

February 2009



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Inside this issue...

DaC driver gets PCN for
stopping on Armistice Day!

Strange timings on the
Charterhouse St taxi rank...

Keith Cain: When you should
press your arrival button...

DaC driver's hellish trip to
Ipswich...

How to park in Marylebone?
Ask Westminster – no one else
understands!

Bernie Madoff scam catches
DaC client for £millions!

Ever been hit by a UFO? What
you can do if you are...!

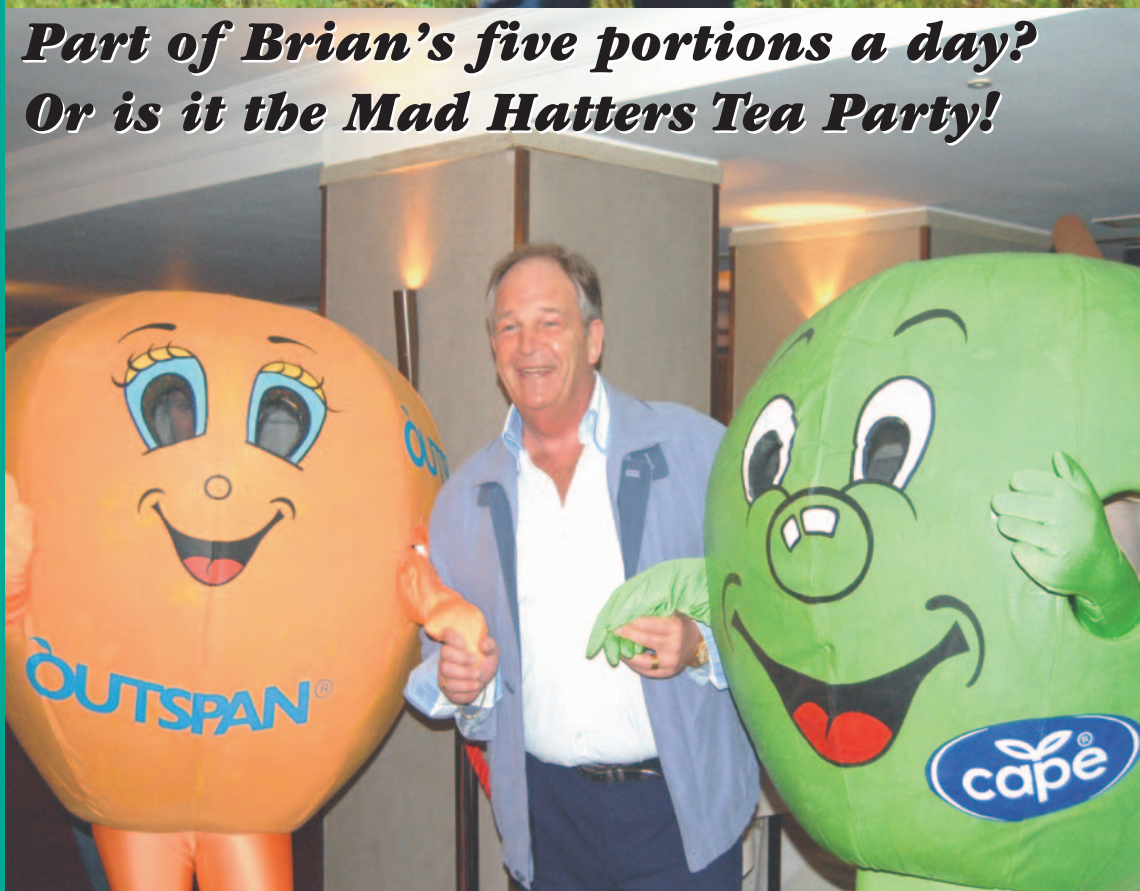
DaC driver: "Insurance hike is
a liberty..."



***DaC in Kenya helping to
save the environment***



***Part of Brian's five portions a day?
Or is it the Mad Hatters Tea Party!***





NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Last visited by *Call Sign* 10 years ago, an update of large department store opening times. If Sunday hours show open times of 6 hours, then the first half hour will be for browsing only. The general opening hours of Westfield are different from M&S and Debenhams; I guess they have separate entrances, as I have yet to have the privilege of being dragged there by my wife...

Debenhams

Oxford St

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	09:30	20:00
Tue	09:30	20:00
Wed	10:00	21:00
Thu	09:30	21:00
Fri	09:30	21:00
Sat	09:30	20:00

Debenhams

Westfield

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	09:00	22:00
Tue	09:00	22:00
Wed	09:00	22:00
Thu	09:00	22:00
Fri	09:00	22:00
Sat	09:00	20:00

Habitat

Kings Rd

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	18:30
Tue	10:00	18:30
Wed	10:00	20:00
Thu	10:00	18:30
Fri	10:00	18:30
Sat	09:30	18:30

Habitat

121 Regent St

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	19:00
Tue	10:00	19:00
Wed	10:00	19:00
Thu	10:00	20:00
Fri	10:00	19:00
Sat	10:00	19:00

Habitat

Tott. Ct Rd

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	18:30
Tue	10:00	18:30
Wed	10:00	18:30
Thu	10:00	20:00
Fri	10:00	18:30
Sat	09:30	18:30

Harvey Nicks

Knightsbridge

Sun	11:30	18:00
Mon	10:00	20:00
Tue	10:00	20:00
Wed	10:00	20:00
Thu	10:00	21:00
Fri	10:00	21:00
Sat	10:00	21:00

Harrods

Knightsbridge

Sun	11:30	18:00
Mon	10:00	20:00
Tue	10:00	20:00
Wed	10:00	20:00
Thu	10:00	20:00
Fri	10:00	20:00
Sat	10:00	20:00

Hamleys

Regent St.

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	20:00
Tue	10:00	20:00
Wed	10:00	20:00
Thu	10:00	20:00
Fri	10:00	20:00
Sat	09:00	20:00

Heals

Kings Rd

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	18:00
Tue	10:00	18:00
Wed	10:00	19:00
Thu	10:00	19:00
Fri	10:00	18:00
Sat	09:30	18:30

Heals

Tott. Ct Rd

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	18:00
Tue	10:00	18:00
Wed	10:00	18:00
Thu	10:00	20:00
Fri	10:00	18:30
Sat	09:30	18:30

Peter Jones

Sloane Sq

Sun	11:00	17:00
Mon	09:30	19:00
Tue	09:30	19:00
Wed	09:30	20:00
Thu	09:30	19:00
Fri	09:30	19:00
Sat	09:30	19:00

John Lewis

Oxford St.

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	09:30	20:00
Tue	09:30	20:00
Wed	09:30	20:00
Thu	09:30	21:00
Fri	09:30	20:00
Sat	09:30	19:00

M&S

Kings Rd

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	08:30	21:00
Tue	08:30	21:00
Wed	08:30	21:00
Thu	08:30	21:00
Fri	08:30	21:00
Sat	08:30	21:00

M&S Pantheon

173 Oxford St

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	09:00	20:00
Tue	09:00	20:00
Wed	09:00	20:00
Thu	09:00	21:00
Fri	09:00	20:00
Sat	09:00	20:00

M&S

Ken. High St.

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	09:00	20:00
Tue	09:00	20:00
Wed	09:00	20:00
Thu	09:00	20:00
Fri	09:00	20:00
Sat	09:00	20:00

M&S

Marble Arch

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	09:00	21:00
Tue	09:00	21:00
Wed	09:00	21:00
Thu	09:00	21:00
Fri	09:00	21:00
Sat	08:00	20:00

M&S

Edgware Rd

Sun	11:00	17:00
Mon	08:00	21:00
Tue	08:00	21:00
Wed	08:00	21:00
Thu	08:00	21:00
Fri	08:00	21:00
Sat	08:30	19:00

M&S

Westfield

Sun	11:30	18:00
Mon	09:00	22:00
Tue	09:00	22:00
Wed	09:00	22:00
Thu	09:00	22:00
Fri	09:00	22:00
Sat	09:00	20:00

Selfridges

Oxford St.

Sun	11:30	18:00
Mon	09:30	20:00
Tue	09:30	20:00
Wed	09:30	18:00
Thu	12:30	20:00
Fri	09:30	20:00
Sat	09:30	20:00

Westfield

General hours

Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	21:00
Tue	10:00	21:00
Wed	10:00	21:00
Thu	10:00	22:00
Fri	10:00	22:00
Sat	09:00	21:00

For the latest 'What's On' guide visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/extras...

You can also visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk for all previous issues back to 1997. To register for the UID (useful information document), which is packed with information you will need on a daily basis, simply click on the UID button on the web page or to register direct, email alan@nashsnumbers.co.uk with the subject of the email as 'UID' with the body of the message containing your name, callsign, badge number, mobile (only used if I have problems with your email address) and your email address...

from the editor's desk

Bus lanes and spilling the beans!

Call Sign came in for some criticism last month following an article headed "*the mystery of the taxi bus lanes*."

The article wrote of the mystery surrounding the sudden and totally unexpected opening to licensed taxis of two bus lanes that we had always been banned from – Bishopsgate north bound and the southernmost part of the Islington (Angel) bus lane. Messages from drivers were flying across DaC terminals telling other drivers they were ok to use both lanes.

After making a few phone calls – to TfL, the PCO and the LTDA – I came to the conclusion that the signs had been altered in error, with my mind going back several years to the ludicrous goings-on at Hammersmith Bridge Road where the southbound bus lane was divided into four sections. According to the signs, we were allowed to use the first and third sections! That was obviously incorrect (it should have been the first three sections, but the painters had missed out the second sign). Even after **Call Sign** complained that we could not be expected to pull in and out of the lanes, nothing was done for several months. I suspected that similar errors had taken place with Bishopsgate and the Angel.

The problem was that had I not said anything, my previous dealings with *Transport for London* tells me that PCNs would still have been issued and although they would certainly have been quashed on appeal, it would have been a hassle. The PCO confirmed to me that the PCNs would probably have been issued, although the grounds for appeal were such that the tickets would have been cancelled.

The result of **Call Sign** informing TfL / PCO was that cabs using the two bus lanes weren't sent PCNs with the hassle that involves. Some may say that had I kept quiet, they would have been happy to appeal any tickets in return for an extra few weeks of lane usage. However, once the first appeals went through, the errors would have been spotted and the lanes would have reverted to their previous usage.

Perhaps more pertinent was the fact that so far as I could see from spending 20 or so minutes on the Duncan Street taxi rank just watching taxis using the last piece of the Angel bus lane before the 7pm free-for-all, was that we made no difference whatsoever. It is so wide that buses loading or unloading at their stops were not inconvenienced at all by our presence. I can understand Bishopsgate because of its narrowness and the number of bus stops along there, but the Angel should become 24 hours because mistake or not, it has now been tested and our use of it during the daytime has been shown to make no difference.

It would also help cut down traffic queues along Islington High Street / Upper Street with taxis being taken out of the equation at the Liverpool Road main lights junction. Over to you TfL / PCO...

Credit Union "bank"

There is a fascinating article in this issue from **John Riley (K38)**, Vice-Prez of the DaC Credit Union. I have often said that I've been a mem-



ber since day one and can't understand why every driver and their families are not queuing up to join. John has written of a new savings plan, which sounds very interesting in these days of ultra-low interest rates. He says that if you have money sitting in a current account or interest account and are getting around 4%, the Credit Union are offering 7%! You would have to keep the money in for 1 year before touching it, but unlike banks and building societies our DACCUs have a heart and if you were to fall on genuine hard times, they would return your savings plus any interest when you needed it. John's article is worth reading...

DaC lady "mugs!"

Call Sign has been very lucky over the years in that our female drivers and staff members have always been available to have their photos put into the magazine if there is a story involving them. Ok, they sometimes require notice so that they can go out to buy a new wardrobe and have their hair done, but the end result is always worth the wait! I'm sure you'd be interested in knowing that when I ask a male driver or member of staff if I can take their photo to accompany an article, they all say the same thing – where should they stand!

I digress. So far as our females are concerned, there have been several in this mag whose photos have been picked up by various press outlets. The first female was many years ago and she worked in the call centre. I can't remember her name, but the photo (which I sadly did not take) saw her in leather on a motorbike. Before you could say she looks nice, the *Sunday Mirror* asked us for her contact details. We asked her if she was interested and she naturally asked how much they were paying because working in a call centre, she was hardly awash with loot! The answer was nothing! They just wanted an article on call centre women. She declined the offer.

Several years on we had calltaker shooter **Donna Merry** and her Mirkou MK30 shotgun; she was not only the British and UK champion, but she also captained the England team. As a by-product, she was blonde and looked great – but naturally that was secondary to us! **Call Sign** sponsored her shooting adventures, giving us the 'rights' to her photos – of which many were published over the years. We were again approached several times by magazines that wanted to reproduce our stories and pix of Donna. We had no problem and weren't asking

for any royalties, but we felt that Donna should receive something. Again they said no – and so did Donna.

Of late, we've had several enquiries regarding DaC driver **Natalia Shalom (A34)**. Like the others, Natalia is very photogenic and again, following publication in **Call Sign**, there have been enquiries about reproducing her photo along with articles about her. Natalia once told us that while she dresses up to the nines when going out, she would never dress in any way provocatively when working. Her main interests as a cab driver are how to eliminate tout-ing and female drivers' safety when in their cabs. As a result, she accepted two offers to speak to organisations that had read about her in **Call Sign** at her own expense because they involved safety in the cab.

I do not consider myself to be mercenary and will often give comments to papers if asked. One long-term client has asked if I can assist with a history they are doing of their company so far as taxi usage in the 70s and early 80s with DaC was concerned. No problem. But when I occasionally speak on radio (usually BBC Radio Scotland) I don't have to ask for a fee, I know they will send me one. Too many people expect something for nothing or want articles the easy way! I don't mind the trade press using **Call Sign** articles, but think it's a liberty when outside organisations want to use them – but don't want to compensate the person the article was about. DaC ladies are not mugs and won't be treated as such...

Ed's lucky day!

Being a Tottenham supporter has its advantages – I can always tell anyone interested how well we did in 1961, or how we would have beaten Burnley in the Carling Cup second leg had they not scored more goals than us!

But you know your luck is changing when you receive a cheque from *Tottenham Hotspur PLC* giving you your share dividend. With a nice first class stamp, my long-awaited cheque arrived containing my end-of-year dividend of 4p. That may not be much to you, but it comes off the huge amounts I spent on season tickets down at White Hart Lane. The only thing that bothers me is that my 4p comes on an RBS cheque! On the other hand, perhaps I could exchange it for one of their shares!

AGM

Yep, it's AGM time again and I really hope that I'm wrong in expecting yet another empty hall. All members should take an interest in their Society and a Sunday morning once a year isn't that much to ask. Hopefully I'll see you all there?

Westminster Demo

At the time of writing, I believe there is to be a demo against **Westminster City Council** on February 5 in protest against their treatment of Licensed taxi drivers, including the distribution of PCNs like confetti. And about time! 2pm at **Trafalgar Square**...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

AGM time...

It is that time of year again! The Dial-a-Cab AGM will be held on 8 February at The Brewery in Chiswell Street at 11am. By now you should have received your documentation regarding the AGM, together with the Annual Report.

As you will see, it is an electable AGM where you can choose your BoM for the forthcoming two years. As most of you are aware, you are required to vote so if you do not vote by post you should attend the AGM, otherwise a fine of £50 will be levied against you. However, as you can appreciate if you do vote by post you are not required to attend, but you must do one or the other.

No doubt you will be pleased to learn that we do not have any rule changes or propositions this year, but of course we do have to elect the BoM. Hopefully, I will see as many of you as possible on the day.

Work – or the lack of!

So far it has been a pretty tough January! Although our figures are getting slightly better week on week, they are still some way off what we were doing last year during the same period. However, I am not really comparing apples with apples because last year, up until May 2008, we were breaking all records!

As you can imagine, clients are becoming more demanding during this present downturn and scrutinising their invoices much more closely than normal, especially looking at any waiting time – a big cost factor to them – so they can go back to the passenger and advise them to not keep our taxis waiting. Whilst they are scrutinising their invoices very closely, it is imperative that we do not make any silly mistakes as it can throw our credibility into doubt. There is not anyone in the market place that can supply customers with more information and statistics than us, but it is paramount that this information is totally correct.

You will read reminders in this issue's Board Members reports of what we should and should not be doing. I must say that the vast majority of you are exemplary with our procedures, however, there is a tiny minority who are a little careless and consequently this throws our reporting into disarray and in turn, raises doubt as to the authenticity of our reporting.

A good example of this is that customers who book on-line have the facility to track their vehicle on the way to the pick-up. What happens in some cases is that drivers hit their *arrival* button before they have reached the pick-up! Of course I know why this is done – to avoid as much as possible, any waiting time before the passenger gets into the cab. However, what happens in reality is that the client can see on-line that the vehicle is not outside and as you can imagine, this can and often does cause some confusion and throws our systems into doubt with the customer. So it is becoming very important you do not press your *arrival* button before you are actually there.



Downturn ...again!

As I stated earlier and of which I know you are all aware, there is a downturn in our work. This is due in no small way to the irresponsible behaviour of some of the Financial Institutions and complacency of governments that allowed them *carte blanche*. As a consequence, many businesses have experienced a downturn in their sales ledger and Dial-a-Cab is no exception.

We are in an extremely healthy position financially, without any debt to service and approaching £5million in cash at the bank, so provided we stay in the boat and keep rowing, we will be fine. However, we must still look at our costs in order to combat this downturn in business.

You will see from the Annual Report, the largest outgoing the Society has is our wage bill, so at the moment we are looking to make savings in that area. I recently had

meetings with all staff to explain the situation and explained that we would be looking to prune some positions in order to make our overheads more manageable.

However, in this day and age a company has to go through the correct procedures in order to lighten the load of the wage roll! There has to be a consultation process; this is not a pleasant task as you are dealing with people you have worked with for many years, but it is a task that has to be done to safeguard the future of the remainder of the employees and of course the members / shareholders.

One of the reasons I had meetings with all staff and have reported the situation to you, the members, is that I have been in this industry for many years and I know how rumours spread and which in the main are totally incorrect. But now everyone has heard it from the horses' mouth. Yes, we are on a cost cutting exercise in order that your business is managed efficiently, but we are not in any financial difficulty, as a quick glance at the Annual Report you have just received will illustrate.

Mad Hatters

I recently attended and enjoyed the LTFUC Mad Hatters Tea Party along with over 1000 children and adults. As the Editor was also there, no doubt there will be a report in this issue, but I must just say that not only was this a hugely enjoyable afternoon, it was also a real credit to the committee of the London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children who organised it.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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TOWER HAMLETS, 2 MINUTES SILENCE AND DAC

An interesting story arrived on **Call Sign's** desk recently from Dial-a-Cab driver **Carl Brennan (C02)**, involving a **Penalty Charge Notice (PCN)** issued to him by Tower Hamlets Council for a parking offence on November 11.

Carl, who has been on DaC for two years, was on an account ride to Gillender Street – which is in both E3 and E14.

The passenger had left the cab and as it was just coming up to 11am on 11 November – the 90th anniversary of **Armistice Day** and the signing to end hostilities on the Western Front between the Allied forces and Germany at Rethondes, France – Carl decided to follow the traditional two minute silence in memory of the 8 million who died in that terrible war.

This was the traditional eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month – with 2008 being even more poignant than usual knowing that on the 100th anniversary in 2018, no survivors would still be alive. The 90th anniversary saw ex-soldiers such as 111 year old Henry Allingham paying tribute to their fallen comrades. Mr Allingham often goes with the **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** on their various outings and says that he considers it his life's duty to make sure that people do not forget the tragedies of those four bloody years between 1914 and 1918. The same principles obviously do not apply to Tower Hamlets Council...

Carl received the CCTV-generated PCN and paid it. He told **Call Sign**:

"Yes, I paid it via their automated phone service. I felt disgusted and although I couldn't deny stopping, I would have thought that Tower Hamlets Council would have known why I was standing next to my taxi for those two minutes. You have to assume that they place the income derived from their PCNs



Troops from the East Yorkshire regiment in Belgium during 1917. It obviously has little meaning to Tower Hamlets Council... Pic courtesy: The War Museum

above the commemoration of the millions that died."

Carl went on: "After all, you must also assume that their CCTV operators were made to continue working during those few minutes. Under normal circumstances I would have appealed, but I was too upset to do so – although I believe that DaC have appealed on my behalf even though the fine has already been paid."

He ended by saying: "Even though DaC kindly returned my £60 to me, I find it so sad that councils are happy to grab every penny they can and so far as they seem to be concerned, nothing but nothing can be more important than that..."

It's AGM Time Again



2008 Annual General Meeting on 8 February...

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

The 2008 AGM will be held as in recent years at:

The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1 on Sunday 8 February 2009 at 11:00hrs.

This year, the AGM includes the election of officers and any nominations had to have been received at Dial-a-Cab House by Friday 14 November. The same closing date applied to members putting forward rule changes or propositions, however none were received.

You must vote either in person or via the voting forms sent to you. But you cannot do both. You can however, vote by post and still attend the meeting but not vote when there. Failure to vote will cost you a £50 fine.

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

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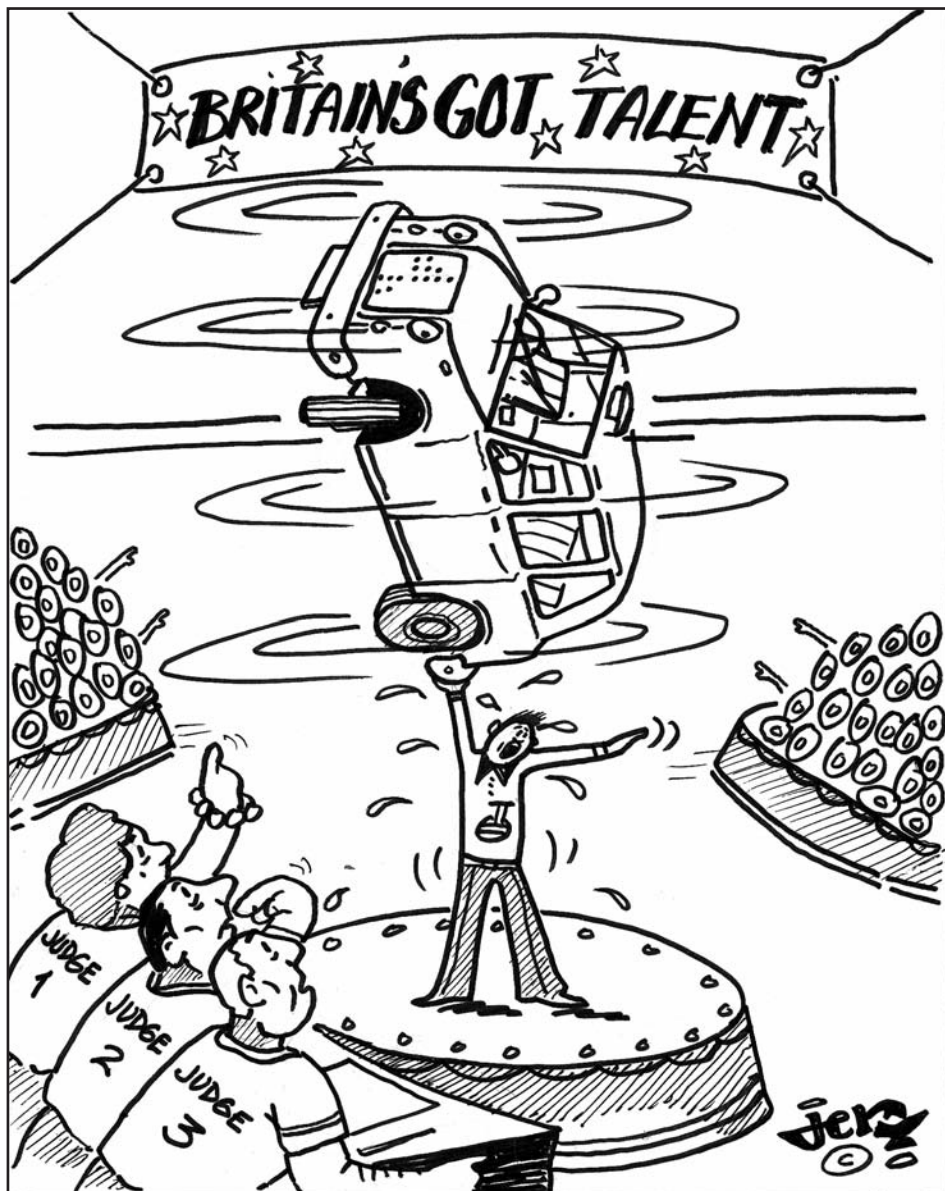
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Jerys World



"Ere Simon, I heard things were tough in the taxi business, but stone me, I didn't think they were THIS bad!"

Now the kids are back at school....

It's the Science Museum for Adults Only

science
museum

Following a successful pilot event in September, the **Science Museum** is now opening its doors every month for late night adults-only events. From 28 January, adults can have the Museum, its world-class collections and interactive galleries, all to themselves in the first Science Museum *Lates* of the new season. *Lates* will take place once a month.

Although you have missed the January *Late*, as an example of what you can expect; the museum turned Japanese in celebration of their new exhibition **Japan Car: Designs for a Crowded Globe**. Among a host of Japanese activities, visitors enjoyed gallery tours, music and a bar all evening from 6.30 - 10pm. Adults can also enjoy shameless playtime (tut tut!) in the famous interactive gallery, **Launchpad**, without having to let the kids go first!

The events are held on the last Wednesday of every month – which makes February 25 the next one. They run from 6.30 - 10pm and are free...

More details at: <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk>

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

Kupkake's Korner



Credit Crunchies!

Our trade's in a state
and nobody cares,
except your few mates,
and a couple of fares...

Work's hard to trap
where it once did abound,
where it fell in your lap
now it cannot be found...

There are no 'free' ranks
and long lines at the rails,
thanks to the banks
and their prime mortgage sales...

Businesses go bust
admitting defeat,
but to earn just a crust
we drive London's streets...

The convoys of cabs
with their lights shining bright,
hoping for hire
both day and night...

It's all so depressing
I tell you my friend,
they call it recession
I call it...the end!

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"Whilst booked into EC5, why not sit on the rank outside Smiths in Charterhouse Street, your for-hire light on, have a nice cup of tea and watch the organised crime unit (loitering-with- intent minicabs) get rather infuriated at your mere presence! Just delightful! Anyone wish to join me? Inaction is taken as a sign of weakness."

That was a letter sent to **Call Sign** by Dial-a-Cab driver **Laurence Green (K53)** recently. With the streets still fairly quiet, it seemed a good way of taking a rest while at the same time reclaiming some of our lost work. So one quiet Tuesday evening at around 9.30pm, Editor **Alan Fisher** went down to Smithfield meat market and attempted to 'put on' the taxi rank outside **Smiths** restaurant. He failed because it was filled with licensed minicabs.

Feeling brave because so many empty cabs were passing by, Alan jumped out of his taxi and approached the mini-drivers and politely told them to shove off as it was a taxi rank! Mini-drivers one and two came up to Alan and number one asked the now slightly nervous Ed if he wanted to borrow his reading glasses as he had a spare pair in his car? Trying desperately hard to sound sarcastic, mini-driver two pointed at the rank signage. It read:

No stopping at any time except taxis: Mon - Thurs Noon - 9pm, Fri - Sun Noon - 7am.

Friday to Sunday sounds fine, but Monday to Thursday from Noon till 9pm? Are you sure? Is that because the PCO value us so much that they don't want us to mix with those who've had a drink early in the week!

This isn't the first time **Call Sign** has had trouble with the Smiths rank. In December 2002, we wrote how then-Gen Sec of SPLT, **John-Paul Pace**, was involved in a Smithfield 'trial' by the

The strange timing of the Charterhouse Street Taxi Rank



Whoever decided that taxis wouldn't be needed after 9pm at a restaurant/wine bar?

Fabric nightclub and Smiths, where he and several other drivers had tried to organise licensed taxis to pick up on weekend evenings in order to get rid of the touts.

The operation had successful moments because thanks to joint **Dial-a-Cab** and **Radio Taxis** co-operation in putting messages out, drivers were stopping there and picking up some good jobs. However, no sooner had John-Paul and co left the site, then things went back to normal with licensed taxis by-passing it and the

touts returning.

Then came the bombshell. Fabric MD Cameron Leslie, claimed he was fed up with customers being ripped off by touts when they left his club - so he said he would organise his own minicab company saying it would be "non-profit making," though how much you could charge before you broke even wasn't disclosed. He added the scheme would include four of his other clubs.












Call Sign suggests that spending some money on security guards to stop touts parking outside the premises at any time unless genuinely pre-booked, could help persuade licensed taxis to stop there. Increasing the rank waiting times at Smithfield so that every day is the same - until 7am - could make a start. Whoever decided that the rank wasn't needed after 9pm???

This magazine asked LTDA General Secretary, **Bob Oddy**, for assistance in the matter and he has promised to speak to the PCO about extending the Monday to Thursday timings. If successful, our grateful thanks will go to him...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online

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CALL CENTRE CHAT

Booking-in to zones

With there being a drop in the number of trips compared to last year, we are seeing far more drivers being booked-in to many more zones.

EC5, for example, is a zone that sees the maximum cabs threshold of 99 being reached more frequently. When the zone opens at 9pm, there are many more drivers attempting to book-in. In order to assure members that these drivers are correctly within one of the EC5 zones, our controllers are taking a screen print of all the call signs and then checking



you must be able to reach the furthest part of that zone within 15 minutes from the time you book-in. This does not mean you can book-in and travel 15 minutes or longer before you reach the nearest edge of the zone. Dial-a-Cab has always been renowned for operating a fair system and I will ensure that controllers do everything they can to maintain the fairness for everyone.

Arriving at the pick-up

With clients scrutinising their transport expenditure, we are receiving more and more questions regarding amounts on the meter at the time of arrival. Many have requested us to supply software for them to monitor where their taxis are. In order for us to supply this, it is very important that all drivers follow the correct procedures regarding when their *arrival* button is pressed.

From now on, all drivers must only press their *arrival* button when they arrive outside the pick-up address. Those who believe they are helping the client to get into the taxi quicker by pressing the *arrival* button a few minutes before they arrive are, in fact, causing the opposite effect. In addition, the incorrect run-in amount is being shown on the trip.

Procedures are laid down for very good reasons and following them is so important to the overall service the Society offers. In order to get all drivers to use the system correctly, we will find ourselves having serious discussions with culprits who, for reason best known to themselves, just cannot follow instructions.

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

Transport for London



PUBLIC CARRIAGE OFFICE

Removal of Mid Year Inspections

Change of licence fee and notification of refunds

Following the decision to remove the requirement for taxis to undergo a mid-year inspection with effect from 6 November 2008, the PCO have now announced new licence fees and arrangements for making a partial refund to those taxi owners who had paid the annual licensing fee of £178, but no longer required to present their vehicle for a mid-year inspection.

As a consequence of the decision, the new annual taxi licence fee will be £160, which will be charged to all owners booking a licensing inspection appointment on or after Monday 19 January.

A refund of £18 will be made to all vehicle owners who paid a licence fee of £178 and who, since 6 November 2008, have not been required to present their vehicle for a mid-year inspection.

The PCO will process automatically all those cases where owners are entitled to a refund, so there is no requirement for vehicle owners to apply to the PCO for a refund. They aim to complete the refund process within a period of 6 weeks from the date of this Notice, which is 15 January. Vehicle owners are requested not to contact the PCO until after the 6 week period has elapsed and only in those cases where they consider that they are entitled to, but have not received, a refund.

Any taxi owner who paid a full licence fee of £178 and was required to present their vehicle for a mid-year inspection on or before 5 November 2008, in accordance with paragraph 14(o) of the *London Cab Order 1934*, but failed to comply with that requirement, is not entitled to receive a refund.

each one with the GPS system to view their position. This process is also carried out at other times during the shift and any driver found to be booked-in incorrectly is requested to book-off and book-in correctly. A log is being kept of each driver whom they need to speak with. Anyone who has been spoken to three times is then sent to the Compliance Officer for further action. Those who ignore instructions to book-off, are sent regardless of how many occasions they have been spoken to. I have instructed controllers to send fleet messages regarding their monitoring and further messages making everyone aware of their findings. So far I'm pleased to say it's working very well and what is more pleasing, is that the vast majority of the fleet are abiding by the rules.

The monitoring of drivers booking-in positions is also being carried out during the day and anyone found not to be abiding by the rules can be expected to receive a call from the Call Centre.

I would like to remind all drivers that when you book into a zone that does not carry specific booking-in instructions,

H U B B A R D
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Wills and Probate

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



CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



Oh where is a soon to clear button when you need one....!

I had my usual 2-week stint in the saddle during the run up to Christmas, but noticed that work levels had dropped from previous years – you guys definitely need that account work to bolster your shift takings. It's been many a year now, but I even found myself reminiscing about that *soon to clear* key about 15 minutes or so from my set-down point!

But that expression, *soon to clear*, seemed quite apt one night in mid-December after driving around the City for what seemed ages without a job – then I got 3 *wrong-uns*, which made me feel that a water cannon should *soon to clear* this gruesome threesome!

Joker number one changed his mind 3 times mid-stream and I really don't like that. It seemed like a reasonable ride at first when he asked for Goodge St from Crutched Friars, but any job seems ok at first after 30 minutes cruising empty! But then I detected that slightly slurred speech and suddenly he wants to go to somewhere down the Old Kent Rd instead. Then as soon as we headed south, it seems Crawford St would be a better idea before he came back again

with a destination in southeast London. I'd had enough and he agreed it would be a good idea for him to alight and clear his head. Miraculously, he agreed – although it didn't stop him starting to glide away before my shout of "Oi Geezer" and possibly his misguided belief that CCTV lenses might be in focus, that persuaded him to give up some folding gear – not sure if I would have seen much of that had we been down Cold Blow Lane SE14!

Comedian number two (it really is so funny isn't it) found me in Tottenham Court Rd and wanted Victoria Station. This one was perfectly sober, but had no cash. After a good ten minutes of waiting precariously at the junction of New Cavendish St and Great Portland St while he whacked about what look like a perfectly healthy ATM machine until someone impersonating Harry Worth showed up, I decided to wipe my mouth before the next bendy bus wiped me out completely!

My real heroine on this shift found me again in Tottenham Court Rd. She seemed pleasant enough as she asked for Paddington Station – indeed it was a *relief*. But before we got very far, that's exactly what she needed! "Stop please

cabbie, pull over, I must have a wee!" So there we were in a busy W1 main thoroughfare, two weeks before Christmas and my punter is enjoying a pee on the pavement! She disappeared from view below the side window... had she done a runner or is that a crawl? I had to look, I stretched over like Twizzle (yes, *Ed, you remember him don't you*) for a quick gander. But she was there all right, in a squat position amidst a tangled mess of knickers and nylons! Talk about the lost rivers of London, there were tributaries heading off in all directions as pedestrians changed step to avoid them! But then what? Oh, no, the coat tails are in the soup, followed by her handbag and its contents – including my money!

That was it, I was off! One last glance in the wing mirror revealed a most unusual sight. I am obviously just naive – I really thought ladies had their bits waxed these days! So much shrubbery was on display as she flipped backwards – the only thing missing was the diving board...!

A bientot...

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

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New Year Promotion:

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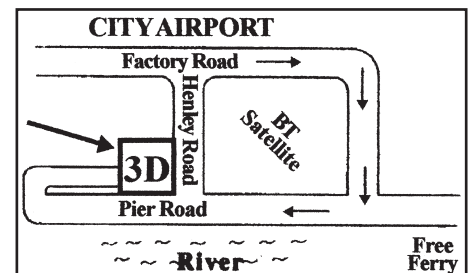
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Ronnie Welch (M42) is a very lucky man. His nightmare journey from Heathrow to Ipswich has a happy ending, but not before his nerves were almost torn to shreds worrying if he would ever complete the fare to the county town of Suffolk in East Anglia.

Ronnie told **Call Sign** how he had been experiencing engine noise problems that hinged around the timing tensioner. He returned to his garage on several previous occasions to effect repairs, which had only been partially successful lasting just a few days before the noise came back like a boomerang returning to its owner!

Concerned whether the cab would be satisfactory for him to go to work on at the weekend, Ronnie took it back to his garage and they duly fitted a new timing tensioner and mounting bracket. Having parted with a considerable sum of money, Ronnie was confident that his problems were over and looked forward to the coming weekend and trouble-free motoring. Little did he know what lay ahead over those next few days...

Ronnie explained to **Call Sign** that the cab had run smoothly at first on the Saturday evening shift, but slowly the same old symptoms recurred during the freezing cold night and he just hoped he would get through the weekend's work and that things would not get worse before he could return to the garage yet again on the Monday morning.

On Sunday evening he set out for work around 9.30, starting from Heathrow Airport. The engine, although noisy, didn't sound too bad. While on the rank, a passenger approached him and enquired the fare to Woodbridge in Suffolk, just north of Ipswich. Having agreed the fare, off they went with Ronnie praying his noisy engine would not only get them both there, but get *him*

Ipswich or bust? Probably bust!



Ron is smiling now, but he wasn't so happy in Ipswich

back home as well.

On the open road, the cab was fine. The M25 led onto the A12 through the Essex countryside and Ronnie thought his prayers were being answered. Things were going well and the cab kept on until they reached the north side of Ipswich. The engine noises had been getting steadily worse for the last few miles, but Ronnie thought his motor would last out. However, while negotiating Suffolk's many roundabouts, the engine noises got louder and louder while the steering became very heavy with Ronnie fighting with the steering wheel to keep the cab on course. As he entered yet another roundabout, Ronnie heard an almighty clanging sound from under the bonnet and thought that an engine part had fallen off the cab into the road! As he crept cautiously around the fourth roundabout, there was a huge bang from inside the engine bay and the steering became almost

impossibly heavy to control. He knew then it was serious and that he was in real trouble...

"Funnily enough," Ronnie continued with a smile, "my first thought was no golf on Monday!" Further ahead Ronnie saw a BP fuel station and staggered towards it, feeling safer if he could make it that far while fighting the heavy steering. As he entered the garage forecourt, Ronnie had another shock when he realised his brakes had failed due to the lack of power assistance from the servo! Narrowly missing a canopy support post, the cab shuddered to a complete stop. Ronnie then had the unenviable task of telling his passenger the obvious... it was the end of the road for Ronnie and his cab!

He continued: "The passenger admitted saying to the traffic warden at Heathrow that he thought my cab might not complete the trip because of the noisy engine! I phoned a local cab company to pick up my passenger and the cab driver's face was a picture when he saw a broken-down London taxi. I offered the passenger £10 towards his cab fare but he graciously declined, but I insisted he took the money. I then phoned the AA to get me back to Dunbridge Street, arriving there at 4am on Monday morning. Wearing only lightweight clothes on a freezing cold night, I slept in the back of the cab until the garage opened for business. When they raised the bonnet, they saw the timing belt completely shredded and the pulleys disintegrated, damaging the alternator in the process. In fairness to my garage, they swallowed the cost of the complete repairs and I cannot thank them enough for their gesture.

Needless to say, the scheduled game of golf was cancelled as I went back home to rest after my Ipswich or bust night!"

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SMILE



Terry was driving home from work one evening when he suddenly realised that it was his daughter's birthday and that he hadn't bought her anything. Then out the corner of his eye he saw a swanky looking toy store. Knowing that it was now or never, he pulled his TX4 over to the side and ran in.

The shop was so big and his knowledge of toys so small that he felt totally lost. So he grabbed the attention of a shop assistant. When asked what he would like, Terry said the first thing that came to mind: "A Barbie doll, please". The shop assistant looked at him in that particularly condescending manner that only west end shop assistants can muster up and asked which Barbie would that be "sir?"

The flustered cabbie looked surprised at the question, so the assistant continued: "We have Barbie Goes to the Gym for £19.95, Barbie Goes to the Ball for £19.95, Barbie Goes Shopping for £19.95, Barbie Goes to the Beach for £19.95, Barbie Goes Night Clubbing for £19.95 and Divorced Barbie for £265."

The man - not knowing much about Barbie - asked why Divorced Barbie was £265 when all the other Barbie's were selling for £19.95?"

"That's obvious," replied the assistant, "divorced Barbie comes with Ken's house, Ken's car and Ken's furniture"

Dial-a Cab Credit Union

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

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The top sign says 1 hour max. The bottom one says 20 mins max at £1 per hour! Other signs confuse credit card payments...

Dial-a-Cab driver **Steve Thomas (N10)** needed to stop for a short while at the three-space taxi bays in Harewood Place, Marylebone, which as all good drivers know comes under the auspices of those

The Easy Way to Park in Marylebone?

Park Somewhere else...!

nice people from Westminster Council. Yes, those same people who kindly invited **Call Sign** up to their CCTV centre to see how upset they were at having to issue PCNs to taxi drivers for stopping. We understood fully that it was for our own good. After all, starvation and good bladder control are useful attributes for licensed taxi drivers to attain.

Steve contacted **Call Sign** to ask a simple question; just what did Westminster's parking instruction at Harewood Place actually mean? After all, he was starving to Westminster standards (and practicing his bladder control) when he noticed that the signs contradicted themselves. He just

couldn't work out if taxi drivers needed to pay, what was the location number of the spaces if you paid by credit card and how long we could stay - 20 or 60 minutes?

Steve contacted Westminster to ask them, but because they were too busy looking after our welfare at other parking spots, they didn't actually know but told Steve not to worry as they would sort it out. In the meantime, she wished him luck with his starvation project!

The bad part is that when Steve returned to the bays the following week, the signs were still the same. The good part is that he has now lost 2 stone...!

"Never been a better time to buy a new or used taxi..."

Leading motor industry magazine *Automotive Management* has just launched a campaign to change the tone of reporting in the national press and on TV from one of doom and gloom about falling car sales, manufacturing plants cutting production, business closures and redundancies, to one promoting the amazing deals that are available to retail buyers and why there has never been – and never will be – a better time to buy a vehicle. Reasons for their optimism include:

- * VAT cut from 17.5% to 15%
 - * Interest rates at lowest level for 315 years
 - * Better fuel efficiency of new vehicles
 - * New car transaction prices up to 10% lower than a year ago, making cars more affordable
 - * Carmakers have stocks of unsold vehicles they are keen to sell, leading to incredibly strong customer offers
- In support of the *Automotive Management* initiative, LTI are offering the



best driver deals ever and are promoting why there has never been a better time to buy a new or used taxi.

Kieren Puffett, editor of *parkers.co.uk* the car buying advice website said: "There are a wealth of great deals to be snapped up. Dealers and manufacturers are desperate to shift stock and have some really strong offers. It's hard to see how the promotions can get any better."

His comments were echoed by Peter Vardy, Chief Executive of Vauxhall, Chevrolet and BMW retail group *Peter Vardy Ltd* in Scotland: "The deals on new

and used cars are as good as they are going to get," he said.

LTI have thrown their support behind Automotive Management's campaign.

"In line with many other businesses in the economy, it became clear to us early in the fourth quarter of 2008 that customers were delaying purchases of new taxis," said LTI's Sales Director Rob Laidler. "We had two choices; either accept the situation and the resultant loss of sales, or react positively and take the necessary actions to stimulate demand and give customers compelling reasons why they should buy a new taxi now."

Rob ended by saying: "Working with our dealers, we have put in place the strongest support package possible that ensures customers receive fantastic deals on new TX4s. The response from our customers during November and December has been fantastic."

TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD STATION WORKS...

Drivers and operators may be aware that major works are planned in the vicinity of Tottenham Court Road station to modernise the tube station and cater for **Crossrail** services. These works will take place over the next seven years and will involve substantial changes to the road layout in the area in several stages.

The first phase of these began immediately after the holiday period. The main elements are:

- Andrew Borde Street is closed to all traffic
- Sutton Row is closed between Falconberg Mews and Charing Cross Road
- The northern end of Charing Cross Road will be northbound only
- The northern end of St Giles High Street will be for buses only (except for access to pick up or set down passengers)
- The right turn from New Oxford Street into Tottenham Court Road

will be permitted

- Buses will be diverted via Shaftesbury Avenue or Denmark Street
- Taxis coming from the southeast should use St Giles High Street and Eamshaw Street to get to Oxford Street or Tottenham Court Road
- Access to pick up or set down in the area of Centre Point, Denmark Street etc will be from Princes Circus via St Giles High Street

More information on the station upgrade and associated works is at www.tfl.gov.uk/tcr_

Further advice will be published when more changes are imminent...

Len Simkins
Head of Strategy and Planning, PCO

How are we doing?

Soon after Dial-a-Cab moved to their new home, **Call Sign** reported that the Society had teamed up with *Carbon Footprint Ltd* to help reduce and offset our carbon emissions, thereby reducing our impact on the environment and in particular, climate change. Every journey undertaken by DaC would from then on become carbon footprint free with any carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions being offset to zero. Since then, many drivers have asked **Call Sign** whether the above was still happening or was it just a page filler?

The answer is that DaC are as involved as they were on day one and still driving down emissions and helping worldwide communities. So we asked *Carbon Footprint's* **Wendy Buckley** for her assistance in updating our progress.

"The business has just launched into the second year of its industry-leading carbon programme, committed to evaluate all its emissions and offset the unavoidable via an expanded range of quality projects worldwide that also bring community benefits. It's not just DaC's taxis that we are focusing on, but also all your office operations – with an aim to ensure DaC takes a leadership position as the most environmentally responsible taxicab business in the country.

"Since launching the project and along with Carbon Footprint, Dial-a-Cab's commitment to the environment has been unwavering. They have offset 4,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide from operations, via a wind farm clean energy project in Harshnath (India), a reforestation project in the Great Rift Valley (Kenya) and before some ask why not here, also a reforestation project right here in London!"

"Recently, our Kenya Reforestation team celebrated a Christmas Tree planting with a traditional ceremony in front of the local Mayor with the team all wearing their Dial-a-Cab tee shirts! This marked the end of what had been a year of tragedy and challenge in the county, but as ever, the Kenyan spirit shone through."

Meanwhile back in the UK, the tree-planting season has been in full swing – at a climate change awareness event organised by *Carbon Footprint* at a Hampshire school where over 100 trees were planted by the pupils, who also learnt how to minimise their impact on our world.

As we said earlier, DaC have now committed to offset not just the emissions of our taxi fleet, but also all office operations. And besides continuing support for the India, UK and Kenya projects, DaC have also selected an exciting new Central

DaC and Carbon Footprint Ltd



DaC's tree planters, in front of the local mayor, celebrating Xmas following a very difficult year in Kenya

Inset: Some of our tree planters take a bow for Call Sign



worthwhile projects across four continents, as well as doing our bit to help alleviate climate change."

American *Maya Nut Tree* reforestation project, which brings benefits to developing communities. This project is *United Nations Environmental Programme* approved and involves the planting and sustainable management of these native trees that help support rainforests and promote biodiversity. The Maya nuts themselves can be harvested from the trees and have great nutritional and medicinal benefits.

Carbon Footprint's Managing Director, John Buckley, added:

"This year – more than ever – Dial-a-Cab's commitment to the Kenya project has truly supported local communities, bringing them hope in some very dark hours."

DaC Chairman Brian Rice, told **Call Sign**: "We are firmly committed to being the leading environmentally and socially responsible taxicab business anywhere. Our carbon offset programme now means we're supporting communities and very



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We make the wheels turn
so you can earn,

On Sunday 17 January, Amsterdam newspaper Het Parool published an amazing article about the possibility of Dutch cabbies driving the iconic London taxi – but an electric version!

While LTI has signed an agreement with electric vehicle maker Tanfield to make battery-powered taxis that are expected to be in production before the end of this year, they were said to be unlikely to go on general sale until 2010 – and that always assumes that the UK at least looks like coming out of the credit crunch.

But according to *Taxi Centrale Amsterdam* director Bas Vos, 50 electric TX4s will be on the roads of Amsterdam this year. Last year he visited the LTI factory in Coventry and was apparently told of the plan for the TX4E.

While many Amsterdam cabbies have an open mind about an electric London taxi, Bas Vos said he needed 30 interested parties and that he now has them. He is convinced he will succeed with London electric taxis and intends importing them himself, with fifty of them running along Amsterdam's canal-lined streets by the end of the year.

Currently the project is shrouded in secrecy, but the left-hand drive TX4E is expected to be revealed at Holland's Auto RAI show in April. *Call Sign* has been told by sources in Holland that the driving mechanism of the two rear wheels will be carried out by two battery-operated electric motors that are currently being developed in Germany and which are expected to give around 150 kilometres before needing to be recharged. That isn't really enough for a full day's work, so a one-cylinder diesel engine has also been added as a generator that can recharge the batteries while driving along. This would increase mileage to around 200Km – 125 miles. Overnight charging would take around 6 hours, with so-called *quick loaders* that are said to be able to do the job in 15 minutes that it is hoped can be placed at taxi offices and possibly ranks. However, long-time London drivers will remember the problems with rank telephones that were constantly being damaged by hooli-

Call Sign Exclusive!

Electric TX4s in Holland?



A London taxi in Amsterdam - are 50 electric ones going to join it?
Pic courtesy Het Parool

gans. What they would do with electric battery chargers is anyone's guess!

Electric vehicles tend to be slow in pulling away. In fact one Dial-a-Cab client who also uses cars, often insists on no electric hybrid vehicles. However, the problem of poor performance is said to have been solved with the Dutch TX4E acceleration said to be almost that of the diesel version. Bas Vos says that once Amsterdam's taxi drivers see the TX4E, they will flock over to it from their current Mercedes saloons.

In early January, LTI's Coventry facility welcomed Amsterdam taxi managers Marijke Vos (Bas' wife) together with Tjeerd Herrema. Neither LTI or Taxi Centrale Amsterdam are saying anything. So the question has to be whether the TX4E is closer than we thought and of course, how much will it cost?

We asked LTI and they claimed to know nothing about Mr Vos. Time will tell...

Alan Fisher

Albany Dinner Dance

The Albany Taxi Charity had planned on hosting their annual Dinner and Dance in February 2009, but due to the current economic climate the committee have decided to postpone the event until Spring/Summer 2009.

The Chairman and Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support in 2008. It is greatly appreciated and we hope you will continue to support our charity in 2009

Best wishes to you all for 2009 from the Albany Committee Members...

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3 Master Suites, 3 Twin Rooms, 4.5 Bathrooms, 30ft Pool on large extended SW facing deck, Games Room. Luxury Specification. In Remington Golf Community. Within 12 miles/16 mins of Disney. Near Lake Toho. Easily Sleeps 14 in beds.

Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350



We at the DaC Credit Union are always trying to bring in new members to the Credit Union as the more members we have, the more money we can lend out.

One of the roads we are going down is a high interest account entirely separate from the Credit Union account. How it works is that if you had monies sitting in either your current account or in a slightly higher interest account and say you get somewhere in the region of 4%, well we are offering a massive 7%. We would like it to work in the same manner as other banks, so you'd keep the money in for 1 year before touching it. Obviously, if you were to get in some kind of financial dilemma, we'd give it back to you plus any earned interest.

We are also running another scheme, which we have named the **rollerbond** for want of a better word. The way it works is this: Say you have a loan with us paying £60 a week while also saving £20 a week, you could then put into the rollerbond scheme £20 a week, totalling £100. The difference from the DaC rollerbond is that you will receive interest on it. It will work the same, so you would have to get to a £1000 before you can have it back, but again with the DACCU, if you get to £800 and you are in dire need, we will give it to you without the need to make it up to the £1000. As most members of the Credit Union know, we will bend over backwards to help anybody even if it means bending all the rules - and believe me we have done so, but don't tell anyone! It's our little secret...

With the high interest account, you would

Dac Credit Union - New accounts!

Have you got our 7% interest yet?

have to be a member and save with us - as with all banks you need some kind of cash flow - we have brought in these schemes to help with this even more so now with the current credit crunch. So I hope you are reading this article thinking that this doesn't sound bad and call us on 0208 522 4502 or 4503. There is an answerphone, so leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as is reasonably possible. Our opening times are from 1pm to 7pm every weekday except Thursday, when at the moment we are closed. If things get busier we may have to open Thursdays too.

We at the Credit Union are working hard to keep things ticking over and these are just some of the ideas we have brought in to help you earn some extra money. But again I have been having trouble trying to get drivers to join the CU, ask anyone who is a member how invaluable we are for your tax, overhaul, emissions systems, new cars or deposits on new cabs. If we get enough new members, maybe we could finance the whole of your new cab! We also have funds put by for the occasional emergency; for example if your gearbox drops out or your boiler at home blows up. We have a maximum £1000, even if your account is out of the three to one ratio we require. Don't forget, DACCU is YOUR Credit Union and run by DaC drivers, so we know what your problems are because we have the same ones.

As we are in downtown Stratford, some find it hard to come to the office. So what we do to accommodate you is that if a loan is required, we will send the forms to your home address and

after you have filled them in, you can either post them back or give them in to Val Gomez in DaC's Driver Services.

Most regular members who use us will know that we are having to book in loans about 3 to 4 weeks in advance due to the high demand at the moment, the maximum amount of loan given is currently £4000, but then with future loans you can then top up to the maximum £8000 total. I hope this information has been of some use and gives you food for thought. Don't forget, it costs you nothing to join and the minimum requirement for savings is £20 per week, even in this financial climate this should be easily achievable. If you do not wish to do this through your credit work, you can send a cheque, pay by standing order or even bring in cash - we have no problem with whatever method you choose.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Editor for his piece in last month's *Call Sign*. It generated 6 new members so I owe him a cup of tea! Alan is a great friend to the Credit Union and we thank him for letting us put our articles in the magazine.

Finally, we wish you all a belated happy New Year from all at the Credit Union, Terry, Brian, Val and last but not least me.

That only leaves me to sign off with my usual be lucky... but be careful out there.

John Riley (K38), Vice-President DACCU
Suite 209, Channel Sea House,
Canning Rd. Stratford, E15
0208 522 4502 / 4503

Peter Sallis: My Sadness at Kathy's Death



Peter Sallis played the incomparable Norman Clegg in the long-running BBC comedy series, *Last of the Summer Wine* "for more years than I care to remember!" He starred alongside **Bill Owen** as Compo, **Michael Bates** as Cyril Blamire (later replaced by **Brian Wilde** as Foggy Dewhurst) and **Kathy Staff** as the incomparable Nora Batty! But it was the death of Kathy Staff that he wanted to recognise.

"She was such a wonderful actress," Peter told *Call Sign*, "in fact I'd go further and call her the powerhouse of our program. When she was on set, things just went right and I'm so happy to be able to put my appreciation of her into the public domain."

Peter, whose failing sight means that he relies on the combination of **Dial-a-Cab** and his **Westminster TaxiCard**, also spoke of his surprise when *Call Sign* informed him that another of his shows, *Wallace and Gromit* in which his voice is that of Wallace, became the most viewed show of the year at Christmas, knocking *Eastenders* into second place by several million viewers.

"I used to get all the actor's trade papers so I would have known that, however because of my lack of sight, there is no point and I'm grateful to *Call Sign* for letting me know about that. It really is a thrill."

His *Wallace and Gromit* fame began in 1989 and also included several

movies as well, but it was *The Last of the Summer Wine*, which first hit the TV screens in January 1973 as a one-off episode but became so popular that it ran for 27 series, for which he became best known!

Peter is now content in his Bayswater apartment "...but I know that whenever I phone up **Dial-a-Cab** to use my **TaxiCard**, that I won't be let down. I think both Dial-a-Cab and the TaxiCard are wonderful. And by the way, don't write me off. I may be 88 years old - but only just!"



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster /
Master of Ceremonies

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

10% Discount for Dial-a-Cab drivers

Fellow of the Guild of Professional
Toastmasters

720 'Mad Hatters' Er

With a beautifully clear sky, even if it was bitterly cold, an amazing 720 children arrived with their coach parties accompanied by around 400 helpers, carers and parents to enjoy yet another LTFUC **Mad Hatters Tea Party** at London's **Grosvenor House Hotel**. For so many years now, this hotel has provided the **Great Room** at no cost and deserves a real thank you.

The Hon Chairman of the **London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children**, **David Lessman (D19)**, told **Call Sign** that they were thrilled by the huge turnout.

"We always invite more than we think will come because invariably some groups just can't make it. This year everyone came and it was just wonderful!"

LTFUC committee member **Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)**, was beginning to lose his voice when **Call Sign** asked him how he thought things were going?

"When you see a child with a smiling face, you can't help but feel happy. When you see 720 of them having the time of their lives, how can you not get a real buzz. It was just brilliant and

well worth losing my voice for!"

Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Brian Rice** came along with his girlfriend Sam. Brian echoed Gerry's sentiment that has brought so much obvious happiness to a member of the cab trade – other than the pressure of being a **Geoffrey Riesel** with his wife Jackie and grandchildren.

The Mad Hatter's Ball always has guest stars and this year's number with **The Cheeky Girls** again topping the bill. There were songs from **X-Factor** favourite **Austen** and **Songtime Theatre Arts High School Musical** performed round while they went through their repertoire.

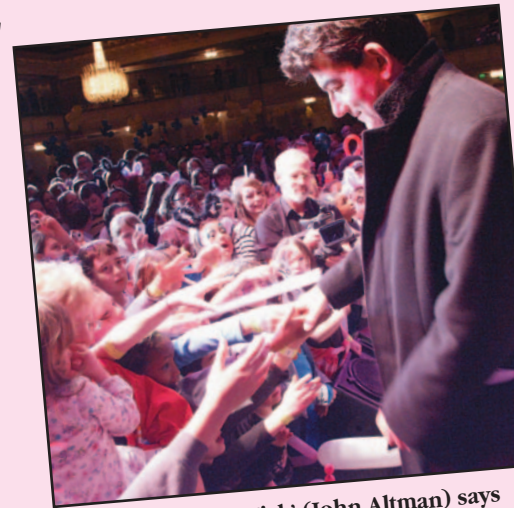
Also on the bill and as always, introduced



Having a good time or what!



BeeGee Robin Gibb with former **Call Sign** writer (and Gerry Dunn's daughter) Lisa, together with son Jamie



Eastenders 'Nasty Nick' (John Altman) says hello to some now-happy kids who had just booed his character!

Harry Hizer and the Spurs



Harry's Big Day! Captains **Ledley King** (o/r) and **Everton's Phil Neville**. Harry is the mascot in white

On 30th November 2008, **Tottenham Hotspur** weren't just playing against the *Toffeemen* of **Everton**, but they were led out by Spurs captain **Ledley King** together with **Harry Hizer**, the 6-year old son of Dial-a-Cab champion parking ticket collector, **Martin Hizer (M47)**.

Harry was one of the mascots for the mighty White Hart Lane lily-whites. They usually go out in order of size with the smallest going first. Unfortunately, Harry was wearing football boots with studs that made him slightly taller than the next smallest, a young girl named Phoebe. However, when ultra-pushy Martin virtually forced Harry to swap boots for training shoes, the natural order was restored and Harry went out with captain **Ledley**.

Obsessive father? Judge for yourself at

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=BjO_KWVhv0 and listen to an ultra-proud dad! You may never have heard a football commentary like this before!

Ok, so **Everton's Steven Pienaar** scored to earn **Everton** a narrow victory, but nothing was going to spoil Harry's big day – or listening to that commentary on u-tube – Martin's day! Either way, well done Harry...

Enjoy the LTFUC Party

with his wife Brenda, daughter Carla and son
y Dunn's sentiments and called it a remarkable
business to so many young kids. The only other
ranks - that **Call Sign** saw was RTG Chairman
ndson Freddy. They too thought the event was

and this year's event must have seen a record
y the bill with a 20-minute live set. In addition,
tin Drage and many others, including the bril-
cal 2, which had most of the 720 children gath-
rtoire!

by **Dave Davis**, was Jailhouse rocker, **Elvis**

Shmelvis and members of the always-present **Bournemouth Carnival Band**.

There were huge cheers for guest appearances from the cast of **Eastenders** - except for **Nasty Nick (John Altman)** who was roundly booed! That'll teach him to keep picking on Dot! Also among the Albert Square crowd was *I'm a celebrity, get me out of here* winner, **Joe Swash**.

Also making appearances were actress **Shirley Ann Field**, brilliant illusionist **Bharat Patel**, TV's **Gladiators**, James Bond and Tenko actor **Bert Kwouk**, **Strike Force** from *Britains Got Talent*, *Summer Wine* actress **Linda Baron** and the UK street dancing champions, **Diversity**.

One final guest - to the astonishment of those watching - was **BeeGees** legend **Robin Gibb**, who popped in to say hello. He told **Call Sign** that he was absolutely astonished that London taxi drivers had arranged the event.

"Now I can understand why they call them the best," he said!

All in all, the whole event was nothing less than the best...



Tom
Whitbread
with two
young
children
from
Northern
Ireland



Dave Davis with Gladiators Enigma and Doom



Elvis Shmelvis with the Cheeky Girls



Brian Rice and family

ELOISE COLLECTS HER £200

Call Sign promised the winners of its Christmas card competition for children up to the age of ten that they would have their £200 prize money in time to spend for the big day and we were true to our word.

Because the standard was so high and the judges - Call Centre Manager **Keith Cain** and Brian Rice's PA **Jacqui Chart** - found choosing a winner very difficult, **Call Sign** added a second and third prize of £60 and £40 respectively.

Eventually they chose the top three with **Eloise Heatley** just taking top spot from **Tom Hannah** and **Gracie Washington** - who at just five years old looks to be a future winner!

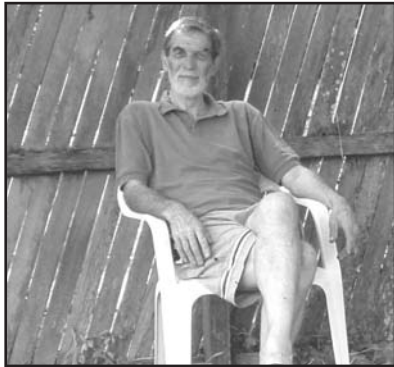
Speaking to **Call Sign** after receiving her cheque from DaC Chairman **Brian Rice**, Eloise told us that she would like to be a doctor one day and no, she wouldn't be sharing the money with her two sisters! We think she may have been joking about that bit!

Well done to all three winners and commiserations to the other 79 who didn't win but whose standard was still very high...



Eloise collects Call Sign's £200 prize from Brian Rice

Former DaC Trainer Undergoes Liver Transplant



Howard Sales: Underwent a liver transplant in Oz

Many drivers will remember **Howard Sales (ex-A11)** who helped train so many drivers at the time of Dial-a-Cab originally going over from voice to data transmission. He later emigrated to Brisbane, Australia where he opened a small service station.

Several years later, Howard – who still reads each issue of **Call Sign** online – wrote to the mag to give us some bad news. He told us:

"I didn't know it when I left the UK, but my life as a cab driver would have had to be put on hold because unbeknown to me at the time I was developing a liver condition known as PSC, which meant taking 16 tablets a day until I could hopefully have a transplant. At the moment it doesn't present me with many problems, but one that would have been a hassle is getting to use a toilet both frequently and at a moment's notice. All the time I can keep busy working, I don't feel tired. But sitting down as I would have been doing in the cab, could very quickly have made me want to go to sleep. Not good on the M4 out to the airport!"

Then, several years on – 22 December 2008 to be precise – Howard got the call to go for that liver transplant in the middle of making a speech at a wedding! Being of Dial-a-Cab stock, he cancelled the phone call and finished the speech, but took it several minutes later during a speech from the best man.

The Princess Alexandria in Brisbane had a liver, but Howard had to go in immediately. The transplant operation took 10 hours. He woke up and was immediately asked if he'd like to take a walk, while someone pushed the pump which had all Howard's drains and IV lines connected to it. Less than one week later, he was discharged – although still needing to return each day for a blood test.

A delighted Howard told **Call Sign** that he had been given New Year's Day and the following week off and that everything was still looking good.

"I'm still on some strong drugs," said Howard, "but I'm feeling better each day. It will be four weeks until I can drive again, six weeks before I'm allowed to lift anything and around three months before I can return to work. But after all these years of waiting for the phone to ring with news of a possible transplant, none of that sounds too bad! And the hospital were just brilliant!" Howard ended by wishing all his old friends at DaC a very happy new year "...and I think it will be a happy one for me as well!"

Nice one Howard!

Since a DaC driver's wife told how she blew the whistle on yellow badge drivers who had been working in central London, **Call Sign** has been inundated with articles on the subject. Now one of those DaC drivers has come back to question the PCO on how much action they are actually taking? We have allowed him to just use his DaC callsign...



Yellow Badges The Debate Rages On...

It was as long ago as February 1999 that I brought to the attention of the PCO the menace of *Radio Taxis* yellow badge drivers working in central London and I suggested to the PCO the use of yellow and green cards displayed in our cabs. As I have previously written, they did not think the idea would work and informed me – and I quote from Roy Ellis's reply. Mr Ellis was Head of the PCO at the time:

"One possibility is that the driver's licence takes the form of a plastic card, which is swiped through a reader on the meter which then displays electronically the area for which the driver is licensed. Even this, though, is not foolproof."

As far as I am aware nothing was ever followed up by the PCO.

I wrote to Mr Ellis again and received a reply on 4th October 2006 on his behalf from Simon Buggy. He thanked me for sharing my concerns regarding *Radio Taxis* and informed me that the PCO had written to all the radio circuits in 2006 advising them of the law and their responsibilities under it. All radio circuits were reminded that suburban drivers are prohibited from plying for hire, which includes accepting radio bookings, when they are outside their licensed area. They advised the radio circuits that this could not be condoned and must stop immediately. He also said that given it appears the practice may be continuing, he would ensure that the matter was raised the next time they met with the members of *London's Taxi Network*, the collective of the radio circuits.

I wrote to the PCO again and on 14th October 2007, received a reply from Mary Dowdye. She had replaced Roy Ellis following his retirement. She confirmed that Mr Ellis did raise the issue of 'out of area hiring's' with the radio circuits in 2006. She thought it disappointing to hear that I believed the practice was still continuing. She stressed that it was quite legal for a suburban driver to undertake a journey that began outside his/her sector, so long as he/she were in their licensed area when they accepted the hiring. She added that if there were evidence that either the radio circuits were acting illegally or encouraging illegal activity, the PCO would take appropriate and firm action.

I do not think the PCO either cares or intends to do anything at all to halt this illegal and immoral practice for the following reasons. All that is required is that the PCO look at the work sheets of all 'yellow badge' drivers to see where they are working. We already know about back-up zones and surely it cannot be too difficult for the PCO to send computer literate staff to see how the radio circuits set up their back-up zones and realise that the offending drivers could not have accepted the hiring from within their licensed areas. The PCO do not actually appear to do anything.

I gave them details of one driver, his cab, his address and when and where he goes each day. They do nothing. So much for their tough threats to act on information given to them?

To me, these drivers are no better than minicab touts. I have no sympathy for them and if they are finding it hard, well so are we all. But let them do what we all had to do – get off their lazy backsides and do the 'green badge' Knowledge or leave the trade. Do not steal our work. There is little enough to go around as it is...

DaC driver O85

HOLIDAY HOME DEALS

FOR DIAL-A-CABBIES

In Ostuni, Puglia, Italy (the heel)

More info at: www.holidaylettings.co.uk/41004

Brindisi Airport 25 mins... Bari Airport 50mins

Flights with Ryanair from £10 each way

Several Blue Flag beaches nearby

Typical rates for 1 week's rental before 20% discount for DaC drivers

January £210 August £560

Contact Shayne Wise (G05)

Tel: 01708 753128 or on mobile: 07590 540620

Email: shaynewise@yahoo.com

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

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies & Gents,

Christmas seems to have long gone and now that the elongated holiday season has ended, we should see trip figures improve as the days pass by. The nights are drawing out and with spring approaching, one would hope that with the current strength of the dollar and euro and the feel-good factor in the USA following President Barack Obama's inauguration, we would see a further increase in tourism from these parts, something that has been missing over the past few years.

EC5

You will have seen from numerous terminal messages, that complaints have been sent out to the minority of drivers that have still chosen to ignore the current booking-in procedures on EC5 (the former Finsbury Square rank).

The rank has been set up in an effort to reduce queue positions and to make it easier for the Call Centre to monitor. I am sure you all agree that enough warnings have been given and those that receive complaints through the post, quite honestly cannot feel aggrieved. Can I please remind you that you must be physically in one of the four EC zones before booking-in to gain a queue position on this rank. The system is regularly monitored and although it is only a minority of drivers that are breaking the rules, they are spoiling it for the rest. It is unfair and once caught, those offenders will be correctly brought to task. Please play the game...

Run-ins

During this current economic climate, account clients are more aware of service levels and



costs than ever before - and rightly so. Please be aware that the present run-in on regular accounts other than TaxiCards is £4.20 at the time of arrival on an ASAP trip or at the pre-booked time. If you are close to the run-in amount but still some distance from the pick-up location, please adjust the meter accordingly by restarting it. The system captures GPS coordinates, so please be aware that if you press the *Arrival* button and it shows that your location is not outside of the account address or pick-up, it causes problems with excess run-in amounts showing on the meter and can result in customer complaints.

Goldman Sachs

Whilst I have reminded you of EC5 proce-

dures, it is also well worth a mention that all Dial-a-Cab members have equal use of the rank outside of Goldman Sachs in EC4. Whist you are waiting for a trip in EC5, why not join the rank in St Bride Street? You are perfectly free to book into EC5 and also have the added option of a Goldman Sachs charge card trip as a further means of generating work.

There is a Marshal on site who is at hand to assist you should you encounter any problems. Many of you have used this rank in the past and are aware that trips will not automatically be offered to the rank from EC5, it is for Goldman Sachs employees to approach you on the rank with their charge cards. Give it a try...

Complaints meetings

The drivers that sit on Complaints meetings are selected from a group of volunteers that any fully paid-up member can join. If you feel you would like to make yourself available as part of a three-driver panel, please contact me and I will be only too pleased to explain how the complaints meetings are conducted and what is required of a committee member. If it is a role that you then feel suited, for I will happily put your name onto the list from which the three are drawn at random

Be very lucky...

Allan Evans

DaC Compliance Officer
Allane@Dialacab.co.uk

DaC client stung in Madoff scam...

Dial-a-Cab client and London peer, Lord Jacobs of Belgravia, had told **Call Sign** of a scam he had been caught in and one where he had lost many millions. This was the day before Bernie Madoff had emerged in the media as the biggest financial fraudster in history...

Lord Jacobs often asks the driver - in this case **Call Sign** Editor Alan Fisher - how he is on that day and in response to Alan reversing the politeness, he admitted that it had been a lousy day as he had been caught up in a "scam" that had cost him a fortune. He actually told Alan how much, but the Editor refused to reveal any more about the precise amount other than to say it ran into millions!

At the time, Alan had assumed that this had been one of the many internet scams doing the rounds, although he did tell the mag that Lord Jacobs seemed far too shrewd to have fallen for one of those.

The following day, the news broke about Bernie Madoff and his \$50 billion pyramid or Ponzi scam that put the New York and London investment markets into turmoil and with it, the explanation of what Lord Jacobs was talking about.

Madoff would ask for at least \$1 million from his wealthy clients and often got them to invest \$10 million or more in his scheme. For many years Madoff kept his clients - including banks - happy and in addition to a monthly return from their investment, there was never any problem getting their money returned. But the US being in recession had a devastating affect on his scheme with many investors needing to get their money back. Because his scheme involved paying one person from another's investment, the money ran out and he was arrested.

Sadly for his investors - and no doubt Lord Jacobs was far from being the only DaC client to lose out - the chances of getting their money returned now seems to be a lost cause. Lord Jacobs won't be totally devastated, however, as the Sunday Times Rich List had estimated his fortune at £128million. However, there was genuine sadness from him for those that couldn't stand the loss as well as he and have been wiped out...

Ron Yarborough, Call Sign Online

Leicester Square "Minicab Rank"

PCO respond...

There have been reports about a minicab "rank" being set up in Whitcomb Street, near Leicester Square. These reports are incorrect: No rank is permitted for minicabs or other private hire vehicles, here or elsewhere in London.

The TKTS booth in Leicester Square has been licensed by TfL as a private hire operating centre through the same licensing processes that apply for any other premises used by a private hire operator.

Westminster City Council has changed the traffic orders for the tour bus stand in Whitcomb St, which is taken out of operation

at night between 9pm and 4am, allowing vehicles to stop to pick up or set down passengers. Parking and waiting are not permitted on this stretch of road at these times. However, a dispensation is in place allowing licensed vehicles from West1 Minicabs, the operator licensed to use the TKTS booth, to wait a short time for a booked passenger. Enforcement of the parking and waiting restrictions is a matter for Westminster City Council.

Vehicles are not available for immediate hire without a booking taken at the licensed operating centre. After making a booking at the licensed office, passengers are escorted to

Whitcomb Street to locate the booked vehicle. All aspects of taxi and private hire legislation must be complied with.

Taxi ranks on Whitcomb Street and Coventry Street are served by hackney carriages, which can take customers without any booking.

Len Simkins

PCO Head of Strategy and Planning

Call Sign Comment:

Whilst we do not wish to disagree with the PCO, our belief has always been that if the cars and drivers are "waiting" in Whitcomb Street and can be seen by the public, that constitutes a rank.

To call it tough out there would be something of an understatement. Drivers are reporting waits on London taxi ranks that would have been more akin to the Heathrow car park in better times! Why it is happening is no longer relevant, but recession is now here and a fact of life. Hopefully, drivers will realise that we are all in the same boat and not try to pull one over on each other.

If empty and you overtake another empty cab and see a hand go up, please remember that it was the other driver's job. However, that doesn't mean that you can drive along at 15mph and expect everyone to stay behind you forever.

If another empty driver lets you out into the traffic, please remember that and don't pick up the job that would have been theirs. And please don't pick up within close proximity to a rank with cabs on.

Following Mike Son's article in this issue (p23) regarding minicabs also having it tough, we took a look around and sure enough **Call Sign** found Addison Lee cars parked in long, neat rows off

HARD TIMES!



Addison Lee cars "against the wall..."

Granby Terrace, obviously finding that with work no longer there, attracting drivers is not quite so easy; or in taxi terminology, they were up against the wall.

Things aren't going to get better by tomorrow, but they will eventually and so far as taxis are concerned, we must all hang in there and do our best...

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

Jon Asks What's New?

Geocaching: Keeping the geeks amongst us fit and sane!

Happy New Year to you all. During that odd few days between Christmas and New Year, I was bored and found myself mindlessly browsing Facebook when I came across a wall post from another member who mentioned Geocaching.



Wondering what on earth that could mean, I immediately Googled the word and found a link to www.geocaching.com and followed that. So began my plunge into a whole new world of high-tech treasure hunting!

Geocaching is best explained by the blurb from the front page of the GC website. I quote: "Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers called geocaches outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and environment support."

So I went and bought myself a personal GPS unit – not to be confused with a SatNav. This is a handheld, highly sensitive and accurate GPS navigational unit often used by hikers and anglers. After signing up to the website – free for basic use and \$30 a year for premium membership, which is recommended – and loading the coordinates of my home into my online profile, I was then presented with all the geocaches within range of my home. Using Google Earth, I was able to



A typical geocaching find
Inset: The Garmin Etrex Venture HC

locate hidden geocaches all over Essex and London. I then simply downloaded the closest 20 into my GPS unit and started hunting with my son!

I'm writing this on day 2 of our geocaching adventures and have so far discovered four geocaches within the local area and failed to find a fifth – too many people around and I didn't want to give the location away!

The rules are simple; when we find a hidden geocache (and trust me they are really well hidden – only a member with the coordinates stands any chance of finding them and even then it's not easy), you can take an item (i.e. a key ring) but you must then also leave an item (ie a small toy) and sign the log book (usually a little jotter). All of this is stored in a waterproof Tupperware lunchbox-sized container and stashed close to the coordinates. Sometimes a microcache is used where there would not be room for a larger cache (like in the city) and this is usually a 35mm camera container with simply a tiny logbook contained therein. You then update the online log for the cache, which shows that you have discovered it and then move

on to the next.

For additional fun, there are often items within the geocaches called *travel bugs*. These are uniquely coded trackable dog tags, which are usually tied to an object (a small figurine or teddy bear or GeoCoin for example, but could be any type of object) and these are tracked online. Every time a geo-

cacher finds one of these, they are to remove it and then drop it in one of the next caches they find. Often the owner of the travel bug will stipulate rules – for example a mini-figure of a footballer must be taken by the finder to a football match and photographed there before moving it on to the next cache they find (which could literally be anywhere amongst the

750,000 worldwide geocaches). Within one geocache we found a trackable Cursed Pirates Booty GeoCoin, which we will drop off in the next cache we find.

I must say that as great as geocaching may sound, it really is great fun for all the family and a perfect way of getting the kids to exercise in the great outdoors whilst hunting for treasure. And for techies like me, it's the best of both worlds – high-tech gadget meets outdoor adventures!

Please visit www.geocaching.com and see what you think. If you like the look of it, I can recommend the *Garmin Etrex Venture HC* navigational unit which I bought as per recommendations from other geocachers and which is reduced to £99.99 at: www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000UNDLQ2

Happy Geocaching – if you become a member, let me know!

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

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, the origin of the name Dial-a-Cab...

From Call Sign, June 1984...

Chairman's Report ... Peter Fennymore (A79)

The Board have now decided on the name that we shall use when we start our publicity campaign to herald the move to our new premises at Brunswick Place. The promotional name will be **Dial-a-Cab**. Our professional advertising agents are convinced that they can get a good jingle around that name, that with sufficient advertising coupled with hundreds of taxis displaying our new door adverts, it will become a household name. It is a very simple name, but when you think about it, it tells people precisely what to do if they want a taxi; just imagine how many times people ask how they can get a taxi? Hopefully that will soon be answered by saying "...Dial-a-Cab of course!" Our trading name will still be ODRTS.

Speaking of moving, we are still on target, so much so that it is possible that we shall be in Brunswick Place before the 31st July 1984. I certainly hope so for nothing would give me a more personal satisfaction than to see us settled into our new home before I leave the Board of Management.

Following the announcement of a fare increase from July 16th 1984, the BoM have decided that the permitted run in will remain at £1.20.

Minimum charges will stay as they are, but extra payment for waiting time will only be paid for 30 minutes and only if you wait a full 15 minutes will any extra payment be made. After 30 minutes, all waiting time payments will be as per meter. The Board have made these decisions to enable us to be competitive, certainly it will make the Sales Executive job of winning new customers that much easier. Statistics show that by far the vast majority of waiting time is less than 30 minutes anyway, so we haven't lost much, if anything at all.

Bye for now - Be lucky - Have faith

Peter Fennymore (A79)



David Kupler (Y74), David Ballard (N28) and Alex Constantinou (N05) are Call Sign's restaurant reviewers. These DaC drivers and their guests will visit restaurants periodically and give their honest opinions. This month David visited The St Pancras Grand...

EATING OUT WITH CALL SIGN

On a bitterly cold late December evening, my wife and I headed off to **Searcys St Pancras Grand** restaurant, situated on the upper concourse opposite the St Pancras Grand Champagne Bar and above the café bars and shops of **St Pancras International** station that has recently undergone an impressive £800million refurbishment and is of course the home to **Eurostar**.

Taking its inspiration from a cross between New York's Grand Central Station and the Orient Express, the restaurant sets out to capture the romance of train travel from a bygone age with lots of glass partitions, dark leather banquettes and waiting staff smartly dressed in black waistcoats. Glowing spheres light the room, with the restaurant's high ceilings reaching up to the Dutch gold leaf roof. There is a nice feel to the Grand.

Certainly executive chef Billy Reid comes with excellent credentials, having previously worked at the 2 Michelin Star Vineyard at Stockcross, together with London's top quality L'Escargot and Belvedere.

The menu is simple and in line with the recent revival of traditional British food. Oysters and caviar feature on the menu, together with cold meats, fish, rump steak and perhaps even more traditionally, sausage and mash!

I decided to swerve the *caviar* at £75 a go, as I probably wouldn't be asked to do a **Call Sign** review again and begin with some very tasty *kipper paté* at £7.50! With it being so cold outside, my wife chose a large bowl of freshly made *cream of winter vegetable soup* at £6 - a simple dish but one that still needs to be done well - and yes, it was.

For our main courses, we tucked in to the *Grand Fish Pie* (£11.75), made with salmon and white fish, topped with creamy mashed potato and smoked Finnan haddock. A poached egg and mustard butter accompanied this delicious pie. Very good value at £15. We added side orders of green vegetables with samphire and a medley of carrots, onions and walnuts. All side orders are priced at a reasonable (for this class of restaurant) £3.50.

Christmas may be long past for Dial-a-Cab drivers, but it had only just ended during our visit to the Grand, so our stomachs were still feeling somewhat seasonally over-stretched. But to please our Editor, we ordered desserts of *Eton mess* and a large slice of *custard tart with butterscotch*. There are several other traditional desserts on the menu including sherry trifle, rice pudding and apple crumble. All are priced at £6.50.

Wine is European and served by the

glass from £3.80, carafe from £11.25 or bottle from £15.95.

We had heard rumours about the St Pancras Grand concerning slow service. Well I can't speak for how it was when it opened, but we found it to be very prompt and efficient and suitably appropriate for those wanting to eat before catching their train.

If you are there just for lunch or perhaps catching an afternoon train and don't feel capable of eating a big meal, there is an all-day brunch menu with lighter meals such as smoked salmon and scrambled eggs, omelettes or burgers.

There is also a very pleasant Grand afternoon tea served between 3pm and 5.30pm, which includes assorted sandwiches and homemade cakes for £17.50. Just as important as the food, bearing in mind where you are, is a luggage waiting area!

The St Pancras Grand Restaurant and Oyster Bar is open daily between 11am and 10.30pm. It also offers private dining, creating discrete surroundings for up to 10 people.

To book, call 020 7870 9900 or email stpg@searcys.co.uk.

David Ballard (N28)

FREE!!! TAXI DRIVERS' BREAKFAST

at the New Radisson Edwardian
Bloomsbury Street Hotel

10.30AM THURSDAY
12 FEBRUARY 2009

Calling all Dial-a-Cab drivers!

On Thursday 12 February, FREE bacon sandwiches, tea and coffee will be served to introduce taxi drivers to our new hotel.

The time? 10am-11am.

Where? The Radisson Edwardian Bloomsbury Street Hotel 9-13 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3QD

Just bring along your badge or bill as proof of ID and enjoy a Bloomsbury brekkie on us!

New Year, New Name! As part of a £25 million transformation, leading London hotelier Radisson Edwardian has announced the four-star deluxe Marlborough Hotel, Bloomsbury was renamed the Bloomsbury Street Hotel from January 2009.

"Bloomsbury has a creative and independent edge and is renowned as a hive for artistic activity," says General Manager, Karthik Ramamurthy. "Being located on Bloomsbury Street and with the British Museum, Covent Garden and Theatreland on our doorstep, we felt it only fitting to reflect and celebrate this heritage through our name and new design."

Paying respect to the literary connection, a whole wall made up of pages from one of Bloomsbury's most famous exports - Virginia Woolfe's *Mrs Dalloway* - now dominates the hotel's spacious reception area.

Positioned in the heart of London's creative quarter, the Bloomsbury Street Hotel has enjoyed a full body, top-to-toe makeover including the creation of a brand new 7th floor hosting some of the smartest suites in London, yet with just 1 extra bedroom (174 in total), it means rooms and bathrooms are even more spacious, with a sleek meeting and events suite, which boasts 7 spaces - including one of the largest meeting rooms in London and the very latest HD technology, in-built Blu-Ray and intuitive touch-screen controls for every aspect of the room.

The beautifully designed spaces provide true five-star luxury at four-star prices, offering guests the same convenient location and high quality service with all the stylish mod-cons.

Showcasing the culinary craftsmanship of award winning chef Redmond Hayward, the opulent Bloomsbury Street Restaurant also looks set to become London's hottest gastronomic destination.

"We believe that this fresh *Bloom* offers a ray of light for London's tourist industry in 2009," added Karthik Ramamurthy, "providing a luxurious and yet relaxing haven within bustling Bloomsbury".

Bookings/info: Tel: 020 7636 5601

Email resbsh@radisson.com

Or visit the website at:

www.radissonedwardian.com/bloomsburystreet

And don't forget your free breakfast on February 12th between 10 and 11am...

Never mind crashing into wind turbines...

WHAT IF A UFO CRASHED INTO MY TAXI???

Following recent news stories about a UFO allegedly wrecking a wind turbine, specialist car insurance broker **Adrian Flux** had a call from a curious customer asking what would happen if a UFO crashed into his car? We assume the same question could apply to your Dial-a-Cab taxi. So the Flux boffins thought about what bizarre accidents were or weren't covered...

Among the potential disasters that are usually covered by normal car insurance schemes - assuming the driver has a comprehensive policy, are:

- Monkeys wrecking the car on a drive through a safari park.
- A block of frozen urine dropping from a plane and hitting the car.
- A meteor dropping from a plane and hitting the car.
- Crashing into a grand piano left on a hairpin bend of an Alpine pass (with European cover).
- A kangaroo on the hop from the local zoo, jumping over the car and wrecking the roof.
- A mastermind criminal operating from a satellite in geostationary orbit holding the city council to ransom by taking over the traffic lights and causing gridlock in the streets during which time chaos the car is smashed.
- A UFO crashing into the car! However, if the UFO causes an accident by attacking the car with, say, a photon torpedo ray gun, then that would be considered an act of war and



If this UFO crashes into your taxi, try to get its registration number!

not be covered. Similarly, if an intergalactic war led to Armageddon and resulted in the car being damaged, that too would not be covered.

Gerry Bucke, of **Adrian Flux Insurance Services**, told *Call Sign*:

"It gets more complicat-

ed if the UFO hits a wind turbine causing a rotor blade to shear off, which then crashes into the car. In that case, the driver's best hope is that the UFO pilot's policy is completely up to date, as it would be simpler to make a claim on the alien's insurance. Otherwise there could be arguments as to who was responsible for the damage to the car. In the worst case scenario, the car would be covered by our policy - it's just that a claim would affect the driver's *No Claims Bonus*."

Gerry added as an afterthought:

"I suppose you could get your money back from *The Sun* if the alien agreed to pose for a photo with you and then only if you got all his heads in!

If you also drive a car, Adrian Flux aims to offer cheaper car insurance and has a huge range of policies for the motoring enthusiast. For details contact the Adrian Flux quote line on 0800 505 3000 or email at quotes@adrian-flux.co.uk or www.adrianflux.co.uk.

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(Additional £500 cash deposit required for any damages)

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Since the downturn in the economy, have you noticed when going into a shop how pleasant, courteous and helpful staff seem to be?

On past occasions I can remember getting annoyed when standing at a store counter for quite some time, while members of staff were too busy with their own unimportant and trivial conversations on their private lives, to take account of customers. There were many times when I'd ask store staff if they would attend to my enquiry and continue their conversations later! But shop staff now actually makes eye contact with the customer and if a purchase is made, the sales person will often ask both disabled and able-bodied customers if there is any help needed to carry items to their car.

Even when work is required at home, how pleasant an initial phone call can be with "...good morning sir / madam, what seems to be the problem?" Then when the contactor arrives without us waiting as long for an appointment as we often used to, a "...good morning and don't worry, we'll make sure any mess will be cleared by us," is always welcome. It is refreshing to get good service by staff that are helpful and courteous.

So it's rather sad that there has to be a financial crisis for those that supply goods and services to realise the customer really does matter and should not be taken for granted.

However, this increase in service obviously does not apply to all goods and service providers, so it is important that our industry is one where good service is paramount to us, as well as being expected by our customers.

It does appear that more drivers - whether radio or non-radio - are becoming more helpful with luggage or offering a cheery hello or good morning or evening. That can certainly help the

Mike Son's Bits and Pieces!



start of the journey and gives some assurance to the passenger that she or he is valued. If they do not want to be cheered up, then that doesn't mean we should be rude. Being polite is an unwritten but important part of our job, in addition to taking the passenger where they want to go.

I know it's tough out there, especially for those trying to maintain the standard of living we have become used to. So the one thing I just cannot understand is still the high level of rejects. Yes, it's hard to believe, but true. Ladies and gentleman, looking for that elusive flyer or roader is a big mistake. Accept whatever trip is offered because you never know where you can end up. Do not gamble - it is just not worth it. How often have you rejected a trip and later

cursed yourself for not accepting it? Next time your finger is hovering over accept or reject, think back and remember that feeling.

A client recently said to me that protecting the financial interest of their organisation by cutting costs in all areas - especially in transport - was a major factor. Service was of course important, but as a company they had so much choice.

Rather than phone for a cab, companies often instruct their staff to take the bus or train or flag a cab down in the street. Minicabs are being used because they have fixed rates, but believe me, minicab companies are also finding it very difficult. I suppose that's one consolation...

Mike Son, Special Projects

Call Sign

February 2009

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BEDFONT GREEN IN PROMOTION RACE

Bedfont Green came away from Chertsey Town's Alwyns Lane ground with an important point as they drew 1-1 in a match the home side knew they had to win to keep themselves in the promotion chase to the Ryman league.

BG Manager Dennis Bainborough welcomed back forward Russell Miner, who replaced suspended Chris Henry in attack and recent signing Billy Sentence, a former Chelsea Junior, was also included as a substitute. The home side started brighter and stroked the ball around well for the first few minutes but without posing a threat to BG goalkeeper / DaC driver, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, but the next 15 minutes belonged to The Green with Russell Miner and Gavin Hart making inroads while midfield pass maestros, Craig White and Jon-Barrie Bates, linked the play well.

Although the match was tight, Bedfont Green still managed to create chances and on 40 minutes Bates played a through ball to Cooper whose shot was parried by Smith, but picked up on the rebound where he rounded the keeper to place home a left-footed shot between two defenders on the goal line.

Chertsey had a great chance to score themselves, a venomous volley was hit from no more than 15 yards but Lee Pearce unbelievably saved down to his right. The big stopper was in fine form and made several clean catches as Chertsey fired in cross after cross before the half drew to a close.

The second half belonged to the home side as they enjoyed lengthy spells of possession with former BG player Aaron McLeish showing flashes of the player that made him such a favourite, but Lee Pearce and the back four were equal to his efforts. On 62 minutes a Bedfont Green counter-attack saw Miner set free, however he was beaten by the very uneven surface. Within seconds a ground kick from the Chertsey keeper was launched forward, an unfortunate mix-up at the back saw Pomroy gifted a chance to equalise and as his goal record this season suggests, he wasn't going to miss.

Chertsey piled on the pressure with McLeish smashing an effort over the crossbar and another wide of the post within a few minutes. Pomroy also had another chance but this time his effort was somehow turned over the bar by Lee Pearce.

Then the following Saturday (24th) a 1 - 0 win over Camberley Town at the same time that Epsom lost to Ash United saw Bedfont Green climb back to the top of the Combined Counties Premier Division on goal difference.

As Lee Pearce told Call Sign: "The promotion dream is still on..."

Combined Counties Premier Division (top five) - 24 February 2009

Team	Pd	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1. Bedfont Green	24	15	5	4	66	37	29	50
2. Epsom & Ewell	24	15	5	4	56	28	28	50
3. Camberley Town	24	12	10	2	58	32	26	46
4. Cove	23	11	8	3	49	34	15	41
5. North Greenford United	22	11	8	3	53	39	14	41

PORTRAIT AND WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

Looking for a present? There is nothing quite as personal as a picture of you and your loved ones in a frame. I do portrait shoots in the comfort of your own home or on location.

Are you getting married? If you want something a bit different and contemporary, then look no further. My specialty is to capture candid moments and the story of your day will be presented in a stylish coffee table book.

As a regular **Dial-a-Cab** client, I will offer you a special deal on portraits: £50 with a CD of all your images (not normally included) and 8% discount on the wedding package.

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



Horoscopes...

Santa brought me a wonderful Swarovski crystal ball last year now that all crystal is Swarovski and there simply isn't any plain unbranded crystal any more... is there? What a triumph for product placement! AND it has magical powers, making little me an expert astrologer. Here is what I have seen (apart from the unprintable, but you don't really want to know who is due for an incurable sexually transmitted disease or whose taxi will be totalled in a police chase crash that had nothing to do with you, or that type of thing).

Aquarius

Early February will be dreary but productive with you getting paperwork organised. However there's a nasty black hole in your constellation in the second part of the month. Women – try to speak as little as possible. Men – your legendary good humour will get you through. No Aquarian should break the speed limit or visit a betting shop after the 14th.

Pisces

Advice, like snow, sticks only when it falls gently. Give your passengers a break this month and only ask for political views and opinions – don't offer them. Women – look for someone wearing black and blue on the 20th and 21st. They cherish you more than you could know.

Aries

You've been fretting about the future; Arians are great worriers. It's not too late for a second string to your bow and you've got time now to look at some re-training. Sign up for a local authority computer course, or get a security qualification or enrol in the *University of the Third Age*, which is cheap, flexible and fun. Go with your partner if you feel shy.

Taurus

Your stars predict a pompous account passenger, a smelly woollen hat left in your taxi, a Russian who has only roubles to pay you and more 'little jobs' than usual expected of you by your partner. The only way to salvage this ditch-dull month, is by doing something totally out of character for someone close to you and waiting for their reaction – but don't leave it later than the 12th.

Gemini

You're fed up, but with the moon in your sign from next Wednesday, a new initiative is well-starred. A good month to drive a hard bargain on a new taxi

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

Back Seat *Driver*



or non-European holiday. Remember, everything is negotiable, so just make your offer to the manager if the salesman laughs at you.

Cancer

Take time out from driving around empty and expand your cooking skills. Cancer partners (and I am one – they call us 'Moon children' in the US because the name of our star sign scares them) should pack some good lunches/snacks for your DaC driver. That will improve the waistline, the exchequer and the relationship.

Leo

The moon is in the ascendant in your sign later this month – does that mean a lottery win? Of course not! Stop dreaming! Stop waiting for your ship to come in; swim out to it. You'll feel better for the swim if nothing else. Say 'yes' this month a few times when you feel like 'no'... even in bed.

Virgo

Expect a big tip this month from a drunken show-off on the 9th, 14th or 23rd. Sign nothing, not even a birthday card on the 10th. It will end

in tears if you do. Take special care, both sexes, with personal hygiene and your hair cut.

Libra

Those Librans thinking of moving in with a new love, think again. Two can live as cheaply as one, but only if one stops eating. Venus does not cross your sign this month, and if it did, so what? Keep your private space for invited guests only.

Scorpio

Scorpios are talented at getting their own way. Women in this sign, try not to be sensitive to insult – it disempowers you. Men, give your partners and friends more of the smooth talk you once did, which they will adore and try not to go on about how hard you have to work this month. We know...

Sagittarius

The Sagittarian arrow signals fear for you this month, a nameless fear. Also, a groundless one as it's going to be a lucky month for you, particularly if you or your partner drive a Metrocab. And if your birthday is on the 9th or 16th, expect help with a longstanding issue. Accept it fearlessly and with thanks.

Capricorn

An accident, a breakdown, a fare-dodger or possibly an embarrassing illness for you this month. Your children or your parents will help you through it, if you let them. It will be a privilege for them and will bring you closer. To avoid trouble, consider staying at home or on holiday all this month and start your life again next month...

Love
Madame Poppy



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LTFUC: Chairman's End of Year Report

by Honorary Chairman, DaC's David Lessman (D19)

In April, at the very kind invitation of Paul Nicholas and David Ian Associates, children were taken from East London to the west-end in a police escorted convoy of taxis to see the hit musical **Grease**, while May heralded a return visit to **Chessington** in glorious sunshine.

However, our annual visit to **Southend** in July was probably the wettest day of the year! Even so, 100 taxi drivers braved the weather and were sent on their way by Ian Luder, then Lord Mayor-elect of the City of London. At **Covent Garden** in September, the public were given the opportunity to see a little of what the Fund tries to achieve and though unable to take part in this year's Pearly Kings and Queens Costermongers' Harvest Festival and Parade, I thank them for the invitation.

The highlight of the fantastic year was the **Gala Dinner and Dance** in October at the **Palace of Westminster**. This spectacular function was a celebration of 80 years of assisting those children unable to enjoy the quality of life they should and we were pleased to entertain many of the generous people and companies who over a period of many years have given us such wonderful support. The year was completed by our participation in the **Lord Mayor's Show** in November, with decorated taxis designed by driver Steve Bell, followed by a truck support-

ing a huge polystyrene taxi and carrying many children enjoying a grandstand view.

The taxi trade press are to be congratulated for giving maximum coverage of all the functions and events that took place. The success of these events, as always, has been achieved not only through the unstinting and generous support of our many benefactors, but by the taxi drivers of London whose unfailing encouragement - donating lost property rewards, taking our diaries, carrying collecting boxes at Christmas and of course giving their time when taking part in the outings for which the Fund is so well known, is truly appreciated.

Although our income this year exceeded that of last year by a little over 10%, our expenditure almost doubled! By restricting our outgoings during 2006 and 2007 and allowing our reserves to accumulate, we were able to make 2008 most memorable. Apart from being seen to celebrate, our 80th year was also a record for the amount granted to worthy causes. The most notable were the purchase of a number of boats for the **Docklands Scout Project**, made possible by the legacy of Daphne Lines and **twenty children's wheelchairs** donated to the **British Red Cross** for home loan use. Over £3000 was given to the **dependants of London taxi drivers** and almost £4000 helped more children benefit through the good offices of **Communications Options**. *The total amount the Fund was able to grant in this special year was just short of a staggering £40,000!*

Naturally, there are the inevitable costs that accompany such an eventful year, but I am proud to report that the general administrative expenses incurred by the Fund represented just 2% of the generated income. I am truly honoured to be part of this small group of licensed London taxi drivers who act as brokers for those who have and those who need...

Within the 2007 LTFUC Chairman's Report, I wrote that as we would be celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Fund in the following year, a number of special events were in the planning stage. Little did I suspect that 2008 would prove to be the busiest, most rewarding and most enjoyable year in the history of the *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children*. I sincerely thank my fellow trustees - all working London taxi drivers - who give so much time and effort, for their support and take this opportunity to congratulate Honorary Life President **Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)** who also celebrated his 80th birthday in 2008.

The year started with the best ever **Grosvenor House** party for 600 disadvantaged children, and once again the Cheeky Girls headed the fantastic entertainment. Many guests joined us including the Worshipful Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Carolyn Keen.

TAXIDRIVERS & OWNERS LEGAL PROTECTION LTD

Following many months of planning, we are pleased to announce the launch of **Taxidriers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd** and are accepting members now.

Taxidriers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd is the brainchild of Alan Fleming, who was formerly the Chairman of The London Cab Drivers Club Ltd.

Taxidriers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd will be a non-political organisation that will provide legal cover and representation for fully paid-up members.

A legal firm, based in the City of London, who have a vast knowledge of Hackney Carriage Law have been appointed by our insurers.

Our subscription rate is exceptionally low due to low overheads, which have been brought about by careful and economic planning. We intend to use modern communication to cut down on administrative costs

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For Membership details, call or text Dave Cohen on 07956 894701 or Alan Fleming on 07831 092123

Alternatively, enquire by email to; topsltd2009@googlemail.com

JOIN NOW...YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE

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

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

The Foundling Museum is at 40 Brunswick Square WC1

Tel. 020 7841 3600

Visit their website at

www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

A Dial-a-Cab driver asks the question...

JUST WHAT DO SOME DRIVERS WANT?



Bernie Silver asks what do some drivers want

An interesting call came in recently from Dial-a-Cab driver **Bernie Silver (G08)**. He had just spoken to his passenger and the resulting conversation had left him somewhat shell-shocked, so much so that he felt he had to pass it on to **Call Sign**. We, in turn, are asking you whether you agree with Bernie or the driver concerned...

The passenger told Bernie how he had ordered a DaC taxi to pick him up at London City Airport on the morning of Monday 5 January – probably the quietest day of the year – and how he had been irritated by the driver's constant moaning.

The trip wasn't a good one – only going to Cabot Square. However through no fault of his own, the passenger had been delayed by 2.5 hours. The driver would probably have been offered a scrub, but obviously chose to wait and for that short journey probably took more money – using hardly any fuel – than many drivers would have taken on the whole day!

"But according to my passenger," said Bernie, **"the driver just would not stop moaning. I just wish I had a job like that every day! You just can't help wondering just what it is that some drivers want!"**

If anyone has a view, feel free to send it in to **Call Sign**...



John Fisher: "I think it's a liberty!"

John Fisher: "Insurance increase is a liberty"

John Fisher (C45) considers himself to be a good driver and his maximum *no claim bonus* with **Westminster** Insurance was testament to that. But last year the Westminster, after many years of covering London's taxi drivers, was taken over by **Tradex**. Drivers were told in a final letter from Westminster that nothing would really change, so most went along with the transfer – one of those being John Fisher.

"Indeed nothing did change," John told **Call Sign**, "until just before Christmas and a few days before the policy was due to expire, when a quarterly cover note was sent to my home. I was told that the rate had increased from £540 a year – which I paid at £135 each quarter – to £655 a year. However, that was if I paid the lot! If I wanted to continue paying quarterly, that rate would increase to £786 via £196 a quarter. I thought it was a real liberty."

Because of the holiday period, it was too late for John to look around for another insurance company so he paid up.

Call Sign spoke to Tradex and we were told they knew nothing about it, but that a Manager would call us back. Unfortunately no one did, so we have to assume that John's case is now the norm.

If you have suffered a similar occurrence or found a better insurance deal, let **Call Sign** know. It's also worth bearing in mind that you no longer have to visit your insurance broker, so it really doesn't matter where the company is based provided they offer the correct cover for London taxis.

If Tradex would like to comment, the space is theirs...

WCHCD GREEN BADGE GUIDES AT THE WAR ROOMS

DaC drivers walk in Churchill's footsteps...

A group of taxi drivers, including several from Dial-a-Cab who had passed their Green Badge Cab Guide Course, recently had a private tour of the Cabinet War Rooms, the bunker from which Winston Churchill and his Cabinet ran the country during WW2. The tour allowed them privileged access to the key rooms of the Museum including the Cabinet Room, which has been perfectly preserved since 1945.

Call Sign's Bob Woodford said: "It really was an excellent tour and we'd like to thank Operations Manager Gerry McCartney and Melody Allen of the Museum for organising it."

The Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms are open daily from 9.30am until 6pm (last admission 5pm). For entry fees or details on booking private tours, visit their website:

www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet.

For details on the next Green Badge course, contact course co-ordinator **Graham Woodhouse** on 07968-791117 or e-mail at info@cabguide.com.



Sweet Trees

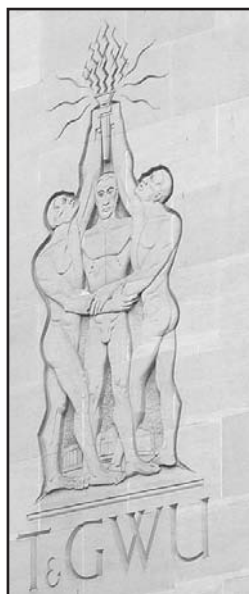
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The old TGWU - did it work against the drivers?

Yes I know it's quiet out there and things are tough, but at least you don't have to worry about being made redundant, sacked or turned down for an interview! But things will get better and just as the London cab trade is the first to go down, it is also the first to bounce back up!

Us old ones have seen all this before and it doesn't help to moan... although it can make you feel a little better! At least we can work as many days and hours as we are capable of. To my way of thinking, the big differences between now and the old days is the huge increase in legal and illegal competition. In the past there was very little, just the odd car slinking around the clubs and the few yellow badge drivers working in town.

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

FIFTY GREEN YEARS...

Nowadays there seems to be every form of vehicle - no matter how dangerous they are to the travelling public.

But remember this; when the licensed taxi trade was highly unionised, scabs and illegals were few on the ground and if you didn't have a paid up union card you couldn't get a fleet cab to drive. And, as a *musber*, many of the bigger cab garages would not service, work, or repair your taxi. Since the weakening of all trade unions, employment security has all but disappeared and much of the blame for this must be put onto the unions themselves who abused their enormous power by wanting what has proved to be unaffordable wages and benefits for their members.

The London cab trade has the LTDA as its best bet to fight illegal and unfair competition and practices. But with only about one third of all London's licensed taxi drivers being members of any trade organisation, even they can only do so much to help and support the trade.

So my advice to you is this; you are members of one of the best radio circuits in the

world. Now join the LTDA, which in my opinion is the best taxi defence association in the world. In that way you at least have two strong organisations protecting and supporting you against all the jobsworths, trouble-makers and regulators.

It is, of course, up to you. I still belong to the LTDA and I no longer drive a cab for a living or any other reasons. Frankly, in all the years I spent behind the wheel, I never found driving in a taxi as nice as driving in an equivalent priced car. So other than the money a taxi takes - whereas a car takes your money - I must state that a car is better to drive under most circumstances. But a taxi gives you a better, safer tool to do the job with.

If you have a God, or Gods you believe in, ask them for some bad weather and a few wildcat transport strikes, as they nearly always bring in some extra dosh.

Be lucky, be safe, and keep on plugging away...

Sunset Strip

How to Use Call Sign's Website

One of the most common letters **Call Sign** receives is why we only put 20 pages from each issue online? The answer is that we don't!

There are two versions of each issue in the **Call Sign** library - the biggest facility of its kind in the whole cab trade. If you want to have a look at an online version - and you can go back to 1967 - just go to www.dac-callsign.co.uk. You will then see a selection of years beginning at 2009 and going right the way back to 1967. Click on the year you want and that will then present you with that year's covers. Just click on the one you want to read.

If you go back prior to May 2006, each issue will contain a selection of around 20 pages from each issue. These will include mainly DaC attributed stories, BoM reports and the Mailshot pages. These 20 page selections continue up to the latest issue, but since May 2006, there are also PDF versions of each issue. These contain the complete mag - ads n'all.

If you select a 20 page version, you can also use **Call Sign's** search facility. This enables you to enter a word as a clue to help you find something. If, for example, you remember writing a letter to the mag but can't remember when, put your surname into the search facility and it will bring up every page where the name is mentioned. Click on the one you think it might be and that should contain your letter! If you click on the little PDF sign (at the bottom of each icon) you will get the complete mag but no search facility.

There are three very old issues available to look at; one from 1987 which is almost complete and one each from 1977 and 1967, which are both complete mags.

Hope that makes life easier...

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Fare increase – in favour

Dear Alan,

You asked in your Editorial column recently whether we should forego the tariff increase next year. The answer is an emphatic 'no' for the following reasons. Firstly, tube and bus fares are set to rise by 6%, train fares by 7% and the airlines are still charging a fuel surcharge even though the price of oil has dropped by over 60% in the past few months. The public expect their transport costs to rise and any rider who stops using cabs in the coming months would have done so regardless of whether we get a 3-4% rise or not. Secondly, although the inflation rate is falling, it was still running at 4.1% in December. We need the increase just to maintain the standard of living we had last year. No increase would mean that the effects of this year's inflation would be locked into our tariff forever. And thirdly, it would set a precedent. We've had an annual increase since at least 1980 when I started driving and we've had them in good times and bad. A possible compromise would be for the negotiators to apply to have the extras reinstated. This would be cost neutral to single pins and we would get proper recompense from the five handers in the City and the Fulham Road who think it's funny to go round the corner and legal you for a fiver.

On another matter, can you tell me what the Society's policy is regarding the recruiting of new drivers? Twice recently, I have been asked by drivers how to do something or other on the terminal adding that they've only been on the circuit for a few weeks! When I joined the circuit in April 1993 just after the last recession, I had been on the waiting list since the summer of 1990. Surely it's time to stop recruiting new drivers until business picks up, after all, apart from bailiffs and liquidators, who else is increasing their workforce?

Jon Francis (A39)

Thanks for the letter Jon. Whilst I agree with your sentiments in principle, I have to disagree in practice. These are extraordinary times that do not appear to be heading towards normality any-time soon. So as I said last month, a 4% increase will put your takings up by £4 in a hundred. If the increase only loses you one job – bearing in mind there are around 2 million people currently out of work – then you are already out of pocket. Believe me, it gives me no pleasure to say that because you are right that passengers get used to an increase under normal circumstances. But these times aren't normal and I really believe that rejecting a fare increase would gain us

some positive publicity and possibly help keep some passengers that we might have lost. Either way, we're going to lose far more than we gain but rejecting the increase could possibly help – especially bearing in mind as you state, the increases in bus and train fares.

As for your second question, I asked Allen Togwell – he carries out the new driver's interview process for DaC – and for some time now we have just been replacing those that leave or sadly pass away ...Ed

Fare increase – against

With reference to your *Fares Unfair* item in the December edition of *Call Sign*, I must say that I agree totally with your view that we should forego an increase in the next tariff review. If things go on as they are or as most of the 'experts' are predicting, get much worse, then an increase in our prices would in my opinion, be disastrous for our trade. What business suffering a big fall in sales, then increases its' prices?

On the other hand, I feel a decision to decline an increase properly announced to the public for maximum PR benefit, would have a really positive impact on both the image of our trade and more importantly, our workload. Quite how this can happen though, I'm not sure because as far as I know, there is no mechanism within the trade to seek the views of the majority on such an issue. I think all night-time drivers have seen work levels plunge at a time when we are traditionally at our busiest. In conversation with passengers, it is evident that Tariff 3 is losing us untold business. It was conceived when times for the taxi trade were good - when demand at night far outstripped supply. In the current economic climate, where the reverse is true, many people feel that Tariff 3 fares are very expensive and a big deterrent to them using cabs after 10pm. I believe all night-time drivers have seen work levels plunge at a time when we are traditionally at our busiest. Are we just going to sit back and accept the situation on the assumption that better times will soon return, or should we attempt to do something to recover some or all of our lost work? Unfortunately I realise that any proposals to freeze or reduce our prices would be very unpopular with many drivers and I suppose therefore are unlikely to happen.

Mike Holleyoake (M06)

And again...

I totally agree with your view re not taking the usual increase in taxi fares given to us next April. For a start it hardly makes any difference, it would generate the usual bad publicity about greedy cab drivers and probably convince some people into using other forms of transport. I would rather keep the current fares and have bums on seats.



What's the point of an increase if it means driving around empty! And I certainly don't agree with increasing the minimum to £15; in fact we might have to accept that we are going to have to offer more fixed prices to keep the work. Luckily for us, the train companies seem to have shot themselves in the foot with an inflation busting increase! I am sure the daymen should be able to organise a taxi-sharing scheme whereby maybe they can pick up 4 people from the suburbs to bring into the city? I am also sure it will be cheaper and more pleasant than using an overcrowded train.

I'm sorry to hear that Richard Potter is taking a well-earned break from writing for *Call Sign*; I used to enjoy his articles, cheers mate.

May I also take this opportunity first to thank the BoM and all the staff at DaC for another excellent year, despite the downturn towards the end, and also to wish the BoM, all staff and fellow members a happy and hopefully not so severe 2009.

Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)

And again...

Hi Alan

I must have spoken to at least 20 fellow cab drivers regarding the Spring increase. Along with myself, not one has been in favour of accepting it. I think I read in *Call Sign* that it's around 3.9%, which will make very little difference to our daily take and seeing as all businesses around us seem to be dropping their prices, an increase for us could have a very negative effect on our trade. I have never had any problem with the current meter fare, but it's now bums on seats that counts.

If the fare increase in reality makes little difference, a fare reduction by the same margin would also make little cash difference to us. The trade could do with a bit of good publicity for a change and possible encourage a few more of those bums to go on our seats! Yes, to some this suggestion might seem too radical, but given the current climate perhaps this is the time for the trade to consider a tariff reduction?

Kevin Went (N19)

And to all those who expressed an opinion on the 'should we or shouldn't we' accept an increase by phoning, my thanks as well. All in all, I'd say the total percentage vote was around 70 – 30 against accepting an increase ...Ed

And a different view...?

Hello Al,

Re your idea of a fares freeze; although you probably mean well, we as small business are no different to Dial-a-Cab. I would therefore suggest you talk to Brian and ask him

MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 28

to freeze the increase in subs considering the way the work has fallen away. I am pretty sure what his answer will be! **Terry Jackson (E56)**

Thanks Terry, but I'm not sure it's the same thing. Any driver can leave DaC to go elsewhere if he thinks it is better value, but he can't just leave the trade. Go out onto your local High Street and tell me how many small business are increasing their prices, as against lowering them in an attempt to keep going and getting some money in? ...Ed

Letter to the Chairman...

Dear Brian

This is the first time I have written to you, but I feel compelled too. We in the taxi trade are faced with the most difficult time I think since the emergence of the minicab and we need to rise to the challenge.

Having been a taxi driver for the last 17 years and with Dial-a-Cab for 14 years, I think we have all enjoyed good times with sometimes even a glut of work. But gone are the days of 30 to 50 jobs in EC5 waiting to be covered, now we struggle to get a position at 8.50pm.

Desperate times call for drastic measures. We need to claw back the big accounts from the PH. Would the Board consider:-
(i) Cancelling all run-ins and engaging the meter at booked time only?

(ii) Do away with £4 pre-booking fee for stations and theatres?

(iii) Cancel the £1.50 levied by Dial-a-Cab on all cash and credit card bookings and again only engage meter when outside of address and at booked time?

These are just a few suggestions, there are many other things we may need to look at.

Jamie Lee (T36)

Brian Rice replies: Very interesting letter Jamie. These opinions always surface when there is a downturn in the work! Personally, I do not agree with you, after all where do we stop? Abolish the driver gratuity and also give the client very low fixed prices? Experience has shown me these measures do not work; believe me it is the easiest thing in the world to lower prices but extremely difficult to raise them when things get better. Consequently, what happens is that our prices will be so low drivers/members will not cover the work when things get busier, so we will then lose the account through bad service. But of course it will not be bad service but bad pricing and our Society will be tarnished with that reputation for bad service. Believe me Jamie, it is never a good thing to lose an account through bad service (when it isn't); it is far better to lose on price –

“that DaC is a good company, a little pricey but excellent service!” I believe that you are sincere in what you advocate, however, there are many members that would not agree with you and would not be prepared to work under your terms - what do we do then?

What you are suggesting would help slightly in the short term, but not in the medium to long term. What you must realise is that taxi fares are a little expensive, especially on tariff 3 (unless of course we abolish it!). Where the customer can actually save the most is to get their travellers into our cabs with the minimum amount of waiting - that is where the saving can be made, savings can be made there which would be more than the total of all your suggestions and not taking it away from the driver as you suggest. However, to make that enormous saving the client would have to advocate and invoke that situation,, which they are reluctant to do! They would far sooner abolish the disparity between tariff 1, 2 and 3, abolish run-ins, abolish driver gratuity, abolish fare increases and every trip be a fixed price - we could do it, but I do not believe it would be in the medium to long term interests of members.

Finally, we will monitor the situation closely and if we need to change the way we work then that is what we will trial, in the meantime, we should not panic and succumb to a knee jerk reaction, after all, everyone is a good Captain in a calm sea!

And another suggestion

A few suggestions for everyone to chew the fat on. I believe we should be seen as trying to be flexible in the current financial climate.

Minimum fare: Let's scrap it - how often does an account ride cost less than £8 anyway?

Fixed Price Fares: Our meter is calibrated for London traffic, not 70mph down the motorway. It's fantastic when you get a roader, but they are very few and far between. Let's get more long distance work by offering realistic prices.

Shared Taxis: Advertise at train stations, bus stops, entertainment venues and the like. Why not start taking work from buses? It'll be cheaper for the punter and mean more work for us.

Bums on seats: So what if 5 people can take a taxi from A to B in the West End for a fiver.... let's just get 'em in.

Discounts for account users: Stack 'em high, sell 'em cheap.

Or shall we all sit on the ranks talking to the doom and gloom merchants? The future's bright, the future's in our hands. **Terry Vale (J29)**

Thanks Terry; I think the answer to Jamie's letter (above) gives Brian Rice's view on the minimum fare, fixed price



and discount situation so far as DaC are concerned. The shared taxis idea sounds like it's worthwhile and one the LTDA could take a look at. However, shared rides only work when there are Marshals around and they have to be paid for. I agree with you about bums on seats. It has never bothered me if it's one or four people in the cab. It's the same distance, takes the same time and keeps you working ...Ed

Thank you...I'm rich!

Dear Mr Fisher

Thank you very much for my £60 cheque. I hope that you have a very Happy Christmas...

Tom Hannah (son of Phil Hannah K26)
Nine year old Tom was one of the three winners of the kids Christmas card drawing competition ...Ed

Hold Tight?

One good thing that has come out of the current TX4 problems is that I have discovered Hold Tight Vehicles. A little while back **Call Sign** took a group of DaC drivers to the LTI factory in Coventry as part of LTT's *Listening Programme* and during the meeting, there were complaints about the number of service dealers outside of London i.e. there weren't any! But recently LTI have authorised Hold Tight in Dartford who carry out warranty work for them as a service agent, so I took my 57 in because it needed its third radiator within 12 months and the inhibitor switch kept coming on, which caused the engine to cut out when starting up and the washer bottle dash light needed adjusting. The two young fellas who own it used to work at Putney Bridge Motors and did a good, quick job for me and I would recommend them if you don't want the hassle of going into town. You can find Hold Tight at 21 Applegarth Drive, Darenth, Dartford DA1 1JD or call them on 01322 277755

Changing tack, I worked Boxing Day and one thing I noticed over the festive season is how impatient people are. As a driver, I have got used to other drivers pushing and shoving etc but what I can't fathom out is why taxi drivers hoot one another! I picked up a job off the 'Raft' and as I turned onto Eccleston Bridge, the lady passenger said she only had £15 and would that get her to Islington? Considering it was rate 3 with £4 extras, I suggested that she may need some more. She told me to drop her off at the nearest tube, which happened to be the front of Victoria Station. So after going around the one-way system, she got me to stop right on the bus stop in Wilton

MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 29

Road. After stopping as quickly as she demanded and with £10.80 on the clock, I politely suggested that she ask the price before she hires a cab next time (as if there would be a next time) and wondered whether I should just waive the fare as a matter of Christmas cheer? Just to make matters worse, behind me was another taxi driver hooting and flashing his lights while the lady proceeded to pay me in change. Yes, he was rushing to sit on the back of the rank. It must be one of the most pointless things to do, but as usual I just laughed it off as you have to. Lets hope his new year resolution will be to be a bit more considerate of others!

Richard Potter (T51)

Always pleased to give publicity to a deserving garage ...Ed

AGM BoM election

Dear Alan,

In the January edition of *Call Sign*, several of the existing Board of Management wrote articles regarding the need for experience and as I will not have the opportunity to address the whole membership prior to the AGM (unless they all turn up), I was hoping that in the spirit of fair play I could add my own comments.

During the past period of unprecedented growth, the membership were advised by Board Members that continuity was the key and that we shouldn't change a winning team when it came to the BoM election. Now, as we enter a period of uncertainty the members are advised that experience is essential and now is not the time for new faces to become acquainted with the running of DaC. The obvious question is that if we shouldn't change the Board in the good times or in the bad, when is the right time? For me, the answer is that every successful business changes its personnel when it wants to and not when it has to. As for the article by Allen Togwell regarding the qualifications for a successful Board Member, I can only assume, by it's timing that it was directed at both Joe Brazil and myself. As someone who has driven a cab for over 20 years, I can assure Allen that I've been around more blocks than I care to remember and I have the passion for the Society to succeed. If I didn't care I wouldn't have been a Marshall for 14 years and tried to deliver the best possible service to clients and drivers alike. As for being out of my depth, only time will tell if I'm successful. But let me assure him I have the utmost confidence in my ability and given the chance, will make a positive contribution.

Paul Jenner (L19)

AGM BoM election

Dear Alan

I read with interest Allen Togwell's article expounding the belief that the school of

'hard knocks' somehow qualifies you to 'skilled management' - interesting. Our chairman and I seem to disagree with him, especially regarding our present management structure.

I may never have been a coalman or vacuum salesman, but I do know a thing or two about Dial-a-Cab after seventeen years in its employ. Everyone elected brings something to the table, none of our subscribers should ever be excluded. As to our current structure, everyone knows a cab with a puncture still works, but it works a lot better when it's repaired.

Joe Brazil (K16)

Both Paul and Joe are standing in the forthcoming BoM elections and in fairness, I decided to allow them a letter in Mailshot as the Board have their own regular articles ...Ed

Successful appeals

Dear Alan,

Thank you for your advice and suggestion on how to appeal the PCN that I received just before Christmas. In view of the fact that I had left for Spain prior to knowing I had committed a parking offence, I arrived home to find that I had also incurred a penalty charge as well, doubling my fine to £120.

As you suggested, I appealed online explaining that I had been out of the country and attached proof of flight departures. I also explained the reason I had parked in excess of 6 minutes was that my fare only had a £50 note and that I had insufficient change to give him. My fare went into the casino to get change, which took a lengthy time. I was unable to drive off without payment due to the high amount of money on my meter. Westminster Council have now informed me that no further action will be taken and that my PCN has been cancelled. I hope this letter will encourage other members to appeal.

Ecstatically happy, surprised and pleased... Steve Shaller (R75)

And another...

Hello Al,

I got a PCN just before Christmas for a supposed yellow box contravention in Liverpool Road. I challenged it on the grounds that the description of where it took place was very vague and I also asked them to supply me the *Road Traffic Law* and *Traffic Management* qualifications that the operator of the CCTV camera had as I was going to appeal on the grounds that a vehicle that should have given way to me from a side road (*Highway Code*), didn't, thereby forcing me to stop in the yellow box. I got a reply back this morning and - I hope you're sitting down as Islington parking Services have backed down! It read: "Had this PCN been issued correctly it would have been enforceable, however upon looking at the CCTV footage, I am satisfied that your vehicle entered the box first before the



vehicle in front of you entered the junction from the right. This vehicle should have given way to you. It is upon these grounds, I have decided to cancel the PCN."

Firstly, well done Islington Parking Services for seeing commonsense and remembering that there is a Highway Code. But more importantly, why didn't the CCTV operator spot this and what qualifications does he/she have to decide on our fate? Did asking for their qualifications put the wind up them? What would have happened if I hadn't appealed? It pays to study the *Highway Code* occasionally especially as it seems, in Islington anyway, to supersede their Traffic Byelaws. And, quite rightly as Islington have proved, if we keep to it and someone else breaks it, it shouldn't be us that are penalised. It will also make you a better driver.

Why don't we all try it? Next time you get a PCN from a CCTV camera, if you think there are reasonable Highway Code grounds, appeal and ask to see the operators Road traffic Law and Management qualifications. It will cost you nothing and could save you £60.

Mickey Lappin (E46)

Well done Steve and Mickey. If a driver is obviously in the wrong, then it's a fair cop! But if there is a good reason why you stopped or got stuck in a yellow box junction, don't just say you can't be bothered...appeal. The fine will be held at that level while the appeal is ongoing. We are very slowly and gradually winning a battle that may never end, but because so many of us are appealing every PCN we receive, it could be that we are getting a little more leeway ...Ed

And one that didn't make it...

Dear Alan,

Sorry to hear about the PCN that you failed to overturn at appeal. I was also done in Edgware, having a meal on a Sunday night at 8.30pm. I too surveyed local signs to make sure I was ok, but returned to find a parking ticket under the wiper. I meekly paid the fine to avert any further aggro. However, on 1 May 2008 while working, I had to visit the toilet urgently. I parked at the northern end of Essex St in order to use the conveniences at the Law Courts rank. I had tried to park in the usual places, but on this occasion none were available. I left a note on the dash and ran to the toilet. I returned a short while later to see a PCN attached to my windscreen. I appealed over the internet to their website, but it was rejected. I then asked for a hearing at New Zealand House and this was granted. I met with the Adjudicator on Monday 27 October,

MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 30

carrying with me with what I thought was vital evidence provided by our wonderful girls at Driver Services. Val gave me proof that the cab had only been parked for 1 minute before the PCN was issued. I also had a photo taken by them of my note on the dash of the cab. The evidence provided by Westminster, which was sent to me before the Hearing, was that the warden had asked a member of the public how long the cab had been parked and they had replied 7 - 8 minutes.

At the Hearing, I explained the situation; however the response I got was that they would send my mitigating evidence to Westminster for their deliberation. I then asked whether they would be as unbiased as the Adjudicators are in their decisions, to which there was no reply.

Unsurprisingly, I received a letter a short time later explaining their empathy with my situation, but that they would still be enforcing the PCN.

Facing the fact that I would be coughing up £120 for a quick 'jimmy', I decided to ask

for a review of my case. The enforcement was temporarily suspended, but finally on 3 December I received a letter to say that it was not appropriate for there to be a review of the decision.

My failure does not divert the fact that I had marvellous support from the DaC office, for which I am extremely grateful.

Adrian Landau (T14)

Sorry to hear that Adrian. That is the first time I've heard of an Adjudicator not coming to a decision and rather disturbed to hear that your evidence wasn't accepted. Being a natural born trouble-maker, I think I would have insisted on a decision, because the bump sent to you before the hearing usually says that a decision will be reached. Sounds like a cop-out to me ...Ed

PCNs the Hizer way?

Dear Al

Nobody enjoys getting a PCN and **Martin Hizer (M47)** is certainly tireless in his attempts at getting them cancelled. But is he right to be so openly boastful about the false excuses that he uses - his favourite seems to be 'returning lost property' when going for a

sandwich.

In a letter in the *January Call Sign*, he mentions 'honest taxi drivers', but is he being totally honest? Would he accept a traffic warden being as equally economical with the truth? So I have a suggestion that could help his wallet and his digestion.

The next time he stops at *Pret a Manger* for that well-earned sandwich, he could invest £1 in the parking by phone system. He could then take his time in choosing what to eat (the smoked salmon is the only one without mayo) and then stroll back to the cab without worrying what he might find when he gets there. He will also save money by not having to fight the tickets or attending an appeal.

Geoff Levene (K43)

Thanks Geoff, the thought also occurred to me - should I have mayo with the salmon! ...Ed



Why Are Camden Breaking the Law?



When Dial-a-Cab driver **Martin Russell (T10)** phoned *Call Sign* to tell us he had been sent a *Penalty Charge Notice* (PCN) for doing a u-turn in Southampton Row, our initial response was to tell him to appeal as the signage had been incorrectly displayed for some time and it was still worth a shot.

Our obvious question was to ask when the offence had taken place? To say we were astonished to hear that it was almost six months earlier would be an understatement!

We contacted **Barrie Segal**, the Founder of **AppealNow.com**. Barry has been a friend of DaC ever since his late mother was a regular and very satisfied user of the Westminster TaxiCard. On several occasions he has provided very useful advice for this magazine and its drivers and this time was no exception. He quoted the law:

"Subject to the provisions of this section, no penalty charge notice may be served under this Act after the expiry of the period of 28 days beginning with the date on which the alleged contravention or failure to comply occurred."

Barrie's only comment was that the PCN had therefore been illegally issued!

That leaves us with the question: Why are Camden breaking the law by sending out-of-date PCNs? The answer is probably because they know that someone, somewhere will pay it and if they can get away with it, then they will. So always check the date of any PCN and remember the above law.

Another valuable lesson worth remembering is how much Barrie Segal can help. You can sign up for his monthly *Insider's Parking Ticket Newsletter*. It provides newsflashes and a 30 day money back guarantee for an annual subscription of £14.97.

AppealNow.com is also the only website in the world where you can appeal your parking ticket on line in 4? minutes!

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