep working, to which I totally agreed with him. He also said the only people telling him what to do were other cabbies and that they were just rumours and hearsay until he heard something official. Again I agreed with him.

But what really worried me was the 56 plate bit; an 07 plate could also have been affected because as you know, the number plate only relates to when it was registered with DVLA and an 07 plate could quite possibly have been made before one of the unlucky 56 plate ones, yet registered with DVLA later in the 12 month period. I know that can happen because my last TX2 was bought and registered in late Feb 2003, but was a 52 reg. Had I chosen to wait 10 more days, I would have had the same cab I ordered but it would have been a 03 plate! I now have a 57 plate and on the Friday received a letter from LTI with an updated insert for my owner's manual. This gave updated instructions regarding the recent fires and the fuel filter. So why were they sending this to 57 plate holders if, as they claim, it's only 56 TX4s that are at risk? So Alan, could we be facing a complete recall of all TX4s? Also is the trade, TfL, PCO, LTI doing enough to alert all drivers?

On Friday 26th September, rumours were bouncing around about the entire TX4 range being taken off the road if a cause could not be found and then on BBC radio news they reported that a further 1000 TX4s were to be suspended. I listened to the M&O recorded message but to be honest, unless I heard it wrong, it sounded as though they still hadn't found a direct cause but were modifying parts, adding heat shields, replacing materials and checking for pipes that may be damaged. OK, but that is no consolation for the 100s of drivers who have faced money worries.

What I find most concerning is this fire suppression system. Is this just a glorified word for a fire extinguisher and if so, this to me indicates LTI are still worried - despite all their refits - that fires are still possible. Are all TX4s

going to be fitted or just the current suspended ones?

If all TX4s are to be fitted, then what's so wrong that the engines have to be protected by an extinguisher when TX2s, TX1s, Fairways, Metros and Vito's don't? And if the public get word, are they going to think twice about getting into a TX4? Looking at the way this problem has been dealt with, I feel so sorry for the affected drivers and it would be interesting to see over the past few weeks how the sales numbers of the TX4 went as compared to a Vito.

In January this year, I wrote to *Call Sign* about my TX4's problems and stated then that the Italian army and Islington Council had allegedly cancelled their contracts to have VM engines. Did they know something LTI didn't? I guess we will never know...

Michael Beevor (N76)

Hi Mike, with regards to the fire suppression system, I don't believe that this is being fitted because they expect more fires, but purely as an added safety feature to add confidence to a vehicle that must be quite short of that commodity at the moment. After all, if you bought a Daimler and was told it had a safety feature such as that, you'd be pleased. However, reading the latest LTI info (P27) I'm not sure that the fire suppression system is still to be fitted to later models.

And yes, all TX4's will have the work done, but not be taken off the road...Ed

How much longer?

I am finding it impossible to get any news from M&O about where I am on the VIN list. I have this morning discovered two garages that have jumped the VIN queue, claiming they *supposedly* offered their cabs as guinea pigs. But they would say that wouldn't they? One fleet owner also told me that the engine has to come out in a 9-hour operation per cab.

Knowing what sort of delay to expect is imperative to drivers. Also you may want to warn drivers who may be tempted by any solicitors offering to represent them in class actions or the like for reparation on a *No win No fee* basis. It is likely that the firms require drivers to sign a contingency fee agreement, which normally works out at a 35% cut of any settlement.

After three weeks plus of being without a cab, I have just found one from a garage that apparently *jumped* the queue to get their TX4s back on the road. I have e-mailed and phoned LTI without success or response about their lack of an up-to-date briefing. Do you have any clout?

Jon Tremlett (Y32)

Jon's letter is one of many I have received on the subject. My view of the situation as it stood on October 21 is in my Editorial. You can read their latest update as of October 28 on page 27 ...Ed



Waiting for passengers

Could someone in authority please answer a couple of questions for me. Firstly can you tell me what is the maximum time that I am compelled to have to wait for an account passenger? And secondly, if I accept an account trip with a stated destination and the destination changes to one that doesn't suit for any reason prior to the POB being pressed, can I have the trip recovered and redispached with the correct destination? Definitive answers to both these questions would be appreciated.

Stephen Gander (V20)

Allan Evans responds: Hi Steve, as a rule a driver would be asked to wait for an hour before requesting to be removed from the account trip he has accepted (although there may be extenuating circumstances that would obviously be taken into account). It is then that the trip will be recovered and only when the replacement taxi arrives would the original taxi be cancelled. If a driver accepts a trip and the destination was completely different or in a different direction from the offer, the driver may request that the trip is reallocated should he not be in a position to complete the job.

No U-turn in Southampton Row and Call Sign

I recently received a PCN in respect of my doing a U-turn in Southampton Row and I have to ask why the PCO require us to have a vehicle which can perform U-turns when organisations like Camden Council introduce random regulations like this one, which penalise us when we make one?

Anyway, I digress. I could see no way out of paying the fine, but on the very next day I received my copy of *Call Sign*. In this issue you had an article on this very subject in which you described how several drivers had appealed the offence on the basis of poor signage and their PCN's were subsequently cancelled. I therefore appealed on the same basis and lo and behold my PCN was also cancelled. I write therefore to thank you and all concerned for saving me £60.

Mike Holleyoake (M06)

Pleased to be of service Mike. You can read the advice of a solicitor in this issue in Ask Gary ...Ed

W101...

Some time ago W101 was disbanded after 8pm. I thought this was due to drivers wanting Lazard work later in the evening without the risk of taking a 'walk up' off the rank. It

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was then disbanded altogether. The answer was revealed in last month's *Call Sign*. I was reading the article whilst on W101 when I was hailed by the doorman with a LAP T3 (not all bad). This rank was very useful in taking a short cut to a Berkeley or Stratton Street job, the same as EC11 EC9 EC10 etc. It seems like one person complaining brought about this change. I would like to suggest that W101 be resurrected to be in force from 10am to 10pm.

Alan Nash (A95)

Alan, I have to assume there were no cars about! ...Ed

And more...

John Smithen (C03), writing about the former Mayfair hotel in Stratton St in the *October Mailshot*, has got it wrong. I was ranked up there about 10 weeks ago with 3 other Dial-a-Cab drivers and one ComCab driver. The doorman, a chap in a bowler hat named Nuno, came up to all of us one by one and asked if we would "give him money for an airport job." When the last one of us had stood firm and said no, he went back to the hotel, got the passenger and the cases, hailed a cab off the street and negotiated with him. He then put the cases in and the cab drove off. When I challenged him about it, his words were: "I did not see you or any other cabs on the rank." John Smithen seems to think its ok to pay for work, but don't we pay enough already? It starts off at a fiver, then rises to six quid. Mr Smithen decides he doesn't want to pay six quid so it goes to bloke who will and we are back to where we started.

Incidentally, the Marriott, Swiss Cottage also puts any long job into PH. Even if they just walk up to the reception and ask for a taxi, they get them to wait while they phone for one, even with a full rank of licensed cabs sitting outside. I recently emailed the Front of House Manager and apparently: "Taxis and PH work seamlessly together at this hotel." I don't know about seamless, but they now see-less of me as I don't put on or pick up from there anymore either!

Mickey Lappin (E46)

I'm with you Mickey; I refuse to pay for doing my job ...Ed

Three-hour read!

My *Call Sign* arrived on 1 October and because it was the Jewish New Year and I wasn't working, I just sat down and read the magazine from cover to cover – the first time I have ever done it all at once! It took me three hours and made me wonder how you do it and also drive a cab? It made excellent, entertaining reading, but even more amazing was the fact that for a monthly magazine, you even scooped TAXI (which came out at the same time) with news that the TX4 fire problems had been sorted and that upgrades were about to start.

In future I will ask my wife if I can take an extra day off in order to just sit down and read *Call Sign*! Mind you, I know what she will say!

Sid Nathan (K88)

Thanks Sid. Your sentiments are appreciated ...Ed

Aubrey's birthday...

Many thanks for your kind mention in September's *Call Sign Flashback* and birthday article in the October issue (*Aubrey hits eighty*). Although rather embarrassing, the sentiments are greatly appreciated. I cannot think where all the time has gone since I was a young buck joining ODRTS. Time does go so quickly when you are having fun - at least some of the time! Hitting eighty? I believe it is the only time I have ever hit anyone! How you knew the exact date of my birthday, I do not know. I still have many friends at Dial-a-Cab and my good wishes go out to all the drivers, staff and management.

Aubrey Siteman

Barkingside, Essex

Hope you had a lovely birthday Aubrey ...Ed

Speeding in the fog...

I read the article in the October *Call Sign* re DaC driver **Alex Laird (O64)** who was involved in an accident in the fog. He has left me feeling truly amazed. By his own admission it was very foggy and visibility was compromised, yet unless there was a printing error, his speed was in the region of 40mph!

With the *Highway Code* declaring that one should drive with the ability to be able to stop safely, if I was the driver I would be concerned that my insurance company might well refuse to pay out on a claim.

Yours in horror...

Joseph Batty (W90)

It is a good point although, I got the impression that the fog suddenly deteriorated and before he could slow down, it was already too late ...Ed

Nash's Numbers and something for nothing...

About 150 drivers have taken up my offer of the Nash's Numbers Useful Information Document (UID). I offer this every month at the bottom of my articles on page 2, but maybe many of you miss it. As most of you read *Mailshot*, I think it might be a good place to let you know if you are missing out. I do this work for free, so updates may be a little slow coming out, but it now contains over 70 pages of info including the fare table, distance to towns, hotels, pubs and bars, nightclubs, restaurants, lap dancing clubs, MP stations Heathrow and Gatwick terminal info, LCA arrivals, Eurostar arrivals, postcodes (both inner and outer London), street numbering, What's On at Earls Court, Olympia, ExCel and O2 plus more. If you



would like a copy, simply send an email to alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with the subject as UID then very simple text containing your name, email address, call sign, badge number and a contact phone number, which will only be used if your email address fails.

Alan Nash (A95)

It really is free with no hidden agenda and a very useful item to take to work every day ...Ed

Post Office cock-up

I thought I'd drop you a line concerning a couple of things in the October *Call Sign*. Firstly on the matter of the great *Call Sign* postage cock up; our postman left us a card to say the Post Office was holding a delivery for us and that there was a fee of £1.24 to be paid on it. When I phoned my local sorting office, they said that they didn't have it but it was being kept at another sorting office. When I then contacted the second sorting office, they said they didn't have it either! They then told me to go online and quote the reference number on the card. I quoted the number and paid the £1.24 and was then told the item would be re-delivered to me. I have now received an email from the Post Office saying they no longer have the item and it had been returned to sender. Do you know of any of those particular *Call Signs* that have been returned?

Secondly, the case of John Shakeshaft (P52) and his PCN in Moscow Road. This incident reminds me of another of our drivers who received a PCN containing a picture of his cab in the infamous Holborn box junction. The council, Camden I think, said that the driver had committed an offence by stopping in the box (as shown in the picture), but on viewing the video footage it was clear that the driver had not stopped in the box at all. Now what occurs to me is that in both of these incidents, the councils in question are trying to obtain money by deception, which as far as I'm aware is a criminal offence? If the drivers in question are in a trade organization, they should be talking to their legal departments, and if not they should at least pay a visit to a police station to make a complaint! I'm sure Dial-a-Cab would back them up as someone needs to stand up to these councils when they are clearly trying to deceive us!

Peter Kelly (Y96)

Thanks for that Peter. I have been speaking to Westminster about a similar PCN as that issued to John Shakeshaft and managed to get that cancelled as well. Yes, I agree that whilst no one is perfect, some of these PCNs are obviously being

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issued – at best – without the Council remotely checking for any reason.

And no, there were no Call Sign's returned to sender that I know of ...Ed

DAB radios

I remember last year when drivers were asking in *Call Sign* about DAB digital radios in taxis and the reports weren't good. I notice from your editorial that you now have one in your taxi. Is it any good so that I too can listen to my beloved Spurs lose in crystal clarity!

Kevin Went (N19)

The DAB comes with the TX4 'gold' models and it is really excellent quality. Sadly the same can't be said about Spurs. Perhaps an 'Arry miracle? ...Ed

Annual report

Dear Alan

In the last Chairman's annual report, we were told that there were proposals to bring in outside experts and professional managers to take over some of the functions carried out by our elected Board members. At the AGM, this was elaborated on and it was explained that final responsibility for decisions and policy would still rest with Board members. Can you please send one of your trusty investigative journalists to find out answers to the following:

1. Have any outside consultants or managers been brought in?
2. How many and what functions are they carrying out?
3. How much has been spent on recruitment and wages?
4. How much has been saved by employing these new people?

5. What improved efficiencies have been noted?

6. How much extra income has been generated?

7. By how much has the wage bill for Board members been cut?

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Brian Rice replies: Laurence, yes, everything you ask about was recommended by me in the last Annual Report, however we have experienced a huge downturn in our fortunes - as indeed has the whole of the Taxi and Private Hire industry. Consequently, I do not feel we are currently in a position to add to our wage bill. Quite the contrary in fact, our wage bill has been cut with fewer staff and Board Members working fewer hours. When things improve - and I have no doubt that they will - then that will be the time to employ these top managers. But in my view now is not the time to increase our costs, we have to cut them to ensure we remain a viable business.

I know you quite well Laurence and I have never been anything other than totally honest with you, as I try to be with all our members, however, the next part is quite difficult for me to convey to you. One of the reasons we are somewhat more successful than some of our competitors is because we do not have too many chiefs - but more Indians. For instance, one of our competitors employs a Key Account Manager, Sales Manager, someone to market their Platform, Chief Operating Officer and a Chairman - we just have a Chairman.

I don't think the way in which we operate is necessarily correct, in fact I know it's not and it will most definitely have to change one day, but not at the



moment in this current economic climate. Laurence, I hope you will accept my answer in the spirit in which it is intended

Lou Gitlin

Could you please publish my regards for good health, strength and prosperity to Mr Lou Gitlin. As you said (*Oct Call Sign*), only those of us on the circuit long enough will know what a genuinely nice person he is.

Louie Christian (A48)

Lou has had trouble with a collapsed bladder following prostate problems and asked Call Sign to thank all those who remembered him in phoning us ...Ed

Rafted by George!

I just wanted to correct your item on George Raft and the Colony Club (*Oct Call Sign*). As you rightly said, Raft was involved with a casino of this name that I believe was based around Berkeley Square. However, this had no connection with the Colony Room Club in Dean Street. That was a drinking den popular with the likes of Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Tom Baber and Jeffrey Bernard. It was run by a formidable woman called Muriel Belcher, who couldn't always remember people's names so she called them by a four-letter expletive. I bet even George Raft and his mates would have been shocked! It's still in business, but its future is uncertain...

Geoff Levene (K43)

If they were the last clients, I'm not surprised it's doing so badly! ...Ed



Complaints Meeting Results



A Complaints meeting was heard on 8 October 2008. The results are below...

Name/call sign	Nature of Complaint	Sentence
Hakan Hazirci (O67)	Rule 2 Rule 3 Rule 7	2 weeks susp 2 weeks susp Expelled
David Leonard (J40)	Rule 1 Driver used intimidating and threatening behaviour to a member of staff at DaC's Roman Way fitting bay	Severe Rep
Marc Drain (S26)	Rule 11 Driver booked in to the E140 rank outside of the security barriers, therefore gaining an unfair advantage over his fellow members	2 weeks susp
Neil Decort (J94)	Rules 2, 11 Driver booked in to E145, which at the time was a physical rank when he was at the eastern end of Canary Wharf, therefore gaining an unfair advantage over his fellow members.	1 week susp
Gelataw Abdi (E74)	Rules 2, 3, 9, 12 Driver accepted an As Directed trip in EC5 and then refused to cover the trip claiming it was too far to run for a short journey, causing a long delay.	1 week susp

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TXII Bronze Auto	Black	- 52 -	175,000	£8,450
TXII Silver Auto	Black	- 03 -	173,500	£9,995
TXII Bronze Auto	Black	- 03 -	96,500	£9,995
TXII Gold Auto	Platinum Silver	- 03 -	163,000	£10,995
TXII Gold Auto	Thistle Blue	- 53 -	165,000	£10,995
TXII Silver Auto	Black	- 53 -	155,000	£10,995
TXII Silver Auto	Red	- 04 -	141,000	£11,695
TXII Silver Auto	Platinum Silver	- 04 -	85,000	£11,995
TXII Gold Auto	Oxford Blue	- 04 -	150,000	£12,495
TXII Silver Auto	Black	- 54 -	91,000	£12,695
TXII Bronze Auto	Black	- 05 -	63,625	£12,995
TXII Silver Auto	Thistle Blue	- 05 -	103,700	£13,695
TXII Silver Auto	British Racing Green	- 05 -	55,000	£13,995
TXII Gold Auto	Nightfire Red	- 54 -	92,000	£13,995

*Trade Descriptions Act 1968. We have been unable to confirm the mileage on this odometer and it must therefore be considered incorrect

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