

November 2009



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Lee Morland's 25 years at Dial-a-Cab...



*Ab monsieur, so you are on zis Dial-a-Cab too.
Zen why are we in Paris???*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Last visited night clubs in Aug 08. With the Xmas season coming, clubs are not only in demand but test our memories to the limit. I've tried to list some of the more unusual or the popular ones that escape your mind but shouldn't have...

Night Club & Address	Night Club & Address
Addies Club 121 Earls Court Road SW5 9RL	Fluid 40 Charterhouse Street EC1M 6JN
Agenda 3 Mincing Lane EC3R 7AA	Green Carnation 5 Greek Street W1D 4DD
Alhambra 33 Commercial Road E1 1LB	Herbal CLOSED!!! 10to14 Kingsland Road E2 8DA
Almada 33 Dover Street W1S 4NF	Hidden 100 Tinworth Street SE11 5EQ
Alto Club 15-21 Ganton Street W1F 9BN	Hub 2 Goulston Street E1 7TP
Amika 65 Kensington High Street W8 5ED	Hub KX 34b York Way N1 9AB
Aquarium Club 256 Old Street EC1V 9DD	Jacks Club 7to9 Crucifix Lane SE1 3JW
Area Club 67 Albert Embankment SE1 7TP	Koko 1a Camden High Street NW1 7JE
Automat 33 Dover Street W1S 4NF	Inc Club Unit 20 Peninsula Square SE10 0DX
Bar Rumbe 36 Shaftesbury Road W1D 7EP	Infinity 10 Old Burlington Street W1S 3AG
Beduin 57-59 Charterhouse Street EC1M 6HA	Ivy Club 9 West Street WC2H 9NE
Below 54 54 Great Eastern Street EC2A 3QR	Jewel 4to6 Glasshouse Street W1B 5DQ
Blagclub 11 Russell Gardens W14 8EZ	Juno 134-135 Shoreditch High Street E1 6JE
Blagclub Kensal Rd 222 Kensal Road W10 5BN	Kabarets Phophecy 16to18 Beak Street W1F 9RD
Blagclub Notting Hill 68 Notting Hill Gate W11 3HT	KCLSU Surrey Street WC2R 2NS
Blush 37 Duke Street W1U 1LN	Kitts 7to12 Sloane Square SW1W 8EG
Blush 8 Cazenove Road N16 6BD	Korsan 161-165 Kingsland Road E2 8AL
Boujis 43 Thurloe Street SW7 2LQ	La Pollera Colora 4to6 London Bridge Street SE1 9SG
British Luxury Club 70 New Bond Street W1S 1DE	Lately Night Club 175 West End Lane NW6 2LH
Bureau 13 Kingly Court W1B 5PW	L'Equipe Anglaise 21 Duke Street W1U 1LB
Café de Paris 3to4 Coventry Street W1	Lightbox 6a South Lambeth Place SW8 1SP
Cameos 50 Margaret Street W1W 8SF	Lo Profile 84-86 Wardour Street W1F 0TQ
Cargo 83 Rivington Street EC2A 3AY	Loop 19 Dering Street W1S 1AH
Catwalk 70 New Bond Street W1S 1DE	Los Locos 24-26 Russell Street WC2B 5HF
Centro & Den 18 West Central Street WC1A 1JJ	Lost Society 697 Wandsworth Road SW8 3JF
Charlies 9 Crosswall EC3N 2HT	Shoreditch House Ebor Street E1 6AW
Charlies Club 37 Leinster Gardens W2 3AN	Lounge Ebor Street E1 6AW
Cherry Jam 58 Porchester Road W2 6ET	Maddox 3to5 Mill Street W1S 2AU
Club Aquarium 256 Old Street EC1V 9DD	Mahiki 1 Dover Street W1S 4LD
Club Coliseum 1 Nine Elms Lane SW8 5NQ	Manteca 66 Wardour Street W1
Coco SW5 180 Earls Court Road SM5 9QG	Masters Club 12 Denman Street W1D 7HH
Coliseum Club 1 Nine Elms Lane SW8 5NQ	matter O2 Peninsula Square SE10 ODY
Crystal Club 78 Wells Street W1T 3QL	Maya 1a Dean Street W1D 3RB
Den & Centro 18 West Central Street WC1A 1JJ	Mayfair Club 50 Dover Street W1S 4NY
Dingwalls Middle Yard Camden Lock NW1 8AB	Miranda Club 9 Kingly Street W1B 5PH
Diva Beach 222 Fulham Road SW10 9NB	Mo Bay 139 Wardour Street W1.
Divas 17a Harrington Road SW7 3ES	Mo*vida Club 8 to 9 Argyll Street W1F 7TF
East Village 89 Great Eastern Street EC2A 3HX	Moonlighting 17 Greek Street W1D 4DR
Eclipse 158 Old Brompton Road SW5 0BA	My Place 1to3 Trebovir Road SW5 9LS
Eclipse Club 139 Stockwell Road SW9 9TN	Notting Hill Arts Club 21 Notting Hill Gate W11 3JQ
Eclipse SW19 57 High Street SW19 5EE	PlanB 418 Brixton Road SW9 7AY
Egg 200 York Way N7 9AP	Plastic People 147 Curtain Road EC2.
Embargo 59 533b Kings Road SW10 0TZ	Rumba (Bar) 36 Shaftesbury Road W1D 7EP
Embassy 29 Old Burlington Street W1S 3AN	School Disco 229 Great Portland Street W1
Enclave 25-27 Brewer Street W1F 0RR	seOne Weston Street SE1 3QX
Escape 10a Brewer Street W1F 0SU	Stanza Club 93-107 Shaftesbury Avenue W1D 5DY
Eve Club 3 New Burlington Street W1S 2JF	THAT london 338 Boord Street SE10 0PF

Great News! After years of being dormant due to the work required to create a new search engine and revamp the database, the 'Points of London' website is back up and running again and much, much better than before. Either go direct to www.pointsoflondon.co.uk or link from my web site www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click on the 'Points of London' icon. While you are at the Nash's Numbers website, why not sign up to the FREE 70 plus page download of the useful everyday document packed with lots of information, including a lot more clubs than listed in this issue but also restaurants, pubs, hotels, lap dancing clubs, city livery companies, airport terminals, LCA arrival times, shop opening hours, street numbering, fare table, distance to outer London towns etc. etc. Simply click 'Free 70+page info' button. 'What's On' is only available on the website this month at www.nashsnumbers.co.uk. Click 'What's On'...

from the editor's desk

Who's going?

Unfortunately for this magazine, the last issue of **Call Sign** allowed our new printers an extra two days to prepare their first issue for us – and in those two days the news broke of the wife-killing minicab-driving paranoid schizophrenic being told that he may have been fine for driving a minicab, but he had nowhere near the high standards required to become a licensed London taxi driver. Whereas I managed to remove the page that contained photos and comments from eight Dial-a-Cab drivers at the Penton Street demo – as those quotes had become irrelevant following the breaking news – I couldn't alter my Editorial, which asked whether another paranoid schizophrenic who had been locked up for murdering his friend and was in the process of eating him when caught, would get similar privileges had he not been locked up in Broadmoor?

However, one part of that Editorial still remains relevant. Towards the end, I asked a simple question. It read:

What I'd like to know is just who at the PCO/TfL thought that someone with this man's record should be able to go onto the Knowledge – especially as it is common knowledge that the (PCO) examiners were all against it? And whoever's decision to allow him to continue it was, I think they should carefully consider whether they are the right person to hold their high position at the PCO...

But no one seems to have shown a tinge of honour by at least holding their hands up and saying they got it wrong. If it were not for the demonstrating drivers on both demos – the RMT first and then the United Trade drive-in the following week – make no mistake, that guy would be on the Knowledge now and the licensed taxi business would be just a short period away from having a paranoid schizophrenic in its' midst – one who we would have to rely on to take his medication or.... well who knows. Many in his position live full and happy lives, but not as licensed London taxi drivers.

Call Sign was on the front line in 1999, campaigning (successfully as it turned out) for the PCO to return licenses to diabetics who were on tablets but who were told to hand in their *Bills*. The Head of the PCO at the time, Roy Ellis, didn't need prompting but immediately gave a response to this magazine explaining his position. Whether we agreed was irrelevant, but he didn't hide. Has anyone heard anything from Penton Street? After all, you don't do the Knowledge from City Hall. The answer is no, they just duck and wait for anything they don't like to blow over. It's a shame, because there are some very intelligent people based at Penton Street who have obviously been forbidden from talking to the trade press about anything other than how much they enjoyed going on a trade charity outing.

TfL/PCO will have noticed that real taxi drivers were happy to give of their time to protect the public against the possibility of danger from this individual. We uphold moral values – can TfL say the same? Clearly not.

After all that has been said and done, what would have happened had not the story been leaked? Like several in the trade, I knew about it for some time before the story broke and assumed that he would be kicked off quietly. We weren't looking to make the candidate a scape-



goat. Whilst I don't go along with this "it's not his fault and he may be a nice chap" rubbish – he killed his wife, for God's sake – there was no point in prolonging his agony. But TfL/PCO knew about it and did nothing. Therefore TfL should question the suitability to remain in office of the person who gave permission, because the licensed taxi trade now has no confidence in their decision-making ability. Do the honourable thing and go now...

Cab Trade News

An article by Peter Rose in September's Cab Trade News made me smile. Using material that sounded like it had been obtained from an internet chat room, it criticised Dial-a-Cab but couched that criticism in question form rather than giving a view. But there was no need to worry Peter, no one at DaC would have smacked you on the wrist had you been brave enough to personalise your criticism, rather than keep referring to "someone said" etc, they would just have corrected you. And your views on Concierge are wrong – again obviously come from a third party.

After all, try phoning DaC and asking for a minicab? You won't get one. In fact, if 99.9% of DaC's account clients asked for one, they wouldn't have any more luck than you. But four account clients do have that facility, but only for the car companies they have previously nominated. I think it's fair to say that if we did not provide them with that facility, they would just phone those nominated car companies direct and quite possibly give them work that we get, because however big those four accounts are – and they total £millions to DaC and its drivers – they only get the facility if they also use a large number of DaC taxis – and so far as I can see, those large numbers amount to many more taxi trips than the cars they also ask DaC for.

But what makes me smile even more is that Peter is a member of the former T&G Cab Section at Unite – as a whole Britain's biggest union, but for their tiny cab section, it is debatable whether the number of London taxi drivers who are members even reaches 3 figures. Yet no minicab driver that wanted to join the Unite main section would be turned away. I don't remember Peter kicking up a fuss about that. And unlike Unite, you won't find any minicab drivers working at DaC!

There are some very nice, sincere guys on DaC who are also members of the Unite Cab Section, but they don't go around criticising with-

out knowing the facts as Peter has. In fact, I've met Peter several times and he is also a likable guy who cares about the trade. But, like them or not, you won't find any minicab drivers in the LTDA or LCDC as you will in Unite.

Even stranger, I left the T&G some 20 years or so and joined the LTDA. Why did I leave? Because at my 1/230 branch meetings, the London taxi business always took third place to discussions on the latest situation in Cuba and/or Hackney Labour Party. If there was time left then we'd get in some taxi talk. Go to the Unite website now and one of the main stories is on the Miami Five – the story of 5 imprisoned Cubans. They don't seem to mention Hackney Labour Party, but perhaps I wasn't looking in the right place! But I read enough to know that Unite will support workers in any industry – and PH drivers are an industry.

I think the bottom line, Peter, is that if you are bored and fancy slugging someone off, at least check your facts first.

Cycling paradise?

I'm rather concerned at the Mayor's plans to introduce cycling superhighways to the capital next year. The plan is anticipated to increase cycling on London's roads by 400%, with those who we assume would have used public transport being able to rent a bike from one of 6000 pick up / drop off points throughout London's nine boroughs. The scheme is estimated to add another 27,000 or so extra cycle trips a day in central London within its first three years on the way to a final 40,000 EXTRA cycle trips each day!

Cyclists on the cycling superhighways (which will be part of the main roads) will get the usual advance stop boxes so that the rest of us are held up for even longer. They will also get continuous lanes through many junctions (no doubt to save breaking the apparently non-existing law of cyclists only stopping at red lights if they want to get out another sweet!) And did I mention that they will have obstructions "minimized" with improvements made to road surfaces to ensure a smoother ride. And our potholes? Sorry, bit short on readies at the moment!

And at the end of their cycle into London? Well TfL say they will work with businesses on the cycle Superhighway routes to provide cycle parking, grants for facilities such as showers and lockers and help with cycle maintenance. Any chance of helping towards my next cab service? Ah yes, a bit short of readies at City Hall.

TfL also claim they will fund additional cycle training in the London boroughs where cycle hire or cycle superhighways will be based. I assume that it won't be compulsory and that we'll be setting free on London's roads many thousands of cyclists whose only previous experience was via their mountain bike Xmas prezzies as kids.

There are no plans for helmets to be offered, so by the time the London Olympics come here the capital will be absolutely awash with bikes. If you have ever been to Amsterdam and been almost run over by a cyclist, you'll know exactly what I'm scared of.

And may God have mercy on our souls...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

End of a tough Year

As most of you are probably aware, the end of our financial year was 31 August and you don't need me to tell you what a tough year it has been!

The Auditors have been in the building and whilst I am aware of our results, our Auditors have not yet given them the official stamp, which is a formality. Consequently, I do not have any qualms about relaying information to you before it has been officially ratified.

Our accounting procedures are so good now, that the team of Auditors were only in the building for four days, yet I can remember being a new Board Member and seeing an army of Auditors in the building for up to a month. It just shows how far things have progressed during the past fifteen years and just how precise our accounting procedures are today.

The last time we experienced a downturn of a similar magnitude to the last couple of years was in the early nineties. I know the mind plays tricks over the years, but I do believe the nineties downturn hit the trade far worse than the current economic climate has. I can remember hotels on Park Lane closing down whole floors due to a lack of customers, but thankfully that scenario has not been repeated this time.

However, during the current recession the financial sector has been hit particularly badly, which in turn has had a dramatic effect on the account work that was completed by radio circuits, after all, they were big users of all the taxi radio circuits and Dial-a-Cab in particular. Consequently, I think it's fair to say that although the whole trade has experienced a downturn, radio circuit drivers have been hit particularly badly this time. They in turn have been endeavouring to take more work off the street, which in turn must have an effect on the non-radio driver.

In the nineties, Dial-a-Cab experienced a 17% fall in turnover due to the recession, however, during the past year we have experienced a fall of just over 32%, which I believe goes some way to show that the current downturn - although not as bad as the nineties - has hit the radio circuits and certainly Dial-a-Cab, harder than the remainder of the sector. That, of course is due to the fact that we are heavily dependant on the financial sector.

Nevertheless, there is a marked difference on this occasion compared to the last, when Dial-a-Cab lost in excess of one million pounds over a two year period and very nearly went out of existence. The Board of the day decided to pay members credits three weeks in arrears to help ease the Society's cash flow problems. It also increased subscriptions by £20 per month - and as you can imagine,



an increase of that magnitude almost twenty years ago was not very popular!

At this point, I would like to assure you this thread is not leading anywhere, it is just a means of educating members to the difficulties that were experienced by the Society back then as compared with today.

As I mentioned earlier, our turnover has fallen by just over 32%, which in monetary terms is just under £16m. For turnover to fall by that amount in a year is colossal by anyone's standards. However, steps had been taken in advance to cut our expenses and a significant amount of overheads have been taken out of the equation. Although this has had a significant impact on last year's figures, the full effect of the savings will not be felt until we reach the end of our current financial year.

Although we will show a small loss up until 31 August, we still have in excess of £6million cash at the bank, in addition to having no debts. This easily tides us over the current downturn.

There is not any threat whatsoever to

this Society's financial stability and I am delighted to report there has been a small increase in work over the past few weeks, as you are all undoubtedly aware, so I am extremely optimistic it will not be too long before we are in the black again.

I must say that, given the circumstances, our figures this year are quite satisfying and the whole point of building reserves is so that we can deal with a downturn, even one as bad as we have just experienced. Those of you that have been in the trade for several years will know, as I do, that business is cyclical and we should always have reserves to deal with any downturn.

Goodbye and Hello...

I was recently invited to a function to mark the departure from the PCO as Head of Taxi and Private Hire, of Ed Thompson. I am led to believe that Ed is off to do something regarding transport planning issues for the 2012 Olympics and of course I wish him well in his new venture. However, it did give me the opportunity of meeting John Mason, who will be Ed's successor and he in turn made a visit Dial-a-Cab House towards the end of October. Hopefully he was suitably impressed with our operation.

I also had the opportunity of meeting Jeroen Weimar, the Chief Operating Officer for TfL, I had never met Jeroen in the past, but no doubt our paths will cross in the future.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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DaC Drivers' Miraculous Escape!

Call Sign featured **Mark Stansbury (M94)** in our last issue (*A Vito good read*) when he was 'hoping for the best' after taking delivery of his new Mercedes Vito taxi. But unfortunately, Mark's partnership with his new cab hasn't lasted too long because within a matter of just a few short weeks and through no fault of his own, they have parted company!

Mark takes up the story:

"I was driving down Bond Street with passengers in the back and steadily



Mark's Vito after the smash

Inset: Mark in the last issue after taking delivery of his new cab

that although my passengers were hurt, they were eventually able to continue their journey by other means. I don't think the other driver was so lucky and I believe he needed serious medical attention. I do hope he recovers fully."

Finishing the sad tale, Mark told us: "My cab is almost certainly a write-off, the damage being so extensive. I am currently in negotiation with my insurance company, although they have valued the cab at much less than I had hoped for given that it was only a matter of weeks old. We shall have to see, but I cannot say any more at the moment."

As they say, the cab is just metal, so long as the two drivers are ok, that is literally all that matters...

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approaching the junction with Brook Street. I remember entering the junction and suddenly hearing an almighty bang and instantly feeling an impact on the right hand side of my cab. I don't really remember anything else after that except staggering away from my overturned cab," he told **Call Sign**.

Grimacing as he recalled the accident, Mark continued: "I was really very lucky to have survived at all, and I am eternally grateful for that. I could have easily been killed. It appears that another cab that was travelling along Brook Street, entered the junction with Bond Street at the same time as me and collided into the offside of my Vito, spinning me around and actually flipping me over - such was the force of the impact!"

Continuing, Mark said: "It proves the strength of the cab in

LCA owner buys Gatwick

Gatwick is being sold for £1.51 billion to London City Airport owner, US-based Global Infrastructure Partners. BAA announced its plans to sell Gatwick in September 2008, before the end of the Competition Commission's UK airports market investigation.

The agreement will lead to greater competition between airports serving London.

Chief executive Colin Matthews said: "Gatwick and its people have long been a central part of BAA and we are proud of the airport's development as one of the world's leading international airports. BAA is changing and this marks a new beginning for both Gatwick and BAA. We wish Gatwick well for the future and are confident that the airport will flourish under new ownership. BAA will focus on improving Heathrow and our other airports."

The company has also been ordered to sell Stansted and one of Glasgow or Edinburgh airports, but is appealing against the decision.

The sale of Gatwick, which is subject to approval by the European Union, is due to be completed in December.

Gatwick, which employs around 2,500 people, opened in 1958 and is the busiest single runway airport in the world, handling 32.2 million passengers in the year to September...



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"Come on guys, there must be something else you can moan about other than taxi drivers!"

MALTA HAILS THE LONDON TAXI



LTI Vehicles has secured further international orders for its London Taxi with the appointment of *Muscats Motors Ltd* as the official importer of the TX4. The announcement was made following a successful demonstration of the vehicle in Malta earlier this month. With delivery set for the end of November 2009, drivers

Now it's off to Malta!

and passengers in Malta and Gozo will soon be part of a taxi system that is hailed throughout the world.

"Maltese dealer, Muscats Motors Ltd, quickly realised the benefits of a tailor made taxi service that sets them apart from the competition," LTI's International Market Development Director, Matthew Cheyne, told *Call Sign*. "There has been a fantastic reaction to our taxi during the launch. The Maltese say that the service brings them up to date with their neighbouring countries and makes them feel as if their country is coming of age."

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LTFUC AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children will be held on Tuesday 1st December 2009, 7.30pm at the New Park Day Centre, 19 Highbury New Park, Highbury, N5.

There is parking at the Centre and refreshments will be available. All drivers are most welcome to attend.

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**We make wheels turn
so you can earn.**

London Mayor, Boris Johnson, announced a change of mind at last month's Conservative party conference in Manchester when saying that contrary to his original plans, the controversial phase 3 of the *Low Emission Zone* would be brought in because City Hall now believed there was no other way to meet EU targets.

The proposal has angered many of the London taxi drivers who believed that the PCO / TfL had assured

their taxi's future when in March 2005, they announced *the Mayor's emission strategy for licensed London taxis*. The authorities had been assessing, under normal taxi working conditions, the ability of the various systems to reduce (and maintain) taxi emissions to the required Euro 3 standard when fitted to different models of licensed London taxis and their durability in service.

In November 2006, the PCO told *Call Sign*: "The PCO remains confident that the approved emissions reduction systems are fit for purpose and, if correctly fitted to properly prepared and maintained vehicles, will deliver the required standard - ie Euro 3 for NOx and particulates." This followed an article in *The Badge*, where the LCDC claimed that the emission systems were not working. It seems



Boris changes his mind on the LEZ

that Alan Fleming – LCDC Chairman at the time – was right to criticise the PCO.

So now, a huge number of licensed taxi drivers will either have to buy new cabs or retire earlier than they expected because of the Mayor's draft air quality strategy, which backtracks on his pledge when taking power – although it was his predecessor, Ken Livingstone, who brought in the original policy.

Mr Johnson's plans are to refuse to license taxis older than 15 years by 2012 and ban all taxis older than 10 years by 2015. The move is expected to affect about 1,600 cabs by 2012.

The move applies to PH as well. He claims that older taxis are the biggest source of particulate matter, known as PM10, which comes from exhausts and brake and tyre wear. But wasn't that why we had the emissions strategy? According to the Mayor now, these exhaust emission traps don't work well enough, yet when fitted, the PCO said they were fit for purpose.

Central London has the highest PM10 levels in the country and does break European Union limits, which could lead to the Government being heavily fined. London's

bus fleet are also in breach of the regulations, but unlike taxis, they will be heavily subsidised. Those taxi drivers that in good faith spent several thousand pounds on converting their cabs, cannot even get that amount back.












One of the drivers affected is the taxi-driving father of DaC driver **Mark Thurbin (M96)**. Mark found fame in the August 2006 issue of *Call Sign* when he told of trapping a job in Pall Mall, which then asked him to go to Marrakech! Mark said that older drivers like his 67-year-old father would be forced to give up the job if the Mayor's plan came in. He said that there were hundreds of older cabbies like his dad who had been driving a taxi for years and they were often the best ones around.

"They really take care of their vehicles," said Mark. **"Many of them have taxis older than 10 years and may only work a few hours a week - so buying a new cab or renting one just wouldn't be worth their while. It is so unfair to penalise them."**

Also planned is the planting of many more trees in London to assist in protecting pedestrians from the dust particles. It is also hoped that non-urgent traffic will be rerouted away from busy roads when pollution is at its highest during the summer.

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Waiting for Godot is the controversial play by Samuel Beckett in which Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for someone named Godot who both talk of, but don't really know. Unlike either Vladimir and Estragon, Dial-a-Cab driver **Natalia Shalom (A34)** knows exactly what she is waiting for – a rank outside **Nobu** in Berkeley Street.

Problems with Nobu at Berkeley Street have been ongoing for several years. In the **November 2005** issue of **Call Sign**, we wrote of it when one of our drivers took down the registration numbers of touts operating outside – and apparently doing so with the backing of bouncers and staff. The driver, **John Fisher (C45)**, told this magazine 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! We, on the other hand, passed the registration details over to the tout squad and several arrests followed. But it couldn't stop the cars.

In our **May 2009** issue, Natalia told **Call Sign** that little had changed at Nobu. She said she had dropped a passenger outside the restaurant and decided to wait a while in case someone came out looking for a taxi. But there were so many minicabs outside, the only way she could stop was by double-parking. Like John Fisher, Natalia was told by Nobu staff to move on as she was causing an obstruction and that in any case, taxis weren't needed as they had their own car service! Not one to back down from

Waiting for NOBU!



Natalia's battle for a rank outside Nobu may be on the verge of success...



a confrontation, Natalia asked DaC dispatchers

to put out what had happened to her and since then, an unofficial rank has been in operation outside the Berkeley Street premises. And sure enough, diners leaving the restaurant have made full use of that rank leaving the minicabs time to, no doubt, discuss why Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot!

In that issue, Natalia also said: "The best way to fight them is by putting a taxi rank outside the door, then passengers would have the choice - and I know who most would choose!"

Call Sign closed the article by adding: "Are you reading this at the PCO? We need a rank at Nobu..."

Well now that demand is on the verge of becoming reality – although it has become more apparent as time goes by that Nobu do not want it – obviously preferring a car

service where, according to rumour, the drivers pay for the privilege of being there! The official taxi rank has now been applied for, but amazingly there have been 47 objections to Westminster, five of which came from solicitors representing Nobu!

In return, the LTDA have employed their own solicitors to counter the objections and are hopeful that by the time of this issue's publication (November 1) or very soon after, an official rank will be placed outside the Berkeley Street restaurant.

Natalia told **Call Sign**: "If it happens, I will be delighted. My only fear is that when it does appear, it may be busier on the streets and no one will want to cover places like Nobu and Smiths. We have had such a battle to get to this position, I just hope that we all put ourselves out to make sure we don't let ourselves down and cover the work. If we don't, then I'm sure that Nobu will try to get the rank cancelled and bring their little friends back to the fold."

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

Kupkake's Korner



Not all-White on the night... or on the Internet list!

With a sad White Knight
I must confess
I did all right!

He has regressed
to childhood times,
as you might have guessed
he hates my rhymes!

He seems obsessed
with hidden agendas,
a man possessed
with cracks to render.

His posts lack zest
so filled with hatred,
But I couldn't care less...
'Cos he's been checkmated

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Official fuel consumption figures for the TX4 in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.5 (11.1) - 28.0 (10.1), Extra Urban 38.2 (7.4) - 41.5 (6.8), Combined 32.0 (8.8) - 35.2 (8.0), CO2 emissions: 211 - 233 g/km.

call centre chat

As Directed

From time to time, I am asked by the Controllers to remind drivers what the Procedure Rules are, because it's becoming more common for drivers to conveniently forget how we operate. Can I remind you about the type of trips that are dispatched *As Directed*.

Apart from a True A/D trip, the others fall into four categories. An airport destination, a wait and return, a trip where the destination is the same zone as the pick up and VIP accounts that are masked as A/D. The reason for doing this is solely to ensure the less lucrative journeys are covered and the service we supply to our clients is second to none.

What we are seeing is an increase in the number of drivers who are accepting A/D trips, only to find that they are running further to the pick-up address than the trip is actually going.

While this is acceptable, it is being stretched just that bit further in the mornings when all trips between 7am and 10am are dispatched as A/D. Drivers are being offered trips from back up zones, accepting them to see where the destination is and if it's only going local, they then play the 'running further than the trip is going' card to get the Controllers to recover the trip.

This action is no way within the spirit of how the majority of the Society works and I have now instructed Controllers to refuse to do this. I think many, at times, forget what the trip offer is all about. It was designed to offer a driver a trip and the driver to make the decision whether he/she wanted to do that trip. On the trip offer, it does give the pick up zone, so a driver, before accepting the trip has time (a minute and a half to be precise) to



decide if they want the trip. If the accept button is pressed, then the driver should do the trip. That's working within the spirit of the Procedural Rules of the Society. More importantly, when a driver asks for a trip to be recovered it takes time, which can add to the trip being delayed and this is happening more frequently.

In future, if drivers finds themselves accepting an A/D trip from a back up zone and the trip is not going further than they are travelling to the pick up, please do not ask for it to be recovered as a refusal will offend.

Changes to SE75

Many will have seen and experienced the changes to SE75. Regrettably, the Board had to make changes to the way trips were dispatched to prevent the account from changing their service provider. Those drivers who work SE75, know that the local trips were being rejected and it was not possible to be able to supply vehicles within the contracted times. It was never the case that the Society

should pay drivers more to do these trips because if we did, it would never stop there. Experience tells us that once regular trips are topped up, then drivers wait for more trips to be topped up before accepting. With this account, they have been using taxis for more years than most of our fleet have held a badge and they know all too well drivers reject the local trips. Some drivers are very outspoken to these passengers, telling them that their journey is no good for them. Why? We are going through one of the toughest times ever, but some drivers never think outside the box about what possible damage they could be doing to the Society by expressing their feelings. Unfortunately, this all comes back to the Board and it's our responsibility to placate the client and give assurances. By dispatching the work without a destination and what the fixed price is, it enables the client to get an improved service. It will also ensure that the smaller trips as well as the longer trips get their cab in an agreed time. Believe it or not, more drivers will get a chance of both local and long distance rides. I know there were a couple of trips with a questionable fixed price and I have instructed that these trips be reviewed with the client as soon as possible and hopefully drivers will understand that although shorter trips will not be as lucrative, they do allow for a speedier return to accept another trip.

And for other accounts...?

Another reminder to all drivers is to ensure that as soon as the taxi arrives at a destination where there is no fixed price, the meter is stopped immediately. This will prevent any misunderstandings.

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

Corporate travel planners vote...

London: World's top conference destination!

London is the best destination in the world to hold a conference, according to corporate travel planners. The UK capital won the coveted gold award in the Best Conference Destination category in the inaugural **Conference & Incentive Travel Magazine** Hot List.

More than 400 event planners, representing some of the biggest brands and their corporate travel budgets, voted across an eight-week period. While London may have been boosted by corporates keeping their meetings on home shores due to the recession, it is its positioning as a vibrant destination for high-profile events such as the G20 London Summit, that has highlighted the capital's event infrastructure.

C&IT editor **Yasmin Arrigo** told **Call Sign**: "With just over 1,000 days to go until the 2012 Olympics – arguably the biggest event on the planet – rolls into the capital, corporate event planners have placed London top of the conference league. And on the eve of ExCeL London becoming the capital's first International Convention Centre (ICC), London can be justifiably proud of its event offering."

The **C&IT** Hot List 2009 is designed to celebrate the best destinations, venues and suppliers for events across 12 categories, as voted for by C&IT readers, with a Gold, Silver and Bronze place awarded in each. Despite long-haul incentive travel taking a hit during the downturn, ExCeL London took gold in the Best Conference Centre category, while country estate Chewton Glen was voted Best UK Incentive Hotel and Welsh retreat Celtic Manor took gold in the Best UK Conference Hotel category.

The winners received recognition at a gala event held at Axis, at London's One Aldwych on 30 September.

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Continued from October...

I have already written how Carriage Officers made life tough, but they had their reasons. If you remember, I said you were told at your first interview that if you did not like the idea of being a servant, to forget the whole idea. They knew what you, as a servant, could face. Here is an example of how rough the odd passenger could be if they got out of bed the wrong side and you were on the receiving end...

I had queued around the ranks at Victoria and at last reached the 'point'. I had only been driving for about four months. Two ladies got into my cab; it was dark and I couldn't see them, but they were happily chatting away and had given me no destination. The cab behind got off and blew his horn at me to move away. I called to the ladies: "Did you hire me for a chat or would you like to go somewhere." The answer was for me not to be impertinent and to go to South Street. As I drove up South Audley Street, I asked which way, left or right? One barked: "Are you daft or stupid, I told you South Street." It was easier to turn left, so I did so into South Street. The voice from the back again barked: "You've gone the wrong way, you know very well it's the other side I want." So I turned round and arrived in the other part of South Street. Another bark: "Now you have passed it. Stop!" The first woman got out and I was told to go onto Westbourne Terrace. Having learned my lesson, on arrival in Westbourne Terrace I drove quite slowly up the road. At the northern end I turned around and said: "That was Westbourne Terrace madam, where would you like to go now?" She snarled at me: "You know very well that I said Westbourne Grove. I have taken the number of this cab and I shall be reporting you to the Carriage Office. You are impertinent, rude and not fit to hold the job of a cab driver." I turned the cab round and went up Westbourne Grove and politely asked where she would like me to stop? The answer was "by the light." But which ruddy light? At this point I lost my temper, pulled into the kerb and said: "I'm sorry madam, but I am going to lose my temper. Would you mind getting out of the cab please, I will not be charging you the fare." She leaned over into the luggage space and said I was the worst cab driver she had ever been carried by and that she had no intention whatsoever of paying me any way! "Hold up your badge," she said, "I want your number and I shall be reporting you."

Sure enough, two days later the brown envelope arrived from the Carriage Office with instructions to report in immediately. The next day at eight o'clock I was there and told to wait in the corridor outside the Super's office. I waited for about an hour when a voice

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

John Edwardes: *My Life as a Taxi Driver*

bawled at me to come in. I went and stood at attention in front of his desk. He ignored me. I stood watching the clock. Twenty minutes later he stopped writing and glared at me. Picking up a letter from his desk, he said: "The Assistant Commissioner and I have discussed this matter. Because of your war record, on this occasion we will be lenient. However, if we ever have another complaint from a member of public about you, you will be out. I shall be writing to Lady Xxxxx informing her that steps have been taken to punish you for your disgusting behaviour. Get out!" Best to say nothing in mitigation, not if you wanted to keep your badge!

Wrong way to Victoria?

I had been told that the Stock Exchange rank in Bartholomew Lane was a good one, so I put on feeling excited and a little scared. What if I was asked for somewhere I didn't know? But all was well. My first job there came complete with top hat. In those days it meant he was a stockbroker. He asked for Victoria Station. Phew, that was easy, thank the Lord! Arriving at the station, I pulled up. He got out of the cab, leaned into the luggage compartment, glared at me and asked how long I had been driving a cab? "Don't you know the way to Victoria Station," he asked? "Because of you I've missed my train. I take a train from that

rank at the same time every day and easily catch it. But not today. Learn your bloody job." I said I was sorry but I had gone the way the Carriage Office had stated. I asked how he would have gone and he told me another way, which would have missed two traffic lights and three constables on point duty and resulted in him catching his train!

My first time in a Cab Shelter...

The first time I went into a Cab Shelter, I entered with my big green badge secured in the regulation position on my left breast. Suddenly all conversation stopped and a dozen frozen faces looked at me. A voice called out: "Sorry son, this is for cab drivers only." Later, an old driver explained to me that I was dressed too posh and that I would mess up the job looking like that. "You must remember that you're skint, you're always skint," he told me, "you don't know how you're going to pay the rent this week, governor! Who's going to give you a tip looking like a toff," he asked? "We live on tips, always remember that." I learnt that he was right. I also learnt the taxman believed this too and told me a third of my income was tips...

Continued next month...

Victoria Borwick: "Let's elect the Head of the Met..." *"...and target illegal minicabs!"*

At a recent speed meeting of the London Assembly's Conservative group, Londonwide Assembly Member, **Victoria Borwick**, said: **"A Conservative government would move to have the head of the Metropolitan Police directly elected by the people of London."**

The meeting also heard that if the Tories formed the next government, minicab touts would be targeted with more emphasis on enforcement and it called for fundamental changes within *Transport for London*. Their irritation with the current structure was fairly evident.

The meeting took place during the recent Conservative Party Conference in Manchester. It was estimated that around 200 Tories attended to discuss and clarify Conservative policy for London

Victoria Borwick is the wife of former *Manganese Bronze* Chairman and self-admitted lover of taxis, Lord Jamie Borwick – the founder in 2004 of the Modec electric vehicle. Victoria has often said that she shares her husband's admiration for the London taxi driver.

With an election due next year, we will no doubt see a response from the government...



Victoria Borwick.
"Let's elect the Head of the Met Police"

Gerald Weiland (C18) is a man with very firm opinions when it comes to buying new taxis. While his new TX4 taxi was being refitted at DaC's Roman Way depot, **Call Sign** took the opportunity of asking him if he had thought about a Vito cab?

"I've been driving cabs since 1970 - almost 40 years - with 28 of those years on Dial-a-Cab," he told **Call Sign** "and I've always had an LTI product. I change my taxi every three years and when the time came to buy a '59' plate TX4, I simply changed the colour - back to black!"

In full flow, Gerald continued: "This is the first 'black' taxi I've had in twenty years, mainly because there are no colours in the current range that I particularly like, but, yes, I did stick with the LTI brand. To be honest, I have never even thought about another marque - even when the Metrocab was around - and I certainly did not ponder too long over the Mercedes Vito, that's for sure! I never even gave it a thought. I don't actually know anyone who owns one either..."

A VITO? NEVER EVEN GAVE IT A THOUGHT...



A TX4 for Gerald

Following a quick check to see if his TX4 was ready to leave Roman Way yet, Gerald continued: "Yes, price was a consideration as there was a discount on the TX4. But other than my previous TX4 needing two radiator changes, it gave me good service with no real problems, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed for this one!"

Leaning forward conspiratorially, Gerald told us as if it were a secret: "Do you know, I sold my Midnight Blue L301 PME to my neighbour, and it is still going strong after all these years!"

Moving back to the Vito, Gerald finished by telling us: "I was in the dealership recently having some work done on my previous cab and there was a Vito owner bemoaning the problems he was having with the footstep and something about the wheels. I left him to it as I drove out of the garage, signed on to the Dial-a-Cab system and went off to work..."

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Bedfont Green Shock...

Lee: If they don't want me, I'm outta here!



Could Lee be out of Bedfont Green!

In a move that may not have shocked football, but certainly shocked **Call Sign**, **Dial-a-Cab** driver and **Bedfont Green** goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, was dropped from the team following a defeat, where he admitted fault for two of the opponents goals.

Exactly 12 months earlier, Lee was bubbling when **Call Sign** spoke to him after **Bedfont Green** had gone top of the Combined Counties Premier League and were well on the way to the promotion they celebrated at the end of the season. They had just thrashed **Chertsey Town 5 - 0** and Lee told us: "The football we played was just magical, we were gliding around the pitch and you couldn't but help feeling sorry for **Chertsey**!"

They say that a week is a long time in football, let alone a year, and Lee admitted that his recent performances weren't always up to the high standards the DaC driver sets himself. But his form had been improving before the bombshell hit - manager **Dennis Bainborough** had dropped him.

"I was dumbstruck," Lee told **Call Sign**, "I love playing football and I was just as annoyed with myself as the manager obviously was, but I thought I was playing my way out of that bad patch. The boss obviously disagreed."

However, the **Zamaretto Division One South & West** team had, since Lee was dropped, plunged to two successive home league defeats including one to **Uxbridge**, where the manager said afterwards: "That was a disappointing display, it was the worst we have defended as a team all season." They also suffered a home defeat to **Chesham United** to be dumped out of the **FA Trophy** at the Preliminary Round stage.

How many of the 7 goals BG gave away in those three games were down to new goalkeeper **Gary Ross** is for the manager to decide. The only question seems to be whether Lee Pearce will be recalled?

Lee was loaned out to **Egham** for three games and was expected back at **Bedfont Green** by the time this issue comes out. But we hear on the grapevine that **Egham** wouldn't mind signing him, however that would involve dropping down a league and Lee has enjoyed his time and achievements at **Bedfont Green** and probably would rather stay - but only as the first team goalkeeper. Will he be pushed out? We'll know by the time the next **Call Sign** comes out...

Call Sign

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October 14, 1984 saw the return to the Shirland Road cellar of **Lee Morland**. It wasn't his first time there. He had been to our Maida Vale HQ before to have a brief go at being a telephonist before moving on to Radio Taxis (South) for 3 years and Computer Cab for 12 months as a dispatcher. But the pull of ODRTS was too strong and in 1984, he returned to Shirland Road, but this time as a dispatcher.

This was in the last year under the Chairmanship of **Peter Fennymore**, who stood down from the position later that year after overseeing our move to Brunswick Place. Lee's direct "boss" was Peter's son Bob, who was Control Room Manager at the time.

"I've enjoyed it all," Lee told *Call Sign*, **"and I wouldn't be surprised if I was still here after 50 years!"**

Nowadays Lee is the Call Centre Supervisor Manager for the day shift, but in November 2006 he completed the Knowledge so there isn't much he doesn't know about both sides of the business. Even wife Tracy was with DaC for 12 years, starting as a call taker before moving to the DaC Help Desk and then dropping

It's 25 Years for Lee Morland



Lee now as Call Centre supervisory Manager and Lee in his first day as a dispatcher

However, he will forever remember one game in September 2001 – his last – when two of the five DaC team members were sent off for swearing at the referee and Lee – as team captain – led the rest of the team off the pitch, leaving a bewildered set of opponents standing there! Lee also has a broken finger that never healed as a memory of his footballing days representing the Society!

So does Lee have any complaints? After all, he knows *Call Sign* can keep a secret!

"Well, between you and me, as I'm getting older, a softer chair wouldn't go amiss!"

To celebrate Lee's 25 years at DaC, he was presented with a bottle of Champagne and with Tracy, taken out to dinner. Our congratulations go to Lee as well...



three floors to the IT department.

Lee was also the cornerstone of the successful DaC 5-a-side football team that won a divisional championship.

CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU REDUCES FEES

But don't get excited...it's not for us!

The *Criminal Records Bureau* (CRB) has reduced the fee for Standard Disclosures. Following a pricing review, the government agency has agreed to reduce the fee charged for a Standard Disclosure from £31 to £26. The change came into effect from 1 October 2009.

For the third year running, the CRB has not increase its fees. The planned fee reduction has been made possible due to an expected increase in the volume of disclosure applications being processed as the new *Vetting and Barring Scheme* came into place from 12 October.

Checks for volunteers will continue to be free of charge, which provided a saving to the voluntary sector of approximately £27 million in 2008/09.

Home Office Minister Lord Brett explained:

"The CRB plays a vital role in helping to protect the most vulnerable in our society by giving employers the extra tools they need to make informed recruitment decisions. The cost of a CRB check continues to represent good value for money, given the protection and assurance that such checks provide. In 2008, a further 18,000 unsuitable people were prevented from gaining access to children and vulnerable adults as a direct result of a CRB check, bringing the total to around 98,000 in the past five years."

However, the reduced rate does not apply to licensed Taxi drivers. The Home Office spokesperson pointed out to *Call Sign* that we need the enhanced version, which is still the same price.

When we in turn pointed out that we are thoroughly checked before being allowed to go onto the Knowledge, that the PCO/ TfL are automatically informed if we break any laws and that we have to apply for a re-licence every three years so why do we need the enhanced version, the spokesperson didn't know – other than telling us that we needed the enhanced version!

The fee levels are now £26 for the Standard CRB check (reduced from £31), with the Enhanced CRB check still at £36



Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, Lord Brett



DaC Credit Union offering 7% interest again!

As all you lovely people out there have seen on your terminals, we have re-opened the high interest account. However, there was a mistake on the terminals, which for some reason said the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union were ONLY offering 5% interest on any money you invest. Of course, like the last "window", that should have read 7%. That window of opportunity lasts but a short period and will no

doubt - if last time is anything to go by - be closing shortly. However, if I or one of my colleagues have spoken to you about investing and you are waiting to get your money from an endowment or ISA, then don't panic... you can still come on board. The first time we did this, there was an understandable worry from some subscribers who wondered how the DACCU could offer 7% while banks and building societies made a big deal on their "special offer" at 3%? Naturally, we cannot disclose names of those who took up the offer last time, but suffice to say that all were delighted! But as I said, the offer is very limited. Once we have the amount we need, the offer closes again until the next time.

My next bit of good news is that we have decided to move from Stratford. I'm sure there will be lots of cheers from you lot out there as we have located premises in Hackney Road, just before Cambridge Heath Road. It is Unit 14 at The Peterlee Business Centre; there is a security barrier where we have to buzz you in and a fair bit of parking. Hopefully, we should be in there by mid-November and will be sharing the building with *Tiger Tyre and Wheel*. They are a new / remould tyre sales company, but mainly dealing in taxi tyres. You will be pleased to know that they will be giv-

ing Dial-a-Cab Credit Union members a nice discount on tyres, so for all you non-members out there, that is another initiative to come and join YOUR credit union.

I really don't know - and I have written this in Call Sign a million times - why every driver on Dial-a-Cab isn't a member? We are here to help you, not rip you off. Just ask anyone who is in the Credit Union. When you need quick money, there is no one quicker at dishing it out than your DACCU.

The tyre company will be using the ground floor and we'll be upstairs, out of the way. I'm sure you will like our new home as it is easy to get to and then back into the work as soon as you pull out of the gate. So while you are upstairs sorting your finances out with us, your cab could also be getting fitted with its new tyres. Now what kind of service is that!

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

Be careful out there...

John Riley (K38)

Vice-President DaC Credit Union

PS: If you can't afford new tyres, we could always give you a loan...

Did you know that about London?

Old Billingsgate Lower Thames St

is often used as a function suite nowadays, but did you know that the original fish market that stood there was built on the site of one of three Roman harbours in London? It stood there from 1016 until it finally moved to what were then the new Docklands beyond Canary Wharf in 1982 - over 960 years! The haddock still tastes good though!

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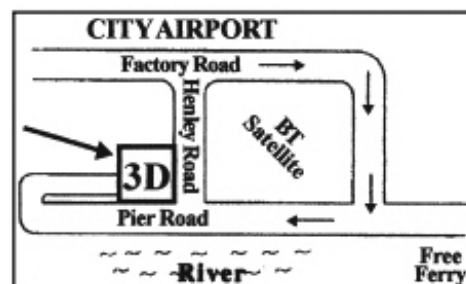
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Sunday, 8 November, will see the annual Remembrance Day service at Whitehall's Cenotaph. Although the *Treaty of Versailles* that ended the Great War was signed on 28 June 1919, the Allied powers have had an armistice with Germany in place since 11 November 1918 and the Sunday previous to that date usually sees memorial services held around the world.

So, as with every November, our thoughts turn to our fallen British and Commonwealth service personnel and the many that have been wounded in action or who are in action all over the world as you read this. The *Royal British Legion* has, for many years, helped and supported these service personnel and their families and is just as poignant today as we hear and see those brave men and women coming back from Afghanistan.

This is a story about some of those people from 1942...

"Even though the battle of the skies had been won by the RAF, there was still a big challenge for Churchill and the Royal Navy to win the Battle of the Atlantic, thus protecting the supply lines from North America. The German warship *Tirpitz* was Hitler's jewel in the crown and in January 1942, was hiding up in the Kiel Canal in Norway. Churchill knew that at some stage, the vessel would need to be re-armoured and modified to go into out-and-out battle. Also, should the battleship need repairs from battle combat, it would need somewhere to go. The only dry dock capable of holding such a huge vessel was at St Nazaire on the French Atlantic coast. So plans were made to destroy the dry dock gates. Churchill needed to neutralise the threat of the mighty *Tirpitz* before she got to France.

Under the command of *Earl Louis Mountbatten*, a plan was hatched to sail up the Loire in a ship laden with explosives, then ram and blow up the dry dock gates with submarine support. It was decided to use delayed action fuses, which would allow the British forces to escape first and hopefully reduce casualties. The ship to be used in the mission was the *USS Buchanan*, which had been given to the British by the USA and renamed *HMS Campbeltown*. For this mission, she was totally stripped and her bridge given armour plating.

On the 26 March 1942 at 3pm and under the command of *Capt Robert Ryder*, *HMS Campbeltown* set sail from Falmouth on this daring and dangerous mission, with a gunboat and two destroyers as escort. They reached the mouth of the Loire around midnight that evening and proceeded towards St. Nazaire port. The port and estuary were heavily defended and to put off the German gunners, each ship flew a Nazi Ensign flag. Some two miles and 5 minutes from the target, the German flags were replaced with white British ensigns and the Germans opened fire with the ships crew suffering many casualties. The *Campbeltown* increased its speed significantly and rammed the dry dock gates at 01.34 on the 27 March - amazingly just 4 minutes behind schedule. *Capt Ryder* went ashore to satisfy himself that the *HMS Campbeltown* was both scuttled and embedded in the gates. He and his men then withdrew. On the way out, the fleet suffered heavy losses and by the time they got back to Falmouth, only 4 boats of the 18 had survived. Of the 241 commandos that set

Remembering Remembrance Day



**At the going down of the sun
and in the morning, we will
remember them...**

when 5 – including *Captain Ryder* – were awarded the Victoria Cross, the most ever awarded in a single operation. 70 bravery awards were given to other servicemen.

The *HMS Campbeltown* was still embedded in the dry dock gates when 40 German officers came to have a look at the ship, along with two captured British Commando officers who knew about the explosives. The Nazi officers had been heard to remark that the British should have known that a ship this size could never have done such damage to the dry dock by ramming it. Little did they know because at 10.30 on 28 March, *HMS Campbeltown* exploded killing them, along with 250 German troops on the quayside. The dry dock gates were also irreparably damaged. *Operation Chariot* had rendered Hitler's Battleship *Tirpitz* useless and made sure that the Allies took one more step closer to winning the Second World War."

Please support the Royal British Legion, for Service personnel from yesterday and for those of tomorrow. Lest we forget, please wear your poppy with pride...

Richard Potter (T51)

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Yianoulla Nicola is now a successful writer whose proud husband, Nick (O99), has been on Dial-a-Cab since 2007. He is justifiably proud of his wife and they were both at a Waterstones book signing to launch the second edition of her first novel, *Holly Blue* (HandE, £6.99).

The novel – which is the first part of a trilogy – introduces readers to Sofia, a young girl torn between her Greek heritage, strict upbringing and her relaxed English surroundings. The story follows her journey from England to Cyprus, shadowing her life and loves in a dramatic, compassionate tale. Being of Greek descent has undoubtedly helped Yianoulla write with such honesty and a deep insight into Greek culture.

Thinking backwards from the success of a book signing, it wasn't all roses at the beginning. Yianoulla was advised to take up a hobby and began writing **Holly Blue** as a therapy whilst suffering from *Empty Nest Syndrome* – brought on by her daughter leaving home. But her manuscript was seen and published by *HandE* and became a success. As Justine Maynard, Director of *HandE Publishers*, told **Call Sign**:

"It's so easy to lose track of what has been achieved and Yianoulla has been through every emotion possible whilst writing her titles. She now has a new outlook on her writing and is on track for the release of her second book."

Indeed, following the success of **Holly Blue**, a publishing date was set for the sequel, ***Smile if you Love Me***. However, Yianoulla felt a sudden rush of apprehension due to the pressure of suddenly becoming a published author. While Nick was enjoying himself at the Gym, what had previously been a hobby suddenly transformed itself into becoming Yianoulla's career, with all the stress that involved. But the sequel is now fact!

SLASHING-DIESEL COSTS

As **Call Sign** has written in its last two issues, when you fill up at a **Texaco** or **Morrisons**, DaC drivers have the opportunity of saving between 3p and 5p a litre by using a **Black Cab Fuels Card** and instead of paying cash or using your own card, just signing for the fuel purchased and the amount is debited from your bank account 2 weeks after the end of the week via direct debit. It matters not how much the fuel is advertised at outside the garage, you pay whatever the Black Cab Fuel Card rate is for that week. You can also manage your transactions online if you wish by accessing your account details and purchases at any time. For more information on how to open an account, visit www.blackcabfuels.co.uk or call 0800 987 5701 and speak to John Murphy. Terms & Conditions apply and are available on request.

Holly Blue...

Yianoulla at a book signing!



Yianoulla with Dragon's Den Theo Paphitis

Yianoulla told **Call Sign**: "Both books were written under totally different types of stress. I knew inside myself all along that I was going to write three books about the life of *Sofia Constantine*, but I never thought of it as being anything other than a hobby. I honestly never imagined that anyone would take it seriously!"

One person who takes Yianoulla seriously is Dragon's Den star, Theo Paphitis. Born in Limassol, Cyprus, he was naturally attracted to Holly Blue and asked for a copy at the book signing!

Holly Blue has been given a new makeover for this second edition. Yianoulla went on to tell **Call Sign** that she was personally captured by the original front cover, but felt that the fresh new look reflected more how she felt about her future as an author.

And how did she enjoy the book signing? "It was just brilliant, I loved it! I can't believe that what began as a hobby has turned into this!"

And does Hubby Nick fancy the idea of writing a book? "Not unless it has a taxi driver who likes to go to the gym as the hero," Nick told us with a grin, "otherwise I'll leave that all to Yianoulla!"

Holly Blue is one of a trilogy with the second book in the trilogy, *Smile if you Love Me*, on schedule for release early in 2010. The next **Call Sign** will be giving readers the chance to win a copy of both of Yianoulla's first two books, *Holly Blue* and *Smile if you Love Me*, in plenty of time for Christmas.

Holly Blue is also available at Waterstones and good book stores everywhere...

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An excellent **Andrew Gilligan** article in **The Spectator** (19 September, *Chucking millions down the Tube*) got **Call Sign** thinking about the Paralympic Games, which will be held in London in the two weeks between 29 August and 9 September 2012. According to Gilligan, Transport for London is "...to waste £97 million on a 'symbolic' project to give wheelchair users access to Green Park station." His question to the Mayor is why hasn't he reined it in?

The problem seems to be that TfL intend spending around £400million on digging new lift shafts and passageways to provide what it refers to as *step-free access* for the disabled to some of the underground stations. Just under £100million of that huge sum will be spent just on Green Park Station alone. And the problem? Well the process of converting the stations only gives wheelchair users that freedom of movement from street level to the platform. Getting onto the train itself will be as problematic as it would be even before work begins.

As taxi drivers, we know by the numbers we pick up and set down at Green Park just how busy the tubes are there, so even if some kind passenger were to assist the wheelchair user in boarding the train, the carriages are often packed and a wheelchair just wouldn't fit.

Dial-a-Cab currently have over 6800 registered Westminster TaxiCard users and I would hazard a guess that around 10% are wheelchair users. In that case, none of those 680 passengers would be able to use even a converted Green Park Station without a great deal of difficulty.

Andrew Gilligan goes on to say that there are around 3,500 disabled people living in Westminster. He gets this figure from the number of disabled person's free travel pass holders - the requirements to get a TaxiCard are different. Andrew's main point is that it would be cheaper to give every single one of those people a free car for the rest of their lives than to spend that money on converting Green Park Station!

Then he quotes a fact that caught Call Sign's attention. He claimed that for the price of the works at just that one station, you could give every one of the 121,000 Londoners who qualify for a disabled travel pass, £800 worth of taxi vouchers.

As the Paralympics last just two weeks,

The Disabled, the Paralympics and the DaC TaxiCard



Will the Mayor sponsor TaxiCard during the 2012 Paralympics?
Inset: Andrew Gilligan



Andrew Gilligan – who we are starting to like more and more – asked why TfL doesn't just give every disabled Londoner who wanted to go to the Stratford Games, a free taxi from where

ever they lived? And in all honesty, that sounds like something that **Call Sign** can agree with.

In fact, we think the idea could be taken even further by allowing taxis that have wheelchair passengers during the 2012 Paralympic Games to have access to the *Olympic Route Network*. As it stands, the *International Olympic Committee* decree that

only vehicles carrying competitors and those people involved with the Olympic family, will be able to use those routes and there seems to be little anyone can do to change that for the first two weeks. For those two Paralympic weeks, with TfL or Westminster (or both) allowing wheelchair passengers unlimited free use of London taxis, we should surely come under the classification of "family" and get use of the ORN?

We asked Mayor Boris Johnson for his view and hope to get a response by the next issue...

TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR DINNER DANCE

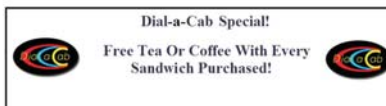
The **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund's** 36th annual Dinner/Dance is on Saturday 5th December 2009 at the Holiday Inn London Kensington Forum. Included in the price is a 4-course meal and half a bottle of wine per person, after dinner tea /coffee with tea / coffee and pastries served later in the evening. There is also dancing to a live band.

Ticket are £60 per person and include a complementary drink on arrival
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Hyde Park's *Winter Wonderland*, London's largest and most dazzling winter event returns to London for six weeks of festive fun from Saturday 21st November 2009 to Sunday 3rd January 2010. With no admission fee, *Winter Wonderland* offers a whole day-out from 10am to 10pm with beautifully themed attractions set out under thousands of twinkling lights.

With over 1.5 million visitors to date, *Winter Wonderland* introduces even more rides, attractions and games never before seen in the UK, spread across Hyde Park's historic parkland. The event features *The Mario & Sonic Winter Olympic Games Ice Rink*, the largest open air rink in Central London and the iconic *50m Observation Wheel* with its 40 heated pods offering truly spectacular views across the city. *Winter Wonderland* also boasts the most atmospheric German Xmas Market in the country, with over 60 individual Tyrolean-style chalets selling unique and quirky gifts, overlooked by central London's only Rollercoaster.

New for 2009, visitors can enjoy *Zippo's Christmas Circus* in its very own heated big top, with a show especially created for Winter Wonderland. Fitting in with the spirit of Christmas, there is a **free** Father Christmas up till Christmas Eve, which *Time Out* named the best outdoor experience! He will be welcoming children with a surprise gift. Winter Wonderland has also been nominated for *Consumer Event of the Year* at the *Visit London Awards 2009*.

Great food and drink contributes to making *Winter Wonderland* such a phenomenal success. Bratwurst sausages and continental beer, steaks and Gluwein are amongst the offerings in the Bavarian Village, the House of St Nicholas and the two-storey Café Grell. Amongst other heated cafés and bars, are culinary delights closer to home by way of hog-roasts, pies, hot cider and real ale. And Winter Wonderland would not be complete without the beautifully themed *Candy Castles* selling gingerbread hearts, roasted nuts, crepes and Xmas stolen.

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Winter Wonderland is back!

And guess who has 100 tickets to give away!



Advance tickets are available for Mario & Sonic's Ice Rink (which sold out in record time last year) along with the Giant Wheel and Zippo's Christmas Circus.

Go to www.hydeparkwinterwonderland.com for more info / tickets. Other attractions operate on a pay-as-you-ride basis, with prices starting at just £2 for under 12s and £3 for those aged 12 and over. With free live music ranging from choirs to Oompah bands, *Winter Wonderland* offers great value entertainment for all the family.

In addition to the fun, *Winter Wonderland* also provides much work for taxi drivers. *Call Sign* has suggested to the organisers that a taxi rank be placed just inside the Queen Mother gates – which are usually locked for this event. Regardless, it will be a great six weeks...

Winter Wonderland is closed on Christmas Day.

Not that this amazing event needs much publicising, but in the form of a pre-thank you to drivers for providing the same excellent service we gave to Winter Wonderland patrons last year, they have given *Call Sign* 100 – yes one hundred – tickets to give away for the launch night on November 19. On that date, entry is by invitation only and all rides will be free and many famous celebrities will be present. But you will have to have a wrist band and we've 100!

Just email us at callsignmag@aol.com and tell us how many weeks of festive fun Winter Wonderland contains. Add your name, callsign and a contact number. Each correct entry will win two tickets. Up to two competition entries per family – which means that you can win no more than 4 tickets!

Good luck...

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The Metropolitan Police Service Cab Enforcement Unit, part of the Transport for London funded Safer Transport Command, made 40 arrests during a covert operation overnight on Friday 1 October and Saturday 2nd October 2009.

The Cab Enforcement Unit officers patrolled touting hotspots in central London locations such as the Haymarket and in prevalent areas in South London. They dealt with touting, illegal operating, illegal plying for hire and unlicensed drivers and vehicles. This is not only to ensure compliance with regulations, but most importantly to enhance the safety of the travelling public.

Officers used specialist undercover tactics to catch touts red handed. The operation was not only successful in arresting illegal touts, but also acquired valuable intelligence.

Cab Enforcement operations are carried out on a regular basis in line with current intelligence on touting behaviour. More than a dozen operations have taken place in the last two months to tackle illegal cabs and touting across London. They also cooperate with clubs to crack down on touts who operate in these areas and to ensure compliance with regulations and to enhance the safety of the travelling public.

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

Chief Superintendent Joe Royle, Safer Transport Command told *Call Sign*:

"We are working together with our policing partners to keep London moving safely by driving down crime and the fear of crime even further. Illegal cabs and touting undermines the legitimate cab trade and raises the fear of crime. The

Forty arrested in Crackdown on Illegal Cabs



Plain clothes policewoman frisks a tout

Safer Transport Command regularly targets policing activity on unlicensed and uninsured vehicles and carries out major operations targeting offenders who pose as taxi or minicab drivers. The safety of the public is paramount and I would advise everyone not to get into any vehicle that they have not booked and always

book a cab through a reputable PCO licensed company."

Steve Burton, Director of Community Safety Enforcement and Policing added:

"Dealing with illegal cabs and touting in London is a priority for TfL, as we are committed to getting Londoners home safely and supporting the law abiding drivers in the taxi and private hire trades. TfL funds 68 dedicated Cab Enforcement Officers in both the Metropolitan Police Service and the City of London Police, who carry out regular covert and high visibility operations to deter and apprehend illegal cab drivers. It is also worth remembering that only taxis (black cabs) can be hailed in the street or picked up at a rank without booking. Any minicab journey that hasn't been booked through a licensed operator is illegal, uninsured and unsafe."

The Metropolitan Police Service Safer Transport Command, funded by TfL, was set up in 2002 to fight crime on buses, tackle illegal taxi touts and assist with the control of traffic congestion. There are now more than 1,000 uniformed officers in the unit. They made 736 arrests for touting between 1 August 2008 and 31 August 2009.

Of these drivers, 145 have had their PHV licenses revoked by the Public Carriage Office to date, with the remaining still being processed

JOHN MASON VISITS DAC

Having recently taken over Ed Thompson's position as Director of Taxis and Private Hire, John Mason – now based at Blackfriars with TfL – paid his first official visit to Dial-a-Cab on 22 October.

Chairman **Brian Rice** showed Mr Mason around and during the 90 minute tour of DaC's four floors, he explained how the Society operates. Following the tour, the pair discussed trade matters in general.

Brian told *Call Sign* afterwards:

"I don't think it will take John Mason long to settle in and understand how the trade operates. He certainly seems like someone we can work with."

Mr Mason previously held the position of Head of Enforcement for Congestion Charging within TfL.



Brian welcomes John Mason to DaC House

Many Dial-a-Cab drivers come in daily from the east using the A12, with a large percentage of those leaving by the Olympic Park Eastway exit. Watching the village changing on a daily basis can almost take your breath away, but as professional drivers we also have other things to look at – such as watching out that we don't stop in yellow box junctions.

DaC driver **Howard Flavin (A18)** usually comes into town that way and like most drivers using the route, had been inconvenienced by the ongoing roadworks that seemed to have been there forever, together with a set of temporary traffic signals that caused huge tailbacks each day. Because the lights seemed to have just been “plonked” down with very little thought, there were times when if they suddenly turned red, not only were you in for a wait of several minutes, but the chances were that you would have had to stop in the fading yellow box at the Eastway junction with Osborne Road. And that, indeed, happened to Howard.

“It wasn't as though I was slap-bang in the middle of it,” Howard told **Call Sign**, “I was on the periphery of it, but a camera high up on a lamp-post caught me and the next thing I knew was that a PCN arrived in the post from Hackney Council. I remembered the incident and felt quite miffed that Hackney's self-inflicted traffic hold-up had caused me to stop on the outer edge of the box – albeit definitely touching it. I wasn't blocking anyone in and in fact, so far as I was concerned, the section I was in shouldn't have even been there as it was beyond where the road junction ended.”

In fact, so “miffed” was Howard that he decided he wasn't going to hand over his hard-earned money to Hackney without them knowing they had been in a fight! Over the past 18 months, DaC drivers have gained a name for militancy when it comes to paying PCNs, with the old days of just paying up seemingly having gone. Even when the fine was to be paid by DaC itself, drivers were so fed-up that they insisted on appealing the penalty tickets, with many being successful. Howard's PCN was down to him, but he was every bit as annoyed as those caught whilst quietly waiting for their passengers. However, he knew he'd have no chance in a normal appeal because he was in the box and caught on film. So he tried another approach.

“I had always wondered why that particular box seemed to not only cover the junction, but also go beyond it, so I decided to find out if it was legal. I came across ticketfighters.co.uk and going by the information on that site, I went back in the early hours and measured the box. I almost staggered myself when I realised that I had been right and that the box was too large. I appealed but Hackney said no, so I took it to the adjudication service at PATAS in Angel Square N1. They agreed with my findings and allowed the appeal on the grounds that the offence did not occur. Not only was I pleased with the result, but I felt really proud of myself for not caving in to Hackney Council. It's the first time I have acted in this type of militant way in regards to a PCN, but now I wouldn't hesitate to do it again.”

In the adjudicator's decision, she said: *The issue in this case is whether the box junction in Eastway is properly marked. Mr Flavin has provided his own drawing of the box junction. He states that he measured it himself. The local authority do not suggest that the measurements Mr Flavin has provided are inaccurate and nor has the local authority provided its own measurements of the box. I therefore find that Mr. Flavin has accurately recorded the measurements of the box junction.*

Howard's Yellow Box Victory!



This Call Sign picture shows how the yellow box illegally overlaps the junction

The box junction is across the junction of Osborne Road and Eastway. Its purpose is presumably to protect access to and from Osborne Road and to ensure that drivers on the

Eastway do not block that access. The CCTV footage, together with Mr Flavin's diagram, show that the box junction extends beyond the junction in both directions. On one side this is by 870 centimetres and on the other by 1110 centimetres. The CCTV footage shows Mr Flavin's taxi stationary beyond the junction of Osborne Road, but within the part of the box junction that extends 1110 centimetres beyond the traffic. This means that his taxi is not blocking any car turning into Osborne Road, nor any car turning right out of Osborne Road.

Mr Flavin argues that the box junction does not comply with diagram 1044 in the Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 2002. I

agree. This is because the box extends well beyond the kerbline of the junction with Osborne Road on both sides of the junction. Diagram 1044 shows that the corners of the box junction should be at the corner points of the kerbline.

As I find that the box junction does not comply with the Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 2002, I allow this appeal.

Howard ended by telling **Call Sign**: “There is nothing worse that when you get hemmed in by someone who blocks a yellow box junction. As professional taxi drivers, we rarely block junctions even without a yellow box in. But Hackney's decision to put in a box that was bigger than that allowed and to fine drivers going in it, was a liberty. Sadly, I doubt that they give a toss and they will still collect fines from those that can't be bothered fighting them...”

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compliance officers report

Hello Ladies & Gents,

Meter clearances...

In this article I feel it is important to remind you once again of a few of the situations that are still regularly popping up that may cause problems. I can't stress highly enough how important it is that you check all meter fares before you clear the actual trip. I have often mentioned that the system captures all of the amounts that are entered in the trip cycle as separate figures, from accept through to CLJ. Extras that are shown on the meter will also appear separately and any discrepancies will be flagged up on daily reports that are computer generated and highly accurate. Please remember that as soon as you finish the trip, it is imperative that the meter is stopped and cleared through the terminal. Account clients quite rightly request routine spreadsheets that offer them a complete breakdown of all charges that appear on their invoices and the need for accuracy is essential.

Complaints

Over the last few editions of *Call Sign*, I have always made every effort to keep you regularly updated with any issues or procedures that could lead to a complaint. In addition to this, there are regular fleet messages that in all honesty are impossible to miss - I see them myself. I consider myself to be a fair-minded person, but if the procedure rules are persis-



tently violated, I will not hesitate to invite offenders into a complaints hearing to answer to their peers. Every complaint that I send out is treated on its merit, and once I receive the reply back it is a decision based on integrity and fairness to every member and one that will safeguard our accounts.

DaC package...

I am sure that I don't have to remind any of you that the past eighteen months have been a difficult time, not only for the taxi industry but also for the UK and world economies as a whole. Although it seems as though we are

starting to turn the corner, we are regularly being told in the media that it will be a gradual recovery with many bumps along the way. Let us not forget that every account we have, be it large or small, should be treated in a professional manner - **first class service and customer care is vital**.

Let me remind you of what Allen Togwell has often mentioned: *'It can take many months to secure an account, it can be lost in an instant.'* So please go that extra mile, it is what keeps us ahead of the competition in a market place that is so highly competitive. The package we at Dial-a-Cab offer is second to none, but there is no room for complacency and it is my job to protect both members and clients alike, which I will always do.

Multiple destinations...

Finally, I still feel that our drivers are the best in the trade. The vast majority of us work within the spirit of the Society and take the rough with the smooth. On a multiple booking, if there is more than one destination it shouldn't need me to remind you that taking a journey that may be more lucrative than the original trip you accepted without a valid reason is not the way we work. How would you feel if it happened to you? I am sure you get my drift...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

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



Call Sign En La Belle France



By the time these notes have gone to print, I shall be in **New York City**. I have quite a lot to cram into the 6 days I shall be there and one whole day will be taken up with the efforts of completing the **New York Marathon**. Believe me, it will be an effort this time as I cannot remember ever having prepared so badly for the 26.2 miles - and I've done quite a few in my time! So I fully expect that it will take me the best part of 7 hours to hobble round - that's fine, I'll be sporting a T-Shirt with the logo and www.london-donsightseeingtours.co.uk splashed across its front and back! Great exposure and yes, I shall take my time!

Talking of **London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours**, I also have several meetings lined up with Travel Agencies in Manhattan to promote our visitor attraction. The temptation will be to jump in a Yellow Cab between meetings, but I reckon walking around the City will be the best way to squash those blisters - ouch!

Oh yes, the famous New York Yellow Cabs! Well, also during my short stay I will not only get the chance to catch up with my old mate and cabbie Fred Wrack



(see *Call Sign July 2008*), but on this trip I shall also be meeting **Peter Franklin**, the 'G a b b y Cabbie' who regularly fea-

tures on Dotun Adebayo's overnight show on Radio 5 Live - his email writing style is just as brash as he sounds on air!

Oh, and that Marathon - well it will be struggle, but at least I won't be wearing any fancy dress this time, or carrying a bucket filling up with coins around the track - that's because at the time of going to press, there is already over £2,300 in the kitty for **Get Kids Going!** My sincere thanks to all those DaC subscribers / *Call Sign* readers that have contributed so far!

I'll let you know how I get on...

A bientot

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



Bob will be meeting Peter Franklin aka The Gabby Cabbie on his NYC trip
Pic courtesy The BBC

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Home Counties**

October 2nd saw 100 taxis filled with children suffering from life threatening illnesses being transported to a weekend they will never forget. The day began early as everyone arrived for *The Big Breakfast* send off. This event sees noise levels increase along with the excitement. The scale of the send off always takes the invited sponsors and dignitaries aback and there were some short speeches of thanks and good wishes. But all the children wanted to do was get into their taxis and begin the journey to the Disneyland theme park in Paris.

The Lady Mayoress of the City of London, *Lin Luder*, cut the ribbon to mark the start of the convoy. It was led by The Master of *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* and his wife in a cab driven by the Beadle, John Sheen. Behind them were the 100 taxis (and as usual many from DaC), police cars – including police outriders from both the UK and France - London Ambulance vehicles, AA breakdown trucks and vehicles supplied by Kia and Honda to support the trip. The PCO's recently appointed Director of Taxi and Private Hire, *John Mason*, was invited to watch the trip depart. He told us:

"TfL and the PCO are delighted to support this great event, which has in the past brought a lot of joy to thousands of children. For some of these children it will have been their first time in a cab and their first time abroad, which makes it even more special."

Office workers arriving at Canary Wharf to begin their day were soon caught up in the excitement, waving to the convoy as it left on its way to Dover. During the trip, the police stopped traffic to allow the convoy to drive safely down to the port.

Once aboard the *P&O Ferry*, packed lunches were consumed, friendships formed and acquaintances renewed. On arrival in Calais it was a sunny afternoon and the convoy reformed and headed towards Paris. At a refreshment and refuelling stop, the children were entertained by clowns and characters at the French service area before setting off again.

The sun was setting over *The Magical Kingdom* as the convoy arrived and its passengers disembarked their cabs ready for dinner. Although the children (and drivers!) may have been tired, the excitement was still evident as everyone checked into their rooms.

On Saturday morning, the weather was kind and soon the hotel was left deserted as everyone left to enjoy a day in the *Disneyland Paris Park*. There were smiling faces everywhere as the children, drivers and carers went on the rides and watched the shows. The main parade of the afternoon was one of the highlights for many, before leaving to go back to the hotel to prepare for a *Gala Dinner*. This dinner had some extra special guests as Disney characters came and joined the children, posing for photographs and joining in the disco.

As dinner ended, it was time to have a final night in the hotel before leaving bright and early on Sunday morning. For those drivers who were taking part in the trip for the first time, the magic is as strong as for those who have made every one of the 16 Magical Taxi Tours. Special thanks must go to the drivers

Magical Taxi Tour to Disneyland Paris



DaC's Dennis Heavin (A01) with some friends. But who planted the smacker on his forehead!!!!

Of course he's a real mouse! Lots of mice wear bow ties...



strands that pull together to make this such a wonderful trip. Since it began in 1994, around 3,200 sick children have enjoyed the annual Children's Magical Taxi Tour, organised by the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers.

Cover pic: Monsieur Brian With (Y84) and Monsieur Phil Davis (F10 and Chairman of the Disney Committee) doing their best to recreate something or other...!

Sandie Goodwin

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Working as part of the London Taxi trade or any large organisation can have its advantages and disadvantages. Being that we are 24k strong these days, we sometimes appear faceless when criticised and the media do take every opportunity to exploit that.

We have plenty of spokespersons when it comes trade activities, but I think we let ourselves down when we come to promoting / selling ourselves as to how good we are at what we do. Imagine asking drivers to voluntarily contribute to an advertising fund at a rate of £1 a week, rather like the RMTs 'fines pool'. If everyone joined up, that would mean nearly £100k a month on advertising ourselves to the public! Maybe a campaign on the underground with a picture of a spacious clean cab, gliding down a bus lane with very heavy traffic around it. Or asking what the chance of catching swine flu was when travelling on your own, again with the same picture?

If you have driven out to Heathrow in recent months, your attention would have been drawn to a large poster on the side of a building next to the M4 elevated section. It claims, referring to the Heathrow Express: "Had you got the HEX, you would have been at Heathrow by now." So that begs the question, who checks these things? Because had you picked a



passenger up in Mortlake High Street, that statement would be untrue. In fact if you picked up at Hyde Park corner, it would still be untrue. This is good example of people saying and claiming what they like, knowing that the trade are unlikely to contest it. And rest assured, the public believe these things. Just click on google and enter *London Heathrow taxis*. A whole host of private hire companies will magically appear!

Recently I picked up an American gentlemen from the Stafford Hotel going to

the HEX. He told me that he thought that \$70 was a lot of money for a ride to the airport. My reply?

"Well you are riding in £32k worth of vehicle, with a driver of 18 years of experience who took 3 years to do the knowledge. And besides, wouldn't you much prefer to travel on your own rather than share a train with 200 people?"

After a pause, he told me to take him to terminal 3. After spending £250 a night in the Dukes, he knew it made sense. I believe many think the same, but are waiting to be persuaded.

But that's the trade as a whole; at least on **Dial-a-Cab** we do much to advertise ourselves, especially our door logos and tip-up seats. It's pleasing to see more DaC logos on taxis than any other radio circuit. Sadly, I was outside a high profile account in the city recently on a four-cab job and two of the other cabs didn't have logos. Personally I think that's a shame, because wherever you can get some exposure, get it. And as they say, there is no such thing as bad publicity...

Richard Potter (T51)



Possible Redundancies at LTI?

Workers at Coventry's LTI's Holyfield Road factory will be at the centre of events during a 90 day consultation period over possible redundancies following parent company Manganese Bronze Holdings announcing a fall in sales of 9.1%, although *Call Sign* was told that redundancies were just one of the options being looked at.

The firm said that trading in the UK continued to be hit by recession and that not only were TX4 sales for the eight months to the end of August down, but that they were also predicting a fall in demand during the second half of the year. With a break-even figure being given as 2000, Manganese Bronze said in their *Interim Management Statement* that they had sold a total of 1,207 vehicles in the UK over the period 1 July to 29 September 2009.

The group has attempted to cut costs by using lower cost Chinese parts, but said that had not been sufficient to reduce the break-even level because of price increases from UK suppliers. They had previously announced the ending of contracts with its entire UK franchise network and instead were concentrating on developing a direct sales operation as part of the plan to return to profitability.

The statement revealed MBH net cash stood at £3.4 million, with net debt of £6.7 million after taking up stocking loans of £10.1 million associated with a finished goods inventory.

August saw MBH's US subsidiary, LTNA, close as planned with net assets of £800,000, half of which was converted into cash. The group added that its joint venture with Geely in China (Shanghai LTI) - of which MBH owns 48% - was making good progress. They said the joint venture in China offered the greatest potential to achieve their vision and secure a long term future for the group.

MBH also said that the TX4 recall was virtually completed and the case had been closed by VOSA. They added that liability for the original problem had yet to be established.

Continuing with the statement, MBH said it expected international demand to strengthen, although trade in the UK remained tough. It said that while the speed of the ramp up of international sales was improving - although below previous expectations - it was expected to accelerate. UK sales were expected to remain under the manufacturing break even level, which necessitated the UK dealer reorganisation and commencement of consultation with regard to their UK manufacturing operation. They added:

"Overall, while group operating performance is expected to show year on year improvement, the outcome for the full year is expected to be a loss below current market expectations."

Prior to the Manganese Bronze Holdings Statement, Eco City Vehicles announced an operating loss before tax of £100,000 compared with £700,000 pounds in 2008. Eco added that they were optimistic about the second half of the year.

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**Check out my portfolio on www.anjaking.com
Enquiries via email to anja@anjaking.com**



In the *October Call Sign*, Dial-a-Cab's PCN expert **Barrie Segal**, explained about an issue involving CCTV *Penalty Charge Notices* that had been issued by Bexley Council. He told this magazine that some PCNs had been found to be invalid by the parking adjudicator. This was due to the date of the PCN not being the same as the date stamp on the envelope. He added that if any driver had received a CCTV PCN from Bexley, they should check the posting date against the date of the PCN and if different, then the PCN could not be enforced.

Barry, whose *AppealNow.com* website has probably helped more people than any other site of its kind, now gives *Call Sign* readers an update re CCTV issued Penalty Charge Notices issued by Bexley Council.

He told us: "I have now seen one decision to this effect and understand there are others because the date of the PCN was not the same as the posting date! So if you have received a CCTV PCN from Bexley, do check the posting date and the date of the PCN. If they are not the same, the PCN cannot be enforced."

"If you have a continuing appeal with them and don't have the envelope, ask them to provide evidence that the PCN was posted on the date shown on the PCN."

Even if you have paid the CCTV PCN, it is worth asking for this information. If the dates do not agree, then it is equally worth you asking for your money back because of the unenforceable character of the PCN. The council are unlikely to agree, but you will have your claim on record."

The Churchill Lectures at the Churchill Museum & Cabinet War Rooms

The Centenary of MI5 and MI6

Most **Dial-a-Cab** drivers know only too well where the headquarters of **MI5**, the internal security agency and **MI6**, the overseas intelligence agency that until John Major admitted its existence in 1994, was spoken of as pure fantasy, are. Being good folk, we keep the info to ourselves in case not everyone watches *Spooks*!

But now there is an unprecedented opportunity to hear leading authorities on the British secret services, revealing stories and exploring significant moments from the 100-year history of the **Security Service** (MI5) and the **Secret Intelligence Service** (MI6).

To mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the two British intelligence agencies, a prestigious group of experts will take part in a special series of lectures at the **Churchill Museum & Cabinet War Rooms** in central London. The lectures, part of the annual *Churchill Lectures* programme and sponsored by the *Military History Channel* (Sky 531), will offer a new insight into the history of MI5 and MI6, with important incidents from the life of the two services explored in new detail.

Among the subjects to be covered are the extensive intelligence networks developed across Occupied Europe by MI6 during WW2, the delicate relationship between MI5 and MI6 during the War and their collaborations and their differing relationships with Churchill. Also, marking its 70th anniversary, a new perspective on the remarkable story of the *Venlo Incident* - when two MI6 officers were kidnapped by Nazi intelligence during negotiations aimed at overthrowing Hitler. There will also be a section on how the Secret Intelligence Service dealt with the diplomats and protocol of the Foreign Office.

Each lecture will be hosted by an expert in the field, including Mark Seaman - intelligence historian at the Cabinet Office; Dr Christopher Baxter - Research Fellow in Intelligence History at Queen's University Belfast; Professor Gary Sheffield - Professor of War Studies at the University of Birmingham and Dr Nigel Steel - Head of the Imperial War Museum's Research and Information Department.

The programmes consist of:

***Mark Seaman: The Venlo Incident, a new perspective: 10 November, 6.30 - 9pm.**

***Dr Christopher Baxter: Uninvited and Unwelcome Guests: Spies and British Diplomacy in Neutral Europe during the Second World War: 24 November, 6.30 - 9pm.**

***Professor Gary Sheffield: Fighting for Churchill? The ordinary British soldier in the Second World War: 17 March 2010, 6.30 - 9pm.**

***Dr Nigel Steel: With Winston Churchill at the Front: 23 March 2010, 6.30 - 9pm.**

Whether or not you admit to knowing where Thames House is, you most certainly know where the **Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms** at **Clive Steps, King Charles St SW1** is, especially after *Call Sign* reviewed it last month! Even if James Bond isn't around, meeting MI5 / MI6 experts sounds like an ultra-interesting experience.

More details at <http://cwr.iwm.org.uk> or call 020 7766 0155.

Tickets are £15 adults and £12 seniors / students / friends of the museum. All tickets include full access to the museum and War Rooms...



The original James Bond won't be there but the evenings will be fascinating

When **Call Sign** met **John Goate (T12)** he told us that he was delighted with his new TX4 and looking forward to a happy and profitable life together! Having been on Dial-a-Cab since December 2008 and with a total of nine years taxi driving experience behind him, he was confident that his choice of workhorse was the right one.

"Yes, I looked at the Mercedes Vito but didn't really fancy driving around in a van, however nicely it was converted" he said. "My previous TX4 had eight - yes, eight - replacement coolant radiators and several turbo hoses, but was otherwise pretty reliable, so that hasn't put me off buying another new one. In any case, the Vito is too big for my driveway and I wouldn't be able to open the door to get in or out," he said with a grin!

"Another big factor in my choice to buy a TX4 was that I was very concerned I might be confused with the PHV people and that is not a road I would want to go down. The 'Taxi' signage that some of them have along the side of the Vito helps, but I still feel uneasy about the public's perception of which vehicle pulls up alongside them when their hand goes up," he said.

John finished by adding: "With the discount currently available on LTI's TX4, I now have a brand new cab with a manufacturer's 3 year warranty for just a few quid more than the

THE VITO WON'T FIT MY DRIVEWAY!



John Goate: "I don't fancy driving around in a van - no matter how nicely converted!"

previous repayments on my old TX4. How John sped off down the road to start work... bad is that?"

And then, thinking about those repayments,

© **Call Sign Magazine MM9**



LTFUC take 50 Children to see 'HAIRSPRAY'

50 disadvantaged children had a great hair-raising experience when the *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children* took them to see a Saturday matinee performance of smash hit musical 'Hairspray' at the Shaftesbury Theatre. The children were driven to the theatre in a convoy of 18 taxis decorated with blue 'Hairspray' balloons and in no time the quiet City of London streets had come alive with the sounds of horns blaring and flashing lights. It was a lovely sunny day and many pedestrians and people sitting outside cafés were waving to the children, who in turn frantically waved back, trying hard to master the 'royal' wave as they felt so special!

The show began at 3pm and it was a sight to behold to see the looks of amazement on the children's faces, especially as many of them had never been to a theatre before. The children had been put forward for this outing by the police and were all very deserving of this special treat. Ice creams were given out to everyone during the interval and I took the opportunity



LTFUC Hon Life President and DaC driver Bill Tyzack with some children who went to see Hairspray

to chat to some of the excited children, one little boy telling me it was his best day ever and even asked whether what he was watching was real or TV!

A further surprise was in store for the children at the end of the show, when three leading members of the cast, *Brian Conley*, *Chloe Hart* and *Liam Tamne* came out to meet them and have photos taken. We thank them for this

kind gesture, especially as they were all due back on stage again at 7.30pm.

The Hon President, Hon Chairman and Committee of the LTFUC are deeply grateful to *Jon Kissack* at *Stage Entertainment* and his team for all their help and support in putting this day together and for the kind donation of the tickets, which enabled us to give these children a day they will cherish forever. Our grateful thanks must also go to all the drivers and helpers, *Ben Heath* of the *NCP Car Park* in Museum Street for kindly donating the taxi parking spaces and *Richard Green* of *Simons Electrical Wholesalers*, Honeypot Lane

Stanmore for his donation.

This show can only be described as brilliant, amazing, happy and funny – in fact a musical with everything! If you have not seen it yet, you are really missing out!

There are more photos on the LTFUC website at www.ltfuc.org.uk...

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

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

Flashback
1967

This month's Flashback goes back to 1967, when an amalgamation of Radio Taxis – aka Mountview – and ODRTS was being spoken of...

From ODRTS News Magazine, August 1967...



Amalgamation with Mountview

In the July issue of the ODRTS News Magazine, a letter from Radio Taxis (Southern) Ltd was published offering their thanks for the co-operation of ODRTS when Mountview experienced a power failure. It goes to prove just how much closer the two major London radio circuits are working. This, of course, is extremely gratifying and

one must wonder why all this didn't happen sooner? Nevertheless the possibilities of being even closer are imminent.

Amalgamation cannot be dismissed and one's eyes must surely boggle at this thought. The business potential is boundless and makes one's heart beat a little faster. Of course there would be many obstacles to overcome, for instance, the administration differs a great deal, the set-up is different, even the job calling is different. BUT the drivers and the cabs are the same. At the next meeting of the Joint Radio Committee (Mountview and Lords), one item on the agenda will be to discuss ways and means and the pros and cons of amalgamation.

It is not the intention of the writer to sway you one way or the other, but if ever there was a reason for you to write in your views, this must surely be it. Providing sufficient space is available, every letter will be published. Now is your chance to give your opinion. This invitation also goes out to any of our friends on Mountview who care to drop us a line.

This brings me to the point of apologising to Radio Taxis (Southern) Ltd, as their address was published in error by the printer in our magazine and was given as - wait for it - 144 Shirland Road! This prompted Mr Freddy Franks, Mountview's Secretary, to enquire whether a pantechnicon was available so he could bring their office equipment over to us. Sorry Freddy!

Going abroad

The ODRTS News Magazine has proved quite popular abroad, as well as at home, and regular copies are being sent in answer to requests to Israel and Finland. Keep up with your articles, gentlemen, they are widely read.

POB

There are some points I would like to make, mainly for new subscribers and also to refresh the memories of some of the old 'uns. POB means that you are technically POB until your meter is in the For Hire position. One new driver received a reprimand for coming in on open call when his meter was still not cleared - although he stated he had been paid off. As far as this circuit is concerned, while the meter is still engaged or on stop, you are POB.

One other driver was given seven days suspension for not having his radio on. He was on a credit account job and was called to be re-directed. But he could not be contacted and the Society was put to the extra expense of almost £3 to send another cab to the new pick up. These delays can be quite serious as well as expensive for us. Please make sure you are in constant touch when on a radio job.

Joe Toff (B04), Editor

CHANGE

Starring Arturo Brachetti: Garrick Theatre until 3 January 2010

I recently went to the opening night of **Change**, a new one-man show starring **Arturo Brachetti**. The title may give you a clue to the contents; it's a show of quick changes - clothes, that is - and to say this man has it down to fine art is an understatement! My wife, who had never heard of Arturo before, accompanied me. I had previously seen him on the *Paul O'Grady* show and knew what to expect from this amazing man.

The show began at 7:30pm and finished at 9:15, which included an interval. During that time I lost count of the number of changes Arturo accomplished. These ranged from the Queen to a punk rocker, Quasimodo to King Kong, Gene Kelly to Carmen Miranda and James Bond to ET.

This show is variety at it's best and just as music halls used to be - there to entertain you at the very highest level. Arturo Brachetti achieves this through the gruelling task of being on stage virtually every minute of the show. This 52-year-old man shows an abundance of energy that would embarrass many a younger person.

The audience were in the same frame of mind, they wanted him to carry on for a series of encores, which is more or less impossible for a quick-change artist. As the show ended, my wife was full of admiration for the star and said it was one of the most enjoyable shows she had seen this year.

My one criticism has nothing to do with Arturo; it is the problem of it showing at the Garrick Theatre. This theatre has a low upper circle and during one sequence, when he acts as an Angel flying across the stage, if you are sitting in Row N or higher in the stalls you are unable to see Arturo when he is at his highest point. But as it only obstructed my view for around 45 seconds, I can't complain too much! It would take far more than that to spoil this show!

This is a show for all the family and that includes the young children.

If anyone would like to book tickets for Change, you can at www.changelondon.com or call 0844 579 1974...

Tom Whitbread



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Are we London Cab drivers as obnoxious as some make out - especially the press? Well having recently taken an extended vacation, which included a cruise from Baltimore to New England, a few days in Washington DC and a week in Las Vegas, I realise that after 45 years of being a London Cab driver and yes, having an occasional moan about the attitude and the mode of dress of drivers, I realise that even if I didn't already know, the London Taxi Industry is simply the best in the world. Yet visitors from abroad seem to appreciate our service more so than those that live and work in London.

As an example, when we arrived at Washington Dulles Airport on the start of our trip, a prepaid limo was to meet us and take us to Baltimore for an overnight stay prior to the cruise. Tired and exhausted after a long trip and expecting the driver to meet us in the airport terminal, surprise, surprise, no driver! So what do we do now? Airport staff had not heard of the limo company. A member of airport information phoned the limo company but with no response. We decided to search for the driver outside the terminal building.

After about an hour, we eventually found the driver. The vehicle had no company markings or passenger nameboard; in fact it was pure luck we found him. Unbeknown to us, onboard there were another two passengers who were to be dropped off en-route. They were also frustrated having to wait so long. After a bit of verbal with the driver, he said the boss would like to speak with me on his cell phone. It turned out that unless we paid a further \$100, we would be going nowhere. Insisting that I had already prepaid \$140 for the ride, I was told it wasn't enough. This left me with no choice but to cough up, what a crook! I am pleased to say the travel agent and the cruise line are investigating. But not a great start...

The next adventure was on our return to Baltimore after the cruise. Prior to leaving the ship, I asked the Purser if we could have a vehicle to take us to Washington, unfortunately I was told this was not possible, but was told there were plenty of cabs outside the terminal building.

Washington DC is a matter of approximately 40 miles. The luggage guy took us to a line of waiting taxis. The first cab was really skanky and the driver wasn't much better. I asked the Taxi Marshall if we could wait for another in better condition, but they all seemed to be the same, so we got in the cab. He was one miserable S-o-B - you can tell I've just returned from the USA! He asked me for directions and of course I hadn't a clue; he then tried to use his SatNav, which wasn't much help. Nevertheless, he said he would get us to Washington.

The cab was filthy, the seats were torn and to top it all, at about 60/70 miles per hour he kept on fiddling with the SatNav. I told him not to worry about that and that I was sure if we asked for directions, between us we would get there.

The driver seemed to be talking to himself en-route, there was no radio in the cab and we were getting more than concerned. Driving at 60 along the freeway, he suddenly swerved onto the hard shoulder. I asked what

ARE WE OBNOXIOUS?

Mike Son takes a look!



Mike and machine gun in Las Vegas

he was doing and he said he was going to try the SatNav again! It was getting to be quite scary, I can prove that by the bruises I suffered where my wife was holding my arm.

We eventually arrived at our destination more than a little shaken but not stirred. Will I still moan about the mode of dress about London Cabdrivers? Most probably, but we are still undoubtedly the best taxi service in the world.

Another little adventure...

This was a bit of *Boys Own* stuff. Having never served in the armed services, the nearest I got was joining the JLGB - the Jewish Lads & Girls Brigade when I was young. That is a bit like the Boys Brigade, which was founded in 1883 and the JLB - as it was then known - was founded in 1895. Both these organisations are still thriving.

Anyway, driving along in Las Vegas, I noticed a shop named The Gun Store. The advert outside said 'try one', well no way could I resist that. I entered the store, the sales people, both men and women, were armed to the teeth. I then got a bit jittery, nevertheless I was there and asked what the procedure was to have go with one of the guns? All that was required was ID and a credit card. How easy was that! I was asked what I would like to shoot with? The choices were unbelievable. I chose one M16 machine gun, an M249 SAW 223 machine gun and two handguns, one of which was a Beretta. After donning ear and eye protectors and having some tuition, it made me laugh when I was asked what target would I like? I thought there would be just one - a bulls eye. Oh no, I was offered Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, plus oth-

ers. I chose Osama bin Laden, this apparently is the most popular! Only in America could it happen!

Those who have served or have family in the military most probably would think this was a game and I was not taking account of those youngsters who do the real job of protecting us. The targets were made of paper and didn't shoot back. What would I do if a gun were pointed at me? Most assuredly something nasty in my trousers! However, the experience was enjoyable - in fact it was awesome!

**Mike Son
DaC Special Projects**

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**Tues-Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 12-6pm
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**Usual admission £5, concessions £4,
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**The Foundling Museum is at 40
Brunswick Square WC1**

Tel. 020 7841 3600

Visit their website at

www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

Towards the end of 2001, **Jason O'Brien** was the DaC Help Desk supervisor, making the trip from home to Brunswick House each work day on his Suzuki 600 motorbike. That was until the day when Jason became involved in an appalling accident in Great Eastern Street.

He was almost at work when suddenly a car turned right in front of him, throwing Jason off the bike and projecting him at high speed into a traffic bollard. Coming off the bike itself left Jason with several cuts and bruises, but the real damage came when he was thrown into the bollard with such force that he sustained internal injuries requiring emergency surgery during which a part of his intestine had to be removed.

When **Call Sign** spoke to him in his hospital bed, Jason remembered with little fondness that by then he had already been in hospital for around 4 months and had still not been allowed any solids to eat. His wound had been healing very slowly, but was still so big that you could actually see inside his stomach and he had a net and plastic bag placed over it to stop anything falling out! But even that wasn't Jason's biggest problem. He also had a tear in the small bowel that was pumping up fluid. Jason had already had so much surgery carried out in the bowel area, that the surgeon was reluctant to go in again. Consequently he spent most of his time lying in bed with the plastic see-through bag that kept filling up with those stomach fluids coming through the wound.

The fact that the accident wasn't Jason's fault seemed totally irrelevant to him at the time. But a successful operation to resection the bowel and cut away a further piece of

Eight years on and...

Jason is back in the Saddle!



It took 8 years but finally Jason is back in the saddle

intestine gave Jason hope of a return to some form of normality. However, although the leaking had stopped, the wound itself had not properly healed yet. But he kept smiling

throughout.

"As an early riser, I had to train myself not to wake up before breakfast had finished," he told us. "Though your body eventually gets used to not eating solids, after several months without food, the smell of breakfast presents a huge difficulty. My best option was to wake up after everyone else had eaten!"

Jason has been with Dial-a-Cab since 1990 and has had to make difficult decisions along the way, but none so hard as the one he took in 2009 - eight years after the accident.

"I decided to buy myself another motor bike," he told us. "I bought it without riding it first and in all honesty, I was afraid to get back on it. I was also worried about what my wife would say, after all, she sat and watched me barely survive in 2001 and I couldn't help but wonder whether she'd be happy about me getting back on a bike. But she was fine about it and once I did it, all the old confidence came flooding back. I also feel much safer because I'm now a bit older and a bit wiser. Nowadays, if I can't see the whites of their eyes, I assume they can't see me either and keep well clear...!"

The TX4H Comes a Step Nearer!

In December 2007, **Call Sign** exclusively revealed after a trip to their factory in Coventry that **LTI** would be working on an electric taxi and also planning a hydrogen fuel-cell TX4. In July 2008, we went further and said that between 50 and 100 London cabs would be fitted with hybrid engines, comprising of a hydrogen fuel-cell system and electric motor. Part-funded by the UK government's *Technology Strategy Board*, the initiative would allow LTI and their partners for the hydrogen project, **Intelligent Energy** - the clean power systems company - to test fuel-cell electric hybrids under arduous real-world conditions - and what form of vehicle was better placed than a licensed London taxi!

On the 9th October 2009, Intelligent Energy played host to Energy minister, **David Kidney**, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). The minister met with Intelligent Energy Chief Executive, **Dr Henri Winand**, to discuss the importance of greater investment in UK-based clean technology innovation. During the visit to their facilities in Loughborough, the minister was given a hands-on demonstration of the hydrogen fuel-cell, which will be installed into a fleet of zero emission London taxis in time for the London Olympics in 2012. The minister operated the fuel-cell with a simple press of a button, instantly generating around 30 kilowatts of energy - enough to provide propulsion to the iconic London taxi.

Mr Kidney told **Call Sign**: **"I was very pleased to visit Intelligent Energy, where I had the chance to see first-hand the exciting developments they've made in their drive towards the commercialisation of hydrogen and fuel-cell technologies and in particular the work they're doing to introduce low carbon taxis into London by 2012. It is essential that we bring forward these innovative low carbon technologies to tackle the challenge of climate change. DECC's new competition, launched in September for up to £7.2 million of funding for hydrogen and fuel cell technology demonstration, will fill a current gap in the innovation chain relating to scale-up and deployment of this low carbon technology. The competition is a clear measure of Government support for this innovation."**

The taxis will be able to operate for a full day without refuelling and have a top speed of 75mph. It is also claimed that the fuel-cell power-train will provide even better acceleration than current models. Taxis would be able to top up their hydrogen tanks at central depots using a refuelling process that takes just a few minutes. Even winter would prove to be no problem with the fuel-cell system being able to function at temperatures down to -20C. It will fit in the space where the VM engine currently sits in the TX4...



David Kidney on his tour of Intelligent Energy



Neville Chapman comes as close to a TX4 engine as he ever needed to!

Call Sign has now made its sixth **Listening Group** trip to the LTI facility in Coventry and it probably ranked as its best yet.

LTI Government Affairs, **Richard Daniels** and their Market Development Manager, **Paul Kelsey**, greeted editor **Alan Fisher** and the eight **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, plus one guest, at Coventry Station at 10am.

The eight DaC drivers were **Neville Chapman, Dave Creber, Alan Lipscombe, Paul Gane, Janet Fox, John Dixon, Kamel Abdellaoui, Fred Cooper** with the **Call Sign** invited guest being **John Paul Pace** from **TaxiCab News**.

Arriving at the factory, we were delighted to see that Manganese Bronze CEO, **John Russell**, had kept his word to the Editor that he would attend to answer any questions. Also there to answer driver's questions were LTI Engineering Projects Director **Paul Woolley**, Sales Director based at M&O, **Rob Laidler** and LTI's Customer and Technical Support Manager and the man who always turns up to answer drivers questions and any moans about their taxis, **Trevor Hattersley**.

There followed around two hours of questions and answers interspersed with coffee and biscuits. The questions covered topics from bulbs to the problems tall drivers had to the heater noise when on boost and questions on whether, following a spate of rumours, there would be a new engine (the answer was no)! Questions comparing the TX4 to the Vito weren't in short supply either! No question was refused and promises to look at the many suggestions were made.

Then it was lunch and off on a tour of the factory – beginning with a view of a sheet of metal being pressed and ending with a completed taxi! En route, the group's timing was perfect as we saw a body lifted onto a chassis – not something that all **Call Sign's** visiting groups have been lucky enough to see.

Then it was the 4pm train at Coventry to get us all back to Euston just before 5pm. Everyone agreed that it had been a very worthwhile day, some believing that LTI had turned the corner with others not so sure. But everyone was impressed by how well we had been treated.

The next **Call Sign** trip will be in the spring...

Call Sign's Most Successful LTI Trip Yet!

John Russell takes a two hour Q/A Session



DaC Drivers on tour



A TX4 body drops onto the chassis





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

JON ASKS WHAT'S NEW?

Project Natal

Many of you will already have the **Nintendo Wii** and no doubt some of you only really got into video gaming because the Wii does what conventional consoles like the **XBOX 360** and **PS3** cannot do; allow you to control the game play through natural body movement - rather than sitting on the sofa getting sore thumbs on a controller! The Nintendo Wii with its sensor bar and Wii-mote was groundbreaking technology that made the gaming experience attractive to every member of the family.

Of course **Microsoft**, being the technological leviathan that it is, had its nose put squarely out of joint by Nintendo's stratospheric success in the family entertainment market. The XBOX and XBOX 360 are targeted towards a mainly male audience, whereas the Wii is just as appealing to mum and the girls as it is to dad and the boys. So Microsoft has decided to do something about it and as expected of the Big M, they are taking gaming to the next level!

Lately I've been reading online and watching videos on **YouTube** about **Project Natal** from Microsoft. I read about this project in the media a few months back and immediately my ears pricked up! Project Natal is the codename for a "**controller-free gaming and entertainment experience**" currently being developed by Microsoft for their XBOX 360 console. Basically, what they are doing is introducing a sensor bar for the XBOX360, which provides the same motion-sensitive functionality as Nintendo's sensor bar... **but without the need for a controller!**

So how does it work? The sensor bar utilises full skeletal tracking (customised for each user profile through a body scan) to ensure that whatever moves any part of your body makes, the game responds accordingly, making the whole experience completely immersive. If you want to play football in a FIFA game, you simply run and kick as if you were playing football. Perhaps you're playing a combat game - no need for controllers, just fight the on-screen opponent by making all the moves you would if you were actually up against him! Or if you want to buzz in on a game show, you simply smack your fist like it's a buzzer.



Is Microsoft's Project Natal going to be the ultimate gaming experience?

The sky is the limit. If you want to use some of your own gear in a game (skateboard, weapon, clothing etc) you can scan it in and it is immediately available for you to use in any game.

Unfortunately I've been unable to procure a test-run on this fantastical gaming experience as Microsoft has been very restrictive with whom they will allow near Project Natal. Still, their own propaganda certainly captured my imagination and from what I have heard from the lucky few who have had some exposure to the goodies, I know one thing: I **must** have this as soon as it

comes out!

I don't think either my article or the accompanying photo will do this futuristic gadget the justice it deserves, but I hope I have piqued your interest. So even if you've read about Project Natal before, why not spend a few minutes watching the videos showcasing this cool concept online at www.xbox.com/en-US/live/projectnatal.

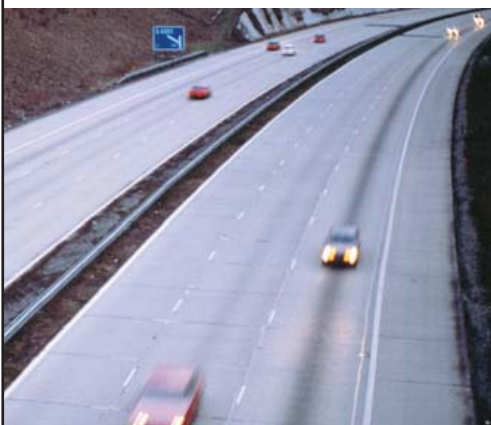
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Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator



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LTI Vehicles has hit back at claims that the Mercedes Vito conversion was outselling their purpose-built TX4. LTI sales director, Rob Laidler, told *Call Sign*:

"We have seen the press statements and they are very misleading. The claim that the Mercedes Vito conversion sells four times as many as the TX4 may be true for KPM, our independent dealer who has been struggling to sell the purpose-built TX4. We always knew that when KPM introduced the Vito conversion, they would find it difficult to sell both vehicles side by side and the market has shown this to be true. It's a reflection of their ability to sell more than one product rather than the popularity of one vehicle over another."

LTI quoted figures from the *Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders* showing that so far this year, 226 Mercedes Vitos have been registered in the UK including demonstrators and loan vehi-

TX4 v Merc - LTI Hit Back!



The TX4



The Vito

cles, compared with 1,084 LTI vehicles. LTI claim that the Vito has about 17% of the national taxi market and about 25% of the London market.

"This is the level we predicted as the Mercedes fills the gap in the market previously occupied by the Metrocab," Mr Laidler continued. "It is competition for us, but we confidently predict that the current generation of London Taxi - the TX4 - is still the best and will remain at number one."

LTI sells the TX4 through its Mann & Overton London dealership in Brewery Road as well as at KPM. M&O say that a mixture of special deals on the TX4 combined with the Government's scrappage scheme has boosted sales.

Rob Laidler added: "Another urban myth that keeps getting thrown into the

public arena is the fuel consumption of the Mercedes. For instance, the majority of driving in London is in town and this is classed as the urban drive cycle. According to government figures, the TX4 is more economical than the Mercedes. The TX4 uses 11.1 litres per 100 kilometres and the Vito uses 0.3 of a litre more at 11.4 litres per kilometre. Many drivers report that the variation in their cost of fuel is exaggerated by rapidly changing fuel prices, which gets confused with the true fuel economy figures. We think drivers know which is the best vehicle for the job and that is the only vehicle recognised the whole world over as a taxi - the TX4."

Rob's parting shot? "You don't get many tourists coming to London to ride in a Mercedes Vito now, do you?"

SMILE

Jewish humour...

A young Jewish mother was preparing a piece of brisket one Friday for Sabbath dinner. Her daughter was watching with interest as her mother sliced off the ends of the brisket before placing it into the roasting pan. The young girl asked her mother why she had done that?



The mother paused for a moment and said that she wasn't really sure!

"This is the way I always saw my mother make a brisket," said mum. "Let's call grandma and ask her."

So mum phoned her mother and asked why she always sliced the ends off the brisket before roasting?

The grandmother thought for a moment and then said that she too wasn't really sure, but that was the way she always saw her mother make a brisket!

By now, the two women as well as the young daughter were very curious, so they decided to pay a visit to the great-grandmother, who at 96 was in a residential home.

"You know when we make a brisket," the two explained almost simultaneously, "we always slice off the ends before roasting it. Why is that?"

Great-grandmum, even at 96, didn't need to think too hard.

"I don't know why you two do it," she said, "but I never had a pan that was large enough...!"

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PCO public enquiry?

Dear Ed

As chair of RMT Taxis London, I would like to thank you for the excellent coverage you gave to both us and the trade as a whole regarding recent events. Particularly the very worrying situation that seems to be coming a regular event at the PCO, whereby anything that can be done to cast the Hackney trade in a bad light - or reduce its quite rightly worldwide reputation - is done. As is obvious from our call for a Public Enquiry into all the working of the PCO, we at the RMT are not going to just stand by and let this situation continue. It's about time these public servants were made to be accountable to those they serve - the public - and those that pay their wages through licensing fees, the drivers - both Hackney and Private Hire. And I do mean the drivers, as it is they who pay by far the greatest portion of fees to the PCO. The very small percentage of fees that come from the PH operators seem to be directly inversely proportional to the influence these so called businessmen have over the work of both Taxi and PH drivers.

If you are an RMT member and not getting emails from the branch, please contact Dave Vidgen at davidvidgen@btinternet.com or phone Dave on 07899 786 433. At present we have over a 140 email addresses that keep bouncing messages back to us. This could be for several reasons, so if you email Dave directly, we can correct this and try and keep you up to date with events planned etc.

Eddie Lambert (V37)
Chairman RMT London Taxis Branch

M4 bus lane and Addison Lee...

Dear Mr Fisher

Thank you for your email regarding the use of the M4 bus lane by Private Hire vehicles. Whilst TfL is not responsible for the enforcement of the M4 bus lane, it is aware of the issue and the concerns raised by the taxi trade. As a result, TfL has been liaising closely with both the Highways Agency and Metropolitan Police and recently arranged a meeting to discuss this issue with them. All parties agree and are clear that Private Hire vehicles are not permitted to use the M4 bus lane and any non-permitted vehicles are committing an offence and subject to enforcement action by the police. The Highways Agency have expressed a strong desire to work closely with the police to address this problem.

In the meantime, TfL will continue to monitor the situation closely and will con-

tinue to remind Private Hire drivers and operators that any use of the M4 is subject to enforcement action.

Jeroen Weimar

TfL Chief Operating Officer - Enforcement and Compliance
When Call Sign first spoke to TfL, they informed us that there was nothing they could do re Addison Lee as the M4 was the responsibility of the Highways Agency. We disagreed with them in that regardless of who was in charge of the road, TfL were responsible for issuing licenses. We said that surely AL were flouting the law and as such should be reminded of who licenses them? Apparently that is what TfL then did ...Ed

Contamination?

Recently I had the same problem with my TX4 that we all go through - blown headlight bulbs - and had to make a visit to a garage to have them replaced, as we all know what a fiddly job that can be! I went to a well known garage situated under the railway arches at Three Colts Lane. This garage is named after the sort of home you would erect if you were going on a camping holiday in a street of the same name (got to give a cryptic reference of the garage name as legal proceedings are to follow). After completing the bulb changes, the mechanic offered to top up my levels and me thinking what harm could it do? A very bad mistake!

Off I then go, only for approx 90 miles later my brakes had practically failed. As I live in Kent, I managed to get my cab to an LTI garage in Dartford. Upon their inspection, it was found to have been caused by brake fluid contamination. Therefore, to keep within LTI guidelines, a major job was required that would cost me personally, the thick end of £1800 as LTI would not authorise the work to be undertaken under warranty. So with that figure and the obvious loss of earnings while the work took place, we can all see a simple task of topping up the levels has been a very, very expensive lesson learnt.

If there are any other drivers who have experienced a similar scenario with this garage, I would be grateful to hear from them as they may want to join in my legal procedure as many voices speak louder than one. **Call Sign** has my contact details...

Lee Pheby (E32)

Boxing clever

I received a PCN for stopping in a Box Junction in Shaftesbury Ave, the one by the Shaftesbury theatre as you come down from Bloomsbury Street. The photo shows the

whole of my cab stuck without escape. Having viewed the photos from 2 angles on line, I saw I was there for 8 seconds and was then looking at paying Camden £60. I phoned the LTDA, who put me through to their man in charge of PCNs. He asked if it stated where in Shaftesbury Avenue? As it didn't (and there are three in Shaftesbury Ave) he told me to appeal stating that the exact location was not given. It worked and I won the appeal.

It pays to join up as I would have paid the fine otherwise and remember to check all the detail on your PCNs. Never pay if you can appeal!

Darren Hawley (A80)

Well done Darren. My thoughts exactly! If we just cave in and pay, they will just present us with more and more tickets ...Ed

Colour Call Sign

Alan

The new format and look to the magazine is great! Congratulations!

Tom and Deb Carter, DaC software, Indiana, USA

Bus lanes...

Morning Alan

Just a quick question and to save a lot of time speaking with TfL. Re Shaftesbury Avenue and Piccadilly, are they putting back the old bus lane going westbound across Eros and are they doubling the size of the bus lane the length of Piccadilly going west.

Mike Leo (Z09)

So far as I know, the Shaftesbury Avenue bus lane you refer to would be for the benefit of the 38 bus route. I believe the LTDA have objected and it has been under negotiation for ages, but apparently no closer to any settlement. As for the Piccadilly bus lane, I've heard nothing and it may be just one of the 1000 rumours currently doing the rounds! ...Ed

Thanks LTFUC for a wonderful day...

To all our brilliant cabbies and helpers - On Saturday 26th September we were lucky enough to be taken on a very special trip by the LTFUC. They kindly took us to see the amazing show Hairspray in the West End. The lovely taxi drivers had got us 50 seats for the show and arranged to pick us up from the City to take us there. Our children are all from unfortunate or underprivileged backgrounds, but I don't know who was more excited, them or me! We had a coach pick us up to take us to the City to



Mailshot

Maishot continued from page 33

meet the taxis. Imagine the surprise when we saw the cabs. They were covered in balloons and we had a fantastic welcome from their wonderful drivers. They were so friendly and funny and the children just loved them. We were driven through the heart of London, from the City to the West End on a busy Saturday afternoon, with the cabbies sounding their hooters and waving at all the cars and people. Everyone laughed and cheered and all the children saw were smiles. I was asked by one of the children in my cab if they were famous people waving at us? I said: "No, you are the special people today, they are waving at you."

Arriving at the Shaftesbury Theatre, we were shown to our fabulous seats right at the front of the stalls. We couldn't have had a better view. The children were astounded by the whole experience so far, so imagine the excitement when the lights dimmed, the curtains parted and the music started. The show was spectacular and the whole experience amazing. When the interval came, it gave the children a better chance to explore the mysteries of the theatre. The statues around the auditorium with the sumptuous drapes and enormous chandelier got one of the children to comment that "it was nice of them to get the theatre decorations out for us!"

The second half was as spellbinding as the first. As the climax of the show came, the excitement rose and by the last song, many of these normally introspective, unsure, disillusioned children were in the aisles singing, waving and dancing. Their faces were a picture of total uninhibited joy. It was only when the show was over and we were allowed to be introduced to the cast that Marvin, one of my group of children, realised that he had been watching a live show. He had thought the entire experience had been played out before him on a giant screen. It was only then it struck me that for many of these children, entertainment only consisted of sitting in front of a screen, be it a television or computer. As we left the theatre, our amazing host of taxi drivers again met us and whilst travelling back to the City to meet our coach, Michael - one of the children in my cab - said to me: "I think this has been the best day of my life."

I cannot end this letter without expressing my special thanks and gratitude to Michael, the fabulous driver of our taxi and all the other drivers who gave up their time to make this day possible. Michael was so kind, friendly funny and caring towards our children and made it a very special and memorable day. Thank you for that day to remember...

Love Rossi and all the kids
'Giving a Child a Break' (Police Summer

Camp Project)

The report of the Hairspray outing is in this issue ...Ed

Don't forget your mother and father...

Your mother and father give you your bread and butter all the year round. So do our account customers - yet no sooner has it turned a bit busy than the 'bids' list starts filling up with uncovered trips. How soon we forget all the regulars that kept us going through the past year when things were so tough. Yet we still wonder why we see cars outside the doors of some clients. Now is the time that we should be showing how good we are; but if it's like this when just a bit busier, I can't help but wonder what we will be like if it gets really busy again? They now have car firms ready and waiting to take over and unless we pull our fingers out, that is exactly what will happen. Your mother and father wouldn't have given up; our customers can quite easily do so if they wish.

On a totally different subject, can someone remind us on the going home procedure ie how many jobs and how long you have to be signed on etc. And the new all-colour *Call Sign* is excellent - by far the best magazine in the trade.

Sid Nathan (K11)

Thanks for the letter Sid. It seems strange talking about getting busier, but it undoubtedly is. And yes, it is upsetting for those that have been on DaC for many years - the company we are supposed to own - to watch when trips aren't covered. Your warning is 100% right, because there was a time when account clients threatened to use cars, but knew that they never would because they were incapable of providing a good enough service. They can now and they do. Only we can stop them by providing that even better service. Some of us do, but it needs most of us to do it.

As for Code 3: Once you have been signed on for at least an hour and have covered a minimum of 5 account trips, you can put on your Code 3. You can then book into any zone and can accept or reject as often as you want, it will also unmask any AD trips. You can also bid for EC5 or SE75 trips but not book into those two zones. However, the bid trips will only offer you a job to your home zone or one of its back-up zones. You are then booked off for 6 hours ...Ed

Hi Alan

Can you please explain the thinking behind

not being able to *soon to clear* into E14? Several times I have done locals from the banks on the Island and find it frustrating having to wait till I'm clear before being able to book in again. We get regular messages outlining changes of booking-in criteria at the likes of SE75 and EC5, but no explanations for the reasons behind the changes. I cannot *soon to clear* into EC5 or E14 but I can into SE75? It seems so arbitrary. I look forward to your reply...

Mark Sherlock (W41)

Thanks for the letter Mark, I can't explain the answer, but I know a man who can! ...Ed

Allan Evans replies: Hi Mark, originally the E14 zone was made physical because security at CWM would refuse many drivers entry to Canary Wharf who did not have their *for hire* lights on, or were on an actual trip that was showing on their screens. To allow drivers to book into the physical zone (E14) and wait for account trips seemed the best option available. It also allowed those that wanted to use the cash rank both choices.

Unfortunately, too many drivers abused the STC function and were in areas way over the normal 15-minute period from the E14 boundaries. So many, in fact, that it became almost impossible to monitor. This zone is strictly monitored and now that it is physical, it works well. In April when the enforced change was implemented, there was an information sheet available at Drivers Reception and both Keith Cain and I mentioned it in our *Call Sign* articles (April 2009), which as you know is also available online at the *Call Sign* website (www.dac-callsign.co.uk).

Our Work?

I do not wish to get into an unrealistic debate with another driver regarding the definition of **our work**. However, the fact that we possess the license to **ply for hire** because we are qualified to do so, allows us to provide the service so revered and respected worldwide.

A *License* by definition, permits the holder to **legally** do that, which is otherwise prohibited by Law. Unfortunately, in our case, the licensing authority does nothing in any constructive way to protect us from the unlicensed individuals who pretend they are Taxi drivers. Strange that in the 21st Century, we still live in fear of a PCO's power to put a stop on our vehicles for some petty misdemeanour, yet they turn a blind eye to the antics of touts blatantly soliciting passengers! If they were to get their act together and



Mailshot

Mailshot continued from
page 34

really crack down on the touts, impounding their cars as do the police with uninsured and untaxed vehicles, then the high price we pay for our **right** to work, might seem worthwhile!

It is our work, and if a potential passenger chooses to use a minicab by phoning a licensed minicab organisation rather than a **real** Taxi, then we should ask why? What can minicabs offer that we don't? Price? No! AL's quotes are often higher than ours. The driver? We are the licensed ones with a safety reputation second to none in London. The vehicle? We have no real choice because of Draconian *standards of fitness*, but our cabs are clean and well maintained. It is OUR work and long may we prosper...

David Kupler (Y74)

Anyone else have a view on what "our work" is? ...Ed

Call Sign trip to Coventry

Hi Alan,

Just to say thank you for giving me the chance to visit LTI in Coventry. The trip was filled with new information and knowledge and well organised.

Thanks again to you and LTI...

Kamel Abdellaoui (J22)

Pleased you enjoyed it Kamel. Call Sign takes DaC drivers to LTI twice a year and we are the only London group travelling there consisting purely of taxi drivers ...Ed

Legal action

Hi Alan

Is it true that two trade groups are heading into a legal battle with each other? How PH must be laughing...

Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)

I agree with you 100% Divyesh. I don't know whose version of the disputed events are true and whose aren't. All I care about is that two trade organisations may well have to pay huge amounts to barristers and that is a real waste of their member's money. Whatever happened to printing your version of events if you were unhappy? ...Ed

Oneworld Heathrow Switches

Eight members of the **Oneworld** alliance will be concentrated in two of Heathrow's terminals rather than five from the beginning of November. The global airline grouping's biggest relocation project to date is due to be completed by the end of October, with the final moves of member airlines at their London hub.

All **Qantas'** operations at the airport and **British Airways'** Bangkok, Singapore and Sydney services will switch from Terminal 4 to Terminal 3.

Finnair and **Iberia** moved to Terminal 3 earlier this year, along with a number of BA short haul routes. Already based in Terminal 3 are other Oneworld carriers - **American Airlines**, **Cathay Pacific**, **Japan Airlines** and **Royal Jordanian**. All BA's other operations are now housed in the new Terminal 5. T3 is the closest of Heathrow's existing terminals to T5.

The project brings the operations of the alliance's eight carriers serving the airport from across all five of its passenger terminals to just two, as it aims to smooth transfers at its biggest European airport hub.

Terminal 3 is nearing the completion of a multi-million pound upgrade to bring its customer facilities up to a similar standard to those offered at Terminal 5, including a new BA lounge facility. A first class suite will open when its Sydney flights move there.

BA has also recently moved three of its London routes - serving Gibraltar, Malaga and Pisa - from Gatwick to Heathrow.

Mexicana became part of Oneworld in November, along with subsidiaries **MexicanaClick** and **MexicanaLink** as affiliate members.

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At the London Marriott West India Quay Hotel

Friday 6th November between 8am - 11am...

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The London Marriott West India Quay Hotel is the hotel that helps support the Disney trip and they are keen to encourage black cabs there...

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