

May 2009



Call Sign

FROM THE HOME OF DIAL-A-CAB INTERNATIONAL



***Sam's done it!
Driver's son qualifies to fight for England...
Olympics next???***

***A 23 year old DaC lady shows
Nobu the way a real taxi
service should operate!***

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

***DaC's Barrie defeats
Westminster in landmark PCN
victory!***

***Parliament Sq demo: DaC's
Roman Way manager (and
Tamil) explains all...***

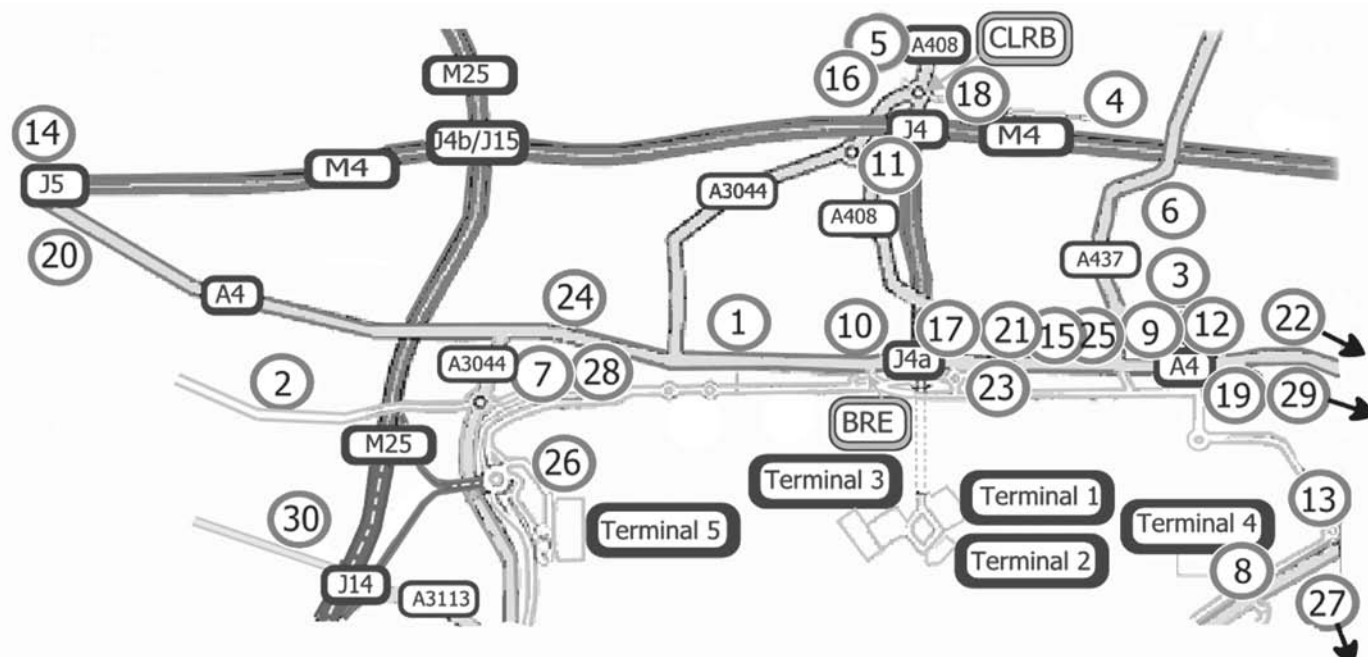




NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

Requested by numerous drivers, this is my best effort for the location of Heathrow hotels...



Map	Hotel	Address	Directions See Abbreviations below	Mid Wk	*
1	Arora International	The Grove, Bath Road, UB7 0DG	BRE TL Hotel on NS	£115	4
2	Arora Park Hotel	Old Bath Rd / Coleridge Crescent, SL3 0NZ	BRE TL, forward Colnbrook By-Pass, Left at Stanwell Moor Rd, Right at RB	£ 99	4
3	Berkeley Park Apts	Marlborough Crescent, UB3 5FG	BRE TR, L High St Harlington, cnr with Marlborough Cr	£109	4
4	Comfort Inn HTR	Shepiston Ln, UB3 1LP	CLRB, 4th exit into Shepiston Lane, jnc Arlington Ct	£ 47	3
5	Crown Plaza	Stockley Rd	CLRB, straight on to Stockley Rd, 1st slip left	£134	4
6	easyHotel	Brickfield Ln, Hayes, UB3 5DX	BRE TR, L High St Harlington, RT Brickfield Ln, at end before road bears left.	£ 25	
7	Heathrow Lodge	556, Old Bath Rd, UB7 0EF	BRE TL, forward Colnbrook By-Pass, Left at Stanwell Moor Rd, Left at RB, Jnc Heathrow Close.	£ 38	
8	Hilton Terminal 4	Terminal 4	Term.4 RB take A30 London slip and then immediate left	£155	4
9	Holiday Inn Ariel	Bath Rd, UB3 5AJ	BRE TR, Corner of High St Harlington, NS	£114	3
10	Holiday Inn Bath Rd	Bath Road/Sipson Way, UB7 0DP	BRE TR 1st left	£144	3
11	Holiday Inn M4/Sipson	Sipson Road, UB7 0JU	CLRB, 1st exit into Holloway Lane, L into Sipson Road	£136	4
12	Ibis HTR	112 Bath Road, UB3 5AL	BRE TR, just past Airport Bowl, NS	£ 52	3
13	Jurys Inn HTR	Eastern Perimeter Rd TW6 2SR	Northern Perimeter Rd EB, (close to long term parking)	£ 82	3
14	Marriot Windsor	Ditton Rd, Slough, SL3 8PT	Spur Rd, L M4 leave J5, NB London Rd, L Ditton Rd	£139	4
15	Marriot HTR	Bath Road, UB3 5AN	BRE TR, just past New Road, NS	£160	4
16	Novotel HTR	Cherry Lane, UB7 9HB	CLRB, 2nd exit into Cherry Lane, 1st slip left	£ 89	3
17	Park Inn HTR	Bath Road	BRE TR, corner of Sipson Rd	£ 86	4
18	Premier Inn(M4)	Shepiston Ln, UB3 1RW	CLRB, 4th exit into Shepiston Lane (o/r just past dual carriageway)	£ 65	3
19	Premier Inn Bath Rd	15, Bath Road, TW6 2AB	BRE TR, opposite Oxford Avenue. SS	£ 83	3
20	Quality Hotel HTR	London Road, Slough SL3 8QB	BRE TL, Colnbrook By-Pass, L&R into London Rd	£ 57	3
21	Radisson Edwardian	140, Bath Road, UB3 5AW	BRE TR, just before New Road, NS	£198	5
22	Ramada HTR	745, Bath Road, TW5 9QE	BRE TR, just before The Avenue, NS	£ 89	4
23	Renaissance	Bath Road, TW6 2AQ	Nettleton Road off Nene Road RB	£126	4
24	Sheraton HTR	Colnbrook Bypass, UB7 0HJ	BRE TL, Colnbrook By-Pass, 1st slip right past Hatch Lane	£103	4
25	Sheraton Skyline	Bath Road UB7 0HJ	BRE TR, just past Marriot, see #15, NS	£132	4
26	Sofitel Terminal 5	Terminal 5 TW6 2GD	4min covered walk to T5	£171	4
27	St Giles HTR	Hounslow Rd, TW14 9AD	Hatton X exit, Faggs Rd, Harlington Rd W, TR Hounslow Rd, on left just before New Road.	£116	3
28	Thistle Hotel HTR	Bath Road, UB7 0EQ	BRE TL, Bath Rd, bear L into Bath Rd at Total Gar. SS	£ 75	3
29	Travelodge HTR Central	700, Bath Road, TW5 9SW	BRE TR, go to Wagonners R/B and come back, SS	£ 49	2
30	Travelodge Term. 5	Calder Way, Horton Rd SL3 0AT	M25 J14 exit west side Horton Rd	£ 60	2

Abbreviations - BRE - Bath Road exit via West Ramp, one-way to Newbury Road onto Bath Road A4...
 CLRB - Cherry Lane roundabout, leave by Spur Rd, straight on and under at M4 roundabout to...
 TR - Turn right / TL- Turn left / NS North side of road / SS South side of road / RB - Roundabout...
 * Star rating - Mid wk is approx cost per room per night mid week 04/2009 (weekends cheaper)...

For 'What's On' and a larger coloured version of the above, visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/extras

from the editor's desk

New marshalled rank... why?

I think that the more marshalled ranks we have, the better. However, this issue of *Call Sign* tells of the latest addition to those at Liverpool Street and Cranbourn Street. This one is at Cornhill and if you work during the evening and early hours, you will know of the minicab touts that hang up in Cornhill by the Abacus nightclub.

This club's survival seems to have bucked the trend of those establishments that come and go and suggests it to be quite an upmarket place. In addition to a disco, it has a restaurant and bar and judging by the way those entering are dressed compared to some of London's clubs, it sounds like a good place to pick up work. But you'd be lucky to even get close enough to the door because of the endless queue of touts – the majority with private hire stickers on their cars and, I'd bet, only a tiny minority of them with genuine booked trips to pick up.

Anyone who has seen the excellent LTDA DVD on touting in London will know of the uphill battle we are facing against touting from private hire. But we already know all about it. The police know all about it. The PCO know all about it! So why has nothing been done?

The police can't be everywhere and contrary to some reports, the tout squad have done their best under Sgt Dave Hillson with the small numbers they have.

But marshalled ranks do seem to be one answer and when the news from the PCO, the CoL Corporation and the new marshals in town (*Taximarshalls.com*) arrived on my desk about a marshalled rank at Cornhill, my immediate thought was that the Abacus touts would now be facing a battle. So although it doesn't begin until next week (8 May), I thought I'd take a look to see how close it was situated to the club. So I went on a quiet Sunday...

The new rank will be operational from 7pm through to 7am daily and marshalled Friday and Saturday evenings from 11pm until 2am. There are other parts of Cornhill that need taxis, so perhaps outside the club might not be the best place – even though just to the east of Abacus is the widest part of the road. But whoever has organised it has given us a rank opposite St Michaels Alley, which in addition to being at least 50 yards from the club, is also on the wrong side of the road and facing east. So from the club in the dark, not only wouldn't you be able to pick out a rank of cabs, but you couldn't even see their for hire signs because they are faced in the opposite direction!

If I didn't know better, I'd think that those behind this rank didn't want to interfere with what seems to have become legitimised touting. But the marshals may not be too happy...

Trouble in store?

Why? Well the situation has suddenly changed. Dial-a-Cab drivers – probably fed up with seeing their work disappearing into the exhaust pipes of the touts described above – suddenly decided to fight back. It has done nothing less than relaunched the minicab war of the 1960s. Our "troops" took back work that had been monopolised over the years by minicabs – and yes, many of whom have PCO licence stickers. Smiths of Smithfield suddenly have an amazing service again and our rank has been reclaimed, much to the upset of those the PCO refer to as legitimised private hire, but who we childishy refer to as



touts due to their hanging around outside the door looking to nick our work! Hopefully the PCO will soon make sure that the finish time of Smiths rank goes beyond the ridiculous 9pm it currently has four nights each week.

Nobu of Berkeley Street also now has an amazing taxi service once again, but things are different there. The doormen – in danger of losing some finance perhaps – try to push our drivers away. Nope, there is no rank there and had it been a matter of hailing a taxi as a punter came out, then fair enough. But the reason they don't want us there is because we take up the room that the licensed touts need! However, again led by our victorious troops (!!!), things suddenly changed.

And that takes us back to Abacus and the marshal who will be doing duty there. On Thursday 23 April, a DaC driver was arrested outside along with a tout. The driver had stopped there after seeing another taxi driver being set upon by several of the above mentioned touts. The driver was later released after spending some time in the cells.

That same evening, traffic wardens cleared a stack of touts from the front of Abacus, giving the impression that someone was trying to help our cause. But equality is the PCO's name and that same night they launched their own troops into the west end giving any empty cab passing a free MOT! Whoops!

Cyclists

I've lost count how many times over the years I've had a go in *Call Sign* at the atrocious riding of many of London's cyclists. There is no way of checking this out, but I'd be surprised if a figure of at least 25% of them failing to bother stopping at traffic lights wasn't reasonably accurate. Now Boris Johnson wants to let those of them who don't do so anyway, turn left at traffic lights even if red.

To be honest, that doesn't bother me and if they can do so safely, then that wouldn't cause many problems other than to those pedestrians crossing the road. But as many cyclists don't worry about pedestrian crossings – let alone those crossing the road at lights – it could work.

I can't discuss the recent deaths involving two female cyclists who were both tragically killed by moving trucks. Meryem Ozekman was crushed by a truck between it and the railings at the Elephant roundabout, while Rebecca Goosen suffered a similar fate when turning left from Old Street into Goswell Road. Both were said to be experienced cyclists.

But in general, it is true that many cyclists do shoot along the inside just as you are turning left. Some travel so quickly that you just don't realise they are there. In fact, some cyclists now travel so fast that unless you have an open road, you can't keep up with them.

Yes, as cyclist's organisations are often keen to tell us, they put no harmful chemicals into the atmosphere. However, the number of pedestrians hurt by them must be going up all the time as their numbers increase.

Let me make it clear; there are also many good, responsible cyclists who I personally have no problem with. But even they admit that there are many bad ones and certainly too many who think London's streets are a perfect place to pretend they are in *Le Tour de France*.

Is there an answer? Well yes there is. I've said it before and I'll probably say it again: Licence every cyclist just as cars are. Then every cyclist would have a number plate where that rider could be reported if riding dangerously. Perhaps even ban racing bikes in town? After all, these bikes with wheel rims the thickness of this mag when closed are not designed to ride slowly, whereas London's streets are no longer safe to speed along – especially during the daytime when most cyclists are out there.

An excellent way of travel has been ruined by the large number of selfish cyclists who do exactly what they want, when they want and who care little for pedestrians, let alone other road users. Yep! Licence them all, make them identifiable and start fining those that ride dangerously by shooting along the inside at speed, ignoring traffic signals or who go straight across a pedestrian crossing while people are on it. If it's wrong, then it's wrong...

Curse of the cash machines?

I know what you're thinking – another article on PCNs and cash machines? But you'd be very wrong! If you drive regularly as I do, I'm sure you would have noticed a shortage of £5 notes; this also has the effect of creating a shortage of £1 coins. You only have to have two £5 fares giving you £10 notes to find £10 one-pound coins have also then gone.

The reason? I believe there are two. Firstly, the popularity of cash machines means that passengers don't get five pound notes any more, with none of them giving out below a £10 note. Secondly, if you go to the bank to get a supply of fivers, the chances are that you'll get a stack of old notes, which suggests that something is going on. Surely they can't be thinking of getting rid of them... perhaps for a £5 coin? Well don't you believe it...!

End of another year

Call Sign's year ends with the May issue and June is our month off. So to those of you going away, I hope you have a great time and for those of you thinking of staying put and saving a few shekels to put towards something important, I hope that if nothing else, you can at least relax and take some heart from Brian Rice's Chairman's report that the recession may well have bottomed out and that the uphill climb back to normality could be beginning.

I hope to see you all again with the July issue...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

More Good News!

No doubt you will remember that in last month's **Call Sign** I endeavoured to point out some of the good things that were happening in the world, in complete contrast to the doom and gloom merchants that were talking everything down.

I think it's probably fair to say that there is not one of you out there that has not heard of **Goldman Sachs**. Well, the Wall Street giants recently reported a \$1.8bn (£1.2m in real money) net quarterly profit, beating all analyst's expectations. That was in complete contrast to the previous quarter where Goldmans had posted their first quarterly loss since going public in 1999.

What's also quite interesting is that Goldman Sachs has said it would reserve more money for staff salaries in the first quarter than it did last year. Not really sure what that means as Goldman have reduced their headcount by some 7%, so perhaps they are going to recruit? But what is perhaps more likely is that they will pay bigger bonuses to existing staff.

Is the worst of the recession over?

Given the above results, some analysts are now saying the worst could be over for finance firms. What they are also taking into account is that another American bank, **Wells Fargo**, surprised investors when announcing it expected a record net profit for the quarter. Those two were then followed by **JPMorgan**, who earned around £2bn in that same quarter and then **Citigroup**, who pushed out \$1.6bn in profit - although that amount left them with a small loss after dividend payments to preferred shareholders were taken into account.

I have also noticed that the weekly trip figures at **Dial-a-Cab** seem to have bottomed out and if the above news on the four banks continues into other banks and indeed businesses, it could herald the beginnings of an upturn here at DaC House and bring into the market place yet another sign that things will soon begin improving everywhere. So let's all hope that the worst is over.

However, one thing is certain; we were definitely in a fairly small minority at Dial-a-Cab in trying to promote an optimistic attitude from the word go. I said many times in the early days, when we thought we were still dealing with a minor slowdown, that I felt we were talking ourselves into a recession. And we did...

Back to the last recession...

I know how tough things are out there at the moment, so I was tempted to go back to the early nineties to see how we fared in the last deep recession that we experienced. That period was quite catastrophic for Dial-a-Cab, as we almost went out of business and lost nearly £1m in a two year period.

I am led to believe that the BoM of the day had to inform the bank on a daily basis exactly how much money had been received on that day in order that the bank could decide



whether or not Dial-a-Cab could continue to trade! I know it was a very nervous time for everyone involved, including members who were extremely uncertain as to whether or not Dial-a-Cab would survive.

The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the BoM of the day decided to increase subscriptions by £20 per month and instead of paying everyone one week in arrears, that was increased to three weeks in arrears.

You can imagine the situation with rumours about the Society's survival being rife. There was also the problem with members being uncertain as to whether their money was safe. It wasn't just their rollerbond money invested in the Society they had to consider, but also the delay in paying their account work. Not only did DaC have nothing in the bank, we also had large debts to service and if the Society had gone bankrupt then every driver would have experienced a loss, some members more than others.

However, the situation was made even worse when one of our competitors within the taxi industry distributed our End of Year Report to all our large clients in an attempt to display and broadcast the terrible financial turmoil that Dial-a-Cab was experiencing.

What a contrast to today, although we are

experiencing a greater downturn than eighteen years ago, Dial-a-Cab is much better placed to weather the storm. In fact, being financially secure, we are far better placed than almost anyone within the taxi or private hire industry. In the early nineties, we had a downturn of approximately 17% and almost faltered, yet we are currently experiencing a 27% downturn and there is not any question that we will weather this storm. Not only are we far better placed financially, as we do not have any debt to service and due to good management in the past we are sitting on several millions of pounds in the bank, but of course our new building is also paid for.

It's a funny thing how the mind plays tricks as I would have thought the early nineties recession was worse than this one! However, when I look at the figures they actually state the downturn today is worse, certainly in terms of a reduction in turnover, but somehow I do not believe this recession will continue for as long as the last one. What we must also bear in mind is that although our turnover is running approximately 27% down on last year, for the previous two years our turnover had increased by 35%.

So the point is that although the downturn this time is more severe than the early nineties, I do not believe it will be as prolonged. As for Dial-a-Cab, we will survive this recession without any problems to the Society as a whole and begin getting our house in order once again... so that we might weather the next downturn!

And finally...

Many of you will be going on your annual holiday shortly. I hope you all have a relaxing time and return to, hopefully, a much busier London...

Brian Rice
Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

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DAC BOARD REJECT PAY INCREASE

Following a decision by the Dial-a-Cab Board to reluctantly not offer any pay increase this year to staff members, DaC Chairman **Brian Rice** told *Call Sign*:

"This is the first time in the thirteen years I have been Chairman, that our staff have not received an annual increase. We value staff greatly and our training programmes make them the best. However, this economic climate is such that companies are closing down, while others are actually 'offering' compulsory pay cuts. In addition to that, unemployment is going through the roof with well over 2million currently out of work and an expectation that figure could reach 3million before an upturn in the economy arrives. DaC has always prided itself on being ahead of the game and to increase our staffing costs at a time so soon after some positions were made redundant, would surely not be in the best interests of the Society."

Brian continued: "Some years ago, it was proposed at an AGM that the DaC BoM should receive the same increase as that given to drivers at the annual fare increase. This year that would have meant 3.4% added to our hourly rate. However, I'm proud to say that at a recent BoM meeting, the Board to a man decided that it would be wrong to take that increase whilst the staff had none..."

Call Sign spoke to someone in the Call Centre who had been with DaC for many years. He told us that the view of the vast majority was



The Board at the recent AGM (with Mike Tovey)

that they were just pleased to have a job without a pay cut.

"One or two moaned briefly," he said, "but more out of disappointment than expectation. Most of our call takers and dispatchers had no problem with the decision and there was certainly no mutiny here!"

Electric Taxi is a Metrocab!



It's a long time since *Call Sign* had cause to publish a Metrocab photo. Could this be the new electric taxi?

The February 2009 issue of *Call Sign* revealed that the then-director of Dutch taxi company *Taxi Centrale Amsterdam*, Bas Vos, was considering placing an order for 50 electric TX4Es and that they would be on the roads of Amsterdam later this year. According to Mr Vos, he had visited the factory in Coventry and we assumed that meant LTI – even though everyone we spoke to there denied knowing anything about Mr Vos – although they were happy to talk about their projected TX4E.

Mr Vos claimed that the two rear wheels of his electric taxi would have two battery-operated electric motors that were expected to give around 150 kilometres before needing to be recharged. In addition, a one-cylinder diesel engine had also been added as a generator that could recharge the batteries while driving along. This would increase mileage to around 200Km or 125 miles. Overnight charging would take around 6 hours, with so-called *quick loaders* that were said to be able to do the job in 15 minutes, placed at taxi offices and ranks.

Now *Call Sign* has learned that Mr Vos did indeed go to Coventry, but not LTI. Instead he met representatives from Metrocab, who apparently still have an office there although no new cabs have come onto the London market in recent years.

A U-tube of the cab can be seen at <http://www.amsterdaminc.tv/2009/04/01/tca-gaat-groen/>. It is in Dutch but shows the new Director of TCA, Mr van der Veen, with the Metrocab and explaining that TCA's taxi is currently the only electrically driven one in Western Europe. He adds that TCA hope to have 30 such taxis during 2009 and another 150 every year following. By 2015 he expects 60% of the total TCA fleet to be electric, before finally becoming 100%.

Can this be the long-awaited Metrocab return or is it just another red herring. Time will tell...

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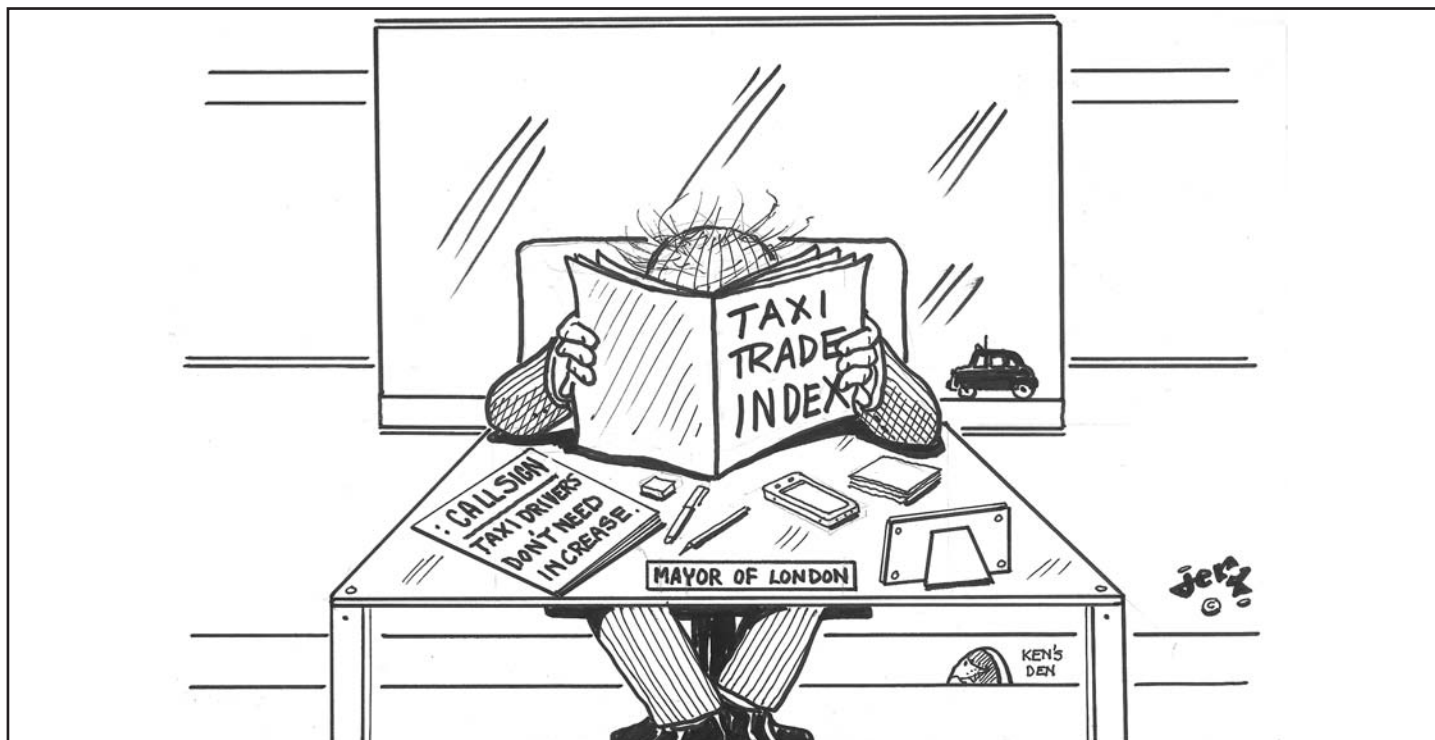
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Jerys World



"This Alan Fisher chappie; perhaps we should get him onto the TfL Board in place of that young Mr Oddy. We can use people who don't want fare increases!"

Special Science Museum Offer for Taxi Drivers

Free family admission on 16 and 17 May!

On the 16 and 17 May, the Science Museum will be offering 'black cab' drivers and their families free entry into the new exhibition *Wallace and Gromit present a World of Cracking Ideas*.

This fun, family-orientated show aims to appeal to all ages by telling the story of invention and innovation to inspire creativity and flair. The exhibition, a partnership between the Science Museum, Aardman Animation and the Intellectual Property Office, takes visitors on a tour of 62 West Wallaby Street, the famous home of Wallace & Gromit. Here visitors can take in objects from the Science Museum's collections, which reflect the spirit of innovation, whilst interacting with some of Wallace's own cracking contraptions such as the Tellyscope II, the Piella Propellor and the Blend-o-Matic. Visitors are encouraged to come up with their own creative ideas, which they can jot down and leave at *Ideas Stations* located in the Living Room, Dining Room, Kitchen, Bathroom, Workshop and Garden. Each room in the house, from the kitchen to the garden shed, looks at a different aspect of the thinking process behind ideas and shows visitors how they can protect their intellectual property through patents, trademarks, designs and copyright, ensuring they derive maximum value from their ideas.

For this special one-off weekend, Licensed London taxi drivers can get a free family ticket of up to four people, which usually costs up to £30. *Wallace and Gromit present a*



Children enjoying the "thinking Cap" at the Science Museum to work out their own creative ideas...

World of Cracking Ideas is located on the second floor of the Science Museum, but tickets can be obtained from any ticket desk.

Entry to the exhibition is timed, so to avoid waiting we advise that you get tickets as early as possible in the day. Drivers will need to present their taxi badges at ticket desks to claim the free tickets.

To make the most of a visit to the Science Museum, you can find out what else is on offer by looking at the website www.sciencemuseum.org.uk prior to your visit. The Science Museum is home to more than 15,000 objects spread over seven floors in a building ¹/₄ mile long. It provides a fascinating insight into the worlds of science, technology, medicine and industry, and has a giant IMAX cinema and exhilarating simulator

rides to make the Science Museum a thrilling day out. The Science Museum is open seven days a week between 10.00 and 18.00. Entry to the museum is free, but charges are made for various exhibitions and IMAX.



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In the November 2005 issue of *Call Sign*, **John Fisher (C45)** wrote of the problem outside *Nobu* in Berkeley Street, Mayfair. He said he had taken registration numbers of touts operating outside – apparently doing so with the backing of the “bouncers” outside and staff inside. John said that the cars even had an unofficial rank and that when he tried to stop outside, the Concierge told him he was causing an obstruction and should move off! John challenged Nobu to call the police and not unsurprisingly, they rejected the offer! Instead, the touts threw snide comments at both John and another Dial-a-Cab driver that was also there.

Call Sign passed the details over to **Sgt Dave Hillson** of the Cab Enforcement Section of TOCU and a raid was later made when several minicab drivers were arrested.

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

Now over three years later, DaC driver **Natalia Shalom (A34)** tells *Call Sign* that nothing has changed at Nobu! However, this time things could be even worse.

Natalia may be female and very young at 23, but she doesn't allow anyone to walk over her. In fact, Natalia even asked *Call Sign* to volunteer her as a decoy for the tout squad – an offer that the police considered being too dangerous!

Recently Natalia, who works nights, dropped a passenger outside Nobu and decided to

Natalia: Why don't Nobu Want Us?

Then comes the answer - of course they do!



Natalia thinks a rank outside Nobu would work while boyfriend Daniel proves it could!

dwell in case someone came out looking for a taxi. However, she told *Call Sign* that there were so many minicabs outside that the only way she could stop was by double-parking. Her boyfriend, and also a DaC driver, **Daniel Woodhouse (K84)**, joined her. Within minutes, she was told by Nobu staff to move on as she was causing an obstruction. Natalia and Daniel both refused. Whilst the staff were not rude at first, their attitude changed and became more threatening. Natalia was then












told that taxis weren't needed as they had their own car service!

As a night driver, Natalia told us that most passengers coming out of these establishments would prefer a taxi, but are not given the chance. “These minicabs will keep coming back,” said Natalia. “The best way to fight them is by putting a taxi rank outside the door, then passengers would have a choice - and I know who most would choose!”

Then on April 20, that choice arrived – albeit unofficially. Daniel was outside Nobu and told a DaC dispatcher that the restaurant was saying real taxis weren't needed as they used minicabs! That was enough for most Dial-a-Cab drivers that read the message and they flooded into Berkely Street like the Cavalry, with their for hire signs lighting up the street and stopping minicabs pulling up outside! Minicabs had to be moved on much to the obvious distress of the DaC drivers who tried not to smile! The DaC exercise answered the question as to whether we are wanted at Nobu or not. Well done Daniel and Natalie. And are you reading this at the PCO? We need a rank at Nobu...

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Dial-a-Cab drivers with a compulsion to have a quick drag may have the answer in a new type of cigarette called **Intellicig**. The claim is that the smoking ban does not apply to **Intellicig** and that not only does it satisfy a smoker's craving for a fag, but it doesn't give out any vapours even though smoke is exhaled.

Currently, DaC Account Manager **Caroline McGowan** is testing out the product for **Call Sign** and will give her views in the next issue (July). Caroline has been smoking for many years and although working in a stressful job, would love the opportunity to move away from real ciggies. We have also asked her to keep a record of any financial savings in moving over to **Intellicig**.

The electronic cigarette – which is rechargeable – is said to have the same qualities as a cigarette, but is cheaper, legal for indoor use and gives out no fumes. **Intellicig** looks like a real ciggie and provides smokers with their fix of nicotine (plus traces of propylene glycol, glycerol and water compared to the 4,800 chemicals you find in a typical pack of 20). That means there is no carbon monoxide, tobacco or tar, making it odour free and healthier than a normal cigarette. Neither is there any danger of passive smoking, setting fire to anything or dropping ash on the carpet!

A 20-a-day smoker – which category Caroline probably comes under – can also see staggering savings of 75% on their usual smoking costs with an **Intellicig** pack retailing from £15 and a cartridge lasting eight times longer than a standard cigarette. For someone

Intellicig: Is it the smokers answer?

Caroline tests it out for Call Sign



Caroline McGowan will be testing out Intellicig for Call Sign

like Caroline, that could result in an average saving of £1,500 over a year.

Intellicig doesn't sound like a device to help you give up smoking. It seems to be aimed at those who either can't or don't want to stop, hence the nicotine. However, if it means that smokers go over to a product that sounds as

though it would benefit everyone around them including the person with the ciggie, then it's probably worth giving it a go.

The company is based in Accrington and is the only supplier in the UK to assemble and package its products here. This is how it works...

The **Intellicig** comprises three parts – the battery / micro-electronics, vapouriser device and mouthpiece / cartridge. When the smoker inhales through the mouthpiece, a sensitive micro pressure switch activates the rechargeable battery, which immediately causes the vapour device to vapourise a tiny drop of the cartridge liquid. The vapour contains vapourised nicotine within the *mist*, which in turn is delivered straight to the blood stream via the lungs, giving them the instant nicotine fix – but without all the other harmful ingredients found in tobacco. When you inhale, the tip illuminates and when you exhale, there is smoke!

Caroline began testing as of the Easter Weekend and her remit is just to tell Call Sign the truth. We are not looking for advertising revenue, but if we can help protect the health of those smokers that cannot give up, then that is our aim...

St Pauls holds United Guilds Service



DaC's Jim Rainbird (on right) together with WCHCD Master Andrew Overton, Eddie Crossley and Michael Davies - all three being the Masters's Wardens

Freemen of the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** recently attended the 'United Guilds Service' at St. Paul's Cathedral. The City of London Guilds, Fellowships and Livery Companies are invited to the Annual Service, which is also attended by the Lord Mayor. The origins of the service date back to 1943

when at a meeting at Goldsmiths' Hall by Masters of the great twelve Livery Companies, it was decided that a service would help lift the spirits of the City of London following the Blitz of WW2. The service commenced with a fanfare of trumpeters from the Band of the Blues and Royals and a verger led the procession

including Masters' of the great twelve, The Bishop of London, Aldermen and the Lord Mayor, accompanied by his Serjeant at Arms and sword bearer.

Several Dial-a-Cab drivers, together with Chairman Brian Rice, were at the cathedral for the service. Anyone who earns their living through the Taxi trade can apply to become a Freeman of the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**. For more details, contact the Clerk on 01494 765922.

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Mr PCN and another victory for Barrie Segal!

Millions of parking tickets unenforceable!

In a landmark case at the London Parking Adjudicator, **Barrie Segal**, the founder of AppealNow.com, has got Controlled Parking Zone "F" for the **whole of central London** declared illegal! Barrie represented transport company, Keystone Distribution UK Ltd in a case against Westminster Council where he claimed that the Council's massive F Controlled Parking Zone in the very heart of **London** was illegal and that no parking tickets could be issued to motorists on single yellow lines in that zone.

The Chief Adjudicator in his decision cited inconsistencies in Westminster Council's

Barrie's landmark PCN victory throws enforcement into chaos!

approach: *"There was, in my view, inevitably doubt about whether its Controlled Parking Zones were properly signed with the required entry signs."*

Astonishingly Westminster Council did not provide any evidence at the hearing to refute Barrie's argument and didn't even turn up! The Chief Adjudicator went on to say: "Since the Council has not responded to my invitation to make representations, I do not have that clarification before me. I am therefore not prepared to find that Zone F is properly signed."

Barrie Segal's argument was that Zone F did not have the correct signs at each vehicle entry point and therefore the zone was illegal. After a site inspection, the Parking Adjudicator agreed with Barrie.

The effect of the decision (Keystone Distribution UK Ltd v City of Westminster, Case No. 2090063252) is that every single yellow line must have a time plate showing the parking restrictions along its length (the DoT recommends every 60 metres). As hardly any single yellow lines in the F Zone have these individual signs, no parking ticket can be issued to vehicles parked or waiting there.

The F Zone is bordered by:
1. Bayswater Road from the Junction with Sussex Gardens along the whole of Oxford Street to the south to Centre Point.

2. Sussex Gardens to Edgware Road to Marylebone Road to the West.
3. The Whole of Marylebone Road to the North.
4. From Centre Point northwards to where it meets Marylebone Road.

Barrie told *Call Sign*: "This is another victory for motorists in their fight against over-zealous councils and shows that councils must follow their own rules. This decision will affect motorists throughout the United Kingdom, as I believe that hundreds if not thousands of Controlled Parking Zones are not properly marked as required by law. It is clear to me that millions of parking tickets have been issued illegally in London and the rest of the UK. For years, councils have unfairly penalised motorists for trivial contraventions such as parking slightly over a parking bay and have said that it was the law. Well this is the law now and the council failed to comply and must suffer the consequences."

Barrie's advice to motorists who have received parking tickets for parking on single yellow lines in the F zone in Westminster is to contest their parking ticket quoting the Keystone case – PATAS number 2090063252).

Barrie Segal - founder of AppealNow.com - is currently assisting DaC in its battle over PCNs to drivers on account trips...

Thank you from the Credit Union!

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those Credit Union members who made the effort to come to the AGM and make it another successful meeting. All the standing members were re-elected and I would like to welcome **Neil Brewer**, who kindly volunteered to go onto the Supervisory committee. It amazes me every year to see that the majority of members don't come to the AGM to see how we look after your money. You must all have a great deal of trust in us and we thank you for that. Still, there's always next year. And by the way, I'm up for re-election then!

As for the meeting itself - again chaired by President **Terry Dodd (W15)** - we heard of a healthy increase in membership numbers, the number of bad debtors was low and that liquidity was much improved. A 1% dividend was announced, but in a close vote following a discussion, the members present voted to put that money back into the emergency fund. After all, it is OUR credit union.

Doug Fisher (A59) announced that almost £750,000 was loaned out last year making the average loan just over £2100.

Lay General Manager, **Barry Epstein**, told members that DaC itself was a big help with administration in linking the parent company with the credit union. Barry pointed out that when the *Financial Times* wanted to know how taxi companies were coping with the recession, they didn't go to the usual taxi



trade spokespeople, they went straight to DaC Chairman **Brian Rice**. "They obviously know the difference between elected spokespersons and those that know what they are talking about," he said with a smile!

The sensational 7% interest account...

Next up is the fabulous 7% interest we have been giving. I've had a number of calls from members asking if they can put money in, but as I said in the last issue of *Call Sign*, it was so successful that we have closed it for the time being after getting so much money in from drivers. Depending on how things go, we will be looking again at re-opening this account in or around the end of September.

£8000 loans available...

If you read my last article, I mentioned raising our maximum one-off loan to £8000. We have always managed to top up to £8000, but because of cash flow problems suffered in the past two years, we had to reduce the maximum one-off loan to £4000. By doing that, we managed not to turn anyone away and long may this trend continue. In fact, since the current DACCU Board have been running the Credit Union, we have never turned anybody down!

When the maximum was £4000, we had a waiting list of between 3 to 4 weeks. But following an influx of funds from our 7% interest account, you will now be pleased to hear there is no waiting time and you can have your loan as and when you want it. So if you need a few quid without any hassle, get yourselves down to Stratford and sign the forms, or alternatively we can post them out to you. Or maybe you would like to visit the lovely Nuala in *Driver Services*, who is kindly helping us out with that, so can I take this opportunity to thank her.

If you want a chat about the Credit Union, just call us on 0208 522 4502 or 0208 522 4502 or visit us at Suite 209, Channelsea House, Canning Rd, Stratford, E15 3ND.

John Riley (K38)
Vice-President DaC Credit Union

Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

Go into any watering hole and somewhere amongst the din you will hear that the cab trade is finished. A comment I'm sure everybody heard when on the *Knowledge*. Which did little to encourage persisting with what at times seemed an impossible task, particularly through the cold winter months. And a likely reason why the reputed drop out rate of 80% amongst an already low interest group, saw very few new faces coming into the trade. Perhaps that might have been the objective? Talk the trade down in the hope it would deter wannabe cabmen from nicking their work. Whatever the reason, this together with badges being relinquished and the trade being selective in what work it did, evidently left a huge gap in the market place for PH to exploit.

Ironically, from their inception in 1963, PH has grown at treble the rate than badges issued and an awful lot of work has been nicked in the process - a situation made worse by the cab trade making no attempt to regain the initiative. Especially the trade organisations, the very people who now more than ever should be showing leadership in an industry whose members, in their defence, work in an insular environment. I know I'm copying, with a slight adjustment, a headline that goes back a bit - AD64 to be exact - but *'fiddling while the cab trade burns'* seems particularly apt. When was the last time a trade organisation newspaper stated the need for the cab industry to smarten up its image, act like ambassadors and offer a number of suggestions on how this can be achieved? The answer is never, because there is this ridiculous belief that the trade they represent is beyond reproach. That is *manna from heaven* to PH and why one proprietor claimed in a full page spread in the *E S* to be a multi-millionaire on the back of the cab trade's parochialism. Even so and contrary to what many believe, this trade is far from finished, but like anything that's been around for over 300 years it most certainly is in need of a face-lift.

During this recession, many of the big stores in an effort to boost sales, have instructed their staff to be extra helpful and polite. It's hardly rocket science, but it works. So do the same and let it complement a recent piece of good fortune - namely the John Worboys affair. Many in the trade thought it would be extremely damaging, but it has in fact had the reverse effect. I have never seen so many prominent figures and articles in the press praising London's Cab drivers long standing reputation for honesty and integrity, and insisting it shouldn't be tarnished by the actions of one man.

Standards?

Long standing reputation indeed. Which begs the question: Since when have supposed former strippers and porn stars been considered fit and proper persons to become holders of a green badge? I'm aware that civil liberties would have relaxed the PCO's strict character rules of the past (they nearly considered me to be of dubious character because I had three points on my driving licence). Evidently times have changed, and sadly for the worst. Which doesn't surprise me, since nobody any longer considers it is their responsibility to set standards and the reason why there is so much wrong about today's society.



Recently, a footballer was accused of spitting at a team manager. Why the furore when footballers are permitted to spend every minute spitting on the pitch - a filthy habit copied by children on the street. Another recent article in the press asked about men smartening up their image to hang onto their jobs during this recession. Image? What image when TV, once a model for setting standards, considers it perfectly acceptable for sloppy unshaven newscasters and presenters to appear without ties or jackets, but instead to wear open-necked shirts or polo shirts?

What's cool?

And along the road from where I live is a church where I regularly see adult males attending weddings dressed in track bottoms, jeans and trainers. Is all this supposed to be, and I use a modern euphemism - cool? Is it cool for pregnant women and the elderly to be forced to stand on public transport whilst ignorant youths occupy the seats? Is it cool to see police in Kevlar Vests standing idly outside schools while children, either on a mobile or effing and blinding, are putting the fear of Christ into the elderly or those shopping nearby? And if anybody dare comment and is lucky enough not to get stabbed, they get the finger and are accused of being miserable old gits living in the past. A past ironically when parents and those in authority had a responsibility to conduct themselves and hold others to certain standards, when discipline was taught in schools and the streets were policed by real men - not 5'6" acne face adolescents - and in a manner that showed their true worth. One such example of that worth was myself receiving a hefty whack by a 6'3" local Bobby when I was caught, aged 13, walking along a street holding a cigarette, resulting in my never touching a fag from that day to this!

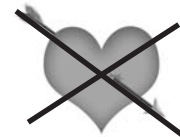
It was also a past when between 1950 and 1963, 2.5 million males age 17 to 21 were forced to do their National Service. There were naturally a few who disliked being taken away from the comfort of home and their mums and thought it was bullshit. The majority however, including bullyboys who were soon pulled down a peg, accepted the discipline and returned to civvy street as responsible young men and grateful for the experience. They became part of a society where cab drivers could earn a living without fear of getting mugged and the elderly were not beaten up and robbed of their pensions. It was also in the past when a drill sergeant's attitude was often applied in the work place, including the public sector and specifically the PCO. I have no idea

how the modern day PCO go about separating the wheat from the chaff. One thing I'm sure is: *Diversity Awareness, which includes bad language, behavior, colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, sex, disability, age, religion/belief or sexual orientation etc*, would most certainly restrict present day examiners from exercising their duty in the manner of their predecessors. For example, when the PCO was at 109 Lambeth Road...

Mr T v Mr Finlay?

That was where in January 1965 I arrived early one morning for my first appearance. After being told to go down to the waiting room in the basement, I and another guy who had arrived earlier sat in the freezing cold for several hours, during which time others were arriving and being called up before us. Eventually, with patience wearing thin and almost dying of hypothermia, we decided to go up to find out the reason for the delay. Fortunately for me, the other guy spoke first. And the answer he got was: *Don't like being kept waiting do you chum?* So he was told to go away and come back in three weeks! On hearing that, I quickly legged it back to the basement and continued to wait. Eventually I was called up to an office where for some odd reason the examiner was sitting behind a desk in one corner, while in the farthest corner was a chair, on which I sat. Nothing was said for quite a few minutes, which suited me, as I was pleased to be in the warmth. I was just getting comfortable, when the examiner asked: *"Who gave you permission to sit?"* I promptly stood and said sorry. He replied: *"Sorry what?"* I said: *"I beg your pardon,"* to which he rolled his eyes and said: *"I beg your pardon what?"* I then realised I should have addressed him as sir. I was then told to sit. Having suffered for many years with a hearing defect, I had a habit when sitting to speak with someone to move my chair forward slightly, and as I did so, he gave me a piercing stare and asked if I worked for Pickfords (furniture removers)? I immediately moved the chair back! Eventually he asked me my first run.

The examiner, incidentally, had a broad Scottish accent and with the distance I was sitting away from him, I had difficulty understanding what he was saying. So I asked him to repeat the run three times, to which he replied: *Are ye bloody deaf or ken ye nay understand bloody English lad?* It transpired he was asking me Broad Street to the Haemophiliac Society, which I would have answered correctly had he not suddenly jumped up smack in the middle of my calling the run and looked out of the window and then start rummaging in his desk, causing me to lose concentration. I was asked five more runs in a similar manner and I failed each one. I was of course disappointed, but not annoyed by his manner because it was obviously part of the test. However, I did get a surprise at the end of that first appearance. As I approached the examiners desk to get my card, he gave me a rare smile and said: *Well done, keep at it laddie.* Which I did, and within 12 months I was a proud owner of the coveted green badge...



From Lovers To Divorce in 20 Minutes

And all in the back of the Editors DaC taxi!

It was a Friday evening and one of Spring's first mild evenings. All those prospective punters out there were smiling as they left their hotels in what **Brian Rice** told us last month had become the 27th cheapest city in the world! All I was looking for was a decent evening's work. I wasn't looking for a story. In fact **Call Sign** was a million miles from my mind. All I wanted was to take a few bob quickly, because it had been one of those nights when the cabs in front and either side were trapping, whilst I was just driving around empty!

Then the magical hand went out from the doorman of the Westbury Hotel in Conduit Street. I swung into the driveway to be told that the young couple were going to see *Wicked* at the Apollo Victoria.

As they got in, it became obvious they were in love. Ok, so no birdies were tweeting above them, but they seemed almost afraid of letting go of each other's hands. Repeating what the doorman had already told me, they added that they were from Gateshead and on honeymoon in the capital. It was their first trip and they were interested to know whether Portobello Road market on the following day would be worth going to? In the mirror, I saw them have a quick kiss as I was about to tell them that they would enjoy it. Suddenly the atmosphere changed.

"Can you go back to the hotel please driver, my wife has forgotten the tickets!" There was no hint of a smile. After all, we'd only just reached Curzon Street so there was no real delay. But he didn't like it.

I could sense the tension in the back of the cab and I could almost hear the silence.

"Can I wait in the cab while my wife goes back to get the tickets," he asked? She got out and I tried to lighten the atmosphere by suggesting that it was usually the men that forgot things. He smiled but remained quiet.

Several minutes later she returned and we made our way to Victoria. All I could hear was some whispering, which I assumed was their way of making up. We turned down Grosvenor Place and suddenly the world exploded.

"How dare you talk to me like that," came her screaming voice. "I should have listened to my mum. She said I'd be sorry if I married you!"

As we reached Bressendon Place, the instruction I had a feeling would come reached my ears. A screaming voice told me to return to the hotel! Stupidly I tried to tell them that everyone has rows and forgets all about them. The reply was unprintable and I turned left along Victoria Street for the return trip.

As we reached the Westbury, the same linkman opened the door. She was first out and just as they do in the movies, she removed her new wedding ring and threw it into the cab and at the person who looked increasingly like becoming her ex-husband.

He got out and came to the side window. Sounding as though nothing had happened, but unable to dispel the lone tear coming from his eye, he apologised for their behaviour and gave me £40 for the £18.80 fare. In his hand was the symbol of a marriage that 20 minutes in the back of a **Dial-a-Cab** taxi seems to have destroyed.

It had turned into a nice job, but how sad was it that such a small incident could possibly wreck a new marriage. Sadly I can't tell you whether it did or not and I don't suppose we'll ever know...

Alan Fisher

NEW CAB GUIDE COURSE

Many drivers who have studied the **Cab Guide Course** report that not only did they enjoy the course and the different areas studied, but are also earning more money as a result. The course is co-ordinated by Graham Woodhouse, himself a taxi driver and a guide. He explained:

"This course is a certificated course in conjunction with the City University, aimed at and for London licensed taxi drivers. Those guides who get their badge at the end of the course are then able to undertake tours in their taxis. This is a great way of tourists being able to enjoy London. Every guide has a unique way of guiding and can also tailor tours to specific needs.

During the course, a variety of areas are covered including the history of the cab trade. Visits are arranged to various establishments such as museums. During the past few months, the guide course has made visits to places such as The Museum of Childhood, The Science Museum and The War Rooms. The groups have been given an insight into the work of these diverse places and in some instances have been able to enjoy areas that are not normally on view to the public. An inside knowledge of interesting museums is essential for advising tourists of places to visit. This is also true for London taxi drivers in general, who are frequently asked about places to visit by ordinary fares."

Described as extensive and intensive, the course covers the history of London, architecture, the Great Fires and the Blitz, lost rivers and villages, together with many other subjects. This assists drivers in presenting the great city of London to both passengers and visitors in an entertaining and informative way. Guest speakers from University College London, the National Trust, and the Taxi Trade give talks to students, with printed hand-outs for every lesson and visual aids to assist lessons.

If you would like to know more about the next available course starting in September, contact Graham by phone on 07968 791 117 or email him at cabguide@sky.com and he will be pleased to tell you more!

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Contact Andy (P32) on 07904 091278 or 07932 960350

Dial-a-Cab driver Lee helps Bedfont Green to the championship!

History was made on Saturday 18 April as Bedfont Green FC were crowned Combined Counties League Champions following a 4-2 win over title rivals Epsom & Ewell...

An own goal in the home side's favour was all that separated the two teams in a first half shaded by Epsom, before a four minute goal fest early in the second half livened up proceedings. Billy Sentence began it by doubling the lead when he shaped to shoot from the edge of the area, cut inside his man and then curled his shot in with the outside of the boot. The visitors hit back with an instant reply when Robbie Burns finished from close-range. The two goal advantage was restored just two minutes later with Chris Henry latching onto a through ball and calmly slotted it past the advancing Paul Borg. Epsom showed great spirit and when Kyle Hough converted a 68th minute penalty to make it 3-2, you could be forgiven for thinking there may yet be a twist in this title decider. Four minutes later the large crowd saw the match settled when Stuart Blackburn fired in an unstoppable shot to make it 4-2.

Bedfont Green played out the remainder of the match without cause for concern, knowing they had won the title with 3 games still to play!

CHAMPIONS!



Another Lee save for the new champions

English Football League 2008 - 09

Team

Bedfont Green (*Champions*)
Chertsey Town
North Greenford United
Camberley Town
Epsom & Ewell
Cove

The elevation to step 4 football for the club is an unbelievable success story in only their fifth year in Senior football and enormous credit goes to everybody at the club who played their part in achieving this piece of history.

As the Champagne corks popped, DaC driver and Bedfont Green goalkeeper **Lee Pearce (J71)** told *Call Sign*: "We had a slow start to the season, but once we got going we felt we could win every match we played in. The boys are over the moon about winning the title."

The presentation will be at the club's final home game in the derby match against Bedfont...

Report / Pic: Stewart Cook

CCL Premier Division (Top 6 of 22)

P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
39	26	9	4	108	53	55	87
39	22	7	10	93	54	39	73
39	20	12	7	89	62	27	72
39	20	11	8	92	49	43	71
38	20	10	8	76	49	27	70
40	17	14	9	76	56	20	64

Call Sign Snapper becomes 'special advisor' to Boris!

More used to being behind the camera, *Call Sign's* photographer **Alan Green (E52)** found himself talking to a camera while being interviewed by BBC Transportation Correspondent Tom Edwards.

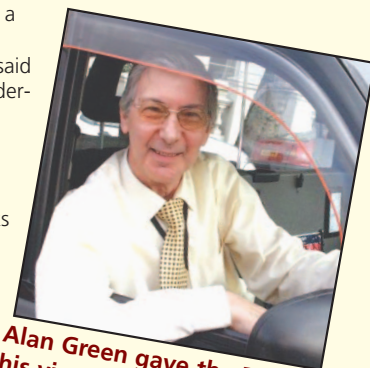
"I had just pulled onto a rank when I was approached by a man toting a camcorder," Alan explained. "He said the following day Mayor Boris was due to announce proposed changes to the way road works were to be undertaken in the future and the Beeb's London News was gauging the views of taxi drivers. These would then be brought to Boris's attention, so did I have any advice to give the Mayor! Thankful that I had a clean cab, was wearing my *Turnbull & Asser* tailored silk shirt and co-ordinated necktie, I gave the Mayor and several million BBC viewers the benefit of a Dial-a-Cab driver's advice!"

Alan made the point about the number of times the same sections of road were dug up, then left for weeks without progress before eventually being filled in - only to be uprooted again shortly afterwards by another utility. *Call Sign's* normally calm 'snapper' saw a rare opportunity and gushed forth his views on traffic congestion, environmental issues relating to emissions while stationary, general road safety issues and the overall economic impact.

"The interview lasted about 6/7 minutes, during which time the Beeb man also took views of our door logo," added Alan. "Sure enough, the next day BBC TV London News aired the piece - although drastically edited and minus the logos - in news bulletin's throughout the day. It showed Mayor Johnson viewing the DVD of me spouting forth and he was clearly heard to say: "He's absolutely right!" Beaming proudly, Alan added: "I guess I can now call myself one of the Mayor's Special Advisors!"

Mayor Johnson later went on to announce that in future, road works that were not being worked on would be covered with steel plates. The five major utilities have agreed as part of a voluntary code to cover up those holes in the road that were not being worked on so that traffic can drive over them. In addition, the Mayor has encouraged them to put notice boards up at the site to say when the work will finish.

This represents yet another election pledge made to *Call Sign* in our February 2008 election interview with Boris, that the Mayor has acted on since taking office. The question on road works was posed by **Bill Kibble (K86)**, so it only seems right that yet another DaC driver should reprise it on television!



Alan Green gave the BBC his views on London road-works

LTI PARTICIPATE IN £2000 GOVERNMENT 'SCRAPPAGE' SCHEME

LTI Vehicles have confirmed that they will participate in the Government's "scrappage" scheme, which will give the owners of 10 years and older vehicles a £2000 incentive to purchase a new vehicle.

Commenting on the scheme, LTI's Sales Director, Rob Laidler told *Call Sign*: "We welcome this initiative from the government to stimulate sales and improve the quality of the UK's taxi fleet. A new TX4 is so much safer, cleaner, more efficient and comfortable than a 10 year old taxi and this will be a real benefit for drivers, customers and the environment, as well as helping UK automotive manufacturing through these tough times. It's one of those rare

win-win situations!"

With the Government only committing a limited budget to this incentive, drivers are urged to talk to their nearest LTI dealer now to save disappointment.



All drivers would have received a letter by now from our Financial Controller, Warren Smith, which confirms the alterations to driver payments that we originally notified of some six months ago. I wanted to add additional information to hopefully prevent rumour or any misunderstandings and I'm also trying to reduce the number of calls to Driver Services enquiring about the changes.

Firstly, let me confirm that the changes have been made solely to bring our payment frequencies into a more manageable and sensible accounting practise. Our auditors for many years have always suggested we look to do this and while there has never been a good time to do it, we hope that having given a long notice period, drivers have made allowances for the change. Those weekly paid drivers will be affected the most, but only by one week. However, because we will be deducting the subscriptions every two weeks, hopefully this will help a little at the changeover.

The deduction of subscription every two weeks has been calculated as follows. At present our monthly subscriptions amount to £124.00 plus VAT = £142.60. Multiply this fig-

Drivers Payments Now Fortnightly



ure to calculate the yearly amount (£124.x12 = £1488 + VAT = £1711.20). Then divide these totals by 52 to calculate a weekly amount, then multiply this figure by 2 which is £57.23

+ VAT = £65.81. If you apply the same calculations to drivers that pay second driver subscriptions, these equate to £30.92 + VAT = £35.56.

Another change that will be noticed is the cut-off day for trips. Instead of a Thursday being the cut-off day, we will run through till midnight on a Friday. Your money will then be in your bank account the following Friday.

I must stress that these changes have been made purely due to accounting procedures and nothing else. Any other reasons you may hear as to why they have been done should be dismissed as being untrue...

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager



CITY SMASH & GRAB!

The spate of taxi break-ins, as recently reported in the trade press, is not confined to the Paddington and Marylebone areas.

Dial-a-Cab driver **Paul Latimer (Y89)** left his cab locked on the taxi rank at the Thistle City Barbican Hotel EC1, while he quickly nipped across the road to grab a take-away coffee and sandwich. He returned to the cab a few minutes later to discover

the vehicle had been broken into and several personal items had been stolen, including his iPod, SatNav and £45 in change that had all been hidden in a sports bag.

"The little sh*t was seen doing it by a passing motorist only moments before I came back to the cab," Paul told **Call Sign's** reporter. "There was broken window glass everywhere. A hoodie-wearing kid around 15 years old and riding a bike, obviously for a quick getaway, was the culprit. My pal and I chased round the streets trying to find him, but he'd disappeared," a still irritated Paul told us.

He then went into Shepherdess Walk police station and waited about 45 minutes to even be seen, before eventually finding a policeman leaving the station in a van who, when he heard of Paul's plight, went out with him in an effort to find the culprit.

"It was a bit too late by then," the DaC driver moaned.

Paul was eventually given a *crime number* at Islington police station near the PCO.

"I was pretty unimpressed with the police response, however the people at **Autoglass** were really helpful and got me sorted very quickly," he added.

"I had to pay £75 excess on my insurance, but it's the loss of my personal effects that is irritating. Luckily I had my credit cards and moneybag with me. It's still a hard lesson though," Paul concluded thoughtfully.

The message is clear. Do not tempt these undesirables by leaving anything on show. It is important to ensure your cab is locked securely with no items of even minimal value on display and when possible, park in a secure area or in good lighting when on the street.

© Call Sign Magazine MM9

Taxis stopping at cash machines

PCO Notice 15/08 in July 2008 announced the trial of permitting taxis and private hire vehicles to stop and wait while passengers use a cash machine on Red Routes at night. This exemption has operated successfully since then and TfL has started the process of formally incorporating it into the traffic management orders governing the Red Routes.

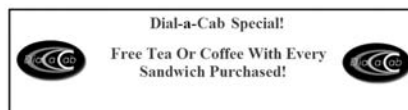
Trade associations will shortly receive the consultation documents. In the meantime, the informal exemption continues to apply.

Taxis are permitted to stop on red routes between 10 pm and 6 am every night of the week for up to 5 minutes while passengers use nearby cash machines. This exemption only applies on London's Red Route network, indicated by red lines at the roadside and signs saying *red route*. Drivers continue to be liable for penalty charges if they wait at cash machines on restricted sections of other roads or outside these times.

Drivers must always be mindful of the safety of their passengers and other road users, and may be penalised if they wait in locations where it is unsafe to do so. Drivers must not stop on pedestrian crossings, zig-zag lines, bus stops marked with a wide red line or in locations where stopping would cause a safety hazard or obstruction.

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

EATING OUT WITH CALL SIGN

The **Coach and Horses** is at the now-trendy and upmarket **Ray Street** in Clerkenwell. It was established in circa 1855 when rather less trendy, as an alehouse and bear pit where bear baiting was considered to be the equivalent of Liverpool v Man Utd today! However, this stunning Victorian hostelry is now an award-winning pub, with a new head chef in Henry Herbert – a fifth generation baker who has been described as a baker extraordinaire!

The Coach and Horses could be described as an old school pub. It certainly has a very welcoming, friendly atmosphere with a comfortable ambience. The style of food was very much olde English fare with some very imaginative dishes, which whenever possible are sourced with fresh local ingredients.

On the evening **Call Sign** sent me there, I was scheduled to be accompanied by my wife, but she had to pull out at the last minute. So I asked fellow Dial-a-Cab driver **Dean Rafferty (O19)** to fill in and I knew he would give me an honest opinion on the food.

For starters I picked *asparagus and poached egg* while Dean indulged himself with *Crab on toast*. Both were very tasty, well prepared and different enough to be interesting!

Main courses were also of an olde English nature. I chose the *rabbit and garlic pie with mashed potatoes*. As an admitted rabbit virgin, I must say that I enjoyed it enormously. I'm not sure whether they used garlic in the 19th century, but I can forgive them even though its discovery is now 6000 old. The English wouldn't touch it until the 1960s – around twenty years after our American cousins and double that in the Mediterranean countries. In the meantime, Dean polished off the *Dover sole* totally unworried about its history. Other than "mmmmm" (!!!), his only other comment was how really fresh and tasty it had been.

Both Dean and I were driving so wine wasn't something we wanted to contemplate, but I must add that the Coach and Horses choice of wines looked very thoughtful and impressive and would probably satisfy even the most discerning palates.

And finally on to desserts. Bearing in mind the olde English feel to the Coach and Horses, what could please the Anglo-Saxon tastebuds more than rhubarb – especially as it came in the form of a *Knickerbocker Glory*! Alongside it came Dean's scrummy-looking *apple crumble and custard*. Both were well prepared and executed to look almost as good as they tasted.

I can honestly say the food was excellent and add that to the informal and discreet service, I would definitely recommend it for a casual evening out.

The opening times are:

Mon to Fri: Pub 12 Noon – 11pm and Kitchen 12 Noon – 3pm and 6pm – 10pm.

Saturday: Pub: 5pm – 11pm and Kitchen 6pm – 10pm.

Sunday: Pub: 12 Noon – 5pm and Kitchen 12 Noon – 3pm

More info at 020 7278 8990 or at www.the-coachandhorses.com.

Alex Constantinou (N05)

"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

So what to do when we're facing very hard, difficult times and how to cut running costs and change your luck? First some bad tips that you can guarantee will resurface like dud money. They may seem tempting, but in my long and weary experience, always ending up costing loads more than they should have saved you... or worse!

1) Run your cab on a mixture of 1 part paraffin to 3 parts diesel. Saves a few bob, but ruins the diesel engine's injectors and pump, also nullifies your warranty and is illegal. If you are caught doing this, the fines and penalties are very severe and could lead to confiscation of the vehicle, your licenses and possible imprisonment.

2) Using Red or agricultural diesel that pays a much lower rate of duty and tax. Then trying to get rid of the red dye by using so called magical, but expensive, pellets that appear to make the dye disappear but doesn't when the fuel is tested by an inspecting officer. It can also leave traces with some smoke test equipment. If caught doing this, the fines and penalties are very severe and could lead to confiscation of the vehicle, your licenses and possible imprisonment.

3) Cutting back on servicing, maintenance and tyres. The first two soon lead to bigger costs, while tyres that should be replaced can put points on your licence, lead to nasty accidents, invalidate your

insurance and if causing a bad accident, a spell in Her Majesty's prisons!

How to cut costs and stay alive...

Remember, charity is a good thing, but best if it starts at home. Look after your health with sensible eating, working routines and regular exercise, as even a 20 minute walk after a meal just a few times a week will help you to stay fit and

healthy.

Don't overdo it, as any extra gained will be lost if you have to take days off to recover.

Try to see the good side of life; there are many more people in this world that would swap their lives for yours.

Lastly, if you think you are going to be lucky, you will be surprised how often you are!

Be Lucky, Sunset Strip

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January £210 August £560

Contact Shayne Wise (G05)

Tel: 01708 753128 or on mobile: 07590 540620

Email: shaynewise@yahoo.com

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

Bahrain Joins the TX4 Club

And sets up a £180million radio circuit compared to ODRTS' £200!

Two hundred of Bahrain's taxi driving community will soon be driving the latest LTI TX4 cabs around the streets of Manama or picking up in Saar, possibly the most affluent district of Bahrain where many ambassadors and wealthy Bahrainis live.

The first 50 of the 200 TX4 ordered black and white chequered cabs arrived in February to complement the fleet of the newly formed **Arabian Taxi Company**. The cabs are similar to the UK version, but with plushier seats and a fitted 13 inch LCD screen.

Interestingly, the Arabian Taxi Company is a joint initiative between the Bahrain Development Bank and Economic Development Board and has been established with a capital of £180million and 314 shareholders. These consist entirely of orphans and widows of deceased taxi drivers and elderly drivers who together own 80 per cent of the company. The remaining 20 per cent is owned by the Bahrain Development Bank.



ODRTS 100th member, Cyril Nathan, is welcomed by founder Chairman Bonnie Martyn (right) to the 1955 ODRTS circuit

When Dial-a-Cab first began in 1953, it consisted of 24 drivers raising £200 between them. Mind you, they did already have their own cabs! Within 18 months, Chairman

Bonnie Martyn was welcoming our 100th member, Cyril Nathan with his Oxford taxi.

One of the first to drive the ATC TX4 in Bahrain was 26-year old Mansoor Abdul Hassan Ali. He was full of enthusiasm saying he was delighted with his new ATC job and the perks it offered - which include health insurance and a new traditional middle-eastern uniform.

Thirty-five of the new TX4s will be driven by women, aimed at those female Bahrainis that did not want a male driver. The final batch of TX4s were expected to be on the roads of Bahrain by April.

In addition, LTI International Market Development Director Matthew Cheyne tells **Call Sign** that the company are expecting at least another ten distributors to be on board in the next few weeks and that they were close to signing agreements with many other countries.

DAC'S MERCEDES MAN!

Robert Webb (A03J) was a happier man when **Call Sign** met him recently. He'd had a spot of bother with his Mercedes Vito taxi and **DaC** MDT unit, but had finally got both problems sorted out. Robert took up the story:

"I double up with my dad, Robert Snr. We had a 2-year old TX4 that went in for a routine service. There was only 20,000 miles left of the manufacturer's warranty, meaning it would expire part-way through the year and we were hesitant to run a doubled cab without the protection of the warranty. Then while my Dad was at KPM waiting for the TX4 to be serviced, he saw a 6 month old Vito taxi up for sale because the previous owner could not get on with it and had traded it back for another TX4!"

Robert continued: "My Dad phoned me to say we've bought a Mercedes Vito without actually consulting me, but I do like it even though we've only had it a few days. I took it back to KPM because a passenger door wasn't opening properly, so they changed a servo motor on the door mechanism and it seems to be working ok now. Then I had to run around getting the meter sorted, because the DaC terminal wasn't reading the fare. There were also wiring problems at the meter, which could only be fixed at the depot and now I'm back at Roman Way having the finishing touches sorted out on the terminal. Everything seems to be coming together after a bit of chasing around," he grinned.

And what did he think of the Vito?

"It's smooth, quiet and comfortable," was Robert's positive reply as he drove gingerly out through the Roman Way exit.



Robert Webb

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Designation of Island Taxi Rank at Putney

As of Tuesday 5 May 2009, the rank for eight taxis situated in High Street, Putney opposite Putney railway station will be designated as an 'island' rank.

The rank will be available to suburban drivers licensed for the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames. It will **not** be available for any other suburban drivers but will continue to be available to drivers holding All London badges.

By granting island status it is hoped that a regular supply of taxis can be established for commuters and the local community. This is an experimental scheme that will be trialled for 6 months, after which time a decision will be made as to whether to make the island status permanent.

Suburban drivers permitted to use this rank from 5 May 2009 should note that they will **not** be permitted to ply for hire in the vicinity of the rank, nor ply for hire at the nearby Werter Road rank. It is hoped that drivers holding suburban badges covering the Richmond-upon-Thames sector will take advantage of this opportunity to expand the service they provide to the public.



Keith Reading

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**Fellow of the Guild of Professional
Toastmasters**

By the time you read this, **Martin Leat (P35)** will have completed two full 26-mile marathons in the same month! When we caught up with this man on the move, he was preparing to reprise his Paris run - having previously taken on the French capital's streets last year. Martin told **Call Sign** that he has been running for around five years and during that time had completed six marathons in several countries. The 49-year-old told **Call Sign**:

"I started in Dublin with a time of 3 hours 55 minutes, then did the London, Kent Coastal, Berlin, Chicago and then my first Paris - so this is my second time there," he confirmed.

"If I can do Paris in under 3:15 this year, it

Dac's Multi Marathon Man!



Ready, set, go! Martin gets ready for his next marathon!

will give me good for age automatic entry into the 2010 London Marathon," he said hopefully. "I began running to raise

funds for Macmillan, the cancer charity, after my mother died from the disease. I could accept being bald, which isn't too bad, but bald and fat? No way," Martin said with a broad grin!

More recently he has run to raise funds for the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution), a cause close to his heart as his son is a full-time crew member of the marine charity based at Waterloo Bridge.

"I just do the running, others do the hard work of fund-raising. I'm also a member of the Serpentine Running Club, so fellow drivers might see me pounding the course from time to time as they drive through the Park," he added.

Asked about his training program, Martin saw our reporter noticeably wilt thinking of the discipline involved in 18 - 22 miles steady running 4 times a week, regardless of the weather! "Sunday morning is the hardest," Martin confessed, "getting up early takes much motivation! On run days, breakfast consists of porridge, banana and honey, but I eat health-

ily all the time, as you might expect," he said.

Asked about further running ambitions, Martin admitted to having three - the first of which he has achieved with the completion of a 10K run in under 40 minutes.

"I achieved that this past January in Hyde Park, with a time of 39:56 seconds," he told us with obvious satisfaction. "So that leaves two remaining ambitions, which I hope to realise during the year - a half-marathon in under 1hour: 30 mins, with his current best being 1:30:17 seconds, and a full marathon in under 3 hours: 15 mins. I'm working towards it," he said with great confidence.

Call Sign asked Martin what it was like to run the London Marathon on home ground and along a route lined with landmarks so familiar during a normal taxi driver's working day?

"At the 18/20 mile marker, energy begins to wane, but you have to push on. Things begin to look up as you round the corner into Admiralty Arch and head down The Mall. You start to perk up knowing it's not too long to the finishing line!"

Taking a breath, he added: "I'm doing the Amsterdam full marathon on 18 October, so there's plenty of training still to come!"

As **Call Sign** went to press, we learned that Martin had completed the Paris marathon, a race upon which he had placed such high hopes for automatic entry into the 2010 London, in 3:26:30 seconds, sadly some 11.5 minutes longer than the qualifying time of 3:15.

"Well there's always Amsterdam in October," he pointed out optimistically.

We at **Call Sign** wish him good luck and good race times.

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

Kupkake's Korner



HACKNEY CARRIAGE?

It was a narrow street in Hackney close to London Fields, where a loaded car came at me and I assumed that it would yield!

He passed two vacant spaces and continued in my path, there was malice in those faces I swear I saw them laugh.

Still closer they continued till I was forced to halt, I couldn't drive around them and it was all their b****y fault!

Behind the errant driver more cars just made it worse, I looked in my mirror to see if I could reverse.

There were several vehicles back there what was I to do?

No room for manoeuvre No one could get through!

Now the doors were opened and drivers gathered round, as if they had some answer... but the language was profound!

That the bling-encrusted young man who had started this affray, was adamant in his position that HE had the right of way!

There were no points worth gaining so slowly all went back, till the youth could drive around me and shout his verbal attack.

And so I continued driving I take it all in my stride, My life's about surviving not assisted *motorcide*...!

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The existing Grove Street site will be exclusively for Body Repairs.**

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LTI Service Dealer

Ever found there's a lot more to someone than meets the eye? Well that's certainly true about **Ricky Manetta (N16)**. You may know him as your friendly marshal on Bank Street E14, but you could also see him at the London Marathon – he's the good looking one who sits on the back of the police motorbike to protect the front runner. Or if you're a UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) fan, you could have seen him with another DaC marshal, **Stefan Fitt (P88)**, walking the fighters into the Octagon and co-coordinating the event.

Many drivers have recently been asking Ricky about starting a self-defence class during the day. Suddenly, realising how interesting he was, **Call Sign** coerced him into an interview!

He already has two classes in Essex teaching *Karv Maga*, the defence system that Israel's special forces use. Delving deeper, we found his history in martial arts went back some 20 years, including boxing, jujitsu, wrestling, mixed martial arts and Thai boxing - which until recently he taught in two clubs in Holborn and Covent Garden.

Now concentrating on his self-defence classes, he explained this wasn't martial arts, it is defending yourself against anyone carrying any weapon as quickly and efficiently as possible. So with the usual journalistic expertise you'd expect from **Call Sign**, we could not let a statement like that go by without some proof to back up the claim.

As luck would have it, we had the right man for the job as a volunteer. **Mark Thurbin (M96)**, who is also known for trapping a street job to Marrakesh (*Aug 2006 Call Sign*) was in the office. He was asked to grab Ricky. He told the mag: "Ricky asked me to grab him and before I knew it I was on the floor! I can't believe how quickly and effortlessly he was able to do it. I'm definitely going to join up!"

Ricky then wanted to demonstrate how easy and effective the moves are to learn, so he taught **Nuala** from Driver Services a technique to escape being attacked. Smiling as Mark went down like a ton of bricks, Nuala told us: "It was so easy to bring Mark to his knees! It just goes to prove that good technique will overcome brute force. I'm certainly going to go to Ricky's evening class in Woodford Bridge."

Editor Alan Fisher, whose past is involved in pro-wrestling, told Ricky he believed UFC was fake before sticking a gun into his ribs. He too was beaten in seconds!

Ricky went on to explain that your age, weight and fitness didn't matter because the classes were designed to get fitter, stronger and more flexible and like most things, what you put in, you get out. But the emphasis is on techniques and once you know them, you'll be confident of being able to deal with any situation - even if you do have trouble running for the bus!

Ricky is thinking of holding a weekly class at around 3pm as close as possible to the City. If you are interested in attending the class, please contact Ricky on **07950 267 574** or Nuala in Driver Services on **020 7553 7201**. He needs a certain amount of interest before he can book a venue. Some drivers have shown interest in a half-day seminar every few months. If you can suggest a better time or know of a good location with parking, Ricky would be very pleased to hear from you.

What do you mean just a cab driver?

If you want to know how to defend yourself, Ricky's the man!



Nuala on her way to bringing Mark Thurbin to his knees



Editor Alan isn't smiling - he's in pain after Ricky disarms him...

Penalty Charge Notices

Barrie Segal – recognised as the UK's leading expert on parking tickets and parking ticket law as well as being the founder of the **www.AppealNow.com** website – has answered several queries for **Call Sign** readers over the legality of their PCNs. Now Barrie is assisting **Dial-a-Cab** in trying to cut down the number of PCNs our drivers receive. This means some changes to the old system...

Until further notice, DaC are going to dispute all issued Penalty Charge Notices for those drivers who were on account trips. Not all the appeals will be successful, but hopefully some money will be saved and cut the appallingly high extra cost to the Society.

The new procedures are as follows:

1. On receipt of a PCN - do not pay it
2. Take the PCN to Nuala in Driver Services immediately because the notice has to be disputed within 14 days. Please ensure your call sign is marked clearly on the notice.
3. If the Appeal that is lodged on your behalf fails, tell Nuala and an appeal to arbitration will be made. You will be given the option of either attending that arbitration in person or by writing.
4. Should all appeal avenues still fail, DaC will ask you to pay the fine and you will be reimbursed in your credits.

Drivers have long complained that taxis are being picked on. DaC and Barrie Segal are now trying to do something about that. Failure to adhere to the above procedures will result in the driver being liable for payment of the PCN.

If you have any queries relating to the above, please contact Nuala in Driver Services on 020 7553 7201.

As of April 1, guidelines from HM Government specified that CCTV cameras had to be of a minimum resolution and that 100 of the Westminster cameras – although reasonably clear – failed to meet those Government specifications. The result was that those 100 were turned off and have to be replaced, as upgrading would cost almost as much. Westminster Council has complained to Geoff Hoon, the Secretary of State for Transport, about the decision.

The cameras fall foul of the *Traffic Management Act of 2004* (although that act came into force in 2008). Westminster were informed that its digital cameras did not meet the minimum technical standards of 720 x 576 pixels – the cameras they used worked at 704 x 576 pixels.

A Westminster spokesperson told **Call Sign** that 704 x 576 was the industry standard and that the decision would not help congestion in the city.

However, there are still many cameras in the Westminster zone that operate within the new guidelines, so PCN's are still possible and Dial-a-Cab drivers are asked to take care as to where they stop.

CCTV cameras in the Westminster area also came into the news recently when **Call Sign** was told that the reason a CCTV camera was aimed at the *Iron Lung* toilet facility-in-the-round in Regency Place was due to an alleged attack on a traffic warden who was

Westminster CCTV Cameras Switched Off...



You were always being watched - but now some cameras are being switched off

allegedly in the process of giving a PCN to a taxi driver who, in turn, had been inside doing another type of process! Certainly gives 1984 a new twist

CAUSING OFFENCE WITH PASSENGER RECEIPTS

Mary Dowdye, the PCO's Head of Standards & Regulations, has written to **Call Sign** regarding the issuing of receipts that could cause offence to passengers.

This is the second time the PCO have written about this and Ms Dowdye claims that offence is still being caused, particularly to female passengers who have been given receipts that advertise lap dancing clubs and other similar establishments.

Call Sign is alone among the trade press in having a policy of refusing advertising material from the above types of establishments. Our reasoning is similar to that of the PCO, except that whereas a female passenger may take offence, we believe that a driver's child could pick up the magazine and find material that is totally unsuitable for them. So we support the PCO's stand. Ms Dowdye goes on to say:

"When providing drivers with receipt pads, the PCO asks promoters to apply the same standards used for approving advertising on taxis and the reverse of printed taxi receipts, which at present do not extend to hand written receipts. These standards are detailed in Appendix B of the PCO publication *Guidelines for Advertising on Licensed London Taxis*, which is available at www.tfl.gov.uk/taxi advertising guidelines.

"These standards specifically state that advertisements should not be approved if they advertise lap-dancing, gentlemen's clubs, escort agencies or massage parlours.

"The PCO recognises that receipts are an effective method of advertising and has itself promoted causes through this medium. However, when issuing receipts, drivers are reminded that the advertisement of some products or services may cause offence to passengers."

Ascott Cab Co Become LTI Service Dealer

In case you missed the news last month, the **Ascott Cab Co** is now an **LTI Vehicles Service Dealer**, allowing London's drivers to benefit from an additional service and repair facility.

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

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

possible standards. On site, the Ascott Cab Co also acts as insurance brokers.

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

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

To find out more about Ascott Cab Co, go to www.ascottcab.com, phone 020 8692 1122 or see their ads in this issue on pages 18 and 19...

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month's Flashback goes back to June 1967, a letter from V.W.Maxey (C12) and a different world! He told the ODRTS News Magazine about a conversation from a cab driver to his passenger, which was reported on in his son's comic. *Valiant*. Would this happen today?

From ODRTS News Magazine, June 1967...

Dear Sir,

Do you think the enclosed cutting is suitable for use in *ODRTS News Magazine*? I came across it in one of my son's comics. The name of this particular comic was *Valiant*. I am sure that the cabbie concerned was certainly this, if only "just a cabbie."

Yours faithfully
V.W.Maxey (C12)

When the late King George V fell ill, a London businessman took a taxi to Buckingham Palace and waited there for an hour until the latest health bulletin was posted up outside. Afterwards he drove to a railway station, but when he came to pay the fare, he discovered that the meter had only registered one shilling.

"Your meter must be faulty," he told the cab driver, "I kept you waiting for an hour!"

The cab driver replied quietly: "There is nothing wrong with my meter, sir. He's my king as well as yours."

M.Triggs,
Fulwell, Sunderland

Flashback
1967



Late Night Marshalled Taxi Rank at Cornhill ...but how the touts must be laughing!

The City of London Corporation, in partnership with Taxi Marshalls.com and the Public Carriage Office, are launching a new marshalled taxi rank scheme in Cornhill, EC3 – outside 77 Cornhill (opposite St Michael's Alley). So far so good, but...

Abacus is at 24 Cornhill, it is an upmarket bar, restaurant and disco and well known to most taxi drivers who work evenings as a minicab touting spot. Now we have a marshalled rank that could have given us an opportunity to reclaim some of our work.

The problem is that it is around 50 yards away, on the wrong side of the road and facing the wrong direction!

The marshalled taxi rank scheme will commence on Friday 8 May 2009 and marshals will be at the rank on Friday and Saturday evenings between 23.00 and 02.00. The marshals will be responsible for the organisation of the taxi and passenger queues at the rank, ensuring that passengers are able to get a taxi as quickly and efficiently as possible.

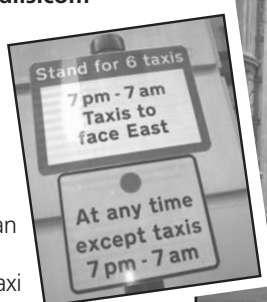
The taxi rank in Cornhill will be operational between 19:00 to 07:00 every day and drivers are reminded that the normal rank regulations apply at all times.

The times and dates of the other late night marshalled taxi ranks are:

Cranbourn St (outside Aberdeen Steak House) – Friday and Saturday 22.00 – 03.00

Liverpool St Station (outside McDonalds) – Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 22.00 – 02.00

See Editor's page...



Taken from outside Abacus, the circle in the road shows where the new rank is... Inset The regulations force taxis to face eastwards and out of view of Abacus

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Tom Whitbread at London Zoo

So that you can tell your passengers about it...!



On 2 April this year, I was happy to accept an invitation to the new Animal Adventure section of the London Zoo (ZSL) at Regents Park. This came about because I subscribe to the Zoological Society of London by purchasing a yearly ticket for one of my grandsons and myself. We do cause something of a problem when we both go there, as we have the same name and birthday. Both of us were born on 29 July, were both christened Thomas Whitbread - but some 55 years apart!

Many people take the zoo for granted, but they do some wonderful work in preserving endangered species of animals, reptiles and fish. It continues this work through the support and generosity of likeminded people such as myself, donating to the upkeep and research completed by its employees.

Older members reading this article will remember the old children's area situated by the newly refurbished penguin pool and play area. Also there were a few goats, rabbits and sheep and even, I think, a donkey. Now they have activity areas and adapted areas where children can get close to the animals and watch them being fed whilst being told about the particular animal's habits.

You enter between two areas for the Red Panda and the Ring Tailed Coati before proceeding to an adventure area. This has climbing ropes and bamboos, also hill climbing ropes and a challenging cargo net to transverse before continuing on to see the Meerkats, Yellow Mongoose, Prairie Dogs, Porcupines and Aardvarks. To get closer to the Meerkats, children can crawl through a two-foot high pipe that goes up in a glass dome in the centre of the Meerkats enclosure so they can watch them running around.

My grandson thought it would be great if I could also crawl through this pipe with the tiny children! I didn't want to look silly so I did it. Along the way I also banged my head and ruined the knees of my trousers! But it made the watching kids happy and gave me a greater insight into what they could achieve in seeing the animals up close.

Then it was onto the play area with its large tepee, oversize acorns, flowerpots and an imitation pond, which the children can walk through. But beware as they walk across the pond; hidden water spouts and fountains suddenly come to life, soaking any child to close to the outlets. Mind you, few of them looked upset - more delighted!

Then on to see the Kune Kune Pigs, Llama and Alpaca; this is opposite to the area that is fenced off, but has entry gates so the children can play and stroke the sheep and goats. Then at the furthest end is a meeting room and bird pen with a Seriemas "Snake Basher!" As it's name tells you, this is a large bird that grips snakes in



Tom Junior in the glass pipe with a Meerkat keeping an eye on him!

its beak before smashing them on a rock until dead!

Into the meeting room at 1.15pm where the children can go and be instructed on workings of the zookeepers, they are also given a zoo shirt or jacket to wear. Once fully attired, they are instructed on how to prepare the food for the Kune Kune pigs so that they have to work to gain access to their food. The children are then taken to help feed the small pigs before going into the sheep and goat enclosure to help clean up.

There are also keepers walking around with birds of prey on gloved hands explaining to the young children what they are and how they live in the wild. While the children are enjoying themselves, there is a brand new shop and cafeteria for adults to relax in with a cup of coffee whilst being able to keep an eye on their offspring.

When the children are exhausted, you can take a leisurely short walk to the new Blackburn Pavilion, which has the most amazing animated

clock at its entrance. Inside you have an information area on the birds, with some very large cages housing toucans and other large birds. You can then go through the fine chain link curtain that stops birds flying out of a freedom area. In this area, there are around 40 different types of birds flying about in an area of ponds, bushes, trees and a waterfall. You can then walk along a wooden walkway and have birds flying freely around you or possibly just walking around in front of you. You also have a new Gorilla Kingdom, Butterfly Paradise, Gibbons enclosure and a Bugs theatre with activity den. My grandson especially liked the Clore Rainforest Lookout,

a building where you can get close to animals from the tropical rainforests of South America.

If you decide to get a yearly ticket for the Zoological Society of London, your fee will include as many visits as you like during the year to either London or Whipsnade Zoo. You will also get invites to special openings of new projects, this way you do not get crushed by crowds or the more unruly children.

It will also allow you to tell passengers who enquire about new items at either zoo that you were one of the first to be invited to oversee the opening of it, so you can tell them about it!

This type of knowledge nearly always puts you in line for a larger gratuity from a very grateful passenger.

May your working life become profitable again within this year...

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member

Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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

*Well wonder no more! If you are a subscriber, journeyman or member of staff at Dial-a-Cab, then you qualify to join the **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union**. Any member of your family residing at your address also qualifies for membership!*

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

The cost?

Just 1% per month on the outstanding balance (or APR of 12.68%). Loans can be paid back early AND there is usually an annual dividend on your savings.

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

Call us on 020 8522 4503

Soon after an announcement that pedicabs may be given "parking places" where passengers can go to find them, it seems that could be the forerunner to a campaign preventing the three-wheeled menaces from "ranking up" at many popular tourist haunts.

Certainly London's major theatres could use a broom to sweep away the pedicabs that block exits whilst touting their wares. However an encouraging sign was seen in Regent Street recently where a pedicab rider waiting outside possibly the world's most famous toy store, Hamleys, was nicked for his troubles. His excuse in fairly good English and overheard by a **Call Sign** reporter, was that he had seen many pedicabs parked there so he assumed it was ok for him to also do so. What he hadn't realised was that the pedicab riders previously there had been warned away from the store exit by another police duo, leaving this poor chappie to face the music!

Ever since the first pedicabs were spoken of, **Call Sign** had no objection to them being given spaces in tourist spots for circular tours ending up back where they began, but not to be used as transport for getting from A to B.

But it wasn't just the pedicab the "hobby bobbies" were looking at. The **Call Sign** reporter put his taxi onto one of the two ranks in the centre of the road opposite Hamleys whilst listening and taking a photo. The first rank was filled with taxis for hire. The second had **Call Sign's** cab plus one other,



NICKED!

Is it the beginning of a clampdown on pedicabs?



The Pedicab is nicked

Inset pic: Empty cab parked on the Hamleys rank...

with no sign of the driver. He was obviously parked there.

After nicking the pedicab, they walked over to the rank. Our reporter explained that he was there briefly to take photos. Reluctantly, he told the police a lie that he believed the other driver was on a radio job and probably looking for his passenger. They

seemed to accept that and walked off. Whether they returned later, we do not know but at a time when drivers are finding it difficult to pick up a job, is it right that parked taxis should take up valuable ranking space? Unused back street ranks, well ok, but outside Hamleys? We have deleted his registration number.

Is it the beginning of an anti-pedicab campaign? We await with interest...

Lucky For Some? Ask Cliff!

The traditional cabbie saying of 'be lucky' had a particularly significant meaning recently for Dial-a-Cab driver **Cliff Giffin (C55)**.

Cliff told **Call Sign** that he usually parks his cab around Fenchurch Street Station before boarding the train for home in Southend.

"On this occasion, I had planned a few days off and took the cab home so as to make an early start when I did get back into the saddle," he said. "The day I returned back to work, I decided to start really early so as to beat the traffic into London... like 04.00 actually!"

Cliff continued with his tale. "I wasn't 500 yards from my own front door when I saw a parked car further down the road. The driver was waving like mad for me to stop, so I pulled in to see the problem. He wanted a jump-start as his battery was flat. I wasn't very keen as I wanted to get going, but couldn't leave him there. The suddenly I noticed the Addison Lee logo on his rear window and I lost interest," Cliff said with the slightest of grins!

"At that moment, a young lady came running out of the house where the car was parked and asked me if I could get her to St Pancras to catch the first train out of London?"

Being a gentleman and seeing a lady in distress, Cliff told her that wouldn't be a problem, quickly loaded her bag and set off for the Eurostar terminal, leaving his Addison Lee 'friend' to make his own arrangements.

Once on the way, the passenger told Cliff how earlier on the PHV driver had asked if anyone else was in the house to give him a start, and when she innocently explained that her father was still asleep, the Addison Lee driver asked her to awaken him from his slumber so as to assist to start the minicab.

"Can you imagine the cheek of it," Cliff asked while laughing incredulously. "And that's when I arrived on the scene."

Did Cliff get her to Eurostar on time, **Call Sign's** jealous reporter queried having never had such a good job coming into town?

"Of course," Cliff responded positively, "I'm a Dial-a-Cab driver and we always do our best to help... well for most people!"

We forgot to ask Cliff whether he went back to Southend to see if the AL driver had managed to get going...???



Cliff Giffin - not an Addison Lee fan!

Golden Gloves Championship for Sam Bezzina!

The past two issues of **Call Sign** have detailed the progress of **Sam Bezzina**, son of Dial-a-Cab driver, **Dean Bezzina (M10)**, and his ambition to box for England. To do that, he needed to win a Golden Gloves Championship. Two victories – the second while suffering from an infection – saw him through to the final. A win here would see him qualify not just for an England place, but also the chance of future Olympic glory.

And he did it! It was national title glory for the Newham BC boxer when the ABA Schoolboys Championship honours were decided at Dagenham's Goresbrook Leisure Centre. Liam Etheridge, from Walsall's Pleck BC, supplied the opposition for Sam Bezzina in the Class Three 48kg final and the talented rivals produced a high standard final at the two-day **Royal Navy** sponsored tournament. But it was Sam who had the edge with his effective punching in the opening session, staying on top until the final round, when the powerful midlands' hopeful made a desperate attempt to turn the bout his way. The judges gave the verdict to Sam with an 8-5 score in his favour. Whilst the score reflected a clear winner, it certainly did not reflect the amount of leather thrown. This was a hard fought contest with both fighters realising how much was at stake. Following the



Sam is now qualified to fight for England. Will he make London 2012

final round, Sam was awarded the national title and a pair of Golden Gloves.

To win a national title is a great achievement for Sam and also means he has achieved yet another of his goals – to box for his country. Sam will now be very busy training over the next eight weeks in preparation for the *Three Nation's*, which will be held in Stranraer (Scotland) from 12th June to 14th June this year. Sam has also been selected to

attend a days training camp at the Royal Naval base in Plymouth, where he will receive a day's coaching from the best of the RN boxing team and put through his paces by their physical training instructors. Sam will also be in action at the Circus Tavern in Essex on the 15 May 2009 when Newham ABC will be holding their annual dinner show.

This will prepare him for the *Three Nation's* where Sam will proudly represent his country for the first time and hopefully get his first gold medal whilst wearing an England vest. If Sam continues to develop and perform well, he will be ideally placed for all the right people to see him if he is to achieve his ultimate goal of representing England in the Olympics. Sam knows he is just at the beginning of a very long journey and could be too young and inexperienced for the London 2012 Olympics. But that won't stop Sam's 100% passion and determination each and every day, as he always has from day one.

Amir Khan had great success as a young Olympian when he won silver and Sam knows that with hard work and determination, an Olympics medal is a real possibility for him.

From all at Dial-a-Cab, good luck to Sam...

JOHN DENHAM HAILS LTI APPRENTICES...

Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham MP, recently visited LTI Vehicles to meet apprentices and some of the staff who have benefited from Government funded training via Train to Gain.

John met with John Russell, CEO of LTI parent company Manganese Bronze Holdings and LTI MD, Peter Shillcock. The Minister was also greeted by Sophia Lock, who in 2008 scooped the coveted EEF Engineering (West Midlands) *Apprentice of the Year* award and Sophie Emerson, who recently joined the company as a Business Administrator Apprentice.

Following the meeting, John spent some time talking to staff that had participated in apprenticeship schemes at the Coventry-based company. He was also shown around the plant by Peter Shillcock.

John Denham said after the visit: "I was delighted to meet some of the LTI Vehicles apprentices and staff. Manufacturing companies such as LTI make a vital contribution, not just to the West Midlands but to the UK economy as a whole.

"These are challenging times, but we must look to the future by supporting the skills and expertise that we have in the West Midlands so that we can emerge stronger from the downturn and take advantage of the upturn when it comes."

Peter Shillcock added: "It's been a real pleasure meeting John today. Investment in skills and training is vital if we are to make the most of opportunities when the economy grows stronger. The visit gave us the chance to show what progress and achievements our apprentices have made. No doubt, they alongside their colleagues will ensure a bright, strong and competitive future for LTI Vehicles."

Call Sign says: *LTI deserve congratulating on their policy of taking on apprentices. This gives young people a real start in life and it's just a pity that something so common in the 20th century has now become such a rarity, that magazines such as this find it newsworthy. Well done LTI...*



John Denham with LTI apprentices

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S UPDATE

Hello Ladies & Gents,

As you are aware, new procedures are now in place on Canary Wharf and apart from a slight alteration when it first became operative, the system seems to be working well. The *Soon to Clear* facility had to be quickly removed because too many of you were in areas where even the fastest taxi in London could not be expected to reach the E14 zone in the allowed time!

Can I again please remind you that *Canary Wharf Management* (CWM) have the power to remove vehicles and also ban them from entering the estate if in the case of taxis, they fail to have their For Hire light on or park in places away from the official ranks, which may in their opinion obstruct entrances. This was the main reason behind the BoM needing to change booking-in procedures on the Island and whilst it will continue to be strictly monitored, it was seen as the fairest solution to an ongoing problem that would allow you to wait specifically for radio trips or make use of the official taxi ranks. It is also designed to give early morning men the added back up zones to E14.

The City Airport rank (CC00) is also running smoothly and a number of you have already expressed their wish to make this change a permanent one. The number of taxis that are actually booked in at the LCA now appears on *zone one* of the zone query pages.

Professionalism

Although there has recently been a little more positivity in the media over the econ-



omy, it doesn't need me to tell you how tough the conditions are at the moment, especially in the corporate sector and how important it is to show professionalism and a high degree of customer care. Arguing with passengers over preferred routes or drivers seemingly unhelpful to their needs does not help us and is a bad reflection not only on our Society, but the trade as a whole. Please bear this in mind. For all sorts of reasons this job can be frustrating and highly stressful, but from experience if you deal with the passengers correctly and show a degree of understanding, a potential problem can in many cases be prevented.

Run-ins, arrivals and parking are all issues that have the potential to cause problems and these are areas that are

monitored and that we must all be aware of.

Run Ins: £4.20 unless otherwise authorised. TaxiCard trips are £3.80.

Arrival: Only press your *Arrival* when physically outside of the pick-up location.

Parked Button: If you are moved on or unable to park directly outside, please use the *Parked* button to notify the Contact Centre of your new location. This has caused problems recently, especially if there is a high amount showing on the meter when the client is unable to locate his or her taxi.

Trips that are allocated in outlying areas (eg SE50 or E99) have increased lead-in times but all locations outside of the London postal zones are physical and unless you are in the zone itself, you are not permitted to book-in. The trip(s) will be allocated to back-up zones and eventually appear in the *Bids* if no taxis are booked into the trip zone or one of the back-up zones.

Great Science Museum offer

On the weekend of the 16th / 17th May, the Science Museum will be offering Licensed taxi drivers and their families free entry into the new exhibition '*Wallace and Gromit present a World of Cracking Ideas*'. You can read about this special offer elsewhere in this issue...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer



AFTER WESTMINSTER...CABSURANCE?

Following the demise of Westminster Insurance and the take over by Tradex, **Call Sign** has been inundated by Dial-a-Cab drivers who claimed that the new company had raised premiums for those paying on a quarterly basis. We have now been approached by **Emrose** regarding their **Cabsurance** policy. They assure Dial-a-Cab members that they are still able to arrange annual taxi insurance policies on a quarterly basis.

Cabsurance went on to add that their policies can also incorporate a *Guaranteed No Claim Bonus*, subject to underwriting criteria and ended by telling us that whatever the insurance needs of DaC drivers, they were confident of offering them a saving on the premiums being paid, in addition to an impeccable service.

Call them on 020 8597 2622 for more information...

Dave Stock moves to PCO taxi Licensing



Dave Stock

With effect from 1 May, responsibility for the delivery of taxi (and private hire vehicle) licensing and inspection services will transfer to **Dave Stock**, the former PCO Head of Service Delivery.

The core services are delivered under contract by SGS. Since the contract came into effect in April 2004, this contract has been managed within the PCO by **Alan Matthews**. However, as a result of planned organisational, Mr Matthews current post as Head of Projects and Developments ceased as of 30 April.

The PCO Contract Management Team, under the day to day responsibility of Ray Biggs, will now report to Dave Stock. This change will not affect the standard of service delivered to taxi and private hire licensees...

LONDON LEGEND Limousine Taxis



London Legend specialises in wedding transport. Our magnificent Asquith Limousine Taxis and Landaulets with drop hoods are replicas of the legendary 1930's Austin Low Loader Hackney Carriage. Special rates for Dial-a-Cab drivers on mid week and out of season weddings. We cover all areas of London and the south east.

Tel.: 01628 471632. Mob.: 07974 348974.

London Life in the Bus and Taxi Lanes

It's another quiet Monday evening and I'm filling up my cab at the Finchley Road BP garage at Swiss Cottage. I get into conversation with a Polish driver for **Addison Lee** and asked how things were? He shook his head and said they were very bad and that he had to work very long hours. He asked how many hours I worked and I said I usually did around an 8-hour shift and asked him the same question.

"Much more," he replied, "14 hours sometimes; you have to or you would go home with very little. But our managers and bosses at Addison Lee - they are earning all the money!"

One of our buses is missing...

On the subject of drivers who only speak a little English and are not familiar with the landscape, buses have them too. A friend who drives a London bus told me how one of their buses travelling north to south went missing.

"How can a bus go missing," I asked?

"Well, it disappeared, we couldn't track it on screen or get radio contact the driver for ages. The garage was frantic with worry because of today's climate with terrorist attacks etc. They were screaming down the line trying to contact the driver. Suddenly a feint, frightened voice came back saying in broken English that he didn't know where he was!"

"We told him to read the road signs and asked what they said? The driver replied Gatwick Airport! By this time the bus had emptied out with all the passengers doing a runner!"

On another occasion, a bus again travelling north to south was apprehended by police. This happened in the Seven Sisters area of Finsbury Park; an area I grew up in during the sixties. I know it's never been the most salubrious of areas and we also had gangs back then. Two I remember were the 'Arcade' and 'Ma's Boys' from her cafe in Blackstock Road. But Finsbury Park could boast the Astoria Cinema with its art



But since then the area has been in gradual decline and is now noted for its scruffy internet cafes, kebab shops, others selling Pringles and a six-pack, a mosque raided by anti-terrorist officers and the odd grisly murder - as was the case this particular day when the bus was apprehended by the Met. The area had been taped and cordoned off and a diversion set in place. However, the bus went straight through the cordon, right into the crime scene and was promptly surrounded by police cars and the driver nearly arrested. Perhaps that's what happens when you are programmed for one route only!

But timetables are now obsolete, with journeys taking almost twice as long with all the current roadworks. The capital would, of course, come to a complete standstill if the bendy fleet had been increased as was originally planned.

Cobblers?

This is not rocket science, just common sense, but that is outdated in today's sophisticated society where you need a mobile phone and a degree in texting to pay for a London parking space. The latest one is texting to find a toilet in Westminster! Who dreams this stuff up? There is probably a four page definitive politically correct guide written about it lying around somewhere. If so, it should be filed under the name Cobblers - but perhaps they're saving that for text-a-shoe repairer?

deco interior, swimming baths, a park and boating lake with fishing and traditional pubs with live jazz and blues such as the Manor House. We also had tailoring shops, clothes boutiques and Italian delis.

And...

Mayor Boris inherited a regime that costs London a fortune, with many unprofessional people earning huge sums of money and he needs a massive clear out to stop us becoming a laughing stock. As to the whereabouts of Red Ken, TfL's former spiritual and visionary leader, he was last spotted on the top deck of a bus heading northwest, eyes shut in deep meditation, no doubt pondering his next big challenge...

David Heath (Ex W27)

Taxi Driver of the Year Show

I'm sorry it has taken me so long to inform our friends that though we did get Hyde Park for the TDY event, what with this year's financial situation we were unable to secure a sponsor for the show and are unable to go ahead.

However on 5th December 2009 at The Holiday Inn Kensington Forum we still intend holding our annual dinner dance, so we can make donations to the charities that have supported us. We have had to move to this hotel because we do not want to turn people away like the sell out we had last year.

We have also been able to hold the price at £60 per head and still have the 4-course meal. So don't be the one that misses a great night. For any information on the dinner please call on either tel/fax 020 8952 1357 or mobile 07850 056 765.

Russell Poluck MBE (T55)
Hon chairman

World drivers report more fares using the London taxi

Taxi drivers around the globe are reporting an increase in fares and earnings by switching to the world famous London Black Cab. In cities from Bahrain to Beijing and Riyadh to Cape Town, drivers are choosing to drive a London Taxi as tourists and business people instantly recognise the world famous vehicle.

In Beijing, taxi drivers report an increase of thirty percent in takings when driving the London Taxi, whilst in Riyadh, the black cab is preferred over limousines by the top hotels.

This point of view is supported by internet polls and surveys that report the London Taxi as the best in the world. "Almost half (44%) of the 3,300 travellers from France, Germany, Spain and the UK surveyed by **Hotels.com** said that London's black cabs were the best," reported the website.

Tourists and travellers visiting London, home of the Black Cab, always quote the taxi as one of the chief reasons for visiting and one of the top ten attractions, according to **Forbestraveler.com** who call it "a tourist attraction unto itself. The world's greatest taxi city."

Rob Laidler, Sales Director for LTI Vehicles added:

"It is the best vehicle and service in the world. We regularly hear anecdotes from drivers throughout the country that passengers instantly recognise the TX series as taxis, whilst converted vans are often mistaken for private hire or minibuses and feel they miss out on some fares as a result."

So it is no surprise to Matthew Cheyne, LTI's International Market Development Director, that drivers around the world would want to choose the London Taxi as well. "It makes sense that a vehicle which is purpose built, recognised everywhere you go, fun to use, safe and offers the passenger privacy if they want it, would be the automatic choice for passengers if available. And we know that drivers who operate and drive the London Taxi are busier and earn more than their colleagues."



This TX driver has gone for a bite in San Francisco



Call Sign asked that question to Dial-a-Cab's Roman Way Manager, Dana Thananjeyan, himself a Tamil who has been greatly affected by events in Sri Lanka...

Very disturbing news is leaking out from the safety zone in Mullaitheevu district in my home country of Sri Lanka, where a cruel war has been waged for several months and has now reached its peak of devastation. Current news coming out from the war zone must disturb all human hearted people. In the last few days, there have been many massive excavation machineries established near the perimeter of the safety zone and huge holes are being dug day and night by several thousand Sri Lankan armed and supporting forces. These holes are being dug for no valid reason other than to facilitate a witness-free mass murder of the remaining Tamil population in the event of the Sri Lankan army advancing into the safety zone and killing everyone. Internationally prescribed and prohibited dangerous weapons such as cluster and phosphorus bombs, plus other chemical bombs have been used recently in the war zone by Sri Lanka armed forces.

Those in the safe zone were originally living in four districts in the Vanni region and have been forcefully confined into the safety zone due to the advancing Sri Lankan armed forces with its massive artillery and air attacks. The Sri Lankan government has barred international media and aid agencies from accessing the affected people. The International Red Cross is the only non-governmental organisation managing to be present. The absence of independent media and international humanitarian agencies allows the Sri Lankan government to easily continue the war in such a cruel manner. Currently, The Sri Lankan government has been using every means to destroy the integrity of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

We, the Tamils living all over the world, are very disturbed by these terrible happenings to our beloved kith and kin there. We want international leaders and human rights organisations to take effective and immediate steps to prevent the Sri Lankan government from making any more attacks on the innocent Tamil civilians in the name of releasing them from LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). The suffering people need immediate assistance and protection by the UN and other world organisations.

I am one of the Tamils affected by this. I have

Why are they demonstrating in Parliament Square?



The photo shows a makeshift hospital at Mu'lli-vaaykkaal. It was filled with casualties and on the Monday afternoon it was taken, another 600 wounded people were brought in...

lost contact with my mother, my sister's family and other relations for over 3 months now. I have no idea what has happened to them.

Please help the innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka by giving your support. They are being killed and genocide is silently taking place there under the cover of "war against terrorism."

Thank you to all DaC drivers for reading

this and considering the plight of Tamils.

These two websites may interest you;

www.tamilforum.com/unspeakabletruth.html and www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=29090

**Dana Thananjeyan
DaC Roman Way**

KNOWLEDGE via SATNAV!

A Dial-a-Cab driver, who wishes to remain anonymous, sent this photo to **Call Sign**. Having read this magazine's views on the danger of passengers believing us to be the same as minicabs if a SatNav is on show on the front screen of the taxi, he took this pic of a Knowledge student riding around town with a satnav clearly attached to the bike.

The question now is whether the PCO will work out that he is obviously trying to offload the hard work involved, or will they just ask what difference it now makes as taxi drivers are using them anyway? Hence the destruction of our trade continues..



The Knowledge boy is clearly using a SatNav

No, not *that* kind of stoned! **Call Sign** asks the question because it seems that an increasing number of our drivers are being targeted by stone-throwing youths and the dangers this presents are obvious. One such recent victim was **Tony Doltis (R38)** whose cab windshield was shattered while he was travelling eastbound along Evelyn Street near its junction with Creek Road SE8, as he was taking a passenger home.

Tony told **Call Sign**: "It was 19.50 hours and I was taking an account client from the City to Greenwich when it happened. I was travelling at about 25 mph along Evelyn Street, when I suddenly heard an almighty bang that sounded like a bomb going off inside the taxi and at that moment a huge circular crack appeared in centre of the windshield. I checked in my nearside door mirror and saw a hooded youth of about 12/13 years old disappear down the pathway that leads to a housing estate. I'm not sure if he was the culprit, but he was the only person around. My passenger was also startled at the noise. Having set him down, I returned to Creek Road to see if I could find any clues, but there was nothing. My wife said I should report the incident, which I did at Snow Hill police station. The Duty Officer was very helpful and told me he could fax through the details to Lewisham police for them to investigate. I'll bet not many people know that," Tony said grinning!

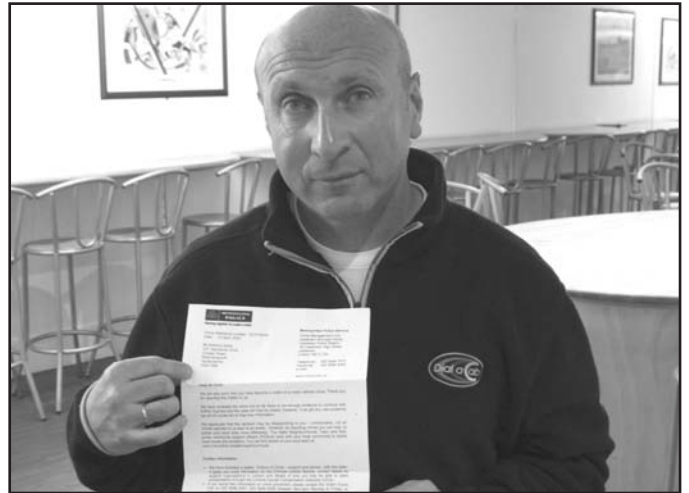
"Autoglass were also quick to replace my broken screen, although I had to pay £60

Tony with his police report

insurance excess, which meant that I was well out of pocket over the trip," he added.

"I received a letter from the Crime Management Unit of Lewisham police, in which they also said that if crimes go unreported, then nobody knows about them, inferring it cannot be investigated. That does seem obvious, but suggests people are accepting the un-acceptable," he continued. "So the advice to **Call Sign** readers is to always report any crime so that it can be recorded."

Co-incidentally, later that same evening, **Paul Ranson (L90)** had his cab damaged by stone-throwing idiots while travelling towards



the top end of York Way, Kings Cross. Both drivers were lucky to escape unharmed, although shaken. So the answer is clear. Be vigilant and report any incident to the police...

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EAST LONDON CABBIES OUTING TO MALDON

Can you please help them?



The next **East London Cabbies Outing (ELCA)** will be on Wednesday 1 July 2009 and will be taking special needs children to Maldon Park in Essex.

We are a group of licensed London taxi drivers who organise an annual outing to Promenade Park in Maldon each year for around 200 children from all areas of London. The children have a variety of special needs from downs syndrome, autism, physical disabili-

ties and severe learning disabilities.

This year makes the 57th year of the outings and is an ever-lasting memory for so many of the children, bringing a joy of happiness to all those who take part.

We need taxi drivers who can help us on this fun-filled event by donating their services for the day. Can you help?

Contact Jeff on 07841 395 006 or Ken on 07973 462 351.

Remember, it may be corny, but it's also true: A child's smile makes the day worthwhile...

You can read more at:

www.eastlondoncabbiesouting.co.uk

John Dixon (B67)

DAC CUT-PRICE TRIPS WITH...



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

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

The prices to DaC drivers?

Just £49 return standard class OR...

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

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

Call Sign May 2009

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On page 7 you can read about the action DaC drivers took outside Nobu in Berkeley St. But what about Smiths? Two facts about Smiths restaurant in Charterhouse Street, EC1; it is owned and run by celebrity chef John Torode and gets a large number of its clients arriving in London taxis.

Call Sign's only interest is in the second fact, because at the end of the day, John Torode is still the chef and owner, whereas many of his clients go home in a minicab. Why? Mainly because they hang up and offer themselves to Smith's clients as they leave.

Earlier this year, we published a letter from DaC driver **Laurence Green (K53)** asking why drivers booked into EC5 didn't wait on the Smiths rank and give themselves an extra bite of the cherry? *Call Sign* pointed out that the rank had ridiculous times for use, those being Monday to Thursday between Noon and 9pm with Friday to Sunday as Noon till 7am.

The leader of a trade organisation promised he'd take up the cause on our behalf and attempt to get the times changed. Then on Wednesday 22 April, Dial-a-Cab drivers decided that enough was enough. As the timing of the rank finished at 9pm, the two cabs on it were joined by another 20 DaC taxis and Smiths clients received the best, and probably cheapest going home service they had ever had!

There were a few Liverpool Streets and London Bridges, but there were also many good jobs while *Call Sign* listened in. There was a Hornchurch for J03, Marriott at Heathrow for Z14 and other good trips for

And what about Smiths?



As far as the eye could see on the night of 22 April, DaC taxis take over the Smiths rank...

DaC drivers whose call signs we didn't know – such as New Cross and onto Chelsfield, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Kingston. Most of them would normally have gone in a minicab – probably licensed but picking up in an illegal manner, which would have nullified that licence.

The rank was serviced well, although mainly by DaC drivers. *Call Sign* spoke to a ComCab driver who joined the rank, having previously thought it was a 20-cab radio job, until realising they all had their lights on! We also spoke to a tout in St John Street while we were looking around. He complained that we were taking his work and that when it was busy, we didn't want to know. Hopefully that second part will not come true, because

in the three days from 20 to 23 April, Dial-a-Cab drivers began the process of showing that we are not just the best drivers, not as expensive as the usual minicab drivers, but also available to go anywhere.

All the DaC drivers congratulated our dispatchers on the way they kept drivers informed as to availability on the rank (and outside Nobu at the same time).

Why on earth does the Smiths rank finish at 9pm? Roadworks? Where? It's all very well for Taxi and PH Director, **Ed Thompson**, to go round looking at PH touting, but here is his chance to do something about it...

In the meantime, well done to DaC drivers who were so good that a movie went round the internet about them!

E3 TAXIS LTD

New Year Promotion:

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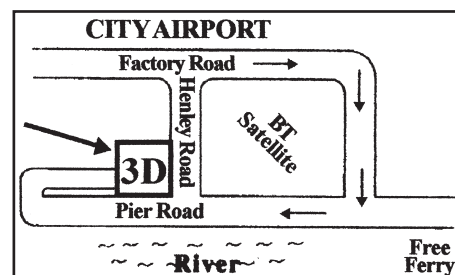
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WE ARE ALSO A PCO APPROVED EMISSIONS FITTING AGENT FOR THE TAXI CAT SYSTEM



A new gallery exploring the sheer diversity of wildlife living within touching distance of visitors, has opened at the **Horniman Museum** from 24 April. Through a combination of living exhibits, ranks of specimen creatures, children's interactives and historic exhibits from the Horniman collection, *Nature Base* will equip visitors with the skills and knowledge to become nature explorers, locating and identifying the natural life in their local environment.

Following on from the Aquarium, which opened in 2006, the new gallery is the latest stage of the Museum's *Evolution 2010* project, which will develop the Horniman galleries and gardens to tell the story of life on Earth.

***Nature Base* is designed to show children and families how easy it can be to find and help to preserve wildlife, even for people living in the centre of the city.**

Perhaps the stars of the new gallery are the live exhibits, including Britain's smallest rodent, the harvest mouse and the beautiful and rare African flower beetle known as the Horniman, having been discovered and named by the Museum's founder Frederick Horniman in 1877. At the heart of the gallery is a honey bee hive, home to hundreds of bees and enabling visitors to look right into the centre of the hive, observing the queen, worker and drone bees, while attempting to count the number of bees filling the hive.

Nature Base is divided into four areas – Explore, Observe, Identify and Describe. As visitors enter the gallery they encounter the Evidence Tree, which displays plants, leaves, seeds and evidence of wildlife gathered from within the sixteen acres of Horniman gardens. The Observe area encourages visitors to look and listen for signs of local wildlife and to develop skills for exploring nature. The 'Wild Wall' contains a series of beautiful framed dioramas of city birds, collected and created by Victorian naturalist Edward Hart and including the blackbird, robin, swift, house sparrow and black redstart. Visitors will also be challenged to recognise the sounds of an assortment of city animals, including the pipistrelle bat, hedgehog, fox and tawny owl.

The Describe area is concerned with recording and spreading information about wildlife found in specific areas of London, to keep track of numbers and to identify any species whose numbers may be declining or thriving in certain areas of the capital. It also explores the individual case of the red squirrel, which has not been seen in London since the 1950s and includes images of some surprising city residents, red kites, peregrine falcons, sparrowhawks, kestrels and buzzards. Capital Creatures tags throughout *Nature Base* indicate some of London's most popular animals and birds, including stag beetles, house sparrows and bats.

A number of interactive exhibits are designed to bring children closer to the animals, which live in their locality. In the Identify area, a video microscope displays a living image of the specimen under examination on to a flat screen. 'Feely boxes' containing animal specimens will help children identify animals by touch, with animal tracks nearby as

Wildlife Gallery at the Horniman Museum



Your chance to see inside a real honey bee hive at the new Horniman Museum gallery

Nature Base at Horniman Museum, 100 London Road, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3PQ.

Admission free. Open 10.30am-5.30pm daily. Further info www.horniman.ac.uk/naturebase

or phone 020 8699 1872

The Museum and gardens are both wheelchair and pushchair friendly with accessible toilets. Limited on-site parking is available for disabled visitors – call 020 8699 1872.

clues.

Sting, the museum Patron said: "Evolution 2010 is an inspiring project. It will open our eyes to the amazing diversity of life on earth and our place as human beings on this fragile planet."

CAN YOU HELP WITH THE WOBURN SAFARI TRIP?



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

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

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

Susan Angel on 07958 280881

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



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It's said that a friend in need is a friend indeed. In DaC driver **Daniel Heaven's (001)** case, that was very true and referred to a mechanic friend of his and a Dial-a-Cab driver responding to a plea for help...

Daniel told **Call Sign** how, soon after having a major service on his TX2, he experienced a dragging feeling to the rear of his cab.

"I was PoB from Olympia to Kensington High Street. As we were going along Ken High, I heard a banging sound from the rear and the cab began to feel very sluggish and un-responsive to the engine. I pulled into the kerbside to set the passenger down and then stopped another cab driver to ask him to check my rear wheels as I moved along slowly. He confirmed that the nearside rear wheel was not turning properly!"

That was enough to put the wind up Daniel, who suspected that a major job was looming. He continued the story...

"I phoned a mechanic friend who thought it might be seized brake shoes that were 'stuck on'. He suggested hitting the centre of the hub with a heavy implement to try and free off the brake shoes. So I put out a fleet message to see whether anyone had a hammer in their cab and sure enough, within a short time a fellow Dial-a-Cab driver arrived on scene with the right tool. I gave the hub a solid thump and heard another bang as, sure enough, the sticky brakes returned to normal! Wow, was I relieved!"

Daniel's DaC taxi gets...

ALL SEIZED UP!



Daniel points out what happened to his cab

The following day Daniel took the cab back to his garage to be checked out and they told him that it did sometimes happen when the brakes had been fully adjusted and dust tended to build up within the brakes. They released the

adjusters a fraction and his cab has been fine ever since. "I still have every confidence in the garage," Daniel concluded...

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Charm Offensive...???

I hailed a Dial-a-Cab taxi last month for a short trip for my nephew and his wife to get their luggage to the nearest tube with a lift. The older-than-average driver turned us down at first, saying he couldn't get the luggage and two people into the taxi. I could see he could, as Mrs. Nephew is only a wee slip of a girl and there was the space next to the driver as well as the back. I told the driver I knew Dial-a-Cabbies could do anything and identified myself as Poppy and opened the door before he could get away - was that all a mistake?

He grumbled about the luggage damaging his taxi and said my relatives would pay extra if it did. No help with the bags and the meter kept running at the end until they'd taken every case onto the pavement. No tip for him then and once I got the email from my relatives telling me of the unhelpfulness, I apologised and felt embarrassed. I really don't think surly does it in these troubled times; do you?

And my own DaCman?

My DaCman Glen can be as grouchy as the next man, no question about it. For example, waking me up regularly while hissing *shhh* if he thinks I've been snoring! Wouldn't a real gentleman just move to the spare room and leave out the remarks about hearing my honking 100 yards away? Of course he would. A girl needs her dream-time...

But at work, my Glen's a changed man; all smiles and conversation. Hour-long waits on ranks and nights with just three jobs have brought out the Sir Galahad in him. He used to drive straight past anyone carrying smelly fast food, now he stops, picks them up and sweeps up the chips squashed on the floor of the taxi when they've gone. In the past, if passengers asked for "the theatre" or "my hotel, can't remember the name but it's near a garage," he was happy to drive round and round as punishment until they realised they were in London, not some one-horse town with only one hotel or theatre. Now he'll patiently rattle off names of theatres, shows and hotels until

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

Back Seat *Driver*



al bigger tip, I suppose.

So it's back to the sourpuss who condescended to take my nephew to the tube. When you treat your passengers like nuisances, you're just recruiting work for the minicabs who will send a people-carrier if you say you have lots of luggage and not make a fuss like you did. I'm not saying one spoiled DaC man is the biggest villain in the recession, but it's one more than we need from where I sit as a back-seat driver. I don't suppose I'll see you again, at least not if you see me first! But if I do and your taxi engine's on fire, I'll ring 998, mate! Count on it...

**Till then,
Love Poppy xxx**

the country bumpkins remember where they're going.

He turns down the radio if they want to talk, instead of turning it up and pulling the divider hatch shut like he used to. Glen was always quite correct with the public, but now there's eye contact, little jokes for the kiddies and magazines for people to read on the back ledge. OK, it's just Private Eye and The Spectator, but it's a nice touch, don't you think? He also takes euros, dollars or pounds and is grateful.

People business

A publican once told me: "My business isn't beer, it's people." I think taxi driving in London is the same. There isn't much repeat business outside of account work of course, so much of the sunshine Glen's spreading around really benefits everyone else out there - the trade in general - and not him, apart from an occasion-

PATRICK O'BRIEN

Call Sign was sad to hear of the death on 9 April of long-time Dial-a-Cab subscriber Patrick O'Brien (E57). The brother of former DaC dispatcher, John O'Brien, Patrick was laid to rest on 28 April at the St Pancras and Islington cemetery.

To all Patrick's family and friends, the deepest sympathy from everyone at Dial-a-Cab.

R.I.P.

London Taxi Sightseeing Tours



Some of the Cab Guides who will be taking tourists on a 'Black Cab Sightseeing Tour'

Launch Week at the 'Britain and London Visitor Centre'

London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours are proud to announce their *Launch Week* is taking place at the *Britain and London Visitor Centre* at 1 Regent Street, from the week commencing 11th May 2009.

Our qualified Taxi Driver Guides will be on hand throughout the week to meet and talk to tourists, members of the public and the media about what is an exciting new sightseeing option in London. There will be a visual demonstration of the tours. The guide will be supported by 'Arfur', who is 'half a cab' (kindly donated by LTI). All of our Driver Guides not only have 'The Knowledge', but have also passed the CabGuide Course (sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers and accredited by City University).

Our tours will be fun and entertaining, our clients will have a lively commentary throughout and there will be photographic opportunities, comfort stops and even a coffee break if required. Passengers will be transported in an iconic London Taxi with a friendly, knowledgeable driver guide who can answer their questions in more depth than on a coach or bus tour, where there are far more people in a group.

Visitors to our exhibition will be able to speak to our Driver Guides about the tours; they can even book one and save £10 if they do so at the launch. There will also be a free draw to win a tour, which can be taken anytime!

During our *Launch Week*, we shall also have a selection of *Black Cab Collection* memorabilia available. Everyone likes to take home a reminder of their visit to London and what better way to remember their *London Black Cab Sightseeing Tour* than with a cuddly bear or even a model taxi. The collection features items such as branded clothing and vehicle accessories, all endorsed by LTI Vehicles, manufacturers of the world famous Black Cab.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, recently called on the world to come to London for the experience of a lifetime, as he announced a new £2million marketing campaign to boost overseas visitors to the capital – so, what better way to experience the sights and sounds of London than on a *London Black Cab Sightseeing Tour*!

Bob Woodford

Oxford Circus goes Japanese!



The new crossing will look like this one at Tokyo's Hachiko Square

Work is to commence on a Tokyo-style pedestrian crossing at the Oxford Circus junction. When completed, it will involve taking away the barriers, stopping the traffic in all directions and allowing those wishing to cross to do so diagonally as well as in the normal way.

The cost of holding up the traffic and no doubt causing even more congestion, is estimated to be in the region of £5million and should finish in November...



DAC APPEALS RESULTS



The following are the results of the Appeals meeting held on Friday 3 April 2009...

Clyde Ellis-Hall (F15): Booking in to EC5 incorrectly (Rule 11) - 2 week suspension was reduced to 1 week.

Andrew Gorman (W77): Accepting a trip in S99 when booked in to SW7 (Rule 11) - 3 weeks suspension increased to 4 weeks.

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Licence in jeopardy?

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Failing to Notify Driver Details

Driving without Due Care

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Dial-a-Cab House or email us
at - callsignmag@aol.com**

Addison Lee and bus lanes

Before the Mayoral election that saw Boris Johnson take over from Ken Livingstone, I was one of several DaC drivers who threw questions that affected us at Boris in a pre-election issue of *Call Sign*. One of the questions (I think it was from Stewart Lewis D20) asked Boris if he would allow minicabs to use bus lanes and he said no. Last month in the Evening Standard, the owner of Addison Lee cars said in an interview that he felt they should be allowed to use bus lanes otherwise they might reject offering their services during the Olympic month in 2012. Do you know if the Mayor has changed his mind?

Alex Constantinou (N05)

I asked Mayor Boris Johnson again and this is what he said: "I can confirm that I have no plans to allow private hire cars to use bus lanes." That sounds clear enough and if Mr Griffin reads *Call Sign* – and apparently he dislikes us because of our battle to get his fleet to finally replace their rear windscreen wipers – then he now knows as well ...Ed

Sunset Strip

Re the April 2009 *Call Sign Online*, I particularly enjoyed the piece by *Sunset Strip* and look forward to hearing more from him! Incidentally, my 'vehicle' is a 1955 FX3!

John Freeston

**Vice Chairman (American Section)
London Vintage Taxi Association
Pleased you enjoyed it John ...Ed**

The Gentleman's Circuit?

Just perused the April edition of *Call Sign* and if I may, I'd like to proffer a reply to Barbara Poluck's letter suggesting that the expression, *the gentlemen's circuit* is sexist. I'm amazed at how many people over the years have got it totally wrong.

Before Political Correctness became a cancer on common sense and sexism a byword for paranoia, to refer to someone as a 'gentleman' would mean they were a person whose conduct conformed to a high standard of correct behaviour, manners, helpfulness and courteousness.

Hence Dial-a-Cab, the Gentlemen's Circuit - Gentleman as in an adjective and NOT as in gender.

**Allen Togwell
Dial-a-Cab BoM**

Hold Tight...

I recently read a *Call Sign* letter in which Richard Potter (T51) recommended the Hold Tight Garage in Dartford and I thought readers living that way might be interested in hearing of the service that I recently received there.

Having been the owner of two TX2s and now a TX4, I have used two main dealers in

central London (KPM and Coachline) but have not been impressed with the service or attitude of either of these garages. I live in Orpington and in the past if anything is needed to be done to the cab, I would drop it off in the early hours of Monday morning after working Sunday night, with my girlfriend picking me up. Then I'd get a train back up to London to collect the cab when it was ready. My TX4 was nearing its 50,000 service when I read Richard's letter in *Call Sign* so I decided to try Hold Tight because if nothing else, the logistics of dropping off and collecting the cab would be much easier.

On Tuesday 24th March I contacted Hold Tight and booked in my cab for service for Monday 6th April. On Saturday 28th March at about 4pm, I was on my way into work when my power steering belt snapped. I had the vehicle taken to Hold Tight and left a message in their answer machine explaining the situation. On the Monday morning they contacted me at 9.15am to say that they had replaced the belt! They also informed me that the front pads were dangerously low and should be replaced (the handbrake light had been coming on and off, which was apparently a warning sign and not as I thought another minor problem with the cab). It was agreed that as I did not work Monday or Tuesdays that they would keep the cab until late Wednesday to do the service there and then to save me coming back again the following week. There had also been a problem with the ignition system which Coachline had been unable to sort out. On Wednesday afternoon, I went to collect my cab and spoke to Lee, one of the owners. What a nice guy! He had done all the work and solved my ignition problem by replacing a part. He also informed me that I had a small leak in my radiator which needed replacing. Although it had already been replaced once, he explained that there was a new improved one which should be fitted. In addition, my rear brake shoes had only 2,000 miles left on them. I am on the list to have the new radiator fitted in a few weeks when the rear brakes would be sorted at the same time. Interestingly, when the vehicle was last serviced at Coachline, they explained my water loss as a loose hose!

Thanks to Richard, I have now found a garage that is not only more convenient for accessibility, but which appears to bend over backwards to get you back quickly on the road and is actually interested in solving issues with the cab and not fobbing you off with excuses. Once again thanks for the recommendation.

Can I also take this opportunity to praise your efforts in producing *Call Sign*. I have no doubt this takes a lot of time and effort. I always enjoy reading the magazine and have found no end of useful information contained within. Keep up the good work.

David Cross (Y66)

Thanks for that David. It's always useful to hear good recommendations ...Ed

Getting a Handel on Jimi...

Re the Handel Exhibition in the April *Call Sign*, I believe that Jimi Hendrix also lived at



the same address (25 Brook Street) during his short life. I almost wrote *tragic* in that last sentence, but whilst his life was tragically cut short, I don't believe his life was tragic... but stellar. As they say; those that burn the brightest also burn the shortest...

Eddie Lambert (V37)

Ken Freeborn's 45 years...

It was great to read the article in the April *Call Sign* on Ken Freeborn's 45 years as a taxi driver. We were both on the knowledge at the same time 1963/4 at Cooks garage and school in Huntsworth Mews. I do remember Ken and his Beardmore. I wonder if he remembers any of the other graduates from there? In fact I met one this morning - Georgie Hurst. I got my bill a couple of months after Ken - on 20th April 1964 to be exact. Any older drivers remember that date? It was the day BBC2 was due to start, but had to be postponed due to a fire at Battersea Power Station. The fire knocked out every streetlight, traffic light, theatre and cinema in the West End! It was utter chaos and that was the first night I went to work! I went down more one-way streets the wrong way than a bike rider does! Congratulations Ken...

Ray Sorene (A53)

SatNavs in taxis...

Once again I read an article decrying the display of SatNav's in taxis. For the education of the Editor and of others who have older units or do not have a SatNav I, like the Editor, have had one for several years for use outside of town and until January of this year kept it out of sight until required. However the new unit I purchased in January has a feature, which I now find irreplaceable. The main benefit of this new feature is this; unlike many who enjoy the inane ramblings of daytime chat show radio hosts, I find them irritating. As most local radio stations have now taken this cheaper option of broadcasting and irregularly intersperse traffic updates, the latest feature of my Garmin SatNav, a lifetime's subscription to Traffic Master, is a work of genius. I no longer have to rely on local radio, but can listen to what appeals to me. On two occasions since January I have been saved the irritation of being stuck in a jam and managed to get both passengers to their destinations earlier than would otherwise have been the case, as a result of timely notifications from my SatNav. Both passengers commented on the fact that my early change of route had been very welcome and both tipped well, which at the moment appears to be a rarity. So until somebody finds a way of providing me with up-to-date traffic information that doesn't involve me having to listen to the ramblings of some bigoted chat

MAILSHOT

Mailshot continued from page 34

show host, I will continue to display my SatNav but rely on the knowledge to get me around London, although if caught in darkest Edmonton it may well be in use.

Terry Lewis (C33)

Thanks for the letter Terry. This mag is always happy to publish driver's views regardless of whether they agree with me or not! Sadly I'm afraid your story of two occasions that the SatNav has saved traffic probs since January does little to convince me. After all, you wrote to me in mid-April and if that is the alternative, then I still believe that we do far more damage to our name by displaying them than getting the occasional Traffic Master message. After all, this summer is going to see a huge increase of tourists from Europe who will be taking advantage of the weak pound. They will see your SatNav and the one in the Addison Lee car and assume we are all the same. That is something I for one do not want to see ...Ed

Bishopsgate bus lane

Reading the April *Call Sign* and the article about Tony Guerrier's (P48) bill, it mentions the fact that following his father's PCN some years previous for setting down at the Bishopsgate bus lane, ever since then we have been allowed to pick up and set down there. Is that true, as I hadn't realised it?

Bill Kibble (K86)

It's true Bill – assuming it hasn't been changed back! However, after picking up or setting down, you must leave that particular bus lane as soon as it's safe to do so ...Ed

Tinted windows

The rear windscreens on Addison Lee cars seem to be getting darker and darker. So much so that the licenses on their new models cannot be seen through the glass. Can I have my taxi's rear window tinted like theirs?

Bernie Silver (G08)

A TfL spokesperson told *Call Sign*: To answer the question about tinted windows, no specific dispensation has been given to anyone regarding the level of tint on the rear windows of private hire vehicles. But private hire vehicles have to be compliant with construction and use regulations for motor vehicles that allows for windows, which the driver cannot directly view the road through, to be tinted to this level. You will notice that even these vehicles have the front driver and passenger window and windscreen only tinted to a light level to meet with the relevant regulations. However, with regard to taxis, they are governed by the 'Conditions of Fitness' that has requirements that are over and above such regulation such as requiring the

turning circle. In this document, all taxi windows can only be tinted to a maximum level of 25%.

Having a Twitter with Richard

I nearly didn't bother responding to Jon Winterburn's piece in the April *Call Sign*, which gave his view on Twitter, as I didn't really want to get into a discussion with someone who openly admits to not having used the service and has no plans to. But I must point out a few things that have happened to me through Twitter. One is making contact with various people that have now become semi-regular customers. Not exactly high rollers, but in this climate any extra work is of course welcome. I've also taken a booking for a four-hour fashion shoot and no, not of me... the cab! The other exciting thing - for me anyway - is that I have made a really good contact at Wilton's Music Hall and am becoming involved in some of their fund raising activities. Just a couple of examples of how Twitter can connect you to people you would never otherwise have come across. And my point re Twitter is as much to do with how technology will effect our trade as to what Twitter itself might do. So all in all, not bad for an uneducated, socially inadequate child!

Richard Cudlip (V23)

Jon was slightly concerned before the last issue went to press that his comments shouldn't be taken too seriously. I assured him that the language he used wouldn't offend anyone, but I may have lied a bit! ...Ed

Tony Ellis and Marshalling

Just read your comments about Tony Ellis in the April *Call Sign*. I met him once on the then Millennium Dome rank and as we were the only cabs there, we started chatting. It didn't take long before he accused me of brooming work at Orpington Station. Even though I did do some work there in those days, I had no recollection of what he was talking about. But he knew me and another family member who worked a green badge, so he had a way of gaining information. I asked him why he worked with the tout squad and he said "he got what he wanted out of it" - whatever that meant. He went on to tell me that he had recently been on holiday with them all!

When I was on ComCab, I believe he was instrumental in getting Suburban drivers who were allocated work in E16 to come into E14 to cover the *Credit Swiss* account. Like you, Alan, I am an LTDA member but have always been wary of Tony Ellis's motivation and true intentions because he is a yellow badge driver. Personally I believe he has created a culture that we are currently suffering from - that it's ok for yellow badge drivers to do green badge work in a green badge area... which we know it's not.

He might be on the LTDA executive, but



no one has ever explained what his remit is or what his motivations are and the way he goes about his business sometimes creates suspicion. I appreciate that he does do much good work on behalf of the taxi trade, however he gives me the impression that he wants a green badge. If he does, why doesn't he do the all-London Knowledge like the rest of us, rather than looking like he's earning brownie points to get one through the back door?

Richard Potter (T51)

Tony Ellis is involved with the new taxi marshalling service which covers Cranbourn Street, Liverpool Street and Cornhill plus a few suburban stations. As I said in my editorial, I don't know him and have no probs other than the people behind it run a private clamping operation and I wasn't sure whether the two mixed ...Ed

DaC House

One thing that's been bugging me for a while now is why we don't stick our phone number on the front of Dial-a-Cab house? Being in such a prominent location on the edge of the City, surely this could be beneficial in creating more work in these lean times?

Roland Brewer (M38)

You might be right Roland, but it would still be useless until every DaC driver had the stick-on phone number attached to his or her cab. It's like a one-off ad on TV – totally useless unless viewers see it constantly. Driving past DaC House and seeing our number would only be beneficial if the person noticing it had already seen it many times on our taxis. Sorry if I sound a bit like a Board member on that, but I really believe it to be the case ...Ed

PCO refunds?

I enjoyed your article in April's *Call Sign* about the PCO going back to the Lambeth days; that's where I did my Knowledge and it brought back many memories, but I thought I would let you know that the driver challenging PCO/TfL about the refund is not on his own. I have been challenging them for some time now to produce evidence that shows this reduced return to be legal, as of yet they have failed. I have also suggested to them that I will consider a legal challenge unless they can prove to me conclusively that they have the right to take this action. If you could inform Graham Rogers (Y31) he is not on his own, it may give him some support.

Mike Pollington (K17)

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