

August 2009



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*No 'Casualty' as Jim begins Kwame's 45,000 mile Commonwealth tour!*

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

**Brian Rice resigns as Chairman of London TaxiBoard**

**A DaC driver asks: What is "our work?"**



*Call Sign at the world's biggest building site asks: "Will the Olympic Park be finished in time???"*



# NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

New Eurostar timetable started 04/07/2009 and is valid until 12/12/2009 - unless they change it mid term as they usually do! For 'What's On' in August (probably not a lot although the football season starts 15/08/09) go to [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) and click on "Extras."

Time	From	Train	Notes	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
07:55	Brussels	9109		★	★	★	★	★	★	
07:58	Paris	9005		★	★	★	★	★		
08:28	Paris	9007		★	★	★	★	★	★	
08:56	Brussels	9113	until 31/08/09	★						
08:56	Brussels	9113	from 01/09/09	★	★	★	★	★	★	
08:57	Brussels	9113								★
08:59	Paris	9009	from 01/09/09	★						
09:34	Paris	9011		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
10:31	Brussels	9119		★	★	★	★	★	★	
10:36	Paris	9015		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
11:28	Paris	9019		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
12:26	Brussels	9181		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
12:29	Paris	9023		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
12:59	Paris	9025	until 31/08/09					★	★	★
13:28	Paris	9027		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
14:03	Brussels	9133							★	★
14:34	Paris	9031		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
14:59	Paris	9033								★
15:26	Brussels	9139							★	★
15:29	Paris	9035						★	★	★
15:56	Brussels	9141		★	★	★	★	★		
15:59	Paris	9037	until 31/08/09	★	★	★	★	★	★	
16:36	Paris	9039		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
17:03	Brussels	9145		★	★	★	★	★		
17:34	Paris	9043		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
17:59	Paris	9045	until 31/08/09							★
18:03	Brussels	9149								★
18:07	Brussels	9149		★	★	★	★	★	★	
18:34	Paris	9047		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
18:59	Paris	9049	until 31/08/09					★		
18:59	Paris	9049								★
19:03	Brussels	9153		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
19:34	Paris	9051		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
19:56	Brussels	9157		★	★	★	★	★		★
20:06	Paris	9053		★	★	★	★	★		
20:29	Paris	9055								★
20:29	Paris	9055	until 31/08/09						★	
20:34	Paris	9055		★	★	★	★	★		
21:12	Brussels	9057		★	★	★	★	★	★	★
21:29	Paris	9059		★	★	★	★	★		
21:33	Brussels	9163		★	★	★	★	★		★
21:33	Brussels	9163	until 31/08/09						★	
21:41	Paris	9059							★	★
21:59	Paris	9061								★
22:34	Paris	9063		★	★	★	★	★	★	★

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## from the editor's desk

*I don't particularly look forward to the August (or September) issues of **Call Sign**. Call me selfish, but when you guys all go away for your summer hols, it leaves me working out who there is left to write about! But plough on we must...*

### Olympics

**Call Sign** was recently given a tour of the gigantic building site in East London, known more officially as the Olympic Park. Somehow, on 27 July 2012 and for sixty days, London will become the sporting capital of the world when it hosts the Games of the XXX Olympiad. Then, when all is over and we revert to being just the tourist capital of the world, the Games will have left behind what's been described as a "sustainable community benefiting from new homes, a new park and world class sporting facilities." Sadly few living in the area seem to believe that. However, it's worth pointing out that those giving the tour genuinely believed it and that is certainly encouraging.

Perhaps that's why we are the tourist capital of the world - because in general we believe very little of what we see or hear and are something of a world-class novelty! We should introduce a new national anthem called *I'll believe it when I see it!*

In the meantime, a few facts about 2012 that you may not (yet) know. There will be almost 8million tickets available. The number of people expected to use public transport has been estimated at around 800,000. During the Games, 260,000 loaves of bread and 160,000 litres of milk will be consumed - hopefully at more realistic prices than the Wimbledon tennis rip-off merchants! And perhaps most impressive in these days of going "green," around 90% of materials reclaimed from demolition work at the site can be either reused or recycled. Oh, and one last thing - some 2000 newts will be relocated from the Olympic Park to a local nature reserve. If the Olympic bars are cheaper than Wimbledon - and let's be honest, they couldn't be any more expensive - you can probably add a few thousand human newts onto that total!

My only real concern is the official view on taxi facilities - that it's too early to worry about yet. Well actually it isn't. One piece of land where Hackney Marshes currently sits was described to me as a "possibility." Those of us who don't plan to leave the country during the Games will be awash in work, with thousands of people daily wanting to go to the Olympic Park. And what about the last 30 days when the Paralympics are on? Who will be taking the supporters who are in wheelchairs? Trade reps need to get in now and sort out taxi set-downs and pick-ups.

One thing is definite; there is no way on earth that we are going to be able to use the *Olympic Route Networks*. These are the routes that will be specifically for athletes and officials etc and which are said to take up 0.5% of our major roads - but no doubt the important ones. Buses too will be banned from them and that suggests traffic chaos that makes anything



we have ever seen before, seem like a walk in the (Olympic) park! My deep-rooted fear is just whose vehicles will be used in the *ORN*? I think you know what I mean. I don't fancy being stuck in a hold-up, while a bunch of PH cars with Olympic stickers shoot past me.

And for those who can't wait, tickets will be going on sale from January 2011...

### The LTFUC...

The *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children* recently paid for the refurbishment of a new medical facility at the Woodfield Special School in Kingsbury. The cost to the LTFUC was £3,000. But how do they do it and where does the money come from?

In early July, the LTFUC committee were invited to attend morning assembly at the **Underhill Junior School** in Barnet, where a cheque in the amount of £555.60 was presented to the fund's Hon Secretary, Malcolm Shaffron. And why did they do that? Well, some two months earlier, the Fund took children from the school on a trip to Woburn Safari Park. Head Teacher, Naz Goddard, later told **Call Sign** that they wanted to show the LTFUC how indebted they were for giving them the opportunity and that the donation was to show the appreciation of parents, teachers and carers for taking the children on the outing. The donation was presented amidst loud cheers and the LTFUC were extremely grateful.

But it is a gratitude that, whilst never taken for granted, they are getting used to after over 80 years. Because, when it comes to children's charities, the Fund are right up there at the top of the tree and unsurprisingly, a firm favourite when it comes to choosing a charity worth donating to. Many of the LTFUC committee are either on Dial-a-Cab or have been so in the past. But the bottom line is their association to the London taxi trade.

Indeed, this issue carries reports on several different taxi trade charity outings. There cannot be a trade in the world that does so much for charity, yet continually has to fight for its existence. At least we've had the time to get used to it since 1620 when good old Captain Baily sent out four coaches and drivers and told them to ply for hire along the Strand!

No doubt in 2020 we'll be having the same moans!

### Black Cab Fuel Cards...

I need help here! This issue contains an article on fuel cards that are now available to licensed taxi drivers. It should also contain a single page insert about those cards and will give the latest litre prices on the bottom, so that you can see how much you save. So why do I need help? Well, when things sound too good to be true, it's usually because they are! But in this case, I can't see anything other than a card well-worth getting.

At first I thought it was some kind of credit card where you could save 5p a litre on diesel, but paid it back in interest. But no, this is a fuel card that you can use every time you fill up your cab (or your car with petrol). You will then (via direct debit) pay weekly, beginning two weeks after you first use the card. You will save at least 5p per litre on the average price.

You can also check what you have spent at any time by going online. There are no fees or hidden costs whatsoever!

But what if you are shopping in Tesco and they offer you a discount on diesel that is too good to turn down? Easy, you just fill up there because there is nothing that says you have to use the card. It is entirely up to you. The only downside is that currently you have to use either Texaco or Morrisons. However, there are plenty of their sites around and the organisers are hoping to add more suppliers if the Black Cab Fuel Card is a success. I'm going to get one.

Details are inside this issue...

### Eurostar fares

In the December 2003 issue of **Call Sign**, we proudly announced a deal with Eurostar who were offering Dial-a-Cab drivers special subsidised fares from Waterloo to any of the Eurostar destinations. The fares for DaC drivers then were £49 standard return or £99 for the excellent first class return fare. You have always been allowed to take your friends and family with, provided that the DaC driver is among those travelling. Since then, the only thing to change was that Waterloo became St Pancras!

Well now, almost 6 years later, Eurostar have made an increase to the standard fare, which sees a £10 increase up to £59 - still a bargain! The first class fare remains at £99.

For those who haven't yet discovered them, the form you need to fill out is in the DaC driver reception where the trade papers are. If you have never sampled the relaxation of traveling via Eurostar, you can get to Calais in 58 minutes, Lille in 1 hour 20 minutes, Brussels in 1 hour 50 minutes or of course Paris, which is just 2 hours and 15 minutes away! If you compare that with flying, well just think about the two-hour check-in at the airport, then the hassle of getting out of the airport and getting to where your hotel is. With Eurostar, you "land" in the centre of your destination!

One piece of advice, if you are traveling and returning on different days, check that your selections are ok before booking a hotel.

*Merci et au revoir...*

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# Reflections Of The Chairman

## Heathrow and minicabs

There certainly has been a tremendous furore in the trade during the last month regarding minicabs having a booking desk on Terminal 3 and Terminal 5 at Heathrow. I have read all the various reports in the trade press and had several conversations with members of Dial-a-Cab on the same topic. Consequently, I intend to relay the events as they occurred regarding the situation and Dial-a-Cab.

On the morning of Wednesday 1st July, I received a telephone call from Geoffrey Riesel, the Chairman of Radio Taxis Group (RTG) informing me that a meeting was currently taking place at Heathrow between the British Airports Authority (BAA) and taxi trade organisations. The trade was being informed that as of 1st September, two minicab booking offices were being set up on terminals 3 and 5. Terminal 3 was to be operated by Addison Lee and terminal 5 by One Transport, the ground transportation wing of RTG. I must admit I was somewhat surprised at the stance that had been taken and put my opinion forward, however I was told that having these booking offices at Heathrow "was in the best interests of the trade."

As soon as our telephone call ended, I received two telephone calls from individuals at Heathrow, both informing me of the situation, while others asked me to clarify the situation.

Later that day, Geoffrey Riesel and I had a meeting with a company that acts jointly on our behalf to lobby the authorities on matters that concern our trade such as Private Hire in bus lanes and 'all over' liveries on minicabs etc. They have set up numerous meetings for us with various bodies that can have an influence on our trade. As stated earlier, the lobbyists were jointly funded by RTG and Dial-a-Cab.

Although both RTG and Dial-a-Cab had been reviewing the situation regarding funding due to the economic downturn and also because of other initiatives that were taking place in our trade with other organisations, it was reluctantly agreed at that meeting on 1st July that we would stop funding the lobbyists in the future.

In the meantime, as you can imagine, the mood in the trade was getting a little militant and advice was being offered at Heathrow in the shape of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), so much so that Bob Crow attended the feeder park to speak with drivers. I would like to point out that, in my opinion, events that take place at Heathrow would certainly have a bearing on the trade in town. If there is less work at the Airport, then there will be more vehicles in town looking for work and had the booking offices been successful, then other termini would adopt the same stance as BAA in an attempt to increase revenue.

The trade had also organised a 'drive in' at Mountview House, headquarters of RTG, for the afternoon of July 10th. That same morning at a meeting with BAA regarding the booking offices, trade officials informed BAA that they would take action if they (BAA) continued with their plans for the offices. The meeting adjourned without any settlement being reached. However, trade representatives received a telephone call at 16.00hrs that Friday afternoon informing them that BAA were going to scrap their plans for the time being regard-



ing the instigation of the offices. I immediately received a telephone call from the trade at the airport informing me of the situation.

No sooner had I finished talking to the 'trade' than I received a telephone call from Geoffrey Riesel informing me that, in his opinion, the 'drive in' at Mountview house had not been very successful. I had to tell him that it didn't really matter whether the 'drive in' was successful, as BAA had decided to postpone their decision to implement the booking offices.

So what really lies beneath this thinking to implement minicab booking offices? The answer is simple - money! Every time a taxi goes through the feeder park, the driver has to pay £5.50, but what does BAA get from private hire when they pick up at the airport? The answer is nothing! It is a fact that 24% of journeys from Heathrow go in a minicab, so imagine if they could charge every one of those trips? The income would be extremely substantial.

There is not any question in my mind that, in time, all cars would have to report to the booking office in order to pick up, or any pick up would have to come via the booking office.

I believe we need public support to keep the booking offices away and we will not get that support whilst we charge exorbitant prices for journeys that go just outside the MPD. The

trade has to implement a suitable system, because until they do, the situation we have just seen will appear again in the future. Irrespective of what anyone says about pre-booking, a member of the public would have been able to approach the booking office for a minicab and one would have been despatched from their airport car park to transport the passenger. That is almost tantamount to immediate hire and would circumvent the Hackney Carriage laws. I believe there would also be a substantial minimum price from the booking office and if the public did not wish to pay that amount to go local, guess where they would be directed to!

## DaC and TaxiBoard

**As you are probably aware, I am Chairman of the London TaxiBoard (LTB). However, due to events that have occurred during this past month, I feel I do not have any alternative but to resign from my position as Chairman. I believe it is imperative that both Dial-a-Cab and myself distance ourselves from events that recently occurred at Heathrow Airport.**

## John Lee and ComCab

For the past four years, John Lee has been the CEO for ComCab. He is now returning home to Singapore and at the time of writing, I am unsure of who his replacement will be. During these four years, I have had an excellent rapport with a man of high morals and principals, a man that keeps his word. I can only hope that his replacement (unless the structure is changed) has the same integrity and a good grasp of the workings of our industry, because unless they do then much harm could be done to the trade.

I for one will miss John, who I understand is leaving the Comfort/Delgro organisation, but of course I wish him every success in any new venture he undertakes. It is always a pity when someone you genuinely like leaves the trade!

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

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# DRIVERS ATTACKED AT LOO STOP!

News has come into the *Call Sign* office that taxi drivers have been attacked during the evening while visiting the toilet in Horseferry Road, Victoria. This loo has long been known as the Iron Lung due to its circular shape.

DaC driver **Christopher Hones (S81)**, himself a night owl, told our reporter:

"Nightmen who dine at the nearby restaurants are particularly vulnerable, as it appears they are being watched by teams of thieves who follow them into the toilet, block the entry and exit points of the loo and then attack the defenceless driver. They then steal his moneybag and anything else they can grab hold of before running off down Regency Street or whichever route offers the quickest disappearance from the scene."

Christopher continued: "It's amazing how speedily news like that travels throughout the cab trade. I was shopping in my local supermarket in Waltham Abbey the morning after the two drivers were attacked, when the driver of a non-radio taxi stopped me to advise of the unfortunate incidents, one of which I saw," he said.

*Call Sign* asked just what Chris had seen?

"I was there at around 10pm on the Thursday evening when the cafe is open and saw police cars and an ambulance by the loo. I understand the driver was badly beaten up in the attack. Later, I returned at around midnight and again saw numerous police cars with blue lights flashing, parked up around the toilet area and was told that yet another taxi driver had fallen victim to the muggers. The restaurant is popular with night drivers and you can usually see a line of cabs parked along the street for several hundred yards, so it's easy for toe-rags to take their pick of a potential snatch. There seems to be no shortage of victims."

Chris ended by saying: "I'm sure there are many perfectly respectable residents in the Regency and Page Street areas, but unfortunately there



The Iron Lung loo - drivers are being attacked

is also a breed of less desirables that prey on innocent and honest citizens."

*Call Sign* readers will recall our report in the March 2009 issue regarding **Michael Kaye (N04)**, who was pushed to the ground while leaving a restaurant in Paddington and who ended up in hospital as a result of the ferocity of his attackers. It seems that as the economic downturn bites ever-harder, villains are turning to increasingly desperate methods of finding easy money. Our advice is for drivers to be aware of their surroundings and extra vigilant when not locked safely in their cabs.

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## LVTA in Waalwijk



Some of the 800 + old vehicles at Waalwijk

*Call Sign on-line* reader and press officer for the Dutch section of the LVTA, **Hand Dooren**, has sent us some photos of a recent annual event held at Waalwijk in southern Holland, where over 800 old British vehicles went on parade - the highest number of the past ten years.

You can see many of them at [www.londontaxi.web-log.nl](http://www.londontaxi.web-log.nl) by going to the events list on the left side, then choosing **Waalwijk 2009**, double-click on the link and choose the **colour slides (Diavoorstelling)**.



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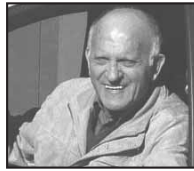
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# Jerys World



"Now listen here squire, I know you minicab blokes want to use bus and taxi lanes and I'm happy to let you do that. All you have to do is the Knowledge and you can even have your lunch in them!"

## Brunswick House Demolished...



Going going gone...

One thing's for sure, many long term subscribers will have their own memories of Brunswick House...

© Call Sign Magazine MM9

A piece of Dial-a-Cab's history is being demolished just across the road from our current DaC House home. Brunswick House, which we moved into from Shirland Road on 11 August 1984 and stayed in until 5 May 2007, is being redeveloped along with the Cable & Wireless complex on the corner of Chart Street and East Road.

Older members will recall the excitement of moving from the confines of W9 to the more spacious and impressive Brunswick House (then Allington House) with its dedicated drivers reception, car park for driver's safety and convenience and a stone's throw from some of our most senior City accounts.

This building was also from where our

minimal might seem now, it was the forerunner of the despatch system we use today and served us well enough.

Now the site is being torn down to make way for, well, who knows what? Perhaps an hotel or office complex as space in the square mile seems to be at a premium.

Whatever emerges from the rubble, perhaps someone will agree to place a blue plaque on the wall there, which might read: *From this building in 1989, two-way taxi radio communications took a giant step forward with the introduction of digital data despatch between base and mobiles. Mind you, it might need a pretty big plaque!*

then cutting edge 'data despatch' system of job distribution was conceived and launched on 29 April 1989, giving Dial-a-Cab a head start over our competitors in securing and retaining accounts with that advanced technology.



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Around sixty angry drivers picketed Mountview House, headquarters of the Radio Taxis Group, on Friday 10 July. The group included shareholder/drivers who subscribe to the North London based company and was organised by the RMT section of the cab trade.

The drivers were protesting about a proposed deal involving BAA with *Addison Lee* and *One Transport* - the private hire arm of Radio Taxis - which would have allowed both companies to offer minicabs to passengers arriving and departing from Heathrow Airport.

Executive Chairman of Radio Taxis Group, **Geoffrey Riesel**, was made aware of the demonstration in expectation that he would meet the protesters on the day. However, he failed to address them and had two strategically placed security 'bouncers' placed outside the building to protect it against any possible trouble. But the demonstration passed peaceably.

Mr Riesel's VW Phaeton car was in the car park, but the RTG Executive Chairman was nowhere to be seen.

**The demonstration began at 3pm with an on-foot picket and was expected to follow later with cabs blocking Lennox Road. But just after 4pm, a telephone call was received advising that BAA had agreed to put the minicab booking booths proposal on hold, subject to talks with taxi trade representatives. The demonstration then ended.**



RTG Exec Chairman Geoffrey Riesel failed to address the demonstrators at Mountview House

An RMT spokesman claimed they would not fall for stalling tactics following the BAA announcement and added that BAA's original plans would have undermined the licensed taxi trade at Heathrow by allowing minicabs to operate what was effectively a ranking system at the airport. The spokesman also claimed that drivers were still considering further action against the Radio Taxis Group.

Meanwhile back at Heathrow, BAA had been determined to press on with their plans, which would have begun in September. Senior Regional Organiser of Unite - the former T&G - **Peter Kavanagh** is said to have warned BAA that direct industrial action would follow on the following Monday (July 13th) and it would have affected the entire Heathrow operation unless BAA dropped their competition proposals.

Following a meeting with BAA, which saw the LTDA and other trade organisations, with the exception of the RMT, involved in negotiations, Mr Kavanagh said:

## Heathrow dispute: Drivers picket RTG HQ

### as BAA back down from minicab booths plan!

**"This was a hare-brained scheme that should never have seen light of day. There is no way that passengers would benefit from a taxi bidding war, which would have clogged up the airport's roads and just brought confusion to passengers who want an efficient, easy to access service they can trust.**












**"We are glad that BAA has seen sense and withdrawn their competition plans. We hope BAA has learned from this that it is better to work with us on any future ideas for how the taxi service at Heathrow can maintain its quality service to passengers."**

*Call Sign* then went back to *Dial-a-Cab House* to ask Chairman **Brian Rice** for his view on the situation. He told this magazine:

**"I would not dream of passing comment on how our competitors run their business. However, I have been in this trade long enough to appreciate the strength of feeling that a move such as this would provoke. The ball is now in our court and our industry must address the situation whereby members of the public that live just outside the Metropolitan Police District (MPD) are expected to pay exorbitant fares in a licensed taxi from Heathrow. Unless this situation is resolved, then the situation we have just experienced will surface again. It is up to every trade organisation and driver to come up with an agreeable solution."**

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A sunny day saw the **Albany taxi charity** take children from **Chernobyl** and **Belarus**, along with children from **Midfield Primary School Special Opportunity Unit** in Orpington, for a day of fun and entertainment at Herne Bay seaside resort. The Belarus children still suffer from the effects of the Chernobyl disaster 20 years ago when the Russian nuclear power plant melted down. These children were in the UK thanks to the *Friends of Chernobyl's Children*, and were staying with families for a month. While here, the families take them for medical help and dental treatment that they cannot get at home.

From Midfield school, 38 children with autism, along with their staff enjoyed the day out. Hannah Winter, Head of the Special Needs unit, said:

"Some of our pupils had never been to the seaside before, they had a fantastic day."

Throughout the year, the Albany Committee make trips down to the town to arrange the outing, made possible by the group efforts of all those involved, both in the cab trade and in Herne Bay. The convoy arrives in Herne Bay and parks at the Herne Bay Catholic Club where they are welcomed by the committee and volunteers from the Catholic Club. Thanks go to Trevor Schilling, the Treasurer from the Club, Rose Ledger and Julia Archer for their help, along with the Parish Priest Father Mark.

On arrival the children were welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Canterbury and local councillor Vince McMahan, who joined the children as they walked down to the seafront, escorted by a group of police cadets. Once on the front, there was a chance for everyone to enjoy lots of different entertainment. There was a clown who performed magic at the bandstand and

# Albany Taxi Charity Take Children to Herne Bay



A group of children from Belarus enjoying the Albany outing

more fun!

Thanks go to Chris West, the town partner who liaises with the kid's entertainers and the Seashell Restaurant of Lisson Grove for sponsoring the fuel and breakfast for the taxi drivers.

The Albany committee also extend grateful thanks to the drivers who gave their time to make the trip possible, especially in view of the current economic situation that

circus entertainers along the promenade, showing the children how to spin plates and juggle. Many took part in various street games as well as taking a tour of the area on an open top bus. Ice creams and packed lunches came into the equation as well and for the children from Belarus, the fascination of the penny arcade games was evident!

At mid afternoon, everyone made their way back to the Catholic Club where there was more entertainment in the form of a disco followed by fish and chips, chocolate and then

affects their working lives. A special thank you goes to Jimmy Pullum of T&J's Breakdown for providing taxi breakdown / recovery services free of charge – and it came in handy as his services were called upon on the return journey back to Orpington!

A final and most important thank you goes to all the Albany Taxi Charity Committee members for all their hard work in co-ordinating Herne Bay and Hastings trips (*see the July issue*) in 2009.

## Manganese loses £1/2 million...

Manganese Bronze has announced a pre-tax loss of £0.6million in the first half of 2009, blaming the economic downturn for a slump in sales. This was against a pre-tax profit of £1.5million for the same period last year. The company said that vehicle sales had fallen 11.5% but that it had reduced its net debt to £3.6million from £7.2million in 2008.

Chief Executive, John Russell, said: "UK sales performance continue to be challenging as drivers' confidence to commit to the purchase of a new taxi remains weak, due to uncertainty about the general state of the economy." He added that the TX4 recall was virtually complete, although liability had not yet been stabilised and ended by saying that the company were now focused on fulfilling the international sales opportunities for TX4 and returning the UK operation to profitability. The company said it would not pay an interim dividend...

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# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

## Allen Togwell responds to Paul Jenner...

In this edition of *Mailshot* there is a letter by **Paul Jenner (L19)**, who many of you will remember stood unsuccessfully for the Board at the last AGM. It would appear his defeat still rangles and he has selected me to feel the brunt of his angst. Still it makes a change, as it's usually the Chairman that gets that honour...

Paul's first gripe is with my comments in the May issue of *Call Sign* when I wrote about the growth of minicabs over the past 30 years and the taxi trade organisations failure to show leadership in regaining the initiative. When I spoke about the trade organisations doing more, I was referring to the trade as a whole, a trade which works in an insular environment and receives no guidance whatsoever on what's best for their industry. For example, I honestly believe that if every green badge driver had been on radio, as in most European cities, minicabs would never have existed. But now unfortunately they do exist, they exist in a big way and like it or not they are here to stay. And no matter how much people such as Paul Jenner do nothing but whinge, it won't make them disappear.

Since being licensed by the PCO, the public and business sector now accepts PH as a legal and creditable means of transport. They have set standards against which comparisons are made to our trade. Particularly with regards the quality and comfort of their vehicles and the appearance, helpfulness, courteousness of their drivers and of course cost. All of which is totally ignored by our industry as an irrelevance. And because of that short sightedness we have and will continue to suffer the consequences. I am no admirer of PH, but it was obvious that one day the monopoly we have enjoyed for the past 350 years would eventually be broken. It was broken and in recent years big money and influence has been invested into PH to the point where they are now a serious force to be reckoned with. And whose fault is that? Well in Paul's expert opinion, it isn't the drivers, it's the fault of Dial-a-Cab and me in particular. Because, he says, of our apparent willingness to get into bed with the opposition.

### Principles?

I would like to put to Paul a hypothetical question: Lets suppose Paul got his wish at the last AGM and was now a DaC Board member responsible for sales. On the first day of his new post, he is summoned to the offices of Blogs & Co, a major bank that spends £7million a year on transport with four PH companies. A new procurement manager is employed at the bank who is very pro black cab, he has heard about our dispatching platform and tells Paul he is prepared to offer DaC £5million of black cab business on the proviso their £2million of private hire business goes through our platform, for which we would be paid a fee each time it is used. Does Paul accept the offer, or does he out of principle refuse to associate himself with PH? Actually the answer is simple, Paul has no choice but to accept it because as a Board member, he is not in a position to allow his own principles to effect the pockets of our members. His job, as



was mine, is to get work of any description, credit work, cash work, fixed price work, work from ComCab and RTG and I might add, work directly or indirectly associated with PH and then leave it to the members to decide whether or not they wish to cover it.

When I first came onto the Board, I was a man of principles but completely naive in the manner in which radio circuits operated. I honestly believed there was an unwritten rule of loyalty, a gentlemen's agreement, a code of conduct to which all three circuits abided by. At that time, our largest and only major account was the BBC in Wood Lane. The BBC, in an attempt to cut costs particularly on run-ins, said they were going to install a taxi rank at the front of their premises, plus use minicabs for the longer journeys. That was the very first occasion I encountered minicabs encroaching upon corporate clients.

Our Board were adamantly apposed to the rank, so the BBC approached ComCab who agreed without question. But the BBC couldn't rely on just one circuit servicing the rank, they needed a back up. RTL (Mountview - now RTG) who were of a similar opinion to DaC over not supporting the rank, arranged to meet at Brunswick House and agree on a joint pact not to accept the deal offered by the BBC. RTL's then-Chairman and their entire Board came to the meeting, each of whom I shook hands with to cement the agreement, before setting off to the BBC to tell them of our decision. Our then-Chairman and I went in first, said our piece and left. Then RTL went in. Later that day we learnt that RTL had reneged on our agreement and had accepted the BBC's offer. Dial-a-Cab was left high and dry. Stitched up like a kipper. So much for principles.

**I learnt a painful lesson that day, which was to trust no one. Use the opposition in every way possible - deviously or otherwise - to the benefit of our Society and take work of any description first and then worry afterwards about how it gets covered.**

### What do DaC do to benefit the trade?

Paul's next gripe is to ask what I have done through JRTA and London Taxi Board to safeguard the interests of our members? Firstly, it's over 15 years since I last represented DaC at a JRTA or LTB meeting. Our chairman Brian Rice is

the Society's representative, a man who I can assure you is extremely passionate about our Society and who never fails to use every opportunity to protect the interests of our members. Barely a week goes by when he is not attired in dinner suit and attending an evening meeting of some description or other, rubbing shoulders with people important to our industry and using every opportunity to influence opinion to our cause. Just a few examples that spring to mind are:

- Lobbying MP's to put forward an *early day motion* regarding stopping all-over signage on minicabs.
- Ongoing lobbying to prevent minicabs using bus lanes.
- Relentless lobbying of MPs, the Mayor and Boroughs resulting in PCNs being reduced drastically.
- Lobbying to allow taxis to stop at ATMs on Red Routes.
- Even while drafting this piece, I've just seen a memo announcing that Dial-a-Cab was mentioned in Parliament (*Hansard 24 June 2009*) acknowledging that drivers on our circuit have enhanced security.
- Significant input into having three tariffs to encourage more drivers to work at night.
- Through regular meetings with the PCO, a working rapport has been established that has benefited the trade enormously as a whole.
- Again as I write this piece, a new website [www.the-london-taxi.com](http://www.the-london-taxi.com) has just been set up publicising our services.
- To our newer members, it's worth noting that Dial-a-Cab is still the only taxi circuit in London offering the general public a real-time taxi booking service on the Internet without the need of a pre-arranged password.
- And last but not least, concerning the safeguarding of our members interests. Thanks to our persistent policy of investing wisely in future development, we are still technologically the most advanced radio taxi circuit in Europe.

### Carding up?

Paul then goes on to question what is being done to soften the effects of the economic downturn? Do we card up any more? I like the *WE* bit. Is he referring to me personally or our 2,200 members? I wrote about carding up a few months ago and explained how it has been the main source of generating business for minicabs and how we should follow suit, especially targeting private blocks of flats. Has it happened? Has there been an increase in cards being collected from Dial-a-Cab House? Sadly, the answer is no.

**Equally last September we took delivery of a batch of telephone numbers to put on our cabs to promote cash work. To date, after almost a whole year, we have exactly 21 cabs carrying this number!**

Paul asks: Is it not time to bring in a decent incentive for drivers to generate future business? First, exactly what does he mean by 'decent' and secondly, why should an incentive be necessary in the first place? It's your business for goodness sake! What more incentive does a driver need to encourage someone to put money into their





*Continued from July...*

### **Appointments from hell!**

One day I was in the PCO Knowledge hot seat and instructed to take a fare from the Ritz Hotel to somewhere that I can no longer remember. I began calling it as leaving on the left in Arlington Street, before being stopped and questioned...

"How many steps are there to the Ritz doors?" *Five, sir.* "How do the doors open?" *Two open from either side of the revolving door in the middle, sir.* "What colour are they painted?" *They are not painted but are stained wood, sir.* "What else is there either side of the doors?" *Two tubs painted green with small fir trees in them, sir.* "What else is on the steps?" *Either side at the edge of the steps are highly polished brass rails, sir.* "Get on your bike and look at the hotel, you've never been near it. Don't come here and waste my time... get out!"

You may not have realised it at the time, but that type of interview was to test your self-control and character. You may think that was the end of that particular episode - as I did - but you'd be as wrong as I was. Thirty days later I had the pleasure of a different officer. I was quite pleased with myself; I had been given four runs and got them all spot on. Then he asked me for the Ritz Hotel to (they all loved this one) Empire House. There were five Empire Houses. Take your pick - whichever one you chose would always be the wrong one! He had decided that I was getting too cocky and needed to be taken down a peg or two.

"Ritz Hotel to Southwick Woman's Hospital, the Private Wing." *Leave on the left Arlington Street.* "Just a minute, the Ritz Hotel how many steps are there to the doors?" He then asked the same questions about the doors etc. Again I was told I had never been near the hotel. "Come back in 30 days. And get on your bloody bicycle and look at the Ritz Hotel." He too succeeded in what he wanted to do, which was to take me down a peg or two.

*At the age of 81, DaC driver John Edwardes (H05) had to suddenly retire following a heart problem. Now he has written about his life as a taxi driver. Call Sign is serialising it...*

## John Edwardes: *My Life as a Taxi Driver*

On another morning, three of us had stood outside the Carriage Office from 4am. It was snowing hard and freezing cold, my beard had frozen to my duffel coat! The wind was blowing off Lambeth Bridge and all us 'lucky' sods looked like the abominable snowman. Eventually at about 9am, I was called up to one of the offices. I was asked some runs and did fairly well while standing there with my hands in my pockets trying to get warm. Outside it was still snowing hard and dark. I hadn't realised that with the light on in the office, the officer could see my reflection in the outside window. He asked if I was working or doing the Knowledge full time? I said I was on it full time. His response? "How are you managing? Are you doing a little bit of stealing perhaps?" I said I was living on my savings. Suddenly he shouted at me: "Get out! How dare you stand in my office with your hands in your bloody pockets" Somewhat shaken, I scuttled out. Neither did he tell me to come back in 30 days, but after 30 days I turned up anyway and was seen.

**After creeping out of the Carriage Office with your tail between your legs, it was straight down the road to Mark Antonio's where the walls were covered in blackboards, with plenty of chalk to write down**

**all the points you could remember and hopefully help the other poor sods hoping to get a badge!**

Eventually I completed the Knowledge and came to the two final hurdles - the suburbs and drive. The suburbs were OK but I was lucky with the drive. This started behind the Carriage Office. First off you had to park your cab in a 'garage' marked with paint on the concrete. It was only just big enough for the cab to get in and you had to make sure you could open the door to get out. This was successfully accomplished and next came the actual drive with the inspector as passenger. Whilst I was parking my cab, I noticed another applicant getting into his cab. His inspector immediately told him to get out. Puzzled, he did so. The PCO pointed to the handle on the door. "It cost money to put that on the door, it was put there so you could shut the door. You closed the door by putting your hand on top of the window and pulling it. How long do you think before the window starts to rattle? This may not worry you, but it can annoy your fares. Come back in fourteen days when you have learnt how to shut a door! I was careful to shut the door on my cab by using the handle!

*Continued next month...*

### **TAXI DRIVERS LEGAL PROTECTION**

**After only eight months of operation, Taxi Drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd is now firmly established, with an ever-increasing membership.**

Founded by **Alan Fleming**, former Chairman of the LCDC and **Dave Cohen**, former Membership Secretary and Treasurer, we are now providing legal representation for our existing members.

**Taxi Drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd** is a non-political organisation, which has been set up to provide legal representation for London's licensed taxi drivers. For further information and membership enquiries, take a look at our new web site at:

**[www.taxidriverslegalprotection.com](http://www.taxidriverslegalprotection.com)**.

*Alternatively, our Email address is [topsltd2009@goolemail.com](mailto:topsltd2009@goolemail.com).*

**Alan Fleming and Dave Cohen**

### **Allen Togwell Marketing place continued from page 10**

pocket? For the past 10 years, we have had a scheme which pays drivers £20 for each lead given to sales. All it requires is for the driver to obtain a business card from a potential customer, hand it into sales and they will do the rest. For that simple task, we will give you £20. How many cards has Paul Jenner handed in since its inception? The answer is not one. Why, I don't know. Perhaps £20 is a waste of his breath talking to someone who as he says, he is in contact with face to face. But in this instance, Paul is not alone. In fact we have just ONE driver out of 2200 shareholders, our conscientious friend Mr Anthony Hizer (E63), who not only appreciates the odd twenty quid, but obviously takes comfort from doing his bit for his Society.

#### *Visiting DaC House*

In conclusion, I feel it prudent to mention that Paul Jenner had plenty to say at our AGM and also plenty to say in *Call Sign*, giving the impression he has great concern for the welfare of this Society. Paul is also a frequent visitor to Dial-a-Cab House for one purpose or another. Yet not once has he taken the trouble to venture up onto my floor to see what is done in sales to generate new business. Or enquire as to what is being done to safeguards our member's interests, or to see first hand the sales literature and how, for example, the professional and impressive manner in which tenders are produced. Or the detailed projects that are being worked on to obtain new clients. Or to learn about the organisations we are involved in that

search, segregate and forward to us a weekly list and details of companies offering invitations to tenders. I would willingly have shown him everything we do concerning the promoting of our business. Or what I do regarding artwork and design etc. But no, he obviously prefers an audience for his grievances and complains that I should publicise all these details in my articles. My goodness Paul, how naive can you get.

However, if that is how you would do things if you were elected to the Board, I look forward to the next edition of *Call Sign* to see this wonderful list of ideas you have that will encourage our members to promote future business.

**Allen Togwell  
DaC Marketing**



The PCO has carried out a comprehensive review of the guidelines for CCTV systems installed in licensed London taxis (and private hire vehicles) in order to reflect current highest standards in this area. CCTV systems are installed for the purpose of improving driver and passenger safety and to assist the police in any possible investigations. Information relating to CCTV systems, their installation into the vehicle and relevant legislation are briefly covered in the guidance notes in this Notice. More detailed guidance can be found in the *Guidelines for CCTV Systems in licensed London Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles* on the PCO website ([www.tfl.gov.uk/pco](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/pco)).

**CCTV equipment to be fitted into taxis should be checked to ensure an 'e' or 'CE' marking is displayed. Systems not so marked must not be fitted as they could**

**interfere with other electrical safety devices and systems fitted in the vehicles, such as the anti-lock braking system.**

## Installation of CCTV Systems

\* CCTV systems must be installed in such a way that they do not present any danger to passengers or driver. CCTV equipment must not obscure the driver's vision or be fitted such that it would prevent safety features like air bags operating correctly. All fixings should be permanent.

\* Suction devices must **not** be used, as these can detach in the event of an accident.

\* Screens for the purpose of viewing captured images must **not** be fitted.

\* All wiring must be permanent and compliant with the vehicle manufacturers and CCTV systems technical specifications.

\* Audio recording is **not** permitted except in specific circumstances, details of which can be found in the CCTV Code of Practice (2008) produced by the Information Commissioner's Office, or as specified by the 'Guidelines for CCTV Systems in Licensed London Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles' on the PCO website [www.tfl.gov.uk/pco](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/pco).

\* Captured images must be protected using approved encryption software which is designed to guard against the compromise of stored data, for example in the event of the vehicle or equipment being stolen.

\* The CCTV equipment installed must be capable of retaining images either within its own hard drive or by using a service provider who can provide secure transfer and storage

facilities. Images must not be downloaded onto any kind of portable media (e.g. CDs, DVDs or memory sticks) at any time. In any event, data must only be retained for a maximum period of 31 days from the date of capture.

\* All vehicles fitted with CCTV **must display standard signage** that is visible to passengers informing them that a system is fitted and which contains the Data Controller's name and contact details. Signs can be obtained from the PCO at Penton Street and SGS Inspection Centres.

## Relevant Legislation

Vehicle owners who have had a CCTV system installed into their vehicle/s must comply with the data protection principles set out in the *Data Protection Act 1998* and will have legal responsibility under this Act for the installation and operation of this equipment and the capture, encryption, storage and use of images.

Any vehicle owner, who may be a company, organisation or individual, who has a CCTV system installed into a licensed vehicle, **must register** with the Information Commissioner's Office. They can be contacted on 08456 306060 or [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk). Evidence of registration **must** be produced if requested by an Authorised Officer of the PCO.

**For further information on CCTV system requirements, contact the Vehicle Policy & Standards Team on 020 7126 1406.**

Mary Dowdye  
PCO Head of Standards & Regulations

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### Taxis, talk shows and the PCO...

The 'talk shows' on the radio  
Seem to like the London cabby,  
There's that bloke on Radio One  
And all those bods on LBC...

The Evening Standard dig us out  
Whenever they get the opportunity,  
With no idea what our job's about  
They really do upset me...

And all our friends at Penton Street  
Who should really know the score,  
Sit on the fence or shuffle their feet  
But don't uphold the Law.

The pirates have the upper hand  
While we have the PCO,  
Who out there cares or understands  
Who really wants to know...?

Who is there to help us  
Who will defend our rights?  
Is there no one to befriend us...  
And help clean up the night?

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**Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350**



**Frank's brekkers with a Hollywood superstar!**

It was around 7.30 on a Saturday morning many years ago when Dial-a-Cab driver **Frank Pegler (E77)** was called to an account address in South Kensington. After completing a local return trip with the housekeeper, he was invited into the house itself where he was met by a grieving woman cuddling a small dog that was wrapped up in a carpet.

"My dog has died," the woman said, tears running down her face.

"Do you know somewhere I can have him buried and how much it will cost," she asked Frank?

Frank was used to questions such as where was the closest car pound or which direction was the M1, but animal burials wasn't on the list. He could only think of the Wood Green animal sanctuary, but it was far too early in the morning to call them.

"Have you eaten," the lady with the dog enquired? "Carmen will make us all breakfast and then we'll call the sanctuary," she added.

So Frank sat down to eat with the DaC account client and her housekeeper, tucking into a hearty early morning breakfast. At 9am he called the animal sanctuary and they quoted him £40 burial fees, but would not allow the owner to stay and witness the burial.

"That's no good to me," retorted the lady, "he's special and I want to be there for him at his final resting place," she said firmly.

"Do you have a garden" she asked Frank?

"No," was his reply, "but I know someone who does!"

Thinking of his parent's house, Frank phoned his stepmother in south London to explain the situation.

"Your father isn't here, but come down anyway," she said.

Frank discreetly whispered down the

# Famous People I've had Breakfast With...



Brian and the late Ava Gardner.



phone for her to start digging and with the account client, housekeeper and the wrapped-up dog safely on board, Frank made his way south.

The dog was duly laid to rest in Frank's parents' garden and they all retired to the front room for tea.

Before leaving to return to Ennismore Gardens SW7, the lady dog owner handed a small envelope to Frank's stepmother and thanked her for her hospitality. When Frank's father got home some time later, his wife told him Frank had visited but didn't stay long as he had some people with him.

"And you'd better read this letter which was

left for you," she added to her still mystified husband.

The letter thanked Frank's family for their help and compassion at a very difficult time and enclosed £40, the equivalent of the burial fee at Wood Green. The letter was signed **Ava Gardner!**

Frank then told *Call Sign* that his father had been a great fan of Ava's during the height of her Hollywood fame, yet she had been sitting right there in his house and he never got to meet her!

Ava Gardner died on January 25, 1990.

© Call Sign Magazine MM9

## Bank of England opens its doors ...to reveal working rooms and architectural treasures

On the weekend of **19th and 20th September**, the Bank of England will invite visitors behind the scenes at this world famous bank. The **Open House weekend** will provide Dial-a-Cab drivers and their families with a rare opportunity to examine the detailed architecture of the Bank and visit the rooms in which some of the UK's key monetary decisions are taken.

The Bank of England and Museum will be open to visitors for 30-minute guided tours. No booking is required, but you should arrive early to avoid long queues. Entry times are from 9.30am to 5pm with the last entry at 4.30pm. Put the date on your calendar now...

Visitors will be invited into the Bank's Threadneedle Street site, a location it has inhabited since 1734. The majority of the Bank was rebuilt in 1925 by architect Sir Herbert Baker, but he retained and incorporated some of his predecessor's much admired earlier work. There is an opportunity to see the Garden Court at the heart of the Bank, where Mulberry trees reflect the origins of paper money. The tour will also include the Court Room, which houses a wind-dial originally installed so that the Bank's directors could forecast the arrival of merchant shipping in the Port of London. The Committee Room where the

Monetary Policy Committee meets to make its decisions will also be open to view.

The Museum entrance is in Bartholomew Lane, just off Threadneedle Street.

There is also a permanent Museum display that tells the story of the Bank from its foundation in 1694 to its role today as the United Kingdom's central bank and which includes material drawn from the Bank's own collections of silver, prints, paintings, banknotes, coin, photographs, books and other historic documents. Exhibits range from Roman and modern gold bars, to pikes and muskets once used to defend the Bank. Computer



The Bank's Parlour

technology and audio-visual displays explain the Bank's role today.

There is no charge for admission to the Bank of England Museum or for any event. For more information visit [www.bankofengland.co.uk/museum](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/museum).

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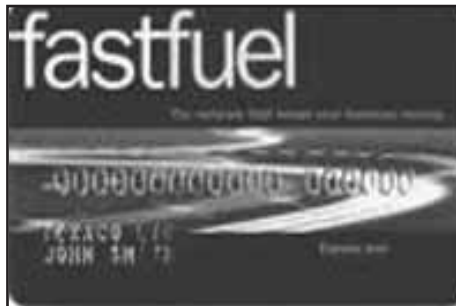
At Last! A Fuel Card scheme that guarantees to slash your diesel costs! A brand new fuel scheme for Licensed London Taxi Drivers means you can now take advantage of an exclusive commercial diesel rate.

**From now on when you purchase fuel at any Texaco or Morrisons forecourt, you no longer need to pay the pump price. For example, for the week commencing Monday 29th June through to Sunday 5th July 2009, the Black Cab Fuels diesel rate was 98.4p per litre irrespective of the price shown at the pump! The London average during the same period was 105.4.**

What's more, the card is absolutely free with no monthly fees or hidden costs. You decide if and when you use the card with no minimum

# HOW TO SLASH YOUR DIESEL BILLS!

*And it's exclusive to 'black cab' drivers and their families*



Using the new card guarantees you will save money on your diesel

**Black Cab Fuels aims to combine the purchasing power of 24,000 plus London Taxi Drivers, spending over £12 million pounds each month buying fuel!**

Haulage firms and large fleet operators have been taking advantage of fixed rate commercial Fuels Cards for years to avoid paying the full pump price. Meanwhile, taxi drivers have continued to pay retail prices despite providing a valuable, high quality transport service across London.

There have been rumblings of discontent from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers throughout the years via their letters pages in *Call Sign* with regard to not receiving any fuel subsidy from **Transport for London**, nor being organised as a group to negotiate benefits when buying a whole range of goods and services.

Black Cab Fuels can offer further, continued benefits and the prospect of additional site coverage if London's Taxi Drivers embrace this new concept. Here is an opportunity to pull together and benefit from the group buying power of every Taxi Driver in London, each of whom normally buys diesel 3 or 4 times a week. And of course, once you have the card, you can also use it when you fill up your private car, saving you even more money!

**With the price of diesel set to rise as the global recession eases, Black Cab Fuels now offers a genuine way to dramatically cut your costs. For more information on how to open an account, visit [www.black-cabfuels.co.uk](http://www.black-cabfuels.co.uk) or call 0800 987 5701 and speak to John Murphy.**

*Terms & Conditions apply and are available upon request.*

## Taxi Driver Safety Brought up in the HOC



**Brian Binley MP is championing taxi Driver safety**

Industry leaders from the London licensed taxi trade have welcomed comments made by Conservative MP for Northampton South, **Brian Binley**, during a debate in the House of Commons on taxi driver safety.

The debate outlined the dangers and incidences of assault faced by taxi drivers and proposed a number of measures to remedy this issue; safety partitions for non purpose built taxis, increased police presence at taxi ranks, CCTV in vehicles and the benefits of radio-circuit membership.

Speaking after the debate, Mr Binley said: **"Violence against taxi drivers has increased sizeably over the past decade and I am committed to drawing the Government's attention to this worrying issue. Taxi drivers do a fantastic job working on the front line of the transport network and we must do all that we can to ensure they have a safe working environment. In London, the black cab is not only an iconic symbol of driver excellence, but also the lifeblood of the capital's transport infrastructure. The centre partition in the Hackney Carriage is a factor in preventing this worrying nation-wide trend being repeated in London and this is why I am calling for greater use of the partition in non-Hackney Carriage vehicles across the country. I welcome the work of London Taxi Network in protecting the interests of both their drivers and customers. I was also interested to hear of the enhanced security benefits of the radio circuits."**

Mr Binley went on to add that there were ways to deal with these problems and referred to radio circuits such as Dial-a-Cab providing enhanced security.

The House of Commons debate took place on Wednesday 24 June 2009 and the Hansard Transcript is available at <http://tinyurl.com/mdpbkj>.

obligations or penalties for non-usage. The system is very simple. You pay an exclusive Black Cab Fuels rate, which is set each week and fixed for 7 days. The rate for the following week is texted to your mobile free of charge every Friday and is valid for the following week from Monday through to Sunday.

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DaC's Laurence Kelvin (W88) looks at the taxi driver's age-old question of...

## JUST WHAT IS "OUR" WORK???



What counts as "our work?"

On 14 July there was a full-page article in *The Independent* about taxis in London covering many of the familiar arguments between private hire and licensed taxis, with particular attention given to the proposal to allow *Addison Lee* and *One Transport* to run a booking system at Heathrow. There were views from an LTDA representative and from the other side, and many of the criticisms of the traditional taxis and drivers had some substance.

Yes, it is true that too many taxi drivers look scruffy whilst lots of private hire drivers always wear suits and have clean vehicles. And the comments about our trade being reluctant to change over the years have more than a grain of truth. Sometimes the fault has been with the PCO, as with their refusal in the past to allow drivers to install radios and rear view mirrors in taxis, but too often resistance has come from taxi drivers whenever there are proposals for change. I remember grumbles when the Piccadilly line was extended to Heathrow and drivers said it wasn't fair and that we would lose "our work." Exactly the same was said when the Heathrow Express was built. If a passenger wants to travel by tube, train, taxi, book a private hire car or get a friend to convey him

or her, then they should be free to choose whatever they wish. Claiming that it is "our work" just makes us look foolish, monopolistic and totally out of date.

Imagine the situation where you call in a handyman to fix some plastic pipes under the kitchen sink and then there are protests from the *Ancient Guild of Master Plumbers* who learnt their trade in 1956, saying that these handymen had no skill or training in soldering lead pipes and should not be allowed to take "their work" - especially as they were not Fellows of the *Livery Company of Qualified Plumbers*.

**In almost every taxi trade magazine, there are articles about "The Good Old Days" and reminiscences by drivers. I cannot remember many features addressing the changes that must take place, improvements we should make or new technological advances that we can make use of.**

And then there were protests from drivers

when charges for taxis were introduced to use the feeder rank at Heathrow. But why should it be free? All other outlets such as *WHSmith*, *Starbucks* and *Boots* pay for the space they use, so why not us? When we protest at every turn about everything, then we will be dismissed as being unable to accept any change and never listened to, even when there is a valid case.

I still meet Londoners who are not aware that it is possible to phone for a taxi, so clearly the radio circuits have failed to get the message across, whilst private hire has succeeded. We need to improve on what we do well, offering the best service with drivers who are smart, polite and even friendly, with clean vehicles turning up quickly and with less than £4 on the meter. Instead of protesting about private hire or the Heathrow Express getting some of "our work," we should direct our efforts at TfL and the PCO to stop the touts at the dozens of clubs, stations and restaurants around London. And of course continue to resist any 'rank' for private hire at Leicester Square or any other place.

The newspaper article had a reasonable analysis from the private hire representative and that makes uncomfortable reading for us. It ends by pointing out that *Woolworth* was stuck in the past and neglected to change and the same could well happen to the London taxi trade.

The article is at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-black-cab-cabal-1744963.html>.

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

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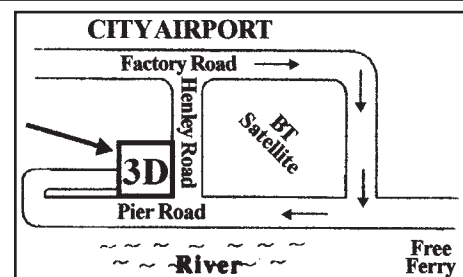
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## COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

*Hello Ladies & Gents,*

I would like to begin this report on a serious note and remind you of how important it is to work within the procedure rules and regulations of our Society. You will see that at the most recent complaints hearing, a number of drivers were expelled by the committee and the sentences for those that appealed to the Board of Management were subsequently upheld. We as a Board have a duty to you, the members, to make sure that serious exploitation of the system and rule violations are dealt with correctly and it is my job as Compliance Officer to make sure that we are all playing on an even playing field, which in this instance wasn't the case.



mind. I have dealt with a number of different types of complaints in my present role, but as a fellow driver myself I find that the thought of exploiting your colleagues is very hard to comprehend and totally unacceptable.

### Fuel card

On a lighter note, you will have read elsewhere in this edition of the magazine that there is now a company that provides a new fuel card solely for Licensed Taxi Drivers that is guaranteed to save you money at the pumps. It bases the cost per litre on the weekly average fuel price and it seems that using the card is something well worth your consideration. The website is [www.blackcabfuels.co.uk](http://www.blackcabfuels.co.uk) and contains information you may require. Information sheets are also available in driver's reception.

### And finally...

With the summer holiday season in full swing, it is a time when most of us can take a well-deserved summer break to recharge our batteries and unwind a little. So enjoy the rest, it is well earned...

*Be very lucky...*

**Allan Evans**  
DaC Compliance Officer  
[Allane@Dialacab.co.uk](mailto:Allane@Dialacab.co.uk)

### Loophole

There was a loophole found in the system that in all honesty, unless you were aware of it, the probability of cheating the system in that way was so minute that it would never be noticed. However, as soon as it was discovered it was immediately investigated and monitored. The necessary fix was then tested and implemented as quickly as possible by the IT department and our programmers in the USA. Unfortunately, a small number of drivers (and it was only a very small number) found a way to gain an unfair advantage over the vast majority of members and this complaint became even more pertinent whilst work was less busy than in recent

times. As you will see in the Complaints results published in this issue of *Call Sign*, other than one driver who decided to leave the circuit before his complaint could be heard, all were expelled from our Society. As you know, all current and outstanding complaints will be recorded and kept on file for any future reference or verification.

The system is constantly monitored and I cannot stress highly enough how important it is to use the system correctly. I have mentioned many times previously that it is always only a very small minority that misuse the system in order to gain an unfair advantage over their fellow members, but the phrase *cheats never prosper* comes to

## WAR DISABLED OUTING TO WORTHING

With over 400 war disabled in an amazing convoy of **110 taxis**, the 61st **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** annual trip to Worthing is a major occasion for the town and the Town Mayor was on hand to welcome the group. Special guests this year were **Joanna Lumley**



One of the old soldiers with Kas

and some of her **Ghurkha veterans**, who following her successful public campaign were very much the focus of attention.

Patron of the LTBAWD, **Dame Vera Lynn**, rarely misses the outing and even at the young age of 92 proudly took her place at the table. She is still held in enormous affection by all the old soldiers on the trip. Sitting next to Dame Vera was the Master of the WCHCD, **Andrew Overton** together with his wife Carol.

Following lunch and a stroll along the Worthing promenade, entertainment from the era came in the form of the **Jive Aces**, a performance enjoyed by all judging by the applause. Also singing was a young lady called **Kas** (Kelly Ann Sproul), who calls herself the new forces Sweetheart and who brought a smile from the original forces

sweetheart, Dame Vera herself!

At around 6pm, Worthing bade farewell to their 'old soldier' guests for another year. But this report would not be complete without two special mentions. Firstly to the drivers, without whom there would be no trip. But secondly to a man who has been on every one of the 61 annual trips to Worthing as well as many other trips made by the LTBAWD. He is the President of the Association and former **Dial-a-Cab Board member, Harry Joel MBE**. Never one for blowing his own trumpet, *Call Sign* would like to do it for him.

He received his MBE back in 1981 for all the good work he was doing for those disabled in conflicts. He was first made Honorary Chairman of the LTBAWD and in 1996 followed that by becoming Life President. Four years after that he retired from cab driving, but seems to accept the position of helping to guide the LTBAWD to "...achieve the aims and wishes so commendably initiated by those London Taxi Drivers who wanted to put their effort into making the lives of War Disabled Men and Women that much more enjoyable" as a job for life.

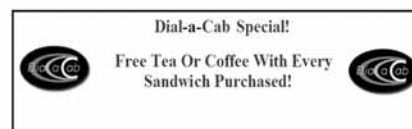
He was once quoted as saying that as long as there was conflict and war around the world, there would be a need for organisations such as the LTBAWD and the work they do. Even following the sad loss of his wife Frances, Harry remained steadfast in his desire to make sure that these stalwarts who had fought for us in different conflicts around the world should not be forgotten.

The LTBAWD is an organisation we should

all be proud of, but we feel sure that all the members of that excellent charity will forgive us this once if *Call Sign* also salutes Harry Joel MBE...

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A sunny Tuesday 14 July saw the *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children* go on their 81st annual trip to Southend, taking 300 'special needs' and disadvantaged children in a convoy of 100 balloon decorated taxis. Everyone had gathered at *Victoria Park* - to whom we thank the staff and management - to be greeted by *Clown Jolly Jack (David Girt)* and Britain's much-loved character *Little Princess* from *Five's* hit TV show, *Milkshake*. Also there was the City of London Mayoress *Lin Luder*, City of London Sheriff *George Gillon* and Tower Hamlets Mayor Councillor *Ahmed Omer*. All gave up their valuable time to wave the children off.

The convoy set off to music and horns blaring with numerous people lining the streets clapping, waving and cheering! The Committee would like to thank the *City of London Police Outriders* (Roads Policing Unit), who escorted us safely to Southend and back. Thanks also to *Rob Wilsmore, Tim Scarr, Ian Bainbridge, Howard Taylor, John Jones-Gill* and *Jeremy* in the Police car. A 'wee stop' was made at the *Live Hotel (Palms)* in Hornchurch and we thank the management and staff for the refreshments and prompt service. We were joined at the hotel by the *Essex Police outriders* and thank them for their help in addition to the *RAC, St. John's Ambulance* and the *Red Cross* for all joining us on the outing.

Arriving at the *Cliffs Pavilion*, Southend, the children were greeted by *Eddie the Eagle* from *Essex CCC*, with *Ben* wearing the costume on behalf of *Southend United FC*. After lunch, the children spent an afternoon of fun at *Adventure Island*, enjoying the free rides that were on offer. Grateful thanks go to *Brian Houssart* of the *Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children*, who worked hard ferrying us all down to the sea front and back. The sun was shining and the children were having great fun - what more could we want!

At 4.30pm it was back to the *Cliffs Pavilion* for tea and a disco and the children were thrilled and delighted to be greeted by Southend's Carnival Queen, *Hannah*. Also there were Southend's *Salvo the Clown* and Balloonists *Mr Chippy* and *Tony Hanscombe*, who had travelled from London to be with us to provide the balloons. We thank them all. Local magicians *Magic Al* and 14 year old *Rocket Rob*, *Robbie Wood* also joined us and special thanks go to them and *Clown Jolly Jack* who travelled down with us from London and kept the children entertained throughout the whole day.

The Fund's Hon. President, *Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)* made a speech and welcomed the Deputy Mayor of Southend, *Councillor Ann Holland*, who had joined us to present The Terry Stapleton Rose Bowl, Champagne and Chocolates to the driver of the best decorated cab, *Steven Bell*, whose cab was decorated as a Spaceship. Second prize went to *Steve Pulham*, whose cab was dressed with an inflatable car and people! The draw for the overnight stay at London's *Connaught Hotel* was won by *Alan Arthy* and was also presented to him by the Deputy Mayor.

*Bill Tyzack* then gratefully accepted a cheque for £2,000 from *Pam Mason* and *Mark Kennedy*, which had been donated by all the staff at *EDF Energy* of Canning Town and the Fund are grateful for this kind donation.

Formalities over, the disco started until an hour later, a giant conga led everyone out of the hall and back to their taxis for the return home. As usual, the crew at *Hadleigh Fire Station* were waiting to hose all the cabs down as we passed and this was greeted with squeals of delight from all the children - especially when any unsuspect-

# LTFUC take 300 children to Southend



If one picture can say 1000 words, then this is it!

ing driver got soaked! Sadly that Fire Station will soon be closing down and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all the pleasure and happiness they have given the children over many years. We will miss you.

**We also extend grateful thanks to the following people, in addition to those already mentioned, for making the outing possible and apologise to anyone we might have omitted in error:** *Clipstone Street Service Station, London Communications, DJ Dave Davies, Alan Jones & the Southend Carnival Court, Costco Chingford (Cathy Charmaine Jerry Prince & the boys) for water, sweets & breakfast bars, Southend FC and all our generous Sponsors including the anonymous donor who provided*

*the drivers with diesel vouchers.*

I would like to quote the words of a little boy interviewed on *Anglia TV* news (who covered the outing). He said: "The outing is really good because it shows they care, it shows they care about people, because some people don't care." That sums up what the day was all about.

*Finally, thank you to all the wonderful drivers and helpers who made this day possible. We put it together, but you guys made it all happen and we just couldn't do it without you.*

*"None Walks so Tall as he who stoops to help a Child."*

**Raymond Levy (LTFUC Press Officer)**  
[www.ltfuc.org.uk](http://www.ltfuc.org.uk)

## ON YER BIKE, BRIAN!

In the May 2006 issue of *Call Sign*, this magazine featured **Brian Tredler (D79)** documenting his fight against Myeloma, a type of bone marrow cancer. Faced with that disease, he became totally focussed on getting fit again and staying motivated to lead a healthier lifestyle.

Now 62-year-old Brian has taken up cycling. Not for him the steady wobble down to the shops, or a gentle pedal around suburbia's park paths. As our picture shows, this is serious stuff!

"I've been cycling for about a year now, having caught the 'bug' from Lance Armstrong," he told our reporter. "Cycling has helped me further my recovery from cancer and is a healthy way to keep fit and stay motivated," he said.

"On Saturdays, I do around 20 miles and recently joined a local cycling club where on Sundays we push into the Bucks / Herts countryside for around 50 miles or so. I get a real buzz from the whole scene. They're a nice bunch of people too, which is a bonus. I've even cycled from Buckingham Palace out to Windsor, a distance of about 45 miles, with the hope of a cup of tea at Her Majesty's gaff, but she wasn't around at the time so we ended up at Starbucks," he said with a huge grin! "It really is a great way to stay fit, breathe in plenty of fresh air and burn off those calories."

"I bought my bike from Condors' on Grays Inn Road. It was built to my own specification - lightweight and strong."

Ending, he told us that if anybody would like to join him, or was looking for advice or inspiration, they could call him on 07958 566 002 and Brian would be happy to pass on any advice he could.

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Brian ready for a ride

This magazine was recently invited to be one of the first to see the progress at first hand of the site that will become home for the thousands of athletes expected in London for the Olympic Games of 2012.

Whilst the project is one of the largest construction and engineering projects in Europe, twice the size of Heathrow Terminal Five when completed, the question to the casual onlooker who is faced with what looks like a huge bomb site, has to be whether it will be ready on time?

According to *Call Sign's* Olympic guide, the project is around three months ahead of schedule, although the only building we saw that had any shape was the Olympic stadium itself. But we were assured that work was well under way on the Aquatics Centre, the Olympic Village itself, the VeloPark (cycling), the Hockey, Handball and Basketball arenas and indeed the centre where the games will be broadcast to almost every country in the world from - the International Broadcast Centre/Main Press Centre - which we were told would be, if laid on its side, half again as high as the Canary Wharf tower!

**As for taxis, we were told of ONE site (currently on the Hackney Marshes side of the A12) where we MIGHT be able to drop off! They say they plan more - but not yet!**

The first ancient Olympic Games can be traced back to 776 BC and were staged on the ancient plains of Olympia. They were dedicated to the ancient 'Gods' and continued until Emperor Theodosius decreed in 393 AD that all such 'pagan cults' be banned.

The modern version - ie the first Olympiad of the modern era - saw competitors mainly from Greece, Germany, France and Great Britain come to Athens on 6 April 1896. The first gold medal at those games was won by American James Connolly, who won the triple jump to become the first Olympic cham-

# CALL SIGN AT THE OLYMPIC PARK



Can what looks like a huge bomb site produce a stadium scheduled to look like this?

ion in more than 1,500 years. Interestingly, to connect with the Olympics past, the London Olympics site has unearthed historical items from the Iron and Bronze Ages right through to World War II.

So will it be ready for 27th July 2012 and the 60 days following? Well, it may resemble something of a tip at the moment, but it certainly is a tip with some style and *Call Sign* has no doubt that it will be completed on time.

## Lee Takes the Plunge!

*Call Sign* has been following the progress of Dial-a-Cab driver and Bedfont Green goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)** for several seasons - including that great FA cup run of two seasons back when he was still with Wembley FC and highlights of their game were shown on BBC's *Match of the Day* and Sky. Now Lee is finally tying the knot with long-time girlfriend **Becky** and trusting himself not to put on too much weight on a honeymoon cruise - while mum and mum-in-law look after the kids! Good luck to them both...



If Lee looks after Becky as carefully as he held the F A Cup, they will be very happy



## Newham Council increases rent tenfold!

*Call Sign* has for some time now been following the career of **Sam Bezzina** - son of Dial-a-Cab driver **Dean (M10)** - and his desire to fight for England and possibly even represent this country at the **London Olympics** in 2012. His biggest achievement so far was to win a prestigious *Golden Gloves Championship* and claim the national title, plus that pair of Golden Gloves.

Dean has never been shy of passing on praise to **Newham Boxing Club** for their help with training Sam, that has put him up there as one of the country's most promising young boxers. But things could change.

Newham Council have always been proud to give their support to the Olympics taking place in their borough, but now Newham Boxing Club, with several youngsters in the gym in addition to Sam aiming for success at the 2012 Games, are accusing the authority of trying to close them down!

The club, based in Stratford's Church Street and just a short hop from the 2012 Games site, have been shocked that with their new lease offer, Newham Council are demanding a rent of £10,000 per year - TEN TIMES their current payment!

**"We were expecting an increase in rent under the new lease, but to ask us to pay around £200 a week is just ridiculous - it will close us down,"** said club official Joe Chapman, who also pointed out that the current rent and rates amounts to little more than £1,000 per year.

**"It looks as if the council want to throw us out and redevelop the site, which already includes a derelict building,"** added Mr Chapman about the club started by his father Ron, together with Bob Galloway back in 1981.

The club has been on the site for 20 years after an eight-year spell at West Ham's Memorial Road and over that time has proved an outstanding conveyor belt for boxing talent. Dozens of national champions at school-boy, junior ABA and national boys' clubs tournaments have been produced under the successful training team at the Newham gym, with many top prospects going on to earn international success with England. Joe Chapman continued **"We had four of our boxers reaching the national junior ABA finals this year and all of them will be aiming at earning their chance in the Olympic squad. How does it look for their future in boxing if the council is now trying to close us down,"** Joe asked sadly?

The club's list of impressive youngsters in addition to Sam, include John Coyle who won the 2009 national title, with Liam Desmond, George Moughton and George Veness as runners up.

The club are urgently seeking talks with councillors to discuss the new rent. The current lease expired in July. Coincidentally, the threat to the club comes just a few weeks after their successful neighbours, **West Ham Boys**

# Sam's Boxing Club Threatened with Closure



Sam outside Newham Boxing Club. Will it survive until the Olympics?

**Boxing Club**, were also battling against the threat of losing their famous gym on the site of Plaistow's Black Lion pub. The West Ham officials were worried that a redevelopment plan of constructing flats on the site would leave them without a suitable home. However, the Hammers were relieved when pub landlord, Tom Friel, withdrew the planning application.

Now, Newham Boxing Club officials hope that someone at the council will also have sec-

ond thoughts about the cash demands of the new lease, which threatens the future of the club and with it the chances of talented youngsters like Sam Bezzina.

Dad **Dean Bezzina** told *Call Sign*: **"It will be an absolute disaster if the club is shut. It does seem the height of hypocrisy for the council to welcome the Olympics with one hand, while taking away some of the possible competitor's chances with the other. I just hope there is a last minute reprieve..."**

## Forever Optimistic

With the current economic downturn continuing, it's perhaps refreshing to meet **David Rance (D16)** whose optimistic attitude to work is inspiring, to put it mildly!

"I've been driving a cab for nearly 40 years and been on DaC for 28 of them. When I stop at cab shelters for a quick coffee and croissant, I hear other drivers bemoaning the fact that there's no work about. Well I'm not surprised they moan. They sit there chatting for hours on end and then complain there's no work! This is a really a good job, but you do have to work at it to take your money," he told *Call Sign*.

"I do not want to criticise others, but I've found that through the ups and downs of the daily grind and over the years I've been driving a cab, you have to meet the challenges as the economy changes. It's all about customer service, doing your best for the cab-riding public and retaining our customer loyalty. It may well be difficult out there at present - there's no getting away from that - but I never refuse any jobs because you never know where any one job might take you and with a Dial-a-Cab radio, there is always the chance you'll get something to bring you back into town."

Looking at the wider picture, David continued: "Those drivers that have held a badge over the past 15 or 16 years have never seen anything like these present hard times, and I understand how difficult it is for them when they have commitments based on the flourishing economy they'd become used to. But those of us that *have* known harder times, like the three day week, miner's strike and IRA bombings, have learned to adjust and survive. But I know it isn't easy," he said thoughtfully.

"Every person is the architect of their own destiny and while this is, as I've said, a good job in that it allows you the flexibility to work however and whenever you personally want to, it also means you have to stick at it even more when the going gets tough!"

David left us with a smile. "Gotta go, it's a bit quiet out there today...!"

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David is always optimistic

## Now it's M&O only....

In a move revealed to *Call Sign* at a meeting on 22 July, LTI parent company Manganese Bronze announced that it is scrapping its independent dealer network in favour of a direct sales operation via M&O. They have issued 12 months notice to end contracts with all independent main dealers and will now concentrate on developing a direct sales operation, together with an improved aftersales network.

The company said that given the current economic environment and continuing evolution of the UK taxi market, it believed it was important to make the change to ensure it could continue to offer the value for money propositions on new and used taxis. They are also hoping to add to their service dealer network to help improve the quality of aftersales care given to customers.

Chief executive **John Russell** told *Call Sign*: "These changes are designed to ensure drivers throughout Britain have easy access to new and used LTI products, along with excellent aftersales care provided by a local service dealer who is trained and equipped to main-

# Manganese Scraps Dealer Network



Manganese Chief Exec John Russell

tain our vehicles to the high standards our customers deserve."

Referring to the recent £9.4million fundraising in June where Manganese offered 5.35 mil-

lion new shares at a 9% discounted rate of 187p per share in order to raise that large sum, Mr Russell said that the extra revenue from the share placement fundraising would go towards investing in further direct sales sites in order to deliver on their improvement promise."

Mr Russell added that it had not been an easy decision to serve notice on their independent main dealers, but that it was important they had a structure and approach that enabled the company to thrive in the years ahead to the benefit of their customers.

He ended by saying: "We are extremely grateful to the independent main dealers for their support in the past, and hope they will consider becoming service dealers in the future."

Also announced was that LTI would now become the London Taxi Company...

## We Did Say!

In the *May* issue of *Call Sign* under the heading of *Nicked*, we published a story and photo showing a pedicab being nicked by police for stopping outside Hamleys looking for some mugs to get into his three-wheeled death trap.

In the same article, we also added a photo taken at the same time of a licensed taxi parked on the rank in the centre of the road opposite Hamleys. Our reporter admittedly pork-pied the police, feeling a pang of guilt about allowing a fellow cab driver to get a ticket without at least trying to help. *Call Sign's* reporter explained to the police that the taxi might have been on a radio job and they then moved on – as did the reporter, so whether they later returned we know not.

In the Editorial of the following issue, Editor Al wrote of a conversation he'd had with police in Old Compton Street when pointing out to them the numerous pedicabs parked on every available inch of pavement or zigzag line. When Alan asked them why they weren't nicking any of them, they pointed out the unattended taxi parked at the back of the Prince Edward theatre and asked whether they should place a ticket on that too? Whilst they were two separate arguments, Alan decided to sigh, followed by a lingering exit stage left. Both incidents hinted at a crackdown of cabs parked on ranks.

Thursday 2 July saw stage one of that with at least three 'parked' taxis on different ranks around town becoming clamped – probably more. Our photographer saw this one – also on the Hamleys rank – ready clamped.

Things may be a bit busier now, but ranks are for working taxis. You can't say you haven't been told...



## New Director of Taxi and PH at PCO

TfL has announced John Mason as its new Director of Taxi and Private Hire at the PCO. Mr Mason was previously the Deputy Director for Congestion Charging and Traffic Enforcement and will take up his role on 28 September, replacing Ed Thompson who announced he was stepping down from the role last month. Jeroen Weimar, TfL's Chief Operating Officer for Enforcement and Compliance, told us:

"John will take forward the already excellent work of the PCO, with a focus on

delivering the Mayor's key objective of cracking down on illegal taxi touts." John Mason added: "I am delighted to have this great opportunity to join the Public Carriage Office. It is a unique opportunity to work with the taxi and private hire trades, whose members provide such a vital service to the Capital. They are already the best in the world and I'm looking forward to working with the trade to provide an even better service for Londoners. I'm sure members of the trade won't hesitate to give me their views."

## FOUNDLING MUSEUM

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

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

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

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

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

**Tel. 020 7841 3600**

**Visit their website at**

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



**Call Sign** has received many phone calls from Dial-a-Cab drivers who had read the last two issues of the mag, but didn't take up the special Intellicig offer. Many wanted Intellicig for their partners.

Intellicig is a new product aimed at smokers. It is an electronic rechargeable cigarette that is said to have the same qualities as a real cigarette (including exhaling a vapour that resembles smoke), but is cheaper, legal for indoor use and gives out no fumes. It looks like a real ciggy and provides smokers with their fix of nicotine (plus traces of propylene glycol, glycerol and water compared to the 4,800 chemicals you find in a typical pack of 20).

The British-based manufacturers claim that a 20-a-day smoker can also see savings of up to 75% on their usual smoking costs with an Intellicig pack retailing from £15 and a cartridge lasting eight times longer than a standard cigarette. DaC Account Manager **Caroline McGowan** tested the ciggie for **Call Sign** and gave it 10 out of 10! She saved enough in her 6 week test to buy two new pairs of shoes – and believe us, Caroline doesn't have cheap taste!

An Intellicig spokesperson told **Call Sign** following Caroline's successful test:

"Every day Intellicig is succeeding in changing people's perceptions of smoking. Gone are the days of smelly ashtrays, to be replaced with the greatest invention of recent times. The Intellicig success story is testimony itself to the positive effect our *EVolution* model has had for so many users; in just six months the company has grown incredibly and now exports to major suppliers across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. The Intellicig offers smokers more than a fighting chance to change their smoking habit to a cleaner alternative, which has spin off benefits for family, friends and work colleagues as they can now be free from passive smoking, smelly clothes and staff disappearing for their fix. Intellicig is also much cheaper than conventional cigarettes and can save you enough in a year for an extra holiday!

**"We know that many Cabbies smoke and along with spending much of their working day in the cab, this can have adverse effects. We are offering all readers of Call Sign a superb discount of 20% off their first order from Intellicig. Also, have a look at our Trade Pack opportunity further down the page.**

"To claim your discount, just go to **www.intellicig.com**, buy a starter kit and when you reach the checkout, enter the coupon code **cabbie20**, which will automatically take 20% off your bill. Intellicig offers a 30-day guarantee and if you are not satisfied within that time, simply return the product for a refund. If you have non-cabby friends, they too are welcome."

### Cabbies' Trade Offer

"Having been a cabbie many years ago, I know that passengers will be fascinated by the

# INTELLICIG SPECIAL OFFER!



Not a real cigarette so the current regulations do not apply

Intellicig and will want to know more. Intellicig have put together a special Trade Pack for Taxi drivers which consists of the following:

- 10 x EVO-U Starter Kits.
- 1 Free EVolution to demo.
- 25 Free Cartridges to demo.
- 1 Free Car USB Adaptor.
- Free Information Stickers.

**The pack costs just £150, which is the trade price for the 10 EVO-U kits. The RRP for the EVO-U is £26 each. If you would like to know more or place your order, please contact the Intellicig team by calling 0845 527 6115 or emailing john@intellicig.com**

**Full details of our kits and Trade Packs are on our website at www.intellicig.com."**

## THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

376 Strand, WC2

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

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

*We are certain that you will be delighted*



Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID

**Salieri Restaurant**  
376 Strand, WC2  
Reservations: 020 7836 1318

London's Royal Opera House recently saw a gathering of political heavyweights brought together to discuss London's economic future. Some of those present included London Mayor **Boris Johnson**, former Tory Minister of Transport and now working closely with the Mayor from within the London Development Agency **Steve Norris**, Shadow Chancellor **George Osborne** and **Lord Peter Mandelson**, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. Also present was Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Brian Rice**. He told *Call Sign* following the conference:

**"It was an extremely interesting day that included three different discussion break-out groups for the several hundred guests to attend. Whilst politics is politics, the meetings did provide an interesting insight into how London's economic future is seen, because this obviously affects the London taxi business and more specifically to us, Dial-a-Cab."**

The Mayor's speech was based on proposals for London's economic development as set out in *Rising to the Challenge*, which was published in May. The conference, organised by the **London Development Agency**, brought together over 300 leading politicians, business people, commentators and policy makers to discuss and debate the key issues facing London's economy and to help develop solutions to shape the future of the capital.

In his speech, Boris Johnson called for London to promote more powerfully its position as the world's undisputed capital of business and ensure that central government work with the city to help keep the capital highly competitive in future. He committed to maintain London as a world-leading low carbon capital, undertake initiatives to improve Londoners' skills and employability and to

## Brian Rice at 'Rising to Challenge' Conference

London's economic future is discussed at the Opera House...



The conference was chaired by London Mayor Boris Johnson

tal. This would substantially reduce the choices available for investors, put up protectionist barriers around Europe and give a huge competitive boost to financial centres outside the EU, such as New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Geneva – to Europe and London's ultimate disadvantage.

*As a by-product, it would undoubtedly do serious damage to London taxi fleets such as DaC.*

The Mayor ended by saying: "My greatest worry is that this is just the start of a flood of draft directives that will start to filter out of Brussels. London is the home of hedge funds and private equity, but having a strong hedge fund and private equity industry is not just good for London, it is good for Europe. No other European city's financial services sector is competing on the same international level as London and the EU Commission must recognise this. That is why I've decided to personally take the lead on this and lobby key figures. London's main competitors are outside the EU, including New York and Hong Kong, so it's blatantly obvious that this unilateralist approach will damage our competitiveness."

continue to invest in projects for London's long-term economic growth

He also called on the Government to help him resist the EU Commission's "dangerous plans" to regulate financial services. He feared the plans could threaten London's status as the global capital of financial services resulting in European investors losing out, seriously damaging the capital's financial services industry. The Mayor fired off his warning directly at Lord Mandelson. Mayor Johnson also added that so concerned was he about the situation that he had sought an urgent meeting to personally lobby EU Commissioners and make the case for London. He singled out the EU draft directive on Alternative Investment Fund Management as a measure that would seriously weaken the European marketplace for hedge funds, private equity and venture capi-

## EAST LONDON CABBIES OUTING TO MALDON

*Taxi Day* in Maldon, Essex, took place on what was one of the hottest days of 2009. Having gathered the special needs children from schools in Newham and Havering, the convoy of over 100 decorated taxis - including several from Dial-a-Cab - set off to the usual noise of air horns and shouts of delight, but with an unusual lead vehicle - a bright yellow Lamborghini! Both this and another Lamborghini attracted much attention throughout the day as the children on the trip and students from The Plume School in Maldon sat in the vehicles. Thanks go to *Glamour Cars for Rent* for sending the vehicles along, allowing everyone to enjoy the roar of the engines throughout the day and also to the motorbike outriders from *Blue Knight* and the *Essex Police* outriders for ensuring a safe journey.

A comfort stop was taken en route to Maldon at *The George and Dragon* in Mountnessing. Since the trip's visit last year, this pub has had a makeover and is now a chic bar with lovely patio at the front and gardens to the rear. Once everyone had been suitably refreshed, it was back into the cabs for the remainder of the trip. As the convoy got closer to Maldon, more and more people stood along the roadside waving to the cabs. At one riding stable, even the horses come to watch!

In Maldon itself, the High Street was crammed with people welcoming and waving to the children. The event is one of the most popular activities of the year in the town, with balloons and decorations adorning the shops and business in the High Street. Then it was into Plume School for lunch before travelling onto Promenade Park for a fun-filled afternoon. This year, the hall where the children ate had a Caribbean theme with students in fancy dress. Entertainment, including a balloon model maker and goodie bags kept the visitors happy during lunch. Then it was off to the park.

Disco sounds later filled the air and everyone enjoyed a great afternoon. *McDonalds* in Maldon arrived with a meal for the children shortly before the day ended. All the guests received goodie bags and the Committee would like to thank everyone involved in making the day such a great success and also *Costco* for their support. The smiling faces of the helpers and the children at the end showed just what a wonderful day they had enjoyed.

Committee member and DaC driver, **John Dixon (B67)** told *Call Sign*: "From beginning to end, the day was just brilliant! Thanks to everyone involved - especially the drivers - for helping to make it that good."

Sandie Goodwin



Taking a comfort break at the George and Dragon



I received the July issue of *Call Sign* on the same day that my left shoulder decided to remind me that I was getting old and send shooting pains around an area that should be mobile.

Perhaps it was brought on by my good nature of getting the shopping from that high-class supermarket, ASDA, for my loving wife who had spent the morning tending the floral display she has produced on our balcony for the enjoyment of passing drivers and pedestrians at Dalston Lane and Queensbridge Road. But due to the pain, I decided to rest the shoulder by having a quiet lay down and reading our magazine. It was the first time in many months that I covered every one of the crammed packed pages of information. But after reading many of the articles and letters, I began to think I was reading past issues as the themes and points made were exactly the same as I had written of in the past and been castigated for, but now the work has taken a downturn, my words seem to have been correct.

I was called a 'friend of the minicabs' at the time, but the idiots who suggested that could not have been further from the truth. Can you remember when I told drivers that while there was plenty of work around, not to bury their heads in the sand as their rear ends would be up in the air and that was the best way to get stuffed? That is what happens when being blinded by greed when the work is plentiful, letting the minicabs (now Private Hire) get footholds in hotels, clubs and many other lucrative venues.

The suggestion from some drivers came as: "What do you know, working in the office all the time." Well I wonder if any of those who profess to be knowledgeable about the cab trade will eat their words and admit I was right in warning you of that looming threat? Maybe this recession will have done some good in bringing the licensed taxi trade closer and attacking the threats to our trade. But I guarantee that if the work becomes plentiful again, drivers will go their own sweet way and let Addison Lee and others get into to sources of work that could and should be travelling in a licensed taxi.

## Cheating the system?

After the last BoM Meeting, I had to sit on a Board Appeals panel for drivers who had been expelled. These drivers had found a quirk in our despatching system, which they then used to their advantage over time to steal work from other drivers ahead of them in the queue. They didn't inform the BoM to allow us to correct the problem and so give every driver equal chances on all work. They capitalised on the problem, making up to £40 to £50 extra a night (using a driver's own words) and would have carried on - except that they were then caught. A few of my colleagues began to feel sorry for the first driver and thought perhaps an expulsion verdict was too harsh, as he spoke with an apologetic and quivering voice.

But when the original sentence was deemed to be correct, his true character showed through with venom when he said: "Thank you for nothing; you have just ruined my life as a radio taxi driver." He seemed to forget who it was that was stealing work from his so called friends.

The Board are in place to work for and pro-

Another batch of views from DaC's answer to Victor Meldrew. These do not necessarily reflect the views of anyone at Call Sign or DaC...

# THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD



tect the 2000+ honest subscribers who go out to work to earn money to provide for their families, not to cheat on their fellow subscribers. I think the BoM do a very good job in accomplishing this on behalf of honest drivers, but be warned, if you are prepared to cheat then it is only a matter of time before you will be caught.

Allan Evans also told me of another driver who complained to him that his name had been put into the results of the complaints meeting, so his friends then knew he had been cheating them. Allan is correct in naming the driver, as I did for 20 years; if you do not want the shame of being named, do not break the rules.

## Charlie Rubin

I, more than many perhaps, was saddened by the death of Charlie Rubin whom I had worked with for over 30 years. This went back to our days in Shirland Road, when he was the day Control Room Supervisor and I was the Night Supervisor. During those 8 years, we had a close work relationship, but it also gave me the opportunity to play jokes on him and as you know, I do have a sense of humour. On this particular occasion, we were working in the basement of Shirland Road. As you descended the stairs, you were confronted by a large counter/desk and on the nearest end of the desk was the diary for that day's happenings. This was the first item Charlie would go for on his arrival, mainly to see what lazy person had gone sick!

One night, with the help of a greengrocer's 1 lb weight and a thin piece of twine, I rigged the diary so as soon as he touched it, the book would shoot along the eight-foot counter and disappear. The look on his face was well worth the wait, just as it was when a driver acquired a shop window mannequin. During the night, I found a set of clothes and dressed it like a driver with a flat hat and telephonist's headphones. Then I sat it at the furthest point of the control room at a telephonist control panel. When Charlie arrived I said there was a driver learning the phones and left it at that. It was some 20 / 25 minutes before Charlie twigged and said he hadn't seen the driver even move. "Are you sure he isn't dead," he had asked!

Also, on the night of 31st March into 1st April, I asked the night drivers over the air if they would like the front shop to stay open all night so that they could be paid throughout the night. In those days drivers were paid cash for their account work in a front shop type office.

If they wanted this to happen, then they should phone Charlie in the Control Room during the morning before midday. I left it at that, so that the some drivers would realise it was April Fool's Day. After around 100 drivers phoned Charlie, he was going up the wall. So to get his own back, he gave a few of them my home number so that I'd be awoken from my well deserved sleep!

The last gag I will relate originated from a driver who sold me some hazelnuts in their shells; the only difference was that these had been doctored and a condom put in the shell in place of the nut, then sealed with the correct coloured plastic wood. I then told Charlie that if he could open the shell without using any tools, I'd give him £1. My wife was with me at the time. Now Charlie, not one to be beat, caught me unawares and put the shell between his teeth crunched and shattered it. The clean condom then gained its freedom, filling Charlie's mouth with a rubbery substance. The look on his face when he realised he had been tricked and the howls of laughter from the control room staff was well worth the £1.

The jokes were numerous and these were just a few of those I played on him, but I am honoured to be able to say he was a wonderful and trusted friend. The only thing that I could not get this gentle man to do was to raise his voice or lose his temper. I will miss him greatly, you do not get characters like him now in the trade.

## Sister Act

I was lucky enough to acquire 2 tickets for the wonderful musical at the Palladium. *Sister Act* is a show well worth seeing and informing your passengers about. I did notice that there were driver's wives with their friends there, but there was an big absence of many drivers...

Tom Whitbread  
DaC Board Member

**Call Sign**

**August 2009**

Editor: Alan Fisher  
 Address: 39-47 East Road, London, N1 6AH  
 Tel: 0207 251 0581 Fax: 0207 553 7293  
 E-mail: callsignmag@aol.com  
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 Email: danny.fresco@dsl.pipex.com

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The Public Carriage Office has given approval for the use of a new external blind spot mirror to be fitted on London taxis. The **Magnum Frog-eye mirror** is the first auxiliary clip-on mirror of its type to be given official approval to be fitted to PCO licensed vehicles. The Frog-eye, due to its larger size, robustness and quality, has been attracting interest from cabbies for some time, according to Magnum the company selling them.

**"We've been selling the Frog-eye for some years now, and have always gained a lot of interest from Black Cab drivers who have been looking for a more effective means to see blind spots,"** says Sharon Hennessy - Magnums MD. **"We finally submitted them to the PCO for approval and are extremely pleased they were accepted and gained so many positive comments about quality and the safety benefits they will provide."**

The Magnum Frog-eye is an auxiliary clip-on mirror, which is easily fitted to the existing wing mirror. Made from top quality German optical glass and using anti-glare technology, the mirror is designed specifically to increase vision and eliminate blind spots, therefore making driving safer for passengers, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. The benefits



The Frog-eye mirror is now available for taxis

include easier parking, a complete view of the kerb, a full wide-angle view, no distortion and the elimination of blind spots. It is also very easy to install.

One cab driver who has been using the Magnum Frog-eye is Johnny (badge 56752) who has been driving for over 14 years. He says:

**"Personally, it's the best bit of cab safety equipment I've ever used. It beats any others I've tried hands down. It's also great on motorways and very useful for overtaking. I fully recommend the Frog-eye."**

Sharon Hennessy added: **"It's all about preventing accidents. We have been selling the Frog-eye to driving schools and instructors, mobility centres, the Highways Agency and various police forces for some years. Now we're happy to be able to provide this potentially life saving mirror to the UK's taxi drivers."**

Currently the Magnum Frog-eye is only available for the TX1, TX2 and TX4, but hopefully approval for the Fairway will soon be awarded as well.

**To contact Magnum, just call 020 8744 5230 or visit [www.blindspotmirrors.co.uk](http://www.blindspotmirrors.co.uk)...**

## Richard Twitters to Tweet-a-Cab!

In the April *Call Sign*, we wrote of Dial-a-Cab driver **Richard Cudlip (V23)** and his desire to see the Twitter social networking facility used as a tool to assist drivers in obtaining work. Richard has been on DaC since 2006 and admits to being a computer geek complete with his own blog ([www.thecabbiescapital.co.uk](http://www.thecabbiescapital.co.uk)). Prior to driving a cab and perhaps unsurprisingly, Richard had previously worked for several IT companies. He told *Call Sign* that he had been using Twitter for some time and had been talking to other taxi drivers - both DaC and non-DaC - about how it could be a useful tool for cab drivers. He described Twitter as a free web-based service that allowed you to stay in contact with a group of people via short text messages. You send and receive messages via the web or text message, adding that most modern mobile phones could be used to access the Twitter service. He compared it to messages sent via driver's Dial-a-Cab terminals, but potentially open to a much wider audience. His aim was to see whether groups of taxi drivers could become organised and, in the not too distant future, even be used to try and get work.

**Well that "not too distant future" appears to be now, because Richard has helped set up a "tweet-a-cab" service on his blogging site from a suggestion by a friend and says it will save potential Twittering passengers standing on the street waiting for a taxi.**

*Tweetalondoncab* began when several of his Twitter friends contacted Richard to see whether he was working. These calls were the beginning of *Tweetalondoncab* becoming a business, a collection of around 30 drivers who all got together via Twitter and now claim to have "hundreds of followers."

Richard admitted when interviewed recently by *Sky News* that his group of Twitterers hadn't received many bookings, but he was hopeful that the message would eventually get out there and that those operating the system would benefit with extra work.

How do they know there are no minicabs creeping in, because the drivers won't necessarily meet? Richard explained that all those driving with *tweetalondoncab* would be accepted through other driver's recommendations. As for customers, they get a taxi by sending a private Twitter message so that their location isn't made public on the internet. When they get a reply, they then liaise directly with the driver - all of whom can also keep in touch with each other whilst out on the road, passing on traffic problems and general info.

It doesn't seem likely that the business side of it will make Richard rich, but if it gets more work, then that is a success story in itself. Richard had a dream and has made it come to fruition...



**Richard's Twitter dream comes to fruition**

## MND: Do You Need Advice?

Following the last issue of *Call Sign* in which we wrote of Dial-a-Cab driver, **Maurice Karter (W46)** and his battle with authority to get his wife Janet treated for the **Motor Neurone Disease** that struck her down suddenly at the age of 53 (*Can MND be defeated*), we have received several emails / phone calls asking if we could put them in touch with Maurice.

Janet receives treatment from Dr Geeta Shroff at her clinic in India where stem cell treatment is not only allowed, but is also used successfully. The treatment is not allowed in this country.

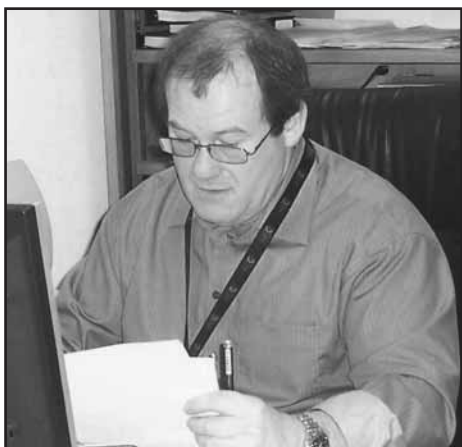
Janet is slowly but surely showing a positive response to the MND and Maurice has told *Call Sign* that he has no problem with us giving out his personal contact details and that if he can be of help to anyone involved with someone suffering from this appalling muscle-wasting disease, please feel free to contact him. Because he spends much of his time with Janet in a clinic where signals are difficult, he cannot always be contacted direct, but if you have trouble, leave your details and Maurice will be only too happy to call you back and pass on his experience.

**Call on 0208 550 4014 or 07973 358 896.**



**Maurice and Janet with Dr Shroff**





Since Dial-a-Cab introduced terminals where credit cards could be accepted as payment instead of cash, hail and ride trips as well as trips through the 'credit card line' have increased. With this has come an increase in the number of Chargebacks. Chargebacks are where the cardholder (mainly) and sometimes the card issuer think that the transaction may not be correct and will take the money back from us. Unfortunately, there is no time limit on Chargebacks, so you must keep your receipts for at least 1 year.

Some of you will have received a call from DaC asking you to bring in a particular receipt so that we can defend the Chargeback. You may also have received a call to say that we are going to take the cost of the trip away from you. Since 1 January 2005, the shift in lia-

## Credit Cards, Chargeback and Fraud

bility from the bank to the vendor means that you, the driver, must take more responsibility in ensuring that the payment will be successful. One overriding statistic in the credit card saga is that less than .001%\* of all credit card transactions processed actually result in a Chargeback, however over 50%\* of all Chargebacks relate to FRAUD. So how are you going to combat the fraud problem?

Always make sure that the credit card **SWIPES** through the terminal.

Ensure you have a valid Authorisation Code.

Where the terminal fails to read the card, you must fill in a manual credit card slip correctly. Just writing the numbers is not good enough; you have to make a brass rubbing of the card and then have to ring up the drivers line for an authorisation code.

When the customer signs either slip, verify the name by checking the back of the card.

Following these four steps proves to the bank that the person who owns the card is in front of you and has taken the trip and that they have sufficient funds to make payment. Our remit with the bank is that all our transactions are "customer present."

**Never KEY a card if it fails to swipe.**

Never **KEY** a card if it fails to swipe. I have written this twice so that those drivers who continue to KEY card numbers may get the message. From the bank's perspective, a keyed card is not proof that the person is present. If the card fails to swipe then ask them for good old-fashioned cash. If they have no cash, then my advice to you is forego the trip because in three weeks or even three months, you may have to forego the money! *We will always take the money back from the driver when he has keyed in a number.* If a card swipes but you do not get a Valid Authorisation, do not accept the fare, as there may be insufficient funds in the account to cover the trip. As before, ask to be paid in cash. We know at the time of submission - i.e. the next day - that we will not get paid for those trips without a valid authorisation and we will take back the money immediately.

If you stick to these few simple rules, then you won't be out of pocket.

\* *Statistics supplied by HSBC*

Warren Smith  
DaC Financial Controller

## HARRY POTTER TOURS BY DAC TAXI

Dial-a-Cab driver **Jim Rainbird (T25)** was telling *Call Sign* about a filming job he recently did and one that you can read about elsewhere in this issue. At the same time, he also mentioned one of the tours undertaken by drivers of **London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours** that were becoming more popular, were based around the **Harry Potter movies**.

One Australia tour company, **Viator** (Latin for traveller) also now advertises Harry Potter tours by genuine "London black cab drivers" and plays on the fact that up to five passengers can enjoy a personalised tour for one set price - obviously a company with excellent taste! But where does a Harry Potter tour actually go and do you have to be a registered wizard to drive / fly the London taxi?

This is the Viator version of the tour so that should anyone - with or without a pointed hat - ask you to take them on it, you'll know what they mean.

First stop is Diagon Alley where Harry and his friends visit at the start of every school year to pick up their supplies of spell books, robes, wands and other items in preparation for their return to Hogwarts. Then of course they can see where Harry walks through the wall to get to platform 9 and 3/4 at King's Cross Station from where the Hogwarts Express departs. Then the passengers can see the place where Harry and Ron stole Ron's father's flying car, while later standing on the bridge where the Knight bus crossed from the third book (Prisoner of Azkaban) and also visit the all-new Leaky Cauldron.

They can follow Harry's flight to London with Dumbledore's Army and see the bridges, buildings and ships they pass along the way. They can also enter the telephone box that

descends into the Ministry of Magic and stand where Harry and Voldemort come face to face for the first time since the Triwizard tournament (Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire).

The tour ends by the Headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix, which is also home to Harry's beloved Godfather Sirius Black.

**What's that? You don't know where all those places are? Perhaps you should consider signing up for the next CabGuide course. These are sponsored by the *Worshipful***

*Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers and accredited by City University. There is no compulsion to have a pointed hat or head!* Contact Graham Woodhouse on 07968 791 117 or email him at [cabguide@sky.com](mailto:cabguide@sky.com) for details of the next course...



## 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 £59 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...**



In the *May 2009* issue of *Call Sign*, Dial-a-Cab Roman Way depot Manager, **Dana Thananjeyan**, publicised the plight of his fellow Tamil country folk at the hands of the Sri Lankan government after many years of bitter fighting for a Tamil homeland. At the time, Dana had not heard from either his mother or other relations in the area for several months and had no idea whether they were safe or even alive. Following the current cessation of hostilities, he revisited Dana to catch up on the latest news.

However, it was a jubilant Dana that greeted us at Roman Way with the good news that, via a relative, he had now heard that his mother and 94-year-old grandmother were well - albeit held in a government internment camp.

"Some might describe the conditions there as a form of concentration camp," he said, "but they are safe and that, for the time being, is paramount."

"Some 300,000 people have been displaced and it is believed that around 25,000 have been killed in the genocide. There are no medical checks or services for those in the camps and on average, between 10 and 15 elderly people die each week from lack of food and poor hygiene conditions. There are even separate camps for children who are taken away from their parents," he explained with a deep sigh, putting aside his joy about his own family members.

# Dana's Good News Day!



**A mother holds her injured baby in a Sri Lankan holding camp**

another friend of his from their college days.

"It was from India that I had an unexpected phone call late one night to say my relative had seen my mother and grandmother in the Sri Lankan camp and that they were reasonably well, although struggling to cope with the wretched conditions," Dana told *Call Sign's* reporter.

"The UN and other international agencies - including journalists - are not allowed into the camps to observe the inhuman conditions in which my people are being held. You cannot but believe that if we had oil or other precious natural resources, the world might have shown a much greater interest in our plight and put more pressure on the Sri Lankan government. Hostilities may have ended, for which I am truly grateful, but there is a long way to go yet," he added.

*Call Sign* then asked Dana about the circumstances in which he found out that his relatives were alive?

"One relative was injured in the fighting and taken to a hospital where he was treated by a doctor friend. My relative described the appalling conditions in the camps and told the doctor he would rather kill himself than go back there. In collusion with the relative, the doctor told the authorities my relative would need to stay in hospital for several days, which gave him time to recover and plan his escape. When fit enough, he just walked out of the hospital un-noticed, boarded a boat with a few others and escaped to India," Dana said through the merest hint of a smile.

Continuing, Dana added that once his relative had arrived in India, he immediately claimed refugee status and met up with

"My granny, at 94 years old, needs daily help, so I just cannot imagine how she is currently making out in an internment camp," he said - all hints of a smile having now vanished and replaced by a look of worry at having their plight brought back to him.

"My mother was caught up in this whole terrible tragedy because she decided to visit my granny at the time of the bombing and Sri Lankan government forces offensive, became trapped during hostilities and was then herded into the camp with thousands of others. If she had not visited my gran, she may have fared better, who knows? The authorities say they will, in due course, release the over 60s from the camps to go back into their own towns and villages, but they also say that these areas are currently unsafe because of land mines. Why would desolate villages be mined? It sounds very suspicious to me, but I am hopeful for better news in the near future."

Dana ended by saying he had little alternative other than to be optimistic, but via *Call Sign* wanted to publicly thank all the DaC staff and drivers who had sent many messages of support following this magazine's publication of the war in Sri Lanka and how it was affecting his family. His desire is to bring much better news in the near future...

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## Did you know that about London?

John Merrick - known as the 'Elephant Man' due to his appalling facial looks brought on through a severe case of neurofibromatosis - was kept in a cage in the window of **259**

**Whitechapel Road** to lure people in to see a freak show? Merrick was later taken over the road to the London Hospital by Dr Treves, where the specialist in skin disorders tried to help him.



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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 decided to 'crank it up' a bit for this year's regular London stint at the Southfields rank to serve *Wimbledon Fortnight* - so I hired a 6-seater Mercedes Vito for the duration! As most Dial-a-Cab subscribers may know, the PCO allow us to operate a shared taxi tariff and consequently the drivers can charge 'per head', so with 6 seats instead of 5 - well you can work out the rest!



The 3 DaC drivers + Bob Woodford take up the back row.. but who is Vince?

My opinion of this vehicle? It is a superb drive and very comfortable. Any complaints? Well, I have to agree with my Editor here - it is not an iconic Taxi. The whole purpose of having the 'van' for the tennis was sheer unashamed greed - sorry!

The event in SW19 normally throws up a few humorous moments; one such this summer was having former Millwall, Spurs and Man Utd striker **Teddy Sheringham** in the

Merc. The cab had been stationary for a while in the sun waiting for the next District line train to roll in, so when Ted sat down, he said: **"It's like a bloody sauna in here mate!"** He got the response he deserved from a Millwall diehard. **"Don't worry Ted, the air conditioning in this cab comes on very fast - and it's got more pace then you ever showed us!"**

My new business, *London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours*, has got off to a promising start since its launch in April, and Harry Potter tours seem to be the most popular request for our qualified tour guides (*see article in this issue...Ed*). It's amazing; the guides never had any of this in their course and exam accredited by the City University!

**The picture shows the team at a recent visitor attraction visit to Ripley's. Ann Watkins, David Rouland and Jim Rainbird are all DaC subscribers, but fortunately the guy in the foreground with the monkey behaviour is not! Despite being an avid reader, Vince is unlikely to read this article!**

Thanks to all who purchased my recent stock of wine - some even made it to my new lock up in Sutton to collect it themselves! I type these notes back at the French vineyard preparing for another run back to Dover with a fresh lot. Bottoms up chaps!

*A bientot...*

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



## COMPLAINTS RESULTS

*A Complaints meeting was held on 23 June 2009. The results are below...*

Name/call sign	Nature of Complaint	Sentence
<b>Jonathan Berns (M12)</b> <i>* Following appeal</i>	Driver continually used the book in facility to exploit the system to gain unfair advantage over fellow subscribers <i>Rules 2, 3, 7, 8, 11</i>	<b>Expelled</b>
<b>Elliot Woods (O88)</b> <i>* Following appeal</i>	Driver continually used the book in facility to exploit the system to gain unfair advantage over fellow subscribers <i>Rules 2, 3, 7, 8, 11</i>	<b>Expelled</b>
<b>Peter Renshaw (T82)</b>	Driver continually used the book in facility to exploit the system to gain unfair advantage over fellow subscribers <i>Rules 2, 3, 7, 8, 11</i>	<b>Expelled</b>
<b>William Sutherland (O41)</b>	Driver continually used the book in facility to exploit the system to gain unfair advantage over fellow subscribers <i>Rules 2, 3, 7, 8, 11</i>	<b>Expelled</b>
<b>Peter Mulcahy (K02)</b>	Driver continually used the book in facility to exploit the system to gain unfair advantage over fellow subscribers <i>Rules 2, 3, 7, 8, 11</i>	<b>Expelled</b>
<b>Paul Woods (V024)</b>	Driver continually used the book in facility to exploit the system to gain unfair advantage over fellow subscribers <i>Rules 2, 3, 7, 8, 11</i>	<b>Expelled</b>

**Stephen Gander (V20) chose to cease his membership with the Society before his complaint could be heard...**

## Fuel prices to go through the floor?

### And did DaC clients cause the increase?

Although oil prices are hovering just above the \$60 a barrel price, not that long ago they reached \$147 for a barrel of the black stuff. One man who gained a reputation for predicting that huge increase was *University of Calgary* business professor, **Philip Verleger** and because of his track record of predicting oil prices, when he speaks on the subject, people listen. Prof Verleger is now saying that because of the worldwide recession, an oil glut is unavoidable and will be reflected in the oil price. His view is that we could be heading back to 1999 prices with a barrel of crude selling for \$20.

Interestingly, Mr Verleger claims that recent increases in the price, although currently on a downward trend, were caused by man-made shortages where two large companies - both of them being **Dial-a-Cab** clients - bought huge amounts of oil that earned them up to 40% after borrowing the money at 3%. The shortages were created by stockpiling the oil on huge tankers in the Mediterranean and with some \$30 billion going into that stockpiling, the shortage created its own market conditions, increasing the value of the oil on the ships by those huge amounts.

The recession has ended the shortages and according to Professor Verleger, the \$20 barrel will soon be coming back. Sadly, he also says it might not last too long! But hey, we'll take what we can!

**Alan Fisher**

When *Call Sign* recently met **William Cornish (T76)**, he told us he was delighted with his new **Vito** taxi.

"I had a 2½ year old TX4, which I didn't fancy running beyond the manufacturer's warranty period, so I looked at the Mercedes Vito and found it suited my expectations," he said. "This is my second day of ownership and yes, I've found the passenger doors a pain, really slow to operate - especially when passengers in a hurry start tugging at the handles. But they soon realise they are going to have to let the mechanism do its own thing and they seem to calm down and wait, knowing there is nothing they can do to rush the process. As a driver, you quickly get used to the routine of activating the doors; handbrake on, into neutral and so on. I've spoken to other Vito owners and they reckon it takes about a week or so to get used to all the switches and things. As this is only my second day, I'm struggling a bit but I'm sure I'll get the hang of it pretty soon!

"The other problem I've encountered is the sheer size of the body, it's huge! I went very carefully around the bends on the approach to the Eurostar terminal at St Pancras and rubbed my tyres on the concrete island! Nothing serious, but again it's a case of getting used to the vehicle," he said with a confident smile.

Moving on to the turning circle, he continued his early review: "The rear-wheel steering feels very weird at first, a bit like turning around in your own space." With that, he gave *Call Sign* a ballet demo by rotating himself while standing up on tiptoe, gracefully completing a 360° (*sort of*) pirouette on an imagi-

The Call Sign debate continues: TX4 v Vito...

# William: Happy So Far After Two Days!



William is happy with his Vito...

nary spot on the floor!

William ended by saying that the driver's cabin was very spacious and comfortable and that the driving position was excellent. And any downside?

"Yes," he told us rubbing his back following the ballet demonstration, "it's a real stretch to

reach the near-side door to place additional luggage beside me!"

With that comment echoing in our ears, William moved off, carefully avoiding the nearby parked vehicles...

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## WCHCD affiliate to Royal Docks School

WCHCD Master Andrew Overton with the Royal Docks School staff and head girl



The **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** has formed an affiliation with a London school. The Master and the Education Committee decided that a school close to the City itself would be the right choice.

Recently, four members of the Company took the special needs children from the **Royal Docks Community School** on an outing in their cabs to Kew Gardens. With the children studying horticulture, the trip was a great success.

That same evening, year 11 pupils gathered for their prize giving at Newham Town Hall and WCHCD Master, **Andrew Overton**, was invited to be guest of honour. The Company had donated book tokens and books about London to be given as prizes for those who had made most progress in each year and Andrew handed them out on stage. He then gave a short address explaining what the Livery was and why the Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers now had a connection to the School.

The Master said: "I am sure that there will be those looking to leave school and wondering what career to follow. Well whilst I am sure there may be those of you who want to be lawyers or bankers, there may be some who would wish to become a licensed taxi driver and I can assure you that this is a noble profession. Indeed, one of our recent charitable endeavours is to raise funds to assist those leaving care to go through the Knowledge. This is the three years training needed to become a

London taxi driver, but once completed, is a licence to earn a living for the rest of your life - a job no one can take away from you."

It is to be hoped the WCHCD affiliation will grow and develop over years to come.

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

# Jon Asks What's New?

## Windows 7

As much as I have been a staunch member of the anti-Windows Vista brigade and a die-hard supporter of both Windows XP and Linux, I have decided to trial out Vista's successor - Windows 7.

I have downloaded a trial edition of the Release Candidate of Windows 7 (32-bit) and am in the process of installing it onto a virtual machine (see my article in the March **Call Sign** on virtualisation). It is due for general release towards the end of July. No doubt you will have heard of Windows 7 and many of you may own laptops or PCs with Windows Vista on it. In my opinion, Vista was a half-arsed attempt at an operating system, because Microsoft had to drop most of the major features it promised us in order to get it out on time. I suspect that, just like with Windows Millennium bridging the gap between Windows 98 and Windows 2000, Windows Vista was simply a stopgap to tide Microsoft over before they could release the 'real deal'. Let's hope so anyway, because if



## Touch Screen Windows 7

Windows 7 is anywhere near as bad as Vista, then Microsoft is in for a rough ride.

**Unfortunately, you will have to wait until next month's article to find out what my experiences have been like with this new operating system, but to pique your interest, here are some of its promised features:**

§ **Windows Touch:** With Windows 7 and a touch-sensitive screen (just like the terminals

in your DaC taxis), you can browse online newspapers, flick through photo albums and shuffle files and folders using nothing but your fingers.

§ **Improved interface:** Windows 7 no longer has the standard Start bar we are all familiar with, but has replaced it with a 'Super bar'. I'll take Microsoft's word for it and let you know if it is indeed 'super' or if it's all hype.

§ **Full 64-bit support:** If you run a 64-bit machine (as opposed to the standard 32-bit), you'll be able to utilise up to 8GB of RAM on the Home, Basic and Starter editions of Windows 7. But for businesses, servers running Professional, Enterprise and Ultimate will support up to 192GB of RAM! Now that is outstanding!

**If any of you out there have been playing with Windows 7, I'd be interested to hear your experiences. You can email me at: [JonW@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:JonW@dialacab.co.uk)...**

*Till next month...*

Jonathen Winterburn  
DaC Network Administrator

## LTI SCRAP OLDEST TAXI IN SCRAPPAGE SCHEME

LTI Vehicles - soon to become the London Taxi Company - has scrapped its oldest taxi to date under the Government's 'scrappage' scheme. The 20-year-old Fairway, which had clocked up over 600,000 miles, was taken in by London LTI dealership, M&O.

As a result, the vehicle's owner, Sheldon Posner of Cricklewood Carriers, has received a £5,000 discount on a brand new model of the TX4. This fantastic deal was made possible thanks to the £2,000 scrappage incentive and a further £3,000 price reduction.

Commenting on the scheme, Sheldon said: "I buy cabs regularly from M&O, as the older they get the more expensive they are to re-licence, so this initiative is most welcoming. In my professional opinion, the TX4 is the best taxi ever made. No other vehicle is built quite like it. Purpose-built by securing the cab body directly onto the chassis, the taxi is strong and durable. It's this feature, which gives the vehicle its unrivalled longevity, that's so important to me. It also has an envious turning circle that can spin on a sixpence, making it quicker than any van conversion. This makes the vehicle so agile.

"The TX1 had only just come out when I fondly recall my four-year-old daughter shouting 'taxi' and pointing at a TX1 parked up at Tesco. This proves just how recognisable and distinctive the traditional London Taxi is and is so across the world."

Peter Rigden, General Manager at M&O told **Call Sign**: "We're delighted that fleet operators such as Sheldon are taking advantage of this offer to clean up London's taxi fleet. We now open up the challenge to see if we can scrap an even older vehicle.

"However, in today's current climate, scrapping an old taxi is not the only way to grab a great deal. With excellent part exchange values and competitive finance rates, there are a number of offers always available to which we can tailor to our customers needs if they are considering upgrading to a new or used taxi. Add to that the advantage of the lower rate of VAT, our £5,000 scrappage offer means now is the time to buy and we would urge drivers to come and talk to us before the Government's limited budget runs out.

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

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### Jodie to run 5K with cystic fibrosis...

In last months *Call Sign*, you will have read about a Vodafone donation to **Dial-a-Dream** - the charity that was founded many years ago at DaC by **Tom Whitbread** and **Bob Heath** to help make seriously ill children's dreams a reality.

That donation has now helped to make a dream become reality for a young 13-year-old girl with **Cystic Fibrosis** by the name of **Jodie**. Her dream was to visit **Walt Disney World Florida** with her family. Jodie was so impressed by the kindness she received that she decided it was time to give something back so others could also benefit.

**So on 6 September, she will be running 5K around Hyde Park in the Adidas Challenge to raise money for new research within the Cystic Fibrosis Trust. Cystic Fibrosis is the UK's most common life-threatening inherited disease.**

If you would like to support Jodie, go to the website [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com), type in **Andrea Crocker**, select **Jodie's Page**, then follow the instructions. Your donation could then be used in possibly helping to save another child from suffering needlessly.

**Tom Whitbread**

# Vodafone, Dial-a-Dream & Giving Something Back



Jodie and family at Disneyworld. Now she will be running 5k even with Cystic Fibrosis

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

**Flashback 1985**

## DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

*This month, Flashback looks at an ongoing dispute over many years that ODRTS had with the Inland Revenue over tax liabilities...*

### From Call Sign, January 1985...

*ODRTS has for some considerable time been in dispute with the Inland Revenue over tax liabilities on member's subscriptions. We are now very pleased to announce to members that the Inland Revenue have accepted our argument re mutual trading, so ably put by our accountants Chantrey Wood King. We reproduce below the text of the letter to us...*

I am very pleased to advise you that we have now won the long fight with the Inland Revenue. They have confirmed that they accept arguments we have put to them that the trade carried on between the company and its members is a mutual trade. No tax is therefore payable on the surplus arising from the receipt of members subscriptions.

We conceded at the commencement of this correspondence that any profit that arose from credit work activities would be taxable. However, it is our view that no such profit arises. Once the expenses of operating credit work activities are separately apportioned, we calculate that these costs are greater than the service charges you receive. Clearly that element has to be agreed with the Inland Revenue. The apportionment of the expenses may have to be negotiated with but, at worst, it could only produce a small tax liability. My belief is it will produce none.

Your members were rightly and naturally very interested in the tax position at the recent AGM and pressed me with questions in respect of it. In view of the importance of the matter, you may want to publish this letter in your newsletter and I would be happy for you to do so.

**R.A.Cole, representing Chantrey Wood King - ODRTS Accountants**

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Many know actor, presenter and playwright **Kwame Kwei-Armah** as paramedic Finlay Newton in BBC's Casualty from 1999 to 2004. That was his big break and since leaving Holby General, he has appeared in many other TV programmes.

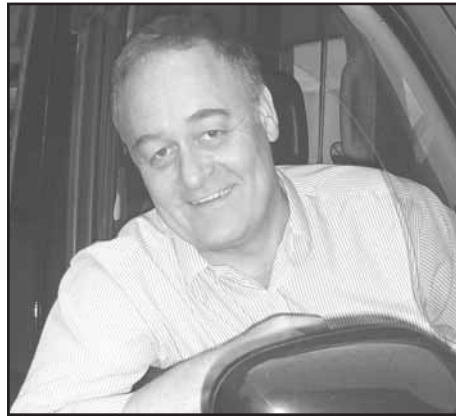
He has also become a notable playwright and indeed *Elmina's Kitchen* was nominated for a *Laurence Olivier Award* for Best New Play in 2003, going on to win the Evening Standard's *Most Promising Playwright Award* of that year. His second play *Fix-Up* was staged at the National Theatre in 2004. In the meantime, he became the first black Briton to have a play staged in the West End, when *Elmina's Kitchen* opened at the Garrick Theatre.

Among his other awards was the 2003 Screen National Film and Television Award for Favourite TV Actor.

Kwame was born Ian Roberts, but changed his name in 1989 to adopt his family heritage, which he traced back to Ghana. And that is, to a degree, where **Dial-a-Cab driver Jim Rainbird (T25)** came into the equation.

Kwame is filming a Channel 4 documentary in which he retraces the Queen's 45,000 mile tour of the Commonwealth in 1953 – soon after her Coronation. Titled *On Tour With The Queen*, it is a 4 x 60 minute series to be shown this month where Kwame compares current and past

# Jim and Kwame - but no Casualty!



Jim and Kwame. See the cover pic for their latest effort!

relationships with the countries that were visited.

Apart from Kwame's travelling in a Dial-a-Cab taxi, he also gets to meet a famous taxi "punter" on his mammoth journey – The King of Tonga - who still travels by London taxi around his island!

Jim told *Call Sign*. "Kwame is a real gentleman. There were no airs and

graces and working with him was like working with someone you have known for years. My part in the filming was just to drive Kwame up and down the A40, leaving him with another 44,950 miles to face! Perhaps not too exciting, but enjoyable non-the-less. I just hope they got in the DaC logo!"

## BOOK REVIEW... BOOK REVIEW... BOOK REVIEW...

### Taxi Jubilee

#### *Fifty years of the Austin FX4 London Taxi*

*Call Sign* has little doubt that so far as taxi historians are concerned, the name of **Bill Munro** stands out as one of just two true experts. Sadly Phil Warren is no longer writing, but Bill certainly is and with **Taxi Jubilee – Fifty years of the Austin FX4 London Taxi** (Earlwood Press £7.45) he once again demonstrates a remarkable insight into the job we all do and that he too has carried out over the past forty years. His book gives a sense of pride in knowing we work for an industry with such a long and distinguished history. It only concentrates on just the last fifty years of those 380 or so, but these were probably the most remarkable of them all, an era that saw as its centre an amazing icon – the FX4.



Conversely, Bill then goes on to say that the cab could have become an icon out of default, because originally scheduled to be in existence for around 10 years before a new model took over, the cost of producing an upgrade became so great that the FX4 stayed with us until the TX1 poked its nose in! But by then, so used to the shape of the FX4 had drivers and passengers become, that the new model found an instant dislike and became known as a Noddy car until those same drivers and passengers became used to it. But to last 50 years is worthy of giving the FX4 its own excellent book - such as Bill Munro's.

Strangely enough, the book says that considering its amazing longevity, the vehicle itself wasn't that good and indeed had some serious shortcomings. However, the makers had tried to correct many of the faults with previous cabs that drivers had constantly complained about over the previous years. It wasn't always that straightforward though!

But **Taxi Jubilee** isn't just the story of the FX4: it uses that cab as its central focus but also tells what life for the trade was like around it. It explains who was who, the differences between Carbodies, LTI, M&O and even the stop / go Metrocab and Winchester.

Well illustrated with 100+ colour photos, where this book leapfrogs other taxi books is that it doesn't look as though its 72 pages have been typed and stuck together with some Prittstick! This is a professional and well-written book on the subject of taxis. If you just go out to work and couldn't care less about this trade's history, then you won't be buying **Taxi Jubilee**, but if you take the slightest interest, then this book will explain in the clearest way most of what you need to know about taxi driving and the huge changes it has seen over the past fifty years. There have been many books over the years about taxis, but few that are recognised as classics in their field. Nick Georgano's *History of the London Taxicab*, Maurice Levinson's *Taxi* and Phil Warren / Malcolm Linskey's *Taxicabs – A photographic History* are three that spring to mind. **Taxi Jubilee** is an excellent addition to that short list.

If you have problems getting a copy either at Malcolm Linskey's shop in Penton Street or on Amazon, you can contact the distributors direct via Mal Smith at:

Dairy House Distributors, Dairy House Farm, Front Street, East Stour, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5LQ. Phone on 01747 838219 or email mal@vintagetaxispares.com...

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Enquiries: email: [anja@anjaking.com](mailto:anja@anjaking.com)



The first Shanghai-built London Taxis have been introduced to drivers and passengers in Saudi Arabia. The news signals exciting times ahead for its makers, LTI Vehicles – soon to become The London Taxi Company – as the joint venture in China is set to transform the Coventry-based firm into a global brand.

Ordered by LTI's distributor in the Kingdom, *Ujra Holdings*, they will be operated as the London Taxi Service from the Four Seasons hotel, where ten of the famous black cabs will be carrying guests to the airport, major tourist attractions and conference venues. Further orders have also been received for 28 more taxis for Saudi Arabia, as they prove so popular with passengers and drivers.

The London Taxi has been specially adapted to cope with the hotter climate. Built with a higher specification of air conditioning, tinted windows and parts that allow for expansion in the heat as well as being able to cope with the desert dust, the taxi was chosen to move customers about rather than using the more traditional saloon-type cabs.

For Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director for LTI Vehicles, these are exciting times for the whole team.

"Our TX4 is generating a lot of interest from international businesses, passengers and operators. Enquiries are increasing and drivers and passengers are telling us that the London Taxi is providing them with a first class ride and experience. Shanghai LTI, our Chinese joint venture with Geely, is quickly transforming us into a global brand as we expand our operation and take our iconic product into countries such as Bahrain, Poland and Dubai."

# TX4s Reach Saudi Arabia!



As part of the joint venture, Geely has established a new factory unit at its Shanghai site where Chinese employees have been trained by their Coventry counterparts. Matthew believes both parties have much to gain from the joint venture as commercial production gets underway.

"Geely is a very fast moving, highly entrepreneurial business with proven product development and production capabilities. The venture will also bring benefits to our UK operation by allowing us to take advantage of

more cost-effective components for our current range. This will help us to maintain our price competitiveness and generate profits to invest in the business."

As the UK's largest British-owned automotive manufacturer, LTI employs 450 people at its Coventry manufacturing plant and wholly owned Mann & Overton dealerships in London, Birmingham and Manchester.

*The photo shows LTI's Matthew Cheyne (centre) and their Saudi distributor at the official handover to Sheikh Alkahtani in Riyadh*

## WCHCD FOUNDERS' DAY BALL

Late June saw the *Annual Founders' Day Ball* for the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* held at the Stationers' Hall in Ave Maria Lane. A fine evening allowed guests to be greeted in the garden area with a champagne reception. This was followed by dinner in the main hall and dancing afterwards in the adjoining Court Room.

Founders' Day celebrates the original licensing of Hackney Carriages on 23rd June 1654 and current Master Andrew Overton commented in his speech this was well worth celebrating. The Master also made reference to the new school and military affiliations that are being set up this year and told his audience that the charitable trust had now been successful in raising funds to enable the new *Kickstart* project to be launched. *Kickstart* will fund care-leavers through the Knowledge process to give those who may have had a difficult start in life the certainty of earning their living in our magnificent trade.

The Founders' Day Ball is a fundraiser for the Company's charitable endeavour and together with the generous sponsorship by ComCab, Ascott Cab Company, Images in Print and Proximo, this ensured that a profit was made on the enjoyable evening.



Andrew Overton greets guests in the Stationers' Hall garden

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## mailshot

Either write to Call Sign at  
Dial-a-Cab House or email us  
at - [callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com)

### Charlie Rubin

Dear Alan

Whilst I endorse the Tony Arnold (F03) comments about Charlie Rubin, who was a real gentleman and one of the most understanding people I have had the privilege to work under at Dial-a-Cab, had there been Human Resources around at the time, he would have been the greatest!

As for Tony's comments about his own dispatching, I think his spelling is off when he spells 'mundane' as 'finest'...

Ivor Belkin (C97)

**I think Tony was remembering Charlie's fun side. He did say that Charlie told every dispatcher the same thing ...Ed**

Dear Alan

I must have been in overhaul when the sad news about Charlie Rubin appeared on our terminals, because otherwise I most certainly would have been at his funeral. As it was, I received a huge shock when the first I knew was after reading the *August Call Sign*. Even then I found it so hard to believe. Charlie was a really lovely man whom I had known for over 30 years. In addition to being so good at his job of call centre manager, just hearing his voice could calm down any argument. He will also be greatly missed as a person.

I wish long life to his family...

Sid Nathan (K88)

Well said, Sid ...Ed

### In answer to...

Dear Alan,

In answer to **Michael Beevor (N76 April Call Sign)**, I agree that a list of petrol stations with ATMs and WCs would be great. You summed it up well in your answer, but as with many of *Call Sign's* regular articles from contributors, these are done for the love of it and therefore the amount of time the contributors take is key. Back in 1997, I had a collection of useful cuttings and wrote a DOS programme (anyone remember DOS) to calculate a distance/fare chart. I offered this to the Editor, which he published and said 6 words to which I agreed: "Can you do one each month!" The editor named it *Nash's Numbers* and I have now clocked up 134 issues. As I say, time is key and I need driver's input for some of the 'out of the ordinary' articles. In January 1998, I asked for input of your favourite toilets as I was going to produce a *Urinals of London* issue; sadly there was not one reply.

I contacted *JCDecoux* for a list of their automatic loos, but they refused. So sadly, Michael, whilst I would like to oblige, that type of list is too time-consuming to produce at present. I have wanted to list toilets since 1998 and Alan Fisher has wanted a station platform numbering article since around the same time. So come on drivers; if you have any sought after info that will be useful to

others, email me at [alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk](mailto:alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk).

And my thanks to **Laurence Kelvin (W88)** in the July *Mailshot* for his kind words...

Alan Nash (A95)

### DaC surplus?

Dear Alan,

In his article in the May issue, Allen Togwell - not for the first time - wrote about the growth of minicabs and the Licensed Trade's failure to "regain the initiative." I couldn't fail to smile at that comment. Is this the same Allen Togwell who, when asked at the AGM, agreed that DaC should share accounts with minicab companies? Is this the same Allen Togwell who as a Board Member has overseen the setting up of accounts to cover the work these companies can't or won't cover? Whilst I agree that there is a lot we could do, especially in respect of appearance and how we present ourselves, the fault doesn't lie solely with the drivers. All of the radio circuits have been only too keen to jump into bed with the opposition and are now reaping the rewards. He goes on to ask what the Trade organisations have done to combat this threat? In truth, Allen, the answer is not a lot. But as a Board Member for a number of years, you have represented DaC on JRTA and latterly the London Taxi Board. What have they done to safeguard the interests of their members? Can you name one initiative in the last year put forward by the London Taxi Board that has benefited the working driver and have they made any enquiries with the PCO to question why your good friends at Lewis Day are still able to operate, even though they have admitted to defrauding the NHS out of £250,000?

Talking of your article, it's supposed to be about marketing, but there is nothing in it to say what DaC is doing to soften the effects of the downturn. Do we card-up any more? Whatever happened to the Dial-a-Cab Charge Card? How much of the revenue generated by the implementation of the cash booking fee and credit card charges has been used to promote our service and in what form has that promotion been? Why is it that although DaC was the first to have the foresight to bring in an online booking facility, there is nowhere on the exterior of our vehicles to promote this, especially in the light that many people now have internet access on their mobile phones? Is it not time to bring in a decent incentive for drivers to generate leads for accounts, after all they are the ones who meet the travelling public face to face? If you want my ideas on this, I'll be happy to present them to the Board although from the articles written immediately prior to the AGM, I got the impression that the only people capable of making any worthwhile policy decisions on the running of this great company were the incumbents.

As someone who takes part nightly in the 8.50 stampede for EC5, when you can count yourself lucky if you get in with a QP under 75, I don't need telling that this recession has



had a far greater effect on us than the last downturn. The membership were told that we needed Board Members with experience to see us through this recession, so when can we start to see the benefit of this experience? We have built up a considerable surplus over the good years, so isn't it about time we started to use some of it so that DaC can fulfil its primary function - to provide a service to our customers and work for its' subscribers?

Paul Jenner (L19)

**Allen Togwell has responded to Paul in a separate article on page 10 ...Ed**

### Surveys

Hi Alan

Any chance you can investigate who is behind (and why) the telephone survey about "the environment" undertaken on behalf of the PCO by a company (I think they said MRSA, but isn't that a bug)? I have just spent ages being asked questions about braking, accelerating, stopping and starting, waiting and God knows what else! It felt like everything except questions on cabbings! It got to the point where I became so fed up that I declined to answer any more and asked who was responsible for the questions. I wonder what this is costing and what they hope to achieve. Have you had any comments from others?

Robert Donald (O47)

**Two points here Robert; surveys are a fact of life and keep the possibly unemployed in a form of gainful employment. And those called could always say no thank you. However, a far more pertinent question is how this company managed to get all these taxi driver's phone numbers (you are far from the only person to be called)? After all, our PC society is firmly hand-tied when it comes to disclosing info to outside sources. They are not part of TfL, but seem to have all the relevant info. I wonder how that came about? The words Data and Protection spring to mind. MRSA - the superbugs! ...Ed**

### Spurs?

Dear Alan,

In your *Al Fresco* article in the July issue, you mentioned that you have been at *Call Sign* "since 1997, during which time Spurs have won nothing." Er . . . what about the Carling Cup win in 2008?

Robert Richland (ex-N94 and another Spurs fan)

**Sadly, Robert, I don't consider that cup to be a major win, just one that gave me pleasure for one single day! There are only two titles worth winning and they are the Premiership and the Champions League. However, I will always remember 1961/2 when Tottenham won both the cup and league and I saw 41 of their**

## mailshot

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**42 matches - my mum wouldn't let me travel to St James Park, Newcastle as I had a bad cold (we won that game 4 - 3). I have to remember those heady days 'cos there isn't much else! ...Ed**

### The sad tale of Frank and the bailiff...!

Hi Alan,

Thanks for the mention in the *July Call Sign*. I'm now famous in my own lounge! I also have a 100% success rate with my 'parking' appeals, with one still pending. It's an interesting one. I got it in Portman Square and appealed it. Appeal refused. Sent back the form requesting a hearing. Nothing happened for a while, then I got a letter from the bailiff. I rang them up to see what was what and was told to call Nottingham County Court, who did not have the case file. So I rang Parking Services and was told I would receive a 'statement of truth' - basically a form saying I had sent the original appeal in.

In the meantime I received two further letters from the bailiff, including one stating they would be sending someone round to recover the monies. I explained that the process was ongoing and if they sent someone round, I would invite them in for a cup of tea and to meet my very large (and unfriendly dog), Frank, who is a very mean rottweiler/ labrador cross. So far no one has appeared! The statement letter did arrive around one month later and was returned the same day. It is now two months since it went back and I have heard nothing. Frank is very upset, having been promised a tasty new friend who has not materialised! For all you drivers who just cough up, please don't! The PCN fine remains at £60 until the final appeal and even if you lose, you have stopped the 'robbers' from using YOUR earnings for at least 3 to 6 months. You also get to practice your letter writing skills...

**Steve Hassan (P95)**

**Steve was in the July issue of *Call Sign* after getting his money back from Camden Council in regard to having done a U-turn in Southampton Row some six months previous. On that occasion he used the services of the local Ombudsman as Frank was off his food! ...Ed**

### Editing a great mag, but...!!!

Dear Alan,

You edit a great magazine and I eagerly await my copy every month. I don't know you personally and have not had the pleasure of meeting you on the street, but from reading your editorials you strike me as an honest man and a man with integrity. Which is why I found your article entitled *Wasted Website* a strange addition to your editorial page. *Call Sign* is read not only by drivers, but also by account holders and passengers.

Should our company magazine be mocking another person's ability to spell correctly? I understand that you yourself might have been on the receiving end of some negative publicity in the past, but should a magazine of *Call Sign's* stature lower itself by entering into this type of article?

I might add that I subscribe to the LTDF and find many of the topics interesting and helpful. I agree that certain posts are hijacked by persons that have an anti-DaC agenda, but they too are entitled to their opinions and you have a right of reply by way of joining the forum.

Thank you for producing a great magazine...

**Paul Smyth (R11)**

**Thanks for the letter Paul. I agree with you 100% about what you refer to as my mocking another person's ability to spell correctly. My only excuse is that it was meant in fun. However, I accept your criticism. As for the rest of that piece, I only said that it was a pity about the new list in response to a driver who originally asked me to publicise it, but later changed his mind. He wrote: "I recently wrote you a letter regarding the London Taxi Drivers Forum and asked if you could publicise it. Can I withdraw that request please? The whole forum has been taken over by the likes of your old buddies \*\*\* and \*\*\* etc (I withheld the names...Ed). It has turned into nothing short of an anti-LTDA machine and anti-DaC / ComCab diatribe. I refuse to post there as it's like a witch hunt with the above trying to disclose posters, personal details and because of that I don't wish to publicise it any further."**

**I'm not in a position to criticise something I haven't used - although I should add that I have joined the LTDF ...Ed**

### Martin and his amazing Technicality Dream Court!

*Greeting PCN Warriors,*

I, along with everybody, have been delighted with the alliance and subsequent success of **Barrie Segal**, who has really taken the war against the 'Evil Empire' to a new level. Not least because as Dial-a-Cab are now contesting all PCNs issued whilst on credit work, I don't need to spend my valuable time in parking tribunals, when I could be out there earning more money for my wife to spend on that fifth handbag that she 'really needed!' Thanks to Barrie, I now only have to fight my personal PCNs. However, just before Barrie joined us, I initiated an appeal against Lambeth council for a PCN issued against me for parking in a suspended parking bay. As I explained on my initial appeal to Lambeth Parking services, my delivery was for 91 Waterloo Road SE1, which is located on the corner of Waterloo Road and Sandell Street. Waterloo Road has bus lanes on both sides of the road plus zigzag lines, as there is a traffic light/pedestrian crossing outside No 91. I



would happily have parked in Sandell Street if not for the fact that the entire length of the station side had road works, meaning that to park would block the whole street, it being quite narrow. I was therefore forced to park in Cornwell Road, where there were even more roadworks! I parked in the loading bay as I thought it would be better than on the yellow lines and also because I was getting further away from my delivery, causing me to be away from my vehicle even longer than necessary, meaning an even higher meter fare for my customer.

Anyhow, an appointment was made for me to go to the new office of PATAS (Parking and Traffic Appeals Service) at Angel Square on the corner of Islington High Street and City Road, which replaces New Zealand House. And so I was sat in front of the adjudicator, one Edward Houghton. For those of you who are familiar with comedian Paul Whitehouse's brilliant character, Rowley Birkin QC from *The Fast Show*, I have no further need to explain how he spoke, but the plum in his mouth was so large, I had to concentrate to decipher his mumbblings! Long story cut short, I was guilty as when the bay is suspended you don't park there, whereas if you stop on double yellows you have legal dispensation to deliver! However, despite the warden having taken a photo of the sign showing the bay as being suspended, Lambeth Council failed to present PATAS with the official documentation showing the bay as suspended. Therefore in their words, the contravention did not occur!

So thanks Lambeth for assigning the cream of your staff to my case! Anyway, a win is a win - even on a technicality. I now retire from fighting Society PCNs unbeaten and feeling very tempted to change my name to Marciano. Nonetheless, we still have to fight the personal PCNs being issued when using loos or grabbing refreshment and I remain available to all for advice. I thank you!

*Be Lucky, Be strong!*

**Martin Hizer (M47)**

**It's impossible to give an accurate assessment of the success DaC have had fighting PCNs since Barrie Segal came onboard, as many appeals take place some considerable time after the 'offence'. However, according to DaC Financial Controller Warren Smith, it does appear that the number of paid tickets has dropped significantly and according to Barrie himself, at the time of writing DaC had yet to lose an appeal!**

**If you get a PCN while on a DaC trip, hand it to Nuala in Driver Services and it will be appealed. As for old Martin changing his name to Marciano, younger DaC drivers may not know that the for-**



**mailshot**

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**mer world heavyweight boxing champion, Rocky Marciano, retired undefeated and is still the only champion boxer to have never lost a pro contest. He even "defeated" Muhammad Ali when in 1969, just before his death, Marciano took part in a fantasy fight known as the Superfight: Marciano vs Ali. The two boxers were filmed sparring, then the film was edited to match a computer simulation of a hypothetical fight between them, each in their prime. Marciano won by knockout in round 13 ...Ed**

**Oldies... but goodies!**

*Hi Alan*

My name is Michael Walsh (H63J but C77 for many years). I'm just dropping you a line to correct what is on page 28 of July's issue of **Call Sign** (Ray Sorene - 40 years with DaC).

I joined on 9th April 1961 when in Pentonville Rd at the corner of Affleck Street. I drove for Board member David "Sailor" Papier. Also on the Board were Bernie Lyons, Joe Assenheim, Maxi Fishel and of course Trixie Solomons. I've been on the circuit as an owner, partner and journeyman without a break. There is also Ivor Belkin who joined a few months before and I'm sure there are others who predate Alan Lewis and Bill Tyzack.

**Michael Walsh (H63J)**

**Thanks for an interesting letter Michael. I have to be honest and say that although I take more than a passing interest in DaC's history, your letter was the first time I had heard of a Board member called Maxi Fishel. If anyone can tell me anything about him, I'd be interested in hearing it. As for your main points, although you have indeed been with DaC since 1961, the list of longest serving drivers only counts those who are still owner-driving members in their own right rather than journeyman. As for Ivor Belkin - who was already dispatching in 1961 - I asked him and he had a two-year break in service returning in 1972, so the records show that as his commencement date. So far as unbroken service as a member is concerned, it's still Alan Lewis and Bill Tyzack - unless someone out there can show me I'm wrong ...Ed**

**Pedicab - and a taxi - rip-off**

*Hello Alan*

I recently picked up two guys at the mini-roundabout on Long Acre who wanted to go to the Bermondsey Square Hotel by Long Lane SE1. They asked how much it would be, as they had just been quoted £25 by pedicab! I told them it was via the meter, but would be far less than the £25. It actually went £11 and they gave me a very nice £4 tip on top. Is it not about time that someone did

something about these three-wheeled menaces both to safety and the public pocket?

**Gerry Tobin (L32)**

*Hi Alan*

I was happily waiting on the rank at the Wyndham Hotel on Chelsea Harbour when a non-radio taxi pulled up, got loaded with luggage and then went merrily on his way. Never mind minicabs or pedicabs, I was done over by a fellow cabby!

**Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)**

**I guess some things will never change ...Ed**

**Insurance and non-fault accidents...**

There is a myth that if you have a non-fault accident and you are not making a claim under your own policy, then you do not need to notify your own motor insurers if you are using a "Non-Fault Scheme."

I would like to advise **Call Sign** readers that this is not correct, as even when you are not making a claim under your own policy, recoveries for the repairs to your vehicle will be made from the negligent party and as such, the claim will be recorded on the Claims and Underwriting Exchange (CUE). By just reporting the claim, you should not receive an increase in premium. Also, all claims have to be reported to the insurer on any vehicle where you are a driver be it your wife's car, your own car etc. And finally, I would suggest that if in doubt, speak to your insurance broker or advisor.

**Jason Beazley,**

**Emrose (Insurance Brokers) Ltd, 606 High Road, Seven Kings**

**Thanks from Brum!**

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to the Dial-a-Cab operator who helped a stranded friend of mine during the early hours of Monday morning. He was stranded in Shoreditch and totally lost. But after a phone call from myself in Birmingham, your operator and drivers



located him and delivered him safely to Victoria Station. We would very much like to thank the DaC operator, but all I know is that she had a foreign accent. I would very much like to send her some flowers. Many thanks for customer service, which is unheard of in Birmingham...

**Martin Miley Birmingham**

**Thanks for taking the time to write. No doubt the call taker thought your Brummie accent also sounded foreign! ...Ed**

**Berk in a Merc?**

*Dear Editor*

I am writing this letter, not in envy but anger and dismay against Mercedes taxi drivers who spend £34,000 on a minicab. Don't they realise the damage they are creating for the trade? I am not on my own in thinking this; the public will soon not be able to tell the difference between us and them (ie PH) if we all look alike. How many times has a driver been flagged down when his for hire light is off? It happens all the time. If the public don't know any different, it isn't their fault if they then flag down a PH vehicle by mistake. But the PH driver won't miss the chance to nick a job from us. More work lost to them! In the end, it will become the norm for them to pick up our work and then they will fight to legally pick up off the street and probably win - and that will all be caused by berks in Mercs. They just don't get it, nor does the Merc driver who writes for a trade paper as the Mole in the Merc - aka the berk in the Merc! Sorry Mole in the Merc who loves his Merc and slags off all other cabs. We don't care, so get a life mate... after all, it's only a van!

**Jimmy Smith (D09)**

**Thanks for the letter Jim. I don't think I need to reiterate my position on this ...Ed**

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