

April 2009



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Brian Rice 'minds' the Minister!



*SPLAT! Driver's son makes
ABA schoolboy finals*



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

*Could this be the most
amazing invention to ever
hit the cab trade?*

*DaC driver's amazing
escape after cab turns over
on icy road...*



NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

The April 2009 tariff rate is an average 3.4% increase. The table below shows a mileage chart for estimating fares for passengers. Remember this is purely on mileage and does not include waiting time in traffic...

Mileage	T1	T2	T3	Mileage	T1	T2	T3
1	£4.20	£4.60	£5.40	33	£101.40	£104.60	£108.60
2	£6.40	£7.40	£8.80	34	£104.60	£107.80	£111.80
3	£8.60	£10.20	£12.20	35	£107.80	£111.00	£115.00
4	£10.80	£13.00	£15.60	40	£123.80	£127.00	£131.00
5	£13.00	£15.80	£19.00	45	£139.80	£143.00	£147.00
6	£15.40	£18.40	£22.40	50	£155.80	£159.00	£163.00
7	£18.40	£21.60	£25.60	55	£171.80	£175.00	£178.80
8	£21.60	£24.80	£28.80	60	£187.80	£190.80	£194.80
9	£24.80	£28.00	£32.00	65	£203.60	£206.80	£210.80
10	£28.00	£31.20	£35.20	70	£219.60	£222.80	£226.80
11	£31.20	£34.40	£38.40	75	£235.60	£238.80	£242.80
12	£34.40	£37.60	£41.60	80	£251.60	£254.80	£258.60
13	£37.60	£40.80	£44.80	85	£267.60	£270.80	£274.60
14	£40.80	£44.00	£48.00	90	£283.60	£286.60	£290.60
15	£44.00	£47.20	£51.20	95	£299.40	£302.60	£306.60
16	£47.20	£50.40	£54.40	100	£315.40	£318.60	£322.60
17	£50.40	£53.60	£57.60	110	£347.40	£350.60	£354.40
18	£53.60	£56.80	£60.80	120	£379.40	£382.40	£386.40
19	£56.80	£60.00	£64.00	130	£411.20	£414.40	£418.40
20	£60.00	£63.20	£67.20	140	£443.20	£446.40	£450.20
21	£63.20	£66.40	£70.40	150	£475.20	£478.20	£482.20
22	£66.40	£69.60	£73.40	160	£507.00	£510.20	£514.20
23	£69.60	£72.80	£76.60	170	£539.00	£542.20	£546.00
24	£72.80	£76.00	£79.80	180	£571.00	£574.00	£578.00
25	£76.00	£79.20	£83.00	190	£602.80	£606.00	£610.00
26	£79.20	£82.40	£86.20	200	£634.80	£638.00	£641.80
27	£82.40	£85.60	£89.40	To Calculate extra mileage over 35 miles add			
28	£85.60	£88.80	£92.60	1	£3.20	£3.20	£3.20
29	£88.80	£91.80	£95.80	2	£6.40	£6.40	£6.40
30	£92.00	£95.00	£99.00	3	£9.60	£9.60	£9.60
31	£95.20	£98.20	£102.20	4	£12.80	£12.80	£12.80
32	£98.20	£101.40	£105.40				

It is important not to exceed the run in on account jobs. Below are the times for £4.20, £3.80 or £3.40 run-ins.

The figures are very useful for pre-booked account jobs.

Run-in £4.20

T1 5:39m to 6:10m

T2 4:36m to 5:01m

T3 3:42m to 4:02m

Run-in £3.80

T1 4:38m to 5:09m

T2 3:46m to 4:11m

T3 3:01m to 3:21m

Run-in £3.40

T1 3:36m to 4:07m

T2 2:55m to 3:20m

T3 2:21m to 2:41m

Waiting time is:

T1 £23.30/hr (for 34mins)

T2 £28.68/hr (for 34mins)

T3 £35.64/hr (for 34mins)

Then at the 'higher rate' at £33.17/hour.

T1 first hour of waiting = £ 29.77*

T2 first hour of waiting = £ 32.77*

T3 first hour of waiting = £ 36.77*

Subsequent hours on all 3 rates = £ 33.17

* includes the £1.80 flag fall surcharge.

What's On... Notable events this month

Event	Venue	Date	Event	Venue	Date
Ideal Home Exhibition	Earls Ct 1	every day until 13/04/09	Russell Brand	O2	17th
Simply Red	O2	2nd	Chelsea at home		18th ko 12:45
Simply Red		3rd	FA Cup semi finals	Wembley	18th
Lionel Richie	O2	4th	Van Morrison	Albert Hall	18th
Arsenal at home		4th ko 15:00	FA Cup semi finals	Wembley	19th
Lionel Richie		5th	Van Morrison	Albert Hall	19th.
Lemar	Albert Hall	9th	Bob Dylan	O2	25th
Chelsea at home		11th ko 15:00	Arsenal Home games		26th ko 13:30
Russell Watson	Albert Hall	11th	Girls Aloud	O2	26th

For a full list of 147 events on this month in date order for easy reference at O2, ExCel, Earls Court, Olympia, Albert Hall, Wembley Arena, Wembley Stadium and all Football match home games in London postcodes visit:

www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/extras

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from the editor's desk

Are the PCO just getting their own back?

Call Sign had long been an unashamed supporter of the Public Carriage Office. We believed that it was a combination of the Knowledge, together with the PCO making sure the high standards for the taxi industry were maintained, that has made the London Taxi trade the envy of the world.

Through the years, London Taxi drivers have gone through different levels of how they felt about the PCO. For many, the 60s and 70s were years of fear! A trip to Lambeth or Penton Street would cause the driver brave enough to take his cab up for an overhaul on his own to suffer major sweaty palms. It was often described as a journey to hell and rarely disappointed!

Drivers were spoken to as though they had just crawled out of the gutter and often given stop notes for the most insignificant of failings – one driver recently reminded **Call Sign** of how his taxi failed through having a screw missing in the boot. Yet rather than allow him to have another put in at the garage, he was made to return to Penton Street and waste yet another morning. Incidents like that were not unusual.

The 1979 ITV movie, *The Knowledge*, was a big hit on TV screens, with most viewers believing that the plot was entirely the work of Jack Rosenthal's imagination. However, Licensed taxi drivers of the time knew that it was far closer to the truth than many realised.

When **Roy Ellis** came along, the situation undoubtedly changed for the better. Taking your cab to the PCO still wasn't how you'd want to spend your day, but there was a feeling of respect in the air. Roy himself was always available to the trade press, turned up to most trade events and indeed was very helpful in providing information during **Call Sign's** successful 1999 campaign to allow Type 2 diabetics (on tablets) to drive their cabs and eventually regain their licenses.

Change...

Then in 2006, Roy Ellis took retirement and **Mary Dowdye** – whose brother is a licensed taxi driver – came in. Around that time, a PCO proposal also arrived for taxis to undergo two inspections a year rather than just an overhaul. This, according to the PCO, would help to keep standards high. No one wanted it, but according to this magazine at the time, SGS felt that just one visit per year from each taxi wasn't enough for a long-term contract. We now know that Boris Johnson promised to get rid of it if elected. He was and he did!

But that wasn't our biggest problem. Gradually the PCO under Mary Dowdye have tried to equalise both sides of this trade by inferring that as Taxi and PH Director **Ed Thompson** recently said in an advert for the Transport Museum, London has not 25,000 taxi drivers and 50,000 private hire drivers – but 75,000 licensed drivers!

In addition, PCO press releases have been sent out as though everything applied equally to both the minicab side and us. It probably began with the PCO sending out reports that gave details of those losing their licenses through misdemeanours. One particular release told of around 90 drivers having their licenses



revoked, yet when **Call Sign** enquired with both TOCU and TfL as to how many of those were actually taxis, the number given was in single figures! We complained and were told that our complaint would be taken into account in future press releases. This was followed by yet another PCO release in July 2007. It read:

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

So **Call Sign** asked yet again – how many of the 7 were licensed taxi drivers? A few days later, we received this short and to the point response from the Senior Driver and Operator Policy Manager at the PCO, **Simon Buggey**. His answer: "All 7 were PHV drivers."

Call Sign responded with: "Can you understand why taxi drivers in London become annoyed at being lumped together with PH drivers when figures are given? The last time involved hundreds of drivers pulled up for licensing offences, yet only a handful were taxi drivers."

I believe that the PCO should revert to itemising numbers."

Mr Buggey responded: "I appreciate your concerns and we'll bear them in mind." Rather than separate the two, the PCO just didn't send out any more revocation notices.

Do you have a UK licence?

But that was just the start. More and more releases addressed both sides, even though they obviously did not apply to taxis. A recent one (which **Call Sign** has not published as we consider it to be a damn cheek) informed us that in order to be licensed as a taxi or PHV driver, an applicant must hold a full driving licence issued in the UK, the European Community or one of the other countries in the European Economic Area. Is there anyone who has passed the KoL without a UK driving licence? I bet there are plenty of minicab drivers out there it applies to, but taxi drivers? But we're all the same to this PCO.

Strangely, another followed that; this one aimed only at taxi drivers and proved that we didn't have to be lumped together with private hire. This one referred to taxis being broken into and advising us to remove our satnavs and cradles when we left our cars! Cars? Does any-

one feel any sense of respect to our business? Thought not! **Call Sign** has published the press release and reworded it out of embarrassment.

There is a feeling out there that claims the PCO think we are too big headed compared to minicabs, who now cower as we used to and that this "bonding" together of both sides is a form of revenge against us. One good example was a recent criticism of their offices in TAXI newspaper. The PCO answer was to bin all the copies sent to them of that issue.

One strike and you're NOT out?

Ed Thompson has now sent out a letter to licensed taxidrivers apologising for lumping taxis together with private hire in the *one strike and you're out* fiasco. However, is it me or does the fact that the trade press received the notice 10 months ago make any apology rather irrelevant, with the PCO obviously being told by the Mayor to send it rather than doing it as a genuine apology? And why wasn't it sent as a press release rather than a letter that the press wouldn't see? I have no truck whatsoever with licensed taxi drivers who hang up outside hotels and they deserve all they get when caught (none have apparently), but to pretend that we are anywhere near as bad as minicabs, is and was ludicrous and any apology doesn't ring as being genuine. Everyone makes mistakes, but admit them at the time and not when forced.

An answer? I do not have one. There are some nice helpful people at the PCO, but most of those have been there many years. The new breed either don't care about this 350 year old trade or feel that they can extract some revenge on us because we stick up for ourselves. Few have ever driven a taxi. Either way, the future doesn't look bright for a successful partnership. **Call Sign** is publishing the PCO apology in this issue, so the world can read it online...

Marshalled taxi ranks

Is it just me? I don't really care if George Bush comes out of retirement to marshal our taxi ranks – ok, perhaps not him! However, there has been a whispering campaign against one entry to the TfL tender document, because the person behind it is apparently involved in a business known as the clamping club. But the question is whether they can run taxi ranks?

Certainly, Tony Ellis – the person involved (but not the clamping business owner) – has been in the taxi business for many years and so far as I know, is still a member of the LTDA Council of Management. He rents his taxi from a former DaC driver and according to that driver, Tony has already been involved with marshalling at the O2 in addition to other venues. If successful, they intend using drivers as marshals who have perhaps lost their Bill through sickness. So far it sounds ok.

I couldn't care less who gets the contract provided they do a good job; after all, very few seem to want it. But that person needs to be able to install trust from within the trade and association with a private clamping company could be pushing things too far...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Tough trading times...

You don't need me to tell you how tough things are and if many pundits are to be believed, we still have some way to go before seeing an improvement in the worldwide economy, which in turn will have an effect on us.

Figures recently released show we have over 2.2million people unemployed in the UK - the largest number for over 12 years. That is a big problem, especially as it is forecast to reach in excess of 3million by the end of the year. That, combined with a lack of confidence and uncertainty, is our biggest problem. Together they make the public nervous that they might be the ones to lose their job in the future; consequently, they are reluctant to spend any money just in case they do lose it and that makes a precarious situation even worse. After all, a recession is when your neighbour loses his job - a depression is when you lose yours.

Of course we can understand the anxiety, but assuming people are still working, then they have never been so affluent. Their mortgages (assuming they are not on a fixed rate) have never been so inexpensive, probably half of what they were paying this time last year. There are sales everywhere and inflation is falling - although that could pose a problem if it were to become deflation, because then the public would again avoid spending for the fear that the goods and services they buy could and probably would soon become even cheaper.

So instead of spending their newfound wealth, they are saving it or endeavouring to settle outstanding finance / credit card bills in case they too become one of the unemployed!

Where is the money going?

As an aside, I read that many savers are withdrawing their money from banks and building societies due to their lack of confidence in them, but just where is it all going? Under the mattress? I can't believe they are all investing in the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union scheme, where a fantastic return of 7% is promised on your investment! I've had many members approach me and ask if they should invest in the Credit Union, but I do not believe I am in a position to advise anyone on their financial situation, except to say that the Credit Union is advised by their parent organisation, the Association of British Credit Unions Limited (ABCUL) and in turn is responsible to the FSA - and I know all about them! If anything were wrong, they would not allow the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union permission to continue the regulated activity of accepting deposits.

Getting better?

But I digress. So how do we get out of this problem and instil a little confidence in people? Of course we all know that the best people to run the country are either cutting hair or driving taxis, so perhaps we can play our part in some small way to help people focus on some of the positives. For instance, retail sales in London's High Streets were up 6.3% in February compared with the previous year, so what does this mean? Perhaps London is not faring as badly as the rest of the country? Certainly unemployment is not rising as fast in London as it is in the rest of the country. It could also mean that due to the fall in sterling' value compared with other currencies, we could be attracting tourists who will now find London quite inexpensive. In just one year, we have gone from the third most expensive city in



the world to the twenty seventh most expensive - or should that be least expensive?

I believe this year will see a tourist boom, assuming of course we do not have any atrocities in London. I'm sure that many of you that work on weekends have already experienced the increase in visitors who become even more noticeable when the sun is shining. Even though the financial sector is struggling at the moment, which in turn affects us, that void can hopefully be filled by the increase in visitors to London. After all, we're not proud - we will accept anyone's money!

Confidence?

I also see that Citi and Barclays are making money again, while Northern Rock have repaid billions and once again are lending out for mortgages. So perhaps things are beginning to improve, all we need is to start installing a bit of confidence. Although writing of confidence, I still cannot comprehend the trillions and trillions that have been poured by governments into financial institutions to bale them out due to greed and negligence. It is said they made some bad loans and invested in the sub prime market, well they must have been doing it for years and years and

every bad debt they have ever had has come out of the woodwork. How can they lose these vast amounts of money without anyone realising - unless, perhaps, they did but then did nothing about it in case it were to affect their bonuses? The money that has been poured into financial institutions would probably be enough to re-mortgage every property in the world - they certainly have something to answer for!

Anyway, there is a moral in the above! You are now armed with a few snippets of positive information that you can pass on to your passengers when the subject of the economy is raised and they sound ultra-gloomy. Can you imagine the follow up? "Hey, I was talking to a cab driver the other day and he tells me we have moved from third to twenty seventh least expensive city in the world, the number of tourists are up on previous years, more money is being spent on the High Street, mortgage applications are almost 20% up over the previous month and some Banks are starting to make money! Primark profits are up 18% and poor old M&S only made a profit of £298m in the first half of their financial year. And if a taxi driver told me, then it must be right!" So perhaps it isn't all doom and gloom and if we have a good summer with lots of sunshine, then we could be on our way.

Selling your cab?

Finally, I'd like to remind you that if you are selling your cab then you must have our equipment removed by Roman Way. Relying on the new owner to do it is not good enough; it is your responsibility.

I point this out because we have had several cases recently where equipment has not been removed when it should have been. After all, the last thing we want to do is request an equipment bond from each member...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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TERRY'S MIRACULOUS ICE ESCAPE

As his brand new TX4 gets written off...!

When **Call Sign** recently met **Terry Vale (J29)**, he didn't have a single bruise or scratch to show from his harrowing ordeal of spinning out of control in treacherous road conditions that damaged his brand new TX4 cab beyond economical repair.

Terry told our reporter that during the early hours of the morning after finishing his night shift, he was travelling towards home along the A12 between Mountnessing and Ingatstone at about 50 mph. He noticed water flowing across the road from the field nearby and in response, slowed down without touching the brakes. About 100 yards further along the road, there was a second flow of water running across the road surface from the fields either side of the carriageway.

Terry explained that further on there is a gradual bend in the road that continues for around 400 yards and that he had now slowed down to 40 mph due to the road conditions.

"Suddenly and without warning," said Terry, "the back end of the cab lost traction and began to swing sideways. I corrected the swing, but the cab swung back the other way pendulum-like, from side to side uncontrollably. The road had turned to ice!"

"This sliding motion continued for some time as I fought to gain control of the cab," he continued.

"Then the cab began to spin wildly round and round in 360° turns several times before colliding with a fence by the roadside and going backwards completely out of control! The cab then crashed through the fence, rolling over and finally coming to a stop upside down in the field," Terry calmly told **Call Sign** as if relating a scene from a film he had seen, rather than re-living his own experience.

"The doors were locked and initially I was unable to get out of the wreck. Thoughts of 'fire' ran through my head as I frantically tried kicking at the windows, but nothing gave way. I thought about using the fire extinguisher under my seat to smash the glass, but couldn't reach it. Eventually I kicked the driver's door open sufficiently for me to squeeze out of the cab."

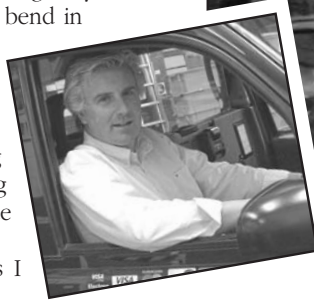
When police arrived on the scene, Terry was to learn that the road had been closed earlier the previous day due to flooding and that the Council had not intended gritting the roads.

"There were no warning signs to that effect, neither the possibility of the danger of ice ahead as I travelled along that stretch of road," Terry stated – still sounding incredibly calm.

"Soon after the police arrived, there was another accident back along the road near to where I had spun and the police then closed the road



The remains of Terry's brand new TX4.



Inset pic: Terry still raising a smile

and called the Council to get the road gritted. Three gritting trucks arrived a bit sharpish," he said with even signs of a grin!

"My TX4 cab was less than 3 months old, so I wasn't too happy about it being written-off through no fault of my own, but I'm very grateful to be unhurt after that nightmare crash and it goes to prove the inherent strength of the LTI taxi," Terry said firmly, this time without the smile. "A life as against a piece of metal? No contest really..."

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London Taxidivers' Fund For Underprivileged Children

CAN YOU HELP WITH THE WOBURN SAFARI TRIP?

Although the LTFUC have received a great response, they still need more drivers to join them on their forthcoming Taxi 'Safari' outing to Woburn Safari Park on Tuesday 19th May.

They need that help in order to give 300 *special needs* and disadvantaged children a wonderful day out. As well as giving a great deal of pleasure to so many children, they can promise you a brilliant and fun-packed day out yourself.

Without you there are no outings, so please contact their Drivers' Liaison:

Susan Angel on 07958 280881

Or enter your details on the volunteer page of the LTFUC website at www.ltfuc.org.uk

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Jerys World



Sorry mate, I know you're late but there ain't no room for buses in the bus lane since bikes and motorcycles got in! And now some minicab firm called Addemup Loo want to get in as well. Gimme strength..!

Ascott Cab Co Become LTI Service Dealer

In a move that took the cab trade by surprise, General Manager of M&O London - the UK's number one LTI Vehicles dealer - Peter Rigden, confirmed that the **Ascott Cab Co** is now an **LTI Vehicles Service Dealer**, allowing London's drivers to benefit from an additional service and repair facility.

He told **Call Sign**: "In continuing support of London's rapidly growing TX4 population, I am delighted to welcome Ascott Cab Co to the family of LTI M&O Service Dealers. Ascotts have an extremely high reputation for customer service in the London trade and we are keen to further develop and strengthen our business relationship with them."

Ascott Cab Co - based in London SE8 - have long provided the capital's taxi trade with routine servicing and unscheduled repairs, but can now also provide LTI warranty work for the purpose-built London Taxi. Trained staff and a fully equipped workshop and bodyshop ensure downtime is kept to a minimum and repair work is carried out to the highest possible standards. On site, the Ascott Cab Co also acts as insurance brokers.

An Ascott Cab Co spokesperson told **Call Sign**: "Taxi drivers in London can be confident that we work hard to offer them excellent service and support. We realise that time off the road means a loss of earnings, so our priority has always been to get drivers back. Should any driver experience a problem, we look forward to welcoming and providing them with the added peace of mind that their taxi will soon be looking and feeling like new."

The addition of Ascott Cab Co now gives drivers a total of six official LTI service dealers in London. Full details can be found on the LTI Vehicles website at www.lti.co.uk.

To find out more about Ascott Cab Co, go to www.ascottcab.com, phone 020 8692 1122 or see their ads on pages 16 and 17. For further information about M&O (London) go to www.mannandoverton.com or call on 020 7700 0888.

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Enquiries: email: anja@anjaking.com



DaC driver **Graham Rogers (Y31)** wrote to **Call Sign** recently regarding our March Editorial on PCO refunds due to the cancellation of the mid-year safety inspection. He agreed with our comments, but wanted to go further and wrote to *Transport for London*.

One point he made to them was that as 24,500 of us had no direct contract with SGS, why did the PCO think that we should foot the bill for a contract that they entered into? He also claims the PCO are using the matter as a smokescreen to increase the licence fee from what would have been £178 - less the mid-year inspection fee of £36 (i.e. £142) - to the new licence fee rate of £160 and then increasing it again from April to £164.

"So they aren't making a small increase of £4 as they claim," said Graham, "it will be £22. Had the mid-year inspection not been abolished, you can rest assured there would have been no increase in licence fees before the 1st April, it is simply being used by the PCO to cover their misgivings and poor contract negotiations and to rely on the cab trade to pay the price."

On behalf of TfL, the PCO's *Head of Strategy and Planning*, **Len Simkins**, responded. He said he understood Graham's concern at receiving only half the amount that he had paid for his taxi to undergo a mid-year inspection, but that it was the case "...that the fees TfL set reflect the cost to the PCO of carrying out its licensing activities." Mr Simkins went on to say:

"The refund represents the amount that could be returned as a result of the decision to abolish taxi mid-year inspections, whilst still recovering the full cost of the taxi licensing inspection service. The licence fee was



PCO's Head of Strategy and Planning Len Simkins

reduced from £178 to £160 to reflect the negotiated settlement with our third party provider, SGS, for discontinuing the contracted mid-year inspection service and a review of the PCO's own costs associated with providing the taxi licensing inspection service."

He went on to say that it was the Mayor who initiated the action that led to the mid-year inspection being scrapped "at the request of the taxi trade," and added that had the PCO returned more to taxi owners, it would have resulted in higher fees from April 2009, or a net cost to TfL. They wanted to minimise the increase for 2009, citing TfL policy of recovering its licensing costs and not to meet this type of expenditure through grant. He also quoted provisions in legislation that allow TfL to determine licence fees and said that since 1981, they have set fees to recover their licensing costs.

Mr Simkins ended by saying that with the

Mid-Year Inspections Refund...?

DaC Driver Graham Rogers questions the PCO

exception of the licence fee increase of £36 in July 2007 to pay for the mid-year inspection, taxi licence fees had not increased since April 2004 when they were £146. Annual inflationary increases from 2004 would have seen taxi licence fees at £172 - 7.5% higher than the fee of £160.












Not happy with Len Simkins response, Graham again wrote back emphasising that because taxi drivers had no contact with SGS re negotiations, why should they pay for what he described as "poor negotiations." He suggested that TfL should have picked up the cost.

Graham told **Call Sign**: "I am not prepared to roll over for the PCO like so many people in this trade seem to do. They seem to think they are our lord and masters and what they say goes, but times have changed and we must not just accept what they say without question."

Graham added that if necessary, he was prepared to consider seeking recovery through the Small Claims Court...

Martin Cordell & Co ACCOUNTANTS

Does your accountant supply you with the following?

-  Over thirty-five years of experience with the Licensed London Taxi Trade.
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(This is expensive and time consuming - Ask your accountant how much he will charge should this unpredictable event occur).
-  A three hundred and sixty five days a year service.
-  A 'nightshift' service.
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Since the AGM, I have spoken with many divers thanking them for their support, but this is the first opportunity I have had to thank the rest of those members who voted for me to be re-elected to the Board.

Since being back, Allan Evans and I have investigated making changes to E140 and E16 (London City Airport). Following on from meetings we had with Canary Wharf Management, we were asked to review our dispatching procedures.

They felt we were contributing to their problems of having too many vehicles inside the Canary Wharf area that were not plying for hire but were waiting to be allocated a journey via their terminal. We were also informed that many drivers had been stopped at the entrances from going onto the island or been asked to leave because they were incorrectly parked up.

Unfortunately some drivers have been very disrespectful to the security staff and banning notices have been issued. In such cases, we believe the PCO are informed in case complaints are received from passengers who have been refused by drivers banned from the island.

In order to accommodate the CWM request, we have spoken with the Board and will now disband E140 and dispatch all work after 21:00 and until 06:00 into E14. Not wishing to make programme alterations to the dispatch system, it will mean that that work dispatched into E14 will not be masked, apart from normal accounts that are set up to be A/D.

It will also change the going home procedure. While E14 is a normal zone when a driver is on a going home facility, all the work will be offered unmasked. It will not be restricted to only work to the home zone or one of the back-up zones. The procedures we

Important Changes To E14 and LCA

Call Centre Chat from Keith Cain



have put in place are: **A driver must be physically within the E14 postal area to book in. Any driver who has engaged his going home facility must not book into E14 between these times, even though the system allows it, they must only bid for trips.**

We also looked at London City Airport and the number of drivers who have been booking into E16 and staying there for a very long time. Investigations have shown that not all drivers are within the Airport parking areas and some book in when many miles away. Whenever we allow drivers to book into a zone using time parameters to judge if booked in correctly, DaC controllers experience many disagreements with drivers based on opinions

of how fast someone can travel to the furthest point of a zone. It was also becoming difficult for those drivers who had been waiting a long time at the airport, to see drivers arriving and taking trips in front of them.

The Board have agreed with us to make London City Airport a physical rank (CC00). Being a physical rank will enable LCA to be self-policing and the only stipulation is that when a driver reaches the Banjo, they must ensure before accepting a trip they are not prevented from doing so by being blocked in. If they are unable to pick up the passenger for any reason, the trip must be rejected or they should book off the CC00 zone. Like all ranks within zones, when booking into CC00, drivers will retain their queue position within E16.

We feel these two changes are very simple to understand and an information sheet has been available from the driver's reception for a least a week. Terminal messages have also been sent out. It is suggested that all drivers obtain a copy of the information sheet or refer to this article so that the new procedures are followed correctly...

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

Brian's Customer Care Gets a Big Thank You!

When it comes to customer care, Brian Abrahams (G91) obviously knows a thing or two about keeping our clients happy, as was proven recently by an account client who especially telephoned Dial-a-Cab House to heap praise on our 'wonderful ambassador'!

"I always do the best I can for passengers, and in these times of economic downturn we need to keep every account of our client base satisfied with our service," Brian told **Call Sign**. So what was it that got a client to ring in admiration?

"I recently took a young lady up to Colindale to collect her car from a dealership," he told us.

"During the journey to NW9, she mentioned that she was going straight on to Nottingham once she had picked up her car and asked me for directions. I told her how to get onto the M1 and also suggested that she check the tyre pressures, engine coolant and screen washer levels before setting off on the fairly long trip. I also advised her to take a bottle of mineral water to sprinkle on her face to combat fatigue if she was a long way between service stations! I was just being helpful by giving her the benefit of my professional driving experience," he said modestly, "and I then thought no more about it."

Brian went on: "Imagine my complete surprise



Brian Abrahams: "Nice to think that someone took the trouble to appreciate my efforts"

when some four hours later, a message flashed up on my terminal screen to say that 'Emily' had safely reached her destination, wanted to thank me for my advice and was impressed with my professionalism! I couldn't believe that

she had called DaC to sing my praises! The advice was no different to that I'd have given anyone," Brian said beaming with pride. He ended by saying something that we all know to be true...

"Unfortunately, it really is the way of life nowadays that people are so quick to complain and very slow to offer compliments, so it really is quite refreshing to think that someone took the trouble to appreciate my efforts. I'm sure any of our drivers would have treated the young lady in a similar fashion, but it certainly made my day, that's for sure!"

DaC Chairman Brian Rice told **Call Sign**: "We have a great deal of competition out there, but it is instances such as these that make us all proud to be part of the London Taxi trade and justifiably have a worldwide reputation for our professionalism."

© Call Sign Magazine MM9

VOLVO RECALL: HOW MANY ARE PH?

An interesting item recently appeared on the Vehicle & Operator's Agency (VOSA) website regarding several types of Volvo. It read as follows:

"It has been identified that on vehicles fitted with a supplementary cabin heater, the unit may contain a faulty valve which links the heater to the climate control. The valve in question may become clogged, which could lead to poor water drainage and in extreme cases a short circuit. Should sufficient heat be generated by the short circuit, a fire behind the instrument panel below the radio may occur."

And the recalled cars? Volvo XC70, V70 and S80. Whilst not sure of exact numbers, **Call Sign** has seen some of these cars in the private hire sector – some even in the company famous for servicing the Whitcomb Street "waiting space" before being moved to the car park next door! No doubt all these cars will be treated in the same way as the TX4 was...

BILKED!

Tony's wasted £35 trip to Hayes



Tony after his £35 bilk

Tony Guerrier (L28) is no stranger to *Call Sign*. His first appearance here was in **September 1999** when sticking up for Metrocab drivers after it seemed they were being blanked from one of our major accounts. His intervention got the answer he wanted - that Metrocabs would be treated equally unless the passenger specifically said they didn't want one.

Then in **August 2003**, *Call Sign* detailed Tony's fight against the Bishopsgate bus lane and how Dial-a-Cab drivers were being penalised there. After receiving a PCN, Tony became determined to stick to his guns in demanding the right to set down or pick-up within the lane's boundary. He refused to pay the PCN after setting down outside 155. The council refused to cancel the ticket and Tony refused to surrender and took his battle all the way. Eventually, three months down the line, the council gave in and ever since then we have been allowed to pick up and set down within the bus lane.

His next battle with authority was in our **March 2005** issue when *Call Sign* told of Tony's battle with Camden Council after he was ticketed for being in the yellow box junction at Holborn Station. Tony's argument was that the box was illegally sited and besides that, the only reason he became stationary for 9 seconds (according to the CCTV footage) was because several cars cut in front of him. Camden refused to budge and Tony went to Arbitration. The Arbitrator agreed that the junction had not been set out according to regulations and added there could be no contravention without lawful signing.

Then in the **May 2008** issue, Tony told *Call Sign* of yet another battle with authority over a PCN. This involved him waiting in Dean Street, Soho, for a disabled passenger on a Westminster TaxiCard. He was photographed on CCTV and sent a PCN. After a 9 month fight, Westminster gave in!

Now there is another Tony Guerrier (P48). He is L28's son and if his photo shows him as not looking too happy, the answer is simple. The evening before *Call Sign* met him, Tony had suffered a £35 bilk for a fare to Hayes in Middlesex. Tony takes up his story...

"It was a Sunday evening when I stopped in Shepherd's Bush for some young men who asked to go to Hayes. You can usually rely on a sixth sense to smell out potential trouble, but I had no such feelings or suspicions as they got into the taxi. So off we went. I dropped two of them off before reaching the final destination.

"Along the way they were chatting jovially enough, the ginger headed one being more verbal than the others. At Hayes, I was directed off the main road into a residential street when a voice from the back asked me to stop. The cab door opened and they all suddenly piled out at great speed, disappearing down an alleyway that led into another adjoining street. I gave chase, not wisely some might say, but they had all vanished into thin air. Upon reflection, I suppose I was lucky in that I did not meet with any violence or get knifed, but the incident did leave me feeling very angry and aggrieved. But what can you do? Even my cab driver's sixth sense did not ring any alarm bells.

"I can only imagine they know these roads well and had planned the whole thing, probably having done it before and I think other drivers should be aware of the situation," he concluded grimly after adding that £35 was a lot of money in the current climate, but that by this time the following week he would probably have forgotten all about it. Had he been attacked, how different would the situation have been!

Sam Makes ABA Championship Final



Sam's hand is raised in victory as he moves onto the ABA Finals and his chance to box for England

*The March issue of **Call Sign** left readers up in the air as to progress of Sam Bezzina, son of Dial-a-Cab driver, **Dean Bezzina (M10)**, and his ambition to box for England.*

*Currently training and boxing for Newham Amateur Boxing Club at u48kgs class 3, Sam had defeated Slough's **Johnny Scott** to secure a unanimous points decision and move on to the national schoolboy semi-finals at Guildford. A win here would see him through to the final, but **Call Sign** had to go to print!*

Disaster strikes!

Four weeks prior to the semi final, disaster struck when Sam woke up with an excruciating pain in his head. His heart rate increased with training - as did the pain. So Dean took him to a doctor who diagnosed a head virus that could last up to 10 days. Two weeks later, with the pain just as intense, doctors decided that it was sinus and treated him accordingly, but the pain continued for another two weeks. Sam's coach, together with Dean, considered pulling him out of the championship semi final. But Sam wouldn't have it! He had worked so hard to get here and the night before the semi final, the doctor finally gave him the go-ahead to box.

Dean told *Call Sign* he had become concerned that Sam's lack of training would diminish his chance of winning. Would he be sharp enough and more importantly, would he have the stamina to go three x 2 minute rounds? Could he tolerate the pain? In boxing, you can't hide.

As the bell sounded, both boxers raced to the centre of the ring and started to exchange punches at a ferocious pace - but those weren't the instructions Sam had been given. He was told to control the pace and conserve his energy. But Sam was producing the cleaner punches and at the end of the first round, had taken a 7 - 0 lead.

Sixty seconds later they were at it again. Sam's opponent, Zak-Edwards-Clark found the going difficult with the pace and range of Sam's punches and the round ended with Sam leading by 13 - 2. Dean looked at Sam in the corner and could see that he was exhausted, the sinus and lack of preparation had sapped his strength. Dean told us that he had never seen his son that tired before. But Sam looked at dad and gave him a wink as if to tell him he was ok.

They came out for the final round and much of the same with both boxers now showing fatigue and Sam's mum and dad running around screaming encouragement to him! But he was showing real signs of tiredness and had to dig in as Clark stepped up the pace in an attempt to close the scores and knowing that a KO was really his only chance. But Sam showed his courage and heart and battled on to the final bell, where he was declared the winner by 18 points to 4.

There were cheers of elation - as well as a few tears - from the large crowd of friends and family who had come along to support him. Sam had just pulled off what Dean thought was a very big ask. What's more, he did it with style and secured his place in the national ABA schoolboy finals, while also moving one step closer to achieving his goal of boxing for England.

Call Sign hopes to have a report of Sam in the ABA Schoolboy's Final in our next issue...

Call Sign

April 2009

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How many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers can honestly hold their hands up and say that not one single passenger has mentioned **John Warboys**, who last month was found guilty of assaulting 12 women, drugging 19 and raping one during an 18-month reign of terror. Police are also braced for a fresh wave of victims to now come forward. The London

licensed taxi driver has also been linked to 85 attacks in the Dorset area and if newspapers are to be believed, could also be responsible for up to 1000 other attacks on women while driving his cab.

Call Sign doesn't need to repeat what Warboys did, every paper in the country has itemised all about the procedure he went through with his story of casino winnings and then asking young female passengers to "help him celebrate." In fact it isn't just the UK press. **Call Sign** has received emailed copies of the story from such outlets as *The Times of Johannesburg*, *The Melbourne Herald Sun*, *The Scotsman*, *The New York Daily News*, *The*

Call Sign asks the unaskable...

Has John Warboys Shattered our Image?

Electric New Paper (Singapore) and IBN Live (New Delhi) among many others.

Had it been a minicab driver, it would have made headlines for a day in London but the rest of the world – and indeed the UK – wouldn't have heard anything of it. But Warboys was a licensed London taxi driver, a group of people that are highly respected around the world – hence the worldwide interest.

So has it shattered our image of respectability? Surely the very fact that much of the world is now looking at one former London taxi driver with such disgust, shows the high esteem we are held in. Women passengers are so confident in the knowledge that our taxis are a safe haven for them, that even they are asking drivers if they knew him or for our views on him. Surely the John Warboys case – as distasteful as it obviously is – shows that scum such as he cannot damage our deserved reputation as the safest form of transport...

Following the case and on behalf of his members, the LTDA offered a donation of £10,000 to the St Mary's Hospital Rape

Haven in Paddington, which specialises in assisting victims of sexual harassment. General Secretary, Bob Oddy, told *Call Sign*:

"The London taxi trade has been appalled by the criminal behaviour of this driver and I wish to extend sympathy on behalf of my taxi driver members to all the victims and their families who have suffered harm and distress as a result of these shocking incidents. This unfortunate case has, understandably, attracted wide media and public attention and become particularly newsworthy due to the high level of trust which Londoners traditionally place in the Capital's licensed taxi drivers.

The isolated actions of this particular driver are very much a case of the exception, rather than the rule and need to be viewed in the context of the 1/4 million taxi passengers who are conveyed safely in London cabs every day of the week. This is a deplorable one – off incident and passengers can be confident that the next cab they hail will convey them safely to their destination."

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

FIFTY GREEN YEARS

Looking at the adverts in the London taxi trade newspapers offering various inducements to buyers in order to encourage them to purchase new and used cabs, got me remembering back to the 1950s when buying a new cab in London was very different...

A standard diesel FX3 was priced at about £1,000 and you could have the following options: A roof rack, a heater (that usually didn't heat up) and a single contrasting colour body line - either red or blue. You could also chose any colour you liked... so long as you chose black! Forgetting the procedures you had to go through with the PCO just to obtain a proprietor's licence to own a cab, there was the joy of dealing with **Mann & Overton** in Wandsworth Bridge Road. Only they could sell you a taxi that the PCO would pass, it had to have their brass plate bolted to the bulkhead otherwise the PCO would not even inspect the taxi. More about this another time.

First there was the treatment when you waited to see the boss. An appointment had to be made to see and enter his hallowed office, where behind an impressive desk sat Mr Overton. As a potential buyer and new owner, Mr Overton would ask searching questions to make certain you were aware of the pitfalls of running your own cab. Some alleged he was looking after his fleet customers needs - who were many and powerful - and that he did not like drivers to

become owners.

Then you had to be able to satisfy him that you could, if using M&O finance, be able to make those monthly payments. Remember, in those far off days few working men - including cab drivers - had or indeed qualified to have a bank account, own their own house or flat to offer as security. Once these criteria had been met, usually done by either producing a recognised building society deposit book with £500 in it, or by having a letter from a house owner in a good job or position offering to act as guarantor, a deposit of £10 was taken, the forms signed and you were then put onto the waiting list.

Normally you could expect to wait at least 12 and often up to 18 months for delivery of the new taxi. Sometimes your place on the waiting list could be sold, at a small profit, to another waiting owner so they could get a quicker delivery and you would either reaply and hope that you would be allowed to go back on the waiting list again or in turn, buy someone else's delivery slot. None of this was exactly encouraged by M&O, but it went on just the same. Fleet and established owners were treated better and it was rumoured that they were even given a cup of tea free of charge!

Then there were the famous books - one red, one black. The red one contained the names (it was said) of those who would never be allowed to buy a cab from M&O again because of various problems they had caused, such as not paying the instalments



You could have any colour FX3 that you fancied provided it was black!

on time or expecting faults to be repaired under warranty! But regarded as the worst were those who constantly complained about rust, poor workmanship and delays in getting warranty repairs and rectifications! Everybody wanted to try to be in the other book. Once you had bought your first cab and had not been in any untoward bother, then you might be allowed to buy your next cab and have it ready for collection in the month you wanted! You would still have to wait around 12 months though, give or take a month or so, but you could plan ahead with some degree of certainty and have it when you wanted subject always to the waiting time. There were no discounts, special offers or luxurious waiting rooms, just a small waiting room with wooden benches...

To be continued...
Sunset Strip

As the title of this article implies, our 7% high interest account has been so successful that for the time being we have had to close our books! However, for those who were thinking about investing with us but left it a bit late, don't panic! We will be looking to reopen the account again in 6 months if things continue to go well.

The other bit of good news is that we have now increased the maximum loan available back up to **£8000**. For the past two years, due to lack of cash flow, we've had to reduce the maximum loan down to £4000 so that we could spread the money available around more fairly and give all Dial-a-Cab Credit Union members a fair crack of the whip. Most members were happy with this, bearing in mind the circumstances, and we at the Credit Union office thank you for your patience and understanding.

Paying off your credit card bill with DACCU...

Do you remember last year when money was no object and all those foreign holidays you had? Or that new car for 'er indoors (apologies to our lady drivers)? You put them on your credit card and thought you'd just pay later? Now with the recession biting and the interest you

DAC CREDIT UNION: "AN INTERESTING SUCCESS!"



are paying - something in the region of 19% would not be too far from the truth - why not take a Credit Union loan to pay off your credit cards, because our interest rate works out at 12% on a reducing balance, which needless to say you don't get on a credit card - or with the high street banks come to that!

As an example; if you borrowed £1000 over 52 weeks, the total interest would cost you just £62. Does anyone believe that a bank out there - let alone credit card companies - has the remotest chance of beating that! So to my mind, it makes perfect sense to use your DACCU membership. Also when you use us, we don't require every detail about you (including your inside leg measurement) and we certainly do not ask you to leave your house as a guarantee! The fact that you are a Licensed London taxi driver and associated with DaC is good enough for us. We can do a BACS transfer straight into your bank account if that's what you want. The High Street banks just can't beat our service. And as a bonus... we are real people!

Emergency loan policy

At the DaC Credit Union, we have always run an emergency loan policy; for example if your gearbox fell out, or the back axle drops off and you did not have enough in your savings to realise the 'three to one' ratio you really need, you will still receive the loan and get yourself out of trouble. Is there a catch? If you call having to be a member of DACCU and saving regularly (which is always your money) a catch, well yes. That was it!

In addition, thanks to the amazing success of the 7% interest account, there is no longer any wait for a loan. So if you asked for a loan on a Tuesday, the money would be in your bank account by the Friday! So don't delay, get on the phone and call us. If the get a voicemail message, please leave your details and we promise we will get back to you.

Call us on 0208 522 4502 or 4503. If you want to email, it's daccu@btconnect.com.

Come down to sunny Stratford and get yourself a bargain!

DACCU AGM

The DACCU AGM will be held on Thursday 16 April at our office beginning at 3pm (not 4pm as earlier terminal messages gave).

Suite 209, Channelsea House, Canning Rd, Stratford, E15 3ND. We hope to see you there. Light refreshments will be available.

That just leaves me with my usual be lucky... but be careful out there...

John Riley (K38)

Vice-President DaC Credit Union

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

Kupkake's Korner



STATION HUNTING

*Euston's like a dungeon,
St Pancras is a trap,
Marylebone's quite pleasant...
Waterloo is crap!*

*Kings Cross has got better,
London Bridge is the same,
Liverpool Street is chaos...
Paddington's insane!*

*Fenchurch St. is civilised,
the gateway to the East,
Victoria has camera spies...
and TfL police!*

*So why do we stand the torture
and wait in endless lines,
hoping that the future
will qualify the time?*

*It's 'cos there's a recession
and radio work is down,
feels like a total depression
all over London Town...*

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DAC CUT-PRICE TRIPS WITH...



You can now travel from the world's newest and most exciting railway station - St Pancras International - to Calais in 58 minutes, Lille in 1 hour 20 minutes, Brussels in 1 hour 50 minutes or of course Paris - now just 2 hours and 15 minutes away!

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

The prices to DaC drivers?

Just £49 return standard class OR...

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

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

Over the weekend I received an email from **Call Sign's** Editor asking me what I thought about some groundbreaking new technology he had seen online? He sent me the link to a **Jay Leno's Garage** video interview and I have to admit that when I first loaded the page, I thought it was going to be some boring video about American classic car parts. How wrong I was! The video interview introduced me to the **Next Engine 3D scanner**, an amazing piece of hardware that captures objects in full colour with multi-laser precision.

If my memory (that it has to be said isn't great!) serves me correctly, the idea of being able to replicate an identical copy of an object was first made popular in the old **Star Trek** episodes. One of the USS Enterprise's unnamed crew members would place something (an alien object of interest or maybe a stun gun perhaps) into a machine which rather resembled a microwave oven, pressed a few buttons and voila! An exact duplicate of said object appeared beside the original. Pure science fiction?

Well, as is so often the case, science fiction has once again become science fact! The **Next Engine 3D scanner** allows the user to take a 3D photocopy of any 3-dimensional object. You simply stand the object on the turntable in front of the scanner and start the scanner up. While the turntable turns the object, the scanner uses multiple simultaneous lasers to generate an accurate 3D computer-based model of the original object. So essentially, what you have at this point is a 3D virtual copy of a physical object (like taking a photocopy or photograph of a 3D object – but the image is also 3D rather than a flat photo).

SMILE



An old man was sitting on the tube train. In the next seat was a younger man. The old man noticed that this young chap had a strange kind of shirt collar. Having never seen a priest before, he asked the man: "Excuse me, but why do you have your shirt collar on backwards?"

The priest, a bit flustered, still politely answered: "I wear this collar because I am a Father."

The old man thought for a second and responded: "I am also a father, but I wear my collar front-ways. Why do you wear your collar so differently?"

The priest thought for a minute and answered: "Because I am the father for many."

The old man quickly retorted: "I too am the father of many. I have four sons, four daughters and too many grandchildren to count. But I wear my collar like everyone else does. Why do you wear yours that way?"

The priest was by now beginning to become slightly exasperated and blurted out: "Sir, I am the father for hundreds and hundreds of people!"

The old man was taken aback by this answer and was silent for some time. As he got up to leave the tube train, he leaned over to the priest and whispered: "Mister, maybe it's your pants you should wear backwards!"

Could this be the most incredible invention ever?

Unlimited spares for the cab trade? Beam me up Scotty!



It looks ordinary - but it could transform the taxi industry

Next, you would need to feed the 3D image from your computer into a **Dimension SST Printer** – like a cross between an assembly-line tool for manufacturing parts and a printer. What this does is take the computer-generated image and create a physical object out of a resin-like plastic. So what you end up with is an exact replica of the original object you scanned (for example, a plumber's wrench)... only it would be in plastic.

By now you're probably asking – okay, so it sounds cool and all, but what good is it and why would anyone pay so much money for one? Watch the video at:

<http://tinyurl.com/cvnbla> and you will see just how useful this is - especially for the licensed taxi industry.

Your taxis are unique and expensive to make, buy and maintain. Some of them are older and I've heard of the difficulties some of you face in obtaining spare parts for the

cabs. I would imagine (and correct me if I'm wrong) that if one vital component breaks and your taxi is of an older model, the cost of obtaining the part and having it fitted can become prohibitive, so you either end up off the road for some time or having to replace your taxi if the part is no longer available. Neither solution is ideal.

All our industry needs is a company that has the scanner, printer and a good machinist and these concerns will become a thing of the past. Just think about it. If you've got a cracked vital component of your taxi's engine, you can simply go visit that company who will take a 3D copy of the damaged component, print out a 3D plastic replica of it (so you can confirm the part is correct) and get their machinist to make a metal version of it. You now have a replacement part that is specifically built for your requirements – at a fraction of the cost! No need for spare parts to be created and stored away, never getting used. This technology can revolutionise the way we operate by providing us with one-off, custom replacement parts – irrespective of the age or availability of said parts!

You can see the **Next Engine 3D Scanner** at www.nextengine.com or the **Dimension SST Printer** at <http://www.dimension-printing.com/3d-printers/3d-printing-sst.aspx>.

I wonder if we could convince the Board to invest in this technology and have the equipment at Roman Way...what do you think? By the way, well spotted, Ed!

Jonathen Winterburn

DaC Network Administrator

PS: For those reading this on April 1, it is most definitely not an April Fool's gag... Ed

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Each additional adult (16+) add £150 p/w

(Additional £500 cash deposit required for any damages)

Call Danny (N95) on 0796 747 6626 or email: thedevelopes1720@aol.com

After several months playing catch-up, DaC driver and **Bedfont Green** goalkeeper **Lee Pearce (J71)**, has told *Call Sign* that BG have hit form at exactly the right time as they continue to top the *Cherry Red Combined Counties Premier division*.

"Since we knocked Epsom and Ewell off the top spot, we've hit our best form. We've had our bad patch that the law of averages seems to dictate every team should go through, so I can't see anyone now stopping us taking the title and promotion. Epsom do have two games in hand, but they have to win them and then they have to come to our place on 18 April and beat us. Even then it would still be close, so I think that makes us strong favourites. We are playing with so much confidence that we go out expecting to win every match."

A 3-0 away victory at Sandhurst Town on 21 March – thanks to scorers Craig White, Chris Henry and Russell Miner – gave BG a 10 point lead in a match where Lee hardly had to make a save and could have covered a few DaC trips to keep warm! Epsom, meanwhile, could only manage a goalless draw against bottom side Hartley Wintney.

DaC's Lee: I think we may have the title!



Bedfont Green's Chris Henry scores against Sandhurst Town
Pic Stewart Cook

Combined Counties Premier Division...Top 5 (of 22)

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
Bedfont Green	35	23	8	4	94	46	48	77
Epsom & Ewell	33	19	9	5	67	35	32	66
North Greenford United	34	18	11	5	81	54	27	65
Camberley Town	33	16	11	6	80	43	37	59
Chertsey Town	31	17	5	9	78	47	31	56

Manganese Bronze Takes Hit For £14 Million

And they apply to HMG for a bail out...

Manganese Bronze Holdings Plc, parent company of **TX4** manufacturers **London Taxis International**, saw their worst nightmare come to fruition when declaring an astronomical full-year pre-tax operating loss of £14.2million. It scrapped any final dividend for 2008 as sales of taxis slowed and the company cut costs.

What undoubtedly turned a bad year into an horrendous one were the exceptional costs of £8.1 million, which included £3.8million for the TX4 recall program of 1500 taxis following last year's fires in 8 cabs.

The company's operating loss for the year before tax was £5.4million. The previous year had shown a healthy profit of £5.6 million from a total of £144.5million in sales, although that covered a 17 month period.

MBH added in their audited preliminary results that they expect to return to profit next year when the Shanghai side of their business is in full flow, with the Chinese version TX4 having now passed its European homologation – ie moving from prototype to legitimate production model. They are said to have orders for 8000 taxis, although not all have yet been confirmed.

However, the company admit that their UK side of the business may be challenging in both margin and volume with Coventry currently building 12 vehicles over a four day week.

According to the report, Manganese have also sought the "working capital" that HMG have provided to some in the car industry under the government's special assistance scheme. This working capital, when provided to others, has been described as a bail out.

MBH CEO John Russell said the company were looking at special assistance from the viewpoint of increasing their research and development spending on green technologies.

The total number of vehicles sold fell from 2,480 to 2,124, while their workforce was cut by 20%. After release of the statement, their shares fell by 16% to 57p. The share price had reached a high of 542p over the past 12 months.



MBH CEO John Russell

JIM CREASK: THE END OF A BRAVE BATTLE...

Many of those drivers that have been on Dial-a-Cab for over 10 years will remember golf-loving **Jim Creask**. His time as a DaC and taxi driver was tragically cut short in February 1997, following a motorbike accident that left him paralysed from the chest down. At the young age of 37, he suddenly became unable to continue with the job he loved.

Jim's wife Debbie has told *Call Sign* that he sadly passed away on 14 February 2009 from cancer, just one week short of his fiftieth birthday.

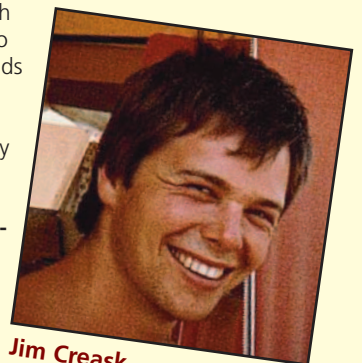
During the time of Jim's paralysis, he had been helped by an organisation called the **Back-Up Trust**. This is a national charity that supports people, young or old, with spinal cord injury. The organisation encourages self-confidence, independence and motivation following a traumatic life changing incident resulting in spinal cord injury. They also support friends, families and colleagues to encourage integration and promote disability awareness and collaboration.

Indeed, Jim went to Colorado with the Trust and Debbie would like to help them raise much-needed funds in memory of Jim.

If you would like to give an amount, no matter how small, any donations in Jim's memory would be gratefully received and be put to good use. Just go to **The Back-up Trust** at www.justgiving.com/debbiecreask1

Jim's sister Terri is now carrying the Creask name on in the London taxi trade.

To all the family, the condolences of everyone at DaC...



Jim Creask

In the September 2007 issue of *Call Sign*, we wrote of the *Radio Taxis Group* launching a 30% biodiesel fuel blend pump at their Station Road fitting bay and warned that the use of it could cause a driver to be in breach of his taxi's warrantee restrictions. LTI issued a statement at the time inferring that if drivers filling up at the RTG pump had problems with their engine and that vehicle was still under warrantee, then it was unlikely that the warrantee would be honoured as the fuel contains 30% biodiesel – 25% more than the permitted amount stated in the warrantee agreement.

That section read: *"The use of diesel fuels with high vegetable oil content of over 5% is prohibited. This includes products commonly described as bio-diesel. This should mean that the fuel available at filling stations in the UK and Europe complies with this, providing that the fuel supplied is to ISO/BSI/EN590 which is the standard for mineral diesel for road use."*

We asked LTI again and they still confirm that nothing has changed since the original article and that VM Motori, whose engine operates the TX4, specify that a maximum mixture of more than 5% biodiesel will not be covered under the LTI warrantee.

Infinitum Limited, the company that marketed the RTG biodiesel, claimed the fuel had been specifically created for use in taxis and cuts Co2 by 7%. They admitted that the blend was 30%. According to an unofficial LTI source, a too-high blend of biodiesel can damage taxi pumps and injectors, clog up the engine and reduce performance. If the fuel

DaC Driver in Biodiesel Warrantee Battle



does not burn properly – and not all the bio-fuel burns – that could also run down the cylinder bores and contaminate the engine, whereas plain diesel is oil and helps lubrication.

At the time of writing (19 March), a Dial-a-Cab driver whose name we are not revealing, has been told that his TX4 engine – which virtually blew up – was showing signs that biodiesel had been used. If correct, he was told that it would

not be covered under the warrantee.

The driver told *Call Sign* that his taxi had never used any biofuel and that he was losing money because while the garage was arguing with him, he had no DaC taxi to use.

Call Sign spoke to LTI and they confirmed that so far as they were concerned, they would repay the garage for the warrantee work, however, should the diagnosis after investigation show that biodiesel was the cause, they would expect to be fully repaid. The problem then left the east London dealer with the problem of whether they would be able to get their money back from the driver should biodiesel have been the cause of the engine blowing up?

The driver assured us that because the cab had never used biodiesel, he was confident no traces would be found, however, should any be found, he would repay the money. In the view of this magazine, the garage should have done the honourable thing and repaired the taxi under warrantee and then, if necessary, concern itself about repayment afterwards.

In the meantime, *Call Sign* can only repeat what we have been told by LTI. If you use biodiesel in the taxi and it is under warrantee, you risk not being paid out for anything associated with the engine.



Thefts From Taxis

By Mary Dowdye
PCO Head of Standards & Regulations

The PCO has been asked by the City of Westminster Police Vehicle Crime Unit to bring to the attention of taxi drivers a number of recent thefts from licensed taxis. These offences are focused around an area in the north of Westminster, predominantly near Marylebone Station at Harewood Avenue, Hayes Place and Baker Street, although other venues nearby have featured.

The method undertaken in these offences is to observe an unattended taxi, the driver of which will have taken a break away from his taxi and then to force entry to the vehicle and steal from within. Items taken include cash bags and drivers badges. The method of entry is crude, with a front window usually being broken to allow access, although access has also been gained through sliding down a rear window, entering and breaking the partition to permit the offender to remove items from the driver area.

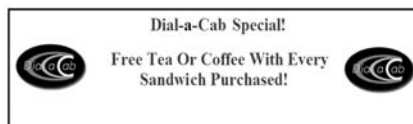
In an effort to reduce the risk of being targeted, drivers are asked by the police to consider the following points:

- * **Be vigilant:** Are there any persons paying obvious attention at ranks or when parking up?
- * **Remove property:** Cash bags hidden under seats and badges in glove boxes have been taken, as well as property such as mobile phones left openly on display.
- * **Remove satnavs:** Remove the cradle too. It shows a thief there may be a satnav inside the cab.
- * **Ensure the vehicle is secure:** Insufficiently locked rear windows have allowed access in some cases.

Unfortunately, there may still be occurrences of this kind despite proper precautions being taken. In these instances, police ask that the driver make the vehicle available for forensic examination. Whilst the police appreciate that there may be a requirement for repairs to be carried out as quickly as possible to enable the vehicle to be placed back into service, they ask that they are given every opportunity to gather evidence.

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COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies & Gents,

I am sure that you are by now aware that since the turn of the year, both EC5 (Finsbury Square) and Canary Wharf zones have been strictly monitored. You will see from the complaint hearing results that a number of drivers have recently appeared before a committee for violating the procedures that are in place. Despite constant reminders and warnings, there are still those that book in outside of the allowed boundaries, giving them an unfair advantage over their fellow subscribers (*Procedure rule no.11*). The monitoring of all ranks and zones is a continual process and be assured that all offenders will be correctly dealt with until we reach an equal playing field for everyone.



Important changes to Canary Wharf (E140) and London City Airport

Recently there has been some important changes to work that is dispatched from both above locations. Comprehensive details appear in Keith Cain's report in this issue. The changes at Canary Wharf follow on from a meeting that Keith and I attended

with the Management team at the Canary Wharf Estate (CWM). In addition, the new procedures at London City Airport will help us monitor the booking-in and we feel it will make it much fairer for those drivers who are actually ranking up at the airport. It is for a trial period, but we hope the changes will help drivers and prevent some of the current problems. It is important that you read the relevant instructions carefully. In addition to Keith's report, you can also pick up a prepared information sheet at DaC House Driver's Reception.

Westminster TaxiCards (WE)

The current contract has been extended for a further year up to the 31st March 2010. All cards that still show an expiry date of 31st March 2009 will be valid up until the end of March 2010. If any taxi cardholder approaches you with a card that has an expiry date of 31st March 2009 it will validate perfectly OK in the normal way through your terminal.

Cash number

In an effort to generate additional cash work during the credit crunch, I believe it is an advantage to advertise our own cash hiring number (**0207 253 5000**). Up to now, only a small number of our members actually display the number on their doors, which is a shame because it was introduced to generate income, especially in these difficult economic times. The Roman Way fitting bay have a large supply and it takes two minutes to have the number fitted.

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer



COMPLAINTS RESULTS

A Complaints meeting was held on 19 March 2009. The results are below...

Name/call sign	Nature of Complaint	Sentence
Steven McMullen (Y42)	Booked in EC5 when in Lower Road, Deptford Park - Rule 11	1 week susp
D.Hillyard (Y99)	Booked in EC5 when in Blackfriars Rd - Rule 11	1 week susp
Bradley Farmer (Z20)	Booked in EC5 when in Southampton Row - Rule 11	1 week susp
John Chambers (V25)	Booked in EC5 when in Whitehall - Rule 11	2 weeks susp
S.W.Baldock (E30J)	Booked in EC5 when in The Cut SE1 - Rule 11	2 weeks susp
Kriacos Kyriacou (J95)	Booked in EC5 when in the Strand - Rule 11	1 week susp
Shaun Ryan (E42)	Booked in EC5 when in Oakley Sq NW1 and Eaton Sq SW1 - Rule 11	1 week susp
Andrew O'Regan (B92)	Booked in EC5 when in The Highway - Rule 11	1 week susp
Kevin Jacob (V45)	Booked in EC5 when at Oxford Circus	1 week susp
Graham Church (S59)	Rules 2, 3, 7	Expelled



The Seyhan and Mehmet Ali Memorial Cup

The Fairway Vets v Tipples
Charity Football Match, Sunday 3 May 2009 at the Bank of England Ground, The Academy, Langston Road, Loughton IG10 3TQ... Kick off 1pm

London taxi driver, Stephen Powell, has organised a charity football match for the past five years in memory of a young boy, Seyhan Ali, who sadly died January 2005 after a courageous fight against cancer. Tragically, Seyhan's brother, Mehmet also passed away recently after he too lost his valiant battle against cancer.

Seyhan and Mehmet's father, Emin, has worked at M & H Taxis for over 25 years, so when Stephen heard of Emin and his wife Sener's tragedy, he decided to raise money for cancer related charities by means of a football match in memory of Seyhan and Mehmet.

Their parents, brother, family and friends dearly miss Seyhan and Mehmet, but by helping to raise money for charity you will be helping to ease the pain in the lives of other children and adults with this life-threatening illness.

Proceeds from the match will go to the **Make a Wish Foundation UK**, who help grant magical wishes to children and young people fighting life-threatening illnesses. **Make-A-Wish** was founded in the UK in June 1986 and since then have granted over 5,300 wishes.

Last year's match raised £1105 and granted a wish for a young lad, Ryan, 16, who is living with Thyroid Cancer. His wish was to be a zookeeper at Longleat Safari Park for the day.

So why not come along and watch a bit of football in aid of a deserving cause...

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LTI Service Dealer

Barrie Segal has over the past few months answered queries for several drivers that had written to *Call Sign* about the legality of their PCNs. Now Barrie – recognised as the UK's leading expert on parking tickets and parking ticket law as well as being the founder of the www.AppealNow.com website – will be assisting Dial-a-Cab in trying to cut down the number of PCNs our drivers receive.

Barrie has been a phone-in presenter on TalkSport, a regular contributor to numerous TV and radio programmes including BBC and LBC news shows, Real Story, Tonight with Trevor McDonald, London Tonight, Richard Hammond's 5 O' Clock Show and The London Programme. He has been interviewed by many international papers including the *New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune* and also assisted a *Which Magazine* report on parking tickets, something that brought them the largest number of responses on any subject the magazine had ever received.

His website, www.AppealNow.com, has been recognised as the best of its kind and has led him to submitting evidence on parking matters to both the London Assembly and the Parliamentary Transport Committee on Parking. He also regularly represents clients before the Parking Adjudicator.

Now, as of 1 April, Dial-a-Cab are hoping that www.AppealNow.com can assist us in cutting down the number of PCNs this Society receives each month. You don't need to be on the Internet in order to join the battle. If you get a Penalty Charge Notice when on a trip taken through the system, do not pay it but bring it to Dial-a-Cab House and either give it to Nuala or leave it for her attention. Nuala will put your details onto a spreadsheet and send the PCN details in batches to www.AppealNow.com. You will then hear from the council concerned whether your appeal has been successful or not. If it has, then brilliant. If it hasn't, then you contact Nuala once again and she will then take the appeal another step forward. If the worst happens and you finally lose, then as you would now, you pay the fine and DaC will reimburse you.

Many drivers have asked that DaC tackle the councils that are making our job so difficult, well now they are and your assistance is needed to see whether DaC and Barrie Segal between them can make a difference.

Barrie Segal is married with two children. He is a former member of the Magic Circle and *Call Sign* hopes that he can perform some tricks to help cut down the huge PCN bill DaC gets each month...

Alan Fisher

DaC take on Penalty Charge Notices...

As Mr PCN Climbs on Board!



All you have to do is to drop any PCN into Nuala and DaC will attempt to get it thrown out...

The UK's best 'black cab' warranty?

The driving force behind what they claim to be "the UK's Best 'Black Cab' Warranty" is Cabsurance, a taxi insurance market leader for over 30 years and Independent Insurance Broker, authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Based in Ilford and Bethnal Green, Cabsurance have an unrivalled knowledge and experience of the taxi industry. Michael Rose and his three sons, Lawrence, Gary and Jon, are at the sharp end of the taxi trade and know exactly the sort of warranty cover cabbies need to keep them moving.

They explained to *Call Sign* that this radical new warranty for taxis of up to 10 years old and 250,000 miles, covers most of the mechanical and electrical parts that are ever likely to go wrong and allows an unlimited number of claims up to the value of the vehicle. Additional cover for catalysts, lost keys, damaged locks and even wear and tear on parts is also available. Repairs can be carried out at main dealers and the full cost of parts and labour are covered.

Michael Rose said, "We've been working with Quentin Willson and Warranty Wise Insurance Services to create the best used black cab warranty on the market and are now proud to offer this unique, simple, clear and secure warranty that is underwritten at Lloyds of London. Cabsurance' expertise, flexibility, tailored cover and customer focus means that this is a taxi warranty like no other."

Quentin Willson added: Designing a fair and clear London black cab warranty that's the best in the UK has been a challenge. I respect black cab drivers and think they deserve a much better used taxi warranty than they're getting now. I genuinely believe that this is the UK's best used black cab warranty, bar none!



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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

Two months back, *Call Sign* mentioned the first DaC girl we had used as a sort of pin-up, but couldn't remember her name – only the Harley she was perched on! So just for all those drivers that begged us to find her, here she is – Michelle Anderson...

From *Call Sign*, November 1997...

Good luck Michelle

Michelle Anderson will soon be leaving the relative comfort of the Dial-a-Cab

control room for the discomfort of a bicycle seat and a trip across Egypt! She flies out on November 30th, hoping to complete the long bike ride in six days and to raise much-needed funds for Mencap.

Anyone wishing to add to the money Michelle has already raised by fair and fowl means (she dressed as a chicken outside a supermarket) can leave it in the *Call Sign* cubbyhole at Brunswick House.

Everyone at DaC wishes Michelle the best of luck and all we can add is that we think we'll publish this photo of Michelle on her favourite Harley Davidson motorbike rather than her as a chicken or sweating in Egypt!

Flashback
1997



Michelle on the Harley

PH and External Advertising...and Barry!

The last time Dial-a-Cab driver **Barry Spear (Y16)** sent *Call Sign* a photograph as evidence of a misdemeanour, it caused a huge shock to all London taxi drivers. The photo was of an out-of-town taxi from Sevenoaks that was using the M4 bus and taxi lane. We said we'd check just to confirm they were for London taxis only and were shocked to discover from *Transport for London* that any licensed taxi from anywhere in England or Wales could use our taxi lanes.

Call Sign then spoke to Luke Richard, the PCO's Senior Strategy Integration Officer, and he confirmed that TfL were correct and any licensed taxi from anywhere in England or Wales CAN use our taxi lanes – unless there was a specific sign saying London taxis only. That did, of course, also mean that London taxi drivers can use bus and taxi lanes anywhere in England or Wales too, provided the bus lane sign doesn't say *local taxis only* and they are, of course, in their taxi. PH cannot use the lanes.

Luke also confirmed that any coach licensed for at least 8 passengers and the driver could use all bus lanes.

So when Barry sent us another picture as evidence, we were reluctant to bring it into the open because of that last experience!

This time he sent a photo of a London private hire car with advertising on its door panels.

"I thought they weren't allowed to do that," said Barry using perhaps a somewhat more colourful language! We put our brave face on and called TfL to see whether anything had changed, bearing in mind Barry's last piece of evidence. But no, TfL confirmed that private hire vehicles licensed for London cannot have advertising on the side of the

car. They can have it on their rear windscreen and a small phone number near the PCO plate, but nothing on the side. TfL also ask any Dial-a-Cab drivers to let them know if they see door ads on PH cars. Second time lucky, Barry...!



Barry's photo showing licensed PH with illegal door ads. If you see the numbers. TFL want to know about it...

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On 22 February 2009, **Ken Freeborn (W6)** celebrated 45 years as a London Taxi driver and was joined by family and close friends to mark the auspicious occasion. Ken is the older brother of **Martin Freeborn (C67)**, himself no stranger to *Call Sign's* pages.

As guests gathered, the talk was of old times, cab trade characters from the past, makes and models of taxis owned and journey's into the (sometimes) unknown! Nostalgia ruled the day as cab-driving colleagues each had a story to tell about those bygone days. The conversation was lively as the guests - some still driving, others retired - each brought a wide variety of taxi memorabilia and related artefacts to share and enjoy. During the day, a quick calculation revealed a total of 272 years of public service among drivers present - an astonishing fact!

Speaking to *Call Sign*, Ken told us: "I bought my first cab, a Beardmore, in April 1965 and joined what was then known as the 'TERminus 6444' radio circuit towards the end of May 1965."

That 'radio circuit' was in fact ODRTS Ltd, the forerunner of Dial-a-Cab. Ken continued:

"There are other drivers with longer service records than mine, but as the date coincided with my birthday, Jennie and I thought it would be fun to mark the occasion. Everyone invited bought in to the theme of a 'Cab Driver's Convention' with gusto, and WAGS were swept along with the idea too!"

Ken's meticulously kept accounts from those long gone days of 1965, record his

Ken Freeborn celebrates 45 years as a Taxi Driver!



Ken and Jennie cut the Beardmore cake

Beardmore taxi costing £500, while 4 gallons of diesel fuel was 18 shillings and 4 pence in old money. That equates to around £0.92p in today's decimal currency!

"92p for 4 gallons," Ken laughed, "it makes you wonder what went wrong!"

Ken has twice won the coveted **Taxi Driver of the Year** competition, winning the title in 1979 and again in 1987, with younger brother Martin taking the trophy in 1990. Indeed, in recent years 6 out of the 10 winners of this prestigious taxi championship have been on Dial-a-Cab. The competition's combination of Knowledge of London and driving skills through a very tough assault course ensured that only the best made the grade.

The guests also spoke of Ken's charity work on behalf of the **War Disabled Benevolent Fund**, and **St. Joseph's Hospice** in Hackney, where he first teamed up with *Call Sign* Editor, **Alan Fisher** and the late **Ian Cameron**, to transport and even entertain the residents.

"May I, through *Call Sign*," said a happy Ken, "express both Jennie and my own thanks to everyone who helped make this a really special day of celebration, all those behind the scenes who supplied info and historic documents, from the TDOY Committee, Benevolent Fund folks and Dial-a-Cab Board and Staff for all their efforts. We both appreciate it greatly."

Well done Ken...

©Call Sign Magazine MM9

Brian Rice 'Minds' Minister at WCHCD Dinner!

The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers recently held a successful *Spring Court Dinner* where Masters and their Clerks from many different City Livery Companies joined them. Guest speaker was **Paul Clark MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport.

DaC Chairman Brian Rice was handed the "job" of looking after **Paul Clark** until dinner and had a comprehensive chat about the London taxi and radio trade. He added to *Call Sign*: "I felt a bit like Dennis Waterman's Minder!" (See cover photo).

Prior to a champagne reception, new Freeman were admitted to the WCHCD. The Master, **Andrew Overton** and his Court of Assistants welcomed Spencer Davis, Alan Garner, Mario Alain Goinden and Edward John Relph. It is always gratifying to welcome new Freeman into the Company, which continues to accept applications. Anyone wishing to learn more about the Company can contact The Clerk, Mary Whitworth, on 01494 765922.

Soon the reception began and the Saddlers Hall was filled with Liverymen, Freeman and their guests. The WCHCD is held in high regard throughout the City and Masters of other livery Companies attending the dinner brought great diversity to the proceedings. They included those from the Tax Advisers, the Firefighters, the Carmen and the Saddlers.

One of the more prominent events in the annual diary of WCHCD is the annual *Magical Taxi Tour* to Disneyland Paris and many of the Livery Companies are pleased to help sponsor this event and make it possible. In his speech, Andrew Overton thanked these Livery Companies and added that the WCHCD



WCHCD Master, Andrew Overton, with Paul Clark. Earlier Brian Rice had 'minded' him!

had already taken over 3000 terminally and chronically sick children to Disneyland Paris.

Paul Clark then spoke of his admiration for London's taxi trade and the work it does. He referred to less mobile passengers and how they have come to rely on the trade. He spoke on the consultation currently under way that was looking into the provision of taxi services across the country. Not every town and city in the UK has the same requirements for taxis as London, so the government is consulting with taxi and private hire trades and their users to look at solutions that would meet passengers' needs.

Diners later enjoyed a Stirrup Cup and Paul Clark was happy to answer questions. The evening was enjoyed by all who attended...

Richard Cudlip (V23) has been on DaC since 2006, is a self-confessed general computer geek with his own blog and who in a previous life worked for several IT companies.

"Because of that," Richard told *Call Sign*, "I have been using Twitter for a while and been talking to other drivers - both DaC and non-DaC - about how it could be a useful tool for cab drivers." For those unable to raise a Twitter, Richard went on to explain to this mag what it was all about, because most of the publicity from celeb Twitterers such as Stephen Fry and DaC client Jonathan Ross using accessories such as Twiterrific while conversing on what time the pooch needs his next walk, mean little to us seemingly dull folk at *Call Sign*!

Richard went on to explain: "It's a free web-based service that allows you to stay in contact with a group of people via short text messages. You can send and receive messages via the web or text message. Most modern mobile phones can be used to access the service. It's like messages sent via our DaC terminals, but potentially open to a much wider audience."

Now in full flow, Richard continued: "I agree with a few of the drivers I've been talking to who think that it could be a really useful tool for cab drivers and the likes of DaC. The implications of this kind of technology on DaC could be huge. I can easily see how it could let groups of cab drivers get organised and, in the not too distant future, even be used to try and get work. Technology is moving apace and things like Twitter, whilst possibly just being the current buzz thing, are going to change even old fashioned trades like ours."

Call Sign asked Richard about the danger of taxi drivers sending messages while driving and what the difference between Twitter and just sending someone a text message was?

"If your phone is in a proper holder," said Richard, "it shouldn't really be a problem to have a look once in a while when you are stationary - not much different to the DaC terminal. Maybe it's something for the IT men to have a think about? As for Twitter itself, the difference is really how easy it is to get and receive messages whilst you're mobile, plus the fact that it allows you to connect to as wide an audience as you want. You can send / receive messages from most decent mobile phones so that up-to-date and useful info can be accessed while you are working. It's nothing that our message facility doesn't already offer DaC drivers, except that what gets sent and viewed is controlled by the user. Also, it could connect drivers even if they are on other circuits or not on radio at all."

Richard ended by adding: "I have already had people that 'follow' me (ie read my Twitter blog updates) asking if I could pick them up from somewhere when they know I'm working. I haven't acted on any of these yet as I've never been in the right place at the right time. But I can easily see how even a small network of drivers could start using Twitter to try and get work. I think the potential is huge, but then I'm a great advocate of technology and the web.

Whether the average driver would get

To Twitter or not to Twitter?

**Apologies to William Shakespeare...
but in 2009 - THAT is the question**



Richard Cudlip

involved in this sort of thing is another matter, but I think the likes of Dial-a-Cab shouldn't ignore it. There's much publicity surrounding Twitter currently thanks to people like Stephen Fry, so even as some sort of publicity stunt, it might be worth DaC trying to get in on the act!"

So we asked DaC's Network Administrator, Jonathan Winterburn, to give his view on this social networking phenomenon. He told Call Sign:

"I've never used Twitter and never will. I used Facebook for a while but have since closed my account, as I don't like their ethics.

Personally, I think all this 'social networking' is highly overrated and only became popular when the proletariat got computers at home and many of those people used social networking to justify their own existence by collecting 'friends'.

"Ok, I'm joking about the proletariat, but back when computing was a black art that was only accessible to the elite few who actually understood the science of computing, we used to rely on two main forms of electronic communication - email and usenet (news-groups). I think both of these are still more than adequate (albeit antiquated by today's standards) and are the best forms of communication for grown adults. Leave the likes of MySpace, Facebook and Twitter for children, the uneducated and socially lacking celebrities amongst us!

Not usually a luddite, considering my job and my passion - but:

1. Why reinvent the wheel when the current wheels are superior?

2. Why must we insist on telling everybody else what we are doing every minute of the day, irrespective of how mundane and pointless it is?

Richard Cudlip's blog can be found at www.thecabbiescapital.co.uk and an article by him can be found in Time Out (31 March)...

Handel Reveal'd: The Story of George Frideric Handel

Marking the 250th anniversary of the death of the great composer, George Frideric Handel, a new exhibition will explore his life and character. It opens in April 2009 at **Handel House Museum**, the Georgian building at **25 Brook Street**, which was his home for thirty-six years.

Handel Reveal'd will investigate many aspects of Handel's life, drawing on objects from the Museum's own collection, significant loans from national museums and private collections. **The exhibition will run from 8 April - 25 October 2009**

and will be one of many events, performances and broadcasts arranged to mark the anniversary.

It was at Brook Street where Handel composed some of his most celebrated pieces, including his most famous work, *Messiah*. A visit to the exhibition will also take in Handel's bedroom, in which he died early on the morning of 14 April 1759, having announced the previous evening he would no longer be receiving guests at the house as he had 'done with the world'.

Among the exhibits will be a rarely seen life mask of Handel by *Roubiliac*, loaned from a private collection. A key object will be the score for the final piece of music written by Handel, *Jephtha* and written in Handel's own hand.

Visitor information

Tues, Wed, Fri, Sat 10am - 6pm; Thurs 10am - 8pm; Sun 12 noon - 6pm. Closed Mondays.

Admission charges: £5 adults; £4.50 concessions; £2 children and free on Saturdays

Handel House Museum, 25 Brook Street, Mayfair, London, W1K 4HB

For further information: 020 7495 1685 or www.handelhouse.org



It isn't just London that is preparing for the Olympic Games and neither is it just London taxi drivers who are concerned that they may be left out of the circle.

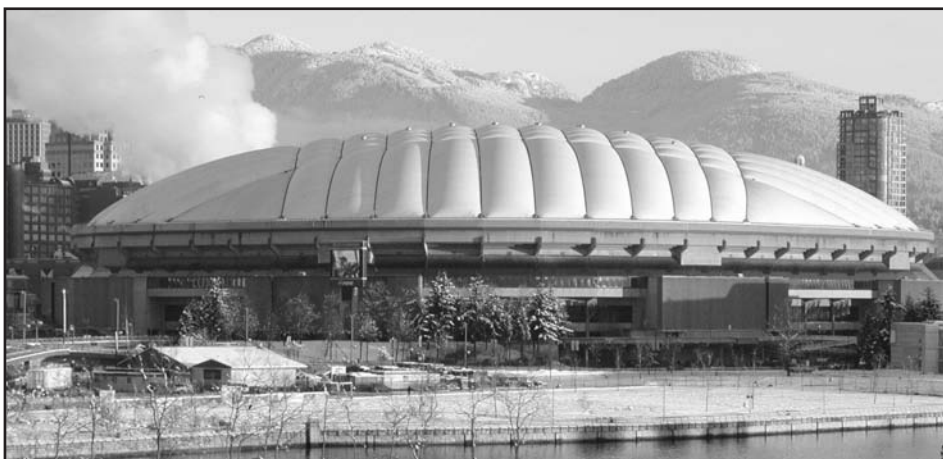
Next February sees the beginning of the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics to be held in Vancouver, Canada where John Palis, executive director of the Vancouver Taxi Association and general manager of Yellow Cab, says he is disappointed that taxis will not get access to the specially designated Olympic Lanes during the Games. Mr Palis claims his company carries 30,000 people a day and feels that not including cabs in the transportation plan is a major oversight. He added that cabs will be stuck in the same gridlock as other drivers.

Call Sign has been worried about taxis and London's 2012 Games for some time. In the February 2005 issue, we interviewed the-then Head of the London Communications Team 2012 and former PA to Ken Livingstone, Liz Crawshaw at a time when we were still bidding to have the Games in London.

Editor Alan Fisher asked Ms Crawshaw about the *Olympic Route Network* claiming it sounded ominous for the taxi trade and its inclusion within TfL's bus lanes.

Liz Crawshaw's answered: "Not everyone taking part in the 2012 Olympics will be staying in the Olympic Village and many will need to travel from London hotels to their particular events. They will be given their own priority lanes known as *Olympic Route Networks*. These will not cover the whole of London, just some specific routes. However, we have been assured that taxis will not be excluded from bus lanes due to ORNs. I have actually raised that question with Hugh Sumner, TfL's Head

Things to Come in 2012...?



Vancouver is almost ready for 2010 but cabs are being excluded

of Olympic Transport. Requirements from the IOC dictate that type of Olympic Route will be needed, but actual specifics as to how it will be implemented have not yet been discussed, but taxis being able to use those routes will be discussed. But as I've said, they will not interfere with your use of bus lanes."

That, together with the Vancouver cabs experience, sounds ominously as though we'll be able to use bus lanes but *Olympic Route Networks* will overshadow these and we could get stuck in horrendous, never-ending jams. Hopefully our representatives will be able to get us some help.

The **London Taxi Network**, who represent **Dial-a-Cab** together with **RTG** and **Xeta** as a group, have been part of the Olympics

Consultation process. Part of their response was to say:

"We believe that London's licensed hackney carriages should be classified as one of the Games' accredited vehicles and subsequently granted access to the accredited vehicles only lanes within the ORN."

"The licensed taxi is an integral part of London's transport infrastructure and passengers will be able to rely on high levels of safety, convenience and quality at reasonable cost in a recognisable and well maintained purpose built vehicle."

"Like the other Games' accredited vehicles that will be using these lanes, our vehicles are instantly recognisable and distinguishable as a vehicle that is allowed to use the lane."

Let's hope the Olympic Committee listen...

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



CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



I got some really good feedback from **Dial-a-Cab** subscribers that I met on the 'Fins' just before Christmas who wanted to purchase my organic wine from the South of France.



So, just to remind those yet to sample this fine tittle from a small family-run vineyard down by the Med, it is available at almost half the price of other organic wines you can purchase from supermarkets or wine merchants - perhaps the Editor can vouch for its quality? (*Indeed, the bottle of red I sampled was extremely pleasant... Ed*)

I also had a really good testimonial for my wines recently when a renowned restaurateur - whose establishment lays just north of the border in the pretty spa town of Moffat in Scotland - added us to his wine list. It's a good bit of kudos as the restaurant has won awards for their choice in wines. The only difference here is that they want to change the label to reflect their own business, but that's not an issue. It just reminds me of the time **Brian Rice** once said to me: "Your wine is good, the price is right... but the label is bloody awful!" I never had the neck to tell that to the designer - the vineyard owner himself - who just tries to be different!

So, carry on drinking the cheap vinegar from Costco and others if you must, but if you want something decent to wash down

that Sunday roast, give me a shout.

My new website is currently under construction, but you can always get me via email me on woodford19@btinternet.com if you want to meet me in the City one evening. £25 buys you 6 bottles of full bodied red or fruity red or medium sweet white or any mixed case of the three - check out

the cost of a case of 6 organic wines next time you are online and you'll see for yourself how mine compares!

A bientot

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

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Contact Shayne Wise (G05)

Tel: 01708 753128 or on mobile: 07590 540620

Email: shaynewise@yahoo.com

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

It has been some weeks since my last article, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank the membership for supporting me for another 2 years.

Towards the end of the previous period, there had been a tremendous amount of activity within Dial-a-Cab. As you know, in an effort to cut costs a small number of redundancies had to be implemented.

This was most certainly an extremely difficult decision for DaC to take, let alone execute. As well as the number of staff who were in line for redundancies, those that were involved in carrying out the procedures were undoubtedly also distressed due to the fact that some members of the team had not only been with Dial-a-Cab for many years, but were also good friends with other staff and Board members socially. Making multiple redundancies - whether it is senior managers or other members of staff - is I believe something previous BoM's have never had to negotiate.

Together with a Human Resource personnel, a Board Member and the Chairman and following all guidelines available, the process was carried out with humility and dignity. They should all be commended in the way they carried out an extremely difficult task.

There can be no nice way of giving someone the dreaded news of being made redundant, but Chairman Brian insisted on speaking

Mike Son's Bits and Pieces



personally to every one to whom the decision applied to and assured them all that it was the position that was being axed rather than the person. I believe that whilst no one liked it, most appreciated the fact that there was no hiding behind heads of staff in giving the news.

And some good news...

New accounts are continuing to be opened, even during these difficult times. Although taxi usage has been reduced, nevertheless the DaC Accounts Department personnel rigorously monitor the situation.

However, any client information is valuable. As drivers, if you hear a passenger is dissatisfied or complaining about any aspect of our service, please let us know. It is so important that we make contact with customers sooner rather than later. You never know; you could be instrumental in stopping the account moving to a minicab company.

Naturally, if you hear something positive that a client wants passed across, let us know about that too. It could be something useful that we hadn't thought of...

Mike Son
Special Projects

ED THOMPSON: WE'RE SORRY!

The PCO of late have been sending out their *notices* as if the licensed public and private hire groups are one. This has annoyed the taxi trade press who constantly point out to Penton Street that we are not private hire drivers, just as they are not licensed taxi drivers. It has also been pointed out that the Knowledge of London is available to anyone with a clean record and on completion of those 3 years or so, they too can become taxi drivers.

So when 10 months ago, the PCO sent out a *notice* under the heading *One strike and you're out*, the impression given was that any licensed driver could be accused of touting and would then immediately lose their licence. Up till now, the trade has been calling on the PCO to rescind that notice so far as taxi drivers were concerned. It ended with the February 5 demo at Trafalgar Square, where many drivers were seen to be waving a copy of the *one strike and you're out* PCO notice.

Finally the PCO - in the form of **Taxi and Private Hire Director, Ed Thompson** - has sent out an apology for inferring that the *notice* applied to taxi drivers. However, they have sent it out as a letter to all 25,000 of us rather than as a PCO *notice*, which would then be circulated to the world via different national outlets just as all PCO *notices* are. We do not know if they have also sent out an additional 54,000 to private hire drivers informing them that the notice only applied to them, because the original *notice* was also published in the minicab press.

Call Sign believes that the apology should have been sent out as a *notice* in addition to any letter; or if they wanted to avoid the cost of 25,000 stamps, instead of the letter. Either way it should be put into the public domain and **Call Sign** is doing that now...

One strike and you're out

In my letter of July 2008, I set out the new policy of revoking the licences of any licensed private hire vehicle (PHV) or taxi driver who was convicted by a magistrate's court of touting. This policy was targeted mainly at that minority of licensed PHV drivers who illegally seek to tout or ply for hire. As a result, the PCO has revoked over 50 PHV driver licences following magistrate's court convictions since August 2008.

There has never been any intention to change the historic and unique right of licensed taxi drivers to ply for hire in London. The policy of 'one strike and you're out' highlights the fact that PHV drivers do not - and never will - have the right to ply for hire. The PCO upholds this principle and it is well understood in the magistrates' courts.

Magistrate's court convictions for touting by licensed taxi drivers are rare - there have only been two in the last two years (both of which

have arisen from incidents at Heathrow Airport) and none since August 2008. The PCO would generally not revoke a taxi driver's licence for such an offence. In the unusual event of a licensed taxi driver being convicted for touting and failing to overturn the conviction on appeal, it is not our intention to apply the 'one strike and you're out' policy. The previous policies and procedures will apply.

I apologise for any confusion caused by including licensed taxi drivers in the 'one strike and you're out' policy.

TfL and Westminster City Council have agreed to work together with the licensed taxi trade and others to improve late night travel in the West End and deal with illegal touting and related offences.

Regards,



Ed Thompson - apologised to taxi drivers

Ed Thompson
Taxi and Private Hire Director



Keith Reading

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Dial-a-Cab driver **Nick Nicola (099)** doesn't always see too much of wife **Joanne**, even though they are just a normal married couple living under the same Essex roof. That's because for 8 hours each day, Joanne locks herself and her laptop in a room and continues writing the follow-up to her book, **Holly Blue**, which has just had its second edition published.

Nick joined Dial-a-Cab in 2007 and had been driving a taxi for four years previous to that. Joanne on the other hand was a nail technician, but decided to take a year off because she had long wanted to put the novel that had been floating around her head for such a long time, onto paper.

"I used to write poetry," Joanne told **Call Sign**, "but I just knew that this story was inside me waiting to come out. It was published and became quite successful so I set about writing the sequel (*smile if you love me*). But my daughter left home whilst I was writing it and I began suffering from what is known as *Empty Nest Syndrome*. What had originally been a hobby had suddenly become my career and I felt extremely stressed. I knew all along I was going to write three books about the life of Sofia Constantine, but always felt it was just as a hobby, I never imagined anyone would take me or the books seriously!"

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

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

The Wife's Book Gets A Second Edition!

"Now I'm off down the gym, " says DaC's Nick...!"



Yianoulla's second edition cover



Yianoulla or Mrs 099

So what is **Holly Blue** about? Well it has been given a new makeover for its second edition, (published 26th March 2009). The book introduces readers to Sofia, a young girl who is torn between her Greek heritage, strict upbringing and relaxed English surroundings. Holly is undoubtedly a spoiled child, but one Christmas she discovers a deception by her father that changes everything she has ever believed in. The trilogy follows her life and loves in a dramatic, compassionate tale. Yianoulla's Greek descent enables her to write with honesty and a deep insight into Greek culture.

Back to hubby! When Nick heard that

Joanne wanted to write a novel, like Joanne he assumed it was a hobby. But he admits that it almost took over her life. Nick enjoys reading – his favourite being autobiographies. But his main enjoyment is going to the gym. So would he ever write a book?

"If I can think of a book involving taxi driving and muscles, I'd think about it. But one author per family is usually enough – especially after seeing how difficult it is!"

Good luck to Joanne and Holly Blue...

Holly Blue by Yianoulla Nicola... HandE Publishers Ltd £6.99... Available on Amazon.

GREEN IS THE COLOUR - GRANDPA IS THE GAME...!

Call Sign's snapper becomes a granddad!

Call Sign received this letter in its latest batch of post. It came from a young lady called **Alexia** who is now over three months old and just getting into email! She wrote:

Dear Ed,

Am I your youngest reader? I'm **Alexia**, daughter of **Call Sign's** former columnist, Zara G, and first grandchild to Marilyn and **Alan Green**, your snapper fella!

I was born on 22 December 2008 in Barnet Hospital and my dad Carl, who is a Logistics Manager for a national freight company, helped the midwife during my birth. He says that I'm the best 'delivery' he has ever made!

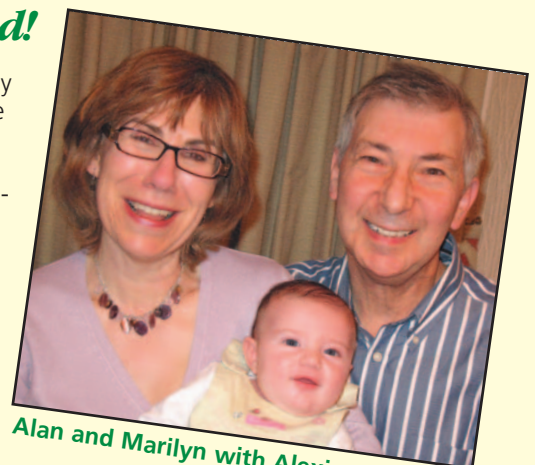
I originally weighed in at 7lbs 10oz and have steadily risen to 11lbs 6oz, which is why both Grandma and Grandpa G are holding me in the photograph!

I've also got Carl's parents Julie and Mario and great grandparents, Daisy and Len from both sides of the family, so my current life is taken up in keeping them all amused when I'm not out with friends, shopping with my mum or sending emails!

Love and dribbles,

Alexia xxx

From everyone at **Call Sign**, many congratulations to the original Green family!



Alan and Marilyn with Alexia

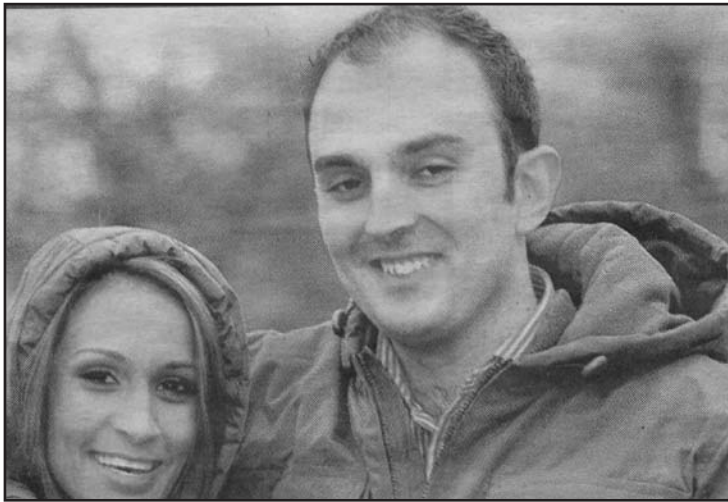
When Dial-a-Cab driver **John Hudson (W34)** contacted **Call Sign** to tell us that his son Mark was a genius, we had our doubts. After all, we knew that Mark wrote for *The Sun*, but a genius? Actually, Mark is a genius only on BBC2, because that's the channel that shows **Genius** - the comedy series where **Dave Gorman** and a celebrity guest discuss the possibilities of the British public's ideas that are so outrageously ridiculous, they can almost be looked on as genius!

Every Friday night at 10pm, you can watch the program that originated on radio and is one of only a few to successfully make the trip over to TV.

Mark Hudson's idea that triumphed over five other contestants was a jacket with an extra hood on the sleeve. Why? Well that allows a "gentleman" to protect a lady in the event of them being caught out in the rain by putting an arm around her and then cleverly pulling the extra hood from the sleeve! Of course, if she happened to be taller than the man - well we could need another genius to sort that one out!

Catherine Tate selected Mark's idea as the winner. According to him he dreamed it up in

DaC driver John Hudson tells Call Sign: MY SON IS A GENIUS!



Mark shows his extra hood
Pic courtesy The Sun

bus where every passenger had their own steering wheel. Depending on which direction the majority turned them would register which direction the driver headed towards first! But it wasn't as clever as Mark's extra hood...

Dave Gorman

the pub - certainly the mark of a genius! Among other ideas touted on *Genius* was a

introduces genius on Friday nights at 10pm (BBC2).

WCHCD, DAC AND A PANCAKE RACE!

The *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* were again delighted to be able to take part in this year's Pancake Races run in the Guildhall Yard by kind permission of the Chief Commoner. Organised by the *Worshipful Company of Poulterers* in association with *The Cook & The Butler*, Pancake Day is held on Shrove Tuesday, the traditional feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday and also as usual, DaC were well represented.

Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter, is traditionally a time of fasting. Traditionally, it became Pancake Day because milk butter and eggs were often the foods given up for Lent.

Back in 2004, the Poulterers began the City's inter-livery pancake race with Livery companies in some way associated with the making of pancakes. Nowadays, other Livery companies join the event, which sees the Masters and their teams race run along the Guildhall Yard with a pancake in a pan. Each runner has to flip the pancake at least once without dropping it on the floor! Themed hats are worn, making it even trickier to run. Unfortunately, this year saw WCHCD Master, **Andrew Overton**, injured during a pre-race practice session, so Dial-a-Cab driver and WCHCD Past Master **Geoff Richards (O87)** agreed to run on Andrew's behalf. Taxi drivers who are Freemen and Liverymen of the WCHCD team included **Carlos Oliveira**, running in the *Mad Hatters* race; both he and Geoff were second in their respective semi finals. Another DaC driver, **Ric Alford (O27)** was running in the Liveryman's race, while former DaC driver **Brenda Bartlett** was in the Ladies Race.

Each team has four competitors who compete for the Trophy - frying pans are awarded to the winner of each class final. Each heat is started by the *Gunmakers Company*, with the *Clockmakers* - being surprisingly perhaps - being responsible for the timing! Lemons are provided by the *Fruiterers* whilst the *Glovers* white gloves are worn by each runner. Sadly WCHCD did not win in their heats, but will immediately go into training again for next year!

Anyone for pancakes!

Flour, eggs and report: **Sandie Goodwin**
Pic: **Jim Rainbird (T25)**

DaC's Geoff Richards takes second place



Police Warning...

Kennington Police have asked the PCO to alert the licensed taxi trade to the following incident. A driver collected a fare from Shaftesbury Avenue 19 March at 2245 and took him to South Lambeth Road SE11. He is described as a white male, approx 25 to 30 years of age, 5'6 tall with short dark brown hair and clean-shaven. He was wearing a smart yellow hooded sweat top, dark blue jeans and light brown shoes. At the end of the journey, the fare got out of the vehicle, **approached the driver's window** and deposited some sort of substance on her face. The driver needed to seek medical assistance as a result.

DI Noyes would like to request that drivers bear in mind this incident whilst dealing with fares, especially with regard to requesting payment, ie **using the nearside window**.

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Many Dial-a-Cab drivers avail themselves of those eating establishments known as 'green huts' to passengers, but which we rather more correctly refer to as Cab Shelters. Thanks to **Norman Beattie** in Winnipeg, Canada – quite probably the world taxi trade's foremost historian – this issue of *Call Sign* looks at the origin of the Cab Shelter...

"The cabmen's shelter (which figures prominently in *Ulysses*) was an institution designed to provide drivers with a place to get in out of the cold and have a cheap meal without straying from the cab stand.

The first shelter was erected in London in 1875 at the instigation of Sir George Armstrong, a newspaper publisher who sent his servant out one blustery January day to fetch a cab from a nearby stand. The servant was a long time returning because the drivers had all abandoned their cabs and retired to the warmth and conviviality of a local pub.

It occurred to Sir George that if the cabbies had been provided with a heated shelter on the cab stand, his servant could have found a cab much sooner. Sir George immediately started a building fund and got some of his friends to contribute. Not coincidentally, the first shelter was located on the closest cab stand to Sir George's (Belgravia) home.

The idea caught on and more shelters were built by the *Cabmen's Shelter Fund*, which

History of the Cab Shelter



An early Cabman's shelter situated almost opposite Harrods!

equipped them with kitchens and recruited retired cabbies to operate them. The shelter design evolved somewhat, but by the 1890s it had standardised as a small, green-painted shed with a tiny kitchen at one end and bench seating for about a dozen customers on either side of a long, narrow table top. The cost for each shelter was about £200.

The shelters were located on the cab ranks, either in the curb or middle lane of thoroughfares. Police regulations dictated that the size of the shelters could not exceed the space occupied by a horse and carriage.

At their peak there were 61 cabmen's shelters in London, with many others scattered in cities and towns around England. Thirteen of the London shelters still survive as 'listed buildings' and all continue function as diners, each with its regular clientele of cab drivers."

You can enter the amazing historical world of taxis with Norman Beattie at... <http://tinyurl.com/af9wuz>

WARWICKS HELP TAKE TAXIS TO CHINA!



Patrick Plant with the new London Taxi company logo

Leading design and marketing agency, **Warwick UK**, is helping to fly the flag for Britain on one of the country's most iconic symbols - more than 5,000 miles away in Beijing!

The Coventry based company from Cheylesmore had been commissioned to design a new international logo for taxi manufacturers **LTI Vehicles** and the finished result will be displayed with pride on London Taxis building at their Shanghai joint venture with Geely Automotive.

The logo is designed to promote **The London Taxi Company** - a new brand established together with Geely as part of their joint venture company. Together, the logo and name will be used as the new international sales brand.

International Market Development Director at LTI Vehicles, **Matthew Cheyne**, told *Call Sign*: "We chose three main colours for the logo - red, white and blue - to symbolise the flags of both countries. With the basic design coming from within the company, the designers at Warwick evolved our ideas and early sketches into the

finished logo and we are delighted with the end result. Early feedback has shown how popular we think it will be."

The logo is the latest in a long line of wide-ranging projects undertaken by Warwick for LTI in a partnership spanning more than a decade. They had previously worked on manuals and handbooks for various LTI models including the TX4 and have designed international brochures, which have been reproduced in numerous languages.

Patrick Plant, Managing Director of Warwick, added; "The move into China is the dawn of a new exciting chapter for LTI and Coventry's motoring heritage. As a fellow Coventry firm with roots in the city for four decades, we are pleased to play such a big part. LTI's famous taxi is now clearly recognised as a British icon and we are proud to be involved in its first venture to the Orient."

Since being formed 40 years ago, Warwick has played an integral role in the brand building process for some of the biggest names in the motoring industry and enjoyed relation-

ships with some of the top international brands such as Jaguar, Land Rover, Massey Ferguson, Dunlop Aerospace and Aston Martin. Many of these relationships have spanned more than a decade and some have lasted more than a quarter of a century.

More than a design and marketing agency, Warwick prides itself in identifying opportunities for clients and helping to deliver mutual and sustained growth.



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- Accident Recovery
- Pay as you go to Membership
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We make the wheels turn
so you can earn,

Packing in work...

Well into his 80s and still dispensing judicial wisdom, Lord Denning once said: "I embody all the Christian virtues, except resignation." Well, I've just resigned. I'm going to retire. Taxi drivers have no expiry date, but for us wage-slavers it's 65 and I'm out of here before then - hopefully before I expire, as my bosses have just cancelled the in-service death-benefit, which was our last perk. Onward to fun and good works for the rest of my life! No more paid holidays, no free tea and photocopier, no Christmas blowout or cakes for everyone's birthday - I can deal with it. We office hacks probably don't have the stories or great memories you **Dial-a-Cab** drivers do, but there were high points in my long career - usually revolving around crises - I could enjoy without being involved in, like the Great Font Wars of 2002. A bored secretary started using large, Gothic type for attendance notes and dazzling colours to highlight her views on whatever she was typing. She downed tools when told to conform and when she gathered some support, they had to bring in a professional mediator. Of course *Arial* and *Times New Roman* were always going to win and colour was banned, along with the drops of blood she sometimes put to drip off large letters, which I actually found quite clever.

At that office, another war broke out later between those wanting lights on and windows shut, against the fresh-air, no-glare camp. The latter were white and the warmth and lights-on people were black Afro-Caribbeans, which made it a delicate issue. Management was determined everyone had to be happy. Individual lamps and heaters sprang up, workstations were moved and long meetings were called. I stayed away, as my attempt

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

Back Seat *Driver*



at honest peace broker by suggesting the cold people wore cardigans, was laughed out of court since the scantily-clad black ladies at that time wouldn't be caught dead in a naff cardigan. Obviously.

My current office had a Great Toilet War two years ago and I was involved, though it was too awful for me to write about at the time. Though I noticed nothing, there were months of complaints led by a snooty enemy of mine on Floor 2, about unspeakable fouling by persons unknown. The most detail given was a floating tampon (not me - too old!) and a tights packet left on the floor. Practices '*a three-year-old would be asbamed of*' were also mentioned. Everyone started complaining but me.

Apart from feeling I must be under suspicion, I had a real problem secret before that of needing instant access to a loo due to chronic inflammatory bowel disease. When my nearest loo was locked as col-

lective punishment, I got a key, but people started to notice I had a private en suite as it were and the boss emailed from head office demanding I hand it back forthwith! Yikes! An interview followed with two male bosses and questions about my habits. But I won the Great Toilet War, dear **Call Sign** readers, by invoking the *Disability Discrimination Act* and bringing in the *National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease* to assist. Snooty left shortly afterwards.

Soon, no more dress-down days, team sponsored walks in the company's T-shirt, Grand National sweepstakes or Euro-Million syndicates. Will life be greyer or lovelier? I've had some great send-offs from jobs, too, like the one from young salespeople I worked with at Oxford Circus. They called me 'mum' and gave me *Elvis's Greatest Hits*. I'll miss being around youngsters - at least the ones who aren't, like, Omigod, like...

I won't miss the sweaty crush on the Underground and having to push people who won't move down, who then say stupidly, "you don't have to push." Most of all, I won't miss dragging my sorry self out of bed every day at 7, leaving my night-driving DaCman Glen snoring happily away for as long as he wants. I hope our relationship can survive me being there when he wakes up....

Till then...

Love Poppy x x x

Disclaimer: A taxi driver (W88 suspected) with a low opinion of women wrote the romantic fiction in last month's issue, under my name. Sisters, believe me. If I wrote stories, the heroines would be pure, faithful and non-materialistic, as in real life.*

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Although **Call Sign** wrote about this several years ago, some drivers still aren't aware that a five seater taxi can only carry a maximum of five passengers – even if two of them are children under the age of ten. The same applies to six passengers in a six seater.

The problem had its roots in the old days when passengers paid the fare plus 10p (later rising to 20p) for every extra passenger, but two children under ten counted as one extra passenger. Now some drivers are assuming that if two of the passengers are under ten, then that means they can carry six passengers in a five seater or seven passengers in a six seater. But the answer is that you can't and whilst your insurance company could possibly cover you were you to be involved in an accident with too many passengers on board, the PCO and possibly the police wouldn't like it – and you might even have to pay any outlay back to the insurance company for breaching their rules.

Tom Reynolds (O85) is one **Dial-a-Cab** driver who believed the above scenario regarding "extras" also applied to seat belts. Sensibly, he wrote to his insurance company (**Tradex**) and they confirmed the situation by replying to Tom with a very interesting response:

"As your insurer, we can only address the insurance issue. We are not competent to give legal advice or to comment on the PCO's interpretation of the legal position."

Your say your TXII is licensed by the PCO to carry five persons. We therefore insure you to carry 5 people be it adults or children. The fact that you may decide to risk your licence, your taxi badge and whatever to carry more passengers is your own decision and if you decide to do just that, obviously you are aware of the consequences. From an insurance point of view, we would be obliged to indemnify you under the Road Traffic Acts and therefore the Police could not convict you of no insurance, but they could still throw the book at you for every other offence that you may have committed.

There is, of course, the added problem that should there be an accident and injury to the passengers which exacerbated or even caused the accident by the overloading of the vehicles or lack of seat belts, then we could (having been obliged to deal with this claim under an RTA obligation) seek to recover our outlays and costs against you for breach of policy conditions (General Conditions for your duty of care – take reasonable steps to prevent injury).

With regard to passengers and seat belts, if they choose not to wear them (but they are readily available for them to wear) then from an insurance point of view, any passenger injury claim would be dealt with by us, but we would endeavour to seek from the passenger concerned a contributory negligence reduction in the passenger's claim against you / us. Furthermore, we would not consider the fact that they did not

Five Seat Belts Mean Five Passengers - MAX!

But are you liable if they don't use them...?



Five seat belts means five passengers unless under 3 years old

choose to wear the belt to be a breach by you of the policy conditions.

Finally, children being carried on the laps of adults. I don't know what the stance is here from the PCO, but, again from an insurance view, if the child was injured we would have to pay the claim in full (always assuming you are negligent in the first place) and again, we would not consider this to be a breach by you of the policy conditions.

Your principal concern has to be whether we cover you for certain risks and I hope that the above addresses this concern, but please understand that we are not legal advisers and if you have

any further worries you should consult your solicitors."

Tom also wrote to the PCO. They confirmed the story but added that as children under three are not required to wear seatbelts, the above situation would not then apply. So four adults and two children aged over three are not allowed, whereas 5 adults with two children under three sitting on adults laps, are.

You should also bear in mind that rules for one insurance company may not necessarily apply to others...

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Zone Change?

Just a thought...is it not possible to put SE75 back into Zone 1? When you look at the zones to book into, Zone 2 is usually full and you cannot see how many taxis are booked in, whereas Zone 1 has less postcodes and therefore drivers can always see how many are booked in. Can you please ask the man upstairs to see what he can do?

Mike Appleby (L73)

Hi Mike, Keith Cain has spoken to Theresa Whitfield in our IT department and she said that whilst Zone 1 is also pretty crowded, it looks possible that SE75 could be moved to Zone 3. Keith spoke to the BoM and as there were no objections, SE75 will in future appear in Zone 3 ...Ed

Why?

Why won't taxi drivers pick me up? So often I try to get a cab after midnight from Queen Victoria Street to Blackheath and no cabs will stop for me? I am usually in a suit and perhaps I've had a glass or two of wine, but I'm never drunk. So why is it that I usually have to end up getting a minicab - who incidentally are around twice your prices ie £50 instead of £25? My thanks to the Dial-a-Cab driver last Friday who proved the exception to the rule and who also told me to write to you...

G.S.McGrath

London SE3

Dunno! As I'm usually home by the bewitching hour, I can only assume that you are throwing up from your 'glass or two of wine' because I wasn't aware that it was that busy out ...Ed

Yellow badges...

It has been drawn to my attention that articles have been written in *Call Sign* magazine regarding allegations of suburban drivers plying for hire outside of their designated areas.

The articles had been written anonymously by the wife of a Dial-a-Cab driver, which started the rumour mill amongst drivers in all sectors. One sector has decided, without any evidence, that the persons involved in these allegations are my wife and myself.

In a recent edition of *Call Sign*, Michelle Haslam signed the letter. This person is not my wife. I hope this will put an end to these malicious rumours and allow us and any other drivers affected to get on with our lives.

Chris Havis (O65)

Sorry to hear that you and your wife are having these problems as a result of the *Call Sign* series of stories re yellow badges working in London. The actual stories were obviously true, otherwise the PCO wouldn't have put out a press release afterwards warning yellow badge drivers of the consequences of working out of their sector. However, they had nothing

to do with you or your wife and I'm happy to confirm that in print. One thing puzzles me though; those who were putting the rumours out about you and your wife, were they the ones working in town? As the *Call Sign* stories were trying to assist in getting rid of those hurting the yellow badge business, surely these people should be congratulating whoever it was ...Ed

To wait or not to wait - that is the question...

Alan

I back Martin Hizer's stance against PCNs as I would challenge every one too, but are we leaving ourselves open? We can't wait, so why do we? We can stop to set down or pick up on any street or urban clearway, even if controlled by loading restrictions, also at bus stops (except broad red line ones) without fear of a PCN. We can even enter to set down / pick up in bus lanes that taxis are prohibited from (except King Cross) so long as we exit immediately. So if you get a PCN and you're just dropping off, challenge it all the way because it's been incorrectly issued. I know some wardens are cheats and liars, but let's reduce the risks of PCNs by not leaving ourselves open. On cash rides, when asked to wait at shops or ATMs, say no unless it's safe. If they want a shop, drop them off, get them to pay and say get another cab when you are finished. Instead of an ATM, offer them the facility to pay via our terminal or drive them to a safe ATM. No waiting time in the world will be greater than the £120 PCN you might get, so why risk it? I know it's impossible not to illegally wait on radio jobs, but that's something that needs addressing with TfL and the trade, but we must still appeal any ticket because you never know.

The only way to stop this PCN onslaught is to cut its money supply and if we keep playing into their hands by waiting at ATMs or park on yellow lines outside the Queensway WCs when the Royal Oak with FREE parking and a WC is just 1 minute away, then we're printing money for them.

Alan, petrol stations; we can stop and wait at an ATM or shop on their forecourts, or if we ask nicely, even spend a penny without fear of that PCN. Most now have either one or all three services, which I believe are never more than a few minutes or slight fare detour away from wherever you are. For example, Texaco City Road and Shoreditch High Street - both have ATMs and WCs. Shell garages at Old Street, Southwark and Bayswater also have both facilities. Perhaps Alan Nash can compile a list of petrol stations with ATMs and WCs for us?

Just don't give the council your hard earned cash and fund their cameras. Start using petrol forecourts... it's safer...

Michael Beevor (N76)

Thanks for that Mike. Passengers do often

tend to exaggerate how long anything takes. Thirty seconds usually means 2 minutes, while one minute means five. And yes, both could mean at least a £60 fine to us by which time the actual passenger will be a distant memory. However, so far as work accepted via our DaC terminal is concerned, you will have read in this issue that as of 1 April, PCNs will be appealed using the services of the UK's biggest expert, Barrie Segal. When you get a PCN, give it to Nuala in Driver Services and she will enter the details onto a spreadsheet. That batch will then go into Barrie Segal's appeals procedure. If turned down, tell Nuala once again and it will be appealed again - all the way to arbitration if necessary. Having spoken to Barrie several times, believe me when I say that what he doesn't know about PCNs just isn't worth knowing! As was the case (reported in the Jan 2009 *Call Sign*) when Barrie forced the Adjudicator into the impossible and got the Controlled Parking Zone for the central zone of London's West End declared illegal! He isn't a guarantee of success, but he certainly narrows the odds a bit. As for Alan Nash making a list, that's a full-time job. Go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk for all previous issues back to 1997. To register for his UID (useful information document), which is packed with information you can use on a daily basis, click on the UID button on the web page or register direct on email; alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with the *subject* of the email as 'UID' and the body of the message containing your name, callsign, badge number, mobile (only used if he has problems with your email address) and your email address. And yes, it's free...Ed

Can you help?

I wonder if you would be kind enough to place a request for witnesses to an accident in which I was involved on 20 February 2009 at the junction of Gracechurch St EC3 and King William St EC4. It was at precisely 14:20 hours when the female driver of a silver coloured car collided with the nearside of my taxi, causing damage to the nearside doors and rear wing. I was not able for reasons to get her details at that precise time, having instructed her to pull into Cannon St to clear the busy junction and so avoid causing serious delays to other road users. Unfortunately she did not comply with my request and as a result I have no details of her.

I have also heard from the City of London police regarding this matter and it appears she may have reported myself for driving away! Any help you can give me would be gratefully appreciated.

John O'Brien



MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 29

Satnavs in taxis

Dear Al,

I thoroughly agree with your Editorial when you say that taxi drivers using satnavs make us look like private hire. I don't think these drivers realise the damage they are doing to the licensed London Taxi drivers' reputation by having the satnavs sitting on their dashboard, although I do believe some feel embarrassed about using them because they tuck them away into the far right hand corner of the windscreen using their body in an attempt to shield the satnav from the passenger's view.

However, may I offer a different angle on what I consider to be the short sightedness of some licensed London taxi drivers when it comes to our reputation and future? Consider this hypothetical situation:-

You have two Vito vehicles waiting for custom. They are identical in every sense – year of make, colour, vehicle condition etc – except one is private hire and the other a licensed London taxi with a 'for hire' sign.

Question: Which one should a potential customer choose? My heart says the taxi but why should that happen in reality? After all, they are identical vehicles! But, you say, the licensed taxi has the better quality driver. Whilst I agree with that statement, there's no guarantee the customer automatically would. So, in order to choose, the customer has a closer view of the two Vitos and notices that both vehicles are using identical satnavs.

Question: Now which vehicle should the customer choose? They may consider spinning a coin at this stage? After all they can see no difference apart from a 'for hire' sign.

And so we go a step further with the customer choosing on-line. They see the identical Vitos and they now 'know' that everyone uses satnav and at this stage they don't even consider the quality of the driver. No – they just notice the price! And because we're now offering the same product as private hire, what else have they got to make their minds up? And can you blame them?

Guys, every time you dilute and devalue our brand and reputation you are giving our work away. People trust certain brands – they know what they're getting. But if you remove the recognisable brand, as with the traditional Taxi profile and reputation for knowing London, you blur the criteria for the passenger's choice.

Just for the record I believe the TX taxi can do with huge improvements, but I wouldn't trade in our world-renowned brand if it meant losing our work - and consequently, our jobs...

Doug Vogel (R05)

Thanks Doug. There is of course the possibility that some out there will believe that you don't really exist and it's me writing under a pseudonym! As I've said many times, I have nothing against satnavs. I carry one in my bag and have used it on a few occasions when going out into the sticks. But I find it almost humiliating

when passengers get in and offer me their postcode, obviously having had it accepted by a previous driver with a satnav on display.

And of course I agree 100% with your Vito sentiments. I have nothing against the Vito as a car, but any vehicle already being used by private hire should never be used as a taxi. It is an offence to use a taxi as a private hire vehicle – but the same doesn't apply to the Vito. So yes, I think it's the beginning of the end for the trade with the blurring of the edges into one big meatball...Ed

Cash work and WIFI

I recently accepted a cash trip on my terminal that turned out to be pre-booked. I thought we had stopped taking cash pre-bookings because of the possible legal implications if one of our cabs arrived late or not at all? When I queried this with control at the time, I was told that I was wrong and that we now did them because of a request in *Call Sign* by one of my peers. Having checked this out and finding it to be correct, I also used the *Call Sign* search engine to locate Allen Togwell's answer when this point was raised in April 2000. The decision was made then to stop taking cash pre-bookings because of a recent court case where a taxi operator was sued successfully for failing to provide a cab at the pre-booked time. So what's changed? Surely a legal precedent is a legal precedent? Can we now afford to take on the judicial system in these difficult times?

Also whilst working recently, I noticed that I seem to be able to get a WIFI connection when I parked near some Addison Lee vehicles. Having made some enquiries, I can confirm that Addison Lee are now offering this facility in all their Mercedes. What a great selling point! Why did they think of it first! It's starting to look like we really are playing second fiddle to a glorified minicab company. We should be ahead of the game and not playing catch up.

Steve Gander (V20)

Keith Cain replies: The Board decided to accept cash bookings because of the reduction in account work we are currently experiencing, with that cash work carries a handling charge which the driver has to collect at the end of the journey. We felt that making our terms and conditions available to the caller prior to them making the booking, was a way to reduce any possible legal challenge being successful.

With regard to your second comment regarding WIFI connection in cabs; I don't agree that DaC is playing second fiddle to anyone. WIFI technology has been around for a long time and it has only become more popular in the past few years. The City of London back in 2007 launched one of Europe largest and most advanced WIFI Networks. It was designed and built onto existing street signs and lampposts. Since then, the advancement of mobile broadband has been fascinating and it would not surprise me if this were not one of the most cost effective

methods to use.

The Editor contacted LTI recently and asked about the possibility of WIFI in all new cabs. He was told it could be done, but would be quite expensive and that many people requiring to be online now use a BlackBerry anyway. That doesn't need WIFI – which may be useful for hotel rooms, but not necessarily taxis any more.

Steve, you obviously see this facility as the difference between a passenger using Addison Lee rather than ourselves, when in reality it is purely the cost of the journey. Clients require up-to-date technology to order their vehicle and manage their costs. I believe DaC are still the leaders with this type of technology and definitely not the followers.

Call Sign Eurostar deals...

Dear Alan,

Call Sign magazine had discount deals for Eurostar; are these still available to Dial-a-Cab drivers or has this offer finished? I must add that I enjoy reading *Call Sign* very much - the best read in the trade.

Brian Marcantonio (R73)

Hi Brian, Eurostar would always make room for a former Taxi Driver of the Year winner (1993) and more importantly, a *Call Sign* caption competition winner (Jan 2006)! Yes, the deal is still on and all you need do is go to DaC House and pick up a form. The reason I haven't been publishing the ad of late is because the service was busy and getting your preferred dates wasn't quite so easy. With everything quietening down, the deal is back to normal – although you still can't guarantee your first choice date, but the chances are good. For those that don't know, DaC drivers get a return Eurostar trip for £49, or if you fancy something a bit more luxurious, you can go first class for £99 return. And for anyone looking for a relaxing short break that hasn't yet tried Lille, I'd recommend it. Incredibly just 80 minutes from St Pancras, it's a very walkable city filled with shops, bars and restaurants ...Ed

The gentle ladies circuit?

I was watching my husband, Russell Poluck (T55), turn his terminal on and was a bit shocked to see *'The Gentleman's Circuit'* appear as a screen saver. I'm not sure what the ladies on Dial-a-Cab think about this and I do understand that many years ago you only had men on the circuit, but in this day and age I think it should be looked into. Yes I know I am not a taxi driver, but I hope I am speaking on behalf of all the lady cab drivers out there.

As a parting shot. I was reading the March *Call Sign* as I like to keep up with the taxi



MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 30

world, but discovered an error. On page 13, you have put (hubby) Russell as Chairman of the War Disabled Charity, but he is actually the Chairman of the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity - although he was on the WD committee many years ago!

Keep up the good work.

Barbara Poluck (Mrs T55)

The title of The Gentleman's Circuit came after several drivers assisted former Board member Joe Assenheim on a day when his cab broke down - around 45 years ago. The title stuck and I don't think anyone has ever raised the point that it could be sexist. I believe we have 22 lady drivers and if any of them would like to comment on whether Barbara is right, I'd be happy to publish their views.

As for the mistake, it comes from sitting through the meeting twice! Not that it was boring, you understand, but Linda had to come and wake me up twice whilst I was going through it again afterwards! Apologies to Russell ...Ed

And speaking of ladies...

I recently had an urgent need to use a loo and as I was close to the Roman Way fitting bay, I thought I'd pop in to use theirs. There are two toilets there - one for men and one for women. Never having been in the gents, I have no idea about how it is left, but I had a shock when I went into the ladies because while there could be no complaint about the

cleanliness of the toilet itself, there was a rather delicate problem involving how the pan was left. I know that there can't be many more than around 20 lady drivers on DaC, so that loo is probably used far less than the gents. Whenever I have used it in the past, I've got the key from Dana because it was always kept locked. The problem I mentioned earlier came at a time when the key to the Ladies had gone missing and whilst not impossible that the last person could have been a longsighted female, it was more probably a male who couldn't wait for his own loo to become available.

Dana always makes sure the loos are clean. That leaves me with two questions; why didn't the person using it earlier use the brush that is always next to the pan and why can't it be locked as it always was?

The delicate assistance of *Call Sign* would be appreciated...

Janet Fox (G35J)

I once went on the old London Transport skid patch at Chiswick, where the experience was frightening - but it was infinitely more pleasant than the one you describe! Anyway, Jacqui Chart at DaC had a word with Dana and the toilet is now kept locked. Any Ladies needing to use it should ask Dana for the key ...Ed

More at the 'More London' rank...?

Hi Alan

Recently I have been observing the parking problems on the south side of Tooley Street by the taxi rank opposite More London. This

is a very busy rank and the size of the rank was woefully inadequate to my mind, but could be extended to at least accommodate 6/7 cabs as there is a parking bay directly in front, which appears little used for the amount of the public who require taxis here throughout the day. Therefore I thought I'd contact the PCO to ascertain what could be done to make the rank larger. Below is the recent correspondence I received and I hope it will be of interest for our drivers and others who regularly use this rank.

David Baker (D22)

Well done David. It just shows what can be done. Robin Gillis, the Integration & Interchange Manager at the PCO, responded to David ...Ed

"David, thank you for your email. I have observed that taxis are in need of more space for some time down at Tooley Street. We are at present drawing up a scheme with our 'Streets' department as it is a TfL controlled road, to take some of the loading bay beyond the rank that you are describing. It would appear we can double the rank capacity, but not extend the rank to take the whole of the bay. I am hoping to be able to finance and organise this in the new financial year starting from April, and I have an agreement with 'Streets' so hopefully we can get something into place fairly soon."



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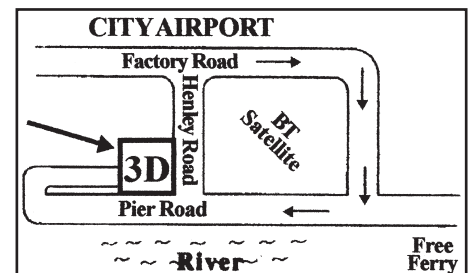
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