

September 2009



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*The DaC driver and the Call Sign toastmaster!
But where's the bride?*



*As the Fresco family
try to come to terms
with losing a wife,
mother, sister and
grandmother,
Editor's wife Linda
writes about Carole
and says,*



"THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND..."



NASH'S NUMBERS

By Alan Nash (A95)

This issue has a car pounds update (last seen in the Oct '03 Call Sign). There are many changes. To locate a vehicle that has been removed for whatever reason by the authorities within the M25, just one number is needed - TRACE - 020 7747 4747. They identify where any vehicle has been removed to. Most bewildered passengers who have lost their vehicles should have been told the address, but they know we London cabbies know everything so ...

Borough	Car Pound Address
Brent	Fourth Way, Wembley, HA9 0LJ
Camden	Regis Road, NW5
City of London	Crown Wharf, Bidder Street, E16 4ST
City of Westminster	Park Lane, W1. (slip road to underground car park, north bound)
Hackney	Leven Road, E14 0LL
Hammersmith & Fulham	Barclay Road, SW6 1EH.
Islington	Regis Road, NW5
Kensington & Chelsea	63, Lots Road, SW10
Lambeth	Silwood Triangle, Landmann Way, SE14 5RL
Southwark	Mandela Way, SE1, by Tesco's
Tower Hamlets	Leven Road, E14 0LL
Wandsworth	Hallowfield Way, Mitcham, CR4 3YE

LEAVING THE O2...

Rather than draw a map, it's easier to explain. You probably all know how to set down at the O2 and where the rank is, for those that don't it's the very last roundabout at the northernmost end of Millennium Way. You then turn right into the taxi area. This is the easy way out and back into the Blackwall tunnel northbound from an event; when you leave the rank, at the roundabout instead of turning left back into Millennium Way, go straight across. The road looks more like a building site than a proper road, but carry on and take the left turn. This leads to a little one-way where you bear right and around to the mouth of the Blackwall tunnel. It's worth bearing in mind that when coming in on the A2 and when the traffic is snarled up back to Greenwich, it's a good idea to come off the A2, go up to the O2 and at the last roundabout turn left and follow the route as above. Works a treat, I know I've done it...!

WHAT'S ON

(September 09). Some notable events on this month (my choice) but for a full list of all 136 events, go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click 'What's On'. Now how simple is that ?

Venue	Event (times are start not finish)	Day	Date
Oval	England v Australia 11:00	Fri	04/09/2009
Wembley Stadium	England v Slovenia	Sat	05/09/2009
Lords	England v Australia 10:15	Sun	06/09/2009
Wembley Stadium	England V Croatia	Wed	09/09/2009
Hyde Park	Proms in the Park 17:00	Sat	12/09/2009
Tottenham	Manchester United 17:30	Sat	12/09/2009
Lords	England v Australia 10:15	Sat	12/09/2009
Royal Albert Hall	Last Night of the Proms 19:45	Mon	14/09/2009
Wembley Stadium	Coldplay	Fri	18/09/2009
Royal Albert Hall	Michael Ball	Fri	18/09/2009
Wembley Stadium	Coldplay	Sat	19/09/2009
Royal Albert Hall	Michael Ball	Sat	19/09/2009
West Ham	Liverpool 17:30	Sat	19/09/2009
Chelsea	Tottenham 16:00	Sun	20/09/2009
Royal Albert Hall 19:30	Elton John & Ray Cooper	Tue	22/09/2009
The O2 arena Music	Cliff Richard and The Shadows	Fri	25/09/2009
The O2 arena Music	Cliff Richard and The Shadows	Sat	26/09/2009
Fulham	Arsenal 17:30	Sat	26/09/2009
The O2 arena Music	Cliff Richard and The Shadows	Mon	28/09/2009
The O2 arena Entertainment	Michael McIntyre	Tue	29/09/2009
Wembley Arena	Michael McIntyre	Wed	30/09/2009

If you want a free 70+ page useful everyday document that lists fare table, postcodes, restaurants, hotels, clubs, police stations, city livery halls, lap dancing clubs, Heathrow & Gatwick terminals, pubs & bars, casinos, shop opening times and very importantly, LCA and Eurostar arrival times, with frequent updates. Simply go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click on UID.

from the editor's desk

Carole Fresco

Last month I complained that with everyone going away, I had little left to write about. I now realise how totally unimportant in the great scheme of things, that statement really was.

On Sunday 9 August, Linda's closest friend Carole – wife of TAXI columnist Al Fresco – passed away in Barts Hospital, just six weeks and three days after being diagnosed with cancer. That diagnosis came on Linda's birthday.

Alan and I have been friends for many years, but it was the friendship between our wives that took centre stage. They went everywhere together – from the hairdressers to the gym to the shops. They were often described as being like sisters. Carole's death has left her family distraught, but in her own way Linda felt many of the emotions Alan, Gavyn and Danny had to bear as her best friend slowly weakened. We were at the hospital every day and watched helplessly as Carole fought so hard against her illness. I also watched Linda's tears as we left Carole's bedside each evening. Sadly, the initial diagnosis had come too late and any chance of a recovery was just not to be.

It is often the way that those who have passed away before their time are portrayed as being loved and I have no doubt that is true on many occasions. But I think I can truly say that everyone loved Carole. She never had a bad word to say about anyone and both Linda and I were heartbroken as her time came – just 6 days before her birthday. The four of us had tickets for the Open Air Theatre at Regents Park to help celebrate the day. Never in a million years could we have guessed at the time of booking that Carole would no longer be with us.

All the Fresco family know what Linda and I thought of Carole and we don't need to repeat it here, other than to say that we miss her terribly.

Smart cars not so smart?

Rumours regarding the legality or otherwise of Westminster and Islington Council's Smart cars, with their roof-mounted CCTV cameras hovering around places that cab drivers may dare to stop for a bite to eat, seem to have been proved following a legal ruling in the Wirral (Cheshire). It came after an appeal against three parking tickets over a period of a week by a lady running an off licence in New Brighton. The PCNs had been issued via a Smart car. She said it was unfair that there were no warning signs. And she won!

This could mean that any Dial-a-Cab driver who has received a CCTV PCN issued via a Smart car, could be in line to get their money returned. The story is inside this issue...

Demise of the Taxi Board

When Brian Rice put into his *Call Sign* article last month that he was resigning as Chairman of the London Taxi Board, I never dreamed there would be such a collapse behind him. LTI and the LMCPA (proprietors) followed closely and as just one organisation was left at



the time of writing and it was over their activities at Heathrow that the exodus began, it seems unlikely that the group will reform.

My own view is that the three should have stayed and forced the other circuit out via a vote of no confidence, however, then with just DaC left as a taxi driver organisation, the LTB would have then carried too little weight. There will be those who say that it carried no weight anyway, but they would be very wrong. I've heard criticism on internet chat rooms for years that claimed the LTB was unelected and did nothing. Well, it may well consist of unelected representatives, but as the majority of the trade belong to nothing anyway and are happy to accept any benefits such as fare increases etc, then few really care because the world is full of groups consisting of representatives of other groups within their field. And of course the LTB cost drivers nothing!

The question is whether the LTB accomplished anything and they certainly did that. I had listed several of the things they had successfully done, but the Chairman's Report in this issue has a piece on the LTB and some of their achievements, so I am leaving that to him. However, I have published numerous reports in previous *Call Signs* involving meetings that Brian Rice has attended wearing his LTB hat and which were of tremendous benefit to our trade.

But if those who are cheering its demise can give me a good reason how we would have been better off without speaking to MPs and the Mayor's office etc, I'd be interested in hearing it. But please don't give me any rubbish about them being "unelected" 'cos that doesn't wash with me. If they have done no good, then I'm happy to listen...

United trade?

We have heard much talk lately of a united trade. Well, there can be no doubt that the more our trade organisations talk, the more benefit we can get. But other than superficially, can it ever happen?

On Friday 14 August, messages went out on Dial-a-Cab terminals saying that a drive-in was to take place at 2am outside *Tiger Tiger* in Haymarket. The purpose was to reclaim a rank. No one could argue with that objective. There were drivers from several different trade groups there, although it seems that those behind it were from Bob Crow's RMT union

and a taxi forum / blog known as *The Anderson Shelter*, whose chief writer is known as Thomas the Tank. Among Mr Tank's previous scribbles, he had written about being presented with a PCN from a Westminster Parking Officer whilst looking for a job outside the Haymarket club. He was legitimately upset, bearing in mind the non-stop touting that consistently goes on there. That led to the drive-in.

Call Sign later heard later that a representative of the LCDC – who as part of the *Joint Ranks Committee* had been negotiating a 9-cab rank outside the club – phoned Westminster Council's Director of Transportation, Martin Low, to complain about the PCN and was told that Mr Tank's ticket would be cancelled if the ticket number were passed over to him. Considering some of the negative publicity Mr Low has racked up from the trade press, this was a nice gesture from both Mr Low and the LCDC.

Was this some new trade solidarity? This magazine and the LCDC are not known for being buddies, but we believed that this was a good example of the trade finally understanding that unity is our best chance and of the good we can do by sticking together. In addition, a negotiated rank outside *Tiger Tiger* would have been a great result.

However, we were later told that the aforementioned Mr Tank told the LCDC to mind their own business and that if they were looking for a headline for *The Badge*, they should get their own parking ticket!

Ah well, back to Heathrow then...

Not so angelic!

Several DaC drivers have written to *Call Sign* and other trade papers to say that whilst waiting for a "present" from Angels at Wardour Street, as apparently their ads in those other papers suggest, they have been told by bouncers to go somewhere unpleasant and when mentioning the ads, were told to complete a task to themselves that has long been recognised as being a physical impossibility!

All I can say is that the drivers never read it in *Call Sign* as this magazine's policy is not to accept ads from strip or table dancing clubs. And besides, who'd want to deal with a club that is always surrounded by touts. You can see where they get the attitude from.

There was once a movie called *Angels with Dirty Faces*. This club seem to have their own movie – except it replaces faces with back-sides! Leave this establishment to those who deserve it...

Second class female PH drivers?

Try as I do not to mention Addison Lee, they keep poking their noses through the railings. Now a DaC driver has phoned to ask if I have ever seen a female AL driver, as he hadn't? The answer is that I don't think I have! If you have, I'd be interested in knowing. Surely Liam Griffin wouldn't be that naughty... would he???

Alan Fisher
Callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections Of The Chairman

Holiday Time

It's that time of year again when the work is even quieter than usual and August is definitely the quietest month of the year. Yet every year we seem surprised that it is so quiet, while all seem to agree that it was quieter than last August. However, this year you would be correct in that assumption - it is actually a little less busy than last August, at least the radio is any-way.

However, I am optimistic that the downturn has now bottomed out, because before we went into the holiday season our figures were becoming consistent week on week. They were not very good compared to what we had been doing in the past, but they were at least becoming consistent - consistently bad if you like - but I believe that consistency shows that things have reached their lowest ebb. At least I hope so...

Not only is work quiet, things in general are very quiet. So much so that the Editor of **Call Sign** has been scratching around Dial-a-Cab House searching for anything to fill the magazine, anything of interest that is!

Tenders

However quiet it is out there, internally we are in the process of completing tenders. Our largest account is out to tender at the moment, while our next three largest accounts go to tender over the next five months.

The terms of the present one are quite simple in as much as the tender starts by stating they spend £5million a year on *Ground Transportation* - £3m on taxis and £2m on cars - and they require a company that can handle and be responsible for distributing all that work to their chosen vendors. Consequently, to those in our trade who say we should not work with cars, what would they do regarding the tender document - not participate? We would be distributing cars if we were fortunate enough to win the tender.

As you can imagine, it is quite a worrying time when large accounts go to tender because there is always the possibility of losing them to a competitor. I am totally convinced there is not a company out there in our business that can offer the client our range of services and reporting, but all of a sudden while everything the client demanded in the past seems to still be relevant, the emphasis has definitely moved to cost.

One client has asked for 347 fixed prices, which I have refused to give. What is the point of having a meter when everything has a fixed price? Offering a few to the client's most frequented destinations is acceptable, but not from every postcode to postcode.

I am endeavouring to explain to the client that we operate on three tariffs and if a taxi company can offer one FP, then that is not in the client's interest. If they are offered the tariff three FP, then perhaps that could be too expensive at three o'clock in the afternoon and if the client was offered the cheapest tariff one option to make the price look attractive, then that would impinge on service during the tariff three time frame.

However, my biggest concern is how desperate some of our competitors might be - or are? Will they offer all FPs - and cheap ones at



that - in an attempt to win business? We all know that they would not give a very good service, but in the meantime we would still have lost the account!

London Taxi Board

I have read quite a lot lately in the trade press about organisations and individuals, including myself, that have recently resigned from the LTB and it would appear that it has now ceased to exist, which I believe is a great pity.

All members that have been with Dial-a-Cab for any period of time will know that I am a great advocate of a united trade, one body that represents most, if not all, of our industry. I have read of many people over the years that have referred to the *vested interests* in the trade - meaning proprietors, manufacturers and radio circuits. What I can't understand is why these driver organisations do not realise that they too are a *vested interest*. Everyone - and I mean everyone - in our trade is. This has been borne out in recent times by different driver organisations endeavouring to outshine their competitors, just in case they lose members to that other organisation. Is that not a *vested interest*?

I would like to make it absolutely clear at this point that I am not endeavouring to 'knock' driver organisations, far from it, I believe every

taxi driver should belong to a trade body for unity and to protect the individual's interests.

However, I have been to meetings attended by unions and associations when the trade and its future is being discussed and what always amazes me is that there is only one party that appears never to be considered and certainly never discussed... and that is the passenger or the public and what is in **their** interest! We sometimes seem to forget we are in the service industry.

I believe that certain organisations on the LTB brought that to the table and I know for certain that all authorities recognised that fact and always treated the LTB with the utmost respect, as we were seen as the moderate side of the trade. Believe it or not, I am quite proud of that because it's the easiest thing in the world to threaten to 'punch someone's lights out' unless they agree with you - not literally of course, but you know what I mean.

I believe over the years the LTB has contributed to some notable successes, including the introduction of the night tariff, campaigned for access to bus lanes and keeping minicabs out of them. We also campaigned for exemption to the Congestion Charge and were instrumental in stopping the all-over signage on minicabs. We also found MPs to be helpful, some of them even putting early day motions in support of our trade!

As I have always stated, I believe there should be one body to represent the whole trade to the authorities. I don't know if it will ever happen, I can but only hope. However, what I am certain of is that if it ever did come together, it would only be a matter of time before it destroyed itself with all the internal politics that goes on in our trade. And do you want to know why? It's because that is what we do best!

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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thelondonpaper

BRIAN RICE LASHES OUT AT Tfl!

A furious **Brian Rice** has told *Call Sign* that he was "absolutely disgusted" with **Murad Qureshi**, Chair of the Environment Committee at the London Assembly. The Dial-a-Cab Chairman – who met Mr Qureshi when criticising private hire's desire for signage – let his feelings be known after reading an interview in **The London Paper** – a freebie newspaper distributed around town.

Brian told us: **"I have just read the article in The London Paper and to say I am disgusted with Murad Qureshi is an understatement! If he is a Chairman at The London Assembly - then he shouldn't be. To make a statement like this is misleading and totally unprofessional."**

"Does he not realise that London taxi drivers drive the vehicles they are forced to drive by part of his very own authority, Transport for London? It isn't as though we have a choice. I think Mr Qureshi should be given some lessons on how London actually works, because he obviously doesn't know - but then I am not surprised!"

The article was headed: **Black cabs 'cost too much CO2'** and below an often-used picture of a row of taxi for hire lights, a sub-heading stated: **DIRTY AIR – Londoners should avoid black cabs...**

According to the paper, Mr Qureshi also added that Londoners should move away from black cabs as "...they produced almost as much carbon dioxide as the capital's 40,000 private hire vehicles," and he ended by saying: "For the conscientious Londoner who needs to use a taxi service, a licensed private hire minicab is the proper option."

The following day, the paper's owner, Rupert Murdoch, announced The London Paper would close at the end of September due to a lack of advertising.

Backing the DaC Chairman, former Tory Minister for Transport in London, Steve Norris told Call Sign:

"Not for the first time, Murad Qureshi has missed the point. It is hardly news that some private cars now emit substantially less than 120 grams per kilometre of CO2. It is equally true that the vast majority of London's private hire fleet, as elsewhere in the country, emit rather more. The London taxi, as **Brian Rice** has pointed out, is a specialised vehicle, which exists because it conforms to the conditions of fitness laid down by the PCO."



Murad Qureshi: "Don't use taxis, use private hire!"

But the issue is not whether a London taxi in its current form emits more or less CO2 than a Toyota Prius. The issue is whether it is sensible to seek to persuade people to use private hire rather than a licensed taxi on the basis of this one statistic and where Qureshi is so wrong is that - as any sane person would immediately understand - the issue is actually which form of personalised public transport is best suited to the journey you need to make. Personally, I use hundreds of taxi journeys every year alongside my Oyster card for the bus and tube. Other friends of mine who live in outer London, use more private hire because that suits their personal circumstances.

I'm forced to reflect on two things. The first is that if this is the best Mr Qureshi can do, he should think of another career because as a politician, he's as much use as a chocolate fireguard. The second is that August is called the silly season for good reason. This was a silly statement, which is frankly not worth taking seriously."

Did you know that about London?

Brooks Club at 61 St James Street was founded by William Almack in Pall Mall in 1764 before moving to its current location 14 years later and run by wine merchant William Brooks. So much in debt was Mr Brooks that when he died, he was buried under the club floor as so many creditors were after him!



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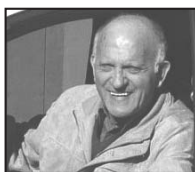
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"I must remember the words... Mr Rice, I am with the Welsh Sheep Farmers Association and I'd like to resign from the London Taxi Board...!"

Stopping at Cash Machines - Camden Trial...



Luke Howard, the Senior Strategy & Integration Manager at the PCO has told **Call Sign** of a trial by the London Borough of Camden to allow taxis (and private hire vehicles) to wait for passengers using ATMs at night on roads in that borough. This follows Transport for London's recent decision to formalise the exemption for taxis (and PHVs) on red routes.

From 27 July 2009, a six-month trial will operate allowing taxis to stop on yellow lines and wait for passengers to use cash machines in the Borough of Camden. Mr Howard said:

"As on red routes, the trial will operate every night between 22:00

and 06:00. Licensed taxis (and licensed PHVs displaying the red route exemption signage) will be able to stop for up to five minutes to allow passengers to use a cash machine. Waiting is still prohibited at bus stops with wide yellow lines, although taxis are allowed to stop at these to pick up and set down passengers. At all other times of the day, the normal stopping restrictions apply.

This trial aims to address concerns about the safety of taxi and private hire customers using cash machines at night. If the trial is successful, then Camden Council will consider making this exemption permanent. Other boroughs may follow suit, but for now this exemption only applies on red routes or in Camden.

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

Further information on stopping restrictions can be found in PCO Notice 44/06 (guidance on stopping restrictions for taxi drivers) and 04/07 (wide red line).



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According to Scottish taxi makers Allied Vehicles, they are looking at the London taxi market following a High Court ruling on July 31st that Allied claim allows the company to sell its cabs in London, Liverpool and Manchester.

The Glasgow company had been refused official sanction in 2007 by TfL for their Peugeot E7 cab to be used as a London taxi alongside LTI. TfL said the main problem was that the E7 could not meet the turning circle requirements. Allied has also spent over two years in a court battle with Liverpool City Council to attempt to overturn a ban on taxis for the same reason. Allied had support from the disability lobby who said that as the E7 could take a wheelchair, the turning circle wasn't really necessary.

Now Mr Justice Blake in the High Court has said that the Liverpool ban contravened EU competition laws in addition to the 1995 *Disability Discrimination Act*.

Allied Chairman, **Gerry Facenna**, described the ruling a massive boost for his company. He said: "We are very excited about

Can Allied Sell The E7 In London?

it. Dealers all over the country are contacting us to say that they think this is going to open everything up."



Will London see the E7?

He also described LTI as "on the rocks" following the Coventry-based company's decision to withdraw sales dealerships from next year.

Liverpool City Council had a month to launch an appeal, but said they would wait to see the official judge-

ment. Their original concern was that some of Liverpool's streets were narrow and that the E7 would have great difficulty in turning round. They also expressed concern over the vehicle's sliding doors. A council spokesperson said: "We reached our decision to ban the taxis after lengthy consideration. Our concerns are also shared by a number of authorities."

Although Allied profits showed a large

increase at the end of their 2008 accounting year, their GM, Donald Pow said that the market had become much tougher since then. He said:

"We took a significant drop around the turn of the year, but things are beginning to pick up again and we are doing well with mobility cars and electric vehicles. He added that the current year's figures would show a rise in year-on-year sales and added that the company remained profitable."












An LTI spokesperson told **Call Sign**:

"Allied won a ruling in the High Court that Liverpool City Council's decision to retain the Conditions of Fitness needed to be re-looked at. This was decided on a range of issues including procedure. We await the judge's written ruling.

"The case was Allied against Liverpool Council and does not affect London, Manchester or any other area. Liverpool Council needs to decide how they will respond to this, but the presentation of LTI as "on the rocks" is weak. It doesn't mention that we raised £9.4 million on the markets a month ago or that we have achieved 91 Government Scrappage deals against Allied's 2 deals, as recently announced by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd!"

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"DaC drivers joining at rate of thirty a day!" John Murphy, Black Cab Fuels

The August *Call Sign* wrote about a new fuel card scheme that guarantees to slash your diesel costs! This new card for Licensed London Taxi drivers only, means you can now take advantage of an exclusive commercial diesel rate. Following that last issue, John Murphy called us to say that **Dial-a-Cab** drivers were joining at the rate of thirty a day! Closer to publication date, that figure was slowly decreasing as we were running out of drivers! Of course there is nothing to stop ANY taxi driver (no PH drivers) joining the scheme, so if your friends are interested, please give them joining details (see bottom of article).

It means that once you are on the system with the Black Cab fuel card (currently using the Fast Fuel commercial card) whenever you purchase fuel at any

Texaco or Morrisons forecourt, you no longer need to pay the pump price. For example, for the week commencing Monday 10 August through to Sunday 16 August 2009, the Black Cab Fuels diesel rate was 97.9p per litre irrespective of the price shown at the pump! The London average during the same period was 104.5.

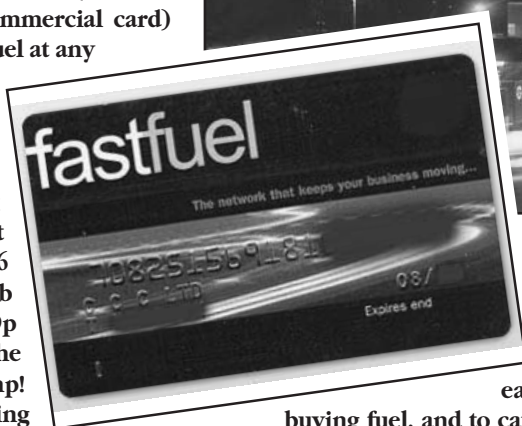
The card's unleaded petrol price (you or your wife can use the card for the family car) for the same period was 100.9p.

What makes this Black Cab Fuel Card so good is that not only is it absolutely free with no monthly fees or hidden costs, but you can decide if and when you want to use it! There are no minimum obligations or penalties for non-usage. You just pay the exclusive Black Cab Fuels rate, which is set each week and fixed for 7 days. The rate for the following week is sent as a text message to your mobile free of charge every Friday and is valid for the following week from Monday through to Sunday. If you see a better rate somewhere – and that is unlikely – but if you do, then you don't have to use the card!

When you fill up at a **Texaco** or **Morrisons**, you hand over the Black Cab Fuel card and instead of paying cash or using your own card, you sign for the fuel purchased and the amount is debited from your bank account 2 weeks after the end of the week via direct debit, in effect giving you 2-3 weeks interest free credit! 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.

Black Cab Fuels aims to combine the purchasing power of 24,000+ London

SLASHING YOUR DIESEL BILLS!



Taxi drivers, who spend over £12 million pounds each month

buying fuel, and to catch up to the haulage firms and large fleet operators who have been taking advantage of fixed rate commercial Fuels Cards for years. In that time, taxi drivers have continued to pay full retail prices despite providing a valuable, high quality transport service across London.

There have long been rumblings of discon-

tent from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers over the years via the *Mailshot* letters pages in *Call Sign* with regard to not receiving any fuel subsidy from **Transport for London**, nor being organised as a group to negotiate benefits when buying a whole range of goods and services.

With the price of diesel seemingly on the up, Black Cab Fuels now offers a genuine way to dramatically cut your costs. For more information on how to open an account, visit www.blackcabfuels.co.uk or call 0800 987 5701 and speak to John Murphy.

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For the first time ever in Call Sign, Keith Cain explains in detail about a glitch in the system that caused several drivers to lose their place on Dial-a-Cab. Here he explains...

Why Drivers Were Expelled

Recently I had the responsibility of chairing a Complaints meeting that included seven drivers who had discovered a loophole in the dispatch system and exploited it for their own financial gain. Normally, nothing is ever written or spoken about a complaints meeting. However, because of the severity of the driver's actions and the strong beliefs I have regarding the fairness the Society operates under, I wanted all members to understand what the problem with the system was, how the events progressed that led to the controllers finding these drivers and reassure everyone that the problem has been fixed.

Back towards the end of April, it came to the Board's attention from a driver that one evening, having done a *soon to clear* into E14 and being given a queue position of 30+, when clearing the trip they were immediately sent a trip offer. Innocently the driver accepted the trip and carried out the journey. While waiting for the client to get into their cab, the driver thought how strange it was that they were offered a £30 trip that must have been rejected by so many drivers. As the work was slow on E14, it just did not add up and something had to be wrong.

When Allan Evens and I first heard of this, we just started scratching our heads because in all the years we have had the data dispatch system installed, nothing like this had ever occurred before. Our IT department felt it was a bug that had always been there, but which due to the downturn in work, had only just appeared. Personally, I did not accept this because even during the busy times after midnight there were always quiet times when this would have occurred. Coincidentally, it all happened the same day that we altered E14O back to E14 and you may recall messages sent out informing drivers that the *soon to clear* function on E14 was no longer permitted.

Switching zones

Tom and Debbie Carter were informed immediately and quickly got on the case to find out what was causing the glitch. The Board felt that the chances of a driver clearing a *soon to clear* trip and a trip being fired into the system at that same time happening again was so remote, that we felt we had sufficient time to find the problem, work on a fix, have the fix sent to us for the IT department to test and install it on the live system before any announcement needed to be made. About a week to ten days later, a controller who by chance was monitoring a driver regarding something totally different, found on his logger that he was booking in to E1 and within 12/15 seconds booked into E14. Having got a queue position in E14, he then immediately booked back into E1 and kept doing this for a number of minutes. While this driver was doing this, he did not receive any trip offers but it raised suspicions by his actions that drivers were now aware that there may be a



problem within the system.

It was at this point that the controllers needed to understand the intensity of the problem and how they could monitor the fleet accurately enough to get answers. Then one controller remembered that this particular driver was friendly with one other driver. It was decided to view the other driver's logger to see if he was doing the same thing. Sure enough, the logger proved beyond doubt he too was doing it, which meant the problem within the dispatch system was far greater than at first thought.

The difference with the second driver was that he was booking into the same zone rather than booking into two separate zones. This driver was offered a trip from E14 while his queue position was 17. He did the trip.

It was now obvious that the glitch was not solely attributed to *soon to clear* trips, it was much more serious. Our IT department informed Tom and Debbie Carter who speedily went about finding a solution. It was still puzzling as to why, all of a sudden, the system was allowing drivers to simultaneously book into the same zone. If you remember, whenever you booked in to the same zone, a message would appear on the screen informing the driver they were already booked in the zone.

How to sort it out

There was now only one way to determine how serious the problem had become and that was for the controllers to spend the majority of their shift viewing every driver's logger who had accepted a trip from E14 and all other busy zones. They were checking to see the driver's queue position and if when they booked into the zone, were they continually booking into the same zone every 12/15 seconds. Meanwhile, more drivers were contacting Board members to inform them of the rumours that were starting to go round. Some told of a trip they had been offered immediately they booked into a zone and as before, could not believe so many drivers had rejected it for them to be offered it. There were calls to the Complaints Officer stating that certain

individuals were going to Canary Wharf and bragging about what they were doing and how much money they were earning. Everyone who spoke to someone at the office had their loggers checked to ensure they were still working the system correctly. With constant messages being sent out instructing drivers to book in correctly as the zones were being monitored, only seven drivers were found over a six-week period to be exploiting the system.

The rest is history; the culprits were issued with a complaints letter and they immediately stopped doing it. They all later attended a complaints hearing (except one) and the Complaints Committee found them guilty of exploiting the system for their own financial gain. Two later made appeals to the Board of Management, who upheld the original decision. The driver who chose to not attend his complaint hearing, decided to leave the Society and had his equipment stripped out. Interestingly, this driver's complaint hearing was the very last one of the day. I wonder if he was tipped off as to what the others findings were?

For obvious reasons, as the Chairman of that meeting I cannot report on the actual points of each hearing except to say that what I found most extraordinary were the explanations each driver gave to justify their actions. Before my eyes, I could see that the days of our Society being known as a *gentleman's circuit* being eroded. I know drivers work for themselves, but in my 25 years of being a member and having had first hand experience of how drivers worked and putting themselves out to complete the trips for the good of the Society, it was clear that a small minority had only their own best interests in mind. That's not how this organisation was founded and it's not how this Board operates today.

I have written before and have stated while addressing members when standing for election, I am adamant I will do everything possible for this Society to operate fairly for every member, from our method of dispatching the work, to treating individuals the same when they need the help of the Society...

Keith Cain
Call Centre Manager
Driver Operations Manager

Call Sign

September 2009

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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*

Continued from August...

Carriage Officers were tough; they made your life hell. When I got my badge, I learnt the hard way why they made life so hard. Remember, you were told if you did not like the idea of being a public servant, then don't do the job. I'll give an example of this later...

Back to my drive. The tester used me to do his shopping and at the same time stopped the cab on hills up and down and made me do a three-point turn in a lane that was only just wide enough. We were out over an hour. On returning to the PCO, he got out of the cab and looked at me. "You're a lazy driver," he informed me, "twice I heard the ratchet on the hand brake click on the last notch. The ratchet will soon wear out. You will be stopped in traffic on a steep hill. Walking between you and the stationary lorry in front is a mother with two small children. This is when the ratchet slips and your cab crushes this innocent family to death. Yes, I will pass you, but think about that family when you use your handbrake."

But I had passed! At last I had my nice new licence and second hand badge. You didn't get a new badge - mine was steel, rusty, chipped and old.

Renting a cab...

York Way Motors was one of the biggest cab garages in London and old man Levy, the

governor, had lent me a cab - both to learn to drive in and to use for my driving test. In return I agreed that when I got my licence, I would spend a year driving for his garage. So, full of myself, I arrived at York Way with my new licence. There were still one or two pre-war Austin Low Loaders that had seen war service acting as, among other things, fire engines towing water pumps behind them. The Carriage Office had allowed them to be converted back to cabs to cover the time their plate would have had left if the war had not intervened. Naturally I was the ideal mug to drive this 'beautiful' Low Loader with its extended plate!

An ideal cab? Acceleration unbelievable? Horse-drawn carts, which in those days were numerous, could and often did have a better take off speed than my cab! The windscreen wipers were temperamental, operated by a vacuum that was obtained by taking a pipe from the inlet manifold to a tank, with a pipe from there to the wipers. Even if they were working perfectly (very rare indeed) and you switched them on as it started to rain, you had a problem. Happily, with a loud sucking noise, they would creep across the windscreen, but if you accelerated you quickly used up the vacuum in the tank and your wipers would slow down and stop. Can't see anything? Tough luck. Take your foot off the accelerator to make a vacuum and hey presto, you could see again!

Winter, which had a nasty habit of coming round every year, had arrived. With no window

on the driver's side and no door on the nearside (just a hole for the luggage), the wind and rain succeeded brilliantly in making you wet and cold. Never mind, you had a bit of tin above the driver's door to stop the rain hitting you. It worked well if you were stationary on a rank and it was not windy. One day as I was pulling out of York Way Motors, the foreman came up and offered me a wiper blade. I said I didn't need it. He ignored me and tossed it on the space behind the windscreen. As usual, he was right and I was wrong. That night it both snowed and was windy. The wind-blown snow came into the cab and covered me. That was bad enough, but it had also blown onto the inside of the windscreen. I found out why the foreman had insisted on an extra wiper blade...

Buying a new cab

After the first month, I decided I would buy my own cab. Having been told of the problems in getting a new cab and the waiting list, I arrived at **Mann & Overton** full of the joys of spring, but soon found difficulties. These were soon ironed out when I told them I would not need the cab for at least eleven months - but would give them a cheque now for £500. The fact there was no choice obviously helped! All of a sudden, nothing was too much trouble! I had already made arrangements with my bank for the difference for when I collected the cab. For the next 11 months, I worked seven days a week...

Continued next month...

From Saudi To Israel

LTI link Arab states to the Jewish state!

Following last month's news of TX4 sales to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Dubai, news now reaches **Call Sign** of an Israeli company ordering the classic London taxi.

According to Matthew Cheyne, LTI's International Market Development Director, these are exciting times for the whole team. Whether that is because the partnership with Geely at their Shanghai factory to produce the *Englon* TX4 is proving to be so remarkably successful, or because it has linked Arab state buyers with Israel - something few other brands have managed to do successfully - Matthew refused to say!

The Israeli company is Eldan Ltd, a leading car rental firm. They have signed up with the *London Taxi Company* (aka LTI Vehicles) to import and market the Shanghai versions of the London taxi models built by Geely Auto. This version will have several improvements in the suspension and the passenger compartment. It also has a more powerful aircon unit

to deal with the temperatures, which can reach over 40.

TX1 and TX2s can be seen outside many Israeli hotels, but these were usually private deals, this is the first time the TX4 has been purchased in a commercial deal.



A TX2 waits outside an Israeli Hotel. Now the TX4 is coming

TAXI DRIVERS LEGAL PROTECTION

After only nine months of operation, Taxi Drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd is now firmly established, with an ever-increasing membership.

Founded by **Alan Fleming**, former Chairman of the LCDC and **Dave Cohen**, former Membership Secretary and Treasurer, we are now providing legal representation for our existing members.

Taxi Drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd is a non-political organisation, which has been set up to provide legal representation for London's licensed taxi drivers.

For further information and membership enquiries, take a look at our new web site at:

www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk

Alternatively, our Email address is topsltd2009@googlemail.com.

Alan Fleming and Dave Cohen

As we go through life, we gather many acquaintances along the way but can count ourselves lucky to find a few that you can call true friends. Carole Fresco was a true friend. Someone I could always rely on to be loving, caring, supportive and honest. I could always rely on Carole to lift my spirits when I was down and be someone who was always there for me in both good times and bad.

We shared so much together in our lives, laughing together at family occasions, choosing our outfits together for weddings and barmitzvahs.

I remember clearly when Alan and I got married; Carole was so excited for us both! She helped me organise my outfit, my hair, arranged for her Alan to have his taxi cleaned and bedecked with white ribbon ready to take me from her house to the synagogue and was there by my side throughout the day.

The reception was held at our home and I seem to remember that Carole was the last to leave and was even seen to be hovering our hall on the way out!

Sadly life isn't always about fun days. Carole and I were also there for each other when times were darker and we needed each other's support. Who else could I ring at 7 in the morning, not feeling at my best and yet still be cajoled into believing that going to the gym would be good for me and that as I was up anyway, why not go – and of course she was right.

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

Kupkake's Korner



London by night...

There's a free for all in London
especially at night,
no authority with muscle
will ever put it right.

Dean Street is on fire
so Oxford Street is closed,
all those cabs for hire
all with nowhere to go!

The rickshaws are all plying
ringing bells touting for fares,
they're jackals following lions
but police don't seem to care.

But they always have time to hound **us**
when we over-rank or rest,
ignoring the obstructing Bendy Bus...
Soho's in a mess!

The drunks are holding up lampposts
with a bottle and a fag,
the beggars sit by cash points
looking very sad.

But we're out there regardless
streetwise and aware,
PCO ready to charge us...
should we dare refuse a fare...!

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Following the sad death of Al Fresco's wife Carole, Editor's wife Linda wanted to put her own feelings into words...

Thank You For Being A Friend



Carole with husband Al at Linda's granddaughter's Batmitzvah

It was Carole who sat with me when I was scared to be on my own whilst recovering from my illness, so that Alan could eventually go back to work.

As I write this, I am looking at a photo of Carole and I taken at my granddaughter's batmitzvah in May (*see cover photo*), just one month before Carole was taken ill. We both had great big silly grins on our faces and that is how I will remember Carole. Making me

laugh and filling me with her infectious enthusiasm for life.

Carole had a great capacity for loving and caring for all those she held dear. I am privileged to say I was one of many for whom that was true. I will miss her so very much.

Sleep in everlasting peace my darling friend Carole.

Linda Fisher

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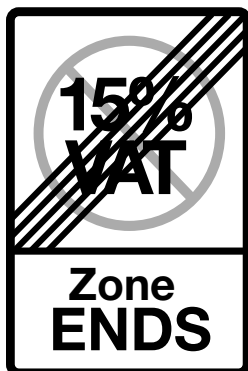
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Official fuel consumption figures for the TX4 in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.5 (11.1) - 28.0 (10.1), Extra Urban 38.2 (7.4) - 41.5 (6.8), Combined 32.0 (8.8) - 35.2 (8.0). CO2 emissions: 211 - 233 g/km.

Dial-a-Cab driver, **Graham Ellis (S95)** was facing a major operation on his back. He was told that if it didn't work, not only would he never drive a taxi again, but he could also end up in a wheelchair. Then a stroke of luck; Graham was talking about his problem to another driver who recommended physiotherapy with someone he had been using for some time and who had helped his back problem. Ready to try anything, Graham went to the **Barking Physical Therapy Centre** and saw **Andy Apsey**.

Graham told **Call Sign**: "Following that serious back injury, I was facing the prospect of a major operation, which, if unsuccessful, could have resulted in me ending up in a wheelchair. I was in constant pain, unable to work or even walk more than a few steps and my GP, in so many words, said I would have to learn to live with the situation. Then another cab driver recommended me to Andy to see if he could help. I'm pleased to say that even after only one treatment, I felt some improvement and have been going to him now for physiotherapy treatment on a regular basis ever since the early 90s. These keep me pain free and able to work. Despite the fact that Andy is blind, he has a wicked sense of humour and visits to him are professional but relaxed and informal and I always come away feeling it is money well spent."

Because cab drivers seem prone to back and general muscular problems, **Call Sign** spoke to **Andy Apsey** to find out more about the **Barking Physical Therapy Centre**. He told us...

"How often have you experienced neck and back pain as a taxi driver? Have you perhaps also experienced pain and discomfort in your legs, arms or hands? I qualified as a physiotherapist in 1983 and established my own physiotherapy and complementary medicine centre based in Barking in 1994, after working 16 years for the NHS. Throughout these many years of work, I have helped numerous cab drivers



Graham Ellis - Physiotherapy saved his career

with their various physical problems. I have developed a technique of working using a combination of massage, manipulations, advice on exercises and posture and the use of up-to-date electrotherapy equipment backed up with evidence based research on its effectiveness in the promotion of tissue repair.

Massage and manual therapy: I have undertaken further qualifications in massage and gained a diploma in sports massage from the London School of Sports Massage (with honours). Cab drivers that I have helped in the past with specific problems have elected to attend on a regular basis to have neck and back massage,

DaC driver: Physiotherapy Saved My Cab Driving Career!

which has various therapeutic benefits as well as giving the opportunity to discover potential issues before they become problems.

I have completed an orthopaedic medicine course and gained expert skills in manipulations for neck, back and joint problems as well as deep transverse frictions massage for ligaments, muscle and tendon injuries, which I have used to great effect. All the therapists that work at my centre are experts in their own right and fully qualified. They are encouraged to attend regular courses so that they can offer the best possible service to clients. Personal professional development is essential.

DaC driver Graham Ellis has been attending the centre since the early 1990s, having been recommended to me by another cab driver. He initially came with lower back pain and stiffness with radiating pain down his leg. Graham has been a cab driver for many years and his work exacerbated his condition. He experienced immediate relief following his physiotherapy treatment and has attended the centre on a regular basis, receiving neck and back massage.

As well as Physiotherapy, the centre offers Acupuncture, Shiatsu, Indian head massage, Osteopathy, Reflexology, Sport and remedial massage."

The Barking Physical Therapy Centre is at 90 Longbridge Road, Barking, IG11 8SF. If you are interested in more details or want to make an appointment, see the ad in this issue.

Andy Apsey is offering a huge 30% discount on treatments for Dial-a-Cab drivers.

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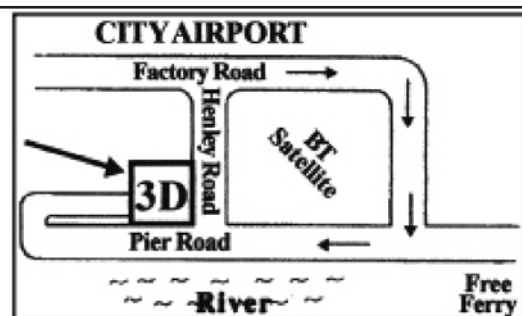
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The first day of August saw the TfL funded Transport Operational Command Unit (ie the Cab Enforcement Unit or TOCU) take on London's bad guys involved either as illegal cabs or touting.

The overnight operation known as Helvellyn 2, is part of an ongoing battle by the Met Police to rid the capital of the above two undesirable elements of society and on that particular Friday and Saturday, 24 arrests were made from the many vehicles that were stopped.

Uniformed Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers patrolled some of London's known hotspots to tackle touting, illegal operating, **taxi ranking offences**, illegal plying for hire and unlicensed drivers and vehicles. They also offered advice to members of the public on safer travel options and the danger of illegal cabs. Bar and club managers whose venues attract high numbers of illegal cabs, were advised on the danger these cabs pose to their customers.

Chief Superintendent **Joe Royle** of TOCU later said:

"We are working together with our policing partners to keep London moving safely by driving down crime and the fear of crime even further. Illegal cabs and touting undermines the legitimate cab trade and raises the fear of crime. The Transport Operational Command Unit regularly targets policing activity on unlicensed and uninsured vehicles, and carries out major operations targeting offenders who pose as taxi or minicab drivers.

At Three2go on September 12 London taxi drivers Run or walk 5k...



Three2go is the third in the annual exciting 2go running race series and family festival, leading up to the London Olympic Games in 2012. It aims for community participation and fun for all the family, with a range of celebrities joining in including elite international triathletes Annie Emmerson and Rachel Joyce. There's a race for everyone, from the marathon down the Lee Valley from St Margarets, to the 5k chip-timed race around Hackney Marshes. The 1k fun run and family festival on Hackney Marsh will round off the day.

London taxi drivers will be playing a crucial role in 2012, but our work-life is sedentary – many of us were very fit, others have never got into regular exercise. So Three2go have set up a 5k race just for London cabbies and LTDA are donating a trophy for the winner!

Sign on at www.three2go.org.uk
Phone 02070917347 or email
three2go@madasafish.com

OPERATION HELVELLYN NABS 24 ILLEGAL CABS

But they won't tell us how many were taxis...



Part of Taxiwise Christmas campaign asking: "Which one is the rapist?" But still the touts are there...

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

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 also announced last year that the number of dedicated cab enforcement officers in the Capital would be doubled to 68. The Cab Enforcement Unit has made over 4,000 arrests for touting and cab-related offences since 2003.

We at **Call Sign** would never complain about these operations, in fact we have been involved with two of them in the past and support them wholeheartedly. But why is it that whenever we ask – as we did on this occasion and just as we have several times in the past – just how many of the 24 were licensed taxis, we get the answer that the breakdown is not available? Could it be that the answer is none and that the PCO's ambition of equality just doesn't work, because many PH drivers just can't survive without touting?

John Mason is the new *Director of Taxi and Private Hire* at the PCO. Let's see how helpful you can be Mr Mason. **Call Sign** has given you the question, will you provide an answer? Our magazine is always open to you...

Cut in taxi hours working?

The safety charity BRAKE, is calling on the government to limit the number of hours taxi drivers can work before being compelled to take a proper break. The family of Gary Glymond, who was knocked down and killed in South Yorkshire on his 19th birthday by a taxi in 2008, supports the move. The driver had admitted working for 13 hours without a break. The Ministry for Transport told **Call Sign** that drivers had a responsibility not to drive an excessive number of hours and especially when tired, but that they had no current plans to bring in legislation.

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PRESENTATION IN MEMORY OF DOUG SHERRY

Three of London's taxi trade charities have joined together to dedicate a Diasend Modem in memory of the late **Doug Sherry MBE**.

David Lessman (D19), Chairman of the *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children* said: "Taxi trade charities all work hard for different causes. For our charity, the **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** and **The Taxi Driver of the Year Charity**, one person had a common bond and will be much missed. That man was Doug Sherry."

Russell Poluck MBE (T55), Chairman of the *Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund* welcomed everyone present. The Diasend Modem is a relatively new technology whereby patients with diabetes can download data that has been downloaded from blood glucose meters. The hardware consists of a small box that reads most of the current BG meters and several makes of insulin pumps using appropriate USB cables or built in infrared receivers. The data is transmitted directly to the internet server using General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), meaning that much valuable time can be saved by these professionals in



helping make adjustments for patients.

Richard Hudd, Chairman of the *London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled*, presented flowers to Doug's wife, Audrey. When the three charities decided that they wanted to mark Doug's life in some tangible way, Audrey chose the **London Medical Centre** in Marylebone High Street to receive the equipment. It was staff at this clinic that had helped Doug with his diabetes, particularly during the last weeks of his life. Audrey thanked

everyone for attending the dedication and for all their support. The Diasend Modem – accepted by Dr Abrahams on behalf of the centre – together with a dedication plaque, is now in use at the clinic.

The photo shows (L-R): Former DaC Board member and current President of the LTBAWD Harry Joel MBE, together with his Chairman Richard Hudd, Dr Abrahams who accepted the Diasend Modem on behalf of the Centre, Russell Poluck, Chairman of the TDoYCF and David Lessman, Chairman of the LTFUC

Noises off to Paul!

When **Paul Leonard (T86)** heard loud clattering noises coming from somewhere around his TX1 cab, he immediately thought it was the exhaust emission system playing up.

"It got so bad that I couldn't stand the rumble any longer," Paul told **Call Sign**. "I noticed it was particularly prominent at around 50 mph on the motorway and suspected that the turbocharger was the culprit. So I naturally went back to my emissions system supplier to get it sorted. They checked out the whole system thoroughly, but could find nothing wrong and said it was nothing to do with them," he continued.

With one possible source of the awful din eliminated, his nerves in shreds and unable to tolerate the clatter any longer, Paul drove carefully over to his service garage for them to investigate the crash, bang, wallop each time Paul drove at any sort of speed, regardless of the road surface.

"I demonstrated the problem and once the cab was up on the ramp, a speedy check underneath it revealed a worn Universal Joint," Paul continued, his voice revealing noticeable relief that the noise had been so quickly diagnosed.

"The worn part was soon replaced and while I was there with the cab conveniently up in the air, I thought it wise to have the auto gearbox serviced at the same time. It glides along now," a much happier Paul told **Call Sign**.

For those less well informed, there are two universal joints, one at either end of the tubular propeller shaft, which transmits the drive from the gearbox to the rear axle and thence onto the rear wheels, so driving the cab forward.

These flexible 'X' shaped couplings allow the drive to pass smoothly to the rear wheels, even though the wheels themselves might be bouncing about due to uneven road surfaces. Clever stuff! Well yes, clever that they pass the drive smoothly regardless of road wheel movement, until they wear out that is! And that's when all

sorts of noises can be produced, echoing around the cab. Invariably these knocks and clonks will increase directly with the speed of the cab, easing diagnosis.

As Paul found out to his satisfaction, worn U/Js are easily replaced, bringing calm to otherwise frayed nerves and aching ears!

The picture shows a typical TX1 universal joint extending rearwards from the end of the tubular propeller shaft and bolted to the rear axle drive flange. Later models of taxi will have differing types of joints, but the basic principal of delivering smooth power to the rear wheels remains the same.



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DAC CUT-PRICE TRIPS WITH...



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

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

The prices to DaC drivers?

Just £59 return standard class OR...

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

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

Dial-a-Cab Board member Tom Whitbread made the front cover of his local paper recently when the *Hackney Gazette* ran a piece and photo on page 1 and a fuller story and photo on page four. The article was headed *Kids' charity founder waiting for your call* and was about the charity set up by Tom and former DaC driver Bob Heath and about getting more children's names put forward who have a wish they would like fulfilled.

Tom and Bob have been helping seriously ill youngsters to make their dreams come true for almost 20 years. Bob's wife, Jacqueline and a friend, Fred Wooding, help them. They are currently looking for more applicants to come forward.

The pair set up Dial-a-Dream at DaC's Brunswick Place office in 1991 and the charity has enabled more than 1,000 dreams to come true for kids nationwide. Tom, who lives in Dalston, told the *Gazette* that the number of requests had slowed and the charity wanted to offer more help - but needed to hear from youngster's families. Dreams down the years have included sending kids to Florida, where Dial-a-Dream owns three villas near Disneyland.

Showing the side that DaC drivers rarely hear of, Tom, who has three children and four grandchildren of his own, said that there was nothing like the smile on a child's face when Dial-a-Dream made their dream come true.

"The problem," said Tom, "is to find people to come up with the right dreams. It has to be the child's dream and no one else's. We do not want to hear from people interested only in a holiday. We have strict criteria. If people meet that, we will do all we can to make sure their child has an experience they will never forget."

The list of dreams could fill up a page on their own and in addition to going abroad or

Tom's Dial-a-Dream Makes the Front Page!



This photo saying Dream Maker for Hire was part of the article

wanting a bike etc, also include meetings with TV celebrities, footballers, WWE wrestlers and many other sports people! They have also arranged for children to spend a day with Gatwick customs staff and riding on a vintage railway.

Call Sign readers will remember the recent article about sending 13-year-old cystic fibrosis sufferer, Jodie Crocker, to Disneyland with her family. Jodie then wanted to put something back and will be running 5k in Hyde Park on September 6 to help raise more funds for cystic fibrosis research in the *Adidas Challenge*.

Tom continued his interview by telling the paper: "If it gives them the willpower to say 'let me live another day', then we have done our job and the children have an experience they will cherish forever. The key thing now is hearing from other children. Please do get in touch. Whatever the dream, however big or small, we will do our best to achieve it."

That applies to **Call Sign** readers too...

For more details about the charity, go to www.dial-a-dream.co.uk or email info@dial-a-dream.co.uk or call 020 8530 5589. By post, the address to contact is: 7 Addison Road, Wanstead, London, E11 2RG

BEDFONT GREEN'S MIXED START



DaC's Lee Pearce makes a stunning full stretch save

Bedfont Green began life at step 4 football on the opening Saturday of their new league - the *Zamareto South & West Division One* - following promotion as champions last term from the *Combined Counties*, with a deserved home victory fixture against **Mangotsfield United**. Their opponents were relegated from the Premier division last season, which meant that at that time they were two divisions above BG.

Bedfont Green manager, Dennis Bainborough, picked last season's starting XI except for promoting James Ward from the reserves after he impressed in pre-season. The team came out to begin the next stage of their football lives in their smart new Dial-a-Cab training tops. The home side went ahead on 8 minutes when **Billy Sentence** found himself 20 yards out with time to strike a sweet left footed shot across Mangos' keeper Tony Court and into the bottom corner of the net. Craig White almost extended the lead moments later when his curled effort came back off the crossbar, but nobody was on hand to turn the rebound in. The away side played to their strengths and hit several long balls up to Mitchel Page and Luke Prosser, but they were thwarted time and again by Fergus

Moore and the impressive James Ward. The Mangos looked dangerous on set-pieces, but the first 45 of the new season belonged to The Green and on 32 minutes Russell Miner played a pass inside from the right where **Chris Henry** turned his marker inside out and raced goalwards to fire past Tony Court in the visitor's goal.

The visitors pulled a goal back when Hendy headed in at the near post from a set-piece. **Dial-a-Cab driver / Bedfont Green goalkeeper Lee Pearce (J71)** had to be at his best and pulled off a string of excellent saves, including one fully stretched effort that saved an almost certain goal and which drew applause from everyone in the ground. Mango players missed several good chances and paid the price on 88 minutes when **Russell Miner** used strength and pace to carry the ball into the area before finishing at a tight angle. There was to be no further drama and Bedfont Green took great pleasure in registering their first win at Step 4 football.

Several days later, Bedfont Green tasted the other side when going down to defeat at **Abingdon United's** Northcote Road ground by 2 - 0. Elliott Osbourne-Ricketts opened the scoring on 28 minutes with a low drive and they doubled that after the break when Nick Thorne scored with an unstoppable free-kick. The Green hit the post twice and had two good efforts cleared off the line, but it wasn't to be.

Lee Pearce told **Call Sign**: "The extra class of this league compared to the *Combined Counties* becomes obvious when you feel the threat of the opposing team being constant. The opposition look dangerous whenever they come forward and that wasn't the case last season. However, by the way we've started, we must be looking very dangerous to our opponents and I think Chris Henry is going to have another good season poking the goals in for us."

The 22 August match also saw Bedfont Green get a useful away point at Thatcham Town making four from their first 9 points. A useful start...



Lee shows Call Sign Bedfont Green's new DaC training tops

Report by Stewart Cook

He may have been with ODRTS for barely a year when we first began in January 1954 following the initial meeting at the Albany Tavern on June 7 1953, but self-proclaimed Doctor, **George King**, could well have travelled further in spirit than any ODRTS / DaC driver before or since.

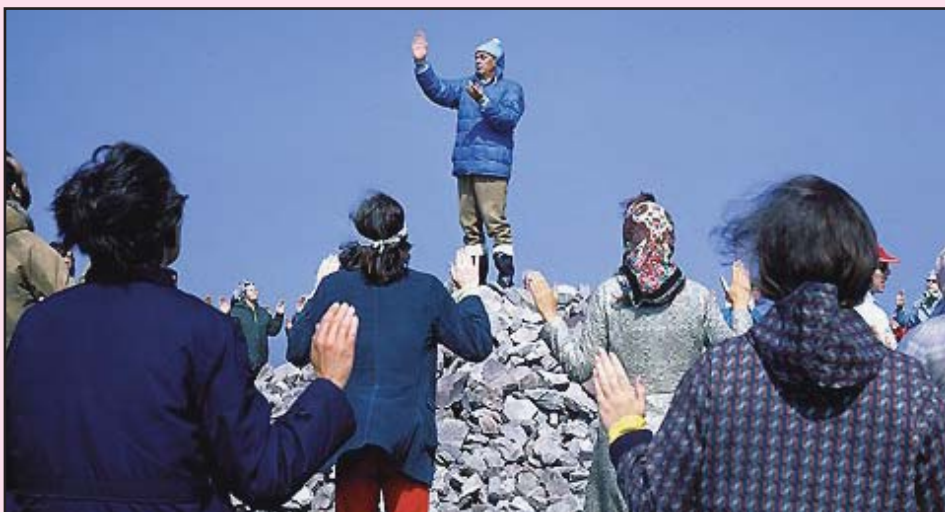
In March 2009, **Call Sign** reported on the astonishing feat carried out by DaC's **Jon Woolnough (L22)**, who in the name of charity climbed the UK's 3 biggest mountains, all in 24 hours for the infamous 3 Peaks Challenge. But to find the legacy Dr King left to the world, you would have had to make the 275 mile, five hour journey to the top of South Wales' highest peak, **Pen-y-Fan** in the Brecon Beacons on Sunday 23 August.

Once on the peak, you would find George King's followers dressed in their anoraks and whilst waiting for the return of friendly aliens who they say have been here before, attempt to use the mountain's cosmic energy to help heal the world. These are the members of an organisation set up by George in 1955 – around the time ODRTS did its first job for the BBC – known as the Aetherius Society.

Aetherians believe that most of the planets in our solar system are inhabited by advanced, though friendly, aliens who travel around the universe turning various worlds into better places. Their beliefs – including that Jesus came from Venus along with Krishna and Buddha – could cause outrage among some religions if most didn't already believe that Dr King's followers weren't just a bit over the top!

George, who along with many taxi drivers of the era, was also a fireman during the war after having had his cab taken over by the War Office as an emergency fire engine, claimed he set up the Aetherius Society after being told by a disembodied voice to prepare himself because he was to become the voice of an Interplanetary Parliament. Some say it was

FORMER ODRTS DRIVER AND THE FRIENDLY ALIENS



George King speaking to his followers on Holdstone Down in Devon
Pic courtesy the Aetherius Society

really a drunken passenger in the back of his cab, but as George is no longer with us – he died in 1997 – **Call Sign** is prepared to accept his word for it!

The organisation claims to have 10,000 followers and if nothing else, could help to explain the huge sale of anoraks around the Brecon Beacons!

A mysterious 'cosmic transmission' from his alien master told George to "charge" 19 mountains around the world with cosmic energy and in addition to Pen-y-Fan, Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Australia's highest peak in Mount Kosciuszko and Mt Baldy in California are three of the others.

It was back in 1959 that George King made the trip to the top of Pen-y-Fan and by using the palms of his hands, "charged" the mountain with what he said was an energy from

deep space. Sunday August 23 represented the fiftieth anniversary of the former ODRTS driver's feat and saw those Aetherians present hold hands in a large circle and pray for their energy to help return the friendly aliens for another visit to planet Earth. We do not yet know as of writing whether they turned up or went to Baldy in California instead – after all, with our rather wet summer, who wouldn't prefer some Californian sunshine!

Since his death in 1997, members of the **Aetherius Society** claim to have lost a direct link to their alien masters, so instead, they follow the instructions left behind by our former driver.

As one of Dr George King's followers pointed out, they don't do anyone any harm and at least it makes a change for a cab driver to go north rather than not go south!

WHAT'S ON AT THE SCIENCE MUSEUM

There is a Space season throughout the summer, which includes the following:

Cosmos & Culture: how astronomy has shaped our world...

Running until 2010 and with free admission, this exhibition traces 400 years of telescope technologies, explores our changing perceptions of our place in the cosmos and examines the role astronomy has played in our everyday lives. Objects on display include Thomas Harriot's drawings of the Moon, Jupiter's satellites and sunspots, the telescope William Herschel used to discover Uranus, a detector seeking the mysterious dark matter that makes up most of our Universe and an amateur telescope made of bean cans, car parts and coat hangers!

Force Field – the ultimate multi-sensory experience...

Charges apply to this exhibition, but if you are an outer space buff, then you will undoubtedly enjoy it. **Force Field** allows you to see, hear, feel and even smell what it would be like to venture into space, with a ride in the Science Museum's extraordinary

new multi-sensory experience. You can journey deep into the unknown with *The Legend of Apollo* film and discover what it felt like to be part of the Apollo missions. The experience utilises the latest simulation and effects technologies to place the audience in a truly experiential environment where they not only see, but also feel what it was like to be part of this major historical event. *The Legend of Apollo* has been created with participation from former NASA Apollo astronaut Col. David R. Scott. The film draws on Col. Scott's own experiences, actual Apollo archival footage, recent satellite imagery of the Moon and exceptional 3D computer animation.

In 2008/09, the Science Museum was proud to have been awarded the Gold Award for Visitor Attraction of the Year by Visit London and a Silver Award for Large Visitor Attraction of the Year by Enjoy England.

There are many other exhibitions to wander round at the Science Museum.

For updates on all their news and events or for their free newsletter, go to www.sciencemuseum.org.uk.



The Force Field experience will show you what being on the Apollo mission was like!

Well, according to MET Parking Services it was...!

Daryl Wood (G07) has good reason to be grateful for being on Dial-a-Cab. Had he not completed a credit ride during the afternoon of July 6 2009, he would have been lumbered with a hefty £100 parking fine for a 5 minute tea stop at the McDonalds restaurant in Trafalgar Way, E14.

Daryl related the sorry saga to *Call Sign*, highlighting for the benefit of other subscribers what he said could feasibly be some kind of parking fine 'scam'.

"I came into work around noon from my home in the south-east, stopping briefly at McDonalds near Billingsgate for a coffee, before making my way on to the E14 rank to start work. It's my daily routine," he explained.

"It usually takes 5 or 6 minutes to grab a coffee and use the loo before moving off to Canary Wharf. I sometimes return there in the evening after work as well. On the day in question, the enforcement camera that guards the entrance recorded me entering the site at 12.13, but the exit camera, for whatever reason, failed to record me leaving Mac's around 5 minutes later - about 12.18. I returned there after work that evening and lo and behold, the entrance camera failed to spot me going in, but the exit camera did record me leaving the site at 21.19. So it looked like I had been

Daryl's 5 Minute Coffee Break is 9 Hours!



Daryl with a PCN for a 546 minute coffee at McDonalds

parked there for... 546 minutes, yes, 9 hours and six minutes!"

Daryl grinned as he showed us the PCN while carefully checking the times on the document that **MET Parking Services**, the park-

ing contractor, had sent him.

"And my family thought I was out working," he said with the same smile on his face! "I've got a secret weapon though" he continued while waving the credit job details print-out in his hand at *Call Sign's* reporter.

"This print out proves that I accepted a credit ride at 15.08 from SE1 to SW3, completing the trip at 15.50, so I could not possibly have been in E14 all that time. I've been on DaC for two years now and this is just one of the benefits of being a subscriber. This print out is absolute proof that I was not there for all those hours. The parking restrictions do allow for 60 minutes maximum, so if the cameras fail to see you come and go and you cannot positively prove you were not there all that time, you've got a real problem because **MET Parking Services** have photographic evidence to prove you were there!"

He finished by saying that he was awaiting the outcome of his appeal, but that his PCN should be a warning to all drivers to be aware of what goes on out there...

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Wedding Bells for a Dac Daughter



A happy Ilona and Tom Duce at their wedding



The Hertfordshire countryside recently rang out to the happy peels of wedding bells when the youngest daughter of Dial-a-Cab driver **David Burnetts (S43)** and his wife **Maureen** said *I do*. At that moment, **Ilona Burnetts** instantly became **Mrs Ilona Duce**! It wasn't an instant courtship though, as Ilona and new hubby Tom had known each other for some time before the usually shy Tom summoned up enough courage to pose the all important question – no, not what the waiting time at Heathrow was!

For the Burnetts family it was a double celebration, as Ilona had graduated with a teaching degree just a few weeks before the wedding, making her parents especially proud of her achievement. With her new husband also a schoolteacher, the Duce family motto could well be *education, education, education* - echoing the phrase of a former politician!

Call Sign's fashion reporter described the bride's dress as ivory white silk with a fitted bodice and full-length skirt. Chief bridesmaid **Alexis** - Ilona's elder sister – was close by making sure no one trod on the beautiful bride's long dress train, while elder brother **Matthew** was Tom's Best Man.

We wish the newlyweds all the best for their future together and extend our congratulations to both sets of parents - Maureen and David Burnetts together with Ann and Roger Duce.

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

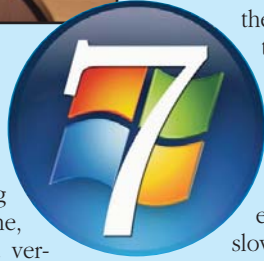
Jon Asks What's New?

Windows 7 review...

If you recall, last month I wrote about the soon-to-be-released **Windows 7** - the latest operating system from Microsoft. At that time, I had only just installed the beta version onto a virtual machine so I could try it out. One month later and much testing (when time permitted), here are my thoughts on the new offering from our friends in Redmond.

Running Windows 7 on a virtual machine, which had a single 32-bit 2Ghz processor and 2GB of RAM, proved to me that Microsoft designed this operating system to function at its optimum on much higher-spec hardware. Bench tests I have seen online of Windows 7 on 64-bit quad-core processors running at least 4GB of RAM (and better yet on 8GB) shows its true potential. But forget about running it on 32-bit hardware with less than 4GB of RAM!

That, in my opinion, is what lets Windows 7 down. Of course newer, more powerful hardware is becoming more and more available - I see laptops in PC World with 64-bit triple-core processors and 6GB of RAM and still it shocks me, because it's all so over the top. The everyday user does not utilise a tenth of



the computing power available on their laptop or desktop, so instead Microsoft bog the machine down with fancy effects, an illogical user interface and memory-hungry processes running in the background. Consequently you end up with a machine that seems slower than your old one running XP.

Don't get me wrong, Windows 7 is most definitely an improvement over Windows Vista, in fact it's what Vista should have been. But it's still more of the same; high system requirements, bloated software, unnecessary effects, poor hardware support and worst of all a horrible and illogical interface. The irony is that Windows 7 has a new feature called *Windows XP mode*. Essentially, this is a virtual machine running inside Windows 7, which runs a copy of Windows XP so the user can run older "XP-compatible applications." What Microsoft is admitting by doing this is that XP is a better operating system! Instead of building Windows 7 to be robust and backwards compatible, they simply shove a virtual version of XP inside Windows 7 - and then have the audacity to charge £149 upwards for the privilege!

As I said last month, Windows XP (service pack 3) is by far the best desktop operating system that Microsoft has brought out. It's

quick, reliable (usually) and logical (mostly). The better the hardware you throw at it, the quicker it runs. Its hardware support is second-to-none. No, it doesn't have fancy effects. But do we really need whiz-bang effects on the desktop? I still use XP in Windows 2000 mode; grey, simple and functional. I don't even use desktop wallpaper! I want pretty, shiny-shiny effects in my computer games, but not on my desktop. Let's be honest - your computer should be functional, fast and reliable. It is, after all, simply a tool and not a piece of crass dress jewellery!

So my advice to anyone buying a new computer; request that the seller installs Windows XP (or Linux - I can recommend *Ubuntu Linux* as the most user-friendly Linux variant), or install it yourself. Your machine will run faster and more reliably... and your software licensing will be cheaper!

I'm no technophobe and I love technological progress, providing it IS efficient progress and not simply progress for the sake of progress.

Help save Windows XP! Go to <http://www.infoworld.com/save-xp>.

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

Are you getting married between September 2009 and March 2010 and organised the wedding of your dreams? Living TV can now help you to...

WIN THE LUXURY WEDDING OF YOUR DREAMS!

Alice Dodge is currently working on a new show for *Living TV* called **Four Weddings**. It has been very successful in bringing in the best average audience of an original series ever on *Living TV* and is now coming up to its 2nd series.

They are now looking for new brides to take part on the show.

Four Weddings has been described as a *Come Dine With Me* for weddings. The general format of the programme is that four brides attend and rate each other's weddings. They score each other on the venue, food, overall presentation and of course, the dress! It's all in good spirit and great fun - except that only one bride will win the luxury honeymoon of their dreams! Will she be from a **Dial-a-Cab** family? You never know!

Alice is looking for every kind of wedding you can imagine. The last series saw them attend a wedding in a cave, a medieval wedding and a wedding at London Zoo! They are looking from high budgets to low budgets, from same sex marriages to opposite sex ones.

If you wish to apply, visit their website and download an application form. The site is located at www.livingtv.co.uk/fourweddings. And if you are successful in getting on the show, please let *Call Sign* know. We won't ask you to take us on the honeymoon!



MOTORHOME FOR HIRE



4/5 berth luxury fully loaded autotrail motorhome available to rent
58 registration, all dates currently available
Available for domestic and euro use
Good rates for Dial-a-Cab drivers
Call Dick Francis (T15) on 07976 444313

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies & Gents,

To make sure you get paid for a credit card trip...

In the last edition of *Call Sign* (page 25), the DaC Financial Controller, Warren Smith, explained the new procedures for authorising Credit Card trips and the importance of providing manual receipts, especially when the terminal fails to read the card. More and more passengers are opting to use Credit Cards, particularly on longer journeys and it is with this in mind that I would like to clarify the current procedures that are now in place. I would also like to follow on from his article and further clarify a number of points that will safeguard payment on these types of transactions.

It is very important that you follow these procedures at all times, which in turn will guarantee payment on trips - especially street generated pick ups that are cleared for significant amounts. If the cardholder, or sometimes the card issuer, queries a transaction or feels it is incorrect, they may take the money back from Dial-a-Cab. This can result in the payment for a particular trip to be taken back from you, even up to a year later. This is known as a *Chargeback* and it has no time limit, so it is imperative that you keep all receipts in a safe place in case you are asked to bring the receipt in so that we can successfully defend the *Chargeback*.

If you are unable to swipe the card at the beginning of the journey and are unable to provide a manual receipt and appropriate authorisation from the Contact Centre, do not under any circumstances accept the card. Often you may be able to key in the details, but this is not proof that the cardholder is present or that he / she has sufficient funds to make the payment. It *could* also be a stolen card. *Don't take the risk; ask for cash.* It is a bitter pill to swallow when payment for a trip carried out in good faith, is clawed back at a later date.

If you cannot swipe the card, then you must fill in a manual receipt and make a brass rubbing of the card, making sure that the embossed card number and details are clearly showing on your copy and that the signature matches that of the actual cardholder. You can then ring the Drivers Line and ask them to obtain a valid authorisation code (this can only be done if you have the correctly filled in receipt). Without a manual receipt, your request will be declined and you will be instructed not to accept the card.

Even if you are given a Credit Card at the end of the journey, you must still follow these procedures before the passenger leaves your taxi. If the trip is generated through the system, we would again ask you to print the two receipts and keep the signed copy as proof that the cardholder was present on completion of the transaction.

Please follow these important guidelines on all Credit Card trips that fail to swipe and where a Manual receipt is given:

The card **MUST** be placed under the three copies and rubbed over with a pen or pencil so that the embossed card number and details clearly appear on the receipt. Signature on receipt must match the sig-



nature on the card

Expiry Dates must not be out of date

Top copy is given to cardholder (white)

The middle copy must then be handed into driver services for payment (yellow)

The third copy is the your copy and must be kept for up to one year as proof of transaction (pink)

Weekend Working on E14

Please be aware that from 15th August, E14C and E14S no longer operated on Saturdays and Sundays. E14C and E14S are still open Monday to Friday 06:00 to 21:00. At all other times the work will be dispatched into E14, which remains as a physical zone. When E14 is in operation, you will not be permitted to STC

into this zone.

The changes have been made to assist drivers at weekends and to prevent them from being forced to sit on the E14C rank when the majority of street work comes from the underground station and Canada Square areas. This zone will be constantly monitored and it is important that you book in correctly at all times to avoid any procedure rule violations.

Displaying the Society logo...

Finally, can I please remind you that any taxi reported as not displaying the Society logo is violating Procedure Rule No.18 '**Not Displaying the Company Logo**' and without genuine reason, it may well result in a complaint. Only a small minority of members who joined prior to January 1996 and pay increased subscriptions, are exempt from this ruling. It is not surprising that taxis spotted picking up from various account addresses that have logos missing on one or both doors, are very often reported by those that do sport them. The rules are in place for a reason and after all, together with the cash booking number, it helps to promote our Society, which is surely a benefit to us all, particularly in this economic climate!

If you have any queries on the above please contact me on 0207 553 7222 or email at Allane@Dialacab.co.uk

**Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer**

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

LOCKHOUSE SECURITY



10% Discount on keys and locks for DaC Drivers

Free estimates No call out charge

Burglary repairs / boarding up

Additional security / security upgrades

Safes opened, repaired and serviced

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Grilles and security gates

Additional vehicle locks fitted

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Transponder and chipped keys

Domestic and commercial

Locks replaced and fitted to insurance specifications (BS3621)

All types of locks, opened, repaired and replaced

Specialists in UPVC doors and windows / patio doors

24hr service

We have moved to:

8-10 The Arcade, Farnham Road, Harold Hill

Tel: 01708 371115

In the August *Call Sign*, we told readers that the PCO had approved the use of a new external blind spot mirror to be fitted on London taxis. Called the **Magnum Frog-eye**, they are the first auxiliary clip-on mirrors of their type to be given official approval by our Penton Street overlords. The Frog-eye has a large size and is robust. It is also a product that London taxi drivers have been clamouring for. How often have you pulled out or pulled back into a lane, only to find there was another vehicle that you couldn't see because it was in a blind spot?

The distributor of the Frog-eye mirror – Magnum – told *Call Sign* through the company's MD, Sharon Hennessy, that the product has been available for some years and had gained much interest from London taxi drivers who have been looking for a more effective means to see blind spots.

"But they weren't allowed to use them because they hadn't been approved by the PCO," said Sharon. "I should add that the only reason was because we hadn't realised that's what we had to do. When we finally submitted them to the PCO, we were extremely pleased they were accepted and gained so many positive comments about quality and the safety benefits they provided."

But do they work? *Call Sign* Editor **Alan Fisher** fitted a pair to his TX4 and gave them a 4-week trial. He told the magazine:

"I decided to fit one to both the near and off-side mirrors. The Frog-eye is an auxiliary clip-on mirror, which the makers claim is easily fitted to the existing wing mirrors. Not being a natural DIY man, it took me 5 or 6 minutes to work out what I had to do, but once I began fitting them, each mirror took me no longer than two minutes to fit and



The Frog-eye attached to the normal taxi mirror

tighten. It then took me two minutes to adjust them so that I could get the most benefit from them. I did that by asking my wife, Linda, to walk alongside the cab and adjusted the Frog-eyes so that as she reached the front doors and became out of view of the main mirror, she was still clearly in eyeshot of the Frog-eye. I did the same on both sides. They undoubtedly increased my vision and helped eliminate those blind spots that so often contain a cyclist, motorcycle or car."

Alan continued: "It did take me a day to get used to looking in both mirrors, but on the third day, thanks to the Frog-eye, I avoided what would have been a close call with a small Honda that had crept alongside me. I think the Magnum Frog-eye is an essential

addition to road safety. I also discovered as a bonus that the nearside one makes parking even easier with its great view of the kerb as you reverse! At these low prices for providing valuable extra safety, the question has to be whether we can afford not to fit them?"

Currently the Magnum Frog-eye is only available for the TX1, TX2 and TX4, but hopefully approval for the Fairway will soon be awarded as well.

The cost per Frog-eye including postage, packing and VAT is £21.51. However, if you buy a pair then the total cost would be just £34.16. On top of that, if you go to their website, select the Frog-eye and enter the code taxi1009, you will get another 10% off the price (before p&p and VAT) giving a further £2.50 off the pair. At those prices, extra road safety comes at a snip.

To contact the Magnum shop, just call 020 8744 5230 or visit them online at www.blindspotmirrors.co.uk...

BOOK REVIEW... BOOK REVIEW... BOOK REVIEW...

The Girl's Car Handbook

Everything you need to know about life on the road...

Any book that has in the acknowledgements: Thanks to Richard Potter of Dial-a-Cab's Call Sign Magazine, must have a head start in getting a review published here! So who better to look at this book, which tells of girls who love their cars but hate the hassles that comes with them, than Richard Potter (T51)...

"As professional drivers, we don't really need to seek recognition from others about our driving skills, because London cabbies are indeed the best - we know that! However that recognition doesn't always come quickly or in some cases at all. As I have mentioned before, most children suffer from IES (instant expert syndrome) and as they grow older, their own driving skills will come into question. Most parents have at some stage in their lives, had to make the decision - do I teach my children to drive or send them to a driving school? And as London cabbies, we would feel well qualified to do the former - but it's not that easy.

So after lessons, tests and Highway Codes, there then come problems such as where to buy a car, which type, where to get it serviced, what's the best insurance etc? Then there's the driving itself and getting used to other bad driving habits, even dealing with stress and the fact that men are rarely wrong - especially behind the steering wheel of a motor car!

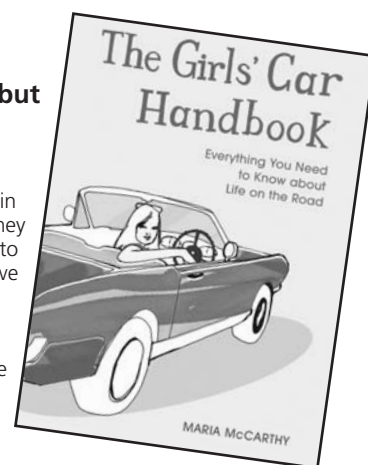
However, if you know a member of the fairer sex who could do with some advice and won't take it from you, fear not because help is at hand. Author **Maria McCarthy** has written a number of excellent books - including *The Girls' Guide to Losing Your L Plates*. They cover all aspects of driving for "girls." Her latest is **The Girls' Car Handbook (Everything you need to know about life on the road (Pocket Books £7.99).**

It is a fact that most women couldn't care less about why or how their car's sprockets work, they just want easy-to-read guidelines for carrying out basic maintenance, in addition to a few useful tips on how to spot a dishonest mechanic or car dealer! To most girls it's about staying safe on the road. *The Girls' Car Handbook* delivers on all these fronts, cutting through the jargon of the often male-dominated world of motoring and explaining everything a girl could possibly need to know in a clear, practical and entertaining way.

As a member of the Guild of Motoring Writers, Maria McCarthy isn't just a fly-by-night writer looking to cash in on a subject few have tried, she knows and understands her topic and together with some invited experts (such as Steve Fowler, editor of *What Car* and Vanessa Gyll, technical expert at *The AA*), this is a book that knows its stuff! Give it to a "girl" you know and you will never have to answer another question on the subject!

Maria's book is assertive, energetic and packed with pages of very useful information for women of all ages - perhaps even female taxi drivers!"

Richard Potter (T51)



Getting together for a beautiful bride...

Call Sign has published many photos and articles involving **Jim Cunningham (S88)**, but they usually involved the games of golf. Then again, perhaps this article isn't so different because although it involves the wedding of his daughter **Lucy**, it took place - where else - but at a golf club! This one was the delightful Crews Hill GC.

What caught our attention was that Jim used the services of Dial-a-Cab driver and Toastmaster **Keith Reading (W76)**. Knowing a bargain when he sees one, Jim took advantage of Keith's regular offer in his *Call Sign* ad to give DaC drivers a 10% discount. As Jim pointed out, weddings cost a fortune as it is, and any help is always appreciated!

We asked Keith to give the Toastmaster's view of the proceedings.

"Having checked out the venue and made sure everything was in place, I took my position within the club entrance ready to receive the guests, bridesmaids, best man and of course, the bride and bridegroom - Lucy and Bobby.

"A fleet of shiny black taxis pulled into the

THE DAC DRIVER AND THE CALL SIGN TOASTMASTER



Jim's daughter Lucy poses with Toastmaster Keith. Bobby will have to look at the album to see how he looked!

forecourt and positioned themselves in a semi circle facing inwards, with all the occupants then making their way to the reception area. Soon after, a white Asquith taxi arrived with the bride and bridegroom. She looked stunning.

The weather was excellent; you just could not want a better day.

"140 guests enjoyed a superb wedding breakfast, whilst being entertained by a Frank Sinatra 'sound alike'. Three great speeches, including Jim who took to the microphone like a natural - his father of the bride speech was excellent. The cake was cut and as soon as the disco began, it was all systems go for a great party.

"As far as I was concerned as the Toastmaster, the event was a great success. Lucy, the bride, Bobby, her new husband and the hosts all enjoyed themselves and thanked me for my assistance. It was a wonderful day..."

Keith's ad appears in every issue and he gives a 10% discount to DaC drivers.

A Dial-a-Cab Driver Asks...

Is Bob Crow The Taxi Trade's Saviour?



Bob Crow

We were all very proud of the drive-in that took place back in February, which showed the depth of anger within our trade. What was surprising was that the RMT were there with their newly created London Taxis section being pushed on by Dial-a-Cab driver **Eddie Lambert (V37)** and co. When I read in the cab trade papers that the slogan that day was *enough is enough*, I wondered whether the drivers were shouting that in the direction of County Hall and Penton St or at our own trade reps? I for one have, through the pages of *Call Sign*, bemoaned the lack of leadership and activity from trade reps as we simply allowed issue after issue to pass us by. Look at Trafalgar Square, printers and the rise in our Bill renewals etc. If we look back, we simply allowed Ken Livingstone to walk all over us and like most things, once an issue is lost, it's lost for good.

So should we start saying **NO** more often and let the media paint us out to be militants? Well if the RMT taxi membership takes off and Bob Crow becomes more prominent within the trade, predictably that will happen because that's what the media always do. But does it matter? Under a *freedom of information* request about MPs expenses, on more than one occasion our elected representatives said no to divulging that information. Even when the Law Lords found that under their own rules MPs should reveal the info, they still said NO. Why, if things don't suit us, should we roll over and be made to feel guilty for simply protecting our business for ourselves and for generations to come?

With the introduction of the *National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers* - the RMT - it must be a good thing because the long-standing trade bodies now have some proper competition. The RMT union has been around for

many years with members UK wide, but more importantly, it has financial muscle. This allows them to employ *Thompson's*, the workplace lawyers. If they took a look at *Hackney Carriage Law* and then compared it to the PCO's modern interpretation, they would surely see some inconsistencies.

At one stage, Bob Crow was even on the board of TfL and I would have thought it a long-term ambition that he would ballot tube drivers to withdraw their labour and then get the cab trade to support the tube drivers as well. As self-employed drivers, secondary picketing is legal. I was surprised to hear that he recently attended a meeting at Heathrow and by the sounds of things, so were the media considering the coverage it got. But is all this really necessary, I hear you ask?

Well here is a good example of the GLA's present industrial relations policy and their determination to get their own way. After having a number of terms and conditions imposed on them, London fire fighters are on the verge of balloting for industrial action. To break the strike, the LFEPA are paying £12 million to *AssetCo plc* to provide the country's first private fire-fighting force to stand in on strike days at London fire stations. Why? To break any strikes!

Whatever happens in the near future, one main lesson that needs to be learnt is that an issue is an issue and a protest is a protest. It seems disconcerting that there is so much unity and anger now that we are in a recession. So it's all right when things are going OK and we're all earning good money? These days, protecting our trade should be a 24/7 job, regardless of the economic climate. In the future, we will need as much strength and solidarity as we can muster. Strong leadership has been in short supply over the past few years, but maybe things are about to change for the better...

Richard Potter (T51)

There has been much discussion of late as to what is OUR work?

Well OUR work is the right to accept an instant hire by a prospective passenger, the private (radio) hire via a telephone booking, the right to ply for hire on railway property and all by virtue of the fact that we are qualified to do so. That's why it is OUR work. The Private Hire fraternity do not have this right, other than to accept PRE-BOOKED trips. THEY CANNOT PLY FOR HIRE ON RANKS OR STANDS, that is the law! They are not qualified or licensed or permitted, therefore they are prohibited from doing OUR work. We have earned that right by passing exams. Yes, there is much of *The Knowledge* that is pointless and outdated in this 21st Century, but it works to enable us - we the qualified ones - to provide a Taxi service second to none throughout the world.

In which other capital city can a person ask to be taken to an address across town and still know they have a more than 90% chance that the driver will know the destination without the need to consult a map? Not one! **GPS, SatNav and other similar systems**

Last month, Laurence Kelvin (W88) asked a taxi driver's age-old question in Call Sign. This month, David Kupler (Y74) adds to the discussion of...

Just What is "Our" Work???



might aid the unqualified drivers to provide the level of service that their prices reflect, but the difference between them and us in terms of professionalism, can be likened to the difference between The Metropolitan Police and Securicor. Wearing a cheap suit, shirt and tie does not make a Taxi driver out of an unemployed bricklayer, just as one cannot make a silk

purse from a pig's ear.

How a Licensed Taxi driver presents him / herself to the travelling public is no reflection on their ability to do the job. Wearing a cheap suit to disguise the evident fact that in general, PHV drivers are less than capable of performing their jobs without those aforementioned aides, is in fact a clever cover-up to fool the public into believing that there is an element of respectability in driving the vehicle. We know differently, *n'est pas?*

So to surmise as to what is OUR work? The answer is ALL of it, except when somebody decides to 'phone a PHV organisation because there are no available licensed Taxis in that area. There is no need for PHVs to be ranking in the West End...anywhere!

David Kupler (Y74)

A Pain in the Butt?

"Yes, it's true, I've a pain in the butt," DaC driver **Ivan Sobell (P69)** told **Call Sign** "and I've had it for several weeks now without any sign of it abating, so I'm pretty sick and tired of it!"

Ivan's problem is *Sciatica*, which is when the spinal discs that form your backbone press on the Sciatic nerve, trapping it and which can also seriously reduce the blood flow to your legs, giving you a pins and needles sensation.

"Don't worry," said Ivan laughing as **Call Sign's** hack took a hasty step backwards, "it's not catching! My doctor has prescribed pain-killers and they seem to have had some effect, but it's a hell of a pain in the lumbar region that can shoot down into your legs and foot," he explained with a demonstration of leg bending while explaining that it didn't affect his movements.

"Look," he said proudly, "I can run and twist and stretch, but it's just a constant pain in the butt!" As Ivan spoke, he had his arms flailing around in the air to help prove his point.

"I think I started it off by bending awkwardly while lifting out the ramp from the back of the cab, because I noticed the pain come on a day or so afterwards," he commented.

"Posture has a great deal to do with spinal care and I've invested in a new drivers' seat for my cab to improve my driving position. As one who practices martial arts, I'm aware of how important posture and balance is. Funnily enough, this problem has not stopped me working, but I have reduced my hours considerably and I stop fairly frequently, usually making for the nearest rank, to exercise my back muscles. I walk about and develop my martial arts exercises to keep loose."

Ivan finished by telling **Call Sign**: "I'm sure this condition will subside once I'm able to relax when we go on holiday in a few weeks time, but right now, as my wife keeps telling me, I'm a pain in my own butt!"



Ivan shows Call Sign his bending abilities

©Call Sign Magazine MM9

Isn't Life a Bitch...?

Dial-a-Cab driver **Barry Spear (Y16)** seems to have caught the **Call Sign** photography bug! In the past, Barry has photographed an out-of-town taxi using the M4 bus and taxi lane. After we asked the Public Carriage Office about it, we discovered for the first time that ANY taxi that was licensed anywhere in the UK could use any bus/taxi lane. We too can use out-of-town bus/taxi lanes - providing, of course, we are in our taxis at the time.

Next he sent us a photo of a Parisian taxi apparently plying its trade in London during the last RMT tube strike. We don't think Monsieur le Cab was actually allowed to do that. However, as RMT members were probably taking their turn at operating railway station shared ride trips while their fellow members were on strike, we assume that everyone was looking the other way on that day!

Now it's the turn of a strange looking Vito. Barry told **Call Sign**: "Seeing this vehicle caused me great confusion. It is the same

vehicle that is used as a licensed taxi, whilst also used by private hire. This certainly wasn't a taxi, but it surely cannot be licensed as a private hire vehicle because of the adverts, yet if it is carrying passengers, then it should be."

Barry ended by saying that it didn't use the Bishopsgate bus lane, so it definitely wasn't a bus!

On that note, we allowed Barry to get on with his newly found hobby...



Is it a Taxi, PH or a bus!

The story of Mike's knee...

As it's the silly season with not much to report so far as work is concerned, I thought I would write a little about a medical issue I endured which has resulted in much pain and discomfort in my knees during the past year or so. After MRI scans, it was suggested I had a *meniscus tear* together with a cartilage problem. An *arthroscopy* (key-hole knee surgery) was performed, but after a month proved to be unsuccessful and the recommendation was of a total knee replacement.

Hip replacements have been performed in the UK since the 1960s and knee joint replacement procedures followed shortly afterwards. The implants and techniques have developed rapidly since then. As an estimated figure in England and Wales, there are approximately 160,000 total hip and knee replacement procedures performed each year. These procedures are carried out in around 400 hospitals. One third of these hospitals are managed by the independent sector and the remaining two thirds are NHS hospitals.

Total knee replacement procedure consists of replacing the diseased and painful joint surfaces of the knee with metal and plastic components, shaped to allow continued motion of the knee. There are many different types of knee replacement available, although the traditional type of total knee replacement involves replacing the bone at the lower end of the femur (thigh bone) and replacing the bone at the top of the tibia.

On occasion, only one side (either left or right) of the knee joint needs replacing. This type of procedure is called a *unicondylar* knee replacement. It is important to ask your consultant about what knee replacement they recommend and what the advantages and disadvantages are. Although many knee problems are caused through sports ie football, rugby, cricket and other over exertion of joints, sitting in a cab for hours with little or no exercise and being a bit chunky like me, can also be a contributory factor. Your family history could also play a part. Is *Osteoarthritis* a factor in your family? This may help with the prognosis.

Prior to my knee replacement, the pain was extremely difficult to deal with. However, due to the pain relief medication I was taking, I felt zonked most of the time and unable to drive for any lengthy period. So the advice given by my consultant was to have the knee replaced, which I have now had done.

But has my knee replacement helped? Although the pain I endured prior to the procedure has subsided a bit, nevertheless my mobility is and will continue to be restricted. During this period, I started to have severe pain and discomfort in my other leg. Returning to the specialist, the recommendation was another *arthroscopy*, which was performed, again with no success. The recommendation was for yet another knee replacement! This time I said no.

I have the utmost confidence in consultants who perform these operations and they do help many patients who can then resume an active and purposeful life, but unfortunately after months of physiotherapy on me, the procedures just did not work.

Making the decision not to have any more operations on the recommendation of a long time friend and GP, I went to see a doctor who is a pain specialist and

Mike Son's bits and pieces



anaesthetist. After a thorough examination, he advised me not to have the knee replaced at that time, but would prescribe medication that should help. This helped resolve the pain in the leg that was to be operated on. Had I had known about this prior to the previous knee replacement, maybe I would not be in the situation I am now.

No one should suffer pain and operations are sometimes the only resolve for various medical issues, but they should be a last option; always look for other avenues before taking such a radical decision.

Mike's cab goes under the arches – the bus arches!

It was a Friday night around midnight. I was stuck in traffic heading north along Norton Folgate from Liverpool Street to Bethnal Green with two passengers on board. Suddenly, the driver of a double-decker LT bus travelling south decided to do a U-turn and consequently hit my taxi, jamming it under the wheel arch of the bus! The busload of passengers, my two passengers,

other motorists and youngsters having a drink outside various wine bars were all looking totally astonished and as you can imagine, there were plenty of comments!

The bus driver got out and apologised. He said he didn't know where he was going and took the wrong road. I pointed out that it clearly said Waterloo on the front of the bus, but admittedly at that point, I started to convulse with laughter and couldn't stop until I had to yank the cab from under the wheel arch of the bus by driving it forward.

When we eventually exchanged details, I asked the bus driver to make sure the incident was reported to his supervisors. But unsure if the driver would actually admit to such a stupid and unbelievable error, on the Monday morning I informed them of the incident myself.

Even though the repairs and time off was inconvenient to say the least, I still can't believe it happened. Nevertheless, it still makes me smile when I think about it.

Carole Fresco

You will have read in this issue of the sad passing of Carole Fresco, beloved wife of Al, who we all know as a great wordsmith in TAXI. Carole was a wonderful wife and friend to Al and loving mother to their children and grandchildren. She was most certainly a lovely lady and it was just too soon for her to be taken. Although words are never adequate at such a dreadful time, all I can offer, together with my wife Maxine, is our sincere condolences to Al and all the family. We know they will cherish the many wonderful memories they had together...

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects



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As everybody seems to be writing about their PCNs, I've had four I'd like to write about.

1. I was caught in the box junction, travelling west along Marylebone Road in the bus lane behind a cab. In front of him was a car. As we crossed Baker Street, the car decided to change lanes, leaving me in the box. My exit would have been clear had the car continued, but unfortunately he didn't. I was, however, still moving - albeit very slowly and the traffic lights were still in my favour. Ten days later, I received a PCN re blocking a box junction. The pictures showed me in the junction, but in different positions, so my defence was that there is no minimum speed limit in a box junction. This was rejected, so I appealed and was given an appointment at NZ House. Two days before the appointment, I received a phone call saying they were taking no further action...

2. The next one was when I did a U-turn through the gap of the central reservation at the Strand in front of Charing Cross Station. About ten days later I received a PCN claiming I did not comply with a blue circular keep left sign. The sign they referred to was the sign opposite the gap to keep left of the central reserve when it begins again after the gap (this is like a no right turn sign 50 yards in front of you, it does not mean you can't turn right now, but that you can't turn right in 50 yards time). This is blatant money raising. I appealed but it was rejected. I got my appointment at NZ House. Again, two days before my appointment, I received a phone call saying that no further action would be taken...

3. This one was a good money-spinner for a while. It was Oxendon Street northbound, turning right into Coventry Street then immediately left into Rupert Street. Apparently I went straight across Coventry Street and disobeyed a blue circular sign that says turn right. However, their accusation was a physical impossibility, because going straight sends you through the front doors of *Planet Hollywood*. I put this on my appeal, but it was rejected and yes, you've guessed it, another appointment at NZ House! At this point, I was considering opening an office at NZ House! Again, about two days before my appointment at NZ House, I received another phone call saying I had won my appeal...

4. This one is a classic case of a dishonest traffic warden. I was on a DaC radio job, making a delivery to the next building to the Hard Rock in Piccadilly. I was in and out in about two minutes, but he was outside writing a parking ticket. I told him I had just dropped off a delivery and drove off. There was no ticket on my windscreen, so the ticket was not issued. Three weeks later, I received a PCN for £120 because I had allegedly ignored the option to pay the reduced fine of £60. I appealed, pointing out that I was on a radio job and that Dial-a-Cab would have paid the parking fine for me, so why on earth would I have ignored it? A week later, I received a letter saying they had cancelled the ticket. I must add that they never acknowledged that the ticket was never issued, so that traffic warden is still working.

4(a). There is a God! I stopped in Pimlico Road to use the toilet. I was not causing any obstruction and will not pay for a parking meter to go to the toilet. This is the only thing

Following 4 PCNs, DaC driver Brian Marcantonio (R73) wanted to get something off his chest but just never got that opportunity. Then he picked up an MP...

Getting Something Off Your Chest

the government / local council has not yet been able to tax us on and I am not going to start giving them money to use the loo. I came out about 90 seconds later - having perfected the art of rapid bladder movement after 34 years of cab driving - to find a parking ticket on my windscreen. It would be an understatement to say I was not best pleased. I drove round and found the warden. I told him what I thought of him and said that if I saw him about to use the toilet, I would prevent him from using it so he could wet himself, because that is what he expected me to do. I told myself I was going to appeal this one, because it must be against my human rights. But when I checked the parking ticket, the warden had written the wrong registration number on it. Result - there is a God!!!

As you can see, PCNs are purely for money raising, so I beg you all to appeal every one - even if you are as guilty as hell. Tie them up in paperwork, because all this is a way of them making money and we taxi drivers are on the front line. I have seen some of the bosses / owners of these parking / PCN issu-

ing companies on TV, they are usually fat greasy spivs and if the truth were known, no doubt with a criminal record as long as your arm! These are the people our right honourable MPs / local councillors are doing business with, but as long as the brown envelopes stuffed with cash keep coming, I don't suppose they really care.

I remember when once after picking up an MP, it suddenly dawned on me that this was an MP in my taxi, so I asked him if he slept ok at night? When he said he did, I went on to tell him that when Labour was elected in 1997, the first thing Gordon Brown did as Chancellor was to screw all private pension schemes and many companies final salary schemes. Then within two weeks, MPs voted themselves a huge pay rise and a massive increase in their pension benefits.

"Yet you sleep ok," I said to him? "That action means that I will have to work so long as I am able to after retirement age. But so long as you can sleep ok, that's alright."

Boy did I feel better getting that off my chest...!

Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner Dance

The *Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund* is proud to present its 36th annual Dinner/Dance on **Saturday 5th December 2009**. Reception 6.15pm, dinner 6.45pm It will be held at the: **Holiday Inn London Kensington Forum**
97 Cromwell Road
London SW7 4DN

Included in the price is a 4 course meal and half a bottle of wine per person, with after dinner tea /coffee. Later in the evening, tea / coffee and pastries will be served. Ticket are £60 per person and include a complementary drink on arrival

With your support, the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund will be able to make donations to the taxi trade charities that support us.

Don't be the one to miss one of the great nights out. Come along and enjoy good food and great company. This event will prove to be an enjoyable and memorable occasion for all.

Please complete and return to Russell Poluck MBE, Hon Chairman, 5 St Brides Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 6BT

Please reply by 2 November 2009. Dress is smart. Cheques to T.D.Y.C.F. Please print...

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For further information contact Russell Poluck MBE (T55) on 07850 056 765 or email brussella@talk21.com

The TDOYCF is registered with the Charities Commission No: 1000761

Remembering those less fortunate than ourselves

Call Sign recently had a phone call from Dial-a-Cab driver **Bernie Silver (G08)** who said he'd heard a rumour that parking fines emanating via Smart cars were invalid. We said we'd look into it, but were astonished to find that there was more than a little truth in it and indeed, the possibility that any driver who had been caught and paid a fine after

being photographed by a Smart car, could possibly be entitled to a refund. But it would only apply if there were no warning signs saying that CCTV was in operation in the area – and there certainly weren't any in the parts of Mayfair (usually close to sandwich bars Bernie was referring to) where these London cars hang about. Islington is almost as bad. This is how the story came about...

Rachel Johnson runs an off licence in New Brighton, Merseyside and had received three £60 parking fines in just one week, all for parking outside her own off licence while either loading or unloading.

She complained to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal that it was unfair to issue PCNs via a Smart car when there was no warning about CCTV parking restrictions observation in the area. All three PCNs were then quashed after a landmark legal ruling that any parking fines that came via Smart car cameras would be illegal if there were no council warning signs



Are Smart cars, where there is no warning signs, illegal?

close by. In Rachel Johnson's case, there were none. Had they been issued by a traffic war-

den, then that would have been different.

The result means that thousands of motorists, including many DaC drivers who dared stop to pick up something to eat or drink and who received parking fines after being photographed by cars with periscope-mounted cameras, could be in line for refunds.

These Smart cars were first put out by Westminster in 2007 and have probably ticketed hundreds of taxi drivers in addition to thousands of ordinary motorists. They have now been joined by around thirty other councils across the country who use Smart cars as part of their traffic enforcement program.

Following the result, Rachel Johnson's council at the Wirral has launched a review of the way it uses its Smart car fleet to enforce parking regulations. Their only logical answer seems to be to flood the area with warning signs. However, because each Smart car covers such a wide area, that could involve thousands of warning signs. That would mean that you could always see one were you to walk a few feet in either direction from where your cab was parked. It seems logical that Westminster will also carry out a similar review...

IS ZAT ZE FX4 ON ZE BERLIN TAXI RANK?

Around two years ago, **Call Sign** wrote about DaC driver **Tony Holmes (ex C09)** and his wife Lesley and told the story of how the couple had bought a run-down farmhouse and then taking a year away from the cab to renovate it.

The farmhouse was in Le Marche, Italy, a region in central Italy hidden between the Apennines and the Adriatic Sea. Its picturesque villages are full of ancient churches, abbeys and monasteries, all beautifully preserved over the years. Its sunny hills marked by rows of vines and leafy oak trees that overlook green valleys. You can see what drew Tony and Lesley there and after almost 30 years pushing a cab around London's streets – 20 of them on Dial-a-Cab – off they went.

Well, by the time you read this, the couple should have finished all the work and completed a deal to sell it. Although they had no plans to sell it at the beginning, the bug has bitten them and Tony is now looking for an even bigger farmhouse to start the whole process over again!

Tony also told us about a recent trip to Berlin to visit their daughter and while making their way to **Checkpoint Charlie**, he spotted an old FX4 on the point of a rank just loading up and thought **Call Sign** would like a picture of he and it!

Tony hopes to be back in London soon for a few months to visit friends and relations and to rent a cab to keep his hand in!

"But not an FX4," pleaded Tony, "well not unless it's on DaC...!"



Tony by the old Berlin FX4



Keith Reading

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DaC driver Mike's theory...

Michael Kennedy (M30) is a real fan of the mobile phone. Standard handset, BlackBerry, flip or slide operation... he loves them all – but for his passenger's use! Mike told *Call Sign*:

"I've noticed that since mobile phones, of whatever category, have become so increasingly popular, passengers do not seem to get so agitated when under pressure to get to their destination."

Mike continued with his theory: "Instead of fidgeting on the back seat or bashing my ear about the traffic, they relax more, phoning ahead to advise of delays or even checking their emails – if they have a machine that will do that kind of thing. Or sending emails too," he added as an afterthought.

"It takes the pressure off me for those 20/30 minutes that they are in the cab and I'm doing my best to get them to their destination. It gives them something to do, occupying their time and mind," said Michael.

"People have become increasingly dependent on their mobile communicators and indeed the wide variety of

"Mobile Phones - Fewer Agitated Passengers!"



Michael Kennedy - passenger's technology makes his taxi a calmer place

devices now available are steadily becoming ever-more sophisticated and capable of real technical wizardry," he added.

"Did you know that today's mobile devices have more processing power than was available to put a man on the moon in 1969," he enquired of our impression-

able *Call Sign* reporter who, answering in the negative, requested more information. After all, he had originally only asked if Mike had change of a fiver...

"Who would have thought that a little electronic gadget, the size of a packet of cigarettes, would allow you to be able to speak to someone on the other side of the world, or send them a text message, regardless of the time of day," Michael asked our hack?

Rounding up his theory, Michael ended by saying:

"So you see, with passengers having mobiles, they can sit happily in my cab communicating with the world and leaving me to concentrate on getting them safely and speedily to their destination. That's why I just love 'mobility'" he said with a huge grin. And did you want pound coins or fifty pees..."

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PHYLLIS HAS A QUICK PUFF

Thanks to Call Sign and Intellicig!

Phyllis and Brian on the town and she can still have a puff...!

An unusual thank you arrived on *Call Sign's* desk recently. It came from the wife of former Dial-a-Cab driver **Brian Borden** – one of this magazine's many on-line readers. His wife, **Phyllis**, has several claims to fame – being known to many driver's wives as **Phyllis Gorgin**, head girl at the former east London **Brady Girl's Club**, being one. Another was as director of both *Stardust* and *Stagestruck* stage schools that introduced such names to a mass television audience as the former star of *Eastenders*, **Tamzin Outhwaite**.

Nowadays, Phyllis is more of a housewife with similar likes and dislikes to most taxi driver's wives. Her biggest dislike though, is her own habit of smoking.

"I've tried to give it up," Phyllis told *Call Sign*, "I've tried so many times, but I just can't!"

Then it was non-smoker Brian's turn to chime in.

"Smoking itself is an awful habit. I read the article in *Call Sign* by DaC Account Manager, **Caroline McGowan** and how she had not only tried unsuccessfully to give it up, but about the smell it leaves and something else that also really hit home – how unsocial it was because of the regulations that ban smoking in public places. Like Caroline, when Phyllis and I are out with friends, be it for a meal or even just a drink, Phyllis has to suddenly creep off to an outside area for a quick puff! When we read that Caroline had discovered **Intellicig**, whilst we weren't expecting it to be any more successful than previous smoking 'cures' Phyllis had tried – such as vegetarian ciggies and awful tasting gum, we were both impressed that Intellicig didn't claim it would help smokers to give up, just to cut down. So we sent off for a trial and it is just brilliant."

Before Brian could get too carried away, Phyllis came back to add that she still had a "real ciggie" occasionally, but had cut down greatly thanks to using Intellicig whenever she was out and also when there were visitors to their Essex home.

"It has put sociability back into my dictionary," she said, "because no longer do I have to leave the restaurant table for a puff. Intellicig is perfectly legal because although the tip lights up and you exhale a vapour that looks remarkably like smoke, it isn't real, yet there is



that slight nicotine taste that makes it feel as real as it possibly could be."

Phyllis ended by saying: "I can't see myself ever totally giving up smoking, but at last I've found something that actually does what it says on the packet! I've cut down without the need to give up."

Brian re-entered the conversation by adding that he hadn't yet given up on the hope of Phyllis actually giving up entirely, but for the moment he was very grateful for the small mercy of Intellicig! "And," he added, "can we also thank *Call Sign*. Otherwise we'd have never known about it..."

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As the song title goes, it was 'four in the morning' when Dial-a-Cab driver **William Beer (C62)** stopped for a young couple in Clerkenwell Green. The young man asked how much it would be to take them to Stoke Newington Church Street?

"He explained that the young lady had been drinking and that he wanted to see she was safely home," Bill told **Call Sign**.

"We got to Church Street, and the man, who was probably in his late 20s, made a real effort to see she was safely inside her door before he came back to the cab. None of this turving her out onto the street while he sat in the cab, as so many do nowadays. He made a real effort to ensure she was ok right up to her front door," Bill continued.

"Only when he was satisfied that she was secure in her home did he come back to the cab and ask to return to Clerkenwell. I was so impressed with this young man's attitude towards that vulnerable lady that I told him so, and said how unusual it was in this day and age to see such care. He told me that his father, whom he still missed 10 years after his passing, would have wanted him to act

A DaC driver explains how little it took to make someone happy...

"I Made Him Happy, I Made Him Cry!"



Bill Beer - good deed for the day

responsibly - and that's just what he did."

Bill went on to add: "It's funny, I felt that through my words of praise, this young man had recognised his father from the spirit world acknowledging his sons' chivalrous act towards that female work colleague and that he was rightly proud of the achievement of having done the 'right thing'. By the time we got back to Clerkenwell, the passenger was happy, yes, but he was also clearly welling up, misty eyed that I, a complete stranger, had been the conduit of praise between father and son. Kinda spooky really, but it left me feeling good too..."

Nice one Bill...

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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



Whenever I'm back in London do a stint in the saddle, it always seems that I attract the oddest people, or asked to do the most ridiculous of jobs.

My *Rivers of Babylon* experience just before last Christmas was an eye-opener. Readers may recall my 'slightly overdid it' lady punter who in desperation, asked me to stop so that she could flood Tottenham Court Road with the contents of her rather full bladder! What a spectacle that was for passers-by, some of whom were delirious with laughter at this unfortunate woman's embarrassment - not to mention mine as I patiently sat in the cab wondering if I should test my brakes once we got going again on account that there was so much water about!

So, how about this for a weirdo? The linkman called me up from the point of the rank at the newly refurbished Langham Hotel. My punter is of Mid-Eastern appearance and smiles to me as the linkman hands me the address - Band Q, Smugglers Way, Wandsworth. I tell 'smiles' that it's quite a long way, just in case he thinks it's just off the Edgware Road. It's his turn to hand me some paperwork now and it's a glossy cutting from the Band Q catalogue, showing me an electric fan on special offer at £14.99. I looked up at the most enormous smile now, so wide that we had to endure several gold teeth glinting in the sun.

Phew, I thought, this guy has set his heart on improving the hotels air-conditioning in his room - so much for the multi-million pound refurb! I wondered to myself why, as the cab fare would cost twice as much as the fan, he didn't just go to Argos? Anyway £26.80 later, at the set down point for Band Q, I asked 'smiles' if he wanted me to wait. Needless to say his smile became a grimace, as he said 'No, thank you'!

Anyway, talking about the Langham, I'm sure it was the Editor of **Call Sign** who informed me that it used to be a famous pick up joint for Gigolos looking out for wealthy American ladies - come to think of it, I am sure I used to see Alan's cab parked up on the rank late at night round there!



Ed's note: I deny that claim! Not only do I not possess a pair of white trousers but if I did, I wouldn't have been wearing them because the dry cleaners are closed on Monday. So get your facts right Monsieur Robert...!

A bientot...

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)
Languedoc, France

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If there is one complaint that even beats the lack of work, it's why London's water main replacement work is taking so long and why - even in non-residential areas - workers on the **Thames Water** replacement pipe program seem to finish work long before the average 9 to 5 office worker does?

We know that over a third of London's Victorian water mains are over 150 years old, with more than half being over a century old and that there is a major problem with leakage. According to Thames Water, they need replacing at a time when London's water resources are being put under increasing pressure by the effects of climate change and with the population increasing, a rising demand for water.

Thames say they are committed to replacing more than 1,000 miles of the oldest water mains and pipes with new plastic ones that are said to be more durable and flexible and told **Call Sign** that the work had to inevitably cause some short-term disruption, but that the long-term benefits would greatly outweigh those. More importantly, they said, a reduction in future water main bursts in addition to leakages, would minimise the need for more streetworks.

But **Dial-a-Cab** drivers biggest moans are why so much work all over town was being carried out at the same time - especially where they have those appalling traffic signals that



can only turn green for one street at a time and where, at a junction with four or more exits, you can expect to be stuck in a never-ending traffic hold-up?

Thames Water did tell us that they appreciated they were causing disruption to both local residents and drivers, however they added that no streetworks could be started without them first gaining permission from the local highway authority. They would then have to commit themselves to causing the minimum disruption through their roadworks.

Call Sign ended by asking two important questions: Many areas in the City itself now contain sites where digging is ongoing. Why is this work not being carried out on a 24-hour basis to get it completed in half the time? After all, most premises are offices where any disturbance would be minimal, if at all? Secondly, would rubber pipes last like the Victorian ones have?

Thames Water told **Call Sign**: "**Generally we are not allowed to work 24 hours a day**

Call Sign asks Thames Water...

How Much Longer?

by the councils who give us permission to work on the carriageway. We have to keep a careful balance between getting the work done as quickly as possible and being responsible neighbours. Even in areas that are not largely residential, there can still be people living nearby. On very urgent jobs, in particular 'traffic hotspots' we may occasionally be allowed to work 24 hours a day.

"As for the old cast iron pipes, they are being replaced with more durable and flexible plastic (polyethylene) pipes, which will last for generations to come. This work will be completed by 2010. At that time, the usual London winter scene of a burst water main will all but vanish."

But **Call Sign** cannot help but wonder whether these new plastic ones will outlive the longevity of those cast iron pipes placed into the ground by Queen Victoria's plumbers. But we will not get an answer until the first of the new mains actually bursts. Anyone take a bet on 2011...?

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK



This month's Flashback returns to 1978 with an article in **Steering Wheel** (later to become **The Cab Driver**) on the link between ODRTS and the beginning of the Macmillan Service...

From Steering Wheel, November 1978...

Can You Help?

Taxi driver Alan Fisher devotes his Thursdays to a handful of dying people. Ever since his mother died of cancer last year, Alan has been collecting patients from in and around the East End of London and taking them to St. Joseph's Hospice - which any cabbie will tell you is in Mare Street, Hackney.

The **St. Joseph's Hospice Home Care Service**, which under Dr Richard Lamerton is shortly to be renamed as **The Macmillan Service**, cares for people with an incurable malignant disease in their own homes. It is the Hospice's experience that families and friends are well able - and willing - to cope if they are given enough support. Hospitalisation is thus avoided and the patient can die in his own familiar and reas-



suring home.

Since 1905, the Irish Sisters of Charity have been administering care and specialised attention to those dying of cancer; what Alan Fisher does is to help make those patients last weeks more endurable by taking them to the weekly clinic/social meeting which is held every Thursday between 1.30pm and 4.00pm.

At present, Alan is the only driver that the Hospice has to rely on and they desperately need more volunteers. The work is simple; picking up patients from their homes, taking them to the hospice for a chat with Dr Lamerton, then tea and biscuits before it's time to take them back home. However, it takes a special kind of person to be able to cope with the kind of work it involves. Many cab drivers are well meaning, but you need

to be able to chat and make friends with people whose lives are possibly close to ending and that can't be easy.

If you think that you are that special kind of person who is prepared to give a helping hand to those who are in need, please contact Alan Fisher. He is Fox 7 on Lords radio circuit.

Al Fresco
Editor, **Steering Wheel**

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When **Paul Heatley (V9)** checked his cab tyres, he found the front ones had worn down unevenly across the tread.

"I know TX4s have had issues with tyre wear," he told *Call Sign*, "but I didn't think my own problems were related. It's very easy to rub the tyres against the kerbstone as we pull in to pick-up passengers. Big potholes don't help either," he continued with a grin! "I had the tracking (wheel alignment) checked and also had the tyres swapped around on the wheels to even out the tread wear. Things seem fine now, but it's important to keep an eye on those tyres. There is also a legal requirement to keep the rubber in good order," he added.

Call Sign spoke to our resident motor engineer and she confirmed that steering 'tracking' or wheel alignment is a vital part of tyre care, together, of course with correct tyre pressures as recommended by the vehicle handbook.

"Like anything else, it's important to keep the tyres up," she said softly. "Inflating them to the correct pressure makes for a smooth ride, good handling and also aids fuel consumption. Under-inflation means the engine has to work harder to drive the cab forward, like

Keep on trucking er...tracking!



Paul Heatley

pushing uphill all the time. You'll use more fuel too. Over-inflation, on the other hand, means excessive and uneven wear across the central section of the tread. It also means a

bumpy ride for the passengers," she said.

"Steering tracking can be disturbed if the wheels are impacted against a hard surface and that too may adversely affect tyre wear and, in extreme cases, vehicle stability could also be impaired. The wheels should be adjusted to turn in slightly, known as a *toe-in*, so that when you're on the move the road resistance tends to push the wheels outwards, so in fact they run parallel and tyre wear is even. Misalignment leads to rapid tyre wear. The tread depth is very important too because it disperses road surface water, otherwise you would aquaplane across the street and that's not good for your health," she giggled.

"The minimum legal limit for tread depth is 1.6mm, but I suggest 2mm is just about the minimum in reality. Better safe than sorry," she concluded.

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TfL, Addison Lee and the M4 bus lane...

Was Someone Telling Porkies?

In one of the most amazing disclosures ever to hit the London Taxi trade, a private letter from Addison Lee Chairman John Griffin to all his private hire drivers, disclosed that they could use the M4 bus and taxi lane. The letter was also seen by *Call Sign*...

The letter, dated 6th August, reads as follows:

6th August 2009



Dear Driver,

This is to inform you that we can now use the bus lane on the M4.

Please carry this letter with you as evidence and invite anyone questioning the authenticity of this instruction to contact me on the office number.

We shall of course be pursuing our right to use all bus lanes but for now the M4 is a start.

**John Griffin
Chairman
Addison Lee PLC
ddi; 020 7255 4260**

So, is John Griffin's letter correct? A spokesperson for TfL suggested that the best people to comment would be the Highways Agency and claimed that as the HA managed that road, it was nothing to do with Transport for London.

A spokesperson for the **Highways Agency** said in response:

"Apart from emergency service vehicles, the only other vehicles allowed to use the M4 bus lane are buses, licensed taxis and motorcycles. Private hire vehicles licensed under the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 are not allowed to use the bus lane. The Highways Agency works with the Metropolitan Police, which is responsible for enforcement of the bus lane."

The Metropolitan Police refused to comment, no doubt they were too busy checking for empty taxis parking on ranks. However, they did suggest that they would be interested in who passed the information onto Addison Lee? So would *Call Sign*.

And what about the Public Carriage Office? You no doubt remember those nice people who will stop you working for carrying an 'I love Radio One' sticker on your taxi. The fact that no one loves R1 is irrelevant! Apparently the Penton Street outfit told a fellow editor that it was none of the PCO's business and that they should deal with TfL. If that is true, then there lies the problem. In the old days, it was the PCO. Now it's TfL or SGS or the Met police or the Highways Agency or every damn council in London. It's no surprise that no one knows what is going on. Perhaps it's time the PCO took control again?

On Monday morning, 24 August, *Call Sign* spoke to TfL about AL and suggested that rather than arguing over whose responsibility the M4 was, the easy way out was just to tell Addison Lee that they couldn't use the bus lane! That afternoon, the PCO put out a press release to everyone including AL regarding the M4 bus lane that confirmed:

"Private hire vehicles licensed under the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998, are not permitted to use it and drivers should be aware that contravening the prohibition is an offence."

So it would seem very unlikely that Addison Lee had been given permission and as the headline suggests, we're left with one question: Was someone telling porkies?

**Alan Fisher
Editor**

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Some of you may have seen the article on **Ricky Manetta (N16)** in the May edition of *Call Sign*; he had been asked by some Dial-a-Cab cab drivers to start a day class in London teaching his special style of self-defence.

Soon after the article appeared, Editor **Alan Fisher** was approached by **Steve McNamara** of the LTDA to say that if Ricky agreed, the LTDA would be happy to sponsor the lessons as the organisation felt they could be useful to taxi drivers – although that would have to be for all LTDA members and not just DaC.

In Steve's day-to-day involvement with the LTDA, he got to see first hand some of the problems that drivers were experiencing and especially some with Private Hire. Steve thought that LTDA members would benefit greatly from what Ricky taught, both physically and mentally. So his idea was for Ricky to hold some classes every week at the LTDA offices in Woodfield Road and to make no charge for any LTDA members!

There are now two classes running; one on Tuesdays and another on Wednesdays from 2pm to 3.30pm. Ricky told *Call Sign* that it was the perfect venue, with a large air-conditioned area and lots of parking and washing facilities.

The classes are very mixed, from drivers in their 20s right into their 60s. The come tall, small, fat and thin, which really is a compliment to the class as it shows it's the techniques that work and not the size of the people performing them. Ricky explained that the classes consisted of small warm-up of exercises and stretching, then a quick run over the previous lesson. This is then followed by a new technique and some drills, so everything you learn becomes an instinct and not a thought. In a real life situation, by the time you've had the thought, the instinct has already dealt with it.

Mickey Tarr (R02) is 6' 2" and 16 stone, so we were curious why he would need to do the classes? He explained: "As I get older, I'm not as confident as I used to be and cab driving is so unpredictable. Ricky is absolutely brilliant and gives you that confidence back by giving you the knowledge to deal with any situation, not just the physical - and it's done in a fun atmosphere. I used to train traditional Ju Jitsu, but for me this is a lot more applicable and real. I can also see my strength, fitness and flexibility coming in a short time, just by the way the warm ups are devised. Put it this way; I'm 16 stone and 6' 2" and Ricky is 5' 9" and 11 and a half stone, but I know if I attacked him and that's with or without a weapon, I'd be waking up with a crowd around me and trust me, I've tried with a gun, knife and baseball bat in his class!" Mickey at least had a smile when he said it!

Steve Politz (N57) told *Call Sign* the classes were brilliant. "I can't say enough about it, I'm just addicted," he said! Steve added that the main thing for him was the confidence he had gained through the self-defence and aggression avoidance techniques. This has taught him how to react in situations and not to panic.

Self Defence Classes Go Down a Storm!



Mickey Tarr battles Ricky!



Stretching exercises



Steve Politz (on the ground) isn't going to submit!

He added: "Every

mailshot

**Either write to Call Sign at
Dial-a-Cab House or email us
at - callsignmag@aol.com**

Yellow boxes...

Dear Alan,

I have received a PCN from Camden Council showing four photos of me crossing a junction box in Shaftesbury Avenue, the last one seems to show me stopped in it for 8 seconds. There is no video evidence available, although it states on the notice I can view camera evidence online. But that is unavailable. Do you know if I can appeal on these grounds and also I seem to recall reading in *Call Sign* something about asking for the camera operator's qualification to issue a fine. Sorry to ask but I know you get a lot of enquiries and thought you may be able to help. Failing that, could you put me in touch with our successful Mr Hizer please.

Darren Hawley (A80)

Darren, Camden's website where you can view alleged contraventions, is notorious for crashing. However, it usually works eventually. Martin (what's a PCN) Hizer is always happy to help anyone and his number is 07985 622 638. I've had several requests to repeat the email from Mickey Lappin (E46), which brought in the topic of questioning CCTV operator's qualifications, so I am reprinting it below ...Ed

From Mickey Lappin, Feb 2009: *I received a PCN just before Christmas for a supposed yellow box contravention in Liverpool Road. I challenged it on the grounds that the description of where it took place was very vague. I also asked them to supply me the Road Traffic Law and Traffic Management qualifications that the operator of the CCTV camera had as I was going to appeal on the grounds that a vehicle that should have given way to me from a side road (Highway Code), didn't, thereby forcing me to stop in the yellow box. I got a reply back this morning and - I hope you're sitting down as Islington parking Services have beaten me to it! It read: "Had this PCN been issued correctly it would have been enforceable, however upon looking at the CCTV footage, I am satisfied that your vehicle entered the box first before the vehicle in front of you entered the junction from the right. This vehicle should have given way to you. It is upon these grounds, I have decided to cancel the PCN."*

Firstly, well-done Islington Parking Services for seeing commonsense and remembering that there is a Highway Code. But more importantly, why didn't the CCTV operator spot this and what qualifications does he/she have to decide on our fate? Did asking for their qualifications put the wind up them? What would have happened if I hadn't appealed? It pays to study the Highway Code occasionally especially as it seems, in Islington anyway, to supersede their Traffic Byelaws. And, quite rightly as Islington has proved, if we keep to it and someone else breaks it, it shouldn't be us that are penalised. It will also make you a better driver. Why don't we all try it? Next time you get a PCN from a CCTV camera, if you think there are reasonable Highway Code grounds, appeal and ask to see the operators Road traffic Law

and Management qualifications. It will cost you nothing and could save you £60.

Reply to Allen Togwell...

Dear Alan,

Since Allen Togwell has invited me to respond (*Allen Togwell's Marketing Place - August Call Sign*) and that his reply to my letter is so full of inaccuracies, I feel it only right to reply to what I consider to be complete and utter tripe. It reminds me of a section of the Hawksbee and Jacobs Show on TalkSport entitled "what a waste of ink."

My letter wasn't written in my unsuccessful attempt to get on the Board, but as a subscriber for 17 years who has paid somewhere approaching £30,000 to belong to this Society. It was also written in response to his article and to the Board Member responsible for Marketing, whoever that may be. The fact that it should be him is irrelevant. I would refute completely that I do nothing to promote DaC and he knows that very well. As for his comment that the fault with PH lays with Dial-a-Cab and him in particular is also incorrect, I've re-read my original letter and can't see where I said that. I've said it before and I'll say it again; I do not see the logic of assisting competitors in a very competitive market to maintain their service levels. After all, you don't go into Sainsburys to buy something, only to be recommended Tesco's because they can't supply you with what you want.

With regard to his hypothetical question, I quite agree, I'd bite their hand off. I have no problem with Concierge if it works as it was originally explained, but that is clearly not happening. Ask any of the Marshals and they will tell you that clients have ordered taxis and have been sent cars when taxis were readily available. That, in my opinion, is not how it should work and is detrimental to the membership. Customers have a choice of what vehicle they wish to travel in, but it should be up to them to make that choice. If they want a taxi, give them what they want, don't send them a car.

Do I card up when going to addresses? Yes I do, one to the house on the right and one to the house on the left. Do I offer a card to every street hiring? Yes I do. So only 21 Cabs have the cash booking number. That's a shame but what he failed to say is that I'm one of them. He goes on to say I've never generated a sales lead. Not true Allen and I invite you to retract that statement. What is true is that whilst I may not be as prolific as Tony Hizer, I have never had any feedback on the leads I have put in. No acknowledgment, no message saying that unfortunately it came to nothing and certainly no £20. Is there any sales literature in Driver Services for the drivers to hand out? No. Are there any prepaid postcards for drivers to give to potential clients? No. If there is one thing to

focus the member's attention on potential new customers, it's money. Why not give them a small percentage of the account usage for the first 3 months the account is live as commission? If it doesn't work, so be it, but it would be interesting to see any results if it encouraged even 50 members to be more proactive.

It's not just sales leads I've given in. He may wish to remember the idea I put to him both in an email and personally when I suggested having the DaC logo on the rear carpet in the cab, after all it's normally the first thing people look at when they get in. I'll look into it he said and get back to you. After 6 months of silence and several follow-up enquiries, I went to the Chairman who, as I would expect, followed it up and gave me an answer in 2 days - the PCO wouldn't allow it. It took Brian 2 days to do what Allen had failed to do in 6 months. He also failed to mention why it is I sometimes visit DaC House. It's because I volunteered to sit on the Complaints Panel to ensure all of the membership get a fair crack of the whip.

He then goes on to say that I had plenty to say in my election address at the AGM. Well isn't that what you would expect or should I have said nothing? Afterwards he came up to me and congratulated me on speaking so well. What's changed since then, Allen?

He also calls into question my commitment to seeing this Society continue to flourish. He also knows that not be the case. I didn't stand out in all weathers for 14 years as a Marshall for the money, you could earn more driving. I did it to give our clients and drivers a better service and he certainly doesn't need me to remind him of the stand I took when the Chairman's integrity was called into question, even after personal threats. As for asking him for a detailed list of what he has been doing this year, I didn't ask for that either, a brief résumé so that the members who pay his wages could see what was being done on their behalf would have done.

I notice that there wasn't any comment on my idea regarding advertising the on-line booking facility on the exterior of our vehicles, no comment on the DaC Chargecard and he was strangely mute on our continued association with a company who defrauded the NHS. I've always supported the Board when I have agreed with them, but because I have the temerity to criticise and question, that should not be seen as being naïve.

As someone who has always taken pride in his appearance, perhaps he should get a suit with broader shoulders and not respond to someone with a genuine interest in the future of DaC with such patronising drivel.

Paul Jenner (L19)

Allen Togwell responds: *Ever since I've been on the Board, I've always been proud of the freedom our members have to voice their opinions and criticisms in our in-house magazine, even during the long periods when I was the Society's regular*



mailshot

Mailshot continued from page 34

Aunt Sally. Yet throughout all the flack I took month after month from our members, many of whom were handy with a pen, and the manner in which I reciprocated, never once was I ever accused of talking tripe. My immediate reaction to that comment was to consider any further conversation pointless. Maybe that was Paul's objective, in the hope it will give his reply some credibility. However, never having knowingly written tripe before and being as it is the type of literature that Paul is evidently familiar with, I thought I might as well amuse myself at home during this rainy season and waste a bit more ink.

Firstly: Where in my reply did I say Paul does nothing to promote Dial-a-Cab?

2nd: Yes Paul, you are right you didn't say the fault with PH lays with Dial-a-Cab and me in particular. I apologise, the words you cannot find were: *It wasn't the driver's fault, it was the fault of the radio circuits ie (Dial-a-Cab who I represented) getting into bed with the opposition.* Silly me, thinking it meant the same thing.

3rd: Re my hypothetical question, I'm pleased Paul agrees with Concierge. Just as well because the way it has operated since its inception, without it we wouldn't be in the strong financial position we are today.

4th: I'm also pleased to hear Paul cards up, wonderful, did I ever say he didn't? What I did say was I had written about the benefits of carding up a few months previously and since then there had been no increase in cards being collected from Driver's Reception.

5th: Yes Paul, it is a shame that only 21 cabs carry our number... and I didn't mention the other 20 drivers by name either.

6th: My comment that it wasn't just Paul but almost the entire circuit had not submitted any leads other than Tony Hizer, was based on facts I had obtained from our records. And as a matter of interest, the £20 for a lead is not subject to an account being opened, it's simply for the lead. So if Paul had submitted a lead, which records say he hasn't, it would have been followed up and the £20 duly paid.

7th: There is no sales literature in Driver Services or any prepaid postcards for drivers to give to potential clients? There used to be, but such was the negative response, it was a waste of print and money.

8th: Re giving drivers commission. Many years ago I proposed this idea to the Board and it fell for a number of reasons. Initially there was a suggestion it was against Friendly Society rules, also it would involve PAYE tax, the administration would cost more than the financial return, drivers lack of interest and more importantly it should be remembered that the only accounts likely to be generated from the back of a cab are usually personal accounts, whose usage is only a few hundred pounds a month. Which in volume is OK but singularly for a driver, absolutely useless if they were to rely on

commission. As an example; if you gave a driver say 5% of the 15% administration we earn from the average personal account, the commission would still be a less than a one-off payment of £20.

9th: Paul's idea about our logo on the inside carpet. I had been waiting four months (not six) for a reply from the PCO. By then, a decision had been made which was negative, but which Brice Rice obtained with one phone call, from the head of the PCO who he knew personally.

10th: Yes I did congratulate Paul on what he had to say at the AGM, I also offered criticism on where I thought he went wrong.

11th: Again, where in my reply did I question Paul's commitment to the Society? If Paul and all the other Marshals didn't stand out in all weathers for the money, that's very commendable and I'm sure it will be noted when an increase in the hourly rate is next mooted.

12th: The suggestion to put our on-line booking details on the exterior of our vehicles was not a new idea, both RTL and ComCab advertised above the exterior rear window. I don't have the final say on what goes on our vehicles, it is a Board decision and the consensus of opinion was, as proven with our telephone number that being voluntary, the doubts that many drivers would carry it?

13th: The Chargecard issue: I was purposely mute as I was to Paul's question about whether I contacted the PCO about the PH company who allegedly defrauded the NHS? What on earth has it got to do with me? The facts were published in a national newspaper, so I'm sure the PCO are fully aware of the details.

I started this 'tripe and drivel' by emphasising the freedom of the letters page and long may it continue. Asking a genuine question and expressing justifiable criticism in the letters page is every member's right, although most drivers first telephone if it appears in any way contentious. However to ask questions in a critical manner as Paul did, for example to name one initiative put forward by the LTb, is to undermine the exceptional work that people such as our Chairman does very successfully and outside of normal hours. Frankly, I find that disrespectful and damaging when its goes unnecessarily into print. Nobody on the Board expects praise or is above being brought to task. But there are times when enthusiasm can be dented and a feeling of why bother can be caused by petty criticisms, which I fear one day will be detrimental to the future of our Society. Which makes a mockery of people such as Paul Jenner's claim to have a genuine interest.

Editor's note: Thanks to Allen and Paul for the battle of words, however, I think all points

have now been made and answered and I think this particular thread should now end...

Vito taxis

Dear Alan,

Re the August *Call Sign* Mailshot letter from Jimmy Smith (D09), I recently picked up an Iranian passenger who has lived in London for much of his life. He asked me if the new Mercedes Vito taxis cost the same as the TX4? When I said they were close he told me he would never get into a Vito, as he didn't trust any vehicle that looked like a PH people carrier. He said he only gets into "proper" taxis or sometimes the "flat" one - I think he was referring to the Metrocab...

David Heath (ex-W27)

Dear Alan,

In response to Jimmy Smith's letter (*Call Sign* Aug 2008) *Berc in a Merc*, I strongly disagree that Vito drivers are damaging the trade. The Vito is **not** a minicab but a licensed taxi that complies with the conditions of fitness. It is not the vehicle that should identify us as licensed taxis. New York cabbies, for instance, use a range of vehicles and are easily identified by their yellow and black markings.

The crux of the problem in London is that there is now no clear means of identification between an unmarked Vito taxi and a private hire vehicle. All Vitos should be clearly identifiable by standardised signage. The conditions of fitness should be amended to include this requirement. The orange taxi signage already displayed on some Vitos should be compulsory and maybe even displayed on the bonnet. This would make for easy public identification. I have written to the PCO to suggest this simple change in the rules and I urge all like-minded drivers to do the same.

Tony Byrne (P29)

Tony, your point is well made and totally logical. I just wish that any new taxi had been exclusive to the taxi business rather than to pick one already being used by private hire. After all, if you ever see a TX vehicle as a minicab, then it won't be a genuine private hire because they aren't allowed to use them ...Ed

Fixed prices?

Dear Alan,

Most mornings I drive home via the M11, where almost every other vehicle on the road is a POB minicab and almost certainly heading for Stansted Airport. I'm sure any other DaC driver heading up the M1 will see the same scenario with the minis heading for Luton and likewise on the M23 heading for Gatwick.

Obviously, the reason we are empty is because our prices are way too expensive for these out of town rides. Is there any reason why we couldn't offer competitive fixed prices to cash or even account customers for these trips? A trip from W1 to Stansted will easily go over £100 (probably more than the cost of the



mailshot

Mailshot continued from page 34

passenger's flight). Personally, I would cover an out of town trip like that for two thirds of the meter reading and probably less if I was nearing the end of my shift. Obviously, low fixed prices won't appeal to every driver, so if we did offer this service, perhaps these trips could be broadcast in advance by our controllers to ensure coverage? We should limit this offer to outbound journeys only, with a return available only to account customers (to ensure some payment if anything goes wrong), which could in turn create some new accounts. I remember many years ago, there was a regular fixed price cash trip that went to Oxfordshire on most Friday evenings from the W2 area. It was fixed at £100, but actually went about £135 on the meter and there was never ever an occasion that this trip went uncovered. I'm also sure there was also never an occasion where a driver felt unhappy with the price.

Gary Johnson (P28)

Keith Cain responds: Gary, given the opportunity we do offer fixed prices at rates similar to those you suggest. Two accounts come to mind that have a fixed price from London to Stansted Airport of £104.40, while Gatwick is priced at £89.90 and your assumption is correct, we do not have any trouble in covering them. However, Gary, I would also like to add that we have another account in the centre of town that amongst others, has one fixed price of £17.50 for a 3-mile trip that we often have trouble in covering, despite what our Controllers do and the current downturn in work...

Marcantonio's

Dear Alan,

Just a line about **John Edwardes'** serialised article in the August *Call Sign* - *My Life as a Taxi Driver*. The cafe he mentions where Knowledge boys used to go to share their PCO runs was Marcantonio's and not Mark Antonio's. I remember my dad taking me there and showing me when I was about 8 or 9 years old.

Brian Marcantonio (R73)

Thanks Brian. Coming more up to date, you can read about Brian's PCN collection elsewhere in this issue - something John Edwardes never had to worry about in those early days. You can also read in this issue the latest in John Edwardes' story ...Ed

RTG, Heathrow and the Taxi Board

Hi Alan

I read in *Call Sign* (and every other trade paper) about the actions of RTG Chairman Geoffrey Riesel, who by his actions at Heathrow was prepared to jump into bed with a minicab firm to take over the running of two terminals at Heathrow, much to the detriment of every other licensed taxi driver. The RTG drivers that I have spoken to are very embarrassed by the actions their Board has put them in and I can understand why.

As for the London Taxi Board, I can understand why DaC Chairman Brian Rice had to resign as Chairman of the LTB as Geoffrey Riesel has put him in an imposable

position and I commend him for that decision. Well done Brian...

Pat Keefe

Grey 01

Thanks for the letter Pat. I think we should bear in mind that Heathrow Airport Ltd has put the idea on hold rather than scrapped it. Whether it returns depends on any negotiations the trade has with them and whether that includes reducing some of the high prices for out of the Met trips. It doesn't take a genius to work out how that could easily be achieved ...Ed

Taxis in 2012?

Dear Alan,

Your comments about PH vehicles flying around with Olympic officials in etc, especially in designated lanes during the 2010 Games, whilst we slog it out with all the other plebs, has worried me. If we leave it to organisers to sort out, we will be left out in the cold once again. Fortunately there is sufficient time still to make sure our services are used. Boris Johnson isn't a complete twit and would recognise if it were pointed out to him that leaving the organisation of Olympic travel requirements to a bunch of still wet behind the ears, so-called experts will result in a similar farce to that of the endless bendy buses blocking up the whole of the west end. These are the London Olympics and accordingly should show the world the best London has to offer. There is no reason why the radio circuits cannot offer, during a traditionally quite month, competitive fixed prices when the risks of getting caught in heavy traffic are eliminated. We can also offer a guaranteed service similar to that provided to Virgin trains during the West Coast line shut

down periods. The revenues generated for big business and the government during this period will be absolutely colossal and there is no reason London taxi drivers should not have their small share. Don't let them bully us out of it - enough sharks will be trying their best to do so. Let's make sure we're ready to fight when the time comes. Events in recent months have shown that when united, we can achieve great things. I also advise to look at how Mssrs Foreman (finest smoked salmon) dealt with the Olympic Property Commission to obtain a viable relocation package when told to move! Finally gents, I'd like to know what you think Bob Crow's attitude would be on that one.

Paul Willett (V12)

Brian Rice comments: Strangely enough, Paul, I'm off to see the London Organising Committee of Olympic Games (LOCOG) on 3 September. I can't comment too much at the moment as I am unsure of their current stance, however I do know that although London is quiet in August, the congestion in August 2012 will be something else! There will be Olympic routes in and around London, including the centre, and the only ones allowed to use them will be competitors and officials. However, as you are probably aware, the paraplegic Olympics follow onto the heels of the Olympics and I wonder how competitors will get there? I'm sorry I can't give you any more information, Paul, as quite honestly I don't have it! I do not disagree with your sentiments, however, I do disagree the traffic will be eliminated; with all the Olympic routes I believe it will be very heavy. If and when I have any further information I will of course inform you...



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