

December 2009

# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*Guess who's a grandad!*



*DaC's Jim Rainbird helps launch the  
Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games!*



# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Carrying on from last month, more clubs and bars. Mainly from P-Z but some I missed last month in the A-O range. All these plus hundreds more are at [www.pointsoflondon.co.uk](http://www.pointsoflondon.co.uk).

Club/Bar	Address	Club/Bar	Address
10 Room	10 Air Street W1	Stringfellows Angels	201 Wardour Street W1.
151 Club	151 King's Road SW3	Studio Valbonne	62 Kingley Street W1r 5lr
24 London	24 Kingley Street W1v 1hh	Taman Gang	141 Park Lane W1K 7AA
333 Club	333 Old Street EC1	Tamarai	167 Drury Lane WC2B 5PG
93 Feet East	150 Brick Lane E1 6ql	Theatro	93 Shaftesbury Ave. W1D 5DY
Buddah Bar	8 Victoria Embankment WC2r 2ab	The Den & Centro	18 West Central St. WC1a 1jj
Funky Buddha	15 Berkeley Street W1j 8dy	The Dome	11 Stainer Street SE1
Jalouse	17 Hanover Sq. W1s 1hu	The Yard	Apple Tree Yard SW1
Light Bar	45 St Martin's Lane WC2n 4hx	Tiger Tiger	29 Haymarket SW1y 4sp
Mamilanji	107 Kings Road SW3 4pa	Tin Pan Alley Club	Denmark Street WC2
Mamounia Lounge	37a Curzon Street W1j 7tx	Tingle's Club	Scarsdale Place W8
Man Bar	82 Great Suffolk Street SE1 0be	Toney's Jazz	131 Stockwell Road SW9
Marquee Club	14 Up. St. Martins Lane WC2h 9ef	Top 32 Club	High Street NW10
Prohibition	1 Bishopsgate EC2n 4qt	Toppers Club	61 Poland Street W1
Punk	14 Soho Street W1d 3dn	Toucan Club	13 Gerrard Street W1
Raffles Club	287 King's Road SW3	Tramp	40 Jermyn Street SW1
Red Rooms	4 Great Queen Street WC2b 5dg	Trap	201 Wardour St W1F 8ZH
Revolution	140 Leadenhall Street EC3v 4qt	Trash Palace	58 Old Street EC1V 9AJ
Roof Garden	99 Kensington High Street W8	Trident Club	29 Mitre Street EC3
Ruby Blue	Leicester Place WC1	Troubadour Club	265 Old Brompton Rd SW5 9ja
Rumi	531 King's Road SW10 0tz	Troy Club	22 Hanway Street W1
Sakura	4 Mill Street W1	Tryst	222 Fulham Road SW10 9nb
Secrets Covent Gdn	51 Parker St WC2 5PS	Tudor Club	12 Denham Street SE10
Secrets 1	62 Glenthorne Road W6 0lr.	Turnmills Club	63 Clerkenwell Road EC1WAS
Secrets 2	309 Finchley Road NW3 6eh.	NOW	Electric Dreams
Secrets 3	3 Grays Inn Road WC1x 8hg	Umbaba	15 Ganton Street W1f 9bw
Secrets 4	43 East Smithfield E1 9ap.	Underworld Nightclub	174 Camden High St. NW1
Secrets 5	34 Eversholt St NW1 1da.	Valmont Club	266 Fulham Road SW10 9EL
Shadow Lounge	5 Brewer Street W1f 0rf	Vendome	85 Piccadilly W1
Shake It	29 Great Suffolk Street SE1 0NR	Venom Club	13 Bear Street WC2
Shaun & Joe	5 Goslett Yard WC2h 0er	Venus	Farringdon Road EC1
Sin	144 Charing Cross Road WC2	Village West One	38 Hanway Street W1
Sirocco	39 Shaftesbury Avenue W1d 6la	Vineyard Club	Billiter Street EC3
Souk	165 Clapham High St SW4 7SS	Visions Club	Saint Martin's Lane WC2
Sound	1 Leicester Square WC2H 7NA	Volstead	9 Swallow Street W1B 4DN
St. Moritz Club	159 Wardour St W1F 8WJ	Vogue Club	201-203 Wardour Street W1
Stork Club	Swallow Street W1	Wag Club	33 Wardour Street W1
Storm Nightclub	28a Leicester Sq. WC2h 7le	Whisky Mist	35 Hertford Street W1j 7sd
Stringfellows	16 Up. St.Martin's Lane WC2h 9ef		

For "What's On" guide go to [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) and click on "What's On".

Apologies to those who visited [www.pointsoflondon.co.uk](http://www.pointsoflondon.co.uk) and found it lacking with the latest venues and buildings. Much better this month, so why not try it out. It has a simple search screen, ideal for your mobile phone with broadband. Don't forget to register for the FREE 70 plus pages of download at [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) and click on the "Free 70+page info" button...

# from the editor's desk

## A Capital idea... but for whom?

Don't know about daymen, but the Capital Hotel in Basil Street doesn't seem to require my services as a licensed taxi driver very often, considering it is one of London's longest standing hotels. If memory serves me right, it was in the same place that it is now with the same name when I did the Knowledge in 1969. Mind you, it didn't need me then either!

They are now advertising across the US about their *Capital Idea* package, which gives tourists 'peace of mind' in knowing that regardless of £/\$ fluctuations, the price they order their 3-day break for is the price they'll pay regardless of any currency crashes. Great so far!

The fixed-dollar rates for three nights are \$1200 (£730) for a single and \$2530 (£1540) for a junior suite. So what does this have to do with **Call Sign**? Well, included in the price - besides breakfast - is what they call a luxury chauffeured car to and from Heathrow, London City Airport or Eurostar. Dunno about you, but I don't seem to enter into the equation. However, as you get older, you begin to dislike change... and obviously nothing much has changed there since 1969!

## And speaking of change...

I received a bit of flack from several drivers following last month's issue of **Call Sign**. This magazine belongs to everyone associated with DaC and as such, you should feel free to complain when you don't like something within its pages. It is probably no surprise to you to know that I'm talking about the Mercedes Vito. The complaints were fairly unanimous that the November **Call Sign** was an anti-Vito issue. Well, my feelings about the Vito are no secret. It's a nice vehicle... but even with a 'for hire' sign, it ain't no London taxi! But I don't run the cab trade, so whether I like it or not the Vito is here to stay if drivers want to buy it.

I do find it sad though, that no one could come up with real competition to LTI - ie a taxi that no one other than a licensed taxi driver can use. It makes me smile when Vito drivers tell me about "booked" trips that they now do for below the meter, because that is my point exactly. They become private hire in a PH vehicle.

But back to the question of whether it was an anti-Vito issue? Well not in my view; I was sent some articles from DaC drivers who chose to buy a new TX4. I didn't beg them to write, they chose to and because of that, several drivers complained to me. The strange thing is that when in the previous issue to that, there were two articles from drivers who did buy the Merc and said they were delighted, no one complained! Is there something here that I do not understand and should I remain quiet? Well, I'm sorry, but those that know me will understand that isn't my way when I perceive a threat to the business I love.

As I've said many times now, a real competitor to the TX4 is long overdue, but one that is exclusively a taxi because, repeating myself yet again, once we all drive the same vehicles, the next stop along the line is plying for hire. Several PH firms are already "demanding" that they be allowed to install partitions to "protect the driver." We know that what they really mean is to



protect the passenger, but they can hardly admit that! Then, once they have a partition in their people carriers, they will be as much of a taxi as the Vito is. Can the request be refused? After all, we have now taken one of their vehicles, why shouldn't they take one of our safety features?

Constructive views from Vito and TX4 drivers are always welcome (see Divyesh's report on his Vito in this issue), as would the improvements that **Call Sign** drivers who went to Coventry were promised from LTI.

## Cycling in London

In the May issue of **Call Sign**, I wrote about the tragic death of two female cyclists. Meryem Ozekman was crushed by a truck between it and the railings at the Elephant and Castle roundabout, while Rebecca Goosen suffered a similar fate from a 32 tonne cement mixer when turning left from Old Street into Goswell Road. Both were said to be experienced cyclists.

A recent inquest at St Pancras Coroner's Court into Rebecca Goosen's death recorded it as accidental, after the driver claimed that Rebecca's bike was caught in his mirror's blind spot. There is a case for mirrors that cover a larger area and as I said earlier, both cyclists were said to have been experienced and would have ridden their bikes in a responsible and safe way, but there are too many cyclists who do not have the vaguest clue as to how you should ride a bike safely. Many continue overtaking on the near-side, even though vehicles in front are indicating a left turn. The only surprising thing is that more aren't killed.

We currently have a Mayor in London who is very pro-bike and who is talking about legalising the two-wheelers making left turns even when the lights are red - I thought they did that anyway! The plain fact is that many cyclists are menaces on the roads. The new breed are not only aggressive while ignoring traffic signals and pedestrian crossings, but travel at excessively fast speeds dressed as though they had just returned from the Tour de France.

The answer is easy. Make every cyclist take a cycling proficiency test and question them on the cycling section of the *Highway Code*. Then make them display a licence plate. Is that too difficult if it means that no more young cyclists are tragically killed?

## Maybe next time?

I like to think I get on reasonably well with those in Boris Johnson's Mayoral press office,

however, it's difficult not to notice that with no election looming for the Lord of City Hall, answers to questions are becoming more difficult to get hold of.

The Mayor has answered DaC drivers questions for me, given answers to queries involving traffic and even gave a personalised greeting to **Call Sign** readers last year. But this year, responses haven't been forthcoming quite so quickly.

I recently asked if he was willing to sponsor the **Westminster TaxiCard** for the two week period of the Paralympic Games of 2012 so that any disabled passenger would be able to use their TaxiCard to the Olympic Park for just £1.50, regardless of how much the fare came to. I also asked whether he could speak to the *International Olympic Committee* (IOC) and ask whether taxis carrying wheelchair passengers could be accepted into using the *Olympic Route Network*, after all, the Paralympics is about them. I mentioned in passing about the reputed £97million being spent on Green Park Station in order to make it wheelchair friendly before 2012 - even though that wouldn't make it any easier to get onto the train. I pointed out to Boris that my scheme could be reckoned as costing multi-thousands and not multi-millions.

But despite many emails and phone calls between us, I still have nothing. Perhaps I should have waited until closer to the next Mayoral election!!

## Call Sign

Speaking as modestly as I can, I really appreciate the lovely comments about **Call Sign**, especially since it went to all-colour. And, not wishing to alienate myself from any good feelings subscribers care to throw my way, can I emphasise once again that it is not my magazine... it's also yours! It belongs to everyone connected with Dial-a-Cab, from the BoM to drivers, to the members of staff working at Dial-a-Cab House. Judging by the number of ex and just retired subscribers, it sort of belongs to them too!

But, and I hope you accept this in the way it is meant, if it belongs to you, then I'd like you to take more of an active part. You can do that by letting me have your stories if they involve you or something connected to you. A picture is always welcome to accompany the story. I don't need political stuff, I already have access to as much of that as I want, but if something interesting happens to you and you have email, please send it to **Call Sign** with an added photo. As I said, **Call Sign** belongs to everyone at DaC...

## Congrats boss!

My sincere congratulations go to Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice on the recent arrival of his and Brenda's first grandchild. **Charles William Rice** was born on Wednesday 18 November to Billy and Sam - although we believe it was Sam that did most of the work! Many DaC staff will remember Billy from his time in the Brunswick House Call Centre. While Brian claims to as many as will listen that he is far too young to be a grandad, we think there is going to be one very spoiled little grandson in the southwest!

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# reflections of the chairman

## Advertising and marketing...

I know many of you are aware of the strength of advertising and one of the best ways we can make our presence known is by having our cabs logo'd; this gives the Society much needed advertising.

However, the private hire fraternity are also aware of this advantage and have lobbied the authorities for many years to have their vehicles liveried. We in the taxi industry have always resisted their requests with the authorities on the grounds of public safety. Our argument has always been that unscrupulous individuals would put bogus advertising on their vehicles in order to fool the public into thinking the bogus private hire vehicle was authentic. In addition, private hire would then seek to use bus lanes, as they would claim to be easily identifiable and that members of the public would not seek to follow them into bus lanes. Well, that's one of my theories as why they wish to be liveried.

This battle has continued for several years with the authorities finally relenting slightly by allowing private hire to advertise their company on the back window of their vehicles, much to the dismay of the taxi industry.

Before the demise of the *London Taxi Board*, we on the LTB felt that it would be in the interest of the trade to do some advertising/marketing on behalf of the whole taxi industry, especially during the current downturn. Consequently, we approached the *LTDA* to see if they were prepared to explore joint opportunities of promoting the trade in general to the public at large, with any cost being met by the LTB and the LTDA. The LTDA were interested and the LTB had a website built promoting the whole trade ([www.the-london-taxi.com](http://www.the-london-taxi.com)).

Because the site was not exorbitant to build and maintain on a monthly basis, the LTDA offered to not only pay for the building of the site, but also cover the cost of the maintenance of the site. This is something that they still do today.

The two organisations also thought it would be a good idea to promote the taxi industry with an advert on the back window, using a material that you cannot see from inside the taxi but which could be seen from the outside. This involves using a type of perforated material that ensures just one-way vision.

It was suggested that we had a series of adverts funded by the LTB and the LTDA with slogans such as *On some journeys four people can travel cheaper than the tube* or perhaps *Be safe, be sure, always use a licensed taxi* – you know the sort of thing!

Anyway, both organisations made representations to the authorities to grant permission for London taxis to carry this type of advertising. But before any approval was granted by the PCO, we saw the demise of the LTB. This was a pity as we were just beginning to accommodate joint ventures with other organisations within our industry for the benefit of the whole trade during this current recession.

Then on the 30 October this year, permission was granted by the PCO to allow this type of advertising on taxis. The problem is that there is no LTB anymore. However, I do not believe we should miss this opportunity and to that effect we are in the process of sourcing a company to produce rear window advertising, the only difference to the original plan is that we will only promote



our own Society, with our telephone number and website address, subject of course to PCO approval.

I am led to believe that the material for these advertisements is quite expensive, consequently, we will initially produce just a limited quantity to see how much interest it provokes from our members. According to the PCO notice announcing this approval, the graphics must not cover more than a third of the area of the back window measured from the bottom. I believe Allen Togwell has written something regarding this topic, in fact I know he has as our conversation regarding this issue prompted me to write this piece to convey to you how and why this approval came about. I believe it is quite interesting and goes a little way to illustrate work that is done behind the scenes.

Carrying the rear window advertising for Dial-a-Cab will not be mandatory, unlike our logo, however I would urge as many of you as possible to carry it as it will give us an even greater presence on the streets.

## Eurostar account

Some of you would have heard the rumours that we have lost the Eurostar account. Although not a very large account, some of the work was very lucrative for DaC members. We had heard the same rumours as you, consequently we contact-

ed Eurostar and were told that we were in fact still an 'approved' supplier for Eurostar. Roughly translated, that means something like: *We have not closed our account with you, but you probably will not get any work from us unless there is some dire catastrophe and our other 'preferred' supplier cannot supply us with taxis!* I have learned over the years that there is a difference between an *approved* and a *preferred* supplier.

It would appear the reason for the loss of the account was due to the fact that Eurostar (and they are not alone) require just one vendor to supply all their stations with both taxis and coaches - in the case of Eurostar, that is St Pancras and Ashford, Kent and as you are probably aware, we are not in a position to fulfil that request.

The next station is Euston (West Coast Trains) as they also require just one vendor to supply all their stations with both taxis and coaches. This system has prevailed for some time with WCT, with their last vendor going bankrupt and owing all their suppliers money - including Dial-a-Cab. They have now appointed another vendor to supply all their stations with both taxis and coaches and they have in turn approached us to continue supplying Euston with taxis – but what happens if they go bankrupt as well?

When we became suspicious of the last vendor - as we were not getting paid - we approached WCT and they opened an account directly with us. Then when that last vendor went bankrupt, they continued their account directly with us until such time as they could appoint another supplier that could handle all their work nationwide. The new vendor has now approached us to service Euston, but who is to say that the same scenario could not happen again and we will continue to lose work as the customer becomes more and more focussed on having just the one vendor to supply all their transport needs? However, you already know that as I have been telling you for years...

## And finally...

*I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy New Year and may 2010 be more lucrative than 2009...*

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

## LONDON LEGEND Limousine Taxis



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# LIVER SHOCK AS E7 TAXI PLANS PUT ON HOLD

After Mr Justice Blake said in July at London's High Court that Liverpool's Council were guilty of discrimination in not approving the *Peugeot E7* cab, plans for the new wheelchair friendly taxi – but without the 25ft turning circle – to join LTI vehicles in plying for hire in Liverpool were set to start and the council were ready to begin the E7 licensing program, even though that lack of a turning circle would smash through any *Conditions of Fitness*. It also appeared to bring to an end a successful two-year battle by a disability campaign group to get the E7 licensed. *Allied Vehicles* in Glasgow were confident that London would soon be following Liverpool's footsteps.

But that has now all been put back on hold after the City Council



**The Peugeot E7 - Wheelchair friendly but no approved turning circle**

were again instructed by the High Court – but this time to alter its previous decision of licensing the E7. A team of solicitors acting for TX4 manufacturers, *London Taxi International*, claimed the Liverpool committee's new report was flawed, making it unlawful to licence the vehicle. The committee took the

decision to adjourn the matter in order to take their own legal advice to decide once and for all whether the E7 will become a Liverpool taxi...

## PCO Approve Rear Windscreen Ads And on wheel trims too!



**John Mason**, the new *Director Taxi and Private Hire* at the PCO has written to *Call Sign* of a review regarding the guidelines for advertising on licensed London taxis and amendments that will include, where approved, the placing of advertisement material on the rear windscreen and wheel trims of licensed London taxis.

### Rear Windscreen Advertising

The position of the advertising image/graphics must only be on the lower 33.3% of the rear windscreen glass (measured from the lower edge of the glass at the window seal) affixed on the outer surface, and may be the full width of the window.

The material construction must be of a perforated one-way vision film or similar type design, which will allow the image/graphics to be seen from the outside of the vehicle only. Images and/or graphics must not be visible from inside the taxi when looking out the rear windscreen.

**To maintain a satisfactory standard of the image/graphic performance and keep adverse visual effects for passengers to a minimum, the perforated one way vision film must be of a specification 185 micron perforated one way film with 1.5mm perforations in a 50:50 ratio.**

A minimum level of 30% light transmittance must pass through the combined image/graphics and the rear windscreen. Advertising material when placed on the rear windscreen must not interfere with any equipment normally fitted to the taxi, such as rear windscreen wipers, or obscure any high level brake lights or any 'For Hire' indicator lamps fitted on the taxi.

### Wheel Trim Advertising

Only wheel trims as original equipment supplied by the manufacturer may be used. Any advertising affixed to the wheel trim must not interfere with any design features such as method of fixing, brake cooling vents, tyre inflation valve or with any wheel balancing dynamics or steering operation.

The same advertisement must be displayed on all four wheels, except the layout may be reversed (i.e. the content on the right of the advertisement when on the offside may appear on the left when on the nearside) subject to both views having received approval. Wheel trim advertising may only be used with whole body livery and/or superside advertising campaigns. Any defects to wheel trims to which advertisements are to be applied must have been remedied and/or replaced before the livery is affixed.

Further details regarding advertising on the rear windscreens and wheel trims of London taxis are contained in the 'Guidelines for Advertising on licensed London Taxis' document available on the PCO website. These amendments to the Guidelines will be reviewed periodically in order to evaluate and address any impacts on public and driver safety.



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# Jerys World



No! No! No! Look guys, I promise you I'm not a Dial-a-Cab marshal. Would he wish you a very happy Christmas!!!

## CHEAP DIESEL IN CHELSEA



Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? Yet this is for *real*! The manager of the **Chelsea Cloisters** Petrol Station in Sloane Avenue SW3, Allan Ramachandra, is extending a special offer to taxi drivers of **5p per litre discount** off the regular pump price when you present a voucher available from the garage. And the good news doesn't stop there. You can have the cab cleaned for £5 (outside only) or £10 (in and out) in their underground wash. Importantly for taxi drivers, there are also toilet facilities so you don't have to worry about a £60 PCN while you're spending a penny! So disregard any old reputations, taxis are now being looked after!

During our visit we met **Mark Hinds (C50)**. Mark regularly visits the garage and praised the convenient location and high level of customer service he receives. Also speaking to **Call Sign**, Allan

**Mark Hinds is one of many DaC drivers that now use the garage in Sloane Avenue, Chelsea**

Ramachandra explained that the fuel discount together with the other services on offer was his way of saying 'thank you' to the cab trade for their custom. "Fuel-wise, I intend to compete favourably with other local garages," he said. "We operate 24/7 so you can pull in here at any time. We see about 300 taxis a day now, each spending £30 or more at each fill-up. We also have overnight parking facilities for drivers who live out of town, so they can start work as soon as they collect their cab each morning - no time wasted. It's just £5 from 18.00 hours to 08.00 hours," he added.

"If drivers wish to go shopping locally, especially during the run-up to Christmas, they can leave their cab to be washed for £10 with no parking charge. But, please, a maximum of 1 hour only," he stressed. "We also have a site at Devonshire Row Mews, W1," he said, adding that it is best to make prior arrangements to avoid disappointment.

You can contact Mr Ramachandra by calling him on 0207 584 5469 / 07919 895 363 or email him at ar@pure-parking.com.

Be sure to mention **Call Sign**. Cab wash vouchers available in DaC's reception.

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so you can earn.**

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Cab Enforcement Unit (CEU), part of the Transport for London (TfL) funded Safer Transport Command, has continued to carry out operations as part of their ongoing drive to tackle illegal cabs and touts operating in the Capital. Recently, CEU officers carried out an operation in Charterhouse Street EC1 – a street many Dial-a-Cab drivers have long complained about when it comes to toutting.

The operation took place over two weekends in October and was supported by City of London Police who stopped suspected illegal touts, while TfL conducted vehicle checks. The operation was an undoubted success and over the course of the two weekends, 23 people were arrested, 20 for *taxi toutting* offences, two for *possession of Class A drugs* and one for a *Public Order Act* offence. All were charged or cautioned.

In addition to the arrests, 99 registered drivers were checked by TfL Officers, of whom 4 were reported for not wearing their ID badges, 13 vehicles were considered un-roadworthy, while one vehicle



**Boris Johnson has taken a tough line on toutting**

had its vehicle disc immediately removed because the driver was not qualified to drive at the time.

Positive feedback has been received from management of the local licensed venues and minicab companies and there has also been a noticeable decrease in the number of touts operating in the area.

Mayor **Boris Johnson** has taken a tough line on toutting and any licensed private hire driver convicted of toutting will now lose their private hire driver's licence. He also doubled the number of dedicated cab enforcement officers in the Capital to 68. The CEU has made over 5,500 arrests for toutting and cab-related offences since 2003.

Chief Superintendent **Joe Royle**, of the Safer Transport Command said:

"We are working together with our policing partners to keep London moving safely by driving down crime and the fear of crime even further. Illegal cabs and toutting undermines the legitimate cab trade and raises the fear of crime and we will continue to target policing activity on unlicensed and uninsured vehicles

through operations, targeting offenders who pose as taxi or minicab drivers. This excellent result impacted upon illegal cabs and touts operating in the area and sent out a clear message that their presence will not be tolerated."












He ended by saying: "The safety of the public is paramount and I would advise everyone not to get into any vehicle that they have not booked and always book a cab through a reputable licensed company."

## ALBANY AGM

The Albany Taxi Charity AGM will take place at 3pm, Tuesday 24th November 2009 at the Eltham Conservative Club, 254 Eltham High St, London SE9 1AA. Nominations are now closed. More info from the Secretary, Claire Hughes, on 07932 495257...

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"It was the night Michael Jackson died, about 22.30 hours," **Paul Burrett (G72)** told *Call Sign*. "My music radio was rife with breaking news and rumours about the singers' death as I set down a passenger in Kingston. I checked my MDT and saw a trip in the bids for SE50, so I accepted it. The details said urgent, so I moved swiftly towards the pick-up address in south east London."

Paul continued his story:

"When I got there, it turned out to be a film job for a TV programme – *Come Dine With Me* – where four celebrities gather together, each taking it in turns to cook a meal for the remaining three guests, while those three guest celebs give the host celebrity a points score, according to how they rated the host's culinary skills."

"The winner was the person with the highest score and they went home with a cash prize, which they then donate to a favourite charity of their choice. My task after the dinner was to transport the film crew of three and one celebrity at a time in the back of my cab, around the local streets while each celebrity talked to the camera, judging the host's efforts for the



evening and awarding a points scorecard based on cooking ability and their opinion of the way the evening

## DAC'S PAUL SAYS COME DINE WITH ME!



**Paul shows Eastenders Laila what a real taxi driver is like!**

went. Each local drive took about 15 minutes, before I returned to the host's house and picked up another celebrity – only to repeat the round the block procedure again! I'd never seen the programme on TV, so it was quite an interesting hour and a half's work," he added with a huge smile!

"My final celebrity of the evening for the back of the cab filming bit was actress **Laila Morse**, who plays **Mo** in 'BBC TV's **Eastenders**, where she plays the mother-in-law of licensed taxi driver Charlie. When the filming was wrapped up and in the can – see, I'm even using film jargon now – I took her home to southeast London."

We asked Paul whether he had learned how to cook a nice Xmas lunch so he could invite all the DaC drivers to test it? Sadly he sped off before we got his answer...!

©Call Sign Magazine MM9

## Dial-a-Cab 2009 AGM

Hopefully, and subject to no more postal strikes, all members should have received the **Notice of Annual General Meeting 2009** advising that the meeting will again be held at **The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1** on **Sunday, 7th February 2010 at 11:00hrs**.

The meeting this year will consider an agenda **excluding** the election of officers, but **including** as usual, proposed Rule Changes and Propositions.

**Any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions must be received at Dial-a-Cab House on or before 09:00hrs on Friday 4th December 2009.**

Any member putting forward either a Rule Change or Proposition and wanting to give a brief explanation of it in the January *Call Sign*, may do so by emailing it to the Editor by **15:00 hrs December 11th**. The Editor asks that you keep any explanation to a maximum of around 350 / 400 words.

**Howard Pears**  
Company Secretary

## Marshalled Taxi Ranks in run-up to Xmas

The Christmas timetable for marshalled taxi ranks has been published and drivers are being encouraged to use these ranks to pick up business during the festive season, one of the taxi trade's busiest periods.

The London marshalled taxi ranks in Cranbourn Street and Liverpool Street will be in operation to help organise taxi queues and provide assurance to people waiting for a late night taxi. The initiative is a part of the *Safer Travel at Night* campaign, the partnership between the Mayor of London, Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police Service.

**John Mason**, TfL's Director of Taxi and Private Hire, told *Call Sign*:

**"Late night marshalled taxi ranks continue to prove popular for passengers and London's taxi drivers have been instrumental over the past few years in making these ranks operate smoothly and efficiently. By working together, we are helping drivers get business and giving Londoners another safe option to get home after a night out."**

TfL has worked with the local police to set up these ranks over the last few years and they have proved extremely successful, in particular for women travelling alone at night. In addition to the marshals helping to coordinate taxis and passengers, the ranks are also overseen by CCTV.

### The marshalled rank timings are:

#### Cranbourn Street

Friday 4 Dec – 22:00 to 03:00  
Saturday 5 Dec – 22:00 to 03:00  
Friday 11 Dec – 22:00 to 03:00  
Saturday 12 Dec – 22:00 to 03:00  
Saturday 19 Dec – 22:00 to 03:00  
Friday 25 Dec – closed  
Saturday 26 Dec – closed  
Thursday 31 Dec – closed  
Friday 1 Jan 2010 – closed  
Friday 18 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Saturday 2 Jan – closed  
Restart as normal Friday 8 Jan 2010

#### Liverpool Street

Wednesday 2 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Thursday 3 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Friday 4 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Wednesday 9 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Thursday 10 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Friday 11 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Tuesday 15 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Wednesday 16 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Thursday 17 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Friday 18 Dec – 22:00 to 03:00  
Monday 21 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Tuesday 22 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Wednesday 23 Dec – 22:00 to 02:00  
Thursday 24 Dec – closed  
Friday 25 Dec – closed  
Wednesday 30 Dec – closed  
Thursday 31 Dec – closed  
Friday 1st Jan 2010 – closed  
Restart as normal Wed 6 Jan 2010

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# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

Considering the number of years I've held a badge, I would have thought by now I would have a fair understanding of the mindset of your average cab driver. Especially during what many consider as being the worse economic downturn since the great depression of the 1930s. But two recent incidents within a week of each other involving a total of 14 cab drivers have proven me not only wrong, but also left me feeling completely baffled.

## Incident one...

The first occasion was 8:30 on a damp, cold mid-week morning a month or so ago. I had just left Barts Hospital minor injury unit and was looking for a cab to take me back to the office. I walked down Giltspur Street to the corner of Newgate Street, feeling assured that I wouldn't have to wait long before I saw an empty cab going in my direction. As it happened, there were quite a few empty cabs but all them travelling west. No problem, I thought, being as I was at a crossing and it was easy enough to turn round. Wrong! Seven cabs passed, all with their for hire lights on, each of them looked across at me and saw me waving and pointing east but for some odd reason they just carried on over into Holborn Viaduct as though I didn't exist. Eventually I did the obvious and crossed over to the other side of Newgate Street and stopped the very next available cab. "East Road please," I said. "Heathrow," he replied? "No no," I said, "East Road N1 near Chart Street, please." "I don't believe it; just my luck," was his response. "Excuse me asking," I said, "but is there a problem in the city that I don't know about, such as a flood, fire or perhaps a sudden outbreak of bubonic plague? Only I've just had seven cabs ignore me and cannot understand why?" To which his reply was: "I don't blame them with your ruddy lip," or words to that effect. On arriving at Dial-a-Cab House, the fare came to £8. I gave him £10 and told him to keep the change. As he took the money, he looked up and saw the name above our entrance, shook his head in bewilderment and drove off without comment.

## Incident 2...

Less than a week later, at 5 o'clock on a mid-week evening I had just left the ENT Hospital in Grays Inn Road and walked to the corner of Acton Street looking for a cab to take me back to our office. The reason I walked to Acton Street was so any cab driver travelling north would have the opportunity to do a U-turn before entering the one-way system. After a few minutes I saw five empty cabs following each other, all with their for hire signs on travelling up Grays Inn Road heading towards Kings X. Traffic was busy so they weren't going very fast, yet each one of them having acknowledged me waving, to my surprise just continued on past. So again I crossed the road with the intention of getting the very next available cab when sods law, I saw an empty cab coming up Acton Street so



I chased back across the road and indicated for it to turn left into Grays Inn Road. "East Road N1 by Chart Street please," I said and off we went. I attempted to get into conversation with the driver about the cabs that hadn't stopped, but without success because the driver was talking non-stop into one of those mobile phones that looks like a cigarette lighter stuck in one ear. So I kept quiet until we had gone almost the whole length of Grays Inn Road. Then I tapped on the glass partition to ask which way was he going? "Down to Holborn," he said, "chuck a left, Holborn Circus, Charterhouse Street. Why what's the problem?" "Well," I said, "the problem is I asked for East Road by Chart Street, not Charterhouse Street." "Oh yeah, so you did," he replied and then proceeded to configure the SatNav that I then noticed was sitting, brightly lit atop his dashboard. Curious that the driver, a young smartly dressed chap should need a SatNav for a local ride, I asked him how long had he had a Bill. He said it was 5 years and because I said *Bill* he asked if I was a cab driver? I said I was, of 42 years standing and I also said I found it odd that not only was he using a SatNav, but that he felt no shame in letting the public see that he was using one! He said five of his cab driver friends used them and they all thought they were great. "Maybe," I responded, "but in your case your SatNav and that mobile stuck in your ear are evidently affecting your ability to concentrate on where you are supposed to be going and also I would imagine that in time it will cause you to lose the knowledge you must have worked so hard to acquire." He disagreed and said it didn't bother him at all. Neither, apparently, did it bother him when we eventually arrived at Dial-a-Cab House and he charged me £16 for the fare that should have been half that cost. On receiving my change, I was debating whether to give a tip when without a word he just drove off, more preoccupied with whomever he was talking to on his mobile. Which left me baffled on two counts. Firstly, why on earth should any licensed cab driver have a need of a SatNav for local rides, particularly a driver who's only had a Bill five years and whose knowledge is likely to still be at its peak? And secondly, I'm especially baffled as to why so many cab drivers should refuse a fare simply because it required going in the opposite direction from which they were trav-

elling? I'm reasonably well dressed; I know I'm slim, but I'm not invisible. I can understand the odd occasion when a driver might need to be heading in a particular direction. But surely not seven consecutive cabs in the City at 8:30 in the morning and five cabs at 5 o'clock in the evening? It just doesn't make any sense. The only positive note from this very unusual experience is that none of the cabs in question were carrying a radio circuit's logo.

## Rear windscreen advertising

In early November a statement was issued by the PCO approving the placing of advertisement material on the rear windscreen of licensed London taxis. I believe it appears in this issue.

The position of the advertising must only be on the lower 33.3% of the rear windscreen glass and the material construction must be of a perforated one-way vision film, which will allow the image/graphic to be seen from the outside of the vehicle but must not be visible from inside the vehicle when looking out of the rear windscreen.



### What the rear advertising would look like

Obviously advertising your Society at the rear of your taxi would not have the same impact as advertising on the side doors, however any advertising on a London taxi is a powerful medium, even on the rear of the taxi and it is hoped it may appeal to many of you that do not as yet carry our cash booking number on the sides of your cabs.

The cost of this one-way vision film together with the printing is quite expensive, so only a limited number will be purchased to start with. However, should there be a noticeable interest from drivers wishing to have this rear window advertising, then of course we will make arrangements to meet that demand.

At the time of going to print, we have yet to obtain the necessary samples to submit to the PCO for their approval. But to give you some idea of what the rear advertising might look like, I have produced a computer-generated image.

**Allen Togwell**  
**DaC Marketing**

Whilst we have a steady flow of applications for the Black Cab Fuel card coming in, there is one point I need to clarify and that is regarding a query several drivers have made in **Call Sign** over recent months; is it necessary to give a mileage and registration when using the card to fill up at a garage?

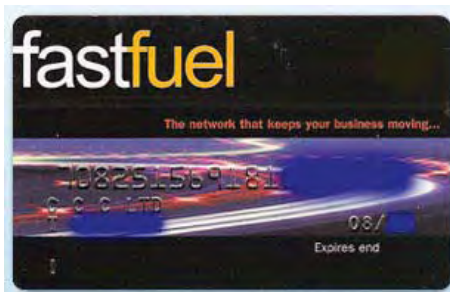
The card we use is a Fast Fuel card, which has been in use for some time and is used by hundreds of transport companies and fleet operators. We opted to use the Fast Fuel card precisely because it has been in general use for that period of time and therefore we knew it would be readily accepted at every forecourt and would work without any technical hiccups. Using a brand new card, produced and branded as Black Cab Fuels, could potentially have been a problem, as the staff in garage forecourts may have questioned drivers on presenting a brand new card that they were not familiar with. So to avoid the potential for any hassle, we opted for the ubiquitous Fast Fuel card.

The reason for the long explanation is that forecourt staff are trained to use fuel cards and are trained to ask for the registration and mileage of the vehicle - but this information it is not required for licensed taxi drivers, ie black cab drivers - yes, I know you don't like the name!

**The reason they ask for mileage and registration is that most Fast Fuel cards are used by transport firms and fleet operators or limited companies that have many vehicles and drivers. The proprietor or owner of the business/limited companies issue cards to their drivers and normally need to know which vehicles the card holders are putting fuel into and the mileage. They need to track and manage their fuel spend as they do not want their company drivers filling up their private**

**Some DaC drivers have expressed concern about having to give a mileage reading when filling up and using the Black Cab Fuel card. Call Sign asked John Murphy why that was..**

## Black Cab Fuel Card and Mileage



their own business - especially on an owner driver's radio circuit such as DaC - and as such they decide if they want mileage and registration recorded. So it should be a simple case of, when asked, just politely saying it isn't needed.

I have explained this to a few drivers and I understand that they have not had any problems, so I thought it is a point worth clarifying in **Call Sign**.

For those that don't know, when you fill up at a **Texaco** or **Morrisons**, DaC drivers have the opportunity of saving between 3p and 5p a litre by using a **Black Cab Fuels card** and instead of paying cash or using your own card, just signing for the fuel purchased and the amount will be debited from your bank account 2 weeks after the end of the week via direct debit.

It matters not how much the fuel is advertised at outside the garage, you pay whatever the Black Cab Fuel card rate is for that week. You can also manage your transactions online if you wish by accessing your account details and purchases at any time.

For more information on how to open an account, visit [www.blackcabfuels.co.uk](http://www.blackcabfuels.co.uk) or call 0800 987 5701 and speak to John Murphy. Terms/ Conditions apply and are available on request.

**vehicles! Forecourt staff are trained to ask as a service to the business owners - not the drivers.**

One of the benefits of a Black Cab Fuel card is that drivers can actually fill up their private cars or cars belonging to other family members. As we at our end do not require information on registration or mileage, there is no need for the forecourt staff to ask, but as they are trained to ask and are used to asking for mileage and registration, they will normally continue to do so.

**Taxi drivers simply have to explain to the person at the forecourt asking for mileage and registration, that it is not necessary. A simple 'no need' is normally sufficient.**

In effect, each taxi driver is the owner of

## SHELTER PARKING CONFUSION

### WHAT'S FREE AND WHAT ISN'T!

Many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers are regulars at the **Hanover Square taxi shelter**. Given that popular establishment's close proximity to the three new 'taxi only' parking spaces in Harewood Place W1, you could be forgiven for assuming that those spaces are part of the shelter's parking facilities. Unfortunately for some drivers who have already found out to their cost, the spaces are not a shelter parking extension... nor are they free! The spaces are indeed clearly marked for the exclusive use of taxis, but charges do apply - even at the low rate for the heart of the West End of just £1 per hour. There is also a maximum parking duration of 1 hour.

Given that a PCN could be £60 and parking in the immediate area is quite considerably more for other road users, it seems wise to pay the £1 while dining at the shelter in peace, or if it's what you came for, complete your Xmas shopping in Oxford Street knowing you're safe from the clutches of eager parking attendants. These nice Westminster chappies even showed an interest in our camera-man during the few minutes it took to capture a few images!

*But of course, should you be parked on the shelter taxi bays, then that is reserved for those who are there to eat!*



**The new exclusive taxi parking bays are to the left of the post box in Harewood Place...but they aren't free!**

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**Call Sign** would like to take readers back to October 2008 and the article *Aldgate: DaC drivers call it the mess!* Following up on information passed to us by a surveyor involved with the rebuilding project at Aldgate, we were told at the time by a Transport for London spokesperson: "A new public open space will be created by closing off the western half of Braham Street between Mansell Street and Leman Street. This will play an important role in regenerating Aldgate for the whole community."

They ended with the almost nondescript single sentence: "Braham Street will also be closed off at the eastern end for a private development."

This all began some three years earlier when members of the *London Cycling Campaign* claimed that the Aldgate gyratory system as it was then, made life very difficult for them and indeed, in 2008 their wishes were fulfilled when Aldgate became two-way again – the first time since before the long-departed Gardiners store burnt down.

It was the part regarding the private development that **Call Sign** managed to get details about, after being concerned as to what it meant. The surveyor asked that we give no details about him because he claimed he would be sacked if word got out, but he told this mag:

*"The western end of Braham Street will be redeveloped into a pedestrian zone, but it will also include two huge tower blocks while creating an island from the back of the Bank of Scotland building to the junctions of Mansell Street and Leman Street."*

TfL's Interim Director of Road Network Management responded by saying: "The changes we are making to the Aldgate gyratory system have been welcomed by all of the road users we've spoken to, particularly cyclists." They hadn't spoken to any taxi drivers that we knew of.

We followed up on the original article in our December 2008 issue. Dial-a-Cab driver **Mike Leo (Z09)** asked TfL about the new traffic system, having explained that he had lived and worked around Aldgate for over 35 years and the old system had always run well, but added that Mansell Street was constantly gridlocked – often tailing back to Tower Hill. He ended by asking what was happening to the then-empty Braham Street?

Yet another TfL spokesperson – there a multitude of them – responded to Mike and said:

*"The works will provide improved pedestrian crossing facilities, removing the fast one-way traffic streams which will deliver many safety benefits. Furthermore, the consolidation of the bus routes, so that east and west bound services are situated on the one road, opposite each other and closer to the nearest underground station will be achieved through the upgrade, providing a more coherent public transport service."*

*"The proposal allows for the creation of a new public space, which is one of the Mayor's 100 spaces to be established in London. This will be in Braham Street, between Leman Street and Mansell Street, which will be permanently closed to traffic after the gyratory is switched over to a two-way operation. This will give many benefits to the public including a new green space for local residents and people working in the area. Features expected to be included in the park are a fountain, kiosk, feature lighting, green areas and trees."*

She added that the area would be significantly improved with benefits to the public realm as well as improvements for pedestrians,

# Aldgate Tower: Have We Been Lied To?



**There's going to be an open space there – somewhere! The question is whether anyone will be able to see it...**

cyclists and public transport users and also claimed that the new traffic system had been modelled to cope with the new layout and would operate within capacity and ended by saying: "I trust that once the works on the Aldgate gyratory have been completed and the system has been fully switched to a two way service, traffic will flow smoothly and efficiently and the area will benefit from the improvements."

Mike was hardly thrilled by the response, but sounded rather resigned when he originally contacted **Call Sign**. Dealing regularly with TfL, we can understand that.

And, as our loyal readers may well have already picked up, there was very little mention about the "private development." But that's hardly surprising because a few trees, benches and even a fountain are hardly much consolation if they include two gigantic office blocks!

And what about the "improved" traffic system? We asked **Mike Leo** if he had grown to like the new scheme? He told **Call Sign**:

"The problem with the new 2-way system is the bottleneck at Mansell St and Whitechapel High St and Commercial Rd with the High St; even at midnight you will sit in at the lights in Mansell St. The timings are totally wrong; the lights go green turning left into Aldgate while the right hand lane stays red – where most of the traffic is.

The 3-lanes with a bus stop cannot work

with buses using Commercial Rd pulling over to the right blocking the whole road, while the 25 bendy bus blocks all lanes because it comes up Mansell St and cuts across to turn right, after which it blocks the High St! I suggest the bus stop is moved further along by Burger King and the traffic light phasing is changed."

Moving onto the new open space, Mike said: "A small part of Braham Street is now green – just for RBS by the looks of it, with more tax money helping them out! The other part of it... yep, a lovely big tower that will stay empty for a while. After all, who would want to live or work next a road that is always gridlocked!"

Well, it looks as though **Call Sign's** informant was correct all along. A project using the name of a cycling group wanting more space for themselves, has been used to pretend that this is all for the benefit of those living and working in the area. The two tower blocks are now unstoppable facts – we just wish that those in charge would occasionally tell the truth and in this case, admit that the main reason for the development – sorry, *private* development – wasn't to improve the quality of life in the area, but to put up more tower blocks. *Aldgate House* will be completed in two years, but at least from its top floor you will get a great view of the RBS benches...

**Alan Fisher**

## Goodbye to the Royal Oak

The **Royal Oak** restaurant that **Dial-a-Cab** and other taxi drivers have been using for many years, was supposed to close earlier in 2009 but applied for, and was given, several "stay of execution" extensions by **Crossrail** – the same Crossrail that has caused so much misery and confusion to drivers in the Tottenham Court Road area. But the Oak's latest extension is definitely the final one and the restaurant will close its doors for the last time in its current location on 10 December. It is hoped that new premises in Edgware Road will open sometime in January...



Malcolm Levant before handing over the meter

When Sheila, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Malcolm Levant's (F24)** other half, ran the **Temple Shelter** from 1982 until 1984, she decided to decorate it with taxi memorabilia. One of the items she managed to get hold of was a **Halda taximeter** from the late 1950s / early 1960s. The initial hiring charge "dropped" at the pre-decimal rate of 1/9p – equivalent to around 9p today!

When Sheila's time at the shelter ended, she took the meter home with her and until early this year, that was where it stayed. It was in mid-July that Malcolm phoned **Call Sign** and told us about their 50-year old meter and asked whether we knew of any good use it could be put to? We knew straightaway of one organisation that could be guaranteed to find it a good home – **The London Vintage Taxi Association**.

It was on a warm late summer evening that Malcolm Levant met up with **Call Sign** Editor, Alan Fisher - ironically opposite the Public Carriage Office – and handed over the meter that had been the cornerstone of his shed for all those years! Alan, perhaps more used to later versions of taximeters, wasn't expecting it to weigh so heavy and his first touch of the item that could have sold for several hundred pounds on **eBay**, was to almost drop it!

However, the meter made it safely into Alan's taxi and he immediately contacted some of his **LVTA** contacts – **John Freston in the USA**, **Hans Dooren in Holland**, **UK-based Chairman Doug Cheshire** and their magazine editor, **Bill Monroe**.

However, it was someone this magazine had totally forgotten about who we eventually presented it to. **Keith White (A16)** has been on DaC for many years and as a former Chairman of the **LVTA**, had written several articles on old taxis for **Call Sign**. He is also the proud owner of one of only two prototype **Metrocabs** made in 1969 – some 15 years before the first **Metrocab** went into London taxi service. Just prior to his prototype, the ill-fated "jelly mould" **Winchester** came and went!

So Alan met Keith and handed the Halda to him.

Keith handled the meter like a new parent and gave Alan a run-down of its history, including telling the **Call Sign** Ed the name of the person (Eugene) who fitted the original Halda meter to his 1969 prototype. At no extra charge, Keith also pointed out that Eugene was still fitting Halda meters to the **Metrocab** in 1984 when it finally became passed as a licensed taxi.

The last word came from Alan:

"I don't think we always realise the amazing history the London taxi trade has and we should offer huge thanks to the **LVTA** for helping to preserve it..."

**Daniel Forbego**

# Journey Ends for Sheila's Halda Meter

*As Call Sign finds it a new Home*



Keith White now has possession on behalf of the LVTA



Keith and Chairman Doug Cheshire at a show

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*Continued from November*

### Who were the pennymen and why did Waterloo smell?

I learnt the times of the important trains at all the stations, as most work was found on the ranks. If you wanted to earn money, that was how you did it. Some ranks were so long that they went around blind corners. **Pennymen** manned these ranks. **Victoria Station** was a good example with four ranks, each of which was around a blind corner and on each corner was a pennymen. Pennymen were usually retired cab drivers helping their pensions along. They stood on the blind corners and signalled you when a space became vacant on the next rank. You gave him a penny for the service; so to get to point at Victoria Station would cost you four pence!

One of the more profitable practices was being on time for the boat trains at **Waterloo**, so long as you did not die from the smell first! You had to be there early - long before the train was due. If late, by the time you reached the point all the passengers would have gone and the next train would not be arriving for an hour or so. This rank was under the platforms in a long, dark tunnel. The smell came from cab drivers relieving themselves against the walls, not to mention the wall also being soaked in wine that was stored on the other side. Add taxi exhaust fumes and it made for an interesting stench!

**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*

Eventually, when the train arrived, the cabs in front of you began moving and you would emerge into the middle of the station alongside the boat train - and into the fresh air!

People on the **boat trains** had come up the line from Southampton. At that time, **London Airport** (no one called it Heathrow) consisted of a few buildings with even fewer aeroplane movements. Unless you were very wealthy, you arrived in England by boat. Three types of boats carried passengers to and from Southampton - cheap, cheerful and slow, faster with better accommodation and finally the liners. Needless to say, these latter passengers were the ones you were hoping for.

Wealthy passengers would have lots of luggage - trunks and suitcases by the load. Remember, even top liners would take four days to cross from the USA, then four days back; stay for a fortnight, perhaps 22 days in total. Clothes, eveningwear, extra, extra, extra! The porters queued at the head of the rank with their barrows loaded with this lovely luggage with each piece of luggage being worth an extra three pence to us. Unlike today, cabs had lots of space for luggage in the front, then there was the roof rack and if you were really pushed, bung some in the boot. Then, of course, the destinations; a London hotel? Not bad, but not like:

*"Do you know where St. Albans is driver and how much would it cost?"*

**"Well sir, I'd be pleased to take you there for clock and a half, sir. I'd have to charge you that, sir, because I'd have to travel all the**

**was back with nobody in my cab, sir."**

And with all that baggage, they would usually say yes. In those days any job over six miles was negotiable...

You also learnt the times theatres burst and waited on the relevant ranks. But let me return to the rank at **Bartholomew Lane**, that I mentioned in the November **Call Sign**. I wonder how many old cab drivers remember trying, like me, to be on point at around 10am? If you were lucky enough to be there, the beadle in his posh uniform would take you down to the rank under the **Bank of England**, making you very happy. Your cab would be loaded with bags of money and two gentlemen would take you on a tour of city banks to deliver them. You would be paid £2 for this job - a very nice sum indeed. This carried on until one morning when the cab on point appeared to be having trouble. The driver had the bonnet open, seemingly unable to start it, waving potential passengers to the next cab. Eventually he got it running just as the beadle came around the corner. Slamming the bonnet shut, he followed the beadle into the bank. When he left the bank and was out of sight, he stopped the cab and two heavies jumped in, overpowered the bank staff and assisted in distributing the money to themselves! The cab had, of course, been stolen and the driver was not a taxi driver. That was the last time cabs were used for that job... and the beginning of security firms.

*Continued next month...*

## GEELY'S LI SHUFU: CHINESE ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

The Chinese *Entrepreneur of the Year* awards is a program created by **Ernst & Young** to identify, salute and reward outstanding Chinese entrepreneurs who have made significant contributions to the economic growth and prosperity of China.

**The winner of the Automotive Category was Li Shufu, Chairman of Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd and partner of LTI in the manufacture of the Chinese TX4.**

Li Shufu founded Geely in 1986 as a maker of refrigerator parts and subsequently moved into decorating materials and motorcycles. Following his huge success in the motorcycle business, Li's ambition was to break into the automotive sector. He managed to start China's first privately owned automotive company in 1998, a sector that was then dominated by State-owned firms.

Geely is now China's seventh largest carmaker, manufacturing popular and budget cars. Li succeeded in the car industry despite the capital-intensive nature of the business and without having to resort to importing technology and capital through joint ventures as State-owned firms had done. Geely is now looking to shift up another gear to become a global carmaker. In addition to having that stake in LTI, Geely recently bought an Australian company that is one of the few independent automotive transmission makers in the world.

Li Shufu has donated over 1 billion yuan (£90million), including money for the Sichuan earthquake relief effort, education for the poor, universities, research institutes and others. He was also ranked 14th among the top philanthropists in China in 2009.

*Our thanks to **China Daily** for passing us the information...*



**Li Shufu - Entrepreneur of the year**



## LONDON TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR CHARITY FUND

*'Remembering those less fortunate  
than ourselves'*

*The Chairman and Committee would  
like to take this opportunity to  
wish everyone a very happy Christmas  
and a healthy new year.*

*We would also like to thank the trade  
press for their continued support.*

**Russell Poluck MBE (T25)**

*Hon Chairman*

## Call Sign

### December 2009

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# Brian Rice Becomes a Grandad!



**New parents Billy and Sam with  
baby Charlie**

**Inset: Aunty Carla has a cuddle**

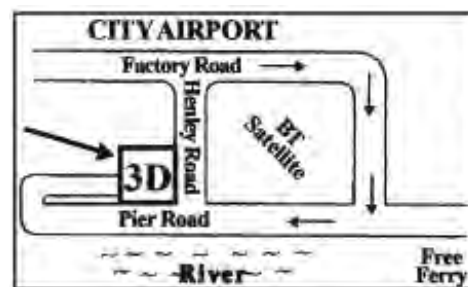
Wednesday 18 November may have been just  
another day for most at Dial-a-Cab, but it was  
anything but ordinary for DaC Chairman **Brian  
Rice** and his wife **Brenda**. At precisely 03.55 that  
morning, courtesy of son **Billy** – who many staff will remember from his  
days in the Call Centre - and **Sam**, the pair became first-time grandparents, while daughter **Carla**  
became a first-time aunt!

Arriving at St Peters Hospital in Chertsey at a healthy 7lbs 2ozs, new baby **Charles William  
Rice's** first words were: "Hi guys, you can call me Charlie!"

The baby was named after both Brian's late brother and father – but in reverse – William  
Charles, whereas dad Billy was born William James.

From all at **Call Sign** and Dial-a-Cab, our congratulations to the extended Rice family. Their  
photo is on the cover...

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**50,000 £140... 60,000 £170... 70,000 £535 Prices inclusive of VAT**

*Some of our services include:-*

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Members of the former T&G cab section, now called **Unite**, were recently seen on a bridge crossing the M4 photographing private hire vehicles from **Addison Lee** who were under instruction from their boss, **John Griffin**, to ignore signs banning all vehicles other than buses or taxis from the bus lane. Unite said it was fed up with misuse of the bus lane by drivers who were not supposed to be in it.

When **Call Sign** looked into the problem (September: *Was someone telling porkies?*) it didn't take long for us to discover what it was. On that occasion, we published the letter that John Griffin sent to his drivers. Signed John Griffin, Chairman Addison Lee, it read:

*This is to inform you that we can now use the bus lane on the M4. Please carry this letter with you as evidence and invite anyone questioning the authenticity of this instruction to contact me on the office number. We shall of course be pursuing our right to use all bus lanes but for now the M4 is a start.*

In reality, only buses, coaches, motorbikes, emergency vehicles and licensed London taxis can use the 3.5 mile bus lane. The only other vehicles that could possibly resemble London PH cars and cause confusion are taxis from other parts of the UK - all of whom can use any London bus/taxi lane provided they are in their licensed taxi. But Addison Lee cars cannot.

The biggest problem is the total lack of enforcement, with just fourteen £60 fixed penalties notices issued in 2008. Speaking logically, it seems surprising that those on business meetings for high powered City companies haven't also jumped onto the bandwagon for the sake of £60, as the lane has no dedicated cameras and the **Met Police** told this magazine in September that they had far more important enforcement to take care of than policing a bus lane. We also told the **PCO** at the time. They said it was nothing to do with them and that we should contact **Transport for London**. We did and they passed the buck onto the **Highways Agency** - who in turn said there was nothing they could do.

As **Call Sign** also said, if Mr Griffin believes that he is above the law, then the **PCO** / **TfL** should remove the licensing from all his vehicles until such time as he can prove that to be the case? After all, we have been told off just for issuing receipts that the **PCO** didn't approve of!

John Griffin has now said that he believes Addison Lee drivers have the right to use the lane and claims that he is willing to legally challenge any tickets they get. He added: *"If we don't get satisfaction in UK courts, we will go to the European court because this is a clear act of discrimination. We seek to compete, for the benefit of the public in a way that is fair to all."*

Discrimination, Mr Griffin? What discrimination? Just because I can tell someone to take a pill for a headache, it doesn't mean I can leave my car in the doctor's surgery parking bay. If your drivers do a full version of the Knowledge and then still prefer to work for you, then I for one will no longer object to your use of a taxi and bus lane. Otherwise, you are minicabs, renamed as private hire and NOT licensed taxis.

If a Dial-a-Cab driver announced in a national newspaper that he was going to use the contra-flow Piccadilly bus lane as he owed a duty to his passengers to get them to their destinations as quickly as possible, **Call Sign**

## Taxi Drivers Photograph Addison Lee M4 Bus Lane Misuse



**Does anyone care who uses it? Well it's about time someone did...**

asked for my PCO files. They went back beyond even my time as a licensed taxi driver. But one thing never changes throughout the 40+ years in the thick wad of paper; not once was I accorded the respect of being known as Mr Fisher. It was always just Fisher. Schoolmaster and

believes that the PCO would quickly act against that driver. Yet so far as we know, nothing has been done about Addison Lee's deliberate snubbing of those whose rules we are supposed to be following.

**So perhaps those in charge – ie PCO, TfL, Highways Agency or if they can spare a minute, the Metropolitan Police, can leave the comfort of their offices and do something useful about this situation.**

Under the *Data Protection Act*, I recently

pupil comes to mind. But not, I feel I can safely guess, when it comes to John Griffin, Chairman of Addison Lee!

Of course, there may be no connection, but wasn't it a certain John Griffin who made a sizeable donation to the Mayor's election fund? 25K wasn't it? Obviously just a coincidence.

**Alan Fisher**  
**Editor, Call Sign Magazine**



**The Children and committee of the East London Cabbies Outing would like to wish all the Drivers and Sponsors of this year's outing a very**

### Merry Xmas & Happy New Year

**We'd Also like to thank them for their participation...**

## Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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

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

**The cost?**

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

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**Dial-a-Cab's Jim Rainbird (T25)** seems to be forever taking celebrities around town. His last appearance in *Call Sign* had him working with **Kwame Kwei-Armah** (paramedic Finlay Newton in BBC's *Casualty* from 1999 to 2004) when he filmed a Channel 4 documentary that retraced the Queen's 45,000 mile tour of the Commonwealth in 1953 – soon after her Coronation.

Jim, who is the Upper Warden in the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers*, maintained that link with the Commonwealth from Kwame's four one-hour programmes, by actually being in on the England team's start to the **2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi**. That will be the last real testing platform for the English competitors before the 2012 Olympics in London.

Jim took a Delhi 2010 touring party from Trafalgar Square to the Newham Leisure Centre in Prince Regent Lane, before going back and forth and then onto The London Studios for a lunchtime television appearance on **Loose Women**. This was to publicise the beginning of the **Queen's Baton Relay 2010 Delhi** journey.

## JIM IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES COUNTDOWN



Jim was involved in the Baton launch for the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Inset: The new logo



up in around 300 days from now when it enters the **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium** in Delhi during the Opening Ceremony. By then it would have traversed over 190,000 kilometres.

The Delhi Games are under a year away and the last multi-sport event before the London 2012 Olympics. They will provide a unique opportunity in the life of an athlete. England's Commonwealth Games team will be more than 500 strong, featuring the elite of 17 sports and 4 para-sports. The new strapline **We are England** celebrates the diversity and togetherness of the England team, whilst the new lion logo adds a sense of strength and dynamism to the team. The new England brand is complemented by a new website at **www.weareengland.org** that contains up-to-date team

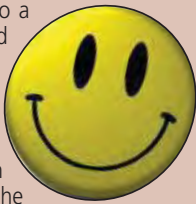
news, athlete profiles, imagery, video and discussion, along with a countdown to Delhi 2010.

Jim told *Call Sign*: "To be honest, with so much emphasis being given to the London Olympics in 2012, I hadn't really thought about Delhi. But the job I did for the Commonwealth Games team has whetted my appetite and I think that Team England are going to blow everyone away with an ultra-successful Commonwealth Games medal tally. I'm sure everyone at Dial-a-Cab wishes them well and I'm just thrilled that – however indirectly – DaC have now been a part of the **We are England** launch."

**The young lady with Jim and the Baton in the cover photo is Joanna Robinson, the Development Director of Commonwealth Games England...**

## SMILE

An Irishman walked into a Dublin bar and ordered three pints of Guinness. Then he sat in the back of the bar, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he'd finished all three, he came back to the bar and ordered three more. The bartender told him that a pint went flat after it had been drawn and would probably taste better if he bought one at a time.



The Irishman then explained why he was drinking that way:

"You see I have two brothers. One is in America, the other in Australia and I'm here in Dublin. When we all left home, we promised that we'd drink this way to remember the days when we all drank together." The bartender admitted that it was a nice thought and left it there. The Irishman became a regular in the bar and always drank the same way - ordering three pints and drinking the three pints by taking sips from each of them in turn.

Then one day, he came in and ordered just two pints. All the regulars noticed and suddenly the bar fell silent. When he went back to the bar for the second round, the bartender plucked up courage and said:

"I don't want to intrude on your grief, but we all want to offer our condolences on your great loss."

The Irishman looked confused for a moment, then a light twinkled in his eyes and he laughed.

"Oh, no," he said, "All three of us are fine. It's me.....I've given up drinking!"

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As **Dial-a-Cab** taxi drivers, we often carry the famous (and infamous) from anywhere to anywhere during the years of our working lives. **Terry Fordham (Y69)**, who has been on DaC just two and a half of his three year taxi driving career, recalled to *Call Sign* the day he took **Virgin** boss **Richard Branson** and a female colleague from Heathrow's Terminal 4, across-country into deepest Essex and Stansted Airport.

"I was point cab on the Terminal 4 rank," he said, "when Richard Branson, in his trademark casual pullover and closely followed by an attractive young lady, came up to me and asked if I would mind taking them to Stansted Airport. I spent at least one second thinking about it before telling him I'd be happy to. I was quite surprised at first, because I assumed that someone like Richard Branson would have had a car waiting for him, but anyway, off we went in the direction of Essex!"

So did the Virgin head talk to the driver or just his female companion, *Call Sign* enquired?

"Mr Branson came across as a very likable guy and was really very chatty. We covered any number of topics during the

# DaC's Terry and the Virgin Flyer...



Terry took the head of Virgin to Stansted

trip. On arrival at Stansted he directed me towards the airport's private area, some distance away from the more usual public entrance," Terry continued.

"After arriving at the set-down, I was invited into the VIP Lounge and offered food and soft drinks before starting my journey back to town. Not only that, but his young lady companion paid me off and included a £10 tip, so I was really delighted and came away thinking what a genuinely nice man Branson is - unlike another airline executive I could mention who was not at all 'easy'! But that's a story for another time," Terry said as he drove away smiling...

©Call Sign Magazine MM9

## Bob Completes the New York Marathon!

*Call Sign* writer and former **Dial-a-Cab** driver, Bob Woodford, promised readers last month that he would complete the 26-mile **New York Marathon**. True to his word, Bob succeeded – and although his time of 6 hours 28 minutes was somewhat slower than the old days when he ran them regularly – thirteen in all including six in New York - it was still 30 minutes faster than he had planned.

The route takes in all five Boroughs of NYC - starting at Staten Island, through Brooklyn and Queens, then into Manhattan, briefly into The Bronx and then back into Manhattan to finish in Central Park, very close to the infamous Dakota Buildings.

Speaking to *Call Sign* after the race, Bob pointed out an interesting fact; the parishioners of Holy Trinity Church close to Wall Street part-funded the 12 bells struck by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1961, with each having a psalm engraved with the first letter of each bell peeling D W H I T T I N G T O N!

Puffing, Bob added one more pertinent fact..."It was bloody dark when I finished!"

He had been due to meet with New York's famous *Gabby Gabby* - Peter Franklyn - but when Bob got to his hotel, Peter had left a message that due to family reasons he had to be out of town. However, Bob was still considered as something of a celebrity and was interviewed on a New York radio station. He told the reporter that he was deliberately going to go slow for maximum exposure. He couldn't see the point in admitting that he hadn't done enough training! Mind you, getting round 26 miles hardly makes you unfit!

Bob completed the race sporting a T-Shirt with the logo **london-sightseeing-tours.co.uk** splashed across its front and back and also had several meetings with travel agencies in Manhattan to promote the UK visitor attraction.

Also, while Bob was there, he met **Tunde Adeyemo**, one of Africa's finest long distance athletes. Apparently Bob offered to be Tunde's pacemaker for the first 10 miles, but he must have forgotten as Tunde passed Bob after around 50 metres!

Bob also said hi to **Shelley Woods**, the Paralympic Silver medallist in the 5,000m wheelchair race at the Beijing Games. Shelley realised her dreams with funding through the charity both she and Bob raise funds for - *Get Kids Going!* Seb Coe is the President of the charity.

Worn out by then, Bob ended by saying that he thought this might have been his last Marathon – until a 'friend' mentioned something about the **Great Wall of China** run next year! We wouldn't bet against it!



Bob with African superstar runner Tunde Adeyemo  
Inset: Bob shares a drink with Paralympic Silver medallist, Shelley Woods, both are Get Kids Going supporters

As **Call Sign** announced the return to Hyde Park of *Winter Wonderland* for six-weeks of festive fun, the organisers chose this magazine to run an exclusive competition where we were given 100 tickets for the invitation-only launch night on November 19. We decided to offer up to four tickets per prize, which still gave us 25 prizes to see the park thronging with DaC drivers, wives, girlfriends and children, mixing freely with invited celebs and press.

**We had originally wondered whether enough drivers would be interested, but we needn't have worried. Call Sign received what was probably by far the highest number of entrants into any competition EVER in any taxi trade paper!**

Incredibly we had a total of 524 entries, the majority asking for four tickets. We also had a large number from non-DaC drivers who told us that their DaC friends were going and they'd like to accompany them. Sadly we had to totally discount those. We even had one online reader from the Czech Republic who wanted to enter the competition, saying that he would be in London visiting his mother on that day! Sorry, but again it was no!

Winter Wonderland runs from Saturday 21st November 2009 to Sunday 3rd January 2010, from 10am to 10pm each day. It has beautifully themed rides and attractions including Mario & Sonic's Ice Rink, the Giant 50m

# Winter Wonderland

*The taxi trade's most successful-ever competition*



**The 50m Observation Wheel at Winter Wonderland becomes a familiar sight for 6 weeks as it lights up London's night sky...**

Observation Wheel, Zippo's Christmas Circus and an atmospheric German Xmas market, all set out under thousands of twinkling lights. Rides start from £2, but admission is free. It

also provides much taxi work as our busy time comes to a close. Booking for the circus and skating is at [www.hydeparkwinterwonderland.com](http://www.hydeparkwinterwonderland.com).

## Have Barbeque Will Travel

*And especially for Dial-a-Cab drivers!*

If you are an expert at making a barbeque, this won't interest you. But if everything you cook in the garden comes out underdone or tasting like rubber – and especially if you don't own barbeque equipment but have always wanted to make a barbeque in your own garden, then listen up!

Many of you will know **Oscar**, who for several years has been copying drivers vinyl to CD and videos to DVD. But we bet you didn't know that for generations his family have been master cooks with his great-grandfather's recipe for *kofte* still tasting as delicious now as it did when he first tried it! Oscar is no different and is brilliant at barbequing.

He has now set up in business with **SIZZLES**. He will come to your house, set up safely in your garden and provide you and however many guests you have with sizzling hot delicious food from the charcoal barbie grill, straight onto your plate.

**Oscar gives you two options:**

1. He can provide all the food (plus rice, salad and pitta bread) including his self-marinated chicken wings and great grandfathers recipe *kofte*, plus of course mini burgers and bring it all round to you and cook it in your garden or...
2. You can go out and buy whatever barbeque food you want and Oscar will barbeque it to perfection as well. Whatever you choose to do, Oscar will come with his barbeque equipment and cook perfectly for you.

**If you are a fan of charcoal cooked food – and there can't be many that aren't - this could be ideal for you, your friends and family. You can book SIZZLES for birthdays, anniversaries or just any excuse for a party!**

**You can get more details on 0208 518 8765 or 07902 246 354. Just ask for Oscar and tell him you're with Dial-a-Cab. He'll give you a great deal...**



## DVLA Launches New Vehicle Tax Line

The DVLA has launched a new memorable 0300 telephone line for motorists to tax their vehicles. The number is **0300 1234 321**, it is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is said to take less than 4 minutes to use. The service automatically checks that correct insurance and MOT documents are in place.

The popularity of the environmentally friendly phone and online service is growing, with more than half of last month's vehicle tax renewals completed that way.

**Andrew Rhodes**, the DVLA's Director of Products and Services, told **Call Sign**:

**"We listened when our customers told us they wanted the option to interact digitally with the DVLA and we are constantly aiming to improve our services. By providing a new memorable renewal number, we hope to make it even easier for motorists to tax their vehicle."**

Those wanting to apply on line can still do so at [www.direct.gov.uk/taxdisc](http://www.direct.gov.uk/taxdisc).

Hello charming people, I'm back due to popular demand! But where is the Dial-a-Cab wife or girlfriend to take my place, the woman behind the man behind the wheel of the best taxi service in London? I know my old readers have missed me, but I'd better introduce myself to the new drivers and their families. I used to share my thoughts on life, love and the laundry basket until I retired in July, when I thought someone a lot younger and more exciting than me would step forward. But she must be shy, so now I've climbed back into the back seat just for the holiday season as surely 2010 will bring a new columnist to these pages - maybe even a male DaC partner? Why not? But there's Christmas to get through first...

I'm always short of ideas for presents and with my favourite Dial-a-Cab driver, *Jingle Bell Glen*, being the most difficult, ungrateful recipient, I decided to ask him straight out what he would like this year. Quicker than an application to the brake pedal when he sees a prospective passenger across the road behind a bus, he replied "Elocution lessons!"

This threw me because although he has some faults, poor mastery of the Queen's English is not one of them. "No, not for me," he added quickly, "for my passengers! The majority of them fail to enunciate their words clearly, so how do I know if they want *Heath Road* or *Heathrow*, *Leicester Square* or *Leinster Square*, *Queensway* or *Queens Way*, *Pont Street* or *Pond Street* or whether to go to *Well Street* or *Wells Street*? How can I give my usual excellent service when they

## For One Last Time

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

# BACK SEAT DRIVER AT XMAS



blears sitting as MPs drawing very good salaries to "represent" us, without facing any penalty for wrongdoing. In my eyes, just having to pay back the money they falsely claimed is no penalty. If you went shoplifting and then got caught, would you simply have to return the items you had been found with? End of story? I think not. As Dylan said, The Times They Are A-Changing...

### Christmas or Halloween?

It was clear this year that Bonfire Night is now much lower key than before. Almost no pushy kids with prams blocking the tube stops, begging for a *penny for the Guy* and far fewer firework displays. Instead, Halloween got very big with adults as well as children in extravagant costumes and pumpkins and themed parties all over London. Despite pronouncements from the Pope saying that Halloween was dangerous, anti-Christian and that children should not get dressed up as goblins, more children than ever went out on the streets and had fun. There has been a distinct shift over the last ten years from Guy Fawkes to Halloween festivities. Perhaps the excessive Christmas binges in recent years will take a hit from the recession and in another ten years we will find that it too has faded in the same way as Bonfire Night.

In the meantime, I hope Santa gets his *Criminal Records Bureau* check renewed in time to get to your house and bring you and yours everything you wish for. A happy, happy Christmas and may your wallets fill up so much in 2010 that you'll be begging us to help you spend it all by this time next year...

*Lots of love,*

**Poppy xxx**

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### State of the Trade?

40 plus years ago they said the game was finished, now I see the clear death throes... and my income has diminished!

I follow lines of yellow lights 'round streets of the West End, hoping that perhaps I might trap one 'round the bend.

I pick up fares I once ignored, go to places I once broomed, I wait at stations, stale and bored and start just after noon.

Each fill-up costs a little more paid mileage has decreased; overhauls and services soar, my bank balance is squeezed!

It's hard to show a cheerful face with so much gloom and doom, competing in this daily race... dancing to this tune.

I blame the traders, I blame the banks, I blame the world recession, the Chancellor doesn't get my thanks, he hasn't yet learned the lesson...

**Kopyright Kupkake 2009**

do not make it clear where they wish to go?" Of course he was just being more fussy than usual and it was time to confront him. "You what? Have you ever really gone to Heathrow airport by mistake?" He confessed that he hadn't as yet! I wondered about the concept of goodwill at Christmastime and asked if he would not like world peace or an end to bonuses given out in the City? "Not at all," my lovely DaCman said, "when some of our account clients were awash with money, there was no shortage of work for us and DaC ran its own Christmas incentive or bonus scheme several years ago. You may remember that I picked up a good few pounds, which helped to fund our trip to New York."

He can be such a smart arse – infuriating! Like so many other people, he is more cynical than before and I put this down to the effect of the scandal of lifestyle allowances and false claims made by MPs. Even if new rules are put in place and enforced, we still have the likes of Derek Conway and Hazel

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November 5 2009 certainly lived up to its name this year – at least it did in Mayfair's Berkeley Street and in particular, outside one of London's most popular restaurants, Nobu. Guy Fawkes night at 7pm was when the new taxi rank outside Nobu came into force.

This magazine began the fight for a rank as long ago as November 2005, when in response to a letter from then-DaC driver **John Fisher (C45)**, we contacted the tout squad giving them a list of the touts minicab registration numbers. They were hanging up outside with the apparent backing of the bouncers on the front! Within weeks, **Sgt Dave Hillson** of the Cab Enforcement Section, led a raid on the restaurant and several minicab drivers were arrested.

We also approached **Alan Matthews**, who at the time was Head of Projects and Developments at the PCO. He wrote to the owners of the vehicles concerned, asking them to respond to John Fisher's allegations. We heard no more after that.

Then in April 2008, we wrote about a 21-year female driver who had become the youngest person to ever join Dial-a-Cab. **Natalia Shalom (A34)** had joined at the end of 2007 after her boyfriend, **Daniel Woodhouse (K84)**, recommended it.

At the time, one of Natalia's biggest concerns was her personal safety as she preferred working into the early hours. And, until she began her personal battle with Nobu, she was very happy with the direction her working life had taken. But that battle became a real thorn in her side when in 2008, Natalia dropped a passenger outside Nobu and decided to dwell in case someone came out looking for a taxi. She later phoned **Call Sign** to tell us that there were so many minicabs outside, the only way she could dwell was by double-parking. Daniel had also joined her. Within minutes, the pair were told by Nobu staff to move on as she was causing an obstruction. Natalia and Daniel both refused. Gradually the staff became more and more threatening until one came over and told Natalia that "taxis weren't needed as we have our own car service!" They may have thought that Natalia would slink away, but their actions were akin to the proverbial red rag to a bull. Natalia "put on" the non-rank every time she was close, telling **Call Sign** that having spoken to many of the passengers coming out of the restaurant, most would prefer a taxi but were not given the chance. She told us:

**"These minicabs will keep coming back. The best way to fight them is by putting a taxi rank outside the door, then passengers would have a choice - and I know who most would choose!"**

On April 20, the battle hotted up when Daniel was outside Nobu and told a DaC dispatcher the restaurant was claiming once again that "real" taxis weren't needed as they were using minicabs! The message went out and that began the famous Dial-a-Cab drivers fight back against many of the establishments that we had lost over the years. Our drivers flooded into Berkeley Street – looking every bit like the Cavalry! For hire signs lit up the street as the taxis all parked outside Nobu, stopping the amazed minicab drivers from pulling up outside!

What does Natalia Shalom think about the taxi rank at Nobu?

# JUST BRILLIANT!



Natalia and Daniel look thrilled at the Nobu rank opening

The battle then moved onto to other clubs and restaurants with DaC drivers once again leading the fightback.

**Then came 5 November 2009 and at 7pm, a proud Natalia Shalom took her place at the point of the 5-cab rank.**

"It's just brilliant," she said, "and I just can't thank **Call Sign** enough for its help. There was a time when I never thought we'd get this rank, but it just shows that with perseverance, anything is possible. My only fear is that when it gets busy again, we'll overlook the ranks we have now won back and return to square one. Hopefully we'll remember how hard the fight to reclaim them was and we won't allow that

to happen. But again, my thanks to **Call Sign**, they did the donkey work, I just sat here!"

Perhaps, Natalia, but if we had sat there, no one would have noticed! Sexist or not, it took a great looking girl, as stubborn as they come, to bring the case to the attention of those who had the power to make the rank happen. So well done Natalia and all those drivers who started providing a service for clubs.

*The Nobu rank is for 5 taxis and runs from 7pm to 4am. When painted out, ranks will also be positioned at Movida in Argyle St, Babble (Berkeley Sq), Jalouse (Tenterden St), Mabiki in Dover St and of course, Funky Buddha close to Nobu itself.*

## 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**



## Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park...

On Wednesday 4 November, I was delighted and honoured to accept an invitation to attend the unveiling of the statue to **Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park** GCB, KBE, MC\*, DFC, DCL, MA, RAF on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, in six months time to be replaced with a permanent statue in Waterloo Place.

Many of you reading this will be asking who is this man? He, alongside two others, made it possible to lead the life you are now experiencing without being under German rule, although Gordon Brown and Tony Blair have done their utmost to reverse this situation and put you under the rule of Brussels!

I have given Sir Keith his full title as he was a quite remarkable man; born in 1892 in the little town of Thames on New Zealand's North Island, he was one of ten children to Scottish-born geologist James Park and his wife Frances. When he was 19 years old, he joined the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand. This company lasted until 1917, when it was acquired into the large shipping group of P&O. Also in the P&O group were the New Zealand Shipping Line and Federal Steam Ship Company, both of which I had the pleasure of serving with for many happy years. So you start to see why I showed added interest in this man.

Sir Keith started his military career in 1914 when he became a gunner. In January 1915 he sailed to Egypt and fought both there and at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli. In the same year, he gained a commission to second lieutenant before he transferred over to the British Army. He was serving in the Royal Horse and Field Artillery when he was seriously injured after a shell exploded under the horse he was riding. It was then he was graded as permanently unfit for active service.

Not to take this as a ban from fighting for his chosen country, in December 1916 he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. July 1917 saw him joining 48 Squadron and flying a two-seater Bristol Fighter. Within 9 months, he was commanding the squadron and given the rank of Major. During his service at this time in the 1914 – 18 war, he was shot down twice and awarded the *Military Cross and Bar*, the *Distinguished Flying Cross* and a *Croix de Guerre*. He also achieved the title of highest scoring ace with 20 victories by the end of World War 1

Another batch of views from Tom that do not necessarily reflect the views of DaC

# The World According To Tom Whitbread

*DaC's answer to Victor Meldrew!*



**The Statue of Sir Keith Park at Trafalgar Square - soon to be moved to Waterloo Place**

Two weeks after his return to England in 1918, he married his wife Dorothy. During their married life, they had two sons. One year later, he was given a permanent RAF commission, before going on to be one of the first to attend the newly formed Air Force Staff College at Andover in 1922. He continued to progress up through the ranks, being posted in numerous places both home and abroad. Then in 1937, he was promoted as aide-de-camp to King George VI for the Coronation year.

In July 1938 he was promoted once again, this time to Air Commodore and became deputy at Fighter Command Headquarters, Bentley Priory near Uxbridge. His boss was Sir Hugh Dowding; he was to become the second person named in the success of the Battle of Britain alongside Winston Churchill. The trio, including Sir Keith, would form and implement the Battle of Britain. Sir Keith was put in charge of the newly introduced Spitfires and Hurricane fighters, these fighters had the added equipment of radar and radio to be able to coordinate aerial defence over Britain.

Then in April 1940, he was promoted again, this time to Air Vice-Marshal in command of No 11 Group - Fighter Command's principal subdivision covering all of London and the

South East of England. It was Sir Keith Park who was in charge of the air cover and protection of troops - both English and allied - when they evacuated from Dunkirk, an operation that returned some 340,000 troops back to England. During these times in France, 435 aircrew were lost in action, men who were critical in the plans for the defence of England.

This brave man was the last airman to leave France in his hurricane, but this was typical of a man who would lead from the front, to be up there in his fighter aircraft showing his men he would not ask them to do what he would not do himself. I suppose you would class him as a real life *Biggles*, someone who could inspire every young man to give their last drop of blood in defending his country.

We had the trio of Winston Churchill, giving the orders as Prime Minister; Hugh Dowding, making sure that fighter command had the correct resources while trying to solve the problems encountered with the night fighting of the German bombers and Keith Park, organising the day-to-day operations from an operations room in Uxbridge. His experience as a working fighter pilot became invaluable. He commanded respect with his strategic brilliance and calm leadership, which gained Britain many successes in the air over England. This man made split-second decisions as Hitler sent over wave after wave of his Luftwaffe to try and batter the English into submission. He was someone who longed to be in the middle of whatever battle was going on, to be with his men and transferring his inspiration and sense of adventure to them. In return, his men would lay down their lives for him. They knew he would never stand on ceremony when it came to sitting with his men, eating off the same tin plates and drinking out of the same chipped tin mugs. He was the first to slap a young airman on the back and congratulate him for a job well done. By the same token, he would never stand for bulls\*\*\*t and would give an airman a real bo\*\*\*cking if he messed up and endangered another's life.

He continued through the rest of the war, being promoted to Air Marshal and Air Officer Commander in Chief Middle East, defending Malta and Egypt. During this time he received the honour of a Knight Commander (KCB).

Then his attention was channelled into assisting the USA with an air supply operation to support Burma's liberation from the Japanese; for his expertise he was awarded Commander of the US Legion of Merit in 1945. In December 1946, he retired with the rank of Air Chief Marshal and was awarded the Knight Grand Cross (GCB).

...continued on page 23

Reading about it sends shivers down the spine, so Call Sign asked Dial-a-Cab IT whiz Jon Winterburn the question many are asking about [www.google.com/dashboard...](http://www.google.com/dashboard...)



## Is Google's Dashboard One Step Too Far???



Yes, I have a Google account and have in the past tried out **Google Dashboard**. What it enables you to do is switch on a function which logs all your web history to the dashboard so you can see all your Google searches, pages you have clicked on from those searches and how long you spent on these pages. This is all part of Google's Analytics Engine, which is used to rank websites. What you must realise however, is that the web history logged by Google Dashboard, is only that which has been passed through Google. In other words, if you visit other websites through other search engines or by keying the addresses directly into the address bar, this history is not logged by Google.

The web history function can be switched off if you do not want your history logged. However, this is all irrelevant - both Google and your ISP already log everything you do online anyway! Google does it as part of the analytics and your ISP does it via recent amendments to the *Communications Data Bill* by the current government.

Google Dashboard merely allows you to view your own history on the website and it can prove useful if you want to recall terms you have searched for and websites you have visited.

In my opinion, Google has a right to log all Internet activity carried out via its search engine. After all, you are using their service for free. If you use Google Dashboard, this logged information is simply linked to your Google account. But if you use Google anonymously, then your history is still logged against your IP address (the unique Internet address given to you by your ISP when you connect to the Internet). So it's not really anonymous either way.

However, I strongly disagree with the amendments to the *Communications Data Bill* which require all ISPs in this country to log and store all your Internet activity (websites visited, key word entered into search engines, emails sent and received and all other Internet-based activity). These amendments were recently brought in by the current Stalinist "Labour" government under the guise of "terror prevention" but in reality, it is simply yet another method of spying on and the controlling of law-abiding citizens by the ever-encroaching "Big Brother" state.

Therefore, Google Dashboard (and the like) is a moot point as the government in our supposedly free and democratic society has already taken what many consider to be illegal measures to encroach on our civil liberties!

And it's only going to get worse..

**Jonathen Winterburn**  
**DaC Network Administrator**

## The World According To Tom Whitbread continued...

Continued from page 22...

**Sir Keith Park died on 6 February 1975 - four years after his wife - in his beloved New Zealand and received a full military funeral.**

If we had men like this leading our country today, what a better place it would be to live in; men who stood in the face of danger to defend their chosen country, not hide behind a reinforced door while lining their own pockets. Not forgetting Sir Hugh Dowding, who when his men went to war, made sure they had the best equipment available.

During the ceremony in Trafalgar Square, Mayor of London Boris Johnson made a short and to-the-point speech, saying that it would have been easier to rename Hyde Park, Sir Keith Park than get his statue put into Trafalgar Square. Why is it that we seem afraid to honour our heroes, yet we allow statues of people from other lands to be erected in prominent places? If it were not for people like Sir Keith Park, you would not be getting so many benefits or be allowed to demonstrate on so many stupid causes.

Then on Remembrance Sunday, I was out walking the dog through Hackney for 2 hours prior to 11am, yet during this time I did not pass one person sporting a poppy in recognition of the wonderful job our soldiers are doing throughout the world in helping oppressed people. Many want to just sit back and take whatever is given free, whether that's a flat for getting pregnant while unmarried at 17, or benefit money so they can stand in a pub instead of working.

The money you donated to those poppy sellers collection tins goes towards the help and care of our young soldiers, some who thought they were "lucky" when a piece of shrapnel pierced their skin, tearing through muscles and vital organs causing red hot pains to paralyse nerves. They lose limbs, get disfigured, yet still think they are lucky to be alive and some are brave enough to want to continue to serve their country.

Yet in one week alone as I write this, we've had two accounts reported in the news, backed-up by CCTV, of foreign nationals using their children to help steal these collecting

boxes from shops. How low can anyone stoop?

You do not have to wait until the weeks surrounding last month's Remembrance Sunday, you can donate at anytime; just ask the **Royal British Legion**. Always **wear your poppy with pride!** You can even be like me and have two large plastic poppies attached to your car roof rack, this way you support our troops and you can find your car in ASDA's car park!

If you hear of a parade or march of soldiers returning from abroad, go and give them a cheer and show that you appreciate that they are putting their lives on the line. Please do not act like an MP; when soldiers killed in battle are returned through the town of Wootton Bassett, the streets are lined with members of the public who go to show their support and respect. I do not remember one MP going to Wootton Bassett to show that same respect...

*May I wish you all a very merry and indeed peaceful Christmas and follow that with the happiest of New Years...*

**Tom Whitbread**  
**DaC Board Member**

The November issue of this magazine contained a picture report on **Call Sign's** latest trip with another group of DaC drivers and one guest - *Taxicab News* writer John-Paul Pace - to the LTI factory in Coventry. We've had a number of drivers phoning to ask what was actually discussed. So here in more detail is a report of the actual question and answer session...

In addition to Editor **Alan Fisher**, attendees were **Neville Chapman (P99)** who together with his nightman Chas Kissin has owned 21 new taxis usually changing them every 2 years - but they haven't done so this time round. **Dave Creber (C46)** has had two TX4s while **Alan Lipscombe (T50)** was on his first, as was **Paul Gane (H33)** and **Janet Ramsden (G35J)**. **John Dixon (B67)** has a TXII while **Kamel Abdellaoui (J22)** has a TX4 Gold and last minute replacement **Fred Cooper (Z18)** also has a TX4. **John-Paul Pace** drives a TX1...

Representing LTI were John Russell (Manganese Bronze Chief Executive), LTI Engineering Projects Director Paul Woolley, Sales Director Rob Laidler, Paul Kelsey head of LTI's Market Development, Government Affairs Manager - and minutes taker - Richard Daniels and Trevor Hattersley, the LTI Customer and Technical Support Manager...

**John Russell** welcomed us and gave an update on the company's position, highlighting investor's support in raising £10m on the markets in July, any restructuring measures undertaken and the current consultation period that seeks to bring the company back to profitability. He also highlighted the importance of the UK manufacturing base for the brand and the Geely joint venture partnership.

**Paul Woolley** then briefed the group on the low emissions programmes, which LTI is currently involved with - the TX4E, hydrogen fuel cell taxi and hybrid taxi. We were told that an electric taxi will be around in 18 months, while a Hydrogen cab would be possible in 15 to 20 years! Paul then gave an update on China and discussed a number of key product issues with the Dial-a-Cab drivers; these included radiators, intercoms and complaints of heat bleed into the driver compartment. Noisy passenger heaters and aircon were also brought up. He also updated us on Euro 5 changes to the VM engine re January 2012 implementation date and technical challenges of the programme.

### Questions

*Due to space restriction, questions and answers have been abbreviated, hopefully without losing their relevance...*

**John-Paul Pace** asked whether it would make business sense to build the TX4 in China?

**John Russell** said that had it been from a purely financial viewpoint, then the answer would be yes. But it's no because of the brand name and Chinese partner Geely wants LTI to have a UK manufacturing base. Two thirds of the costs of vehicle are engine and materials, so restructuring the manufacturing base would have limited benefit.

**John Dixon** spoke about the TX4 radiator issue. **Paul Woolley** responded that LTI undertook successful initial testing but the radiator failed in the field. It took 18 months to find a new one, but LTI are now confident with these new rads, which are sourced from Unipart.

**Neville Chapman** asked what the manufactur-

# DaC Drivers Questions to LTI...



Two of the ten DaC Drivers - Neville and Kamel - together with LTI's Trevor Hattersley (right)

er's radiator warrantee was? **Paul Woolley** replied that the radiators were covered for 3 years or 100,000 miles.

**Alan Fisher** asked if 50 hydrogen fuel cell taxis had been announced by the Mayor by 2012? **John Russell** confirmed the project.

**Kamel Abdellaoui** asked why LTI changed from the successful Nissan engine to one from Ford? The group were told that LTI had problems with the Ford engine eg the timing chain.

Returning to the Nissan engine explanation again, **Paul Woolley** added that there was no Nissan Euro 3 engine that would have been suitable. He said that VM were a very good company to work with, they specialised in low volume and strong joint working relationships. LTI would be continuing to Euro V compliance with VM.

**Alan Fisher** queried the business sense of limiting sales of the cab to just one company - M&O. He added that KPM would probably sell their Vito taxi to former LTI franchise dealers. **John Russell** said that they could do so anyway as a right under competition rules. He believed this was the right decision for LTI and that it would support profitability.

**John-Paul Pace**, supported by other drivers present, said it was about time that M&O treated us as customers. He told of having to wait one hour without being seen at M&O, so he left and bought a vehicle from KPM. **John Russell** then spoke of how the *lean manufacturing theory* had been applied to dealerships to improve customer service and added that they were determined to carry out any necessary improvements. Among key points in the discussion were the need to look at general processes and M&O customer service / culture. Waiting time for service with time off the road equalling a loss of money was also raised. **Alan Fisher** complained that drivers had no contact with technicians and had to explain to a third party what the problem was. Describing a noise was difficult, Alan added.

**Rob Laidler** entered this part of the discussion and said that a successful after sales organisation

focuses on the customer's needs, rather than best process for moving vehicles for servicing and financial purposes.

**Neville Chapman** went back to 1972 when he bought his first taxi for £1,200. There were customer service issues at M&O then and they still remained, he said. **Rob Laidler** discussed M&O again and the need to improve the customer's experience. He said it should be built around the customer's requirements and not the company's.

**Janet Ramsden** spoke about M&O service and repair costs plus the waiting time. **Rob Laidler** said the company were taking a top technician from the workshop to support management and there would always be someone there to talk to should drivers feel they needed to.

**Alan Fisher** asked if there was a new cab on the horizon, pointing out that he last asked just 2 weeks before launch of TX4 - when he was told there wasn't! Alan added that he didn't appreciate being given false information. It was no!

**Janet Ramsden** brought up the perception by drivers that M&O don't treat customers as customers, but as 'taxi drivers.'

**Kamel Abdellaoui** asked again about noise from the rear heater and how difficult it was to speak to customers when it was on. He also asked about fitting climate control? **Trevor Hattersley** replied that they were not fitting climate control, but would be introducing a new, more powerful aircon system. There are also improvements to the ventilation system to come.

Other points left with LTI by DaC drivers included improvement to poor fuel consumption with a current average of around 22.5 mpg, a lack of space for storage in the TX4 driver compartment and whether there was a possibility of radio circuit wiring being built into the TX4 to save Dial-a-Cab drivers having roof upholstery removed before fitting.

Also asked for were DAB radios (already in the Gold version) and a built-in SatNav...

*Our grateful thanks to Richard Daniels...*

I like Christmas. Well, it's a good earner with the four quid excess and the tips are usually better with people feeling a bit more cheerful. Of course, the wife don't like me working and says I should be at home with the family, but give her some of that paper with the Queen's picture on it and she's sweet as a nut – very partial to the red ones she is.

Anyway, it's Xmas Eve and I've had a blinding night with some great jobs from my **Dial-a-Cab** terminal – I give it a friendly tap, thank it very much and now I'm looking for a street job to take me home. It's Fulham Broadway and a smartly-dressed guy with a briefcase waves me down and asks for Harrowby Street, which is okay as it's in the right direction for me.

I don't know about you, but these road-works do my head in. They're all over the place - supposed to be putting in new water systems but taking forever about it. So, of course, we get stopped at one of these temporary traffic signals and the phasing is so bad you wonder whether they're frozen. Now over the last few months I've cultivated a little joke when this happens and I'd turn round to the passenger and say *"Fancy a game of cards while we're waiting?"* Some people smile, others just grunt because they're looking at the meter moving - and we're not moving at all. But no-one has ever said *"Alright, that's a great idea,"* which is what this guy in the back says. With that, he produces a pack of cards and tells me to pull over. Naturally, I'm a bit surprised but I can't tell him I was only joking and when he says I can keep the meter running, I park up and turn the engine off.

Between us on the back seat we're using the briefcase as a table and I notice that he's put on shades and is riffing the cards like a sodding magician. "*Make it poker, shall we*" he says? Well, I've played a bit of poker but only small stakes with my mates, but this guy looks very serious. "*No limit Texas Hold'em alright for you?*"

I nod weakly. "For money?"

He laughs. *"I don't know any other way."*

Fast forward 20 minutes and this guy has beaten me to the tune of £120. My cards aren't that bad, but he seems to read me like a book and my 'hold' cards might just as well have been printed on both sides. I think I've had enough and go to open the door when he puts a very firm hand on my arm. *"Don't pack it in – your luck's bound to change soon."* It's then I notice how big he is and sit down again.

He's right about my luck changing; it goes from bad to terrible, from terrible to diabolical! If I'd been dealt a joker, it wouldn't have surprised me. I finally get up.

"I've got to go, mate – you've cleaned me out."

As we're driving towards Marble Arch, I can see him in my rear-view mirror counting the £250 he's won from me. I feel like the biggest mug there is and am well short of any Christmas spirit.

"It's all here," he says on what must be his third count, "*I suppose the Scottish tenner will be okay?*" I don't answer him 'cos I have the hump bigger than Quasimodo.

★ Christmas  
Card Sharp ★

## A Story for the holiday season



I turn into Harrowby Street and he tells me to stop outside the Victoria Casino.

"I work here," he says. "Well, that is a surprise," I say with sarcasm.

However, the only saving grace in this disastrous event is that the meter is now showing nearly 70 quid. "*Tell you what,*" he says, "*I'll spin you for it – double or nothing.*" I didn't want to, I shouldn't have, but I hesitated.

"Come on, you can't keep losing," he urges and slaps a coin in the palm of his hand. I don't know what to call; I have absolutely no confidence except the confidence that I will get it wrong. "Huh, huh.....tails!" I say.

He lifts his hand to reveal heads.

"You nearly called heads as well," he laughs, "Your luck is well-poxed!"

It was supposed to be the season of goodwill to all men, but that wasn't how I felt towards him as he moved towards the casino entrance. I'm just waiting to turn back towards the Edgware Road when my card-sharp pokes his head through the nearside window.

"By the way," he says, "I nearly forgot, a Happy Xmas..."

## Roy Granville

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

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

## 10% discount on keys and locks for DaC drivers

## Transponders / chipped keys

**On site key cutting services including taxis**

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

**Tel: 01708 371115**

# compliance officers update

## Hello ladies & gents,

As you will see in this edition of **Call Sign**, a number of our members attended a **Complaints Hearing** on the 17th November and the results are fairly self explanatory. Despite many warnings in the magazine and on terminals, I would like to once again remind you of one or two important procedure rules that are still being violated. The committee deliberated long and hard after each of the latest complaints, but as I have said previously, rules are in place for all of us and there are really no excuses when the information is so regularly publicised.



## E14 – Canary Wharf

So can I please remind you again that E14 is a physical zone at all times (including Saturday and Sunday), the only exception is during daytime on Monday to Friday (6am to 9pm). The fifteen-minute rule does not apply when this zone is physical – I hope this clears up any misunderstanding.

## Outlying Zones

All outlying zones on either side of the M25 are physical and you must be in the

zone before booking in. Trips will first be dispatched to the primary zone and then to the relevant back up zones should a trip remain uncovered. After this, any trip that is still to be accepted will appear on your terminal as a trip you can *Bid* for. Once you have been offered the trip, a delay can be sent via the terminal and as long as the client accepts the delay there should not be a problem. For many of you this is going over old ground, but zone-hopping and booking directly into an outlying zone to gain an advantage

over fellow members is a rule violation and is certainly not in the spirit of the Society.

The system is continually monitored and with the sophisticated technology we have in place, it is hard for anyone who faces these types of complaints to challenge them with a worthwhile argument. I am sure none of you want to lose the service of the radio or have a blemished record, so please work within the guidelines.

## Citigroup Rolling Rank

I have been asked to mention that when this rank is in operation, all trips are genuine *As Directed*. The DaC Marshal will put the first person in the queue into the taxi at the head of the rank, so the trips may be long or short depending on the client's destination.

**It's been a tough year for everyone, so all that's left is to wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2010...**

**Allan Evans**  
DaC Compliance Officer

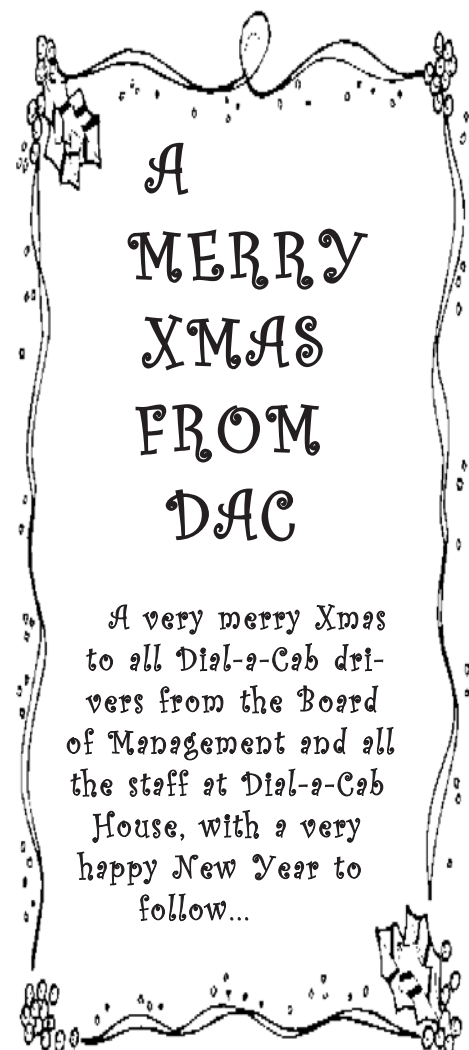


## COMPLAINTS RESULTS

A Complaints meeting was held on 17 November 2009. The results are below...



Name/call sign	Nature of Complaint	Sentence
Khalil Adams (O39)	Driver booked into WW00 when true location was M25 Nr J11 (Chertsey) Rule 11	2 weeks susp
Daniel Hayes (D39)	Driver booked into E14 when true location was Eltham Rd, Sutcliffe Pk Rule 11	4 weeks susp
Andy Gorman (B76)	Driver booked directly into S99 from SW3 when true position was Clapham and accepted a trip from Gatwick A/P Rule 11	3 weeks susp
Kevin Nicholas (V97)	Driver booked into E14 when true position was in West Ham Rule 11	2 weeks susp
John Davis (V41J)	Driver booked into E14 when true position was A13, east of the M25 Rule 11	2 weeks susp
Wayne Leedham (O27)	Driver accepted a number of A/D trips then requested Contact Centre to re-dispatch several of the trips Rules 3, 9 and 12	3 weeks susp
A El Gaoui (P79)	Driver booked into E14 when true position was A20, Fools Cray, Swanley Rule 11 (3 complaints)	2 weeks susp 2 weeks susp Expelled
Trevor Smith (V78)	Driver was booked in SE1W (W/loo) at 17:52, then booked into SW11 at 17:55 and then SW19 at 17:56 - a back-up zone to S99. Offered and accepted trip from Gatwick Airport Rule 11	2 weeks susp
Clifford Jenkins (Y22J)	Driver booked into E14 when true position was A12 Nr Leytonstone Underground Station Rule 11	2 weeks susp



I've now had my Vito for 4 months, so here is my feedback on it so far. Please remember that prior to the Vito, I had only owned the Metrocab series 3. I had my Metro for 10 years (11 years of holding my bill - not even a butterboy yet compared to **Call Sign's** John Edwardes!) So I can only compare the Vito to the Metrocab, although I have driven a TX1 and TX4 when my cab was in overhaul.

**Let me start with the negative points first:**

1) The interior lights in the passenger compartment only stay on for 30 seconds - not good for a nightman doing credit rides, as we all know that a lot of work is still done by Dial-a-Cab clients in the back of the cab. However, I have found a way of keeping them on, although it means me having to press the switch every few minutes. Annoying, but I can live with that and I have been assured Mercedes are looking into it.

2) The intercom is not brilliant, in fact it stops working if you are travelling at speed on the A40 or the M4 for example. Again, Mercedes are looking into it and speaking personally, I love my music so it suits me if the intercom is not too brill cos I'm not much of a talker!

3) I guess I am probably missing out on maybe one or two street hails a week as there is still a lack of awareness. I also get single pins asking whether I would take just 1 person in such a big vehicle and would it cost extra? But when it's explained that it is on a meter that is standard for all taxis, then they are happy to jump in. But against that, some customers have told me that they definitely let other cabs go by if they see a Vito coming up behind.

And yes, I've also been hailed from the other side of the road a few times and it has not been a problem swinging it around. At the end of the day, I am NOT earning any less.

4) Some female passengers have told me that due to the size of the vehicle and when they are on their own, they find the big space in the passenger compartment uncomfortable and unfriendly. Apparently they feel like they are too far from the driver!

5) I've had to buy a stepladder to be able to clean the roof of the cab as it is so big! I am only a small 5'4".

6) Erm.... that's it!

**Now the positive comments:**

1) The ride - wow, it is just bliss! It's comfortable, smooth, quiet and when needed, fast. The driver compartment is very comfortable, especially if you are tall or big. And as opposed to the Metrocab, you don't get cooked if the passenger puts the heating on! And as opposed to the TX you don't get cooked because the engine is getting too hot and you constantly get hot air seeping in.

2) It gives me 25 mpg. The service intervals are meant to be between 18k to 22k miles depending on how you drive. So in my case, that will hopefully be two services a year. And there are only 2 service levels on the menu (sorry, I can't give you the price of these two service levels as I took out the KPM TLC package - £300 and you get free servicing for two years or 100k miles). You also get the added peace of mind with the Mercedes 24 hour helpline and callout.

3) In the 4 months and 12000 miles of

Call Sign asked for a Vito owner to give an update on his taxi. DaC driver Divyesh Ruparelia (V59) answered the call...

# MY VITO AFTER FOUR MONTHS



Divyesh in his Metrocab before buying his Vito.  
Inset The Mercedes Vito



driving, I've had one problem. That was with the solenoid in the rear wheel steering, which took 30 mins to sort out without any down time. In fact, from speaking to drivers who have now owned

the cab for almost a year, the reliability is excellent, which obviously means you can go to work everyday with no down time. Having said that, please God if I am to break down now, then please make sure the **Call Sign** Ed is nowhere nearby with his camera! (*What are you insinuating!!! Ed*).

4) Apart from the four negatives above, the feed-

back from passengers has been universally excellent! I am constantly hearing wows when they get in. In fact some passengers can't believe the price isn't that different from the TX4 Gold and wonder then, why would a driver buy the TX4? I am sure many would have noticed that requests for the Vito on account rides is on the increase. I'm also sure there would be a lot more private work for a dayman, as a lot of passengers have asked if they can book one for their clients. So apart from losing work to PH, I think that we will win a lot of work back from PH!

5) The rear wheel steering is just superb, you get a very tight turning circle albeit a bit slower.

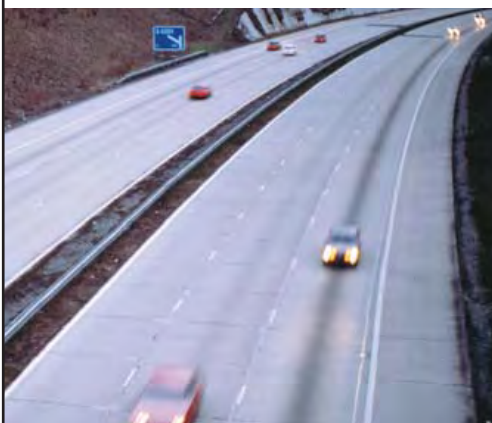
So there you are, that's my view on the Vito. One very satisfied customer...

**Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)**



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I have just been reading in *The Sunday Times* (15 Nov) that *First Direct* have just put their rates up, as have *M&S* and also *Egg*. So how long before the rest follow suit? Is it because Christmas is fast approaching or am I just being just a tad cynical? After all, would our banks do such a thing to us!

If you are interested in our loans and you would like to take advantage, either come down to the office or give us a ring and we'll do our best to accommodate you.

As of this time of writing (19 November), we are still in Stratford but hopefully when you read this article we will have moved to our new premises in Hackney Road, which will hopefully be better for us all. Look to your terminals for updates and new phone numbers. Unfortunately we are unable to carry our present phone number with us as the premises are inner London and the std code changes to 0207.

As you would have seen on your terminals, our high interest account has now closed for

# DaC Credit Union To Your Rescue

*...If you're clever that is!*



you are not sure what this means, it works by having a form of debit card that you want to put money onto. Say for instance you are on holiday and need some money to pay a hotel or restaurant bill, call us up and we will do a BACS transfer onto the card. The money will come from either your own savings / shares or from a loan. The cards are only around the £2 mark and we feel this is a good idea that saves you from walking about with more cash than you want to. There is not much more I can add, as we are in the early stages of looking into it.

I think that's all for now, other than to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and prosperous New Year from all of the Board of Directors and Loans and Supervisory Committees. And of course, as ever, be lucky, but above all be very careful out there...

**John Riley (K38)**  
**Vice-President DACCUCU**

## 'Joy' As Martin Freeborn Remarries



Martin  
and Joy  
after the  
Ceremony

There was 'Joy' all round when **Martin Freeborn (C67)** married Joy Curran at Barnet Registry Office in November, joined by a few relatives and close friends. The couple have known each other over many years, sharing happy times with their previous partners and, when each lost their respective former spouses, Joy and Martin's friendship grew stronger.

*Call Sign's* fashion editor described Joy's outfit as a pale mauve three-quarter length silk dress, coupled with a white stole. The 'V' neck and elbow length sleeves gave a stunning visu-

al appearance, while a posy of white flowers completed the ensemble. Martin was attired in a smart pin-striped business suit and matching striped necktie.

During the ceremony, there was a brief moment of panic immediately followed by resounding laughter from the guests, when elder brother and fellow Dial-a-Cab driver **Ken Freeborn, (W6)** in his role as *Best Man* fumbled in every pocket for the ring, eventually raising his hand high for all to see that he had not forgotten the important item after all!

The couple left for a honeymoon to Tunisia, with promises of returning to the UK with lots of bottled sunshine to share during the cold winter months.

*Call Sign* wishes the newlyweds all the best for the future...

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## Taxi Drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd

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Or call Alan Fleming on 07831 092123 or Dave on 07956 894701

**Gerry Mulcahy (W78) emailed Call Sign recently asking for info on the symptoms and early warning signs of timing chain wear on the Ford-engined TX2 taxi. So we sent our 'in-house' engineer to investigate further, with a view to sharing the results with a wider audience, namely, our readers...**

First port of call was **M&O**, who suggested speaking to **LTI** in Coventry. After several unsuccessful telephone calls, we left a contact number and nature of the enquiry, but at the time of writing, our phone has not rung...

So we spoke to an LTI dealership in Hertfordshire. They told us they fit the Ford timing chain and its' associated parts that comes as a kit. Their spokesperson said that signs of early timing chain wear could be indicated by a difficulty in starting and uneven running when you did get going. The engine would tend to stall shortly after starting and sound extremely clattery, perhaps like a bag of nails until it settled into its rhythm. He would not be drawn on the 'modified' timing chain that we had heard was available.

A little disappointed with the responses to our enquiry so far, we ventured south of the River, to taxi parts specialist **JVBright** in Southwark, run by **Tony and Jamie Smith**. Jamie is the more technically minded, but both guys are always really helpful and on this occasion they even went to the trouble of ordering in, especially for **Call Sign's** benefit, the two types of genuine Ford timing chains and related components available for the TX2. They also shared their considerable combined knowledge of the subject with our reporter.

They confirmed what we had previously been told about ie., the difficult starting and of the chatter and rattle when running. They explained that the timing chain is kept under tension by a hydraulic timing chain tensioner that is activated by oil pressure when the engine is running. A tiny ratchet within the tensioner body keeps the timing chain taught and when the teeth on that ratchet wear, the timing chain is allowed too much slack, hence the noises when running as the chain flaps about to and fro.

If the chain becomes too loose, there is the possibility that it will 'jump' a tooth on the sprocket wheel, causing further damage to the engine.

**There are two options to resolve the problem satisfactorily...**

First is to simply replace the original style of tensioner. Doing this involves stripping down the entire front end of the engine - no quick or easy task - and so it is prudent to also replace the timing chain at the same time, as it is almost certainly worn to some degree as well.

The second alternative is to fit the heavier, strengthened timing chain and its dedicated tensioner, together with all the related components which are engineered to fit the wider timing chain and are therefore not compatible with the original timing chain etc. **Call Sign** was told that it is this type of chain, tensioner and associated parts that is fitted to the Transit engine, where the working cycle of a commercial vehicle is nearer that of a taxi ie stop/start motoring. Inevitably, this option is more expensive given the additional engineering involved, but is like-

# Perfect Timing???

*Call Sign looks at the TX2 timing chain...*



ly to offer a longer service life.

**Another possible cause of engine related noise is a worn Pivot Bracket...**

This is the large spring-loaded arm situated outside the timing case cover on the front of the engine and behind the coolant radiator. It maintains tension on the long rubber belt that drives the alternator and other auxiliaries. But that's a story for another issue..!

*While we are grateful to the staff at JVBright for their help, we would welcome a response from LTI themselves.*

©Call Sign Magazine MM9

**Photos: These are all taken from new parts:**

1. The thinner standard timing chain (o/r) compared to the wider, modified Transit version.
2. The body of the timing chain tensioner. The 'nose' (extended section) butts up against the timing chain under hydraulic pressure from the engine, keeping the chain taught.
3. The 'band grenade' style wire pin locks the internal ratchet teeth (seen through the tiny aperture) as they wear over time.

## City Style Dry Cleaners

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It sits on the south side of the Thames adjacent to Tower Bridge, a huge greenhouse of glass and steel. It probably makes traditionalist Prince Charles wince every time he passes it, along with that other blancmange monstrosity, the Dome, now the O2 music venue where you need binoculars and a wad of money should you wish to visit.

The greenhouse is the GLA, headquarters of TfL, which has 163 officials on 6-figure salaries, the top earner on over £9,000 per week including bonus, backed up with over 2,500 staff earning over £50,000 per annum. How can you have these officials negotiating with tube workers, telling them their wage demands are excessive? It's laughable! Mayor Boris is embarrassed by it and said there will have to be pay cuts at TfL. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

Bob Crow has done a good job for his RMT union members in getting them a decent wage, albeit at the inconvenience of tube strikes for Londoners. As a taxi driver, we did earn a little more on these occasions but were stuck in gridlock for most of the time. With the latest news of bonuses in the City still high, there is no sign yet that fat cats are an endangered species. Will someone set up a [www.fatcattrust.com](http://www.fatcattrust.com) site? You will be helping thousands of fat cats by giving them life, love and loads of money – join now!

There are so many fat cats now living in glass houses that when their phones go off, they don't ring, they purr! David Cameron has said the gravy train has hit the buffers and MPs and their expenses will be more accountable. Like the soul classic, *I'm gonna tear your playhouse down room by room*, he said he would dismantle the red tape machine that is New Labour.

When it comes to transport, London is a unique contrasting city. You can get the Eurostar from St Pancras and be in Lille, France, in 1 hour 20 minutes. Or you can get a number 73 bendy bus from St Pancras and be in Victoria in yes, you've guessed it, 1 hour 20 minutes! As an irate Australian tourist once told me: "Take me to London Zoo, I don't care how much it costs, life's too short!"

# London According to Dave...

## or fat cats in glass houses!



Inside part of the O2 - a wad of money and binoculars needed!

You can go to Victoria Station, considered a smart place already, which will soon have another facelift with many millions spent on it

courtesy of TfL, courtesy of the banks, courtesy of the taxpayer. Or you can turn your clock back 20 years and visit Clapham Junction Station, a few minutes down the road and have a choice of over 20 platforms - the biggest in the UK - yet no disabled access and just one toilet so filthy I would not let my King Charles cavalier use it. He much prefers Eaton Square anyway.

If French tourists disembarked at Clapham by mistake on their way to the Olympics, they would all be shouting wee wee! If that's not all gobbledeygook, then my name's Red Ken.

Talking of which, our former chameleon mayor could be making a comeback - don't underestimate him - as leader of New Labour. He is no doubt surveying the scene from aloft, hovering like a humming bird ready to pounce and like Darwin's theory of mutation, would probably be unrecognisable next time round.

As for new technology, I've nothing against it. Bring on the driverless trains as they have in France and maybe there would be driverless taxis going down Oxford Street. I really don't mind, I just don't want to be around when it happens.

*Beam me up Scotty...*

**David Heath (ex-W27)**

## Grandson for David Lessman

Sandra and **David Lessman (D19)** sounded thrilled as they told **Call Sign** that the Lessman name had added a new name to their list of grandchildren, with the eventual - but safe - arrival of a healthy son to Ruth and Darren.

**Reuben Sol** entered this world at 12.50am on November 1st weighing 7lb 8 oz. Both mother and baby were doing well. And according to David, the grandparents aren't doing too badly either! Reuben makes grandchild number four for the Lessmans, following on from Ben, Joshua and Sadie.

David is the Hon Chairman of the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children...



David and Reuben Sol

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# Hello World... I'm Ellie!



Hello, I'm Ellie Carruthers!

Hello everyone in the world and especially at Dial-a-Cab. I'm **Ellie** and I was born on 1st November 2009 at St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington to my parents, DaC Team leader **Jodie Carruthers** and DaC dispatcher **Tony Luna** – a real **Dial-a-Cab** baby because my grandmother is DaC's former payroll officer, **Lorraine Carruthers**!

I weighed in at 6lbs 7oz. after an eight hour journey to arrive - I was told not to mention labour cos this is a non-political mag!

My parents and family are very proud of me, showering me with cuddles and kisses. My Mum is delighted that I 'popped out' at the very sensible time of 10.38 am so it looks like I've got off to a good start already!

And now, if you'll excuse me, I need my beauty sleep...

## It's Not Just Xmas Here!

It's early December, but in **Call Sign's** year this is Christmas! So when the day comes and you are resting in your favourite armchair in a vain attempt to digest over-ample amounts of turkey and Christmas pudding, or alternatively as a **Dial-a-Cab** driver frantically trying to kill the throbbing of a red-raw index finger caused by stabbing your terminal's accept button all morning, do you ever give a thought to your fellow cabbies and their families around the world and wonder what they're doing? **Call Sign** took a look at how they spend their Xmas - even on the Moon!

**SWEDEN:** The celebrations start on December 13th (St Lucia's day), when the youngest daughter wears a long white dress with a wreath on her head and seven lit candles in it. She serves the family in bed with coffee and ginger snaps. On Christmas Day, taxi drivers make sure all their tools are indoors in case they get bewitched – as you do!

**GREENLAND:** Here they eat cakes and coffee and give presents of walrus tusks and sealskin mitts. It is the one night of the year when men look after the women. Equality hasn't quite arrived yet. And believe it or not, all their Christmas trees have to be specially imported!

**FINLAND:** Cold ham is the main food with salted meat, pickled herrings, salad of chopped carrots and turnips while drinking cups of Glogg – no wonder the cabbies look cheesed off!

**INDIA:** In small villages, Christian Indians send trays of fruit, nuts, sweets and flowers to friends. In southern India, they fill little clay lamps with oil, add a piece of twisted cotton as the wick and then light them. They are then put along walls outside their house so that all will know that it is Christmas.

**USA:** They have many varied customs here. In Alaska, young children run around with lanterns or large stars on poles. In New Mexico, Navajo Indians have what they call *heap big feed*. This consists of meat, beans, potatoes and onions that are boiled in iron pots over huge campfires. They also put lighted candles in paper bags filled with sand. Polish-Americans spread hay on floors or under tablecloths to remember the stable where the birth took place. The cabbies just drive around in snow shouting merry Christmas - we've seen the movies too!

**SICILY:** Here they have feasts from sunset on December 23rd to the 24th. After prayers and songs, they enjoy a meal that may contain eels, larks, pasta, sweet bread and torrone (nougat). Boys come down from the mountains dressed as shepherds playing bagpipes!

**RUSSIA:** Official policy in to replace Father Christmas with a non-religious Grandfather Frost. The commercialisation of Xmas has not yet reached Russia officially, but many of the customs persist. In the Ukraine, they have a 39-day fast followed by a twelve-course supper when the first star is seen. Cabbies don't fit into their cabs by the time Xmas arrives!



Patrick Blower's 1999 cartoon from the Evening Standard

**UK:** We know what everyone does in the UK at Christmas time; they drive round and round the West End looking at Christmas decorations and causing huge traffic snarl-ups! Otherwise they attempt to stagger into taxis. Well it is Christmas!

**So wherever you are – even on the moon - a very merry Christmas to you all...**



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

# DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK



This month's Flashback goes back exactly 10 years - to the December 1999 issue - and the onset of a new millennium. Call Sign had asked DaC's Eddie Lambert (V27) to take a peep into the future; to December 2009 ie NOW!

He wrote three versions; one in which the PCO bowed to laissez faire pressures and took the easy options (Black Future); an optimistic one in which the PCO took bold radical and courageous decisions (White Future) and the nightmare scenario of the 'O' licence, which could make even the Black Future picture seem bright.

Flashback will reprint all three articles, beginning this month with the Black and the White Futures.



## From Call Sign, December 1999 THE BLACK FUTURE of December 2009

The beginning of the end started with the loss of over 300 non-wheelchair accessible cabs and most of their drivers. The world-wide recession, coupled with recent changes in legislation regarding the legitimisation of minicabs and the continued scandalous lack of efficient enforcement, meant that most of these drivers decided they were not prepared to invest £10,000 - £30,000 on another cab and left the trade, some to actually become minicab drivers.

This was followed by another body-blow to the trade; the decision to let any minicab driver who could show three years accounts, have a Private Hire badge without even taking the new simplified PH Knowledge. This simplified Knowledge also meant that very few from outside the families of Hackney drivers applied for the traditional Hackney Knowledge. This accounted for a short-fall of about 500 drivers every year.

What could have been the knockout blow to the trade occurred in December 2007. As the number of cab drivers fell, those on the radio circuits found that they could make a very good living on the radio only and so avoid any of the perceived risks associated with street work. Virtually all new badge holders joined radio circuits as soon as they possibly could and still the radio circuits

struggled to cope. A major West London circuit, under extreme pressure from its shareholders, began taking on Private Hire drivers but this only led to most of its Hackney drivers immediately leaving for the other two circuits.

Then disaster; the son of a cabinet Minister was raped after his pushbike developed a puncture in Hyde Park one evening. He had been unable to flag down a taxi as they were all doing radio work. Because the trade had always strenuously defended its sole right to ply for hire, the government decided that from then on, that was all they would be able to do and ordered the removal of all two way radios and data despatch equipment from licensed taxis.

This had two effects. The compensation pay-outs to the two mutual societies meant that many drivers promptly retired or left the trade and many of the rest, having worked only radio for years, swallowed their pride and bought limos with their compensation money and joined the Private Hire trade. The West London shareholders were highly delighted at the return on the very small investment that they had made in the late 90s and promptly left the London scene.

Now as we face the future and the year 2010 - seriously depleted in numbers - there is talk in Parliament of letting the Private Hire drivers ply for hire at peak hours.

That is the **Black Future**. Next month, the **White Future**...

Eddie Lambert (V27)

## BEDFONT GREEN PICKING UP POINTS

### ...but still no Lee!

Tuesday 17 November saw **Bedfont Green** send west country team **Bridgwater Town** to only their second home league defeat and with BG playing over half the game with just ten men! It was just three minutes into the game when the Bridgwater keeper fluffed a clearance, the ball ending up with the Green's **James Ward**, who hit it into the net for forty yards.

Then after 41 minutes, Bedfont Green's **Billy Sentance** got his marching orders from referee Richard Corp for an over the top challenge.

For most of the second half, Bridgwater piled forward but BG defended stoutly until the whistle blew for the end of the match.

In the meantime, **Dial-a-Cab** driver and BG goalkeeper **Lee Pearce (J71)** is still wallowing in the

reserves, after having been previously out on loan at **Egham**. But while the first team were holding onto that 1-0 victory, Lee was in a makeshift reserve team that got walloped 9-0 at home! And just to rub it in,

when Lee got back to his cab after the game, it had been broken into with around £150 taken.

"Lousy? That's an understatement," Lee told **Call Sign** after the game. "I feel sick!"



Saved this one, but Lee let in nine goals before also finding his cab had been broken into...

## SIZZLES

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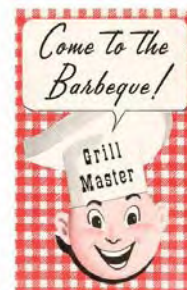
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*Every issue of Call Sign takes a look back at ODRTS history through the pages of the magazines of the time with a flashback*

# DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK



## From Call Sign December 1999... This is The White Future of December 2009

In 1999, the PCO announced that in view of the recent change in legislation, all prospective drivers - whether Hackney or Private Hire - would have to first obtain a suburban Yellow Badge. Once a driver had reached that standard (hopefully within a year) they could then decide to drive either a Taxi or a plated Private Hire vehicle.

The individual who liked to choose when they worked and what to wear would choose a Taxi. Another driver who felt that they needed a bit of discipline within their work life would choose to go PH. Some even did both ie PH work during the week and Taxi work at weekends. The Private Hire driver was then able to work anywhere in the Met, whereas the Yellow badge taxi driver was restricted to his badge borough. After two years, they could then do a Green Badge - ie all London. This allowed PH drivers to work central London but did not give them the status of a Green Badge Hackney driver.

Following on from the creation of a Greater London Authority headed by an elected Mayor and the Metropolitan Police area being reduced to London Boroughs only, the new Yellow badges were borough based.

In the face of fierce condemnation from many, particularly the Minicab proprietors, the PCO stood by their position. They had only one overriding responsibility and that was the "safety of the travelling public". The Knowledge system had worked so well in the past that it had only needed 6 enforcement officers (obviously just the tip of the iceberg as far as the PCO were concerned) on the streets to control 22,000 drivers. Therefore, it would have been silly to do anything that changed this greatly. 95% of minicab journeys started and finish in the suburbs, so why should the public in these areas not have the protection that is taken for granted in central London?

### Local taxi centres

This move led to groups of local taxi drivers, often led by an older green badge driver or two, to form local High Street based Taxi centres (financed by Small Business Grants, European Community Grants and cheap loans from the London Authority together help with radio equipment from the major circuits). These Centres were a great success, as many small minicab operators in those areas went out of business when most of their former drivers could not pass the police record checks.

To aid border enforcement, all taxis were fitted with an AVL sender and drivers had a new licence issued in the form of a swipe card. When they wanted to start work, they had to swipe the card to empower the meter and register to the PCO

that they were working. This stopped drivers from working outside their areas as all the suburban Taxi circuits had modems with a computer link that automatically informed the PCO of jobs and the vehicles that were covering them. Many non-radio drivers had initially been against this, but were persuaded by the increased security that it gave them.

All Private Hire vehicles were also fitted with an AVL system, which was interfaced with a direct computer link from all the PH offices and any vehicle that appeared to be doing a job that did not correspond with the computer screen, was liable to be picked up in the PCO's 24 hour Operations Centre and stopped by the police. This did not happen often as two stops and subsequent convictions meant 12 penalty points for driving without insurance and an automatic ban. To aid these convictions, a new offence was created which enabled passengers who had been touted to be charged with "aiding and abetting" and face a fine plus 3 penalty points. This meant that most passengers were more than willing to give evidence to the police - provided that they were not charged.

### 2004

In 2004, the Carriage Office recognising that satellite navigation systems were now fitted as standard in most vehicles, eased up a little on the Knowledge as such and following on from the Worshipful Company Of Hackney Carriage Drivers tour badge classes (started six years ago in 1998), included 20 tourist runs with commentaries within the Knowledge.

All Private Hire vehicles had to be registered at DVLC (Swansea) as PH vehicles. This measure greatly displeased those PH fleets that provided the driver with the vehicle, as it affected the price that they obtained on resale. Many companies had previously been able to use their purchasing muscle to obtain such large discounts, that after six months work they then sold the vehicle for almost as much as they had paid for it new. But no more...

After two years of taking the legislation seriously, the police found that the problems of the past with touting had virtually vanished and when it did happen, the badge PH driver was as eager as anyone to get it stopped.

The radio circuits formed informal alliances with the High Street operations and passed on jobs which would have taken their drivers too far out of their boroughs and this encouraged central drivers to cover more jobs to the outer boroughs, as there were now far more chances of a job back.

Another spin-off was that the radio circuits, eager to ensure new recruits, formed despatch divisions which used 'Knowledge' trainees for the most part, although some professional riders also joined as the circuits paid better money. This added little cost to their operation but boosted profits considerably.

### Taxi share ranks

Following the success of the peak-time taxi share scheme at Paddington in late 1998 and 1999, the new London Authority ordered the PCO to set up three taxi share ranks in the

West End for Friday and Saturday nights from 23.00 hrs to 02.00 hrs. These were situated at Centrepont, Charing Cross station and Marble Arch. The marshals were funded by participating drivers contributing £1 a trip and the surplus was used to help finance enforcement. This measure also alleviated the night drivers biggest bone of contention, that it was not financially rewarding enough to work late nights as now they could get at least meter and a half for matched jobs.

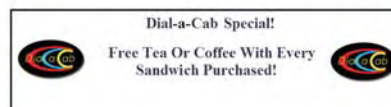
The London Authority also gave the PCO full control over taxi ranks and allowed them to collect all fines levied on anyone parking illegally on a taxi rank. A number of Taxis were also equipped with video cameras mounted behind the front grill and they were used to help keep the bus lanes clear as they could transmit live pictures to the PCO operations centre when vehicles were either blocking lanes or using them. The transgressors would then receive a summons or fixed penalty ticket through the post.

As we entered 2010, a long-term bone of contention within the mutual circuits looked like being solved. One of the societies has announced that it was considering making all drivers that have been members for more than two years, Partners - just the way big law firms and accountants do. This would mean that the Partners would receive a bonus from their society's annual surplus (if there was any) but would still mean that all Partners had equal rights and voting powers. It also gave considerable tax benefits, if the society needs to borrow money from the banks for any reason.

**This was the White Future. Next month, possible catastrophe - O for Orange...**

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# Mailshot

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## DaC racing team?

Well done Jensen Button for winning the FIA World Championship this year, following on from Lewis Hamilton. But I think we could make it three UK winners by entering a DaC team for next year.

I was travelling down Wellington Road at midnight, empty with hire light on, when in my rear view mirror a cab was approaching. As we reached St Johns Wood roundabout, he took the racing line and went past me into Park Road. I think he may have been on softer compound tyres and had a lighter fuel load. In the 'Baker St straight' he then pulled over for a pit stop - but filled up with passengers instead of fuel.

Surprisingly this was a fellow DaC driver. Surely we are on some sort of team orders? Lets play fair.

**James Whiting (E83)**

**Funny you should mention that subject, James, a similar incident happened to me recently - except that I was the racing driver! But before anyone condemns me, let me say what happened. I was crossing Vauxhall Bridge Road coming back into town and following a non-radio cab with a driver I had briefly recognised as being ex DaC. I followed him down the road, intending to bear left along Lupas Street when a message came on screen saying there was work at the Vic. Plan changed and I just carried on behind the other cab. He, in turn, was following an elderly man in an old jalopy who was "cruising" along at around 23mph. So I pulled out and flashed the other cab that he too could pull out in front of me and overtake. But he obviously didn't want to. I waited and waited until eventually I got fed up in case the queue diminished before we got there. He wouldn't have known about that. I touched my TX4 throttle à la Jensen Button and left him to follow his friend. We still hadn't reached Warwick Way. When I got to the Vic, I could see that the message had been correct with not an empty cab in sight. All I had to do was wait (and wait and wait) for the lights to turn green so I could enter the station and receive the acclaim that the waiting passengers would no doubt offer me! But the stalled car in front of me meant that it was to be two changes and of course the ex driver caught me up as I finally went in. Had there been no queue, I'd have waved him round, but it was huge so I pulled up, loaded the passengers and moved off. But not before my "friend" had pulled alongside and called out in a sarcastic tone: "Hello Al, lucky it's busy isn't it?" I mentioned briefly about trying to get him to overtake the car but it was a waste of time in the 4 seconds I had. Life in the fast lane**

**- or should that be the racing lane. Other than that, I agree with you James. I would never have picked up a job had someone put their hands out before I got to the Vic, but it does beg a question: How slow does the cab in front have to go before you can decide to pass him and then how far in front before you can pick up a job? ...Ed**

## Thank you Tom

I don't know what hold Tom Whitbread has over those theatres to get them to give us freebie tickets, but whatever it is, please keep it up! The most recent one in Tom's repertoire was **Change** - the one-man show starring Arturo Brachetti that Tom called amazing in the November **Call Sign**. It really was that good and if it's still on, it is even worth paying to see!

Thanks again to Tom...

**John Davis (V41)**

## An inconsiderate ranker?

Tue 20th October was a milestone for me. It was the day my 37 year previously undisturbed record was disturbed. It was the day I breached sub sections 19 and 21 of the *1853 Hackney Carriage Act*. It was the day PCO Compliance Officer No. 53, Mr S Wyborn, recorded on my file the offence of leaving my vehicle unattended for 6 minutes on Rank No. 5323, thus preventing fellow drivers from using this central location. Furthermore, 'any further breach could result in a penalty of up to £1,000 under level 3 of the Act'.

No, I am not making this up! So to those who regularly work the Half Moon Street Rank, I extend my sincere apologies for any inconvenience caused. PCO Vehicle Compliance Officer, Mr S Wyborn's appraisal is fully justified; I am indeed an inconsiderate ranker!

I dispatch this letter from the TWA Terminal Rank Russell Road, Olympia, loading a bale of hay with one hand while peeing up against the back wheel with the other, in accordance with the Act. **Philip Benjamin (K20)**

**Hi Philip, sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but while carrying out your ablutions on the Trans World Airlines rank, you needed to first have found a uniformed officer of the law to cover your modesty with his cape! ...Ed**

## Yellow box victory

Re the story in the November **Call Sign** in which **Howard Flavin (A18)** successfully challenged a Penalty Charge Notice at the yellow box junction of the Eastway and Osborn Road, just by the Olympic Park; I too received a PCN for straying into that box and also wrote to Hackney Council saying that the size of the box was illegal as it overlapped the corner of the road. They cancelled it and returned my £60. My advice to ant Dial-a-Cab driver who received a PCN

there - even if you have already paid it - is to write to Hackney Council and demand the return of your money.

**Bernie Silver (G08)**

**Well done Bernie. The only certainty is that Hackney won't voluntarily pay back any PCNs that have already been paid unless you ask them! ...Ed**

## Brian for Chancellor?

I have just been reading the Chairman's report on the last financial year (**Nov Call Sign**). This seems to be a classic case of *fixing the roof while the sun shone* - something that our Government failed to do. Dial-a-Cab having £6million in reserve despite a 32% drop off in work, surely puts them in great shape once things pick up. So well done! It's a pity we can't have Brian Rice for Chancellor! Oh yes, and Tom Whitbread as Home Secretary. They would get my vote anyway.

**Terry Farmer (ex-T55J)**

**Hmmm... saving money while getting free theatre tickets? Can't be bad! ...Ed**

## Gisajob?

To anyone who is out there; on Monday I will be signed on for about 10 hours, booking into the relevant postcodes all night long. If at any point you have an uncovered job close to me, feel free to send it down because soon I will be owing Dial-a-Cab money at the end of the month! Remember the good old days when we used to get told off for not doing 40 rides? Aaahhhh, happy days! I recently saw a Board member in a well known W2 watering hole and asked him his opinion about the lack of activity on our terminals. "What do you want me to do," was his reply. I wish he was joking...

**Nick Steventon (J65)**

## Gotajob

At last! After a few unpleasant months, the number of account trips I'm accepting through the system has shot up. In addition, the waiting time on EC5 - even if you put on at number 90 - is down to 20 minutes or so, while the quality has gone noticeably gone up with £40 / £50 rides returning. If things carry on at this rate, the word recession will soon be resigned to the bin for another ten years!

**Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)**

**Sorry Nick, I have to agree with Divyesh. While some days will always be harder than others (Monday does come to mind), generally speaking, the number of account trips I'm doing now is around double that of three months ago ...Ed**

## Vito at Xmas!

*Dearest darling Alan*

I have gone off with a German called Vito.



# Mailshot

## Mailshot continued from page 34

But look on the bright side – at least you won't have to buy me a Christmas present! Why don't you go to Coventry for Xmas, although I'm not sure if they will be having a barbeque this year? Must dash as my smooth Vito awaits!

Lots of love and kind regards...

**Gary Cox (O46)**

**Are you trying to tell me something...! Ed**

## Request to the Call Centre...

A small request for the evening crew in the DaC Call Centre. On any evening from Tuesday onwards, it's VVVHT on the Embankment WB, A4 and M4 WB, Euston underpass EB and The Highway EB. None of it is news! Nor is the closure of Rotherhithe Tunnel on Monday nights. So what is the point of messages to that effect? We get messages about road closures that have been in effect for 3 weeks from drivers who have just got back from a four week holiday! We know! Messages about road closures are important, but the regular stuff I am sure we can do without. Just a thought...

**Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)**

**You sound like a bit of a troublemaker to me! ...Ed**

## Protecting hooray henrys?

Although not a cabbie myself, my family has a history going back to horse-drawn hansom cabs in the late 1800s / early 1900s. My great-grandfather, Joseph Elisha, and his brothers / partners were also involved in horse-selling as well as driving a cab around London.

I'm writing to express my great concern that taxi drivers are being targeted by a *City of London* inspired marketing plan to take up 'Gentleman's Sports' like shooting, game-fishing, horse-riding, fox hunting etc. This is because the City of London wants to swell the ranks of the *Countryside Alliance* to protect their estates and customs.

Why should taxi drivers tolerate being put in harm's way like this? The hundreds of thousands of anti-hunt and anti-city protestors and activists have no grudge against taxis, so why should the City be allowed to create one?

Please make sure DaC members are not put in this position and if they want to pursue these sports, they do so in their own separate organisations and don't get roped into protecting hooray henrys!

**David Elisha**

**Romford, Essex**

**Interesting letter David. I haven't heard anything suggesting that we are being targeted to take up the sports you mention, but believe me when I say that few - if any - DaC members like being told what to do! We are independently minded if nothing else! ...Ed**

## Rear window advertising

Now that the ban on rear window advertising is to be lifted, how about a competition for the best slogan? Perhaps something like: *Dial-a-Cab: The only way to go or Dial-a-Cab, often copied but never equalled.*

**David Kupler (Y74)**

**Brian Rice replies: Thanks for your suggestion Dave - always nice to get some positive ideas. However, in this particular instance we are in the process of producing a rear window advert, subject to PCO approval. It will bear our name, telephone number and website address. I believe Allen Togwell might have a 'mock up' somewhere in this issue.**

## Spooky?

*Dear Alan*

You probably don't remember me. I knew you from Davenant Foundation Grammar school, Whitechapel in the late 1950s. I now live in Tucson, Arizona with my wife and eight dogs. Yes, it is pretty crowded here and I may have to let the wife go!

The reason I'm writing is in connection with a UK television program I watch regularly over here. It's called *Spooks* and is about the British secret service. I read an article recently in *Call Sign Online* (I never miss it as I drive a cab over here and we have nothing like it) re your MI5 and MI6 organisations. My question is that I take an interest in anything to do with real life spying and have been to MI5 headquarters in London – although just the outside – during my several trips back home. I've been told that the program is supposedly based on fact, even though the storylines obviously aren't. So where is the building they show as the front entrance? It certainly isn't the building I've stood outside while imagining myself wearing a Tux, a beautiful woman on each arm and a small halo above my head! The *Spooks* building looks so real, I can't believe they built it just for the program. Hope you are keeping well...

**Terry 'Tiger' Lawson**

**Tucson, Arizona**

**You're right Terry, I don't remember you! Nice to hear from you anyway. As for the MI5 building in Spooks, the next time you are over here, take yourself along to the Masons Hall on the corner of Gt Queen St and Wild St and you'll see the lovely building used in Spooks. Come on, as a possible spy, you surely didn't think MI5 would allow Spook's producers to show the real gaff with real spies possibly poking their heads round the door! And the next time you come over, phone up Dial-a-Cab and they'll put you in touch with me. I'll give you a free ride to Masons Hall. But don't forget the Tux! ...Ed**

## Winter Wonderland

Just wanted to say thanks for the tickets/wristbands we won in *Call Sign* for



the opening night of Winter Wonderland at Hyde Park. The kids thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and I'm sure that there will be lots of work for us whilst it's on for the 6 weeks.

**Ian McCarthy (R064)**

A brilliant night at Winter Wonderland for me and the kids and a great competition prize to win!

**Alex Constantinou (N05)**

Just to say how much my family and I enjoyed Winter Wonderland on Thursday night. It was a nice surprise to receive your call saying that I had won the tickets, especially as I forgot to tell my wife I'd entered the competition, and she was planning a family trip over the Christmas holidays! Once again thank you...

**Tim Pearce (S38)**

**Call Sign gave away 100 tickets for the launch night in the last issue. We had 524 entries asking for over 2000 tickets between them! ...Ed**



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