

March 2009



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Inside this issue...

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Brian Rice answers The Badge criticism of DaC accounts...

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Rosie Harrington – a story to melt your heart...

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Are non-accessible minicabs illegal?



***It could only be another AGM!***  
***Full report inside...***



***“I wonder if Her Majesty needs a cab?”***  
***Demo hits the Palace!***





# NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Part 2 of 2 to complete some more major stores opening times. If Sunday opening hours are shown as 6:30 hours, then the first half hour is for browsing only. Plus an update on Heathrow terminals...

Warner Bros 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	20:00

Disney Store 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	10:00	20:00

Liberties Regent St		
Sun	12:00	20:00
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

Brent Cross Shopping Centre		
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	19:00

Apple Store 235 Regent St		
Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	21:00
Tue	10:00	21:00
Wed	10:00	21:00
Thu	10:00	21:00
Fri	10:00	21:00
Sat	10:00	21:00

Burberry 157 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	19:00
Fri	10:00	19:00
Sat	10:00	19:00

Bose 191 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

Jaeger 200 Regent St		
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	10:00	19:00

House of Fraser 101 Victoria St		
Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	19:00
Tue	10:00	19:00
Wed	10:00	19:00
Thu	10:00	19:00
Fri	10:00	19:00
Sat	9:30	18:00

House of Fraser Westfield		
Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	21:00
Tue	10:00	21:00
Wed	10:00	21:00
Thu	10:00	21:00
Fri	10:00	21:00
Sat	09:00	20:00

House of Fraser City 68 King Will. St		
Sun	Closed	
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	Closed	

House of Fraser 318 Oxford St		
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	20:00

Primark 499 Oxford St		
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	09:00	20:00

OXFORD STREET General Opening Times		
Sun	12:00	18:00
Mon	10:00	19:00
Tue	10:00	19:00
Wed	10:00	19:00
Thu	10:00	19:00
Fri	10:00	19:00
Sat	10:00	19:00

**Heathrow. Oman Air** is a new carrier to fly out of Heathrow from T3. Contact no. 0870 7707319

**British Airways Terminals** (correct as of 11/02/2009). All BA Heathrow flights depart Terminal 5 except those listed below. BA's Information Telephone Number 0844 493 0787

**BA's Heathrow departures not from T5**

Bangkok	T4		Helsinki	T1		Nice	T1
Barcelona	T1		Lisbon	T1		Singapore	T4
Detroit	T4		Madrid	T1		Sydney	T4

**What's on at ExCel**

Professional Beauty	Trade	01 Mar 2009 to 03 Mar 2009
Pro2Pac	Trade	15 Mar 2009 to 18 Mar 2009
IFE09 (International Food and Drink Exhibition)	Trade	15 Mar 2009 to 18 Mar 2009
CRUISE	Public	21 Mar 2009 to 22 Mar 2009
Passenger Terminal Expo 2009	Trade	24 Mar 2009 to 26 Mar 2009

# from the editor's desk

## Disappointing end to a magnificent demo?

I spent several hours at the February 5 demo having walked from Whitcomb Street to Trafalgar Square, along The Mall, Constitution Hill and down Grosvenor Place before turning round and doing the same journey in reverse.

Along the route I spoke to many DaC drivers, every one of them proud at the way the trade had supported the demo, with just a handful that preferred to work instead. Every single one of them said that they were there to complain about at least one of three gripes. The main one concerned the minicab rank that no one thinks is being used as Westminster Council or the PCO's Ed Thompson tells us it is – as a waiting area for minicabs booked around the corner. The drivers all referred to it as a minicab rank, because that's exactly what it is.

Others were there to protest about the onslaught of PCNs we are getting. Certainly Dial-a-Cab drivers know all about those, with huge total sums being spent by DaC who pay them for drivers who are on account trips at the time. And what about parking attendants and CCTV cameras by the toilets at Horseferry Road? A disgrace or what?

A third gripe referred to the PCO / TfL's *one strike and you're out* and the fact that licensed taxi drivers were being grouped together with unsavoury PH drivers who were losing their licenses for touting offences. *Call Sign* has long campaigned for the two licensed groups to be treated as separate units and not as Ed Thompson recently described us as "75,000 licensed drivers." Early last year, the PCO apologised to this mag after we complained that numbers losing their licenses for offences should be separated, because the totals given rarely included any taxi drivers, yet the innocent bystander would assume around a 50 – 50 split.

Prior to the demo, all the trade papers including *Call Sign's* February issue, gave details of what the demo was about and how it would work with those three items forming the main reason for it.

No one mentioned that taxi drivers were "seeking a moratorium on new licences" because of the lack of passenger demand? As Addison Lee get close to becoming the largest London radio circuit and are said to have ordered another 1000 black Ford Galaxies to increase and update their fleet – and no doubt these won't need rear wiper blades – a moratorium would be great! Let's also take away the licenses of 5000 drivers over 50 so that the other 19500 can be a bit busier! Sorry LTDA, I've always believed that you are the best trade organisation of all, but telling *The Times* that we were also there to get a moratorium on licenses was being deceitful to the drivers that gave up two hours of their day. Yes, it is very quiet, but putting a block on new licensed taxi drivers when the opposition are expanding dramatically, is wrong.

Also speaking of the demo, I was equally disappointed to see the RMT there with what I've been told is their new Taxis London Branch. While around 8000 drivers belong to a trade organisation, another new entry into the market place is hardly going to increase that – let alone one led by the ultra militant Bob Crow. It paints a picture to the public that could rebound badly on us – even though the PCO wouldn't know what had hit them!



## PCO refunds

A few people have asked me why the PCO paid back just half of the £36 we had to pay to cover the half yearly check our cabs never had (or ever needed).

Well, I have to assume this to be true and if it is, it confirms what *Call Sign* has been saying ever since the 'half yearlies' were touted as suddenly being necessary. Why would a hugely respected and successful international company such as SGS want to become involved with the taxi trade for just one appearance per year from each cab? But if it were two each year, then that made it somewhat more lucrative. I have said in this mag several times that I believed SGS accepted the deal because it guaranteed them at least those two visits per cab per year before we ever even knew about it.

Rumour now has it that the PCO have to compensate SGS for their losing of those half year examinations. And how are they doing that? With 24,500 lots of £18! Hence you only get back half, £4 of which you will pay extra for your overhaul fee. So that's £14 returned out of £36. I hope you all remembered to say thank you.

The PCO has a record of bad legal deals and this one sounds like no exception. A legal test case to get back the whole £36 would have been interesting, but a complete waste of funds. In any other business, resignations would be forthcoming, but don't hold your breath here.

We currently have a Mayor who believes we are the bee's knees and a PCO who know we are, but who seem to deliberately want to hold us back whilst pushing any merits the PH industry has. Anyone have some answers?

## Fare increase

So the increase that was believed to be 3.9% is actually just 3.4% - or £3.40 for every £100 you take. I just hope it's worth accepting, when over 2 million are now without a job and will have problems affording the bus fare to the job centre let alone take a cab anywhere.

Those who read from their scripts and spouted on how it was important it was not to set precedents, should spend their first extra £3.40 wisely because they may not get too many of them when the story breaks in April. Only 3.4% to us translates in newspaper talk as "*Greedy taxi drivers get fare increase!*" I hope I'm wrong...

## Well done TAXI

Call Sign has never been afraid to criticise the trade press if we believe they are wrong, so by

the same token I'd like to offer deserved praise to TAXI Editor Stuart Pessok on the article in his issue of 25 February.

Several reporters were sent out to test the WestOne "rank" at Whitcomb Street and what they found fully justifies the drive-in of three weeks earlier. As we pointed out 2 months ago, if PH cars are on view to the public for an extended period of time, then they are no longer waiting, but ranking. Now TAXI have proved beyond doubt that these cars are not just waiting for a Marshal to bring round their passenger from the theatre booking stall – unless the Marshal is rather jittery on his feet as in one case a car was timed as having been there for almost three hours, whilst another had the comparatively short "wait" of 92 minutes!

On top of that, all we tend to hear is how they are cheaper than us – well when they go into accounts they do undercut us – but minicabs working for cash have never really been cheaper. One TAXI journalist ordered a cab to go to Euston, whilst a second on another day "booked" one to Victoria. In a licensed taxi, both trips went under £9, whereas with WestOne they were both priced and paid for in advance at £20.

Over to you Westminster Council, the moral "guardians" of London's safety! And once again, well done TAXI...

## Evening Standard and satnavs

If you didn't actually read it, then many of you would have heard of the nice article written by *Evening Standard* journalist Toby Young, which compared London taxis with our counterparts in New York. He says that NY cabs are usually dirty whereas ours are clean; their drivers get lost whereas ours don't with Toby pointing out that we have the knowledge.

He also wrote that we rarely use a map but jokingly added that if we did, we did it furtively as though we were ashamed to let the public see us looking at a map!

He added: "As for satnav, a driver told me recently that you're as likely to find one of them in a black cab as you are a leaflet urging you to join the Labour Party."

Well, as *Call Sign* has pointed out on many occasions over the past two years, Toby has got it wrong there with more and more drivers having a satnav unit on display. We don't need them, so why do those who have them on display not keep them hidden until that elusive job out into the sticks materialises? It makes us look like private hire and if I offend some of you who keep a satnav on display by saying that, then tough 'cos this is my living too and I'm proud of being a licensed taxi driver.

And speaking of the *Evening Standard*, how many of you now get a freebie version instead of paying 50p and then go out and moan about those who use minicabs because they think they're getting a bargain? What goes around comes around...

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com



# Talking to Brian Rice

*The February issue of LCDC paper, The Badge, contained an article titled: Dial-a-Cab hit by credit crunch. The piece takes bits of information from DaC's Annual Report and gives the impression that the Society is balanced rather precariously. So in place of his usual report, Call Sign asked DaC Chairman Brian Rice to answer some questions regarding our Balance Sheets in a language that those unable to understand this type of financial report could understand...*

**Call Sign:** The article mentions our operating surplus as being down from £976,000 to £180,000 and suggests that the current situation looks bleak, having led to staff cuts with "a strong possibility of more to follow." Is their assessment correct?

**Brian Rice:** What the article neglected to say is that we paid members £522k in incentives. Our surplus for the year was £1.821million, that is £1.821million put into the Society. Regarding staff, we have made twelve people redundant and stopped recruiting since May 08. Consequently, our head count is 31 less than a year ago. It is an unfortunate situation, but it is prudent management and protecting the long-term interests of members and staff alike. I am not sure where the author has been, but we are in recession!

**CS:** *The Badge* says you strongly hint that the way forward includes a "distribution of cars by non-members of the Society." It also claims that the only benefits would be to minicab companies and to the DaC Board in that it would keep them in their paid positions. Any response to their view?

**BR:** It is quite apparent the author of the piece does not have any business acumen whatsoever! The market place is changing and in order to acquire taxi work from clients, we have to supply them with their transport requirements otherwise they will go elsewhere. The author of the piece can afford to be a barrack room lawyer, as he does not have a business to run – or if he did it would not last very long! Regarding paid positions, yes I do get paid. Is the author suggesting he does not get paid by the LCDC?

**CS:** They also claim that in 2001, one pound of subscriptions bought members £20 of work but that in 2009 that has been cut in half. Are they right?

**BR:** It is called cherry picking. They have picked our best year ever in 56 years of trading to use as a comparison. For instance, the following year we paid to members £14.54 for every pound of subscription, yet last year we paid £15.71 (not the £10 that was stated in the article) and for the last third of the year, we were in recession. Consequently, I believe the return was quite good under the circumstances.

**CS:** The Badge then says there was an increase in staff costs of half a million pounds despite a lower turnover. Their assumption is that this is "due to the increase in PH work through the call centre." Is it?

**BR:** Absolute rubbish! For the first eight months of the year we were delivering record numbers, so we required more staff. That coupled with our move to the new building, and of course you must take into account the staff's annual wage increase. Those are the reasons for an increase in staff costs, incidentally, turnover was down

1% - again quite good under the circumstances.

**CS:** Finally, the article ends with a statement. It says: "The fact that an ever-increasing amount of work is being booked on behalf of non-members must surely threaten DaC's mutual status, hence the interest shown by the Inland Revenue in the Society's affairs since the introduction of the Concierge booking system."

Are they likely to be correct?

**BR:** Again absolute rubbish! As it was explained at our AGM by the Managing Partner of our accountants and auditors, HMRC see us as a very good business and they would like a share of our surplus, no other reason. These enquires take place from time to time, it is the third one to my knowledge. There will probably be another in the not too distant future and to suggest anything other than that which I have explained is just endeavouring to meddle and cause problems on issues they do not understand or indeed know anything about!

**CS:** Thanks Brian...

## AND THE CHAIRMAN ASKS...

### Do you read my reports?

In last month's *Call Sign*, I went into detail about only completing functions when they applied - for instance the *Arrival* button and *AAR*. But it appears that some of you have totally ignored my request, with the consequence that not only are you throwing our reporting into doubt, but have caused clients to query it.

One client is charging their staff for any time over 10 minutes they keep a cab waiting, so you can imagine that some of their staff are up in arms regarding the situation and as a consequence, the account is investigating our reporting. For instance, if you 'hit' your arrival button 3 or 4 minutes before you arrive (I know the reasons why) we could be informing the client that the taxi had been kept waiting for 14 minutes when in reality the vehicle had been there 10 minutes. I know this sounds a little far fetched, but some clients are using a stopwatch to check our times and I assure you that is true. You don't need me to tell you how tough things are, please don't make them worse by supplying incorrect information to us, which then throws our reporting into doubt, makes a vast amount of work for DaC staff looking at GPS co-ordinates and causes the client to become dissatisfied with our service at a time when they have plenty of alternatives - many of whom are cheaper than us. Our competition can't supply the reporting we do - but what's the point if it is not correct? Please do not give any client an excuse to question our service!

Brian Rice

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# DaC driver's lucky escape?

## After being knocked unconscious in mugging!

**Mike Kaye (N4)** considers himself to be a very lucky man. Although having been attacked in the street and knocked unconscious, Mike was quick to point out when *Call Sign* met him recently that there was an upside to the event.

"On Friday nights, I usually eat with friends in the fish restaurant on Porchester Road, Paddington," Mike told us. "It was about 9pm as we left the shop, splitting up to go towards our taxis that were parked further down the street. As I neared my own cab, there was a noise coming from behind me of men shouting and then suddenly two Eastern European looking males came running alongside me. One of them grabbed my shoulder bag containing my money and cab licence etc. The other apparently thrust his fist into my face - I say 'apparently' because I don't remember much after that, except that I came round lying in the roadway some distance from my cab. My friends told me later what had happened. There was no reason to hit me, because they already had my bag and were making off at speed," said Mike.

"The police arrived to take details and I declined a trip to St. Mary's hospital,

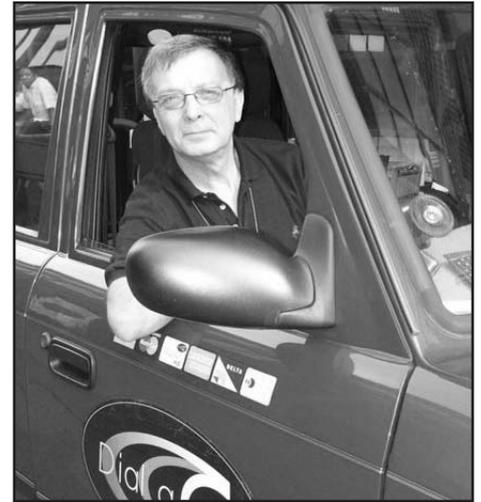
because had I needed to stay overnight, I would have found it more preferable to be in my local medical centre."

Despite being in great discomfort, Mike was able to drive home - his friend Stuart cautiously following him to his destination. He had already called his wife to let her know what happened and that he was basically ok and that she didn't have too long to wait to see him.

"There was no point in her worrying longer than necessary," Mike said, ever thoughtful of his wife's concern. "At my local hospital, it was discovered my cheekbone was broken in two places, but these were healing nicely when I returned some time later for a check up. My black eyes are healing also," he confirmed to *Call Sign*.

"Despite the unpleasant experience, I consider myself lucky on several points," Mike said, looking positive about the whole nasty business. But why does he consider himself to be lucky?

"My mobile phone was in my trouser pocket and my wallet, containing credit cards was in the other pocket, so the toe-rags only stole cab-related items. Also I could have been stabbed, who knows? And to cap it all, our daughter



**Mike was attacked but still considers himself lucky!**

was married just the week before this incident, so had it had happened then, I would have looked like I'd gone 10 rounds with Frank Bruno in the photographs!"

The police call Mike regularly to keep him updated, but as yet, no one has been apprehended...

© Call Sign Magazine



## LTI donate £2000 to NSPCC

Staff at TX4 manufacturers LTI Vehicles Coventry factory recently donated £2000 to the NSPCC. Every year LTI's employees hold a number of events to raise funds for the NSPCC, including a well supported golf day.

"Its important, even in these tough times, that we support such a worthwhile cause as much as possible and we at LTI are happy to be able to hand over this money to the NSPCC Coventry Business Group," Peter Shillcock, Managing Director of LTI told *Call Sign*.

Richard Shawcross, fundraising executive at the NSPCC, added:

"We're so grateful to all the staff at LTI for their generosity and support towards making a real difference to the lives of vulnerable and abused children. The funds raised will go towards supporting the Boole House project in Coventry, which works with local children. None of the services and projects would be possible without the continued generosity of our donors, fundraisers and supporters."

For more information on how you can help support the NSPCC in your area, please contact the local midlands fundraising office on 0844 892 0217

**TAXI**

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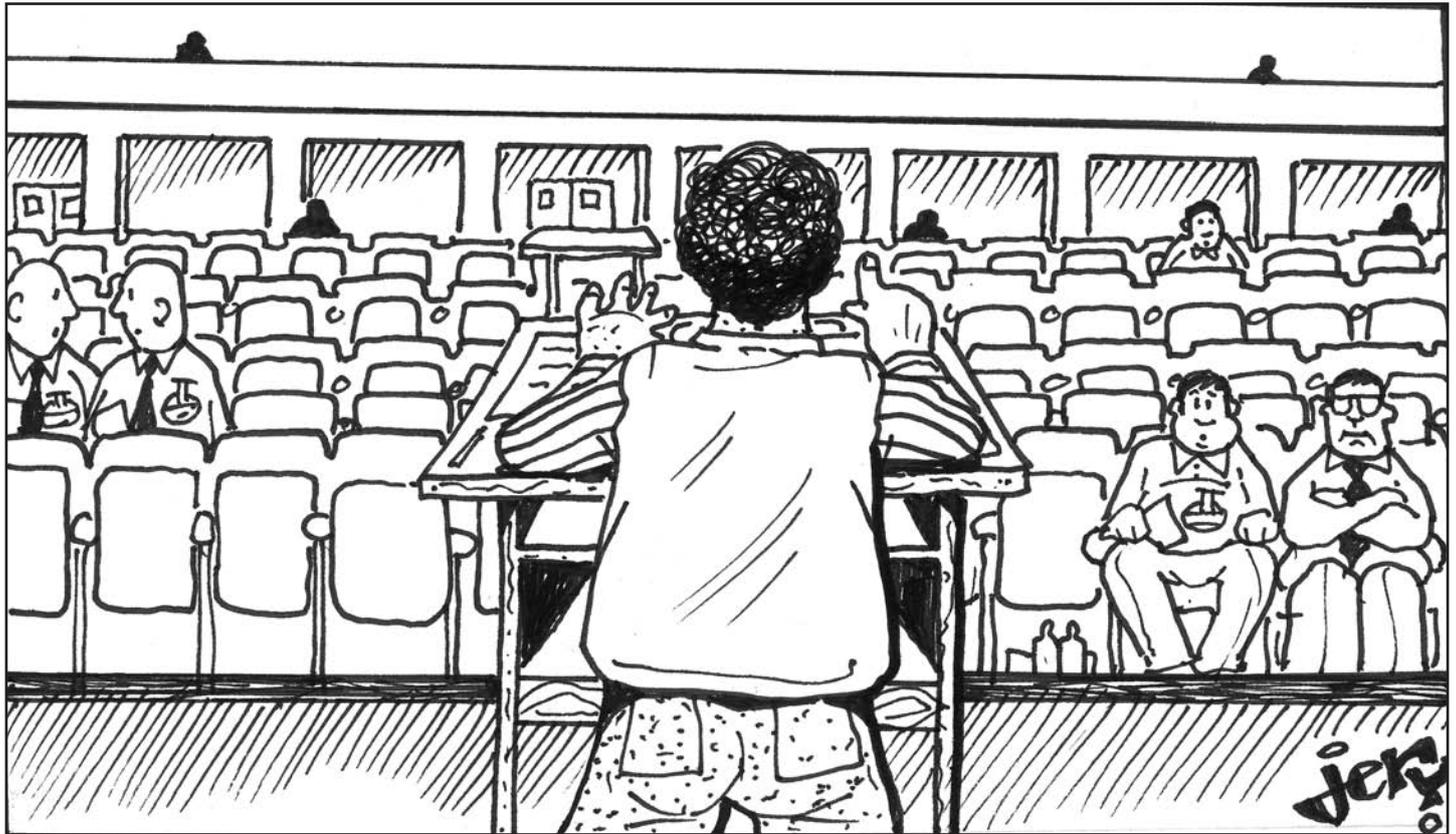
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# Jerys World



“...and so at this 2008 AGM, I'd like to think that I can count on all your votes!”



## “Every Little Helps...”

Bill Tyzack “Every Little helps...”

**Call Sign** photographer **Alan Green (E52)** recently gave a jump-start in Southampton Buildings WC2 to another DaC driver. He forgot the driver's name but remembered his callsign as **Y72**. In gratitude, Y72 offered Alan £10 which he duly rejected. When Y72 insisted, Alan said that he would pass the £10 over to the **LTFUC** children's charity and that's what he did, passing it to the Fund's Life President, **Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)**.

Bill asked if **Call Sign** could pass the Fund's thanks to Y72 and to let him know that the money was gratefully received.

“That will also save the Fund the expense of issuing a personal receipt,” said Bill, “thereby allowing even more money to be spent on the children's welfare. Every little helps...!”

## AA service worth remembering?

A driver tells **Call Sign** that he recently phoned the AA and was assured that if your taxi breaks down during the night, you have two options. The AA will either relay the taxi to a single destination and you make your own way home or they'll take you to your home address then come back in the morning to relay you and the taxi back to the garage when its open. Sounds like a good idea and worth remembering...

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*Late deals and special price for DaC members.*

In 1957, ODRTS (now DaC) Founder-Chairman **Bonnie Martyn** created a huge sensation for the time, when following the successful launch of this Society at Pentonville Road several years earlier, he was asked to go to the beautiful Caribbean / Atlantic island of **Bermuda** to set up a radio-taxi organisation similar to the one he had launched in London in 1952. Money, Bonnie was told, was no object!

So Bonnie resigned from ODRTS – something for which many never forgave him – and travelled to Bermuda via New York on the Queen Mary on 28 December 1957. Sent at the same time on a freight ship were 12 Austin A55s, each fitted with Pye ‘reporter’ radios and which were going to be the beginnings of **Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs**.

After the successful launch of BTRC and making sure that it was on a sound footing, Bonnie returned to London and ODRTS as a Board member. However, his sudden departure to Bermuda had caused some friction and it was a short-lived return visit to Pentonville Road. However, time healed the situation and Bonnie became an honoured guest at many DaC functions over the years. He died at the age of 93 in August 2002 – still in love with DaC.

But Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs still operate and still use voice dispatch. Now **Call Sign** has been informed that the company have received a stern warning

# Bonnie's Bermuda 'babies' get GPS warning



**Bonnie Martyn on his 90th birthday with Brian Rice**

from the Bermuda Transport Control Department demanding that BTRC comply with global positioning satellite legislation passed almost 2 years ago, claiming that Radio Cabs has allegedly defied the

law.

BTRC has been given a far longer period of grace than their counterparts, who have had to spend money on new equipment in order to meet the original deadline.

Minister of Tourism and Transport and now Premier, **Ewart Brown**, introduced the legislation amid opposition from drivers, but that resistance has substantially dropped with 99 percent of taxi owners said to be in compliance, according to TCD traffic officers.

**The only significant holdout to the industry-wide change appears to be Bonnie Martyn's Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs! So Bonnie, if there is a way of coming back, Bermuda needs you!**

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### HOPE?

A new President in the house of White,  
Obama's here with hope;  
the world will soon be put to right...  
after that illiterate Texan dope!

I've been lacking inspiration,  
'cos the picture looks so grey;  
the world's economic situation...  
worsens day by day.

A winter of discontent,  
like no other we recall;  
all the money lost or spent...  
all those backs against the wall.

I want some fresh good news,  
by now I've heard enough;  
I want enlightened views...  
not that same old depressing stuff!

Some snow and London closes,  
no buses tubes or trains;  
the ice destroys the roses...  
the rain explodes the drains.

Despite all this, we carry on,  
we're there in droves to serve;  
until the rickshaws get in our way,  
and we are forced to swerve.....  
unfortunately!

**Kopyright Kupkake 2009**

## Fares increase from April

The TfL Board has approved a 3.4% increase in London taxi fares to apply from Saturday 4 April 2009. The change in taxi fares follows the taxi cost index, which has been used to guide taxi fare changes in recent years. This index reflects taxi running costs in London. Operating costs have gone up by 3.7 per cent this year and the average earnings index has increased by 3.3 per cent.

There will be no change in the flagfall and the distance and time per meter unit will change to give the increase in average fares in all three tariffs.

The TfL Board approved the new taxi fares on Tuesday 10 February, following consultation by the Public Carriage Office with the taxi trade and others, including London TravelWatch. The TfL Board recognised the importance of keeping fare increases to a minimum in the present economic climate while maintaining the link between taxi fares and national average earnings (and other costs).

The Board also approved a 40p metered extra to be charged only if fuel prices reach 147.1p per litre between 4 April 2009 and 1 January 2010. This compares with the end-January price in London of 100.7p. The additional charge, if it is introduced, will be added to the meter by the driver at the start of each trip.

This follows a similar arrangement that was approved in July 2008 to help drivers meet costs if the price of fuel rose beyond a level to justify a 50p extra on each fare. The amount of the extra button is being reduced this year to 40p in order to lower the threshold and reduce the extra costs drivers will have to bear before these can be passed to passengers.

### Average Fares

The average tariff 1 fare will increase from £9.82 to £10.16, tariff 2 from £11.39 to £11.78 and tariff 3 from £13.37 to £13.83. There are no changes to the fares for fixed fare sharing schemes.

## Drivers queue up to get on DaC Credit Union's new rate!

Who says that Dial-a-Cab drivers don't read *Call Sign*! My last article certainly disproves that and shows that DaC's finest knows a bargain when they read it! At the time of writing this, it is 2am in the morning and about the only time the phone hasn't been ringing to ask about our new 7% interest account! So as a masochist, I thought I'd write another article to remind all who thought about investing, but then it became out of sight, out of mind!

So here goes again. The Dial-a-Cab Credit Union has for the last two years, been giving out loans via our overdraft, which for the privilege costs over 12%. Let me also add that we are the only UK Credit Union who have this facility as the Bank of Scotland have provided us with the service based on our member's savings and excellent loan book. So well done to all.

But what if we could give those loans out of our own funds? For a start we'd save that 12% and could pass a chunk of those saved funds over to you – our members – in the form of a 7% return on your investment.

As with all banks and building societies, there is a cash flow problem. But we as a Board saw this downturn in the economic climate as an opportunity to not only help the DaC Credit Union, but at the same time to help all you members out there – currently getting around a miserly 1% on your savings.

The most common question we have been asked is the obvious one: How safe would our money be? Well, we come under the auspices of the *Financial Services Authority*, so all our quarterly and annual figures are sent for them to go over with a fine toothcomb. The money you invest with us has government backing of up to £50,000, so if the bank were to go under, you would have nothing to worry about.

# DACCU 7% Interest Hits the Jackpot...!



If you have more than £50,000 that you want to deposit, we recommend that you put the extra amount into another account – for example in your wife or partner's name. They would, naturally have to join the Credit Union and as all members have to, become a regular saver.

Another question we get is whether you can use the money you have in your Credit Union account? The answer to that is no, the main reason being that we want fresh money so we can add this to the money we already have. The Credit Union would not be gaining anything by doing that, so I hope you can understand our position on it.

Don't forget the **rollerbond** scheme we are also running, which as I said last month (page 15) operates the same way as DaC's rollerbond. But with our scheme, you will receive

some interest on your money depending on how well we are doing over the course of the financial year or how much our auditor allows. But whichever way you look at it, you will be getting extra money on your savings. So even in this financial downturn, you can still win.

We also have a new facility at the credit Union offices that some have already taken advantage of; this is a credit or debit card machine that enables anyone to deposit or pay-off a loan either by coming to the office or by phoning us up. We can easily do the transaction over the phone, so as you can see we are striving hard up here in sunny Stratford to make your life with us as easy and as profitable as possible.

Lastly, can you inform us if you are off sick or going on holiday so we can put it into our diary. That way you won't have our rotweiller, former Driver Services lady, Val Gomez, phoning you up because believe me, you don't want that!

**I hope this article clears up any questions, but if you still have any reservations just call us on 0208 522 4502 or 0208 522 4502 or call in at Suite 209, Channelsea House, Canning Rd, Stratford, E15 3ND. We hope to hear from you soon.**

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

**John Riley (K38)  
Vice-President DaC Credit Union**

## Lord Young visits LTI Vehicles

Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships, Lord Tony Young, visited LTI Vehicles on Wednesday 11 February. The Minister met some of the staff who have benefited from Government funded apprenticeships and *Train to Gain*.

Lord Young was met by Manganese Bronze CEO John Russell and company MD Peter Shillcock, before he took a tour of the plant. The Minister was also met by Sophia Lock, 2008 winner of the EEF (West Midlands) Final Year, *Engineering Apprentice of the Year Award* together with Training & Development Officer, Adam Wright. Lord Young spent time talking to staff at the Coventry based company who had participated in apprenticeship schemes.

He was then shown around the plant by Dave Lancaster, who completed his 4 year advanced apprenticeship in 2008 and Simmeon Joseph, who is in his final year of an advanced apprenticeship.

After the tour, Lord Young said: "It has been great to meet some of LTI Vehicles' apprentices and to hear first-hand about their experiences. We want more people to do an apprenticeship. They offer a fantastic start to a career with the added benefit of earning while you learn.

"We also want to see many more employers following LTI Vehicles' example by offering apprenticeships. They provide businesses with the highly skilled people they need to help them when the upturn comes. That's why we're providing over £1bn of investment for apprenticeships next year, so that many more people and companies can benefit from the opportunities apprenticeships offer."

Managing Director of LTI Vehicles, Peter Shillcock, added: "We are delighted that Lord Young visited us today. He has a clear passion for vocational training and spent time finding out how current and former apprentices had benefited from *Train to Gain*. He also explained the Government's commitment to skills training and his personal commitment to develop more opportunities for apprentices. The Government's *Train to Gain* programme and apprenticeship schemes have provided our staff with valuable skills in the work place."



Lord Young speaks to Sophia Lock

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# All You Need to Know About the 2008 DaC AGM

Photos Alan Green (E52)

**Sunday 8 February 2009 saw the 2008 Dial-a-Cab AGM, held once again at the Brewery in Chiswell Street.**

*What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by Call Sign Editor, Alan Fisher. It is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. A brief Editor's estimation of the attendance put it at 115. Some paragraph grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the long report as compact as possible...*

The meeting opened at 11.03 with Chairman **Brian Rice** asking for the traditional one-minute silence to remember those members that had passed away during the last 12 months. Approval for the presence of a sound engineer, **Mike Tovey** from DaC Accountants Chantrey Vellacott and two young ladies from DaC was given.

## Minutes of the 2007 meeting:

### Matters arising...

**Stanley Roth (Y53)** asked about the previous year when the Chairman had spoke of getting more professional people in and what had happened to that? **Brian Rice** responded that we had gone into recession and instead of taking on new people, we were looking to cut our costs. However, he added that the Society was in very good shape, having no debt and with £4.9million in the bank but considered that it would not be prudent to bring new people in at this time. However, the BoM still felt that was the way to progress.



### Chairman's Report and Financial Statements...

**William Sutherland (O41)** asked whether the report was suggesting we embrace minicabs and that we would benefit by giving away the majority of our work to them, because he couldn't see where that would benefit the drivers? Brian replied by saying that he has two choices when he writes in the Annual Report – he can tell drivers the



way it is or he can tell them lies and that whilst it would be easy to just point out the good parts ie how much we had in the bank etc, he would not hide the fact that there was a definite shift over to private hire. He explained how many accounts were now putting parameters in that excluded taxis for journeys of over 7 miles – some even less. They were using taxis for the shorter journeys with everything else going in cars. He continued his answer by saying that if we did not give the companies what they wanted ie someone to control their ground transportation system and gain an income stream, we would end up getting no work at all. We might have to get used to getting less work from large accounts, Brian said, "...but what is more important to me is that I tell my members the truth. We know we are better than minicabs, but we can't compete with prices that are up to 30% less than ours." He went on to talk about independent platforms outside of our Concierge.

A healthy looking **Bob Ambrose (V13)** who had been seriously ill for some time and now looked back to his best, asked what an independent platform was? The Chairman explained that they were run purely by independent software programmers who had no connection with taxis or private hire and just sold the system. Unlike our Concierge system, these were sold to companies who could then use just cars if they wanted. On Concierge, they had to use at least one taxi company and that was DaC.



DaC's very own Santa Clause, **Keith D'urso (M57)**, was next up to the lectern. He also spoke of Concierge and how account customers from a city account were deliberately lying to our call takers so that their journey would seem shorter and they could then use a DaC taxi. Many didn't want to use cars, said Keith. Brian explained how much extra work we had thanks to Concierge and pointed out one account in particular that used up to 600 taxis a day. He said that without Concierge, we'd have had none of those. Keith said that those trips going into cars



via Concierge should have been going in our taxis. Brian reminded Keith that if we hadn't invented Concierge, these people would still have gone in cars and we probably would not have had the taxi work because those accounts wanted a complete transport system and not as they used to have to do - phone different companies. Brian went on to ask whether Keith noticed how much work he'd got recently from an E14 client who used to use us a lot?

The answer was none because they had gone over to an independent platform that, unlike Concierge, meant they didn't have to use any taxis. Brian ended the answer by saying that you had to give the customer what they wanted or just lose the work altogether. Like Keith, Brian wanted every trip to go in a taxi, but it wasn't going to happen.

### Pat Keefe (G01)

was next. He asked Brian whether more emphasis could be put onto the fact that we were so much more reliable than private hire? Pat didn't like being a back-up to a minicab company and hinted that perhaps if we withdrew that support, the minicabs would flounder. Brian said that if we pulled out, our competitors would jump in ultra-quickly. Pat came back and said that he would rather our competitors did it than a minicab company, but Brian responded that Pat had misunderstood and that if we withdrew from these accounts, then whoever took our place would still be used as a back-up and not as the main agent. Pat asked why the taxi companies couldn't agree between them and Brian gave a previous example of why that wouldn't work. He also emphasised that DaC were the only taxi company that didn't run a car company! He added that drivers not agreeing with it could use the 'T' attribute.



### Next was Phil Ayres (M29)

who asked all the Board members in turn whether they agreed with the Chairman's previous answer? They all said yes.



**Paul Heatley (V09)** came up after Phil and agreed with the Board that the days of

*continued on page 11*

**ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2008 DAC AGM**

us running London were now gone and that our slice of the cake was much smaller than it used to be. He said the situation was quite depressing – a sentiment Brian agreed with. However, Brian also emphasised that cars still could not compete with us on service and told of a meeting with a London Wall account following last month's first heavy snowfall. He asked them who it was that got them "out of the mire" on that Monday in all that snow when there were no trains or buses, "...because it wasn't the cars. They were nowhere to be seen. It was DaC!" Yet still they returned to cars when they finally returned to work on the following day, Brian said. In a more cheery mood, the DaC Chairman said that he felt sure we would come through the recession well, but that there was no way we could change the climate re cars. Paul agreed that he wasn't happy either, but accepted that things were changing and we had to change along with them. However, Brian also pointed out that we did not just roll over when accounts asked for something we didn't agree with and often said no.



How many DaC drivers didn't have the T attribute, asked **John Rubini (F55)**? In response to Brian telling him that around 70 out of 2400 wouldn't take 'T' attribute trips, John brought up the question of principle. Brian again described how independent platforms worked and which of our accounts the developers had approached. John asked what Brian's view was that only 70 refused T work? Brian considered the majority were being smart and looking after their own interests. After all, the Chairman said, they can always reject a T trip if they don't like it.



Former boxing champion **Peter Mulcahy (K02)** stepped up next and spoke about having the T attribute and disliking it. He brought laughter to the hall when he said that he had taken a T attribute trip to Kingston and hated it. He said he also hated the fact that the system then threw him a job from Weybridge back to town! I didn't like that either, said Peter, or the £85 that came with it, but I put up with it! Peter also complained about the new EC5 system of having to be in an EC zone before booking in. As a parting shot, he asked



what the chances of a drop in subs were? Brian answered and added that there would be no increase this year.

**Terry Buffin (S16)** was next. He too brought laughter to the hall when he suggested that having seen the photo of Brian in the Annual Report, the Chairman "...may have had some work done because you didn't look that good 10 years ago!" Brian assured Terry that Allen Togwell had taken the photos and that they were all genuine - as was he! "Well," said Brian, "except for one where I suddenly seemed to have grown hair and resembled Ozzy Osbourne!" Terry then moved onto more serious stuff and also asked about Concierge – this question being about the terms and conditions re our dispatching system platform. Looking at *Call Sign's* Editor, Brian added that he wouldn't really want those T&C reported, as other circuits would then know our charges and that didn't make sense. He then gave those present a rundown of the charges. Terry then went on to compare those charges against cash work taken through the system. In his answer, Brian also went on to explain about online bookings. Terry ended by saying that he didn't want a connection to cars and that Brian as Chairman had to do something about it Brian agreed he was the Chairman but added that he wasn't Paul Daniels and couldn't yet do magic!



Regular *Call Sign* contributor, **Mike Beevor (N76)** then entered the debate asking about average price differences between cars and taxis and also asked how much a car company would charge from London Wall to Heathrow? Brian replied that car companies would often do a 'loss leader' from the account address, but charge much more from the client's home addresses. Although he wasn't sure about the London Wall price, he quoted a Canada Square (E14) car trip to LAP for £46. Mike then said that whilst he wouldn't do it for that price, would it not be worth putting it out as a trip in case it took someone home? Brian said that us offering fixed prices had problems because we operated three different rates. Also, once fixed prices came in, clients then constantly try to lower them. In response to Mike asking why some long trips with reasonable prices aren't offered to us, Brian said it was probably a business rule from that client re distances travelled in a taxi.



Last in the batch of questions re the Chairman's Report was **Ray Sorene (A53)**. He spoke of getting an airport account job on the Monday of the snow and seeing on page two of the details that under no circumstances did the passenger want a car and that he only wanted a taxi. Brian said that those in a high position within an account could do what they liked and if they wanted to just have DaC, then they could.



Brian then thanked all the speakers under that heading for a very interesting session.

**Auditor's Report**

Brian began by pointing out a piece in *The Badge* that he said was totally incorrect. That prompted *Call Sign* to later question the Chairman on the article and say why it was incorrect. That Q/A session can be found elsewhere in this issue.

**Mike Tovey** of accountants Chantrey Vellacott then spoke briefly. He spoke of the cab trade being an economic barometer and how in May, things suddenly began to go downwards as the slowdown hit. He said that even his own office hadn't picked up the signs at that time. He said that it was good to see that DaC had good cash resources through prudent management and had got a good price from the sale of Brunswick House. He added that we had two competitors in the marketplace who would love to have a balance sheet as good as ours and that we were very well placed to ride out the recession – although we should not become complacent. Mike then invited questions.



First up to the lectern was **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)**. He asked whether the current economic climate would see a rise in bad debts? Brian Rice answered the question by saying that it would undoubtedly rise but that our Account Managers do an excellent job in keeping on top of the situation and as soon as they suspect there is a problem in someone paying, they put the account on *stop service*. However, with some clients spending huge amounts on taxi transport, even paying just a few weeks late builds the debt into a very large amount. Brian



## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2008 DAC AGM

then gave an example of how a middle of the road account could suddenly find itself heavily in debt. Russell, who is Chairman of the War Disabled charity, ended by thanking Brian and DaC on behalf of all the trade charities, for the Society's help.

**Roy Hayden (L38)** then stepped up to speak and questioned last year's minutes.

He enquired from Mike about a comment he had made regarding Friendly Societies paying tax and why, because according to Roy's research, Friendly Societies should be exempt. Mike explained which parts were taxable and which weren't. Our subscriptions were exempt, he said, but trading with the outside world – ie our clients – was a taxable income stream. What our accountants have been able to show over the years is that our profits come from subscriptions, while our trading showed a loss and therefore should carry no tax. However, with ever-bigger surpluses over the years, that was becoming more difficult to prove and hence Mike's comment last year that inevitably the tax man would win in the end and we'd have to start paying. However, we do still have strong arguments as to why we shouldn't have to pay but, yes, it was becoming more difficult. We do pay corporation tax, which led Roy to ask Mike if there was any prospect of a similar reduction to that of VAT? Mike's answer was that he felt it to be unlikely.

**Peter Bond (L67)** asked why Radio Taxis had paid tax whereas we didn't? Mike's answer was that finding out why RT paid and we didn't wasn't something he particularly wanted to investigate. We were just happy that we didn't, he replied.

**Next drivers were asked to approve the Annual Report and to reappoint Chantrey Vellacott as auditors to the Society and to fix their remuneration.**

### BoM elections

Next up were the Board of Management elections. The sitting Board spoke first followed by the two new candidates, **Joe Brazil (K16)** and **Paul Jenner (L19)**. These were followed by questions to the candidates with **Sid Nathan (K88)** up first. He asked Allen Togwell how much it cost the Society to prepare the Annual Report, which was Allen's job in-house. It worked out around £3.33 a copy, which was good value. He also asked all those standing if they were in favour of increas-



ing the minimum charge? All said no except Joe Brazil whose CV had suggested a minimum of £15. Joe agreed that now might not be the best time, but that if we asked for £15 and got £12, then that would be a result as well. Sid came back and suggested that an increase to £10 was sensible.

**Pat Keefe (G01)** then spoke about a suggested £2 booking fee that Joe Brazil had put forward to replace the run-in. Pat said it was like robbing Peter to pay Paul and that the *Evening Standard* would rip into us when it got out. Joe disagreed and said that we already charge a £2 booking fee for cash work with no problems. Joe then said that if we were to start the meter on arrival and whenever clients came to the cab, they saw a lower run-in than our competitors normally had for the same wait, it would give a psychological boost towards DaC. They wouldn't think about the booking fee because they don't actually see it. In the end it costs them the same, but it was 'smoke and mirrors' - if you don't see it, then it doesn't count.

**The votes were then counted by the Electoral Reform Services and added to the postal ballot votes.**

### Any Other Business

Whilst waiting for the results, AOB took place with **Ray Sorene (A53)** being first up. He spoke of 'Snow Monday' and the difficulty of making contact on that day. He queried whether it would be possible for us to be given passenger's phone numbers if they gave permission so that we could make our own contact? **Brian Rice** replied that there was no problem if the passenger were to give permission, but that doing it could lead to problems. Ray also spoke about some passengers keeping drivers waiting for up to 90 minutes on a pre-booked job and mentioned one person in particular. Most drivers seemed to think that would be a 'result' but if Ray was unhappy, he should avoid the trip if he saw it was the job and passenger he had referred to.

**Peter Bond (L67)** made his second visit

to the lectern and reiterated Ray Sorene's suggestion about giving drivers the passenger's phone number. He mentioned that one PH company texts passengers to say their car was waiting. Brian said that we too did that. Peter suggested that passengers giving permission for drivers to have their telephone number should become an attribute for drivers wanting it. Brian also spoke of our *Aspect* system, which was an automatic ringback system, but added that some accounts preferred human contact.

**Stanley Roth (Y53)** came and mentioned the *Miscellaneous Provisions Act*, which forbids radio taxis outside London to engage their meter until they arrive at the pick-up, but they can add a service charge as Joe Brazil had suggested. Stanley asked whether this had been discussed with TfL? Brian said it hadn't been spoken about with TfL, but that in his opinion it wasn't a good idea because with the £2.20 clock start and a £2 booking fee, you are guaranteeing a £4.20 minimum whereas one current selling point is that the taxi will arrive with up to £4.20 rather than at least £4.20. Stanley also asked about the equipment update that Brian spoke of last year? In response, Brian admitted to having seen some amazing new stuff that would have been perfect for us, but then admitted to having "cold feet" and was nervous of spending such a huge sum. Looking back, he said thank heavens that he was! In the current climate, said Brian, although the new equipment will have built-in satnav and chip 'n pin etc, in the end it will just offer you a job and you will still accept or reject it. So while these terminals are working and the economic climate stays as it is, such a large outlay could not be justified.

**Colin Jenkins (Y22)** said that it was a myth that we were too expensive compared to cars and that we should push that message.

He also complained about too many unnecessary messages on the terminal and added that we should be promoting our own account work rather than train times. He also brought a smile to the meeting when giving another example: Serious RTA at Catford one-way system. "We don't go south," Colin said to laughter, "so why do we need the message!" Brian said we could stop messages but that we'd be inundated with complaints from drivers asking why their message hadn't gone out. Colin also queried why we sometimes get the same message in triplicate? Brian said



*continued on page 13*

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Keith Cain would look at it. Colin also spoke about being called by someone from DaC phoning him at 5.30am regarding lost property when it really applied to his brother. It then happened again a few weeks later. He asked Brian to try to stop it. Brian apologised and said it was human error. Colin ended by saying how upset he was that Val Gomez had been made redundant from Driver Services after 23 years with DaC. Brian said how difficult it was having to tell someone with such an excellent record that their job – not the person – was being made redundant. “It is one of the hardest things you can ever have to do,” said Brian, “but these decisions are sometimes necessary.”

**William Sutherland (O41)** then addressed the meeting and said that if we were cutting costs, perhaps we should start with the Board member who sits at Roman Way and who tells us to do “stuff” that we already know about. Brian told him he was totally wrong as Tom’s position as a BM at Roman Way was made redundant in November, some time before staff redundancies happened. William said he hadn’t known about that and asked why we needed so many BMs? Brian said William would have to put forward a rule change if he wanted to have less and spoke of a time when there were 8 Board members. He also said that in his memory, members were reluctant to make the Board smaller and informed William that we now had some BMs who only came in for monthly Board meetings. William then asked if we could have a Board member present at the office 24 hours a day because dispatchers couldn’t make decisions? Brian disagreed and said that dispatchers and system supervisors could make decisions and had *carte blanche* to do things like that. He added that William was inventing a job that could cost DaC an extra £75,000 extra on our wage bill.

**Peter Mulcahy (K02)** returned again to the lectern and asked whether redundancies involved last in first out? Brian said no and told the meeting how the procedure worked.

**Rob Lyle (W39)** then asked how much DaC had paid to cover driver’s parking tickets? Brian said that over the past three years we had spent around £250,000. Rob said that he was disappointed with that and we needed to do more. He asked why we weren’t on an LBC discussion with Westminster? Brian said it was because we hadn’t been asked and knew nothing about it. He went on to say that DaC had been to many meetings about PCNs.



**Russell Poluck MBE (T55)** made a *point of order* saying that Westminster claimed that 90% of PCNs appealed against were successful. Rob confirmed that he had appealed against four tickets and all had been quashed.

**John Morgan (H50)** confirmed that he appealed against a PCN and that it was successful. He also asked about EC5 and suggested we should look at expanding the numbers accepted above 99 drivers? He also complained that his terminal was 3 seconds slow and that Roman Way couldn’t adjust it. Brian said that increasing the numbers would involve a major rewrite of the system and as a ‘hard coding’ situation, would be very difficult. He added that it was much better since the implementation of having to be in the EC zones before booking in.



**Bob Ambrose (V13)** was the penultimate speaker and said that he rather liked getting terminal messages as against Colin Jenkins, who claimed to dislike them. He also spoke about an earlier response Brian had given saying that more work will end up going in cars. Bob said he didn’t believe we were that much more expensive than cars, giving an example of someone going to Harley Street in a car and returning in a taxi. The taxi was cheaper. Brian said that Bob wasn’t taking into account that it was a street hail with no run-in or admin charge etc. He reiterated that our best way of competing was on service rather than price. Bob’s last point was to ask how much DaC made on cash trip surcharges? Brian said it was about 80K a year. Bob suggested that subs should increase by £1 a month and we could dispose of the surcharge. Brian didn’t agree and said that cash work was increasing and that drivers should fit the cash number onto DaC taxis as an advert.

The final speaker at the 2008 AGM was **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)**. He suggested that when the weather was as bad as it had been on ‘snow Monday’ then we should not have ‘as directed’ trips. Brian agreed that under some circumstances it was a good suggestion. The problem would be to decide where the cut-off point was – how many inches of snow etc. He added that we’d had many complimentary emails etc saying what an excellent service we provided that day, considering the awful circumstances.

Brian closed the meeting at 2.20pm by saying that it had been a very good one and thanked everyone for being so well behaved and in a closing sentence, reminded everyone that when it came to

it, we were all on the same side...

**Voting Results**

To approve 2007 minutes:  
 Accept 98.6%                      Reject 1.4%  
 To approve 2008 Annual Report  
 98.2%                                  Reject 1.8%  
 To reappoint Chantrey Vellacott  
 97.7%                                  Reject 2.3%



**Board of Management election**

	<b>Total votes</b>	<b>Votes in hall</b>
Allan Evans:	1415	51
Keith Cain	1239	38
Allen Togwell	1189	39
Tom Whitbread	1130	41
Mike Son	1128	31
Joe Brazil	761	30
Paul Jenner	516	41

**Alan Fisher**

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The name of **Aubrey Siteman** still carries the respect earned by a man who spent such a huge part of his life helping to build up the early ODRTS into the successful Dial-a-Cab that we now have.

Aubrey arrived at ODRTS Pentonville Road, in 1963 at a time when **Eli Solomons** was handing the Chairmanship over to **Jack Russell**. In 1966, he successfully stood for the BoM citing the need for computerisation as his election ticket. He became Treasurer for the first time in 1968 and barring one short period, kept his place on the BoM until 1984, when he stood down. He stood again in 1989 and was re-elected - 22 years after his first election success. Between 1992 and 1996, Aubrey was the DaC Chairman but eventually stood aside and continued on the Board in several different positions and was always proud of the fact that he had - at one time or another - filled every BoM position within the Society. He finally retired in 1999.

So, when *Call Sign* read the January/February issue of *Cab Trade News*, we were in for a shock. Former DaC driver, **Frank Braverman**, in his regular column was writing an obituary to another former DaC Chairman Jack Russell who died last November. Frank

# Shock at "death" of Aubrey Siteman

*Well it was a shock to me says Aubrey!*



Aubrey with Jack Russell and Brian Rice at DaC's 50th anniversary celebrations

wrote of Jack:

**"I remember how proud he was of what he considered to be a splendid continuation of the fruits of his and all those other ODRTS**

**pioneers of cab two-way communication that included Jack (Curly) Taylor, Martin Gellman and Aubrey Siteman, who also alas are no longer with us."**

*Call Sign* Editor, **Alan Fisher**, asked around whether anyone knew how Aubrey had died as he had been in good health the last time he spoke to him? No one knew, so he decided to phone Aubrey's home.

**"I was rather shocked, to put it mildly, when I heard the distinctive voice of Aubrey Siteman,"** said Alan, **"when you assume someone is dead, you wouldn't expect to have them answer the phone! I told him that he was supposed to be dead and all he said was that he felt fine but if this was being dead, then it wasn't really so bad and in that case he might consider going back to work!"**

And we're pleased to tell Frank not to worry. **"I've heard worse,"** said Aubrey...

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# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

*I would like to start by thanking all those members who gave me their vote for a further term of office. The attendance at the AGM was once again very small and to those who didn't attend, you missed a good meeting, conducted in a very professional manner. When people spoke they were listened to without interruption and at times it was quite jovial. Which is in stark contrast to AGMs of years past that became so unsavoury, they forced decent members to make excuses not to attend.*



Those that read this column would have seen at the end of the January issue of *Call Sign*, a request to answer 8 questions relating to selling our services.

Three subscribers responded, and one of the answers to the first question, which related to guaranteeing a service was: *Money is the only motivator to guarantee a service, put a high enough premium on a credit ride and it will get covered...*

Yes of course, cab drivers are motivated by money just as any self-employed person is. But they are also businessmen and in business you have to adapt according to supply and demand or suffer the consequences. Continually throwing money at a trip to get it covered is both uneconomical and counter productive, because hardly any trips would get covered unless they carried a premium. In reality it shouldn't be necessary because account work is regular business - tomorrow's business - and should be valued as such. During the past few months, I have heard depressing stories about the lack of work on the streets. About cabs on ranks stretching out of sight and drivers having to cruise endlessly in the hope of trapping a fare.

## JFK and DaC!

As we all know, January is traditionally a kipper period with this year being made worse by the economic crisis worldwide. A crisis that prompts the question whether lessons can be learnt? As JFK once said: *The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.* And in that context I feel a lot more could be done during busy periods by way of promoting our business to compensate for the likely drop during the kipper periods.

Much of our business comes from the large corporates in the City and E14. These are prestigious accounts to have and very rewarding when they are busy. The problems arise when they are not so busy, be it due to extended holiday periods or worse, a recession when they all start looking for cut backs, reductions in staff, lowering expenditure and searching the market place for cheaper suppliers. When this happens, at least part of the shortfall could be made up by the custom of smaller users that are rarely affected in the same way. But we need smaller users in large numbers. That can be achieved by resiliently giving out our give-away cards during the period when we are busy - in other words at a time when you think it isn't necessary. These users ideally would be outside of the E14s, ECs and W1 areas, and who live in private residential buildings. These are easy to target and the reason why when you look in the front entrance, you will see numerous give-away cards from PH firms.

**This is a crude way of marketing, but it works, and you could do exactly the same by dropping in a dozen or so of our cards whenever you are passing a residential building. The residents of private flats save cards from all types of services, it becomes a habit. I know because my neighbours and I do it whenever cards are dropped in the letterbox of our flats.**

Quite often I have come across people who reluctantly use PH, but do so because of the difficulty when trying to book a licensed taxi. This needs to change. We need to be more accommodating towards the smaller user, including being conscious of the amount on the meter when arriving at the pick-up address. I'm not suggesting we undersell our services, just to be more accommodating.

Believe it or not but Dial-a-Cab is still the only taxi company in London that offers a real-time taxi booking service via the Internet, payable by credit card without the need of a password. This should be exploited and you guys, all 2,200 of you, are the ideal people to do it. Not only to users that I couldn't possibly target, but target without incurring any cost.

**I repeat, I have never agreed with the policy of selling our services cheap because history has proven that when you reduce charges or even worse suspend a charge, it is extremely difficult to get it reinstated.**

Conversely, neither do I feel comfortable when the quality of those supplying that service is below what it could be.

## Image and business

The problem with this argument is one our members identify as quality. I once had one of our members aggrieved at my suggesting we should smarten up our appearance, argue that providing the cab arrives on time what difference does it make if the driver's choice of dress was just a jock strap and flippers! Probably none if the passenger was desperate to get somewhere in a hurry. Unfortunately, in today's fast-paced business world, image is of primary importance. And images are formed in seconds, based on your appearance. Projection is nine tenths of success. To get business, you need to project an image that attracts potential customers rather than repels them. I guarantee that all of you at one time in your life have made an effort to project an image and not just on one occasion, but over a period of time. And that time of course was when you were a Knowledge boy and went to the PCO dressed in a suit and tie. It's strange that the moment that coveted green badge is taken possession of, the attitude towards appearance seems to disappear.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another example of how damaging the wrong image can be. The very first B&B I stayed at put me off from using one again for almost 40 years. I was stranded in Newcastle, it was almost midnight and pelting down with rain

when I saw a light above a B&B sign saying rooms vacant. I rang the bell and the door was opened by what I assumed to be a woman because of the stockings rolled up to the knees. **She was built like a wrestler, dressed in a bathrobe, had a fag stuck to her lower lip, no teeth, a chin in dire need of a shave and what attracted my attention most was the huge pair of army boots that she was wearing.** Before I could open my mouth, she grabbed my bag and headed up the stairs, to which I had little choice but to follow. When I reached my room, she slammed the door with the heel of one of her huge boots and began to rant on about something to do with house rules. The room was bitterly cold and the bed had three huge mattresses on top of each other. It was so high I had to climb on the iron frame to get onto the top mattress. Once in the bed, I sunk so low I had trouble getting off the damn thing in the morning! There was no hot water, just a jug of cold water on a washstand. And for breakfast, it was porridge or nothing! That image of a B&B stayed with me right up until a few years ago, when my partner, against my wishes, discovered two absolutely marvellous B&B's in Worthing that we visit often and which we now use instead of hotels. The ensuite rooms are spacious, bright, comfortable and extremely clean. TV, DVD and wireless connection for a PC, tea and coffee facilities etc and the use of the bar in the guest lounge where you leave a note of what drinks you've had. The breakfast is both extensive in choice, plentiful and expertly cooked. All for £35 per head plus a key to come and go as you please.

## Is there a difference?

I mention that story because running a B&B is very much like running a cab. The dead mileage of the previous day cannot be recouped. Equally, the empty bed of the previous night at a B&B cannot be recouped. It is money lost forever.

On the last page of this year's Annual Report, you would have seen a graphic with the message: *Make the most of the opportunity because you never get a second chance to make a first impression.*

That message is the mantra by which the owners of the two B&B's we use run their business and why they are always busy and their competitors are not.

All of us would do well to use it as our mantra, particularly during this recession. Distribute our give-away cards at every opportunity to attract new customers, and when those customers attempt to use our service, they are covered promptly and when they leave your cab, they do so with a feeling of wanting to use us again...

**Allen Togwell  
DaC Marketing**

The February issue of *Call Sign* told of the astonishing PCN received by long-time DaC driver **Martin Russell (T10)**. He'd phoned to say he'd been sent a *Penalty Charge Notice* (PCN) for doing a u-turn in Southampton Row. Our response had been to tell him to appeal as the signage had been incorrectly displayed for some time and it might still have been worth a shot. Martin's next comment shocked us far more than the usual PCN story – the "offence" had taken place almost six months earlier!

We contacted **Barrie Segal**, Founder of **AppealNow.com**. Barry has been a friend of DaC and *Call Sign* ever since his late mother was a regular and satisfied user of the TaxiCard service from Westminster. 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."**

So we passed on Barrie's comments to Martin that the PCN was illegal. Martin appealed and the PCN was scrapped. He phoned us to say thanks, but we weren't happy that the PCN was ever issued. Drivers not on radio or members of a trade organisation, may well have paid up quietly without ever knowing that they were paying for something they shouldn't have.

So *Call Sign* spoke to **Camden Council**. The answer was a total mishmash of fact and fiction with an even more astonishing final comment!

Their initial excuse was to say that the PCN had been sent out three times. According to Martin he only received one. So we asked Camden whether the addresses were all the same as we knew that Martin had been living in Kent for many years?

"Well no," came the answer from Camden, "the first one went to the Company secretary." Company Secretary? According to Martin, he didn't even realise he had one. So it was back to Camden and to ask exactly where this company secretary lived? The Camden spokesperson agreed to let me have the info as I was dealing with the problem for Martin and only because I had his PCN and registration details. Yes, Martin's company secretary was at 39 / 41 Brewery Road, N7. That rang a bell - just as it should from a magazine editor who has been running M&O ads for many years! We pointed out that that was the main LTI dealer where the cab originated from. Martin didn't live there – however spacious the premises are! We were now more than just curious as to where the second PCN went to – was it the PCO / SGS where the cab would have been licensed, or perhaps a local sandwich bar where Martin might have grabbed a snack? Nope, it was the south London garage that Martin had bought the cab from. So why did the PCN go there as well? After all, the offence occurred after he had bought the cab – not before!

The woman at Camden Council, after trotting out several reasons based on "liability

# Martin's U-Turn PCN: Camden Back Down!



though we decided to leave the matter there. After all the work explaining to Camden about the illegality of issuing such a PCN, they rather cowardly cancelled it on the grounds of "incorrect signage."

If any Dial-a-Cab driver was ever unsure as to why *Call Sign* seems to have an interminable grudge against councils persecuting taxi drivers, just re-read this article and the one elsewhere regarding Westminster parking attendants. If they don't tell you, then it's because we believe in fairies!

**Ron Yarborough**  
Call Sign online

changes" as to why an almost six-month old PCN should still be sent out even though it was illegal to do so, eventually admitted: "Well, in all honesty, we don't really know why it was sent out so late!"

Martin was happy... but we weren't, even

## Lee's Journey from Hell to Heaven!



Lee back in training

**Dial-a-Cab** driver and **Bedfont Green** goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)** was bubbling when he told *Call Sign* that the team had overtaken Epsom and Ewell, who had topped the table for most of the season, in the *Combined Counties* Premier division promotion battle.

But the smile vanished when Lee explained that while making an important save against Guildford City – a save that gave Bedfont Green a vital 2 - 1 win – he injured his ankle and had to be stretchered off. The initial medical verdict was that he had damaged his metatarsal and if David Beckham's famous injury was anything to go by, he was looking at a two month holiday – and missing out on possible promotion.

However, an xray showed that the injury wasn't a metatarsal bone, but torn ligaments. Not an injury to cheer most people up, but to Lee it meant no more than 4 weeks out – and possibly less - rather than the whole season. Then even better news so far as Lee was concerned; the snow in February caused several games to be postponed, so he has missed even fewer matches.

"Most people tend to go from Heaven to Hell," said Lee, "I may have made the reverse journey!"

As BG go into the last 15 games, it looks like being a two horse race and Lee will be in the thick of it after all...

### Top three positions

Team	P	Points
<b>Bedfont Green</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>57</b>
Epsom & Ewell	25	53
Camberley Town	27	49

With the cab trade's first major demo for several years and *Call Sign's* Editor planning to cover it on foot, the weather was showing little sympathy with what felt like frozen drizzle slowing soaking our man! But by 1.20 in the afternoon and the meeting point of Trafalgar Square in sight (he began at Whitcomb Street), the rain had stopped while messages from **Brian Rice** appeared on driver's terminals saying that DaC supported the demo.

Alan decided to walk along The Mall rather than the streets where reporters were laying in wait for photo opportunities. By 1.40, the queue of cabs had reached Marlborough Gate and it looked as though the demo was doomed. It was hardly what you'd call a huge hold-up, but he kept going and by the time he arrived at St James Palace the taxi queue looked to have reached at least Buckingham Palace.

Arriving at the Palace, it didn't take long to see that the end of the queue had now reached Hyde Park Corner and by the time he'd crawled up Constitution Hill – even spotting a few drivers practicing their golf swing and a friendly soccer match - and then down Grosvenor Place, it was obvious that there wasn't anywhere that wasn't totally snarled up.

At 3.15, DaC driver **Peter Bond (L67)**, who was the Unite Union marshal, phoned Alan to pass on the message that the demo was over and drivers could return to work. He was now back in Constitution Hill and as the Editor passed the word, it seemed 1000 cabs had suddenly u-turned and put their lights on! Unfortunately they were heading into the jam at Hyde Park Corner that they had created! No one moaned and all leaned on their hooters to celebrate a job well done. It should also be mentioned how co-operative the police were.

*Call Sign's* Ed grabbed a few of our drivers on his marathon walk.

**Mickey Tarbuck (L41)**: "I'm here because we have to defend our jobs. If we don't make a stand now, minicabs will be getting waiting areas all over that will eventually become ranks."

**Pat Keith (G01)**: "I support the aim of stopping minicab ranks, but I'm also here to show my feelings about the way we're treated by councils who take any opportunity to slap a £60 parking ticket on us, even Westminster's own TaxiCard trips! Yet you see the same minicabs in Soho day after day and they obviously aren't getting ticketed or they wouldn't return."

**Larry Miller (S35)**: "If we let the Whitcomb Street minicab rank carry on, we'll see them springing up everywhere each Friday and Saturday evening. It's got to stop now."

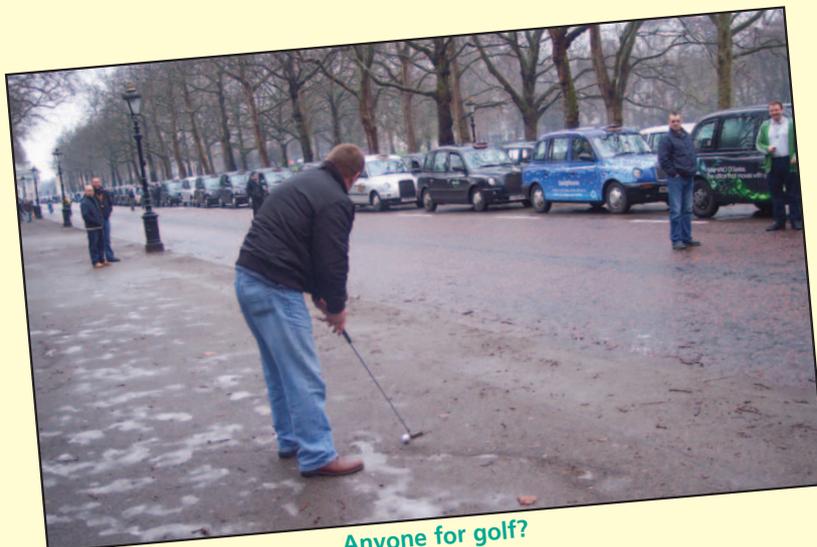
**Seamus Clyne (B69)**: "I'm not against minicabs, providing they stick to their job answering radio calls. But giving them ranks would be catastrophic for our trade and we have to fight it."

**Rob James (O45)**: "I've heard that Whitcomb Street isn't really a rank, but if a bunch of minicabs queuing up isn't a rank, what the hell is it?"

**Martin Wilding (V28)**: "Minicabs say we have a franchise on all the stations, but if they did the Knowledge they'd be allowed to ply for hire in stations as well. I'm also irritated at the number of PCNs we get for doing our job."

**John Nicholson (E13)**: "The size of this demo shows how solid the taxi trade is. The queue starts at Trafalgar Square, yet I'm sitting with my engine off half way up Constitution Hill!"

# DAC at the DEMO



Anyone for golf?



Can you take me to Scotland Yard Driver?



What time are we due at Trafalgar Square?

Dial-a-Cab driver **Dean Bezzina (M10)**, is justifiably proud of his son **Sam's** boxing achievements. He is currently training and boxing for Newham Amateur Boxing Club and at the time of writing, had remained unbeaten since transferring from the Repton Club at the beginning of the season.

**Sam Bezzina** started boxing around 3 years ago in the Essex village of Ongar, his flare and determination for the sport being obvious as he reached the schoolboy National Finals in his first season, having had just seven bouts under his belt. Unfortunately Ongar A.B.C. was struggling for funding and although 150 youngsters trained there 4 times a week, Ongar had to close its doors for the final time. It was then Sam made the move to Repton, one of the big London clubs. Sam had a good first season there and represented the club in Europe twice, producing some great boxing at the HSK cup in Denmark at *u42kgs* and was awarded silver for his efforts. Boxing at *u45kgs*, he was awarded another silver in Finland in the *Box Cup* after a very hard and close fought contest with twice Scottish champion **Robbie McKee**.

After a season at Repton, the travelling from Essex to London 3 times a week and the late nights began to take their toll and forced yet another move - this time to Newham A.B.C. where Sam remains unbeaten. He is currently contesting the *u48kgs class 3* and was in action recently when he forced a first round stoppage against **Jack Shannon** from Danson Youth, to win the London finals. Just one week later, he went on to have 3 x 2 minute rounds with Slough's **Johnny Scott** to secure a convincing unanimous decision and

## Dean's son after place in England boxing team



Sam's hand is raised in victory after a recent bout

to move on to the national schoolboy semi-finals at Guildford. A win here would see him through to the final, which will be held on 8 March at the Gorsebrook Leisure Centre. If Sam takes that title, it could secure him a place in the England team. **Call Sign** will tell you next month whether Sam reached the final and how he got on. Our fingers are crossed!

Sam's dad, Dean, told **Call Sign**: "We are all

very proud of Sam and what he has achieved. We'd would like to thank all of our family and friends who have supported him throughout and of course also thank all of his trainers from the early days at Ongar; his season at Repton and all of his current trainers at Newham. These guys are the unsung heroes who give up so much time with such dedication and commitment. A big thanks to all of them."

## DAC DRIVER SHOULD HAVE HOOFED IT...

### After Meeting Pegasus the flying horse!

While **Keith Robinson (C76)** was PoB from Victoria Station to Abbey Road, the last thing he imagined would cross his path en route to NW8 was **Pegasus**, the flying horse of Greek mythology that was said to carry Zeus' thunderbolts through the sky!

As Keith entered Hyde Park Corner from Grosvenor Place and gently moved with the usual heavy traffic flow, a riderless horse came racing through the gates of Apsley House from the direction of Hyde Park, galloping across the busy carriageways of this central London thoroughfare towards Constitution Hill and Buckingham Palace! The panicking animal - probably weighing around one ton - tried to jump over Keith's cab apparently believing it to be a hurdle, but belly-flopped onto the taxi's bonnet instead. It demolished the bonnet - and front wings too - as it collided with the vehicle.

The frightened animal rolled over into the roadway in front of Keith's former pride and joy and then, while trying to regain an upright position, crashed into a private car that was passing on Keith's nearside.

"To say that lady driver was surprised, would be an understatement," Keith told **Call Sign**. "The horse then lay in the road for a few seconds, not surprisingly stunned by the dual impact before regaining its equilibrium and galloping off towards the Queen's house," said Keith.

A female pedestrian that the horse narrowly missed as it ran across the Knightsbridge pavement, called for police and ambulance on her mobile phone. When the ambulance crew arrived, they quickly checked that Keith was ok before rushing off into the park to look for the rider of the errant horse, assuming him to be injured when the animal 'bucked' him off!

"I checked with the Blues and Royals Household Cavalry a week or two later and was told all was OK," said Keith

Keith finished by telling **Call Sign**: "When I told my cab insurance company what had happened, they initially laughed in disbelief, but I had the cab repaired and claimed my excess back from the Household Cavalry without a problem, so it all worked out well in the end. But at no time did I see the horse fly or I would have hoofed it pretty quickly," he said, finishing with a smile...

© Call Sign Magazine



Did Keith really see Pegasus the flying horse!



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We make the wheels turn  
so you can earn,

Those Dial-a-Cab drivers working on the evening of Sunday 1 February, couldn't have realised during the mid-evening as the snow began to fall, that by 10pm any road markings would vanish under the almost avalanche cascade of falling snow. What no one could have guessed was that London was about to get its largest dose of the white powder for almost 20 years and that by the following morning, the snow wouldn't have yet eased up.

Monday's daymen, getting ready to leave home in their taxis, either found their batteries flat or they just couldn't get their wheels to go anywhere. News reports gave conditions as horrendous with lorries and buses skidding off roads everywhere, causing many roads to become impassable – traffic reports usually more apt for the Scottish Highlands! Many drivers quickly summed up the situation and went back to bed!

DaC's staff faced the same problem with trains either not running or being so late as to make waiting pointless. Some did what the British do best in adverse conditions – rolled their sleeves up (only figuratively as it was too cold!) and began walking to Dial-a-Cab House. Many never made it and had to return home.

Chairman **Brian Rice** left his Hampshire home for the few-minutes drive to his local station where he exchanges his car for the train. He struggled through horrendous traffic before arriving at a car park that would have tested the skating ability of Torville and Dean! He decided that there was no way he was going to get into London so he turned round and returned home. Brian told *Call Sign* that

# Snow? It's "Carry on as Usual" at DaC!



were going to compensate for both train services and the whole London bus service. But we gave it our best shot and rather than facing the complaints we'd have expected, most clients thanked us for at least doing our best to get them to work."

International news station and DaC client **CNN** contacted Keith for a story on how we were coping, with most

what should have been a 10 minute round trip had taken him over two hours!

Brian also added: "I hate missing a day at the office and considered my failure to get in almost as a defeat even though there was absolutely nothing I could have done about it!"

Call Centre manager **Keith Cain** struggled to get in from the wilds of Essex.

"Many of our Call Centre staff were real heroes that Monday," he told *Call Sign*. "They struggled in from all over the place. Drivers were thin on the ground and it was always going to be a losing battle. Yet somehow we coped. There is no way that we, with the smaller-than-usual number of cabs and staff,

news outlets reporting that not only had London been wiped out by the snow, but that there was now no transport - including taxis! In several languages – including Vietnamese – their report quoted "control room manager" **Heath Cain** as saying DaC were doing their best to get clients of blue chip companies to their desks and that we were taking around 5000 calls each hour!

"Yes," said Keith, "we had no choice but to concentrate those resources we had available into covering account work and had to block cash and credit card customers."

And how did he like CNN's name for him as Heath Cain?

"I've been called worse," he said smiling!

## Call Sign Viewpoint...

# A Lost Battle for the Taxi Trade?

Yet another of the PCO's equalisers between the licensed taxi trade and its' minicab counterparts looks to be about to come into fruition.

Going right back to November 2002, *Call Sign* wrote of the High Court appeal defeat by Addison Lee MD John Griffin against the decision that forbade his vehicles using the Royal Park roads because their names represented advertising and confirmed our view that the decision was a correct one. Former DaC driver **John" Toby" Prescott (ex-M48)** now works part-time on his taxi and also works for the underground. He remembers being interviewed by ITV outside Buck House following the decision. He said it was right then and when *Call Sign* spoke to him last week, he was disappointed to hear that it now looks as though minicabs have got their way.

Then in November 2004, former Head of the PCO, Roy Ellis, told *Call Sign* that the PCO felt the Royal Parks "discrimination" against private hire was wrong and that he had sought to contact both the Police Commander of the Royal Parks Constabulary and the Parks Authority to seek to resolve this situation in both the immediate and long term for the benefit of the licensed private hire trade.

Under the *Royal Parks and Other Open Spaces Regulation 1997*, access to the parks is prohibited for vehicles used for trade or business unless specifically exempted. Private hire vehicles do not currently benefit from such an exemption and cannot use the Royal Parks.

In January 2008, the PCO informed to *Call Sign* that they had "...made clear that private hire vehicles provide a similar public service to taxis in many respects and had urged the Royal Parks to extend the exemption to include PHVs among the vehicles allowed to use them."

In response to those requests, the Royal Parks agreed to review the restrictions and had a consultation on the PHVs situation. It had become ever more obvious that the PCO were determined to make both sections of this trade equal. The demo of February 5 shows what the taxi section thinks.

Now we hear that following the consultation, the Royal Parks Agency have proposed allowing private hire vehicles through, even with their advertising. No doubt Mr Griffin will be writing to the PCO to offer his thanks for their support and assure them it was worth replacing their rear wiper blades for it!

*Call Sign* would like to know how long it will be before minicabs will be able to ply for hire because there soon won't be any taxis left. Who'd want to do the Knowledge when you can get the same benefits minicabbing?

Alan Fisher



Only licensed taxis have been able to use the park, now thanks to the PCO it looks like PH can join us...  
Pic © Call Sign



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**AGM notes...**

I must start off by thanking all of the 1171 subscribers that had faith in me and cast one of their votes alongside my name. But that means that there are still some 900 members who either dislike me or have never heard of me. I have never gone around deliberately asking people to vote for me, except when you have to make a speech at the AGM. So I suppose that after twenty odd years of serving the membership, I should be happy to get elected again.

I listened with great interest at the AGM as driver after driver came up to the lectern and related what I had been saying that subscribers should do, in my opinion, to retain or regain our taxi work. But as I've said in past articles, if you ignore what is happening whilst you are earning enough money and do not look to the future, you are burying your head in the sand and there is only one thing that can happen whilst you have your rear end sticking up in the air unprotected! This being the case, many drivers stood up and spoke of private hire operators procuring what licensed taxi drivers regard as their God-given work. You are only able to hold on to that work if you protect it and do not act in a greedy way, which allows others to take advantage of you and your work.

If you do not believe what I've been saying, make the effort and go into Alan Fisher's *Call Sign* website; there you can look up my past articles. Of course, you also have drivers who are so blind or ignorant of the facts and who think it's a badge of honour to boast that they never read *Call Sign*. How else will they know what is happening within the Society or what harm outside interests are trying to inflict on the Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service?

Do not leave it to others to fight off these vultures, you all have to band together and show a united front. I do not mean that you have to get poles and lumps of hardboard to produce banners, which you then use to parade along Whitehall.

Get all of our cabs to show a united front, with taxis that are clean and shiny with windows you can see through, making it a pleasure for passengers to ride in them. Most reputable private hire companies have a contract with a car wash firm so that their drivers have no reason to turn up in a dirty vehicle.

Their drivers wear clean trousers and shirts, where some of ours parade around client's multi-million pound offices with ripped jeans and stained tee shirts. When you get into the back of these drivers vehicles, you are often confronted with the stink of leaking diesel and body odour. Thank God these drivers are in the minority, but ask your passengers which drivers they remember on our circuit and they will immediately recall the dirty and rude with a bad attitude driver. It only takes one bad driver to ruin the reputation of a thousand good drivers.

**I think now is a good time to bring in some emergency rules for our Society rule book, as it is now that you must be looking to get back lost work and retain what we have got.**

A rule that states a member has to have a clean and presentable taxi that would pass a visiting PCO inspector's road vehicle check. Also that a driver during working time must wear a clean shirt and trousers with no smelly trainers. Nowadays you can get trousers and shirts even cheaper than jeans and tee shirts, so the matter of cost that some lazy drivers use as an excuse goes right out of the window.

I'm not saying that you make a driver leave on the first offence, but if he has been caught 3 times without making any effort to change his ways, then he should be asked / forced to leave.

If you think I'm being hard just because I have been re-elected as a Board Member, you are wrong; these have always been my personal views. Or if you think I can say that just because I am sitting in a new office getting a large monthly wage, you do not know how wrong you can be. I only say what I believe and maybe this economic situation that we are currently in is the correct time to think - before

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

# The World According to Tom Whitbread



your door bell and you think back on the words that I've written today.

**And while we're doing that...**

Perhaps if we can sort out the taxi trade and get it financially stable, we should then look at the mess greedy MPs have dropped us into this time. It seems that the people at the top think they are a type of demigod and take advantage with their expenses and allowances. They care little for the man or woman who has just lost their job, but will waste money on making non-existent jobs just to gain votes or give millions in legal aid to people who have paid nothing into the system, just so they can stay here to thieve and defraud the innocent tax payer.

As I have already written, these are my views, but I'm sure Alan Fisher hopes they will send many letters flying to his mailbag so that he will always have a topical, up to date, fresh *Call Sign* magazine for you to read each time.

**Tom Whitbread**  
DaC Board member

you dismiss these changes from someone you think is far detached from the drivers. If we carry on losing work that pays for your living expenses, cab expenses, children's expenses and house mortgage, it may come to a time when Bill the Bailiff rings

**Black Horse is still lending to drivers  
And at competitive rates...!**

LTI's financial arm, **Black Horse Taxi Finance**, is still helping drivers buy new taxis. While many banks have stopped lending or reduced the amount that they will lend to borrowers, Black Horse has continued to provide specialist loans and it is business as usual for drivers looking for a new deal in 2009.

**Rob Laidler**, LTI's Sales Director, told *Call Sign*: "I've been asked by some drivers if there is still competitive finance available to buy a TX4 and the answer is absolutely yes. This is an excellent time to buy a TX4. Dealers are offering some of the most competitive deals ever available and at a time when interest rates are really low and with VAT at 15%, drivers can get themselves a real bargain. Added to that, Black Horse Taxi Finance continue to provide funds for drivers to take the opportunity to capitalise on the current offers," said Rob.

After being approached by a number of drivers who were concerned that there was no longer the available credit to buy a new cab, Rob said: "If drivers are thinking of getting a good deal on a TX4 but are worried that they cannot get finance, I would say to get down to their local dealer now because it is business as usual and there is finance available at great rates."

For more information you can visit LTI's website at [www.lti.co.uk](http://www.lti.co.uk).

## HOLIDAY HOME DEALS

FOR DIAL-A-CABBIES

*In Ostuni, Puglia, Italy (the heel)*

More info at: [www.holidaylettings.co.uk/41004](http://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](mailto: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..."

A change of venue for this years Mocatra Angling Open found us once again north of the Thames at Little Braxted in Essex and a three lake complex known as Coleman's Cottage.

This is a well established fishery with a good head of carp and silver fish, platforms at every swim, no hidden snags, with lots of open water and islands where fish are always caught. And with recent club matches producing good weights and the top men weighing in close to 200lbs, a good day was expected by all. Then the heavens opened up with a monsoon type downpour just as the draw finished and the anglers were gathering their gear and walking to their pegs. Thankfully it only lasted an hour and by the time the whistle to start the match was blown, the clouds had passed and it was back to sunshine.

A good array of club members, guests, previous winners and juniors fought it out over the next six hours with fish being caught steadily by most anglers on a mixture of different baits, with those anglers using corn or pellet catching the bigger fish.

Last year's runner-up and winner of the

Jeff Clark reports on the Mocatra Angling Open competition...

## DaC Calltaker Wins Mocatra Angling Shield



DaC Calltaker Dave Mariner with the DaC Shield

previous year, **Bill Mariner (M80)**, must have been thrilled to see son **Dave Mariner**, who works in the DaC call centre as a calltaker while on the Knowledge, not only take third place overall, but also win the prestigious DaC Shield.

The overall winner was Mickey Hood with 1721b 12oz, second came Graham Dack with 1681b, while Dave Mariner came in third overall place. Jack Jones was the junior winner with 331b and the LTDA Shield went to Alex Roberts. Former DaC driver Mick Moy took KPM's £100 prize with a 121b 2oz mirror.

*The committee would like to thank our sponsors: DaC, LTDA, KPM, HALT, Doug Sherry, Stanway Services and accountants Adam Elliot...*

Jeff Clark (C25) aka Grizzly Adams

DaC's Jon Woolnough (L22) tells Call Sign of his success in climbing the UK's 3 biggest mountains, all in 24 hours in the infamous 3 Peaks Challenge...

## DaC Driver Reaches for the Peak

Well I'm back in one piece after myself and nine friends completed the '3 Peaks Challenge' to raise money for *Diabetes UK*. The challenge involved hiking up and down the 3 highest peaks in the UK - **Ben Nevis** (4406ft) in Scotland, **Scafell Pike** (3206ft) in England and **Snowdon** (3560ft) in Wales - and all three in just 24 hours.

Our challenge started at the base of Ben Nevis at 4.30pm. Once we began the climb, I soon realised why I needed to train so hard for this day. It was a hard slog to the top, where we came across snow, wind and freezing temperatures on the cloud-covered peak. The descent was also harder than I imagined, as it was now raining heavily, making the rocks very slippery. We made it back to the bottom in the respectable time of 5 hours.

But the '3 Peaks Challenge' allows no time to rest - it was straight onto the most uncomfortable minibus in the world for the long drive to the Lake District and our next climb - Scafell Pike at 3.30am and with no sleep behind us. This was to be the mountain I least enjoyed. It was very rocky, very steep and very hard on my tired legs! It was also very cold on the summit, but at least the weather held out for us this time and we completed the climb in 4 hours.

So with aching knees, we were off to Wales to finish our challenge. I think I managed to get about 30minutes kip on this journey. Great! Mount Snowdon was the most touristy mountain of the three, with views as spectacular as the previous two together. With the sun now shining, we were met by some other friends - including my wife - who joined us on this final push. Probably the easiest of the three, we were up and down in around 4 hours to complete this challenge on time and head to our hotel for a well-deserved pint.

We hope to have raised about £3500 via our website [www.justgiving.com/3-peaks-4-dill](http://www.justgiving.com/3-peaks-4-dill) for *Diabetes UK*. A big thanks to all our sponsors including **Call Sign**...



Jon on the Ben Nevis summit

Jon Woolnough (L22)

## Buy a New TX4 in March Get a Little Bit of Britain!

Drivers taking advantage of the March offers for a new TX4 from an LTI dealer could get an unexpected bonus; a fabulous limited edition Union Flag branded radiator grille!

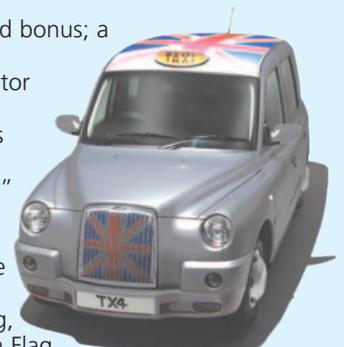
Participating LTI dealers are offering a small number of new TX4s with the option of a different radiator grille, but drivers must hurry, as only some deals are available with the special grille.

Rob Laidler, Sales Director for LTI, told **Call Sign**: "It's a little bit of fun, but we think it looks good as well! Of course we're proud that we are a British company building a British product, but this isn't the beginning of a *Buy British* campaign. It's meant to put a smile on people's faces in these gloomy times."

LTI are supporters of the *Never been a better time* campaign that points out the facts to potential buyers that there has never been a better time to grab themselves a great deal. With bank interest rates at the lowest level since the trade began, VAT at 15% and a host of deals to be negotiated in the showroom, drivers really can get the deal of a lifetime.

Rob added: "LTI and its dealers are tailoring individual deals in each showroom, such as free servicing, free fuel or great part exchange prices. Now drivers can have a little bit of Britain with their own Union Flag radiator grille."

Drivers wanting to grab themselves a fantastic offer on a TX4 and a limited edition Union Flag radiator grille, should contact their local dealer now or risk missing out on this never to be repeated deal.



**Barrie Segal** is the founder of [www.appealnow.com](http://www.appealnow.com) - the website that dramatically increases your chances of a successful appeal following a PCN. For a small fee of £7.99, you can appeal in under 5 minutes. According to Barrie, who is probably this country's foremost authority on parking tickets in the UK and someone who has helped **Call Sign** drivers on several occasions (including the last and this issue's U-turn problem with Camden), as many as 5 million parking tickets per annum could be illegal and unenforceable and that's why more people than ever are lodging appeals. Barrie estimates that 63% of those appeals are being upheld by the parking adjudicator!

However, a recent scam was exposed by Barrie, with assistance from the *News of the World*, which was probably far worse than being caught while stopping to pick up a passenger.

The scam involved Westminster parking attendants faking photographic evidence that supposedly proves parking tickets were being correctly issued. Barrie takes up the story:

"My car was parked in a bay with no sign. In such a bay no parking ticket can be issued, yet my cars continued to be ticketed by Westminster parking attendants on more than ten occasions. In most cases where a photograph of a sign was shown in the "evidence," it was a photograph of a sign some thirty yards away!

"I alerted the *News of the World* and reporter **Guy Basnet** arranged for a car to be left at the spot. They then caught on video parking tick-

# Westminster Wardens Parking Scam Revealed...

Appealnow.com and the News of the World reveal the truth!



**Barrie Segal - alerted News of the World to Westminster parking scam!**

ets being given, while the parking attendants were photographing a different sign - in one case further down the road and in another, a sign on the other sign of the road!" The contractors employing the parking attendants, NCP, told the *News of the World* that they had begun an investigation into the matter. The spokesman added: "We have clearly let ourselves down badly." However, he denied that there had been any fraud. Councillor Danny Chalkley is Westminster's

cabinet member for environment and transport. He told the BBC - who had picked up the story - behaviour of that kind by parking attendants was unacceptable and would not be tolerated. He added that the parking attendants involved had been suspended pending an investigation.

Importantly, Councillor Chalkley added: "Our rules clearly state that if there is no sign on a parking bay, a ticket should not be issued."

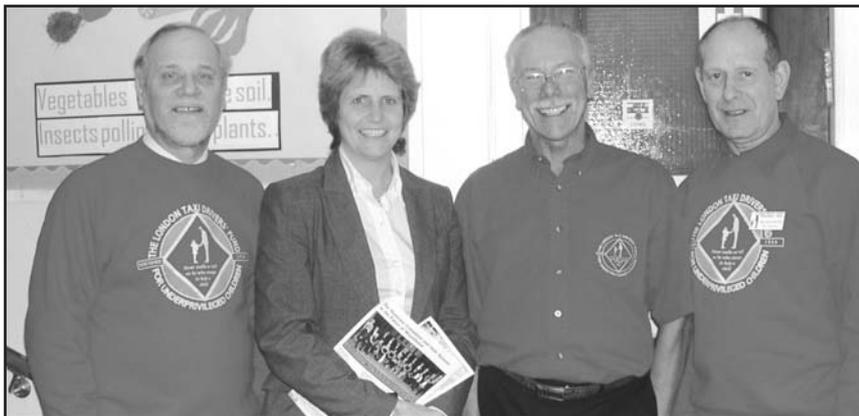
Back to Barrie Segal who added that local authorities were increasingly using the parking ticket 'system' to raise money.

"Gone are the days when parking tickets were used to keep traffic flowing - they are now a major money-spinner. And with that commercialism comes the increasing likelihood that a parking ticket is issued unfairly, incorrectly or illegally."

**Appealnow.com and Barrie Segal are real boons to the harassed motorist and could help you become one of those 63% of successful appealers.**

You can read elsewhere in this issue how Barrie Segal helped **Martin Russell (T10)** escape an unfairly issued PCN from Camden Council...

## LTFUC DONATION TO KISHARON DAY SCHOOL



Presenting the electric changing bench to Chief Executive **Beverley Jacobson**, L-R **Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)**, Fund Chairman **David Lessman (D19)** and **Malcolm Shaffron**

On 22 January 2009, **The London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** presented an Easy-Lift Bench to the **Kisharon Day School** in Temple Fortune. The donation of the electric changing bench - worth over £2000 - will help facilitate the changing of younger pupils at this 'special needs' school.

Kisharon is a charity that was established 32 years ago and which specialises in caring for and educating children and adults with learning disabilities. Kisharon prides itself on

having externally accredited services that cover life span provision from an integrated nursery to residential and supported living services. The school is raising money to maintain the high quality of services they provide and to meet the shortfall in funding from government and local authorities. To donate to Kisharon, please visit [www.just-giving.com/kisharon](http://www.just-giving.com/kisharon).

Kisharon Chief Executive, **Beverley Jacobson**, was joined by several members of the Fund at the ceremony, which saw the

unveiling of the bench to staff and pupils. Dr Jacobson said: "We would like to thank the London Taxidriver's Fund for their wonderful donation, which will help our staff to continue to provide a high-level of care within the community."

**David Lessman (D19)**, Chairman of the Fund added:

"Kisharon provides an essential service and we are delighted to be able to contribute to the school and provide a much needed piece of equipment."

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She hurried down to her swaiting taxi. She knew the fare had been paid in advance. The taxi turned left into Kentish Town Road from Caversham Road where she shared the top floor of a house with 2 friends. It was the last Friday of the month. Her trusty

**Dial-a-Cab** had turned up on time as usual and was taking her to the Charlotte Street Hotel. This is where she had frequent dinners with Tony; they joked that the food was so good that it was a pity not to stay over for breakfast and she had not forgotten her overnight bag. Almost as soon as Bonnie was seated in the taxi, she got out her mobile phone and texted a few friends. There was the latest on yesterday's after-office drinks to catch up on and also a quick note to her mother about meeting up in Hastings for a Saturday lunch. Tony worked at a large advertising agency in Camden Town, not far from where Bonnie lived; they'd met a few years back at The Hawley Arms, several months before it was burned to the ground, got on well from the start helped in part by Bonnie's easy manner and friendly smile and he was soon in the habit of sending an *account* cab to pick her up whenever they had an evening date. She had progressed well in her PR job with her pleasant style, winning friends at work and charming several new clients into joining the agency for which she worked.

Instead of the usual route, the taxi had turned left into St Pancras Way but Bonnie hadn't noticed as she was re-reading the text message she had got earlier from Rupert, a most intriguing guy she had met ten days earlier at a film premiere. From Rome, with English/Italian parents and a background of studying law in Boston and engineering in Milan, he was much more interesting than Tony, who was not totally dull, but rather predictable. They had enjoyed a few lunchtime drinks together and a dinner that had turned out to be more romantic than she had expected. She was just 29, had made no commitment to Tony and did not want to feel tied down yet - not when there was such a good looking and mysterious admirer who was also entertaining, fascinating and fun to be with. Indeed, she had let some of her friends know that Tony was soon to be history and had dropped hints about Rupert. His silver Porsche might also have influenced her feelings. When Bonnie looked up, the taxi was crossing Agar Grove and her driver explained that there had been a message on his screen giving information about road works in Camden Street and this was the best way to avoid delays. It meant there was just time for Bonnie to send a text to Rupert and arrange to see him on Sunday afternoon. Tony was certainly on the way out, but why not have just one more luxury meal at Oscar's Restaurant in The Charlotte Hotel, preferably the grilled Dover sole and then enjoy the superb Frette linen sheets.

As she put her mobile back into her handbag, the driver pulled up by the side of St Pancras Station. Bonnie started to ask him why he had stopped when the passenger door opened and Tony was standing there with a big grin, thanking the driver for his part in the subterfuge. He was also holding a suitcase, her passport and two tickets to Paris!

*This month, a belated Valentine's Day story...*

# Back Seat *Driver*

Kissing can be quite lucrative, and not just in the 30 pieces of silver context. As Bonnie got out of her Dial-a-Cab, the driver thought of the large Paul Day statue inside the station of a couple embracing and then recalled the many couples who had procrastinated as one passenger was leaving his taxi, yet lingered for another goodbye kiss. With the meter running, over the years all this smooching had totalled enough to buy several decent meals. This train of thought was provoked by the distinctive *Fendi* metallic spy handbag that Bonnie was holding. He knew that they cost almost £2000 and had seen her clutching it outside Chelsea Cloisters two days ago when she was engaged in a lingering goodbye kiss to another gentleman, one who had an Australian accent and a large wad of £20 notes. Not that it was any of his business; he was always totally discreet and professional. He was at least 20 years older than her and realised that social attitudes had changed since his courting days. There was just a mixture of jealousy and condemnation as he drove off to look for his next fare, turning on his wireless as he made his way towards the rank at King's Cross. By coincidence, it was playing *La Donna È Mobile* from *Rigoletto: Woman is wayward As a feather in the breeze, Capricious in word And in thought...*

Bonnie had a strong history of dealing with unusual and uncomfortable situations. At work she had pretended to clients that presentations were ready, even though there was still much more preparation to be done, or that a conference hall had been booked although it would have been more accurate to use the word 'planned' rather than 'confirmed'. Socially she had told many white lies when it came to making excuses about not being available for a date. The border between saying she was busy, not in the mood to go to a film, needed time to catch up on some correspondence or seeing her mother was just that; a border that was a bit wavy and grey. Not a definite line or lie. More of a comfortable evasion. There had been previous occasions when she had seen more than one guy at a time, but had always told herself that this was acceptable since it was just the beginning of an association and she did not want to be tied to someone whom she had only seen four or five times. However, her date had frequently received a distinctly different impression - Bonnie's natural enthusiasm being mistaken for personal affection and even some commitment. There had been no deliberate intention to deceive; well not unless there were diary clashes or the prospect of a fine meal with someone else that was too good to miss.

But now this was a totally grand scenario unlike anything she had encountered before. Suddenly she was at the top of an escalator confronted by flames to her left and wolves to her right, with no way down. Tony was leading her into the station and towards the long champagne bar. He had been planning this surprise for months. She was very special and he'd arranged this treat down to the last detail. He had told three of his friends about the trip and let them know how smitten he was with Bonnie and tonight she looked just gorgeous.

Nothing was to go wrong; he prided himself on his organisational abilities and so far everything had run smoothly. When they arrived in Paris, it would be a five-minute taxi ride to their hotel, the *Sofitel Paris le Scribe* near *Place Vendôme* and then he had a table booked for a late dinner at *Café Lumière* in the hotel.

Whilst Tony was letting her know how fond he was of her and some details of the treat he had scheduled, Bonnie was thinking about Rupert and their date fixed for Sunday afternoon and what fun he was to be with and how she had already told her friends that Tony was to be replaced, yet here he was about to take her on a fantastic trip to Paris. It was when Tony asked her for the second time what she would like to drink that she realised she had not been listening to him, but now some decisive action was urgently needed. But what?

She had an urgent physical and psychological need to get to the Ladies as soon as possible. Two minutes later she was powdering her nose again and still had reached no decision. Even she realised it would be contemptible to accept a fabulous weekend from a lovely man and then drop him. Just as she was returning to the seat next to Tony, there was a station announcement: "All trains to Paris are cancelled due to industrial action by transport workers in France. No trains or planes to Paris for the next 24 hours." Her eyes caught Tony's glance as the announcement ended. As she sat down her mobile rang. Without checking caller ID, she answered it and thought it would delay speaking to Tony for another minute or so.

"Hello, can I speak to Bonnie please?" Bonnie responded. "This is Dr Peter Blackstone from Charing Cross Hospital. I'm sorry to say that Mr Rupert Williamson has been pulled from the wreckage of a Porsche. Most of his personal possessions were destroyed in the crash and this is the only contact number that could be found. I am so sorry to have to give you this news over the phone but do you think it would be possible for you to get to the hospital as soon as possible?" Without any thought she said "yes, of course" and hung up.

Her mind was in total turmoil. Memories came back to her of how Rupert drove his Porsche and she was relieved that she had only been a passenger a few times. She knew his fathers' place of work in Rome and this information would be necessary to take to the hospital. Bonnie would have to make her own way as she could hardly ask Tony to take her. As she reached for her powder compact, she burst out crying in spite of herself. "Don't worry, love, I'm just as disappointed as you are," she heard Tony saying. "I'll re-schedule it all soon, I promise." And then she thought of Doctor Blackstone's reassuring and distinguished voice and wondered if he might be single...



*Till then...*

*Love Poppy x x x*

When meeting **Michael Harrington (C20)** for the first time, you cannot help but be amazed at his positive attitude towards life in general and his and partner Sarah's deep love for their eldest child Rosie. That's not to say they love younger daughter Millie any less, but Rosie is a very special nine-year old...

Rosie was starved of oxygen at birth due to medical incompetence, resulting in severe mental disabilities. She is wheelchair bound with limited communication skills, requires 24 hours a day nursing care and attends a Special Needs school. To Michael and Sarah, those limited communication skills were never more apparent than during the time immediately after her birth when Rosie was in the hospital's Special Care Baby Unit. Despite 48 hours of ventilation, the medical team didn't think she would survive and advised Mike and Sarah accordingly. They requested 15 minutes to 'get her ready' before her parents could see Rosie, inferring it might be the last time they were likely to see her alive. But Rosie had other ideas!

It was with trepidation that Michael and Sarah entered the Intensive Care Unit to see their baby, her tiny frame attached to tubes, pipes and wires connected to an array of electronic monitoring equipment making the bleeping sounds reminiscent of a TV drama.

**Approaching her crib, they softly called Hello Rosie. To everyone's astonishment, she opened her eyes in response. It was obvious she was aware and although clinging desperately onto life, was communicating in the only way she could, as if to say please don't give up on me.**

Michael recalled even doctors and nursing staff at the bedside bursting into tears at this miracle of resolve from one so small. Rosie was to stay in hospital for the next six weeks, which Michael described as a roller coaster of emotions, never really knowing if she would indeed live or die. During that period, he and Sarah cared for Rosie themselves with help from her medical team.

The Oxygen Saturation gauge, monitoring the amount of oxygen in Rosie's blood stream, always rose significantly when her parents nursed her, another reminder of Rosie's ability to communicate with those caring for her and making it obvious that she preferred her parents nursing.

Over the next few weeks Rosie thrived, steadily increasing her body weight and building up her strength. After six weeks in hospital, she was allowed home and that, Michael said, was very scary. Suddenly, after having the immediate support of Rosie's medical team, they were on their own.

"We cared for Rosie ourselves, full time, 24 hours a day in split shifts, which was absolutely exhausting," Michael told *Call Sign*. "Sarah's experience as a nursery nurse was invaluable as we did that for the first two years, living only on state benefits. Also, at two years old, Rosie became eligible to attend a Special Educational Needs school. It was at this time that Michael signed on for the Knowledge, with the intention of becoming a London taxi driver like his brother Ken. That would allow him the flexibility to help care for Rosie, while supporting his family. It was to be a long, hard slog though, with numerous

## Rosie Harrington: The Story of a Brave Young Lady...



Rosie (left) with sister Millie

will grunt and her body stiffens. The communication skills we noticed at birth are still very evident now."

When Michael and Sarah began legal proceedings against the hospital, Julia Cahill of

interruptions due to his domestic situation. But with the understanding of the PCO, he eventually won his coveted Green Badge in November 2005, joining Dial-a-Cab in February 2006.

At just 4 years old, Rosie fell ill and was hospitalised for her first time since birth, her parents refusing to leave her bedside despite the fact that Sarah was 8 now months pregnant with daughter number two, Millie. On discharge, Michael and Sarah were able to arrange care facilities for Rosie and though they insisted on being on hand themselves, at least some of the responsibility for Rosie was shared. This 24/7 care continues to this day and will do so into the foreseeable future. Rosie has two dedicated carers working twelve-hour shifts, which allows Rosie some semblance of independence and her loving family a little time together. When Michael gained his Green Badge, all State benefits stopped. This just added impetus to Michael working the cab 'enthusiastically' as he put it, to support his family.

**Eventually, after almost 5 years of legal wrangling, the hospital admitted responsibility to medical negligence and agreed an initial financial settlement, with periodic payments for life for Rosie's care and personal needs, taking another 2 years to finalise.**

This financial security has allowed the family to buy a suitable property close to Rosie's new school, while the purpose-built, specially adapted extension designed to cater for Rosie and her carers allows the whole family to move into the new home. One sad fact of life was that no less than 15 neighbours signed a petition raising objections to the family moving into their area, despite the support and assistance of the Council Planning Department. But Michael, Sarah and their daughters looked forward to the move and starting afresh.

*Call Sign* asked Michael just what Rosie thought of the idea and his reply was immediate:

"She's very excited," he said, "and when she's happy her face lights up and she relaxes her body. When she is not best pleased, she

renowned London solicitors **Kingsley Napley** in St. Johns Lane, Smithfield, took up their case. On her retirement, Terry Donovan, a partner in the firm with a particular interest in clinical negligence, took over the brief as Rosie's official Deputy or Receiver in the Court of Protection, meaning he is responsible for looking after Rosie's best interests for life. That means Terry will work closely, long term, with the family to ensure Rosie's welfare.

Finally, Michael asked to take the opportunity to express publicly through *Call Sign*, his and Sarah's thanks to the nursing staff at the hospital Special Care Unit, to Terry Donovan for all his help and special thanks to Michael and Sarah's families for all their support over the years through some very tough times.

And to Rosie, our admiration for one brave young lady...

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### Revised Taxi Inspection Fee

**Transport for London has announced that with effect from 1 April 2009, the taxi application/ inspection fee will increase from £107 to £111.**

**Other fees remain unaltered...**

Call Sign

March 2009

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

Printers: pjb Printing Limited 112 Portland Rd, London SE25 4PJ

Design: Aldan Publications,

Tel: 07958 300 428

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# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

*Hello Ladies & Gents,*

Can I begin by thanking those of you who had the confidence to vote for me to represent you, the members, for a further term in office at this year's AGM. I have never taken my position as a Board Member for granted and I will certainly try my hardest not to let you down. It is ever-more important that we all work together during these extraordinary times to safeguard our Society and as I have mentioned before, customer care is a vital part of ensuring that our clients remain happy with our professionalism and levels of service – **It is this that keeps us apart from the rest...**

Leading on from this, over the past few weeks I have received a number of complaints from clients who have shown their dissatisfaction at the way they have been dealt with during their journeys. It is disappointing that a small number have complained of unhelpful drivers, rudeness and even intimidation whilst on a particular trip. I am sure you agree with me that every account we service, no matter how big or small, is very important to all of us and I can only urge you once again to make an extra effort to be courteous, discreet and obliging to the passengers in your taxi. It does not go unnoticed and only recently a long standing account holder contacted me and asked me to thank one of our members who went out of his way to help him when he was unwell on his journey to work. I am in no doubt that there are many similar cases that go unreported.

The procedures on EC5 (Finsbury Square) have been in place for quite a while now and despite constant reminders, there are still a minority that book into this zone far from the



four EC zones in order to gain an advantage over their fellow members. By the time you read this article, the blatant offenders will have attended a complaints hearing and the results will be published in the next edition of **Call Sign**. I would hazard a guess that they will be dealt with fairly harshly by the committee, because there are no excuses. At the risk of repeating myself - **please play the game.**

Recently, one or two deliveries have been left at the wrong address and as you can imagine, it causes problems further down the line. In one of the instances, the address was an empty building which made it even harder to reclaim the envelope that contained a number of travel tickets addressed to one of our most senior clients. Can I suggest that if you are unsure of house or flat numbers, please check with the Call Centre before leaving the

package. If you can obtain a signature at the delivery address, then so much the better.

A number of our drivers have encountered problems when being stopped and checked by security at the entrance to the Canary Wharf Estate. As a matter of urgency, Keith Cain and myself met with the heads of security who informed us that taxis are required to have their *For Hire* light on or risk not being allowed through the barriers if they haven't already been allocated a radio trip. Dial-a-Cab has an excellent working relationship with the Canary Wharf Management and we are at present re-evaluating the procedures, especially in the evenings, with the need to find a suitable and fair solution to this particular problem. We will of course update you if there are changes to the booking-in procedures, but for the immediate future please use your discretion – use the ranks whenever possible and do not park in areas that obstruct crossings or entrances to buildings. The security has the authority to move you on, or at very worst, issue a banning notice.

Finally can I remind you that if you have a query on any of the issues I've raised, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email and I will be only too pleased to help and advise you. No one likes receiving a complaint, but rules are in place to protect the Society and all of our members and I will do my utmost to make it a fair and equal playing field for all of us.

**Allan Evans**  
DaC Compliance Officer  
allane@dialacab.co.uk

## Magical Taxi Tour anniversary trip DVD...



**All Proceeds from the sale of this DVD will help sick and terminally ill children go on their trip of a lifetime...**

A DVD of the 2008 Magical Taxi Tour to the Disneyland Resort Paris is now available to buy. This was the 15th annual trip taking sick and terminally ill children on their trip of a lifetime. Guests at the Disney Dinner at The Marriott in December saw the images and DVD as they enjoyed the event and many asked when and where they could get a copy.

Now you can order your copy by simply sending a cheque for a minimum donation of £5 to cover postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to CHCD Charity Trust and crossed *Special Events* Acc. Please post to:

**Magical Taxi Tour, CHCD Charity Trust**  
PO Box 2113, Chigwell IG7 6BP

The Magical Taxi Tour website has also undergone a transformation - log on and take a

look at [www.magicaltaxitour.com](http://www.magicaltaxitour.com) where you can learn more about the trip and its sponsors. The website is also able to accept donations for future Magical Taxi Tours.

### ☆ POLARIS WORLD ☆

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Former **Royal British Legion** Knowledge School superintendent **Roy Cuming**, was also a former Operations Manager at the London Cab Company in Kennington for over 30 years. He helped *Call Sign* on several occasions to find missing relatives of people that had written to us. Now DaC driver, **Colin Isaac (S72)**, who was Roy's son-in-law, has given us the sad news of his passing. Colin told us:

**"Many drivers will remember Roy's enthusiasm and devotion to teaching the Knowledge of London. Roy was also a Blue Badge Guide and highly respected as a cab trade historian. He always showed kindness to any ex-serviceman who wished to become a London cab driver and many obtained their Green Badge under Roy's supervision."**

**"Sadly, Roy recently lost his courageously long battle with illness. But he will always be remembered for his contribution to the Taxi trade."**

Roy's amazing memory of our trade helped *Call Sign* reunite two UK-based families that had lost contact with their relatives who had driven taxis in London, but the case that stands out for us was when an on-line reader, John Osborne who lived in Vermont, USA, asked us if we could help him trace his uncle James Hare, who was a London taxi driver back in the 1950s and 60s, or any of James' descendants. John's only information was that James lived in Fulham at one time, ran a family bakery in Dawes Road, was married to

# ROY CUMMING

27TH JULY 1931 - 23RD JANUARY 2009



Jessie and had a son also called James. He added that because *Call Sign* was one of very few taxi sites online, we were probably his only chance of tracing any of his roots.

Within 5 weeks we had two replies from former ODRTS drivers – one living in New Zealand and the other in Jersey – who claimed to have worked with James Senior, but sadly neither had any up to date information. But soon after that, we had a call from Roy Cuming. The Royal British Legion in the 1950s and 60s was interminably linked to the

Knowledge of London and helped many 'boys' – especially ex-servicemen – learn London's ropes.

Roy told us that he enjoyed reading *Call Sign*, which was always passed on to him by Colin. As he looked through the October 2004 issue, he saw the name James Hare and immediately knew not only the name, but also where the son lived. He told us that both he and James Hare used to rent their cabs from G&S Bricusse in Star Road, Fulham. He also had worked with Tom Hare – James nephew – at the London General and indeed the pair did the KoL together having gone to a Knowledge school in Hortensia Road, Fulham. Even more importantly, Roy gave us James Hare Junior's address in west London.

John Osborne was absolutely delighted with the news as he had long dreamed of meeting with his English family.

**"I don't know Mr Cuming,"** John had told us at the time, **"but I will be forever indebted to him."**

We offered Roy Cuming some money for his time. He refused to take a penny for any of the help he provided. Certainly the mark of a wonderful man. Our thoughts go out to his family...

**Wendell White drives a radio taxi in Denver, Colorado and writes the occasional column for Call Sign. He was the 2008 TLPA International Taxi Driver of the Year...**

## Out and About in Denver

As I wrote in the January *Call Sign*, I received some bad news towards the end of 2008. My doctor told me: "You have a ruptured *Abdominal Aorta Aneurysm* and you have two options. Either do nothing and the results are guaranteed – you'll die very quickly, or you can let us try to repair it and your chances will then be 50%." They went ahead...

Over the past few weeks many of my 'personal' customers have called or sent e-mails asking how soon I would be back at work. So I thought some of you at **Dial-a-Cab** in London might be interested too.

Before they were willing to operate, the doctors tried lowering my blood pressure with massive injections, but I didn't respond. So they proceeded - despite the dangerously high readings and not giving me much chance of even surviving the operation, let alone recover! Good thing they did.

Normally my blood pressure is quite low – although not requiring medication. For more than a month following surgery, I continued taking a prescription for the heart, which resulted in sleeping more than 16 hours a day. After ceasing the medication, my sleep requirements gradually reduced. By mid-December, my recovery started being more noticeable on a daily basis and I was able to switch from using a 'walker' to a cane.

Climbing stairs at first was hard, and walking any distance at all was tiring. Even before the surgery I didn't consider myself physically in top condition (though probably better than most people of my age), but I was able to do yard work and walk without tiring etc and gradually become able to walk longer distances in my recovery.

Early in February, the doctor told me I was at least a couple of months ahead of his expectations and now I have a clearance to return to driving my cab - not that I am as strong as I was before. Being bedfast caused me to lose much muscle-tone. To improve this I have joined a fitness club where I can go when I have any time available to exercise on the various equipment they have, including swimming pool, hot tub and sauna. Because of the damage the ruptured aorta caused, and the corrective surgery that was done, there are a few exercises I must avoid for now – sit-ups and bicycling, for example.

I am grateful for all the people who have cared and am thankful for the recovery I have made so far. Thanks to all who prayed for me...

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



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Several Dial-a-Cab drivers have forwarded an article from the *Daily Telegraph* to **Call Sign** following the result of a Sheffield County Court case. Headed, *Judge's ruling will force firms to cater for the disabled*, the article claimed experts were now saying that meat shops and businesses had to provide equal access for the disabled to all their premises.

The ruling followed a case brought to court by 17-year old David Allen, a muscular dystrophy sufferer who is confined to a wheelchair. He claimed that he could not get access to his local *Royal Bank of Scotland* because the only way in was via some steps and as a consequence, the bank was breaking the *Disability Discrimination Act*. In their defence, the bank said that their other branch in Sheffield did have wheelchair access and that Mr Allen could have used that one. The judge disagreed and the bank say they intend launching an appeal.

The decision begs the question; are London private hire drivers carrying on their businesses in their cars and if so, can they cater for the disabled? Although admittedly prejudiced, the view of this magazine is that minicabs / private hire ARE carrying out their businesses in their cars, otherwise they would not be given Mayoral permission to escape the congestion charge.

We asked PCO/TfL and their response was: **"Transport for London is committed to ensuring all public transport services in London, including private hire vehicles,**

# Are non-accessible minicabs illegal?



**Obviously incapable of carrying a wheelchair, is it now going against the rule of law?**

**are as accessible as possible. All licensed taxis in London are required to be wheelchair accessible under the conditions of fitness, as passengers often hail them off the street. Although there is no such requirement for private hire vehicles, the Public Carriage Office (PCO) encourages private hire operators to provide accessible vehicles and passengers booking a minicab will have the opportunity to ask for a vehicle that is**

**wheelchair accessible."**

That in turn begs another question: Does a PCO regulation supersede the law of the land? The *Royal Bank of Scotland* claimed David Allen could have used another branch. Along with the PCO comment came this added sentence:

**"Passengers can find a list of private hire operators that have accessible vehicles on our website [www.tfl.gov.uk/find-aride](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/find-aride)."**

That again leaves the obvious question as to whether there is a difference between that quote and the *Royal Bank of Scotland* saying that David Allen could use the bank's other branch? Upon the legality of that answer depends the answer to the headline of this article: *Are non-accessible minicabs illegal?*

While true that the answer could also affect legitimate taxi companies around the UK that still use saloon cars, sadly we can only worry about our drivers in London. The PCO are always sent a copy of **Call Sign** and we await their comment.

**Alan Fisher**

## Call Sign Wiper Blade Success!

A **Call Sign** article published just after Christmas 2008 on PH company Addison Lee's sudden and mysterious "loss" of the rear wiper blade arm from their cars as it seemed to be blocking some of the advertising on their rear windscreens, pointed out the obvious danger to the public with their cars then leaving a protruding wiper blade spindle. As always, a copy of this mag was sent to Mary Dowdy at the PCO. Before January was even out, we were told that Addison Lee had been told by the PCO to put the wiper blade arms back on and just as we would criticise the PCO if we felt the need, we are happy to offer praise when deserved and the PCO's quick action certainly deserves praise.

Addison Lee certainly do not seem to be rushing into the replacement process and we welcome the PCO's word that just as any licensed taxi would be, their compliance officers floating around London will have a word in their driver's ears if they are seen without a rear wiper blade arm after February 2. It also raised a smile in the **Call Sign** office when we read in *The Badge* how the LCDC had written to the PCO on 9 January on the subject. They had obviously read our article in December, but the PCO had already acted!

It also reminds us how the scribe from another trade mag phoned to congratulate us on the original story while asking if he could mention it? Of course by then it was in the public domain and all the trade mags were free to use it and certainly did, most with the hidden inference that it was they who had "discovered" it! Bad enough that Addison Lee hates this mag! Ah well...



**The protruding spindle on Addison Lee Cars. As of Feb 2, they should have wiper blades fitted**

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

### CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



I worked a rare weekend just before my editor gave me the 'hurry up' for this article and it was comforting working knowing that *Radio 5 Live* was still sending back regular updates from the football, rugby and cricket, and yes, that Millwall threw away a 2 goal lead again! But my weekend shift had a real football theme to it. **Peter Beardsley** and his family found me *showing out* when they were waiting for a cab outside Marks and Sharks in Oxford Street.



Peter was a smashing bloke and we jawed all the way to the Tower Hotel about football. And what an amazing stats man! He knew all the teams, scorers and dates going way back and then looked after me when I got his daughter back in good time for *Ant and Dec* on TV despite the gridlock in Parliament Square that late afternoon – boy did it pay to double-back to Lambeth Bridge and swap the Embankment option for the Elephant and Castle! Amazingly, my next job featured a footballer from the other end of the scale - two lads in the Highway wanted a run down to the O2. One of the guys was in a former youth academy product at Millwall, but was shown the

door by new manager Kenny Jackett, but **Tommy Kilbey** is now trying to make the breakthrough down at Portsmouth. The following day, while reading the Sunday sports pages, a familiar face pulled up behind me on the South Ken rank - former Fulham midfielder and now Brentford assistant manager Terry Bullivant! As someone once said, it's a funny old game... *Be lucky, be careful out there et à bientôt...*

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



## Is it a virtual world?

The editor had asked me to open this article about virtualisation by talking about *Second Life*®; a 3D virtual world created by its residents and which recently made the news when two 'residents' wanted to divorce! However, having looked at it and had a go on it, I really can't find anything good to say about it (sorry Ed!). So if you are interested in entering a virtual world where you can meet other people and pay for virtual land, clothes etc, then feel free to visit [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com) for more information. However, if you prefer to tinker with computers and try out new operating systems and bleeding-edge applications, then perhaps you might be interested in Virtualisation, or more accurately, O/S Virtualisation. This technology has been around for some years now, but of late has really taken off. This is partly due to the advent of quad-core processors and cheap memory and partly (on a business level), due to necessary CO2 reductions associated with power demands caused by physical servers. So why would you be interested in all this virtualisation malarkey? Well, this is where it becomes fun. If you are the type of person who uses *Windows XP* at home but is itching to have a play with the evil *Vista* or perhaps (dare I say it), *Linux* (ie *Fedora*, *Ubuntu*, *Xandros*, et al), but either don't have the spare hardware to try it on or you're nervous of messing up your current installation, then virtualisation is for you! Even if you are on *Vista* or *Linux* already and miss *XP* or want to try out a different flavour of *Linux* or the latest applications, you can have a go with some software out there called *VMWare* and you can get a free version of it called *VMWare Player* at:

<http://www.vmware.com/download/player>.

So what is it and why do you want it? The simple answer is that *VMWare* provides you with the ability to run multiple 'virtual' computers within your single 'physical' computer, whilst still logged on to your current PC. For example, if you fancy having a play with *Ubuntu Linux*, you can install it as a virtual machine (which you access as a normal window on your desktop) and have a go at using it without affecting your current PC setup. Let's say you find you don't like *Ubuntu*, or it gets all messed up - no biggie, you just delete that virtual machine and start a new one! Try a different version of *Linux* maybe. The key here is that you don't have to go through all the aggro of reinstalling *XP/Vista* back on your physical computer afterwards - your computer stays exactly as it was because you haven't changed the operating system or files on the physical computer.

If you don't have the patience for sitting and waiting for *Linux* to install, you can download pre-installed versions of *Linux* from <http://www.vmware.com/appliances> and boot straight into a completely prepared environment in a few minutes with little or no technical expertise required (see the screenshot)!

Installing *VMWare Player* is easy enough and after a reboot, you can then either download some free pre-installed virtual machines based on *Linux* (as mentioned earlier), or if you want to install *Vista/XP* as a virtual machine, then you will need the original

*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?



**Ubuntu Linux running as a virtual machine on a windows XP**

CD/DVD (or download a free trial version). If you go down the *Vista/XP* virtual machine route, you will also need to visit this website which will help you to install it onto your virtual machine: <http://www.easymx.com>. If you are seriously interested in playing with *VMWare* and would like to have a go at using *Linux* as a virtual machine yourself but are a bit unsure as to what's involved and where to start, feel free to email me at: [opensource@dialcab.co.uk](mailto:opensource@dialcab.co.uk) and I'll be

happy to help if I can. But I must stress that this is purely a hobby to me, so I take no responsibility for anything you do to your own computer! I only check this email address during my own time, so please bear with me. I hope I've explained this properly and I hope some of you out there have a go at *VMWare* and *Linux* and enjoy it - remember, it's all free and it's a lot of fun!

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

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

# DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

**Last month, Flashback returned to 1984 and to the origin of the name Dial-a-Cab. This month we go back three years earlier and to the launch of a not-so-successful "new" name for ODRTS. It's 1981 and the launch of All London Radio Taxis...**



**From Call Sign, April 1981**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (Peter Fennimore A79)**

A short report this month. I must report to you that the Board of Management have decided to use the name of **All London Radio Taxis** in a large advertising campaign, so don't be alarmed when you see that name – it isn't another organisation springing up!

We registered the name some years ago and we have been advertising in *Yellow Pages* under that name for the past 10 years, the advantage being that it puts us first under taxi headings thanks to the A in All.

We believe that to advertise more extensively using the name All London Radio Taxis will make it easier for people to remember our name, and should they forget the number when they ring the operator, it can be more easily found than looking under Owner Drivers Radio Taxis. That name has served us well for the past 27 years, but the Board feel it is too much of a mouthful. We are all proud to be owner drivers and to belong to this circuit, so I am sure we will lose none of that pride, but perhaps gain more work by using the name of All London Radio Taxis.

I would like to thank all the people that have enquired after me following my accident, I am much better now and hope very soon to lose the last of the aches and pains. I must particularly thank F94 who took care of everything at the time of the accident. How that man can devote so much of his working time to looking after the needs of others, I shall never know.

Thanks Steve, you were a Godsend...

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

## FIFTY GREEN YEARS

Well it's no use arguing about it, business is bad across the board! So what can I do or say that might be of any help as an old 'un to all of you maybe younger ones?

Have you thought about getting winter tread type tyres so that you can get out and back to work and even possibly take on jobs that most others can't in bad weather? Or what about a set of chains? Looked after, they will last for years.

Have you considered doubling up on either yours or someone else's taxi? Books and evening classes can help you to learn how to carry out basic servicing and maintenance of your cab and / or home. This can save you bundles of money, but don't be too ambitious to start with as mistakes can also cost you plenty - and never forget that safety comes before money.

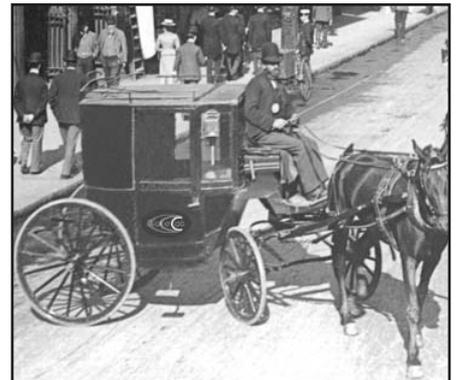
With these long waiting times between jobs, reading a book or magazine that teaches you a new skill, such as a useful language, household repairs, or any subject that either enhances your usefulness to potential punters or which can enable you to do things for yourself rather than paying others to do it for you, can be time usefully spent.

Remember to point out to your fares how much safer passengers are in a licensed London taxi than in almost any other form of transport, both from an injury and a security point of view.

Drive your cab as economically as possible; this is helped by keeping accurate records of the cost and miles covered on fuel. Write the figures down in an exercise book that you check frequently and try to drive in a more efficient manner to get better mpg. It's amazing how much you can improve your fuel consumption figures and at no

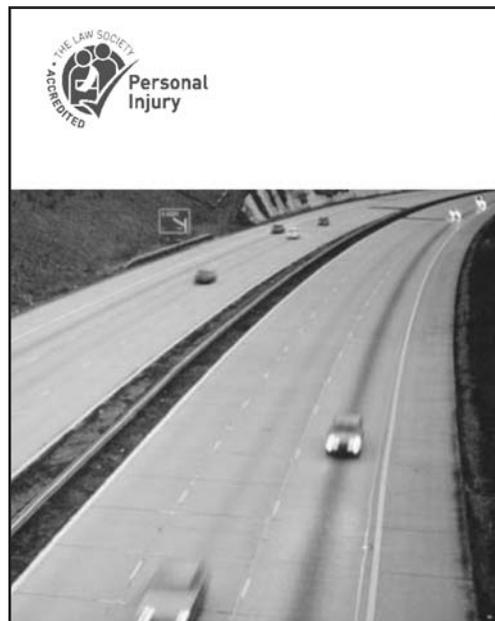
cost by using a lighter right foot on the throttle and brake pedals, together with good judgement of road and traffic conditions. This style of driving will also save money on tyres and general wear and tear, but don't expect miracles at first, it takes time to adjust to a more modest, careful driving style.

Most of all remember this; these bad times are not going to last forever - it may just seem to you as if they are. From what my old friends and acquaintances who are still driving a cab tell me, this really is the quietest any of them have known, but they can still put food on the table, and so can you. So don't give up and don't do anything silly that could jeopardise your badge. *Be lucky and be careful out there...*



The good old days! Pic courtesy Vince Chin

**Sunset Strip**



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at - [callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com)

### Why?

Dear Alan,

A few thoughts on a few subjects. Regarding disaster recovery, since the demise of the voice channel I wonder how much attention has been given to the subject? I know that some has, however, one weekend last year the system went down and parts for a repair were unavailable in this country. We had to go to telephone dispatching in order to give at least a modicum of service to our clients. It was only by luck that the problem occurred at the weekend. Could someone reassure us that a full back-up of the system is now available and usable in the event of similar circumstances? I realise the reasoning behind doing away with voice, but it is obviously not good enough to be dispatching by phone.

On the recession and cash rides: Does anyone know the 'one number' for cash rides that was brought in a couple of years ago? This number was for the public to be able to contact all the radio circuits in rotation to enable them to get a cash cab when they wanted one. I have never seen this number advertised. The £2 booking fee was to be charged to cover costs **and** to advertise the number. With the exception of cards given out by drivers, I don't think it has ever been advertised. I feel that as times get harder we are missing a trick here and should be pushing for work wherever we can get it. Is it time for the advertising budget to be increased to bring awareness to the public who, by and large, don't realise that you can book a licensed taxi? Some of our rivals in the minicab industry seem very good at getting their name out there. Brand awareness and all that.

On a similar subject, why are Addison Lee allowed not only to get away with removing the rear wiper from their cars, but also to stretch their remit in respect of rear signage? The PCO notice clearly states that the size of any sign in the rear window should be no more than 33% of the height from the lower edge of the window. Also, any signs should only be on ONE of the permitted positions. Addison Lee are flouting the spirit and letter of this regulation by incorporating a logo larger than the permitted height. They are getting round the regulation by 'bleeding' the bottom of their logo onto the bodywork of their cars. Surely this means they are using two positions (the rear window and the tailgate). This is blatantly against regulation 5.4 of PCO notice 16/08. Do you think it should be down to us to continue to complain about minicabs flouting laws and regulations or should we expect PCO regulations to be upheld by the regulators (the PCO)?

Sorry if I've gone on a bit...

**Mick Davis (M14)**

Thanks for the letter Mick. I have two replies for you - the Chairman and the PCO...

Brian Rice replies: Interesting letter Mick. Regarding signage, you probably know my thoughts on that as I've written reams on the subject over the years and lobbied many people in order that signage should not be allowed on minicabs. However, the taxi trade did not have any alternative other than to accept TfL's compromise to just have the back window of PH liveried. If you remember, I also wrote that I was surprised our Mayor, Boris Johnson, allowed it on their back window - and that coincidentally Addison Lee contributed £25,000 to his election fund! I went into great detail regarding signage and that £25,000 contribution in the Chairman's report in the August 2008 *Call Sign*, but I do believe it is now up to the PCO to comment any further.

Regarding voice despatching; you may know that we are having tremendous problems with our power supply, which is supplied to us by EDF (a French company) and we have experienced many power cuts with up to seventeen of them in one day! Fortunately, we have very sophisticated 'back up' systems, but on one occasion this building was hit by 10,000 volts that actually blew one of the modules in our Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) system, which resulted in our system going down and was one of the two occasions you referred to. The other was also a power problem.

If the system is corrupted by a power problem, then this would also affect any voice despatching and it would then become unavailable. We can only have voice despatch if V6 dies, but we still have power. So in both the scenarios you quote, even if we had voice we would have been unable to use it! However, for the amount of work we could despatch by voice in the event of a malfunction, it really isn't worth worrying about as it would just be a tiny number and would not placate anyone. So quite honestly, we might as well not bother! As soon as we have a problem with the system, drivers phone in and we direct them towards ranks and that has worked very well as we telephone a trip to the nearest rank. So under those circumstances, we do not have any plans to instigate a voice channel. Even if we did have a voice channel, the majority of drivers would not know how to use it - probably including you Mick - as we have not despatched by voice for twenty years and we would then have to spend a great deal of time explaining to members the procedure of accepting a job on voice.

Cash bookings and brand awareness! I had a most torrid time twelve years ago



when I instigated that none of our vehicles should carry any livery except for the DaC logo, as it would make the public aware of our brand. Many members did not agree, however time has proven them wrong. It is imperative that our brand is seen. So I agree with your sentiments entirely; you can now have our (DaC) cash number affixed to your cab to generate more work.

Regarding the 'one number': This is a phone number that is called by the public and distributed on a round robin basis to all three circuits. It is advertised by the GLA in their paper and also by text messaging, which is also advertised on television in the run up to Christmas. The TfL website also advertises the number and one number also has its own website - this is hosted by one of our competitors who unfortunately has let it fall into disrepair. I have in the recent past advised the Chairman of said company that the site is not online and he is looking at the situation and hopefully will resolve it... hmmm! You, like me, have probably noticed ashtrays outside pubs and clubs advertising a minicab company. We could do that too but I know the majority of my members do not want to pick up radio cash work from clubs and bars and I understand why they are picky, so that exercise would be pointless. The best way to advertise for cash work is by putting our number on the side of your cab. If you haven't already got it, then visit Roman Way. Finally Mike, you finish your letter with 'Sorry I've gone on a bit' - Snap!

A PCO spokesperson adds: *We have not given Addison Lee permission to remove the rear wiper from their cars; the company was given until 2 February to re-fit these wipers. Any vehicle still not fitted with rear wipers will immediately be issued with an 'unfit' notice by our Compliance team.*

*As for signage, the purpose of the guidelines was to minimise the administrative burden on both operators and the PCO - operators can affix any signage to their vehicles that meets these guidelines without needing to have it approved by the PCO. The guidelines were never intended as hard and fast rules and where any operator wishes to use a different format for their sign, they may do so if granted approval by the PCO. Addison Lee did apply for, and were granted, PCO approval of their signage. Initially we rejected their application, but they then modified the proposal so the signage did not cover the licence disc or the red route sticker,*

## MAILSHOT

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*or prevent a clear view through the rear view mirror, and we approved this final design...*

## Ronnie Mitchell to the rescue!

About 10.30 on the evening of 2 December, I had just picked up from Canary Wharf and was heading towards the west end. As I came out of the Limehouse Link, traffic east-bound was at a standstill when a minicab did a u-turn and drove straight into the side of my taxi. He then drove off up the Highway. I gave chase and managed to catch up with the minicab in Alie Street E1. The occupants got out and ran! By this time I was on the phone to the police giving them the vehicle's particulars. They told me to stay with the car as they were on their way. After 30 minutes of waiting for them to arrive, I rang 999 again only to be told that they were too busy to deal with me. At that point I thanked them for their help and carried on working.

The next morning I rang my insurance company, only to be told that the minicab was uninsured. That was of no surprise to me, even though it had the regulation PCO stickers on it. So I went to my local garage, Stables in Penarth Street SE15 to see how much the damage – which was to the front door and wing – was going to cost me. I spoke to Gary, who runs the garage with his father Ronnie, and explained what had happened and that I was going to have to pay for the repairs out of my own pocket. Gary told me that as I was one of their regular customers, they would repair the damage free of charge!

In this day and age, that is something so rare – a garage that looks after its regulars. So I was able to enjoy a stress-free Christmas with my family after initially worrying that I'd have to work over the holiday period to pay for the damage! So I'd like to wish all those at Stables Garage a belated Happy New Year and add a big thank you to them.

As for the police, don't bother phoning them if you ever need assistance as they will just leave you stranded after keeping you waiting and then tell you they're too busy to come out! Why? They are probably too busy nicking hard-working taxi drivers for over ranking!

**Lee Wood (T18)**

**Thanks for the letter Lee. I must admit that although I've never met or spoken to him in my 38 years as a taxi driver, I've lost track at the number of times I've heard the name of Ronnie Mitchell mentioned. Now I can understand why! You're right, it's not just rare for a garage to look after their customers to that extent, but it's becoming even rarer. If anyone has a story of good service 'over and above' by their garage, let me know and we'll give them a mention ...Ed**

## Concierge?

*Dear Al*

In the Chairman's *End of Year* report, I read how well we are all doing now that Concierge is doing so well. Am I right that DaC makes 50p for every job that is booked through the system and that very soon the radio rent is going up to £140 a year? In this current climate, how about drivers getting a subs reduction as the work is just not there? I do feel we should get a benefit from Concierge of some sort, as when I drive past London Wall there are 10 cars to every taxi with many other accounts now also very similar. I can't really see how it's of any benefit to us drivers if we don't see any of these profits? We have trouble booking into EC5 at all now, yet the work is still at London Wall and other major accounts, but the volume of taxis has dropped and risen in cars - from what I can see. So is Concierge a hindrance rather than benefit to we drivers?

**Dave Raymond (F56)**

**Brian Rice replies: I'm really pleased you read my report, however you made me read it again as you have "stated" facts that were allegedly in my report - yet I did not remember writing them! So I read the report again and I'm afraid you have put your own interpretation onto what was actually written.**

**However, what is interesting is that I looked back to all your previous letters to the magazine and one of them (July 2002) actually predicted a lot of our work going to cars. You are now asking me questions where the answers I am going to give, you predicted six and a half years ago – that is impressive!**

**I don't know who told you the subscription was going to be increased to £140 as it's news to me. Also, yes, we do charge a fee for Concierge, which varies from client to client. And what good is Concierge to us? Well, if we never had it we would not be servicing those accounts in any way. You complain about the number of cars being used by clients - just as you did six and a half years ago – but it is called competition and cheaper competition at that! As you are probably aware after reading the Annual Report, there is a tremendous shift in the corporate sector towards cars and what Concierge has done is to hold the tide back. But that is all we are doing - holding the tide back. As the downturn bites, the corporates will be looking for even greater savings by using minicabs. As more people lose their jobs, they will enter the minicab / private hire industry with its easy entry process and the number of cars that compete against us will increase even more. There are already 53,000 minicab drivers, more than double our number. However, with the weak pound (sterling), I'm hopeful we will have a tourist season this year and any respite will be welcome.**



**Dave, you also state we should give members a subs reduction as there is not so much work, but when we were booming and paid back to members over half a million pounds in incentives, I didn't hear you call to increase subs as we were so busy!**

**Finally, if we are doing less work then our income from account clients is falling. If at the same time we were to reduce member's subs thereby reducing income further, we would surely be on a slippery slope? Consequently, I can't comprehend your thought process and logic, as it would surely lead to tears...**

## Taxi for sale...

Can I put my taxi up for sale through *Call Sign*? It is an 08 reg, black TX4, *Silver model* with 57,000 miles on the clock. It has been main dealer serviced and fully maintained. It will be passed in the new prospective buyer's name for £23,999 and available with its new plate from 15th March.

**Tony Arnold (F03)**

**No, you can't put it in *Call Sign* ...Ed**

## Medicals

Having seen an ad on the DaC notice board advertising taxi driver medicals in City Road for £50, I was wondering if there was any reason why we can't use them as the cost seems now to have increased to around £165 at most GPs – certainly a huge amount for those over 65 who need yearly medicals?

**Bernie Silver (G08)**

**Medicals have to be done by your GP as he / she has all your past records. And yes, the cost is extortionate but still preferable to the PCO's original idea of outsourcing medicals. At least you have someone that knows you ...Ed**

## Online thoughts...

What a great way to spend a rather cool afternoon, by South Florida standards anyway, reading the February 2009 online issue of *Call Sign*.

A tip of this Yank's hat to DaC driver **Carl Brenner (C02)** and his action of 11/11 at 1100 hours with the observance of 2 minutes of silence acknowledging the death of the 8 million who gave their lives in the service of their country. I was pleased to note that Dial-a-Cab reimbursed the unfairly ticketed driver for the penalty levelled. Shame on Tower Hamlets. Does their action mean that they are not cognizant of the meaning of Armistice Day?

My uncle and namesake lost his life while serving with the CEF in Belgium on October 30, 1917. He is buried, along with many others, at the Menin Gate at Ypres, Belgium. He

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had just passed his 20th birthday some weeks prior. So Armistice Day is very meaningful to me.

Interesting to me was the fact that he drove for the Hamilton Express Company in Hamilton, which I understand was a car for hire firm. I now proudly have in my possession his Chauffeurs licence. Can this be connected to my interest in the LVTA (*London Vintage Taxi Association ...Ed?*)

I also see from the same *Call Sign* that our local bad boy, Bernie Madoff, sure made his Ponzi scheme a worldwide event with the scamming of a DaC customer! One of his homes is in Palm Beach, just a short motor from my location.

**Lloyd Powell**

**Palm Beach, Florida, USA**

**Pleased you enjoyed the issue Lloyd ...Ed**

## Tradex

*Dear Alan,*

Your article about **John Fisher's (C45)** insurance mirrors my own recent experience together with difficulty in getting a reply to phone calls. My renewal arrived with a large increase in premium and an increase in the excess from £175 to £250. The Tradex office was closed due to weather conditions when I rang to query this! Further, the maximum no claims period had been reduced from 6 to 4 years, though they subsequently claimed the percentage rate as the same. However, I am puzzled by John's figures. My quarterly rate with Westminster was about £225 and the annual rate Tradex have quoted me varies between £900 and in excess of £1000, depending on how I pay and my understanding is that I was also on maximum no claims bonus. Odd that there is such a difference in our two sets of figures. Perhaps you could have another article if drivers' responses are of interest?

**Alasdair Kay (C47)**

## And another...

I refer to the article in the February issue of *Call Sign* by **John Fisher (C45)** regarding Tradex Insurance Co. After being Insured with Westminster Insurance for 27 years under an 'any driver' policy, I was contacted last year and informed all current policies were now being taken over by Tradex. When I received my first quarter, they had removed the 'any driver' but kept the premium the same. When I contacted them, to say they were unhelpful is an understatement! I was kept on hold for 15 minutes while a young lady - who didn't seem to have a clue what she was doing - discussed the matter with her colleague. They finally and reluctantly agreed to reinstate the 'any driver' section of the policy.

When I received my second quarter, they had increased the premium by £85 per quarter, which works out £340 per year. When I

queried this, I was told you either take or leave it. After thanking them for being so helpful (not), I informed them I would be leaving it.

I am now With Sutherland Insurance in W10 who are the exact opposite and couldn't be more helpful. They are also much cheaper.

**Dave Bull (D33)**

**I've received many phone calls from DaC drivers also giving similar stories - saving large amounts if you pay Tradex yearly instead of quarterly, but that it means a huge outlay. I have now received a quarterly request (increased by £100 - yes, £400 a year) and, unsurprisingly perhaps, intend changing to another company even though they too only do yearly or direct debit monthly payments. This company tell me of a sudden increase in drivers looking for quotes - mainly ex-Tradex clients. Had Tradex had the decency to send an accompanying letter explaining the increase, I might have considered it (briefly). Westminster's final goodbye said that nothing would change in the takeover, however, Tradex seem to have their own version on what no change means. When I questioned them for *Call Sign*, they promised to get back but never did. Perhaps they don't want the London trade, but just wanted to put the opposition out of business? They seem to have failed in that desire...Ed**

## Are fares fair?

*Alan*

I can't believe what I'm reading in *Call Sign* regarding fare increases. More fixed prices, no station or theatre charges, only start the meter when outside the job, no increase, realistic fares...! Well why don't we just go all the way and cut our throats and drive these accounts around for free! It would be interesting to know what percentage of the drivers who say no to a increase have little or no mortgages, kids flown the nest and paid-up cabs? Whilst to a wife, probably like many others who have a wife, 2 kids and a tumble dryer to support - not to mention the annual increase in household bills - the annual increase for me is a necessity.

Never give your increase up, always ask for a percentage and negotiate from there, NEVER give up the rise - a small increase, yes, no increase, no! Once you have bought in measures like this, it will be expected of us all the time. But if as you say, the rise will probably be about £3.60 in a hundred and will be hardly noticeable, then if we won't notice it how will passengers? On big accounts, yes it will be noticed, but if big accounts are concerned about costs why do they allow their staff to leave cabs waiting at pick ups for 10/20/30 minutes or even allow them to pre-book cabs at stations when they know a straight-away trip has no extra charge? Saving money, I believe, is in their own hands and not for us to do for them.



**Michael Beevor (N76)**

**Thanks for the letter Michael. I should point out that the above suggestions - other than no increase - weren't put forward by me. My only interest is in the fare increase itself and with respect, you have turned around my meaning. When I said we wouldn't miss £3.90, what I was saying is that for the sake of that small amount we could tell passengers there is no increase this year. Now TfL say it's only 3.4% anyway or £3.40 extra for every £100 you take! With luck, a "no increase" announcement could have taken more than £3.40 in extra fares, whereas following an increase in fares when so many are losing their jobs, we'll probably lose more than that in actual fares anyway. If there were no choice to taxis, then it would be different. But there is, with more and more people choosing an alternative. You know what they say, 3.4% of nothing is still nothing. I guarantee you that the day after the increase comes in, the Evening Standard will have the news on their front page, you will lose most cash tips and we'll see more cars than ever outside our account addresses. Reject it and it's doubtful the ES would put it out as a major headline, but the news would get out there. But as it is going ahead anyway, time will tell ...Ed**

## Marshalled ranks

*Dear Mr Fisher*

I apologise for contacting you directly and hope that you don't find this too forward. I am the wife of a Licensed Taxi Driver who is part of Dial-a-Cab and I believe that if the minicab trade is able to have a satellite office to take orders for minicabs and have marshals to take them to the cabs after booking, then perhaps DaC and the other radio companies need to follow suit. If there are not enough taxis in the local vicinity when passengers need taxis, then a satellite office for DaC should be able to send out for reinforcements to come in from neighbouring areas and taking bookings and notifying passengers as to where to be and which cab will pick them up.

Just a thought...

**Sharon Kent (wife of N88)**

**Thanks for that, Sharon, but I don't think it really applies to a taxi company that already covers the whole of London. If a driver says there is an abundance of work somewhere, DaC will put out a message. Otherwise we'd have to have Marshals everywhere. When we are given notice of an event where a large exodus of passengers is expected, then we do provide Marshals and that**

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system has worked well for many years.

Having said that, the disputed waiting area at Whitcomb Street is available to licensed taxis as well as minicabs and putting a Marshal there would be interesting. The problem is that even if minicabs are using it as a rank, officially it isn't one and I'm not sure how we'd get past that. And call me Alan ...Ed

## £1 for your thoughts!

I was disappointed to read the letter from **Geoff Levene (K43)** in February's *Call Sign* criticising my methodology, tactics and "lack of honesty" in the war against Westminster and co. He begins by asking whether I should be so boastful about my false excuses? If you'd been following my exploits, you'll remember 18 months ago that I wrote an article published in a number of trade papers including *Call Sign*, entitled *an open letter to the Taxi trade*. In it I attacked local authorities and urged all drivers to dispute and refuse to pay all PCNs. The piece was generally well received, but if I'm honest was probably largely ignored by the people that really matter, ie everyday non-politicised Taxi drivers. So I changed tactics to write of my own victories. My point, Geoff, was not to extol my own virtues but to use humour and even occasionally self deprecation to make sure that once a driver began reading, they would finish the article feeling informed and hopefully entertained as well. But also - and most importantly - to show how easy it is to beat these people and therefore keeping your hard earned money in your pocket!

Geoff asked if I would accept a traffic warden being so economical with the truth? It is this question that most alerted me to his detachment from reality. No, I categorically do not accept it and therein lays the whole point! I did not accept it when 3 years ago, a warden sprinted 60 yards to block me in order to get my tax disc details for his already completed PCN whilst seeing that I was getting in my cab. I do not accept it when my peers are ticketed by CCTV whilst uploading the disabled in wheelchairs after taking out their ramps. I do not accept the numerous PCNs received outside our account customer's addresses when there are no alternative parking spaces within a quarter of a mile (such as Soho)! I do not accept receiving PCNs when clients ask to stop at ATMs or while paying us! And I think it's a total disgrace that we are frightened to stop anywhere for a wee!

Geoff, do you think that Westminster were honest with **John Shakeshaft (P52)** when they sent him a PCN by post with four stills of his cab, while omitting the video that clearly showed clients both getting in and out (*Call Sign*, Oct 2008)? Or **Peter Hopkins (W60)**, who stopped to wipe up the coffee that he spilt so that it didn't seep into his electrics (*Call Sign* Dec 2008). Was

that fair or honest? Is it right that the public toilets in Queensway are targeted to avoid any bladder bursting relief? How do you think **Editor Al** feels about the honesty of Westminster when CCTV caught him there after 9pm one evening? And just under your letter was the case of **Martin Russell (T10)** who was 'served up' by Camden, 5 months after it was legal for them to do so!

Geoff suggests that I 'invest £1' in the parking by phone system. Another tax on the taxi trade! There are the 4 or so times we stop to spend a penny for a minute and a half, plus a few minutes to grab a sandwich for lunch, not forgetting the odd can of drink that you might stop for where you'll literally throw 60p at the newsagent and run out and finally all the account customers that we wait for! So that's between £8 or £9 a day, 5 times a week. You must be a wealthy man, Geoff!

Through helping myself, I've helped and advised lots of drivers plus our company and indirectly, our account customers. Whilst you Geoff, contribute by criticising me. But that's easier to do than anything positive isn't it? Despite that, I look forward to your phone call so that I can help you fight **your** next PCN. I doubt that'll happen though, as it's easier to just leave it to DaC - after all, they'll pay, won't they?

**Martin Hizer (M47)**

**I'm keeping out of it! ...Ed**

## Roaders?

*Hello Alan,*

A few months back Allen Togwell asked in *Call Sign* for drivers with new ideas on how to sell the services of Dial-a-Cab, giving a few examples and saying how a customer might react! Well, sitting around waiting for a fare-paying customer to hire me has given me plenty of time to think - not something that's easy for me! It appears most of the business world has gone on a cost-cutting exercise, so we are being offered less work. Also many larger accounts are using cars on longer journeys. Fixed prices won't help, we will still be too expensive. So I have been thinking... how do we make the price cheaper for our customers, yet still get our drivers the full metered fare? Talking with some of my passengers, it appears cars aren't that much cheaper than some of our metered fares.

What if for a trial period we offered all fares to outer London postcodes for just the meter price with no booking fee, no admin charge, no extra waiting fees and no gratuities? That would also mean no VAT (I think). Maybe even no run-in? That would make a pretty big saving would it not? Would it help to generate more work? Of course it would need to be funded in some way, after all DaC needs income too! So what if £1 from the fare was deducted by DaC? Before you all scream at me, it's just an idea.

Another question Allen Togwell asked was where is the new blood going to come

from to run Dial-a-Cab? I know where it was at AGM time - like me, sitting at home! I need some help for a rule change that all new members must attend their first AGM, hopefully giving them the sense of feeling that it's their radio circuit and showing them that other drivers care.

It won't be long now and summer will be here. When are we going to be able to offer clients a taxi with air conditioning? Already I see V6 in bids and I worry that customers will order a Vito taxi without knowing they are not the only taxis with full aircon. We seem to offer everything else, so why not an aircon attribute? Every new car has it nowadays.

Yours with too much time to think...

**Jon Robinson (E88)**

**Allen Togwell replies:** Jon, without expounding all the negatives from clients, members and the Society to your suggestion, we already offer a more attractive journey cost than the 'meter minus all the extras' in our fixed price rate per mile, which incurs no gratuity, no waiting time and no run-in. Contrary to what you say, that is more cost effective than a meter fare.

As for your rule change; I really cannot see the benefit of forcing all new drivers to attend their first AGM and afterwards choose to follow the example of those members, such as yourself, who prefer, as is your prerogative, to sit at home. And as for caring, are you suggesting those members that don't attend don't care, when you yourself chose not to attend?

And lastly, making an attribute for A/C when only a very small percentage of our fleet have this facility would have an adverse affect on service. Perhaps in the future, when at least 50% of our fleet are fitted with A/C and our summers extend to more than a week, it might be worth including A/C in our list of attributes.

## Advising arrival early?

*Sir,*

With regard to the debate on *Advising Arrival* notices, I would like to make one or two observations. The benefits of an early arrival notification would seem obvious as a tool for mitigating our client's costs and time. Let us take a good example of two drivers accepting an asap job on EC5 for a city ride. Driver 1, using his skill and experience advises arrival some minutes before his physical arrival and puts his meter on so as to arrive within a gnat's crotchet of the run-in maximum. His client, having been notified, grabs his copy of *Nuts* and heads for



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the exit, boarding his cab with about £7 on the clock. As the driver heads towards the Link, his screen alerts him to the fact that the cones are making their way once again to the centre of the road for a nights work. Our driver just makes it and his passenger arrives home to a nice meal and a blanket wrestle, before drifting into a restful slumber.

Driver 2 meanwhile, having put his meter on round the corner to the account address, is waiting patiently for the clock to spin up to the run-in. Being stationary, his meter is spinning more like a water wheel than a Catherine wheel and it takes ages to hit the target. His passenger gets the notice, but has to take a call that proves unimportant. He folds his copy of *How to Screw Up and still get a Big Bonus* and heads for the exit. He boards his cab with around £16 on the clock. By the time they hit the Link, Butchers Row looks like a cab demo. Our client arrives home over half an hour late - the promise he was on long gone.

Our clients are not stupid and would readily understand that an arrival notice can be a reliable ETA as well as an AAT. So for a trial period, can drivers use their initiative regarding *advising arrival* to aid the Society, on sufferance of a complaint being lodged should a client complain about late arrival?

**Joseph Batty (W90)**

**Allen Evans replies:** Joseph, can I first mention that the run-in at the moment is up to £4.20, so I would hope that dri-

vers who are near to the pick-up would probably have less than the full amount on an asap trip and no more than £4.20 on a pre-booking. You particularly mention the City, but on any trip in the London area you can encounter traffic problems and delays on the way to a pick-up and will need to adjust your meter so as not to exceed the allowed amount. In this case driver 1 having advised arrival some distance away, may not be outside the account address when the passenger comes out of the office to board the taxi (the passenger may even already be outside of the building when he is advised that the taxi is there, when in fact it is yet to arrive). Taxi 2 would in most cases also need to adjust the meter (especially on tariff 2 or 3) and again I believe it is false economy to sit outside of a pick up location and wait for the meter to reach the run-in max, which in general only applies to asap trips and not pre-bookings. Personally if I was on top of the location, I would much rather advise arrival and complete the journey and be ready for the next trip. When clients query run-ins, with GPS technology it can be accurately proved that the taxi was outside at the point of arrival with the correct amount showing on the meter. If it shows the taxi to be some distance from the pick-up when the arrival is pressed, especially when £4.20 is already showing on the meter, you can appreciate that there is no case to argue only that the driver has exceeded the allowed run-in, which would be seen to



be in breach of procedure rule No.4 and may lead to a complaint. I am sure that drivers already use their initiative, but in my opinion your method would create many problems.

## PCNs and demos

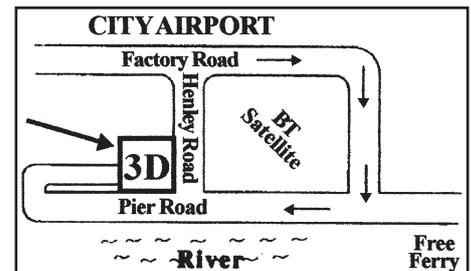
I am currently fighting a Camden u-turn PCN but in the meantime have received two more tickets whilst on radio jobs. One is in the process of going to appeal, the other I sent back only today. After the fantastic turnout for the drive-in earlier this month, I feel that as a trade we should warn Westminster and Camden to stop issuing these PCNs to taxidivers in the course of their work. It is, in my opinion, another money raising scam and should cease immediately.

Drivers on DaC have these fines paid if on a credit job, but what of others who stop to wait for, or collect passengers? Who can afford to pay £60 for a job they may have earned £8/10 for? An all day drive-in would not go amiss; it should be in several places at once and cause the biggest shut down of London since the blitz!

**Steve Hassan (P95)**

Would drivers support that? I'd be interested in hearing your views ...Ed

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