

February 2010



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*Why is this DaC dispatcher on the front cover?
A clue?... Not just because she's gorgeous!*



What has DaC's Sid Nathan got against this bus?



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

London City Airport 'Arrivals' timetable, somewhat cramped but all flights are on one page. For a larger format - including flight numbers and originating airports - sign up for the UID. Simply go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click on "Free 70+ page info."

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For the **What's On** guide, go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and just click on *What's On...*

from the editor's desk

Views of the police?

I recently had a very interesting chat about private hire with a serving police officer. What he said surprised me somewhat when he admitted that the police knew the majority of *bad apples* in the trade were on the minicab side. He also told me about being involved in several anti-tout missions and how they had caught minicabs attempting to tout for business.

Then he spoiled it all by also admitting that they operated under a list of priorities and that minicab touting came very low down on that list. While he added that they would love to be able to devote more time to cleaning up private hire, they just did not have the time.

He also admitted knowing that some private hire drivers – especially at busy times – were touting, while police looked the other way because they were busy dealing with other things. And even more surprisingly, he actually admitted that if there were just too many punters looking for too few taxis, they'd never get home without minicabs touting.

An interesting, yet very sad, chat...

Paul for Music

I don't know how many of you were brought up in the East End in the mid-1950s and early 60s, but if you were then you will undoubtedly remember the record stall in front of Whitechapel Station and the shop in Cambridge Heath Road that stored every one of the latest vinyl releases in those early rock n' roll years.

Paul Shoben - better known as **Paul for Music** - ran both. I tend not to write about personal stuff such as this, but Paul for Music played a small part in my early years that always felt like such a big part, that when I read of Paul's death in December at the age of 87, I just had to give it a mention.

Together with friends, I would spend hours on a Saturday morning outside the underground station listening to Paul playing the latest vinyl tracks – starting, I think, around September 1957 when Lonnie Donegan's skiffle sound was bidding a fond farewell and the American bubble-gum pop machine burst onto the UK scene. It was at that time when the non-stop sound of Paul Anka blared out day after day and week after week as his amazing music-changing *Diana* topped the charts for 7 weeks - with Paul playing it constantly throughout!

Then from Diana, through Elvis and the early Cliff, we gathered around the Paul for Music stall listening to the sound that many just refer to now as "the sixties."

Before The Beatles arrived on the scene, we'd moved onto the home of Tottenham Hotspur for our Saturday afternoon entertainment. But the mornings were still spent by Paul's stall.

The memory of those early years at Paul Shoben's record stall will stay in my mind forever.
RIP Paul...

DaC Credit Union

The past 12 months have finally seen a breakthrough in the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union with new members totalling well into three figures. The only mystery to me is why every subscriber on DaC isn't a member? After all, it costs you nothing and you never know when you might



suddenly need a few shekels. Ok, you have to save a regular amount each month – as small or large as you wish – but that money is yours. You can take it back whenever you want, or leave it mount up so that you can borrow up to three times that amount and get it within a matter of days. With the cost of running a cab skyrocketing, it seems so logical to have access to loans where the repayments are so reasonable, rather than some of those small loan companies where interest charges are astronomical. The amounts you can borrow now runs into many thousands of pounds, but no one will ask you to sign over your house "just in case!" And as many subscribers have discovered, their 7% interest on savings accounts is just unbeatable. Not surprisingly, that offer only opens for short periods within the year so you not only have to be fairly quick, but you also have to be a member. And as I said at the beginning, the only mystery to me is why every subscriber on DaC isn't one already!

Black power?

Several issues back, *Call Sign* published a story by a DaC driver where he told of his fear when seeing a group of 'hoodies' walking towards his taxi. In all innocence, the driver said that the reason he quickly locked his doors wasn't because they happened to be black, but because they were obviously hiding their faces. He went on to say that he would have locked the doors had they been white as well.

A complaint came in from a member of staff in the DaC Call Centre saying that the driver's description was racist and while not for one second do I think the driver meant it to sound that way, I could understand why the complaint was received and as Editor, I sent an apology to the Call Centre member and accepted responsibility. He accepted it graciously and we had a short but interesting exchange of views on the subject.

Now it's my turn to complain about what some perceive to be reverse racism. This column doesn't particularly like minicabs and we've said so many times. However, I have over the years met some of the people behind the larger PH companies and many are just regular guys running a business – so yes, it's the business of PH that I can't bring myself to like and not necessarily those running the businesses.

One "boss" I haven't met is Roger Lynch, Chief Executive of the Ruskin PH group in

Camberwell Road. He seems like a responsible businessman, a nice guy and I'm sure that he would be just as annoyed at his drivers if they were caught touting, as we would be.

Yet according to *Southwark News*, Mr Lynch was "one of a group of prominent black business people invited to Number 10 to mark the rising success of BME entrepreneurs." The paper writes of how Roger Lynch complained to Gordon Brown about the way Lloyds Bank were treating their customers and other items of interest to him. It then goes on to say:

"Roger Lynch is a new entrant in this year's newly-published Black Power List, which identifies the most 100 most influential BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) people in Britain. He is also Southwark's reigning Black Entrepreneur of the Year." It then quotes the Prime Minister in saying how important it is for all black and ethnic minority people to go out and vote at the next election, whether they are Labour, Liberal Democrat or Conservative, because "...the BNP poses the greatest danger to you and diversity in our nation."

Gordon Brown may well be correct about the BNP, but my problem is with the word 'black' and I have a feeling that the person who issued the original complaint to *Call Sign* may well agree with me on this occasion.

Can you imagine the uproar if there were to be a White Entrepreneur of the Year award or if someone were to be nominated as one of the 100 most influential white people in Britain and they were then placed onto a White Power list? The thought is not just appalling, but chilling to the blood. Yes, there are problems between different colour groups, but they represent a small percentage of race relations and most of us get on as being just people, with the actual question of colour not arising.

Then we hear something like the situation surrounding Roger Lynch and his "awards" that appear to be for him being black, rather than for being good at his job – something he obviously is. Perhaps it's just me, but I considered the article in *Southwark News* to be far more racist than the driver in *Call Sign* who perhaps just didn't express himself in the way he meant to...

Mike Son

An article in the January *Call Sign* from Board member **Mike Son**, under the heading *How can we win back our work*, has led to an avalanche of both emails and phone calls – some in favour, some not so much so, but none violently against. Amazingly, one even came in from the private hire section. However, as that person is **Martin Cox** who has huge experience of both sides of the industry, I felt it to be relevant and taking my life in my hands, I have gone ahead and published it!

I have asked Mike not to respond in this issue – especially as he was on holiday for some of the time anyway – but to follow up the article next month.

Call Sign may be just an in-house magazine that can't be bothered extolling its virtues, but it never ceases to amaze us at how often it leads the way in discussion groups...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Winter's here!

We now seem to be getting back to some sort of normality after the long Christmas holiday and, of course, that very bad weather we experienced during the early part of January. We seem to be doing quite well work-wise during this early part of the year, but it really is difficult to forecast business trends due to this period of unusually extreme weather conditions.

Although bad weather can be good for our business, heavy snow also has the downside of making driving conditions particularly hazardous, especially on minor roads. Neither were they bad just in the suburbs, on some days they could just as easily have been in the centre of town.

As I stated earlier, although good for business, it does make life for members much more difficult, especially for the majority who no longer live in town but in the suburbs and even further afield. These are the people that really curse the bad weather, especially if they cannot even make it into town due to the heavy snowfall.

They sit at home feeling extremely guilty about not going out to work, exacerbated by the fact that the credit card bills are beginning to come in following Christmas! They watch the news on television with its live reports from the centre of London, with traffic seemingly moving freely in the background, then they look out of their own window at eight inches of snow, tell themselves that it's probably busy in town and begin to wonder if they should try and get into work? I know the feeling well, as I've experienced it myself in the past.

Anyway, getting back to the work; our figures have not significantly improved this year (as compared to last year's figures) after our first quarter's trading, however, I do believe that we have hit the bottom and am hopeful that business will begin to improve. But as I explained earlier, such inclement weather in our business makes it difficult to predict future trends.

However, I am very pleased to report that we are showing a small surplus for the corresponding period, this is due to the fact that our operating costs have been cut quite significantly over the same period last year and not due to any significant increase in work.

Interesting letters

I believe there are several letters in this issue of the magazine in response to Mike Son's article in the *January Call Sign*. I am not sure if they will be included by the Editor as letters or even articles, but I must say I found them all to be very interesting. It is always nice to have letters that are written in a constructive vein, even those that are also somewhat critical of our operational system - everyone is entitled to their opinion. But what I also found quite pleasing was how sympathetic some of the responses were to our predicament, showing a real grasp of the plight of the radio taxi industry from those individual writers.

There is one important issue, however, and that is when members come up with suggestions that they believe will particularly benefit them as an individual - there is nothing wrong with that and I totally understand that situation



- but what they must remember is that the BoM will only do what they consider to be in the best interest of the majority of members and the Society as a whole, but that whatever we do, a section of the membership will be alienated. It can be a difficult situation, as on some occasions we have to do what some members might consider as not being in their interest.

If my memory serves me correctly, one letter in this issue - answered by Keith Cain - is from a member who complains that work from the 'House' is all A/D, so how can he get a job home? In reality, we made that account A/D because local trips were 'sticking' in the system and we were getting complaints from the client. Consequently, had we had left the trips with destinations, yes, some members would have got a job home in the short term, but in the longer term they would not as we would have lost the account! Everyone would

then suffer from the loss and absolutely no one would receive any type of trip from that particular account again. As a consequence, every member - and the Society itself - would be the loser in that long term.

There is one last point that I would like to address. I believe some members believe we make huge amounts from clients in administration charges, that in turn make our charges particularly expensive compared with the competition. That is a total myth, as in a vast number of cases the admin charge is exceeded by the amount of driver gratuity alone. Whilst I am on the subject of driver gratuity - and you should not read anything into this - one of our competitors has reduced their gratuity to the driver to 5%, that is not to say they have necessarily reduced the charge to the client, it is just a way of increasing their income from the driver.

DaC AGM

Finally, I would like to remind you that the AGM is on February 7th and will once again be held The Brewery, Chiswell Street, commencing at 11am. If you do not vote by post, then you must attend the AGM, otherwise you will incur a £50 fine. There really is no excuse for not voting as we do not have any rule changes or propositions to vote on! Neither is it an electable AGM where a BoM is seeking election.

This is probably the first AGM of its kind where only the minutes, Financial Report and appointing our Auditors has to be decided!

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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AL Driver Tries To Run Over DaC Driver!

It had been a fairly ordinary Saturday night for Dial-a-Cab driver **Marc Turner (R97)** and at just after 1am, with things beginning to quieten down, Marc took a look at the **Holiday Inn Forum Hotel** in South Kensington. But he couldn't get onto the point because an Addison Lee car - complete with driver - was hogging it. Marc takes up the story...

"I put onto the rank and gave him a good stare as if to say please pull off because this is a taxi rank and you aren't a taxi. But he stayed put, so I got out and made as if I was going to take a photo of his car with my phone. No sooner had I held the phone up to his registration plate than he started up his engine and attempted to run me over!"

Calming down a bit, Marc continued his story: "After missing me, he drove off but I had failed to take the photo, being somewhat more concerned at getting out of the way of his car quickly! But then to show his apparent stupidity, instead of just legging it he returned and pulled right up to my bumper and told me that he wanted to hit me and judging by the look on his face and



Marc Turner - Addison Lee minicab tried to run him over!

tone of his voice, he may well have attempted it. Fortunately a member of the public came out just then and defused the situation. I told the passenger that had I not been there, he might well have ended up in the minicab with what appeared to be a mentally unbalanced driver, who was flagrantly breaking his licensing conditions by being an opportunist.

"The Addison Lee driver then butted in and asked what I meant by opportunist, as being from Africa he did not understand the word? I didn't want to involve myself any further and took the passenger and left the hotel - but not without successfully photographing his registration number this time."

Marc has sent two letters of complaint, together with the photo of the AL registration number, to both the Public Carriage Office and also Addison Lee themselves. At the time of going to press, neither had responded...

Geely Sales Go Through The Roof!



Gui Sheng Yue: "Building up new production bases..."

Announcing their 2009 full year vehicle sales, Hong Kong listed Geely Automobile Holdings said they had risen by an astonishing 59% up to 325,413 units.

China's largest privately owned automaker also added in the statement that their December sales were up 108% to a record 43,446 units and that their 250,000 unit full year target set for 2009, was easily exceeded. The company have now revised their 2010 target upwards to 400,000 vehicles. This includes the TX4 taxi, which they also manufacture in Shanghai and begs the question that many are asking: Will the TX4 end up as a Chinese manufactured vehicle if more variants of the London taxi are passed for use in London, should the *Conditions of Fitness* be written off in March?

Geely have already made an estimated US\$1.8billion bid for Ford's Volvo cars and according to Geely Automobile's chief executive **Gui Sheng Yue**, the group wants to expand overseas sales - including western Europe - by exporting two-thirds of output by 2015. Gui added this telling quote:

"Our principle has always been the same. It is that the parent company will build up new production bases and will inject them into the listed company once the construction has completed and the bases become profitable." That seems to be what is happening with the TX4.



TAXI

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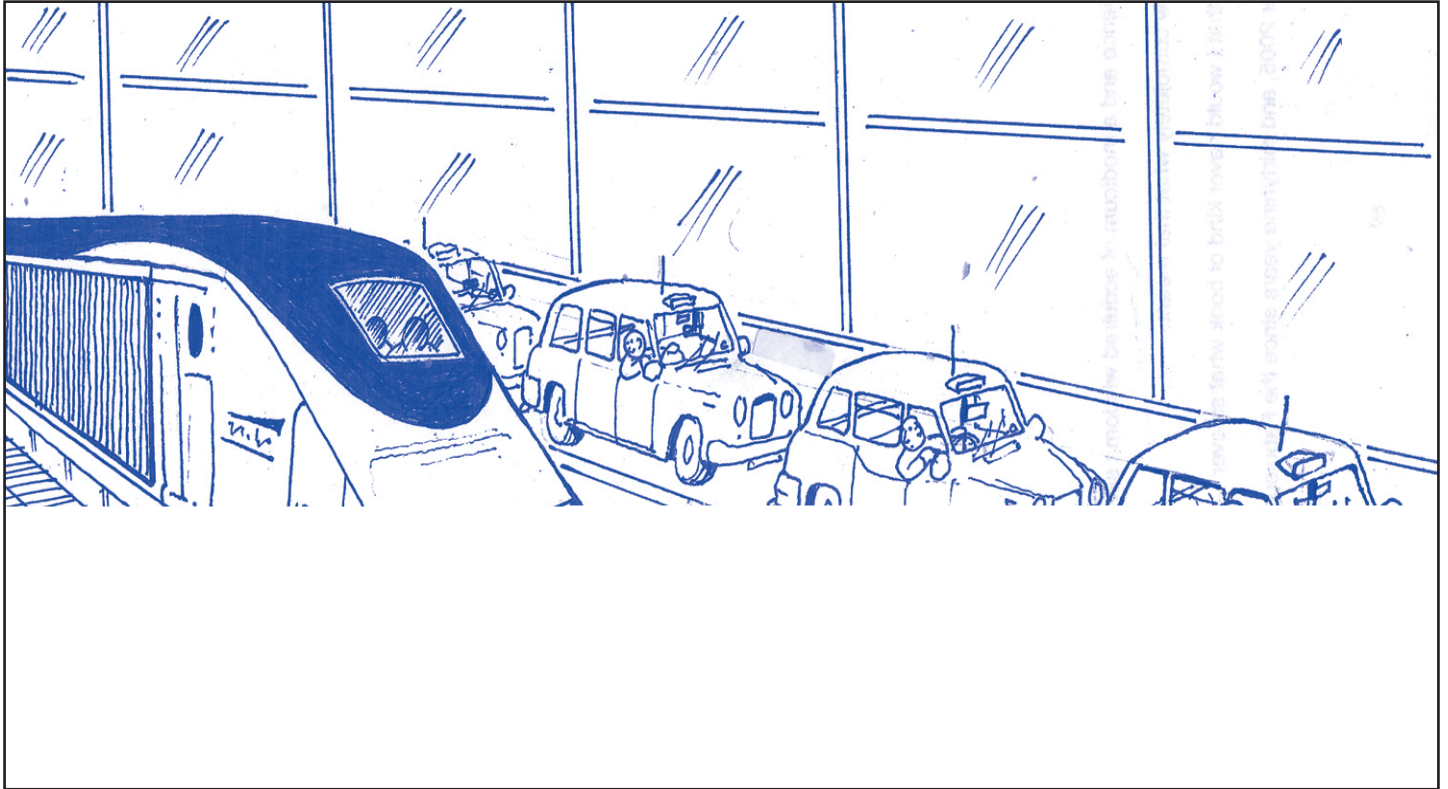
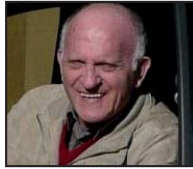
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Jerys World



'Ere Bert, I 'ear this rank's gonna get a million extra punters in time for the 2012 Olympics. You reckon we'll be off by then....???

2012: EUROSTAR WINS...BUT WHO LOSES?

A report issued recently by **Dial-a-Cab** client, *Deutsche Bank*, predicts around one million extra passengers will be using the *Eurostar* service during the period of the 2012 London Olympics. The report claims that after researching data from the last three Games, the Bank had found they had been a catalyst for further passenger traffic and activity, which puts Eurostar in a good position to capture the extra work crossing the Channel from mainland Europe – both for passengers and freight.

The problem for the London taxi trade is that for the four week period of the Summer and Paralympic Games, those extra passengers coming here specifically for the event won't alight at St Pancras International, but will carry on via the new high speed train to Stratford in around 7 minutes. Not something the taxi trade can compete with.

However, *Deutsche Bank* also predicts that the Games will lead to a *spill over effect* that would further enhance London's international exposure over the next five to 10 years. If that turns into fact, it will undoubtedly help this trade get back onto its feet after the disastrous effects of recession - in addition to helping Eurostar



get back into profit following their expensive 2009 Christmas, when trains became stuck in the tunnel following heavy snow and the company paid out millions in compensation and replacement trips.

More good news for London's taxi drivers though, comes in an announcement that the Eurostar line is set to be opened up for the use of rival train companies later this year. German transport group *Deutsche Bahn* is said to be considering plans to run its high-speed trains through the tunnel to link Cologne or Frankfurt with London, whilst French operator *Veolia Environnement* and national airline *Air France* are expected to bid to run competing services.

That could mean that while one hand

takes some of our work for four weeks, the other hand will be giving us much more over a much longer period. At least that's the hope...

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

The 9 December issue of *Taxi Globe* contained an article about new electric buses that *John Lewis* plan to use for transporting passengers to/from their Oxford Street store. Charging passengers a £5 fare, the 9-seater buses are powered by wind-turbine electricity, while the seats are leather. An added attraction sees the bus fitted with WiFi and containing laptops for customer's use.

The bus has come from a partnership between John Lewis and Green Urban Transport Sustainable initiative – or GUTSi for short!

A John Lewis spokesman claimed the company had been working for four years in developing the idea and has purchased twenty of the coaches at a cost of £150,000 each.

The article quoted one unnamed driver as being so upset that he returned his John Lewis store card. Dial-a-Cab's **Sid Nathan (K88)** was equally disturbed by the news. He told *Call Sign*:

"John Lewis has the best-served taxi rank in the west end. There are always taxis there and they do a great job in taking passengers wherever they want to go – be that to the other side of London

Sid Nathan says to the cab trade...

Electric bus? What about the taxi rank???



Will the bus steal a lot of our work?
Inset: Sid Nathan

or just Selfridges. Now we hear about this electric bus service. The type of passengers that use buses charging £5












are exactly the type who would normally grab a taxi outside the store's doors. Why does everybody want a piece of our business; no one is content just having their own. I can well understand why the driver returned his store card."

Sid ended by saying: **"With 20 buses, this could be a real punch in the mouth for us and when you think about it you have to ask why a store whose job it is to sell items to customers that walk through their doors, should be spending £3million to provide transport for customers who can already get there by bus, tube, taxi or even their own transport? Buses, schmusses, who needs them???"**

London Mayor, Boris Johnson, said that he was a big fan of electric vehicles that did not belch out fumes via their exhausts and that he would like to see more eco-friendly vehicles on London's roads. He obviously hasn't met Sid yet!

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It may surprise many of you to know that we at **Call Sign** have been following the progress of **Power Pill** for over four years now. Back in August 2005, Power Pill approached us with a product that they not only claimed would save us money on fuel and get rid of the nasty black smoke pouring out of our taxis, but also offered to prove it free of charge! This magazine has shown the proof many times since, via our drivers testing the product and showing that it actually does what it claims! Not content with giving DaC drivers a chance to test the product for nowt - and with some amazing results - they also set about demonstrating how much cleaner our cab engines stayed by using the product. Again, all the results featuring DaC drivers were published around the world, both in hard copy magazines as well as online.

Power Pill set out to find a well-respected, long established specialist to conduct some major engine examinations and after much research throughout the industry, chose **MAG Diesels** in south London, asking them to strip down a typical diesel engine that had never used Power Pill. Then three Dial-a-Cab drivers were picked at random from the hundreds who were using Power Pill at the time to have their vehicle engines stripped down to see what difference, if any, Power Pill had made. The non-using engine had a large amount of carbon left behind from the diesel. It was explained to **Call Sign** that in every engine MAG worked on, heavy carbon deposits were found within the combustion chamber and fuel system. The result was usually poor start up, excessive smoke, poor gas flow, reduced power and decreased miles per gallon. All of those significantly shortened the lifespan of the engine.

The first DaC driver to have his cab engine examined was **Ken Jackman (B29)**, whose Metrocab Series I had completed over 290,000 miles at the time. Ken had been using Power Pill for over 6 months and on inspection, the findings from his cab were quite remarkable.

Ken told this magazine in 2006: *"I started using Power Pill after reading the articles in Call Sign and immediately started to see improvements in fuel consumption. When Power Pill approached me to demonstrate that my cab's engine would last longer, I was happy to oblige...and it was definitely worth it! The comparison results were quite remarkable."*

Next up to the plate was **Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)**, who has since changed to a Vito but who had a Metrocab at the time. He too was delighted by the results and kept his cab longer than he otherwise might have.

Steve Hassan (P95) was the third driver to have his cab examined and the results in his TXI were just as impressive. He said that all parts of his engine, injectors, filters and even oil were much cleaner since using Power Pill and driving had been much more of a pleasure.

MAG proprietor, **Arthur Bolt** – a veteran

With the need to try to save any money we can on fuel costs, some seem to have forgotten how well Power Pill works – and Chris Hayball has moved as well...

Power Pill Increases Mileage and Cuts Smoke



Valve seating in a cab NOT using Power Pill

of 55 years in the trade - had told **Call Sign** at the time and hasn't changed his view for 2010:

"Power Pill really does work – we have tested all kinds of devices which are designed to give better performance, but in our opinion none have ever achieved results as consistently as Power Pill. The cleaning of the engine and fuel system starts immediately and within just a few tanks of fuel you are driving a much cleaner vehicle, pumping out less emissions and saving money not only on fuel, but hefty servicing bills too. We believe engines using Power Pill should last in excess of 600,000 miles."

Now into 2010, many DaC drivers use **Power Pill** and **Arthur Bolt** - still at **MAG** - still recommends them. **Chris Hayball**, whose ad is in this issue, sells the pills online or via post from his home but has asked **Call Sign** to publicise the fact that he has moved home from **Chesterfield** to **Derbyshire** – a few miles down the road. His internet address and phone numbers are still the same, but those regulars and new readers who write to him for Power Pills should use his new address:

Chris Hayball, Grove Bungalow, Mansfield Road, Heath, Derbyshire S44 5SF.

His prices are still unchanged. DaC drivers can buy one pack for £15, five packs for £65 or ten packs for £110 (including



Valve seating in a cab that IS using Power Pill. The difference is astonishing!

postage). Each pack contains 10 pills and one pill is enough for a complete tank. If you fill up daily, half a pill each time is ample.

You can order by phone on 01246 856 153 or 07737 956 298...

Online: **www.powerpillonline.com** and pay via **PayPal ziggystardust1000@hotmail.com** (enter promo code DAC 10)...

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As we enter the second month of a new decade, Allen Togwell looks at...

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS!

As I draft this article, 2009 is just hours away from ending and for many it's good riddance, except maybe for some of us older folks who as more years pass, question the speed in which they go. One minute we were celebrating the arrival of a new year, next minute it's spring, summer, winter and before you know it, Christmas again - a full year where each day seemed as one and the weeks being a blur. Looking back, I ask myself not only what have I achieved, but also where was the time to achieve it? Including, I might add, at the very beginning of the year, those New Year resolutions...

How many of you at the start of 2009 resolved to lose weight, give up smoking, get fit and - dare I say it - adopt a more positive attitude towards appearance when driving your cab? And how many of you, twelve months later whilst tucking into turkey, mince pies and with a belly full of booze, can honestly say you kept your promise and were a success? Very few I bet, because it's a known fact, as a recent research shows, that less than 5% of those who make New Years resolutions actually achieve their aim.

If it's any consolation to you guys, statistics also claim that women give into temptation earlier than men when it comes to watching their waistlines or giving up cigarettes and alcohol. The average woman will give up their new healthy lifestyle and fall back into their old routine just six days into the New Year. Men apparently - although it's nothing to be proud of - lasted a further two weeks before giving in. Three lousy weeks before they gave in to a fag, booze, a fry-up with chips and the couch instead of going for a jog! Which means already, one month into 2010 and those resolutions are beginning to fail. It's hard to believe that a custom which is practised throughout the world and which goes back as far as 153 BC, can have such a history of negative results. The excuse in some cases is that goals have been set too high or are unattainable, but that's only in the minority of cases; the bulk of the failures are amongst the 10 most common goals which are to lose weight, quit smoking, drink less alcohol, get fit, eat right, reduce stress, spend more time with family, save money, enjoy life more and to learn something new. None of which are really unattainable. Particularly those goals that have a huge influence on your state of health.

To gym or not to gym...?

Take 'keeping fit' for example, apart from the obvious that it makes you look and feel better, regular exercise has been associated with more health benefits than anything known to man. Studies show that it reduces the risk of some cancers, increases longevity, helps achieve and maintain weight loss, enhances mood, lowers blood pressure and even improves arthritis - a common ailment amongst those who sit behind a wheel of a vehicle all day.

Mention keeping fit and the assumption is to immediately join a gym, which really isn't necessary. While exercising in a gym is effective for many people, others join a gym only to find they rarely have time to go, quickly tire of the atmosphere, feel intimidated by the body beautifuls or the monotony of it. The key is to find a physical activity that you enjoy.

Several people I know achieved this by cou-



pling a fitness programme with martial arts, such as judo, karate, kung fu, aikido etc, which apart from fitness, gives the added benefit of being able to defend themselves (ideal for those in the cab trade), plus there's a spiritual element which improves the mind's focus, helps self control and builds confidence. And with the various levels of disciplines that can be achieved in Martial Arts, it creates a motivation to keep at it regularly, either going to a club or working out at home. I substituted going to a gym by taking a brisk 30-minute walk after dinner each evening, brisk enough to cause a sweat. I've also made it a policy of never using the lift. My office is on the fourth floor - eight flights of stairs totalling 86 steps. That simple discipline alone can improve lung capacity, blood pressure and bad cholesterol. I'm amazed at times when I see someone waiting for the lift to go up or down just one floor. I'm sure this has nothing to do with laziness, but just simply habit. Just like jumping into your cab or car to go a few minutes down the road, which is a calorie-burning, leg-strengthening, mind-clearing exercise opportunity lost! It's easy to break that habit if you make it known to everybody in your household that you are going to walk any journey that will take you ten minutes or less without the cab - and that you want their help in making you stick to it.

Having a stretch...

Another simple discipline is stretching, which you can do anywhere. Okay, so stretching isn't going to make you into a lean, mean calorie-burning machine - but it will help you mobilise your joints, get to know where different muscles are and find out the areas in which you are tight and tense. Make having a gentle stretch first thing in the morning or when you get home from work, part of your regular routine. And that's the operative word... routine. Just like the regular routine you have in cleaning your cab or filling up with diesel. Make taking a brisk walk and stretching part of your regular routine.

Driving a cab isn't the best occupation either when it comes to healthy eating. With so few cafés offering fresh vegetables or a wide selection of fish, then the alternative is to eat as much salads as possible and eat at least five different vegetables and plenty of oily fish when you eat at home.

And talking of home, family is the most important thing in a person's life, but some people don't seem to realise this. If you're one of these people that spends more time working than is really necessary than talk-

ing with your son or daughter or partner at the dinner table, then you should seriously consider this as a New Year resolution. A recent study showed that the more often children have dinner with their parents; the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use illegal drugs. Other reports have linked family dinner to higher grades. It can also provide stability and security.

And having a drag...

Nobody needs me to explain the benefits of giving up smoking; fortunately, with the new non-smoking laws in public places, this has forced many to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke during the day, however I'm still surprised by the amount of cab drivers I've seen smoking. Keeping healthy when driving a cab in London is difficult enough, why jeopardise your health and the welfare of your family by smoking? It shouldn't be a resolution to give up smoking, common sense should be enough.

Finally - and yes - I couldn't possibly not mention one final resolution, even though it's not amongst the top ten or for that matter anywhere in the top hundred! Which doesn't surprise me when I see all those schlocky presenters on television.

In fact, as I draft this article, I've just watched a TV news item showing Terry Wogan leaving his BBC R2 show for the last time and seen how immaculately he was dressed to do his job - on radio! Not for him jeans and scruffy T-shirt. He is obviously a man of habit in the way he dresses, whether on TV or radio. And on that point I honestly believe those that drive a cab without any thought to the manner in which they are dressed, do so out of habit.

I just cannot believe so many cabmen can be sloppy in their dress by nature. The reason I'm sure is because there is no peer pressure, they are alone in their cab and there is nobody with whom to measure themselves by or to set an example. I've said it 1000 times; appearance equates attitude. If you look good, you feel good. If you feel good you act good and in acting good and looking smart, it raises your self-esteem. All very important attributes when you are servicing the public and particularly when battling daily against minicabs. Because being outnumbered by nearly three to one, it is they by which we are now measured.

We may not always be able to beat minicabs on price, but we CAN on quality, service, ability and appearance - IF everybody made the effort. Remember, there are officially 60,000 minicabs in London, unofficially is anybody's guess! But if 60,000 minicabs did just one trip a day, that's nearly 22 million trips a year that too many cabmen out there are prepared to lose without making any concerted effort to reclaim.

Think about it, and if you make a New Years Resolution that will improve your health and your job, remember to tell your family and friends what it is so they can encourage you to keep at it.

Be lucky and may I wish you all a happy, prosperous and healthy New Year...

**Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing**



82-Taxi Tour of London

with London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours

Happy New Year to you all – 2010 will hopefully be a good one to everyone!

Together with **Dial-a-Cab** subscriber **Brian With (Y84)**, our venture - **London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours** - is going from strength to strength with sales figures increasing month after month, which is very promising.

LBCST became an idea when two cab drivers - newly qualified *Cab Guides* - enjoyed a coffee one Sunday afternoon in November 2008 in *Costa* on Cheapside and our plans were decided over two large *skinny wet lattes*! We wanted to put our new qualification and shiny new green badges into good use and form a company that would become one of the major Sightseeing Tour options in London.

Our official launch took place at the *Visit Britain Tourist Office* in Regent Street last spring, which included BBC radio coverage, and since then we have recruited a stable of fellow *Cab Guides*, taking clients out on our

Classic Tours as well as our *Themed Tours*, which include *Royal London*, *Roman London*, *Harry Potter Film Locations* and *Jack the Ripper's Sinister London* among others.

As you read this, we are just recovering following a huge LBCST event that took place on Friday 22nd January! Our task was to transport 324 Spanish employees of German car manufacturers Audi on a sightseeing tour of London in 82 taxis, which included taking them to two iconic landmarks for their Blue Badge Guide Presentations. Hard work, but oh so enjoyable...

We won the job because **London Black Cab Sightseeing Tours** are members of *UK Inbound*, who are the only trade association to represent and unite the UK's inbound tourism businesses, and for this event we teamed up with fellow members, *Axis Group*, a Chiswick-based company who provide group travel in London for people from all

over Europe. Networking!

Some of you **DaC** drivers reading this would have taken part and I now know are re-keen to sit the *Cab Guide Course* this year – and why not – a cab driver should always be looking for another 'string to his bow' with uncertain times looming up ahead in our trade.

The *Cab Guide Course* is funded by the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers*, and accredited by the *City University*. Why not consider giving it a go? Why not consider increasing your earnings potential? It's not all about remembering key dates in history - you can always round them off to the closest century! It's more about being able to give a running commentary about the City you work in and know so well and making it fun and entertaining!

Adios a mis amigos – hasta luego!

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)

Have you got your black cab fuel card yet?

The **Fast Fuel Card** (called the **Black Cab Fuel Card** by the promoters) has been in use for some time by **Dial-a-Cab** drivers and many of us now have one, in addition to the hundreds of transport companies and fleet operators who supply them to their drivers in order to help cut their costs. With taxi drivers having to work longer hours to reduce the shortfall in their money, 5 or 6 gallons a day is fairly average and if you round that up as an average of 25 litres per day on a 6-day week, you are looking at approximate savings of £7.50 or more each week. It may not pay the mortgage, but taking away holiday periods when not working and you are still saving around £300 a year. Not bad for nothing!

And that doesn't take into account that you can also fill up your own private car and even use it for cars belonging to other family members if you are out with them! If you are going on a UK driving holiday especially, you can really make a saving on the extortionate current price of either fuel.

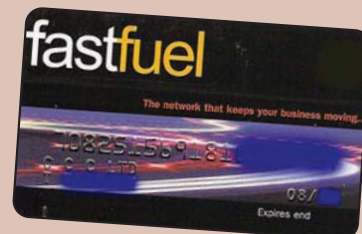
Although you may be asked for registration and/or mileage details because forecourt staff are trained to ask for them, it is not necessary to give either as no one is checking on your usage! A simple 'no need thanks' is usually sufficient.

For those that don't know, when you fill up at a **Texaco** or **Morrisons**, DaC drivers will save up to 5p a litre by using a **Black Cab Fuels Card** and instead of paying cash or using your own card, just signing for the fuel purchased and the amount will be deb-

ited from your bank account two weeks after the end of the week via direct debit.

Remember, 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 – on average around 5p per litre less than many garages. You will be notified via text message what the following week's price per litre will be. You can also manage your transactions online if you wish by accessing your account details and purchases at any time.

For more information on how to open an



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A few thoughts following **Mike Son's** piece in the *January Call Sign*. I've only held a badge for 4 years and could still (God willing) have 30 or so more years behind the wheel of a Taxi. So how we can win back work is of much of interest to me and the family I support!

We're in a difficult position. The *cleaning up* of the PH industry (their vehicles and drivers), improved booking / despatching technology and the invention of SatNav must give PH drivers a more enjoyable job than they'd have had 10 years ago and passengers much more confidence in the PH trade. Also, the fact that many PH drivers are (presumably) happy to take home slightly less money per day (at the moment) than a London Taxi driver might be happy with... and you have a problem which clearly must be addressed before we become just a tourist attraction.

We are in a free market economy. Despite the fact that I still remember the pride I had in getting my badge and the rich heritage we have in the London Taxi trade, thousands of people sadly aren't going to pay us to drive them from A to B just because we 'worked hard' to get our licence." This annoys me and bugs me - but it's true! Like any service provider - as has been said over and over again - we attract custom if the service is excellent and the price is right. Basic business economics. We mostly work using our taximeters - the rates of which are the source of endless discussion. But the meter system must put off some potential clients. I would rather get a fixed price job than no job at all. Sure - it's easier to accept a FP job late at night when you know the traffic won't muck you about so much. But if it's an FP or nothing - then I'll do it (providing payment for waiting time is factored in).

Regarding coverage - is it a problem at the moment? I'm not sure that looking at my DaC terminal that it is. If however, the A/D hours are extended, perhaps some sort of sweetener could be thrown into the mix? I don't know what, but maybe an adjustment to the *Going Home* facility or perhaps jobs being 'unmasked' after a driver has done 3 A/D jobs in a day? Regarding coverage in the outer London postcodes: Could a couple more back-up zones be added to some areas, as I remember they were reduced some time ago. Some jobs have 20+ minutes lead-in time and I'm sure many drivers would travel a couple of miles to cover jobs.

The other issue addressed was customers waiting for their cabs, then getting in and seeing (for example) £8 on the meter (i.e. paying to wait). I don't know how quickly *Advise Arrival* happens (and I am not criticising our Call Centre staff at all) but is there perhaps a role for text messaging to advise arrival / delayed arrival? Maybe this happens with some accounts already? Also I'm guessing that a lot of passengers, particularly corporate clients, know roughly when they'll finish work and need a cab so can book a specific time (albeit only a short lead-in time), then when the cab arrives the price is £4.20 at the booked time. If the passenger is advised of any delay, a new arrival time is set and it's still £4.20 on the meter at that new time. The account holder then decides how to deal with staff who pre-

Last month saw an article in Call Sign by DaC Board member, Mike Son, giving his personal views on how we might win back some of the work we seem to have lost over the years. Now DaC driver James Griffin (T97) replies with his own suggestions...

How Can We Win Back Our work???



DaC Driver James Griffin - do you agree with his assessment of the trade?

book a time and then keep the cab waiting.

I'd also like to briefly throw in one or two other thoughts on the taxi trade generally...

Where we work: PH has successfully 'mus-cled in' to many areas simply because Taxis won't work there. Maybe it's because drivers worry their knowledge will escape them or that the job is going where they don't want it to go, but don't complain when the first thought that comes into peoples head is *mini-cab* when they're out and about and want to get home. Stick your light on outside of Central London and win back some work!

Internet: Go onto Google and type 'London Taxi' - you'll see Addison Lee at the top of the list, followed by dozens of other PH companies. This advertising goes against the use of the word Taxi in the 1998 *PH for London Act* but the public don't care about that, they just want to search for a cab (and sadly the name Taxi seems to refer to PH as well).

Ranks: I reckon we need many more ranks in useful places. They would have useful information signs on them and in time people would know they could rely on them for cabs (think Sloane Square). It would also assist our reputation with the Green lobby who, if they have their way, will cost us more on ever-stringent Euro emissions gear. If we're cruising around less - we're polluting less and causing less traffic. New ranks would keep our fuel costs down too. Passengers with these trendy modern phones could get a map of

their nearest, well-served rank.

Manners: I've lost count of the times passengers have told me how they'd previously got a Taxi and had the driver talking loudly on their phone or was rude to them or the cab stank.

These are the basics. If passengers, who are paying good money, don't get a smart, well mannered driver (who's not jabbering on their phone), in a free market economy, they can - and will - go elsewhere.

James Griffin (T97)

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**City Style 206 City Rd, EC1
0207 490 8791**

It was interesting reading the articles of both the Editor and Mike Son in the *January Call Sign*. Although I have only been on Dial-a-Cab for a relatively short time, I have spent many years on other circuits and in my experience they all have their good and bad points. But I do think that DaC is probably the best and regret not joining sooner. What is common among all the circuits are the drivers. We all have our own views on how things should be run - and why not! We are all self-employed businessmen and on the whole do not like being told how we should earn our day's money.

So how do we as radio drivers sell ourselves in an ever-changing market place? Firstly, we have to accept that we are different from non-radio drivers, we may hold the same *Badge* and drive the same type vehicle, but that is where the similarities end. The non-radio driver has no need to sell himself. However good or bad he does his job, it will not normally affect other drivers. If he decides to go to work dressed like a tramp in a dirty cab, he will still get fares just as if he was dressed in a suit and tie. If he were to upset his passenger and that fare claimed they would never use a taxi again, he won't worry as it would be just one lost fare that he probably would never have seen again anyway. We as radio drivers do not have the luxury of a *don't care* attitude; if one of us were to upset the wrong passenger and they were in the position to cancel the account, then not only would that driver lose - we all would.

So how do we sell ourselves, or more to the point how can we expect our elected leaders and their *Sales* team to sell us? Before they decided to licence the so-called Private Hire under the same umbrella as us, it must have been quite easy to sell our services. One can imagine that we would have said to a potential corporate customer:

"We have a fleet of police (PCO) checked taxis driven by highly trained police checked drivers, all fully insured with regulated meters. They are available 24/7. Or you could go with a minicab company who are unlicensed with unchecked cars. Would you really be happy for your female employees to be driven by someone who may have just got out of prison for rape?" It was probably no contest!

Now fast forward; what a task the *Sales* team now have on our behalf. The scenario is a potential new major company; the Transport Manager says to our salesperson:

"A PH company can supply a fleet of Vito and Mercedes cars all less than 2 years old, they are all licensed as are the drivers by the same PCO as DaC are, the cars are all air-conditioned and equipped with the latest satnav to get our employees to wherever they wish. The drivers will all be dressed in a suit and tie, all fares will be on a fixed price or on mileage and if we need a limo or even a coach, then no problem! And just in case we do happen to want a Black cab we also have a taxi company who can cover us 24/7."

Then the potential customer asks our salesperson to be completely truthful and to give them our offer. Would it not have to be like this?

"Well at the moment, unless we change

Another response to Mike Son's article. This one from DaC driver Ian Connelly (T21)

How Can We Win Back Our work???

some of our ways, the deal is this: We operate 24/7 with a fleet of owner-drivers, all licensed by the PCO. Most of the taxis are under 6 years old, but some are substantially older - perhaps 12 years or more. But all are checked to PCO standard. Some newer ones have air-con, but all have windows that open mainly being at the touch of a button. On the whole our drivers are reasonable smart, but if I were to be totally honest, come the summer and a few of our guys would not look out of place in an episode of *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*! Fares are recorded on the meter with a £4.20 maximum run-in, but we can do fixed prices although some of our guys are not that keen. Some drivers have satnav, but others don't think it that necessary, because you see, we have the Knowledge and if they get an out-of-town ride, they all have maps - you remember, the books with roads printed on them! As a last result, they can always ask the customer which way to go. As for supplying other types of vehicles, I'm sure that if the members support us, we can sort something out. So have we got the contract or what?"

Now if what I've written is to be believed, then to even the playing field out we have to change, and sooner rather than later. So if our Board decide to make changes for a better future, we should trust their judgement. I personally think that if it means we get more contracts, I would go further than Mr Son and would suggest all jobs are *Non-rejectable* and *As directed*, except for the last hour of your shift. You should then be given destinations and allowed to reject as many jobs as you wish, you should also be allowed to do as many jobs in that hour to help you in your home direction, regardless of how many previous account rides you had covered.

If you think about all jobs being A/D, it really is no different from stopping for someone on the street. As for fixed prices, if it means keeping or gaining a contract then there should be no opting out. I can never understand why these FP jobs are rejected, If I get an FP trip for £25, I look at the time it will take regardless of whether the meter's likely to show maybe £30, and if I can do it in 30 minutes or so, in my mind that's a good return. If I was stuck in an unforeseeable jam, then I am sure DaC could and would sort out some extra payment.

As for the age of the vehicles we drive, we are in a recession and as much as it would be nice to boast to a client that all our fleet are new, it is unrealistic and unfair to us as owner-drivers to invest in newer taxis. But if a new driver wishes to join Dial-a-Cab, perhaps there should be an age limit on their taxi - if there isn't one already. If we also accept that what we drive is built for short inner London type trips and the days of the

regular roaders have now gone to private hire, perhaps we should concentrate on expanding all inner London type trips, even if it means doing PH work. A while back I saw around 6 'T' attribute jobs on the bid screen, even though all the zones were full of cabs and it was stone dead out!

Firstly you have to question why are they are so busy that they need us to cover their work, secondly why it is that we are not busy? Thirdly, why are we not doing it! I think I know the answer ... principle!

So how do we solve that one? Like it or not, private hire is here to stay and will only get bigger. If we do not do their work they will either expand quicker or find other ways to cover their excess work. And all those that think that if we don't do it, then their customers will get the hump with the service and come running back to us, well it just ain't gonna happen! And as much as I admire a man of principle, sometimes you have to let go! It didn't do the miners, printers, dockers and many others much good, so if we have to do more PH work to expand, perhaps we should bite the bullet and treat the jobs the same as we do our own.

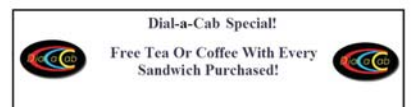
I think that with the above and our closest cab system, we may have a brighter future. Yes, I accept that I maybe looked upon as a defeatist and possibly worse, but my basic business rules are these:

If your services are too cheap, you become a busy fool, if your services are too expensive, you become a broke fool; if you only charge what the market will accept and you're good at what you do, you're nobody's fool...

Ian Connelly (T21)

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Call Sign must be desperate for articles...

Dear Sirs,

Our guardian, **Mr John Edwardes**, has recently retired from being a taxi driver and a member of your esteemed circuit (ex-H05). This means he has all the time in the world to spend on - and with - us, which is a good thing. As he is currently writing a series of articles for **Call Sign**, we thought we might write to you as well.

The other week we took our car, chauffeured by our guardian, to Regents Park. We had a great walk and then came the exciting part - a black cab was hailed, although sadly not a **Dial-a-Cab**, and we were taken to Camden Passage. While we sat and posed for photos, which we have to do an awful lot, our humans enjoyed themselves looking at all the stalls. We then hailed another taxi and were taken back to our car and home. A fantastic day out made great by extremely co-operative cab drivers.

The next trip was by train to Victoria (we do take up quite a bit of room but are more than happy to put up with lots of fuss from other passengers). Once again a cab - this time to Covent Garden. Also again, lots of posing for photos - that's us and not our humans - although we have no idea why! Another cab, back to another train journey and then home. We just thought you might like to get some

NOW IT'S A LETTER FROM TWO DOGS!!!



Axel and Blitz Edwardes.
Inset: Call Sign columnist John Edwardes "new" car - he'd like the DaC logo on it!



happy, good news about great and helpful London taxi drivers in these rather dark times for the cab trade. We would also like to say how much our Guardian loves getting his **Call Sign** every month.

We all wish you a wonderful, peaceful (probably not for the new grandfather Brian - babies make such a noise) and successful New Year.

PS: Attached is a photo of us, of course. We have also sent you a photo of our Guardian's new taxi and were wondering if he could have a DaC logo on the side?

Axel and Blitz Edwardes

Boris Gives £300,000 for Cyclists' Studies

While taxis still wait for action on minicabs using the M4 bus lane!

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson has allocated twelve outer London councils £25,000 each to help them become what he refers to as cycling boroughs. His TfL is trying to encourage more people living in the suburbs to go onto bikes rather than take their cars into town, after his office estimated that half of all car trips in outer London are less than two miles - or a 10 minute bike journey.



Biker believer Boris! But something to help taxis would be nice

The twelve who will be given the money to fund studies to see how cycling could be developed in their areas are Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Croydon, Ealing, Haringey, Havering, Hillingdon, Kingston, Merton and Redbridge.

The scheme follows closely onto his first two of ten cycling superhighways (South Wimbledon to Bank and Barking to Tower Hill) and his bike rental scheme.

No mention so far of any money coming the way of taxis or how the Highways Agency can stop minicabs using the M4 bus / taxi lane. £300,000 should do quite nicely to assist, after all, are we not part of London's transport system...?

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We all know how Parliament likes to baffle we mere mortals with words and *Bills* that leave us scratching our heads in wonderment, just asking the simple question: What???

Such words came from the mouths of two **Baronesses** from the House of Lords – **Warsi** and **Morris** – whose names adorned an amendment to the *Equalities Bill*. A section of the *Wheelchair Accessibility Rules for Hackney Carriages* was taken out of the *Disability Discrimination Act* and placed into its new home within the *Equalities Bill*. It mainly applies to private hire vehicles that cannot take a wheelchair, complete with passenger, into the car without the need for the passenger to leave the chair. It means that the private hire section may be hugely affected – if we have read the moved clause correctly.

The new clause is headed *Private Hire vehicle accessibility regulations* and reads as follows:

1. The Secretary of State may make regulations (in this section referred to as private hire vehicle accessibility regulations) for securing that it is possible for persons:

- (a) To get into and out of private hire vehicles in safety
- (b) To do so while in wheelchairs
- (c) To travel private hire vehicles in safety and reasonable comfort
- (d) To do so while in wheelchairs

2. The regulations may, in particular, require a regulated private hire vehicle to conform with provision as to:

- (a) The size of a door opening for the use of passengers
- (b) The floor area of the passenger compartment
- (c) The amount of headroom in the passenger compartment
- (d) The fitting of restraining devices designed to ensure the stability of a wheelchair while the private hire vehicle is moving

Call Sign asks: So far, it sounds as though Conservative cabinet members, **Baronesses Warsi** and **Baroness Morris of Bolton** are trying to turn private hire into taxis. Then comes the crunch section...

3. The regulations may also:

- (a) Require the driver of a regulated private hire vehicle **which is plying for hire** or which has been hired to comply with provisions as to the carrying of ramps or other devices designed to facilitate the loading and unloading of wheelchairs.
- (b) Require the driver of a regulated private hire vehicle in which a disabled person is being carried while in a wheelchair, to comply with provisions as to the position in which the wheelchair is to be secured.

Call Sign asks: What type of regulated private hire vehicle driver is allowed to ply for hire? We thought it was against all known regulations and could land the driver in court?

In addition, we have been under the impression for many years (since the 1976 *Act* in fact) that private hire cannot use any vehicle that looks like a licensed taxi. While the reverse is possible in London (see the Vito)

The strange change at...

THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT



Baroness Warsi, together with Baroness Morris seem to want PH to become taxis...

there has been no amendment that we have heard of that allows PH to buy a TX4 or any of the various purpose built taxis available outside of London.

We have been writing in **Call Sign** for some time about the perceived dangers now that we are driving private hire vehicles. If legislation is allowed to creep in that forces private hire to use wheelchair accessible vehicles that to all intents and purposes are taxis and that the driver can – according to the two Baronesses – ply for hire, that is the end of the Knowledge and the taxi trade as a whole.

The matter is either far too serious or far too stupid for Call Sign to utter the phrase: We told you so...

You can read the relevant section at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/020/amend/am020-aa.htm>.

Sad Death of Allan Evans Mother



Edie Evans

Call Sign was saddened to hear of the recent passing of Dial-a-Cab Board Member **Allan Evan's** mother, **Edith Charlotte Evans**, shortly before her 85th birthday.

Edie, as she was known to family and friends, was born and lived all her life in the Paddington area, including forty years residing on the Hallfield Estate where she forged many strong friendships over the years. She was the youngest of seven children, marrying William Evans in 1947 and enjoying 46 happy years together until Bill's death in 1993.

She always took great pleasure in caring for her family, especially grandchildren Dean and Joe, and was regarded as a 'mother' to the men and women of all ranks based at Paddington Green Police Station, where she worked until her retirement. She could always be relied on to help family and friends whenever asked and her generosity was legendary.

Edie was also an ardent reader of **Call Sign**, Editor Alan Fisher always reserving a complimentary copy of each issue for Allan to drop off at her home.

Always young at heart in mind and spirit, even though her *Help the Aged* collection box took up a prominent position in her home, Edie will be sorely missed by her family and many friends – the large turnout at her funeral bearing testament to that. DaC Chairman Brian Rice represented the Society.

Everyone at **Call Sign** and **Dial-a-Cab** extends their condolences to Allan and his family...

Alan Green (E52)

Just over three years after applying to go on the *Knowledge of London* at the age of 19, **Dial-a-Cab** dispatcher **Danielle Barton** was recently "invited" to the PCO to be presented with her coveted Green Badge for passing out as a Licensed London Taxi driver.

Danielle, who worked in an uncle's bar in Spain before returning back to London, took note of her mother's suggestion to try the KoL. She joined DaC 2½ years ago as a Call Taker and was recently promoted to dispatcher until gaining her Bill and leaving the Society to work the taxi she will be sharing with her mum – who is already a licensed Taxi driver – full time. Her time with DaC helped enormously, she told **Call Sign**.

Now aged 22, Danielle told this magazine that she thought the PCO officers were very fair in their assessments and that she only got one 'D' classification. We, of course, understand that the PCO treat everyone the same and wouldn't dream of being nice to a young lady from DaC just because she was very attractive!

Danielle leaves DaC after getting her badge!



No longer a dispatcher - Danielle is now a licensed taxi driver

"Actually," said Danielle with a broad smile, "I really enjoyed doing the KoL. You hear stories about the examiners being fearsome, but I found them to be very fair. You sit in the PCO waiting room and you just can't help feeling so very nervous. But in all honesty, there was no need! The important part is that if you are going to do it, there is no easy way – you have to work hard at it. I think the examiners can tell if you are working at it."

The only "easy" part for Danielle was the fact that she did it in a car and did call-overs with a friend! "Some found the car a bit strange," she continued, "but I'm not sure that I would have felt too safe on a bike – especially as I was going out at around 4am most days and I was only 20 and on my own."

And a quick word on Danielle's love life; do boyfriends fit in with the KoL?

"To tell the truth," said London's newest cabby, "I had a few boyfriends in the early days, but I soon came to the conclusion that boyfriends and the KoL just didn't fit in together, so I had to give them up to give all my concentration onto the Knowledge – and I'm just so pleased now that I have passed!"

Danielle also asked **Call Sign** to thank former DaC Controller **Gary Gates** and current Call Centre Supervisor Manager for the day shift, **Lee Morland** – both of whom have been through the Knowledge and who were always happy to answer any questions she had.

Good luck Danielle and let's hope work picks up...

New Improved website for M&O



Mann and Overton, the LTI Vehicles owned dealer network, has unveiled its new and improved website in an effort to enhance its already strong customer offering.

Now www.mannandoverton.com brings together separate websites covering retailers in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and London, to deliver a unique online experience for taxi drivers looking to buy new or used vehicles.

Within the site, two new 'used vehicle' propositions have been introduced to improve the buying process. LTI's **Approved Taxis**, previously known as Quality Assured Vehicles, and **Value Cabs**, which are sold as seen, give taxi drivers the opportunity to view their chosen taxi online before they approach the dealer to buy. Used cab traders are also able to download national trade price lists for the first time.

Rob Laidler, Sales Director at LTI Vehicles, said:

"This website has been designed with the user firmly in mind. It focuses heavily on convenience and makes it easier to search for a used taxi from our national stock. One such feature is to provide the customer with instant access to photographs and details about the vehicle. This is made possible through the supply of mobile technology to each retailer, which uploads photographs within seconds.

"We hope that by making these improvements drivers will find it much easier to buy a used taxi."

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Having read Jon Robinson's (E88) letter to this issue's Mailshot, he asks many questions and makes suggestions as to how the Society should move forward.

Firstly, let me say I am flattered that Mr Robinson thinks I have full control over the working procedures of the Society, when in actual fact it is the Board that decides how the Society operates. I assume that because Mr Robinson believes I make the decisions, then I have a problem with drivers getting *going home* trips. I am not against any driver getting a trip home; I have always felt that a trip home is a bonus to the day's work and if it is possible, then why not? As a matter of interest, I was one of the original group of Board members who came up with the idea of a *going home facility* and researched how we could implement it into the despatch system. Not the actions of a person who is against a driver getting a trip home; more the opposite I would have thought. The Board of the time originally introduced the *going home procedure* and controlled its functionality, this has now been taken away from us by a proposition agreed by the members. Therefore any changes have to be agreed by them.

Let me also clarify Mr Robinson's comment regarding changing the rule about recovering *A/D trips* when a driver runs further to the pick-up than the trip is going.

Firstly, this is not a rule. A driver made the proposition many years ago to keep it alive because when we used voice-dispatch, our work dispatchers - on occasions - would bring to a driver's attention that because they did not know the exact destination (sound familiar), it was possible they were running a long way to the pick-up, possibly further than the job was going. The proposition ensured the facility did not get left to the decision of an individual. To this day, it is still in operation and I am not aware of any driver who has been refused to have the trip recovered.

However, what I referred to recently were the number of drivers who were abusing this procedure and using it as a way of getting to see the A/D trips.

I specifically mentioned drivers who constantly accepted an A/D trip from a back-up zone knowing full well the distance they would have to travel to the pick-up was a very long way. Then unless the trip was very lucrative, they did not want to cover it. I did instruct controllers to monitor the culprits and if they did not refrain from doing it, their request could be refused. I'm pleased to say it has stopped and drivers are working within the spirit of why the procedure was originally suggested.

A/D trips are an area that the Board do make the decisions on and such decisions are not made to hinder drivers, they are made to ensure clients get their taxis on time and receive the service they demand. Even during the recent adverse weather conditions, the A/Ds remained in place because when drivers are offered trips with destinations, they start to gamble. Their thought is that there must be a better trip there and they will reject one after another. Once this happens, more trips are rejected, more trips get scrubbed and service

Keith Cain responds to Jon Robinson's Mailshot letter in this issue...

Moving Forward on DaC?



goes out of the window. And that is something that during the current economic climate, we are striving not to do.

It is not correct for me to comment about another Board member's article, except to say that clients are outspoken about the cost of taking a black cab journey to that of a private hire trip. The administration costs that are added by all the taxi radio circuits to the meter fare and drivers gratuity are minimal amounts. Remember also, the more a client usage is, the less administration charge they pay. Journey costs in a private hire vehicle can differ by up to 35% less than that of a taxi metered fare. Airport trips, for example, can be as much as £30 different. All companies need to make an amount from a trip to run their business and Dial-a-Cab is no different. While private hire firms say they do not charge an administration or booking fee, they make their money by paying the driver less than they charge the

client. At times the difference can be as much as £15 a trip, which in theory is an administration charge. But no matter what the difference is, the comparison we need to be mindful of is what the car driver gets for the trip and what the black cab driver receives.

Mr Robinson asks the question how much would it cost to make admin and booking fees disappear? Running the Society costs in the region of £6,000,000 a year. If there were 2,000 drivers on the circuit, each would have to pay £250 a month subscriptions. At the moment there are fewer than 2000, which equates to the individual cost of subscriptions being even higher. I am afraid to say that regardless of whether we do or don't charge booking fees on certain trips, everything about who's dearer or cheaper comes down to the cost of the trip.

I think Mike Son was attempting to point this out and so long as the meter governs the black cab journey cost and with the overheads of purchasing and running a cab remaining higher than a private hire car saloon, the licensed taxi driver could not carry out journeys at a cost anywhere near that of a private hire driver. We are fortunate that we have clients who are prepared to pay more to use our services. It is up to us - and in saying 'us' I do mean drivers as well - to ensure the service we give is second to none, thus making clients feel their costs are perceived as being worthwhile.

Keith Cain
Call Centre Manager
Driver Operations Manager

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Following a successful legal appeal, the **Peugeot E7** is now licensed to be used as a taxi in Liverpool and Norwich. As a result, London's **PCO** is now said to be re-considering at a meeting next month, the *Conditions of Fitness* that previously barred this and other vehicles presently used in the provinces from entering the London taxi market, on the grounds that any taxi working in London had to comply with the requirement of a 25 foot turning circle.

Meeting this strict licensing stipulation allowed the **Mercedes Vito** to ply for hire on the streets of London, the only marque, apart from the 'iconic' world famous **LTI** product, to meet the current *Conditions of Fitness*.

With a possible PCO 'U Turn' in mind, Call Sign went out on to the streets of the big city, canvassing the opinions of some of our drivers to this news...

Don Bain (O53)

TX2 owner: "This is just not on. What's next? Tachographs? I agree we need competition, but the lack of a 25' turning circle is simply unrealistic. I cannot understand the logic of it. The PCO should be working to improve our conditions, not hamper us."



Michael Dyer (S68)

TX4: "Competition is a good idea to open up the market and widen the choice for drivers, but - and it's a big but - it will kill the London taxi second-hand market. I don't see how it can work in London."



Ivor Belkin (C97)

TX2: "It's the beginning of the short straw, a roundabout way of getting PH fully licensed. No, not the sticker thing that currently prevails, but 'plates'. Do the 2012 Olympics come to mind? Cabs won't be worth anything, because the second-hand market will collapse, even though it would reduce the cost of a new cab."



George Christou (E14)

TX4: "Er, no, not a good idea! It will destroy the residual value of the pre-owned taxis for a start, so that's going to leave many unhappy owners. Has anyone thought about trying to get a vehicle with a normal turning circle onto the Eurostar rank, for instance? There are many other tight spots I can think of, but that will do as an example."



Colin Salmon (N81)

Mercedes Vito: "The Vito had to adapt to meet the present *Conditions* before it



Following the successful E7 legal Appeal, Call Sign asked DaC drivers...

SHOULD THE TAXI MARKET BE OPEN TO ALL???

could enter the London market, and I think loyalty to tradition in this case is a good thing. So yes, the 25-foot ability should be kept. I think it will be beneficial to the trade."

Geoff Davis (Y71)

TX2: "I think it would be a good idea to relax the tight turning circle facility, as it would open the market to other manufacturers. But would these other types of taxis have wheelchair access? Hopefully, with wider choice, the price of a new cab would come down. But in reality, my greatest fear would be the loss of our 'iconic' identity. We are recognised as what we are throughout the world and to lose that recognition would be an absolute disaster."



Terry Parsons (M53)

TX2: "Well, the PCO made such a big deal about retaining the 25ft. turning circle last time, so if now they are considering scrapping it, that is definitely not good news. If a car makes a 3 or even 5 point turn in front of you, that's ok, but a cab? It's all part of the cabbie job surely to be able to turn easily and therefore safely in the opposite direction as passengers require and with the minimum of fuss. Can you imagine trying to stop for a fare on the other side of the road, Oxford Street perhaps? Oh, please! I once had a problem with my steering box, which not only meant it was heavy turning the steering wheel, but a limited lock as well. What a game that was."



Paul Campbell (W68)

TX1: "Yes, I've read a bit about this possible PCO turnaround. We are forced into buying a particular type of product and now we're being pushed into a corner re our iconic status and will lose our exclusive right to pick up off the street. The MB Vito had to meet the current legislation to enter the London market, so why shouldn't everyone else? I bet it's the Olympics and the PHVs are taking advantage of the legal ruling? It's may be the Olympics in the short-term, but a long-term view for street hirings. Well, if they want to do that, the answer is simple - if they want to do our job then let them do the Knowledge!"



Keith Reading (W76)

TX1: "I'm in two minds about it really. I have ridden in an E7 in St. Neots and it was a comfortable ride, so on that basis I suppose there is no real reason why they shouldn't be admitted into London. Personally, though, I like the 25' circle, but I don't think it's the be-all and end-all of the vehicle. I bought a TX1, realising the residual value of an LTI cab over a Metro, but I don't think there's enough business at present to justify the cost of a new cab."



Mark Stansbury (M94)

MB Vito: "What? I had a problem with my rear-wheel steering and got stuck in Liverpool Street, which was not much fun. I can't imagine what it must be like to live with on an everyday basis, although other parts of the country do not insist on a 25ft. turn, true, but I think we need the turning circle for the London job. Having to regularly make 3 or even 5-point turns is going to slow down traffic terribly. It will not make us popular with either our passengers or other road users. I can hear the blaring horns now! Disabled groups may have an accessibility view and there will always be the hard core of drivers who will opt for the TX shape, but I suppose there is the possibility that further competition could mean better build quality in taxis."



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Call Sign

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Win a luxurious stay for two at London's exclusive **ST JAMES'S HOTEL AND CLUB**



Call Sign has teamed up with the exclusive **St James's Hotel and Club** in **Park Place** to offer one lucky licensed taxi driver and their guest, the opportunity to win a luxury overnight stay at the hotel including a gourmet dinner with wine, tickets to see a West End show and breakfast. **St James's Hotel and Club** is a luxury **5 star**, sixty-room central London townhouse hotel, which re-opened in autumn 2008 following an extensive two year renovation and redesign programme.

Located in a quiet cul-de-sac off St James's Street, the St James's really is a hidden gem, whilst also benefiting from being in the heart of London's bustling West End. The hotel provides the perfect base for shopping, sightseeing, theatre and the arts, as well as business meetings or events. Guests can take relaxing strolls through St James's, Green or Hyde Parks - all within walking distance of the hotel - catch a show in the many of the West End's theatres or indulge in some retail therapy in the exclusive shops of the area.

Michelin starred **William Drabble** heads up the hotel's newly launched restaurant, **Seven Park Place**, as well as the more informal dining experience, **William's Bar and Bistro**. The brand new dining concept has established the hotel restaurant as a destination in itself for residents and non-residents alike. With magnificent Penthouse suites and the best terraces in London, the hotel boasts stylish, sleek, contemporary yet elegant interiors finished with handmade silk wallpaper, black lacquered furniture, handcrafted Murano glass chandeliers with polished natural stones in the bathroom. Exclusively designed by **Anne Maria Jagdfeld design** (Berlin), the hotel has achieved a fine harmony between contemporary interiors and the elegance of the Victorian building.

A carefully appointed and original art collection features throughout the hotel. An outstanding collection of 20th-century paintings, the **Rosenstein collection**, dating from the 1920s - 1950s, includes fine examples of *impressionist*, *expressionist* and *cubist* work from all over Europe that guests can enjoy in the hotel's public rooms, as well as in the privacy of their own suites.

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Rates at St James's Hotel and Club start from £215 per room per night (exclusive of VAT and breakfast)

Terms & Conditions: The prize includes one night for two in a deluxe room, dinner including a bottle of house wine, breakfast and two tickets to the West End show of your choice.

The prize is subject to availability. Booking is essential. The prize is valid from 1st March and must be taken by 1st March 2011.

For more information on St James's Hotel and Club, go to www.stjamesclubandhotel.co.uk

DaC 2009 AGM



All members should by now have received the **Notice of Annual General Meeting 2009** advising that the meeting will be held at **The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1** on **Sunday, 7th February 2010 at 11:00hrs.**

The meeting this year will consider an agenda **excluding** the election of officers, but would normally **include** any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions that had been received at Dial-a-Cab House before 09:00hrs on Friday 4th December 2009. However, none were received by that date.

Please remember that if you do not wish to attend the AGM in person, you must have completed and returned the postal ballot form that was sent to you by the given date. Failure to either attend in person or vote by post will result in a £50 fine being imposed. If you have voted by post but still wish to attend, you can do so.

Please remember to bring your 'Bill' with as ID...

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

The recent snowfalls – said to be the worst for over 30 years – certainly seemed to have caught many people off guard, causing misery to commuters and taxi drivers alike. Because snowfalls are a relatively infrequent occurrence here in the UK, we always seem to be unprepared and unable to cope adequately with any of the consequences caused by them.

During the latest snowstorms, some **Dial-a-Cab** subscribers actually parked their cabs and made their way home on foot – or on what remained of the public services that were running.

Neil Johnson (K13) was struggling up the A1 at Mill Hill, until he became stationary in a hold-up for over an hour. Leaving his cab where it was, he walked to the head of the queue to see what the cause of the problem was. It turned out to be two heavy goods vehicles that had jack-knifed across the carriageways, completely blocking the road so that nothing could get through. Police eventually arrived on the scene, urgently requesting the local council to send gritting trucks to clear the carriageways – a lack of grit seeming to have been the problem.

After a long delay with the offending HGVs spinning and slewing in all directions, the second of the two trucks managed to move around 3 metres, which meant that the huge build-up of traffic could just squeeze through the narrow gap between the stranded trucks. Being close to the front of the traffic stuck behind the HGVs when they got into difficulties did have its upside though, with Neil telling **Call Sign** afterwards that as soon as that small gap appeared, he was through it and out of there rather lively!

“I felt sorry for the HGV drivers,” said Neil, **“but was I pleased to get away from there!”**

Stephen Taylor (O50) fared little better in his Mercedes Vito. He was skidding and sliding along The Highway, until finding himself stuck in the Limehouse Link for around 90 minutes – before emerging into even deeper snow! However, the time Stephen had spent in the Link was used to good effect, as it allowed him to read the Vito Owner's Manual – and particularly page 157 which deals with the **ASR** button (acceleration skid control) sited on the dashboard. Activating this control reduces the tendency of the driving wheels to spin by engaging a higher gear, so improving traction and keeping engine revs low.

“Closer to home the roads were like a skating rink,” Stephen told **Call Sign**. **“The cab's handling did improve though with the ASR engaged. When I bought the cab, the salesman told me to leave that control alone, presumably on the basis that we generally don't get much snow here. But it did help and meant I could control the cab – albeit very gingerly – while other vehicles dropped by the wayside,”** he said.

Call Sign Editor, **Alan Fisher** was another casualty. Coming into work on the A12 in his TX4 at around 4pm, he spotted a long tail back and decided to leave by the Olympic Park exit.

“Bad move,” said Alan, **“not only wasn't the traffic moving, but it was like driving on a block of ice. With rear-wheel drive and a very powerful engine, even pulling**

DaC Drivers Slippin' and Slidin'!!!



forward without touching the accelerator saw the back of the cab slide! Coming towards the traffic lights at the junction with Lee Conservancy Road sees a nasty slope, so I got out and told the car behind to make sure he gave me plenty of room as I didn't know what was going to happen! It took around 30 minutes before we reached the slope, but I managed to get down without hitting anyone! I had intended turning right there and going back home onto the eastbound A12, but unfortunately for me the cab wanted to carry straight on! By the time we reached Victoria Park, I decided that I might as well go into town where the roads were said to be slightly better. When I reached

Hackney Road, with cars sliding all over the show and buses parked up because they couldn't grip the road, I decided to go home.”

Finishing off his tale of woe, Alan told us:

“I thought I'd go back via Queensbridge Road, but nothing was moving as one of the last buses still in service had got stuck going over the hill. I tried to turn round but the cab just slid so I resigned myself to a long haul. I eventually got home around 5 hours after leaving home – not having done one single job!”

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign online

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

Kupkake's Korner



General Election – Round 1

We must replace this Labour shambles
Regardless of the cost,
Ignore their weak preambles
Before all is forever lost!

Like Callaghan and Wilson
They've led us down a street,
That ends in our destruction
And knocks us off our feet.

Another term in power
And they'll Tax us 'till we bleed,
This Communistic shower
With their "each one to his needs."

I don't say Cameron's our saviour
But could he make it worse?
The MP's bad behaviour
Carries the 'power corrupts' curse.

Lets sweep away the dead wood
And the "takers 'cos they can."
Replace them with some fresh blood
Who'll heed all our demands...

And fuel???

Soon it will be £1.50 a litre,
next year rising to two,
no help with the meter,
no aid for me 'n you!

PH charge what they like,
no restrictions from TfL,
but we must eat the constant hike,
as the fuel tax coffers swell.

How is it we've come to this?
Why have we no control?
Who gave us the Judas kiss?
Who is it that sold our soul.....???

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Covering London and the
Home Counties

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



From Call Sign, August 1993



TREASURER'S REPORT

I was recently talking to one of our older drivers about our humble beginnings and I thought some of you would also be interested.

In those early days, I was responsible for making sure we had telephones! Sounds obvious nowadays, but in 1953/4 phones weren't an everyday commodity for every family and arrangements had to be made some time in advance with the GPO, who controlled phone distribution back then.

They were situated at Dial House, at the northern end of Shaftesbury Avenue and we had to order two pair of landlines that went from our first premises at 172 Pentonville Road N1 up to Heath Mansions in Hampstead. They cost us £78 per annum each and we had to call a Committee meeting to work out how we would pay for it! We did somehow and they gave us the number of *Terminus* 6444 with 20 lines.

Also at the time, Marconi at the Aldwych told us that they had not yet decided whether they could supply radios and general equipment on hire-rental agreement, as they were not sure if we could afford it! We never went back.

Confusion arose because 172 Pentonville Road was still only being rented on a week-to-week basis whilst we negotiated with the landlord for a long-term agreement. Again fortune smiled down on us and our estate agents, Jack Rose & Co, confirmed that the tenancy had been passed onto us on a 14 years, full repairing lease. The Surveyor's report estimated approx £200 per year repairs and maintenance was also needed.

We then hired an electrical company - Danor Engineering Ltd - who were based right next door to our new property. Their estimates for electrical installation were accepted, although we cut right down on light fittings preferring to spend extra on phones and radios etc. However, **Florrie Culverwell**, our earliest telephonist, complained that it was too dark to see the phone dial and we had to take a loan to pay for extra lighting.

Our Chairman, **Bonnie Martyn**, then arranged with Pye of Cambridge to have the first 50 radios ready on tap for the first batch of drivers. Unlike Marconi, they agreed.

Our first secretary, **Doug Naismith**, then sent a copy of our new Rule Book and premises agreement to the Public Carriage Office. We then booked the Albany Tavern at the top of Great Portland Street for 7.15 pm on Sunday June 7th 1953 for a meeting of prospective owner-drivers, who between them raised £200. That was 40 years ago! The rest, as they say, is history!

Frank Duncan
ODRTS Treasurer



Legally Blonde

On New Year's Eve and accompanied by my wife, I had the great pleasure to see the production of **Legally Blonde** at the Savoy Theatre. We are both great fans of *Sheridan Smith* after seeing her in the TV show *Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps* and then in *Little Shop of Horrors* at the Duke of York's Theatre.

When I first saw *Little Shop of Horrors* it was at the Menier Chocolate Factory Theatre in Southwark and at that performance I was seated next to *Matt Lucas* and his now sadly deceased boy friend *Kevin McGee*. Both of them were really nice and like myself, thoroughly enjoyed the performance.

So back to that very cold evening on the last day of the decade; dressed like *Nanook of the North*, we made our way to the Aldwych by bus and arrived at the Savoy in good time. As the audience began filling the auditorium, it became evident that they were all ready to start the party for the coming New Year, some carrying glasses of alcohol while others had obviously already consumed theirs to waste spilling it! Either way, it made for a very happy audience who were ready to become involved and enjoy every word and musical note.

Four minutes into the production, a piece of scenery jammed and the Manager came onto the stage and apologised, so we then had to wait for the show to restart! After a short interlude and no doubt a few more sips of vino, the orchestra struck up, their music filling the theatre and we were off again with magnificent singing and energetic dancing. After a short time, the star of the show appeared to be greeted with tremendous cheers. *Sheridan Smith* has that cheeky grin that makes you feel as though you are a close friend and part of her performance.

Further into the musical, there was the treat of being entertained by former *Dr Who* and *Tristan* in *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Peter Davidson*. He plays Professor Callahan, the slightly perverted lawyer. Also enhancing the excellent cast and playing Elle's best friend is *Jill Halfpenny*, who formerly played police-woman Kate Mitchell in *Eastenders* in addition to many other roles and, of course, who is a former winner of *Strictly Come Dancing*. *Duncan James* plays the part of Elle's boyfriend - although I have to wonder why he is given a top billing as his part is fairly small! The principal male role is taken by *Alex Gaumond* who is Emmett, Elle's mentor... lucky guy!

This musical is full of good music, enthusiastic dancing and comedy with a cast of beautifully fit young ladies and good looking young men who must spend a good part of the day

Another batch of views from Tom that do not necessarily reflect the views of DaC

The World According To Tom Whitbread

DaC's answer to Victor Meldrew!

in the gym toning their stomach muscles! It is also a show that includes a wonderful performance from *Sheridan Smith* in some figure-revealing costumes, plus the backup from *Jill Halfpenny* who also appears in some costumes that look as though they may have shrunk!

The show stoppers are two dogs *Bruiser* and *Rufus*, a Chihuahua and a Bulldog. Whenever they are on stage, eyes are distracted from the other stars and focused onto the dogs. It is also a show that seems to please minority groups of gays and lesbians, as there is a theme running through that brought cheers and whistles from the audience when certain members of the backup dancers appeared!

This is a show that could seriously challenge other great musicals currently running in London and I hope Sheridan Smith achieves this with her wonderful back up cast.

HMG, snow, ice and the NHS!

I must now congratulate the Government and local Councils over the complete hash they made after being warned that snow and ice was on the way, yet failed to make it safe for motorists and pedestrians. Then there was the inevitable message; we're running out of gritting salt for the roads and pavements. Why was this? Because we have officials who cannot think ahead and who do not want to lay out money on reserve supplies as it might encroach on their bonuses or wage increases! Unlike your Board of Management at Dial-a-Cab, where now you can see the efforts of past year's achievements giving a pay back.

Who would like to lay odds that in June or July we get the other message - we are running out of water and it needs to be rationed with a Government message for us to try and share a shower? Well if *Sheridan Smith* or *Kelly Brook* were to be my flatmate, I might jump at the chance, but with my luck and if she were alive I'd be sharing with *Hattie Jacques*!

We also heard in the past month that not only is money to be wasted on plastic policemen (PCSOs), but that they now want to have fewer nurses working in hospitals with more work to be taken on by Health Care Assistants. This will mean that when more patients die, we'll hear from an official that there is to be an enquiry, but that we should remember that these persons in charge are not fully trained nurses. Then there will be an apology and the hospital administrator will then be given a hefty bonus. No one, of course, will be sacked.

My knowledge of the legal system and law is fairly small, but I would treat a case like this as corporate manslaughter.

You would only need one case along these lines proved and you'd see these incompetent administrators running for cover, trying to get backup from Health and Safety persons plus PC imposters.

Who gets our money?

Every day we hear that this country is sinking further into debt, yet we have a Government who are only too quick to send £millions out to so called underdeveloped countries. These are countries that can always find money for weapons causing mayhem, murder and genocide whilst their President lives in great opulence. The money is sent out of our country, whilst old age pensioners are dying horrific deaths due to the cold, being unable to feed themselves, with some even starving to death. These are people who have worked all their lives and paid taxes, believing that they would be looked after when they reached an age or health condition that bars them from working. Naturally the Haiti earthquake victims are a totally different matter and deserving of our help.

That money could also be used to ensure a better life for those old age pensioners, children in danger or suffering with incurable diseases and who could have their fears lessened if the money wasn't wasted. We should stop the £millions that are being wasted on interpreters for legal or illegal criminal migrants and put it to better use. Immigration services should not allow persons to settle in England unless they can converse in the mother tongue - ie English. Most seem to have no intention of learning English, except for words that allow them benefits, paid for by those same pensioners who are dying excruciatingly painful deaths.

Where to live?

In the courts recently, we had the group of vermin who classed our returning soldiers as baby killers and murderers, whilst extolling the greatness of their ancestral homeland. If their homelands are so great, why are they here claiming benefits whilst not working? Local councils are paying out thousands of pounds to rent these quite-often illegal immigrants a large mansion due to the man of the house not being able to keep his trousers buttoned up. Why do the government not built cheap basic blocks of flats with no central heating, just key meters for light and heating, on the derelict airfields in this country? Then you tell them that if they want benefits, they have to earn them. This can be done by having them clean up common land that needs work so that people have more recreational spaces, working for old people or those who

continued on p23

A new DaC client asks Call Sign to pass on a big thank you to Martyn Madden (Y97)

THANK YOU, MARTYN!

"On Sunday 20th December after 10pm, myself and a friend who had become very ill through alcohol and stress, were waiting on the Southbank for a minicab that had been called but did not arrive. My friend could hardly stand and I was worried she was having some kind of breakdown. I asked several minicab drivers if they could take us and all said no. Eventually a black cab drew up. At first the driver said that he was about to get another fare, but when I explained that I was desperate to get my ill friend home, he agreed to take us to Dollis Hill, where she lives. I could see my friend was too ill to go home alone - she was barely conscious - so I travelled with her although I wasn't sure how I was going to get back to South London for work in the morning. Early on, the cab driver asked whether there was anything we should be doing for my friend? I said I thought she just needed to get home and thanked him for his concern. I could tell that he was monitoring our situation, which felt very supportive but not at all intrusive. After a while he said that he thought the situation had calmed down and I replied how nice it was of him to be so concerned, when actually it was my problem. He said very firmly that it was both his and my problem now. When we got to my friend's house in Dollis Hill, it was 11pm and I asked the driver where the nearest tube was? He indicated the direction and asked me where I lived. He said he was concerned that I might not be able to get all the way home on the tube at that time since I lived quite far away - in Stockwell. I said I'd better get a cab, but noticed that the fare at that time was close to £40.

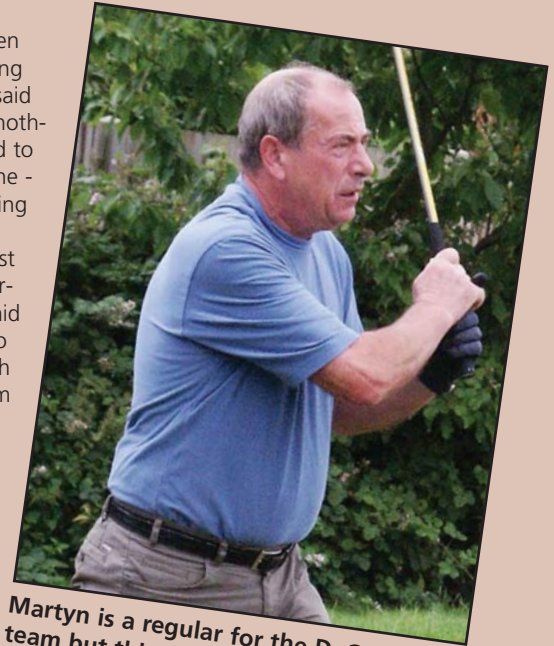
He said he would turn the meter off while I got my friend inside her front door and then I could go in and take as much time as was needed to settle her down, including making her some tea. He would wait in his cab outside and then, if that was what I wanted to do, he would take me home. He said I shouldn't worry about the fare and that we could sort it out when I got home.

When we got back to Stockwell, the meter again showed a similar amount - close to £40, making just under £80 in all. The cab driver then said that all he wanted was £55. I offered him £60 but he insisted that he only wanted £55. He gave me a Dial-a-Cab receipt.

The following afternoon, I had a phone call from my optician who asked if I had left a pair of glasses in a cab? They said a minicab driver had phoned and told them my approximate address saying that he hadn't been sure which house I'd gone into and had no name. They had trawled through all their records to find me. I told the optician the story and her words were: "How amazing! Was he driving a black cab? They're so wonderful aren't they!"

The cab driver had left a name for me to phone and that is how I know his name - **Martyn Madden**. When I phoned, he said that he'd drop the glasses back through my door as soon as he could - the next day in fact. I said I'd like to give him a token to show our thanks, but he insisted that he would simply drop the glasses through the door. He said what he'd done was all part of a London taxi driver's job and that he did that kind of thing every evening. I had paid the fare (which of course I hadn't completely) and that was the end of it. When I said that I'd never come across a cab driver like him, he said that many of his cabbie friends were similarly kind and helpful with some of the people they picked up all over London every evening in a similar terrible state.

So whenever I need a cab, I'll be calling Dial-a-Cab in future and my grateful thanks to Martyn Madden..."



Martyn is a regular for the DaC golf team but this time he showed how kind he is as a cabbie

Ms M. Maguire

The World According To Tom Whitbread continued...

are infirm and who need their gardens tended.

If we are giving them money, then we should see a return. And yes, that also goes for the layabout English families that have never done a day's work in their whole life!

Hooligans and ASBOs

Also highlighted of late are the number of honest, hard working people who are being terrorised by hooligans - many who have ASBOs against them. These people are trapped in their houses or flats, with curtains pulled shut for fear of bricks being thrown through the window and when they do venture out, they get abuse hurled at them. We then see the local Chief of Police come on TV and utter garbage such as that these people should try and make friends with their neighbours! If these office bound police chiefs came into the real world, they'd know that you cannot befriend these out-of-control animals. Maybe these are the police that Jack Straw meant when he said they did not want to go out onto the street?

The only way these Police Chiefs can be

made to do their jobs in a correct manner would be if they were answerable to the local community. If these so called protectors of the public had to be elected by the local community every three years, then they would only get voted back in by results. Maybe then and only then, we wouldn't hear such appalling news such as a mother and daughter having burnt themselves to death in their car after 10 years of being terrorised, with no realistic police protection or prosecutions being made.

You may wonder why I am writing in our magazine about these problems? Well as I have said before in *Call Sign*, we must have a law abiding society where the police are allowed to do their job correctly without the interference of Human Rights or Politically Correct money wasters. We have seen what happens in the jungle - a pack of animals will seek out and attack a lone, vulnerable victim.

Well you are that lone, vulnerable victim when you are out driving your taxi in the dark or on high risk estates. Without the insurance of police protection, we could

well become a state not unlike the back streets of Johannesburg or the violent areas of New York?

It is now that you should start looking at politicians and their career history; have they done the best job over the past years in looking after your interests and that of the country? Or have they been in it for themselves, bending the rules to line their own pockets, or perhaps even breaking the law while hoping their status as an MP will get them off the charge?

I really do not care who you vote for when a General Election comes along, but start thinking now so that you will be prepared to try and get this country out of the mire and back onto a level where we can hold our heads high again, not cower in the corner and let the bullies dictate how we use our countries wealth...

I hope that during the coming year you and your family have a very healthy and prosperous 2010 and if you go to the AGM, please come and say hello.

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board member

Says Martin Hizer (M47)

Several years ago Danish artist, Kurt Westergaard, sparked a storm of protest and violence across the Muslim world with his cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. Some demonstrations against the cartoonist turned violent and led to arrests, but when *Call Sign* spoke – off the record – with two Dial-a-Cab Muslim drivers at the time, both said that while neither would demonstrate, both agreed that the drawings were deliberately antagonistic and stupid. So how offensive can a cartoon, photo, drawing or painting be?

Martin Hizer (M47), who is Jewish, has been on DaC for many years and is usually more concerned with fighting unfairly issued parking tickets, but recently had a taste of the above – except that he didn't see cartoons in a newspaper, he took great offence at a painting on show in Bruton Street art gallery, **Osborne Samuel**. This is what he told *Call Sign*...

"I almost crashed the cab when I saw it! When you read the text below, it may take on a new meaning, but if like myself you never had the benefit of reading that text first – I found it on the internet – you would never in a million years recognise the principal character as being Jesus and you'd probably interpret it as a further accusation of deicide (the act of killing a being of a divine nature; particularly, the putting to death of Jesus Christ) by the Jews and a summary punishment. My concern is that there is nothing in the window to suggest that this is a collection from *The London Jewish Museum of Art* and therefore who is to say that just like myself, the painting won't be interpreted wrongly by some unbalanced individual who would see it as an excuse to attack a member of the Jewish community or a local Synagogue? After all, Upper Berkeley Street Synagogue is only a short distance away, nestled amongst the largest Arab community in the UK. Don't

This Painting in a London Gallery Window offends me...



The Painting that offended Martin Hizer. Pic courtesy The Ben Uri Gallery

forget, it is less than a year since the sometimes-violent protests took place outside the Israeli Embassy.

With the benefit of the definition below, I am happy that the gallery should display the painting, but please withdraw it from the front window. It is provocative and potentially inflammatory in a very dangerous way. After the protests several years ago against the Danish cartoons depicting Muhammad with a bomb, the authorities wouldn't dare display something like this – even had it been painted by a Muslim. If you don't agree ask Salman

Rushdie for his opinion."

This was the explanation Martin Hizer found online...

Acquisition of Emmanuel Levy's *Crucifixion*, 1942 by the Ben Uri Gallery.

Ben Uri Gallery, The London Jewish Museum of Art, is delighted to announce the acquisition of an important painting by the artist Emmanuel Levy. This unique work represents a significant addition to the Ben Uri Permanent Collection and an important moment of protest in Anglo-Jewish art against the reluctance of Britain to recognise and act against the tragedy of the Holocaust taking place in mainland Europe.

Painted at the heart of the Second World War, the work depicts Christ on the cross with the word 'Jude' (Jew) written in blood red above his head. Row upon row of white crosses stretch into the distance over the landscape beneath the cross, echoing the Crucifixion itself. Levy powerfully combines Jewish and Christian iconography in *Crucifixion*; the white crosses mark Christian graves and yet Christ himself is draped in a Jewish prayer shawl and tallit (phylacteries) are wrapped around his left arm. The white crosses take on a complex double meaning, therefore: traditional symbols of Christian belief and ritual, they nevertheless evoke here the millions of Jews who were dying in the Holocaust at the time this work was painted. The clustering of the crosses is a reproach on many levels, for it is the predominantly Christian population of Britain to whom Levy addresses his heartfelt protest.

If anyone has any comment on the story, *Call Sign* will be happy to publish it...

CLIMATE CHANGE FOR CABBIES?

Let's hope we don't change with Yakutsk!!!

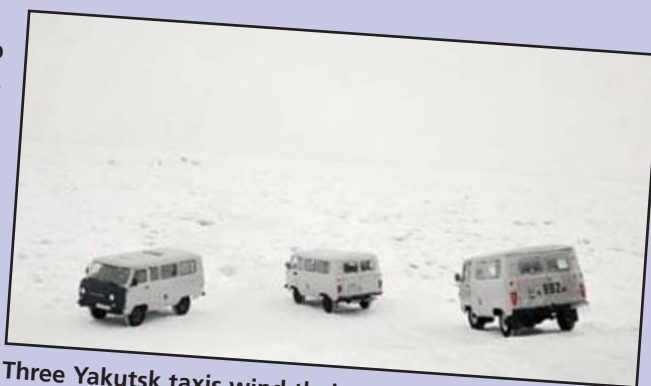
We hear much about climate change and our weather does seem to be getting far more extreme – even so far as to stop some **Dial-a-Cab** drivers actually getting to work. But when it comes to real extremities, we have a long way to go to catch up to the Queen of extreme weather, **Yakutsk** – known as the coldest city on Earth!

Situated in the Russian Far East, around 450 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle, it is the capital of the Sakha Republic. Amazingly, it gets many tourists throughout the year to view the city's spectacular scenery – even though the weather changes like nowhere else on the planet. But it keeps the cab drivers wheels turning (or should that be sliding)?

As an example of the temperature differences, in January, the temperature usually "climbs" as high as –36.1C (–33F) although the city has recorded in the past the fairly parky –63C (–81F). But that's winter... in summer it turns upside down and the average July temperature hits a pleasant 25C (77F), but has a record high of 38.3C (101F)

So what's the worst part of the winter for Yakutsk taxi drivers? Is it driving on slippery roads – especially the frozen Lena River – even with their specially adapted tyres?

"Niet," says cab driver Alexandra Koloff, "it's when you have to get out of the taxi and the frozen air makes your trousers stick to your legs!" Maybe things aren't so bad here yet!



Three Yakutsk taxis wind their way along the frozen Lena River. Pic courtesy National Media Museum and Simon Roberts

While the PH industry enjoys their licensed status, never before has there been such a battle over the word *Taxi*. No one ever envisaged that licensing minicabs would be easy, but the PCO must be under extreme pressure with complaints over the abuse of the word and, what looks like on reflection, a lack of enforcement.

With the world's eyes set on London for the 2012 Olympics, many tourists will be booking taxis from Heathrow via the internet, but how many will get their first look at good old London town not from the licensed taxi that they believed they had ordered, but from the back seat of a PH car that they had booked online and which had claimed to be a taxi company?

Perhaps they had looked on the *Addison Lee* website where they show a fare comparison between DaC and themselves, while claiming that the prices shown are typical. On closer examination, the figures they use are simply exaggerated, thus leaving *Dial-a-Cab* looking far more expensive than we actually are. Indeed, when I contacted the PCO they said they would write to *Addison Lee* to tell them to stop using the word *Taxi* in their advert links on *Google* - which they did.

However, when I contacted the *Advertising Standards Authority* about the fare comparisons, they told me that they had no jurisdiction over individual websites and that *Addison Lee* could put on what they liked, even if it was misleading! For example, no one ever mentioned that over Christmas and New Year our charges only increase by £4 per job while the meter remains the same. Can private hire say that? Not unless you count charging double as being the same!

I recently did a DaC *TaxiCard* trip from Charing Cross Hospital and was trying to meet my passenger at the main reception. On the wall inside were two posters claiming to be *taxi freephone* surrounding a silver box. On the box itself were the instructions to push the red button for a taxi. So I did and a voice replied with: "Hello Sky Cars." I had a brief discussion with the lady on the phone about the rights and wrongs of this sort of thing, but she hung up!

Later that day, I tried contacting Charing Cross Hospital to make a complaint, but it's not as easy as you may think. It seems that if someone had left a pair of scissors inside me after an operation, no problem. But about a PH service? Sorry, but no chance! I also contacted the PCO.

When I attended the *Christmas Young Voices Choir* at the O2, at the end of the evening there was a public information display that appeared around the wall inside the arena. It gave help to attendees on options for getting home, such as the riverboat, tube, bus or underground. When it came to taxis, it gave a plug to a local PH company and used four licensed taxi pictures to accompany it. Not a mention

Following Eddie Lambert's peep into the world of minicab advertising, Richard Potter now follows that up and with apologies to the Bard, asks the question...

To Taxi Or Not To Taxi???



What does William Shakespeare have in common with AL? They both like a good story!

about the rank outside!

Again I phoned their customer service team and complained, whilst also explaining the situation. I also suggested that the O2 make people aware that taxis are available for immediate hire at the rank, with fares starting from as little as £2.20. A few days later they phoned me back and assured me that the taxi pictures had been removed. The guy complained to me that there was sometimes a shortage of taxis at the rank and I suggested that they contact DaC to let drivers know when the O2 was tipping out. All in all, it seems that there is a communication lapse between the trade and these venues. Private hire is quite happy to push the barriers at our expense and if we don't challenge them, they will think its ok...

Richard Potter (T51)

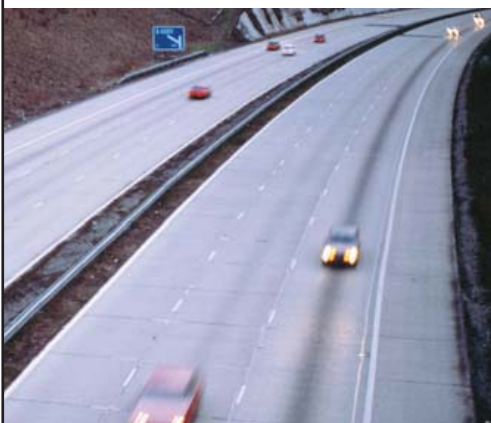
These are a few of the prices Addison Lee claim DaC charge and which they say were "taken from DaC customer's invoices" in 2008 and then compared to their own. The "fares" include account charges. There is no mention of any waiting time. The only surprise is that any regular taxi users would actually believe the above resembles DaC's regular fares on the say-so of AL! Yet the Advertising Standards Authority say there is nothing they can do!

<u>Journey from:</u>	<u>Journey to:</u>	<u>AL cost:</u>	<u>DaC cost (according to AL):</u>
W1	Holloway N7	£24.13	£63.38
W1	City EC2	£18.95	£49.68
W1	City A/P E16	£44.83	£69.46



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Continued from January

Another addition to your armoury if you were a night driver, was to have a bottle of whisky or gin and a packet of two hundred *Players* cigarettes with you. The reason being that very occasionally in the early hours of the morning, you might be hailed by a householder with the request: "Driver, do you know where I can get a bottle of whisky (or gin or fags)?" You would helpfully reply that you didn't know any shops open, but that you had heard the doorman at one of the clubs could produce the odd item "...but it will cost and you will have to pay my fare there and back so it could become expensive!"

If desperate, they would usually agree, so having checked the address to take it to, you'd put on the clock, wander about a bit to make sure it showed an appropriate amount - including waiting time to and from this fictitious club. People like him would most likely have done this before and had an idea of the final cost. You'd then return, produce the required item from your stock and cop a nice bit of profit. This wasn't a daily occurrence, but it was worth keeping some "stock" in the cab.

One of the things you do not get so often today are delivery jobs and 'look after jobs'. In those days cab drivers were given utter trust, which they had earned and rightly deserved. Let me give you a few examples of the sort of jobs that we took for granted. Oxford Street used to be far wider than today. Outside Selfridges, in the middle of the road, was a very busy rank. One day when I was on point, the doorman whistled me over for a young child who got into the cab and told me number xx Trevor Place. When I arrived, the child got out and at the same time a lady got out from a cab that had been following me. Paying off her driver, she called out to me that she would pay me as well. I had guessed what was going to happen. She came to my cab grabbing the child's arm and snarled at him: "Do that again and I'll give you a good smacking." Then she turned to me and asked how much? I enquired what he had done and she explained that he was always doing it. "I get fed up with it and so does the maid," the irritated passenger said. "He gets bored with shopping, walks off and takes a cab home!"

This child had obviously been taught from a very young age that if you get lost, do not worry, just hail a cab and tell the driver where you live and he will take you home. A very sensible idea that many young children were taught at that time.

Then there was the time in Hatton Garden when I was hailed by a gentleman who asked

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*

me to take a delivery to *Garrards*, the jewellers in Regent Street. He added that the store would pay and tip me. He then produced a soft leather bag,, leaned right into the luggage area and told me to hold my hand out. Into it he poured nineteen diamonds and asked me to count them before pouring them back into the bag. He then took my badge number and said he had already taken the cab number. He offered me the option of refusing if I should so wish, but added that if I accepted I would be well paid. Well of course I agreed, did the delivery, the diamonds were checked and I was indeed very well paid. After that job, any time I was empty in Hatton Garden I looked out for him, but no luck...

As I said cab drivers were trusted completely and rightly so. We used to get all sorts of delivery jobs. Any old drivers remember the two old ladies that owned the hat shop on the

north side of Grafton Street? They made the most fantastic hats for the wealthy and used taxis to deliver them. Then of course, many top florists used us to do their deliveries. Law firms were the same with their important court papers etc. We were trusted implicitly.

Cab drivers were also very different to those of today. Many were ex-servicemen and used to helping their mates. If you stopped to look at a map, in no time another cab driver would pull alongside to ask if you were ok? A typical example of this was when I was still driving my ultra-slow *Low Loader*. On a trip to London Airport, I was constantly being overtaken by just about every cab going. On finally arriving, I signed in and was informed that all the cabs that had overtaken me had already signed me in as being ahead of them! Haven't times changed!

Continued next month...

DaC Driver Threatened!



Craig is back to smiling now - but it was far from funny at the time

Meeting **Craig Woodham (P23)**, you realise what a laid back, easygoing sort of fellow he is. So when several unsavoury men threatened him recently, his philosophical attitude was what probably saved him from nothing worse than a ruffling of his nerves, although that of course, was bad enough.

Craig told **Call Sign** of the events that led up to his ordeal...

"It was 16.06 on a Friday afternoon in New Cavendish Street, when I stopped for a man holding a small white cardboard box. He grunted that he wanted Piccadilly Circus and opened the door to get in. With that, and to my surprise, three other men who appeared from nowhere and who were equally scruffily dressed, suddenly joined him. It was that original scruffiness of the first passenger that made me initially hesitate before I had decided to stop for the fare," Craig continued.

"As we crossed the junction of New Bond and Brook Street, I thought I smelt cigarette smoke from the passenger compartment and decided to advise the passengers that smoking was not allowed in taxis and that if they were seen by a passing police car, they would probably be stopped and possibly fined. I mentioned it as a gesture of customer care, not wishing to be pulled up by the police myself," he added.

"They then started to make sarcastic and uncomplimentary comments, steadily building up into shouting obscenities and threatening that they were going to kill me. They then started kicking the central plastic division, tip-up seats and rear door interior trims. It was pretty scary actually, even for me who has studied martial arts. As I pulled over into the kerbside with the intention of getting them out of my cab, I felt a hand grab my left shoulder through the gap of the central division. The kicking and shouting continued until the door was opened and they all piled out, slamming the door as they left," he said, his face pale as he recalled the event.

"Another cab that had been following me very kindly stopped to offer assistance, asking me what had happened while at the same time asking if I had seen what they were doing to my cab? I replied that I was a bit pre-occupied with watching the road and my personal situation!" A small smile crept over Craig's face as he recalled that moment.

Continuing with his tale, Craig went on to say that it was when he looked that he saw they had spat on the carriage windows and other areas of the cab's interior.

"I spent some time cleaning up the cab before I went back to work, grateful that the mess was the only casualty of the journey," he said before driving away and back to the strange job of work that we do....

compliance officers update

Hello Ladies & Gents,

Christmas seems an age away and with the snow at the beginning of the year and perhaps with a proper winter, we can look forward to a better summer than we have experienced in recent years, with more and more tourists visiting our shores.

Over the festive season, when increased volumes of work can lead to a possible rise in customer complaints, this year was gratifying in that no serious issues were reported, which is a testament to you, the members, and the professionalism shown over a period of high demand when tensions can become strained. So well done!

Recent problems

In each of my recent reports, I have usually mentioned some of the problems that continually occur and this report will be no different. The Call Centre is frequently monitoring the system and although I know I am repeating myself, the most common rule violations are still those listed below...

E14: This zone is physical between 9pm and 6am (Monday to Friday) and at all times on weekends. Please be aware that the furthest part west in E14 is Commercial Road, adjacent to the Rotherhithe Tunnel and from the east, the boundary starts at Leamouth Road, so you



must be west of this point before booking in.

Outlying zones on either side of the M25 that do not have a London postal zone are at all times physical. There are trips in outlying zones that have increased lead-in times, but if you are not in the actual trip zone (e.g. SE50, S99, NN99 etc) please do not book into these zones to gain an unfair advantage over fellow members. As I have mentioned a number of times, if there is no one in the trip zone, these trips will be offered to back-up zones and if still unmatched, they will appear on the bid trip screen.

Regular Bookings: It is not in the true spirit of the Society and is a procedure rule violation to book into a zone and wait for a long period of time prior to a regular trip being dispatched in order to maintain a queue position. This is deemed to be *hanging up* and again is a big bone of contention with drivers who see a taxi that appears to be booked in to a rather obscure zone for an unusually long length of time. Please be aware that the Call Centre is monitoring these trips and it is surprising how they come to light.

Euston 'shouts'

There were many Euston shouts during the bad weather and many of you did an excellent job in extremely testing conditions. I have been asked to mention that you are advised to stay in your taxis at all times whilst the Marshals are organising and marrying up the trips. It looks much more professional and please be assured that no driver will be treated differently from any other. The first trip goes in the first taxi...

I hope to see many of you at the AGM, drive safely and keep up the good work...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

DID YOU KNOW!

...that **Lindsey House** in **Cheyne Walk** is the only 17th century aristocratic property left in Chelsea. It was built in 1674 by the third Earl of Lindsey, the Lord Chamberlain to Charles II. It was built on a former farmhouse site, once part of Thomas More's estate and home to the leader of the Moravian Church, Count Zinzendorf. As is the way of life in Chelsea, the building at 96 – 100 Cheyne Walk is now divided into apartments...

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Some of our services include:-

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- * TXII timing chains/belts * TXII heater control valves * TX4 servicing * Tyres supplied/fitted

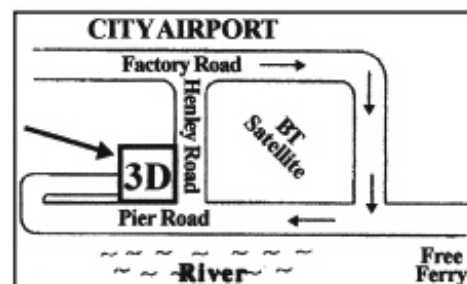
We can service your cab from new without affecting your warrantee

And we will advise on any warrantee work needed

To book: Ring Christine on 0207 474 6592

E3 Taxis Unit 3D Standard Industrial Estate, Henley Road, E16 2ES

Open Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.30pm, Saturday 9am – 1pm



A 15-month long battle by a **Dial-a-Cab** driver to recover his original £9 fare finally reached a conclusion at Horseferry Road Magistrates Court, when the passenger was fined £129 and was described as 'arrogant' by the Magistrate.

Lance Davis (G44) was following another cab along Tottenham Court Road at 02.00 hours in July 2008. The cab ahead stopped for a well-dressed male, but declined the fare and drove on. Lance stopped for the man and accepted the hiring to the Moonlight Club, also known as the Broadwalk in Greek Street, Soho.

Arriving at the club, Lance requested the £9 fare and was separately handed two bankcards that were both declined when Lance swiped them individually through the DaC Data Terminal. The man told Lance to find a local cash point and when Lance asked why the passenger had not mentioned about his lack of money earlier in the journey when they could have stopped en-route, the man became irate. With £29 now showing on the meter from the unnecessary ATM detour, Lance stopped police who were passing by and they searched the man - unsuccessfully it turned out - for any cash about his person. The police then arrested him and told Lance to call West End Central (Savile Row) later. The DaC driver was told that a thorough search at the police station revealed the man did in fact have £30 on him and could have paid the taxi fare, which would have been the end of the matter without the need of his being arrested.

Appearing in court late in 2009, the man was described as an out-of-work stockbroker

£9 Bilk ends in hefty court fine...



Lance waited 15 months to see bilker in court

who had wanted to keep what little cash he had on him for the club. He told the Bench that he regarded the taxi driver (Lance) as offering a public service and therefore expected him to take him directly to the door of his destination, as he did not want to walk!

Handing out a fine of £100 and the £29 fare, making a total of £129, the Magistrate con-

cluded by describing the man as 'arrogant and foolish' to jeopardise his career in the financial sector, with a criminal record for such a comparatively minor offence.

"So far, I have only received a cheque from the court for £50 and I don't know if I will ever see the rest of it," Lance told **Call Sign** when we met. "But a criminal record, hefty fine and the likelihood of not being accepted back into his profession as he would not be regarded as a *fit and proper person* anymore to deal with other people's money given the high standards of professional probity demanded of those in finance nowadays, how clever is that?"

Ending his story, Lance told us that in the eleven years he had been driving a cab, he had never had this kind of trouble before.

"It just doesn't make any sense to jeopardise one's career over a few pounds," Lance added, "but I'm grateful I am on DaC though, as I was able to swipe his 'declined' bank cards first!"

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Risking his life for the Annual Report!

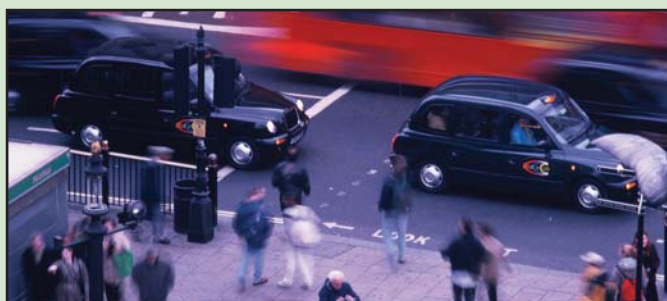
Ok well almost...

You would by now have received your AGM bump together with the *Dial-a-Cab Annual Report*, which as most of you probably know is produced in-house by **Allen Togwell**.

When **Call Sign** received its copy, two photos on pages six and seven showing a DaC taxi taken from above, intrigued us. We asked Allen and he launched into a blow-by-blow account of how he (almost) risked his life by hanging by his (almost) fingertips from a **Trocadero** balcony (almost) overlooking Piccadilly Circus!

"Nothing," Mr T told us, **"is too much for this Society! I could have (almost) fallen!"**

It is worth pointing out that Allen produces our Annual report at a fraction of the cost compared to similar ones - that's how we knew that he hadn't hired a helicopter for the shot!



(Almost) risking his life at the Trocadero for a photo!

SIZZLES

The barbeque that comes to your home!

Sizzles comes to your home to prepare a sizzling hot charcoal barbeque in your garden using our own equipment.

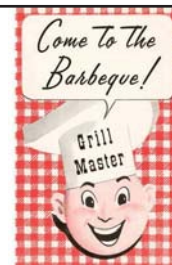
Sizzles can provide all the food and salads or we can cook your own food. The decision is up to you.

We can barbeque for any number of guests, so book now for your next party. Bookings being accepted for 2010 now!

If you are a fan of charcoal cooked barbeques but want someone else to do the hard work, call Oscar now!

Bookings and information at Sizzles:

0208 518 8765 or 07902 246 354





From 1 January 2010 the *one strike and you're out* policy - first introduced in August 2008 to tackle touting - was expanded to include private hire operators based in late night venues.

Previously, the policy only applied to licensed private hire drivers convicted of touting. To date, more than 230 private hire drivers' licences have been revoked or refused renewal as a result of the *one strike and you're out* policy.

As part of TfL's continued commitment to combating illegal cab touting, private hire operators in London have been warned that if their staff are found not to be complying with

'ONE STRIKE AND YOU'RE OUT' EXPANDED

Now to include private hire operators based in late night venues...

the licensed operator rules, they will be penalised and if necessary, prosecuted.

Private hire operators, including those based in late night venues, have been reminded that:

- * Bookings must only be taken inside the premises that are covered by the TfL private hire licence and that the licence should be on display.

- * Staff must not take bookings outside a building that has a private hire licence and are prohibited from soliciting for hire under any circumstances.

- * Private hire drivers must not park or wait illegally outside venues.

John Mason, Director of Taxi and Private Hire at Transport for London, told *Call Sign*:

"We know the public have concerns about taxi touts and that there is particular confusion when licensed operators' staff work outside venues. As a result, I have reissued guidelines to the relevant operators and venues and instructed my enforcement teams to extend

the *one strike and you're out* policy."

Mr Mason continued: "The TfL funded *Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Command* continues to clamp down on illegal cabs and we are determined to tackle any issues surrounding this matter head on. It's important that every Londoner understands the difference between legal taxis and minicabs on the one hand, and illegal cabs and touts on the other. It is a legal requirement to pre-book minicabs, and if you don't you are putting yourself at risk. My message to operators and venue managers is that it is essential you make your staff understand and abide by the law and that we will be pushing for the strongest possible penalties if operators and their staff are found not to be complying with the regulations."

It does seem that John Mason is listening to our concerns and whilst we can no longer be expected to get priority over the legitimate opposition, it is of paramount importance that the public are kept aware of the differences...

Snow, Ice...and now Potholes

A problem dear to the heart of most **Dial-a-Cab** drivers has been highlighted by the AA in a recent report on how the spate of bad weather has affected our roads. Taxi drivers know better than most how you can drive along a road one day and yet, when doing the same trip the following day, find a huge pothole in the road. Even worse, if it has been raining and the hole is filled with water so that you don't realise that part of the road has disintegrated, it could seriously damage your cab if you go through it. And that could lead to an insurance claim.

The AA report says that emergency road maintenance funding is required to stop crumbling roads costing more in compensation and accidents than the funding would cost. They warn that drivers who think they will be in the clear after the snow thaws will probably find an aggravated plague of potholes to contend with over the coming months. Last February's heavy snow pushed up insurance claims for pothole damage by more than 250%.

Repairing the potholed roads will cost local highway authorities hundreds of millions of pounds. But if the roads are not repaired then drivers, cyclists and motor bike riders will be at risk from expensive damage and injuries. Insurance companies will be hit and more claims and potential injuries will add to NHS costs - already hit by the increase in fractured bones as a result of icy pavements. Cash-strapped councils could well face a deluge of claims from road users and the risk of paying out more in compensation than on road repairs themselves.

The AA says that the worst areas for potholes will be over stretches of road where potholes have been poorly repaired in the past, roads where utility reinstatements have been



Just waiting for someone to drop in!

poor, roads that have not been salted and stretches of road hit by consistent sub-zero temperatures.

The report concludes that in the national interest, there is a strong case for emergency extra maintenance funding for councils to head off the threat of the vicious circle of compensation claims and hospital costs outweighing the cost of repair to the roads.

A survey of local authority highway departments last year by *ALARM*, found that more than £63 million was spent filling in potholes during 2008/9, but that a further £47 million was lost to compensation claims and extra staff costs. Even without the impact of last February's bad weather, pothole numbers in

England and Wales had increased 32% over the previous year.

Edmund King, AA President, told *Call Sign*:

"The pothole season has come early this year. You may be relieved that the snow has gone but you shouldn't be complacent. Due to the severity of this winter, it could be a record year for potholes - a million scars of the worst winter in 30 years. We already have many calls from AA members and patrols about potholes. Hitting a pothole can damage the tyre, wheel, suspension or steering or even cause an accident. They can be dangerous for drivers and potentially lethal for those on two wheels.

"Over time, cracks appear in the road surface so when water seeps in it freezes, expands and widens the crack. We are concerned that with local authorities already stretched due to the drain of the winter, whether there will be enough in the purse to heal our ravaged roads? We believe that emergency funding is required to stop the vicious circle of crumbling roads costing more in compensation, accident claims and hospital admissions than repairs. We are asking road users to report potholes on the AA Zone, via www.theAA.com."

Last year saw a reported 968,195 potholes filled in at an average cost per hole of £65 - a total cost of over £63million! The AA are now also asking local authorities to put farmers on stand-by to use their tractors as snow ploughs; to mix sand with salt to make it go further; to be more upfront about which roads are being gritted and to publish maps showing gritted areas in green with non-gritted areas in red and finally one that *Call Sign* really likes the sound of - to use parking attendants (and other contractors) to clear ice from footpaths, access to railway stations and town centres!

In the January issue of **Call Sign**, Chairman **Brian Rice** wrote of meetings he'd had with two Olympic Committees – the **London Organising Committee Olympic Games (LOCOG)** and the **Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA)**. One organises the Games, while the other makes sure that everything gets built and delivered. Transport comes under the ODA.

The meetings are ongoing, but the two most relevant parts involving the taxi trade must be ranking / setting down facilities, plus how the *Olympic Route Network* involves us and whether we can change history – because just as they have in past Olympics, the *International Olympic Committee (IOC)* will have the final say as to who uses those routes and have never allowed any taxi traffic into them before.

Soon after London was given the 2012 Olympics, this magazine asked Australian taxi driver **David Gawthorn** – who was in Sydney during the 2000 Games – what benefit the Aussie cab trade got from them at the time? He told **Call Sign**: “When Sydney hosted the 2000 Games, local cabbies had nothing but aggravation regarding access to them and we were banned from entering the “closed” section of the village, whereas many of the equivalent to London's PH cars were allowed through. In fact I'd say that the Olympics were a disaster for us, so be on your guard because although it seems like an honour, it wouldn't take much to turn it into a disaster for London's famous taxi drivers if they were suddenly refused permission to enter the Olympic area to drop off or pick up. Neither can you enter the Olympic Route Network, which can then turn a regular run into a nightmare.”

Olympic route network

What will happen to the Blackwall Tunnel?

Brian Rice mentioned Marylebone Road last month, where as bad as it sounds, the offside lane may be used as the ORN; if that then means that the bus/taxi lane remains, London's busiest main road will have just one lane operating – the centre one – and if heading east, A40 traffic will probably go back along the elevated section to White City on a regular basis.

This month, **Call Sign** asks about the Blackwall Tunnel and the ORN. There is no taxi lane, but as **Tom Reynolds (O85)** pointed in last month's *Mailsbot* pages, we are banned from the northbound bus escape lane – even though coaches are allowed to use it. Then bear in mind that Olympic events are to be held in both the O2 and of course, the Olympic Park – both within close proximity to the Tunnel. The Park will have the swimming, athletics, cycling and many other events, including being home to many of the athletes, while the O2 will have gymnastics and shooting and Greenwich Park will be hosting the equestrian events. Just a few short miles – and a tunnel that is heavily congested at many times of the day – separate them. So the question must be: How can there be an *Olympic Route Network* going through it? It will cause utter chaos.

An **Olympic Delivery Authority** spokesperson told **Call Sign**: “Our aim has to be to get those taking part in the Olympics to

wherever they need to be according to their event, whilst causing as little inconvenience as possible. The A12 is obviously critical to that aim and it could be that we may have to close the offside lane at certain times in order to allow athletes etc to get to their events. We have put out a consultation plan and there will be another in 2010 and again in 2011. It is important that the athletes arrive for their events feeling unharassed or tired following an awkward journey. That also must involve those critical to the events, such as timekeepers etc. We realise that it will be difficult and hope that forward planning with TfL might help – perhaps a change to traffic light phasing could help ease some problems. More importantly, we should remember that this is just for a few short weeks at certain times of the day only and it really is so important that we show the world how well we can operate these Games.”

Let's hope that future meetings between the Olympic committees and this trade can convince them that London is unlike any other city and that taxis **MUST** be involved. And God help us if rumours that the tunnel is closing for 3 years are true! We will find out by next month...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online

SNATCHED FROM UNDER HIS NOSE!

Eustace Clarke (O34) recently told **Call Sign** how he witnessed the theft of another cab driver's moneybag right from literally under the driver's nose! “I was behind a non-radio cab on the Marks & Spencer rank at Marble Arch,” Eustace said, “when an Oriental looking man opened the near-side door of the cab and handed the driver a piece of paper – apparently with an address on it. As the driver took the paper to have a closer look, the man quickly reached inside the open door, grabbed the driver's moneybag, which he must have seen as he walked towards the cab, and ran off at high speed clutching the bag with both hands!”

Continuing, Eustace added that he realised what a lucky escape he'd had.

“It could so easily have been me,” he said. “I do keep my doors locked, but the thief could have reached right through my open window. I, like most drivers would naturally lower the window right down to speak to someone.”

So be aware at all times, because even the most innocent scenario can end in unnecessary grief without due diligence on your part!

©Call Sign MM10



Robbed on the M & S Rank

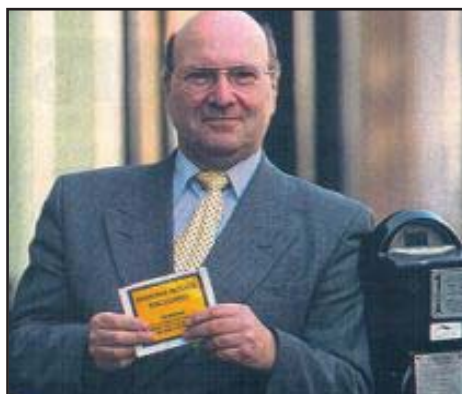
Cameras to work on speed average!

The days of motorists ignoring speed limits and just slowing down when approaching speed cameras, are getting closer to an end.

Unlike earlier rumours concerning average speed cameras in the Limehouse Link that turned out to be the ordinary variety, a stretch of the A13 between Canning Town flyover and the Goresbrook Interchange is to begin working on motorists average speed between the two points, rather than those as they pass any of the cameras en route.

Thirty seven different locations, using eighty four cameras along the 7.5 miles stretch, will work out motorist's average speed and if caught breaking the limit, a minimum £60 and three points on the licence will be imposed. The scheme is set to go live in early summer and if successful, will probably lead to similar installations all across London.

The good news is that for such a fast road, the speed limit will rise from 40mph to 50mph. You have been warned..



Most of you know by now that the UK's foremost authority on PCNs is **Barrie Segal** and that he also works in conjunction with **Dial-a-Cab** in the fight against the issuing of unfair parking tickets to our drivers on radio jobs.

Barrie has now told **Call Sign** of **Brent Council's** parking policy on Boxing Day – Saturday 26th December – that was also point-

Dial-a-Cab's Mr PCN, Barrie Segal, offers some friendly advice to any Call Sign reader that received a Penalty Charge Notice from the borough of Brent on Boxing Day...

DON'T PAY IT!!!

ed out in the Council's **Brent Magazine**, which is a freebie distributed to households in the borough around four weeks prior to Boxing Day.

It was also pointed out that because Boxing Day was on a weekend, the following Monday would be classed as a Bank Holiday

After the paper had gone out, Brent Council's website then changed the information to indicate that they **would** be enforcing 26th December and a substantial number of PCNs were issued on that day – including, Barrie told us, five cars being towed away and one clamped!

So Barrie's advice to any reader – or to anyone you know who received a PCN on December 26th in Brent, is that it should undoubtedly be cancelled and that if you have already paid, you should be entitled to your money back.

Brent's email address for appeals is: brent.appeals@apcoa.co.uk.

Barrie Segal is the founder of www.appeal-now.com - the only website in the world where you can appeal your parking ticket on line in 4½ minutes...

Need tyres and on Dial-a-cab?

TIGER TYRES WILL SAVE YOU MONEY...

Those of you that have been to the DaC Credit Union's new offices in Hackney Road will have noticed a tyre company downstairs that sell taxi tyres. Not only that, but they are cutting the prices if you have the DaC logo on your cab!



Tiger Tyres and the **DaC Credit Union** are situated at **472 Hackney Road**, which lays slightly off the main road into a mini estate.

Examples of Tiger's prices are: **Dunlop £80** instead of £82, **Michelin £78** instead of £80 and **King remoulds** at £30 instead of £32; while Vito drivers can get **Continental tyres at £80**, down from £82. Anyone buying for all four wheels will get a round £10 off!

And of course, if you are a Credit Union member, just nip upstairs and they'll probably lend you the money to pay for them. Is that a deal or is that a deal!

To call Tiger Tyres, phone 0207 729 5237...

Toad, badger, Ratty and Mole At the Bank of England!

There is something interesting taking place at the Bank of England from 15 - 19 February.

A costumed storyteller will be there giving a lively reading of *The Wind in the Willows*, where listeners will be told about the adventures of Toad, Badger, Ratty and Mole and their battle against the weasels, stoats and ferrets from the Wild Wood, who have been rather naughty and taken over Toad Hall.

But why, London's taxi drivers and their children ask, is it at the Bank of England? Well, *The Wind in the Willows* was written by **Kenneth Graham**, who was the secretary at the Bank before leaving in 1908 to settle down in the country, where he was famously 'messing around with boats'!

There is no charge for admission to the permanent Bank of England Museum or for any event. For more information visit www.bankofengland.co.uk/museum.



Off to rescue Toad Hall!

Mailshot

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

Addison Lee and taxis...

Dear Alan

Not sure if its been flagged up before, but to me it looks like Addison Lee are advertising as Licensed Taxis under various internet searches. This one seems pretty blatant to me under a search for London Taxis, coming up as *24 Hours A Day 365 Days A Year With Addison Lee!*

We are not talking here about *related* internet sites, but an actual paid for sponsored link under the London Taxi heading. Not being an expert in advertising on the Internet, I would not know if this is lawful or not, but with the current PCO drive pointing out differences between Licensed Taxis and Private Hire, I think this apparent confusion is probably not in the best interest of the travelling public.

Steve Thomas (N10)

Steve's letter was received after the last issue closed, that being due to the earlier than usual publishing deadlines for Christmas. In that January issue we had an article that pretty much said what Steve is pointing out and which contained a piece from DaC driver and RMT London Chairman, Eddie Lambert (V27), who wrote to *Call Sign* complaining about minicab ads where the word 'Taxi' was used to describe their 'services'. He had also complained to the PCO's John Mason, in addition to Islington Trading Standards after picking Liberty Cars of Old Street as a minicab company that advertised in that way.

Since that issue came out, we've had Addison Lee Chairman, John Griffin, flaunting his wealth in the C4 program *The Secret Millionaire*, where throughout Mr Griffin refers to Addison Lee as a "taxi company." However, I wouldn't have held my breath on the PCO doing anything about that as they couldn't even stop them using the M4 bus lane.

But John Mason is still a new light at the PCO and he gives the impression of caring about the industry as a whole. So perhaps we'll hear that AL are no longer using that bus/taxi lane and that Mr Griffin begins referring to his company as a Private Hire organisation – or even minicab company – because that is what it is.

One thing is certain though. John Griffin will do what John Griffin wants to do and won't give a jot about the PCO if he doesn't want to. If necessary he will use any court of law he believes can assist him. And as *The Secret Millionaire* showed, he won't worry about any associated cost.

Read *To Taxi or not to taxi* in this issue for another view of the situation ...Ed

Nobu rank history?

Reprinted courtesy of CTN

As a licensed London taxi cab driver like yourself, I read most of what's going on in the

trade and I've been a keen reader of your work during the 17 years I've been in this fantastic trade. But the inaccuracy of your front page of *Cab Trade News* dated December 2009 prompted me to write to you and maybe put you straight on a couple of issues. Firstly look at the date - December 2009.

I'd like to bring your attention (and please excuse the self-flattery here) that I believe I was the first licensed taxi cab driver to bring the problem of *Nobu Berkeley* to the trade's attention in – get this – November 2005! That's right, a full four years before the current crusade to "win back our work" (*sic*). And while some people are, maybe quite rightly, taking the praise for getting a rank outside the above establishment, I'd like to ask where these drivers were in the intervening four years, thus letting the 'minicabs' get a foothold outside these establishments when I first brought this subject up in the November 2005 edition of *Dial-a-Cab's* fantastic magazine, *Call Sign* (later used in *Taxi Globe* 13 May 2009).

It makes me chuckle and sad at the same time that this has nothing to do with "winning back our work" *per se*, rather the fact that we're in the middle of the worst financial crisis in more than a few years and all of a sudden cab drivers, myself included, are struggling to "earn a few quid." It's typical and quite sad actually that cab drivers work so hard to get into this trade, then care so little about it when they finally get their *green badge* – apart from when it suits of course. I think you will find there was no recession going on *circa* 2005. How much better our trade would be if this kind of action went on when "we're all nicking a few quid," rather than the odd times when it seems like a "kipper season" all year round.

But alas that is the nature of the beast, I suppose. United we stand, divided we fall and I think these past few months have shown what can be achieved when we as a trade stick together as one! Sadly, I fear the *status quo* will be resumed as soon as work levels pick up... but then I could be wrong. Some redress of the balance to your front page would be much appreciated.

Name and address supplied

The above letter appeared in *Cab Trade News* and my thanks go to Editor Peter Rose for his permission in republishing it. I think it tells the story very well, although *Call Sign* would not normally publish letters where the writer refused to add their name (except in exceptional circumstances). As it comes from another trade paper, we are republishing it as it was ...Ed

Bill's back!

Hi Alan

At last I have managed to get back to work after 7 long months off, two stents fitted and a couple of stress tests to make sure I am fit enough to work. And it seems I am because I've now got my Bill back and I'm fighting fit!

I would like to thank all the people at the *Dial-a-Cab* office who phoned to see how I

was doing, in addition to the get well cards that were sent and the big bunch of flowers I received, all in men's colours - well that's what my wife said! Also, a big thank you to **Chelsea Phil** for the way he helped me and an even bigger thank you to **Neil Brewer (E16)** and all the drivers who stopped him on the road and signed the big card he was carrying around with him! Wow, it really makes me proud to have mates like you lot, so thanks lads. I never doubted it, but I can still say it feels good to belong to the *Gentleman's Circuit*.

Once again to everyone; thanks for caring, it means so much. Be lucky...

Bill Chatterway (A43)

Nice to see you back, Bill ...Ed

Dribbling to the Vito?

With the radio work continuing to dribble out, the future doesn't look very bright if you drive a Fairway, TX1, TX2 or TX4. Things are looking better for Vito drivers however, as many customers are now requiring a Vito when ordering a cab - many of whom have been encouraged by Vito drivers to do so. The Vito and some Metrocabs already have an attribute for being capable of carrying 6 passengers and good luck to them when the customer genuinely requires a six-seater. But I cannot see why there should be a further V attribute for Vitos at the expense of the rest of the fleet and a first off the zone policy should be adopted. I therefore conclude that the V attribute should be removed in the name of fair play.

Barry Spear (Y16)

Keith Cain responds: While these drivers may be encouraging clients to ask for a Vito cab specifically, the call centre advises that any such request may take us longer than our normal 10/15 minutes response time to match one. It also applies to any pre-booked trip. In most cases, clients ask us to try for a few minutes to get the trip covered and if we are unsuccessful then we are to dispatch their trip to all of the fleet. What we have also found in most cases is that the Vito request has only been due to the number of people travelling. Controllers remove the 'V' attribute and rematch the trip with the 6 seater one, but because of the very limited number of Vito taxis and 6 seater metros on the circuit, they have been making the trip a two cab job. One can hardly say this is a benefit to them. However, should this number increase to in excess of a couple of hundred, then the suggestion of them benefiting could be the case. But this is no different to when Metros first came on the circuit and also the TX1s.

In all cases, if the client wishes for us



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to supply a specific vehicle then we aim to meet their requirement.

In this issue there is an article written by Richard Potter with the heading as below. In it he mentions writing to the PCO to complain about minicabs at the Charing Cross Hospital and this is the reply received from the Carriage Office...

To taxi or not to taxi?

Dear Mr Potter,

I would like to let you know that we have established that the private hire operator to whom the freephone connects is *Triple A Express Ltd* of Unit 14, Hayes Metro Centre, Springfield Road, Hayes UB4 0LE (Operator No. 535). The freephone itself is maintained by a separate company. They have been advised that under Section 31 of the *Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998*, the current wording next to the freephone is illegal. I have been advised that it will be replaced, although this might take a few weeks to accomplish. I can confirm that I will also be writing to *Triple A Express Ltd* to remind the company of the requirements of the *Private Hire Act*.

Thank you again for contacting this office. Your assistance is appreciated.

M J Mann

Operator Licensing Section

Non-rejectable?

Hi Alan

I wrote to *Mailshot* back in March 2007 about non-rejectable and A/D trips, but nothing changed. Now I read Mike Son's article and the idea of making all trips between 6am and midnight A/D. I think we've missed the boat. Surely the time to have done this was when we were mega-busy and could not cover the work? At this moment, I think the work would get covered better if trips in the morning were unmasked. We're all sitting on ranks for hours and so long as the job was going further than we're running, then I'm sure they would get covered.

Now I know where the Board is concerned and it's probably a non-starter, so what about some flexibility? When the work gets back to normal (soon please) and the call centre can see we're going to struggle to cover it, make everything A/D and perhaps even non-rejectable at any time of the day. But when things are very quiet, then unmask the jobs (not including the LAPs and A/D accounts).

That gives the Sales team something to offer and the driver a bit of a chance...

Colin Lewis (N55)

I think it's important to emphasise that Mike Son's article was written from a purely personal point of view and not as

a Board member. A further two responses to Mike's article can be read inside this issue with 'How can we win back our work' from James Griffin (T97) and Ian Connelly (T21). In addition, Colin, I think I'm right in saying that DaC controllers already have the power to make everything A/D or non-rejectable, should the need arise ...Ed

Non-rejectable 2

I sat here originally to email *Call Sign* asking Keith Cain what he has against Dial-a-Cab members getting a trip in the direction of home in the late afternoon, evening and night time? As directed on EC5, no soon to clear on E14 and AD from there and SE75 - AD with fixed prices from there! Doesn't leave many zones to find a trip in the direction of home.

I was also surprised that no other members wrote about the rule change regarding AD trips no longer being recoverable, if running further than trip is going. I remember our Chairman, Mr Rice, saying at an AGM that this was unreasonable. Funny how when it comes to changing Code 3 (5 trips in 1 day!) and EC5, the members have to vote? With diesel at just over £5 a gallon and looking to go higher and the huge amount of roadworks going on, I think this is unfair.

Also, while talking about AD trips, during the recent severe weather we suffered, would it not be better to unmask trip destinations and let a driver chose a trip on the way home, rather than drivers going off in all directions, then leaving them with journeys taking hours to get home or like me and many other of our drivers, just struggling to go home empty? The Bid zone was full the night of heavy snow before Christmas and I would have been happy to stay in town and do local journeys, but guess what - they were AD as well! Even the trips with the 'T' attribute seem to fire out as *True AD*. Can't our IT department teach these accounts how to fill in a booking form?

But what really drove me to type this letter was Mike Son's article in *Call Sign*, *How Can We Win Back Our Work?* At last, a Board Member looking to improve my income? Wrong! The only suggestions Mike Son seemed to make involved me doing work for less or possibly running further or longer than the trip may even be going. Perhaps non-rejectable, he suggests? Drivers won't even bother to book in if it ever gets busy again! As Directed doesn't always work ie Brian Rice having to put out personal appeals to cover our work in the west of London in the mornings a few years back!

Mike, you talk about our service needing to be better. You say our accounts, admin and our IT departments being the best there are, then it must be the drivers or their taxis that you think are to blame. Even if we offered a chauffeur service with our taxis, we still wouldn't increase our work. And writing of service, why are we still unable to offer an Air-Conditioned taxi if required! You also say you don't think reducing our admin charges

would do any good? I'm afraid I have to disagree with you. Ask any of our drivers that speak to their customers and they will tell you that Dial-a-Cab is expensive. When compared with many minicabs trips around and across town, the actual meter price is often seen as reasonable. I feel that's why we are not winning our work back - in total we must be too expensive. In addition, we seem to have many more shorter journeys than longer ones. Is this because we are more competitive over a shorter distance?

I think DaC needs to find new ways of generating income. I suggested in the March 2009 *Mailshot* that trips going to outer London should be offered without any charges or run-ins! £1 or £2 could be deducted from the meter fare to fund it. Radical? Perhaps, but if drivers don't like it, then don't accept it. Remember, a *fixed price* fare still has a booking fee! All fares outside the M25 having £2 or more deducted - or perhaps a set amount - would trigger no booking fee for trips within central London. Could an increase in subs generate more work? If drivers paid for each credit ride, how much would it cost to make admin and booking fees disappear? A fantastic IT department is great, but it seems our clients want to travel at a competitive price. Lets have a vote and let our members decide.

I believe that if we carry on as we are, our client base will continue to shrink as private hire tell our customers they are cheaper. When the economy picks up, we know many of these minicab companies will be found wanting, but our radio work may be lost from the London taxi trade forever...

Jon Robinson E88.

Keith Cain has responded to Jon's letter on page 17 of this issue ...Ed

Hi Alan

I note that the January *Call Sign* wasn't carrying the usual Eurostar ad. Have we lost the concession now that we are no longer the main provider?

Jon Francis (A39)

Allan Evans has been trying to get an answer for some time, but we cannot get a definitive reply. All we've had was an unofficial message saying that it was all taxi drivers and that the loss of the account as main providers - although the account has remained open - has nothing to do with the decision. We're still trying to find out ...Ed

Witness appeal

My name is Steve Donovan and I drive an Atlantic blue TX2, reg no LS55 LDE. An alleged incident between two passengers and myself happened on Wednesday 12 August 2009 at the junction of



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Southampton Road and Mansfield Road NW3 between 23.30pm and midnight. My passengers were sick in the cab, losing me a night's work. They paid the fare of £11.80 but not the spoilage charge and then an argument ensued.

I have now been accused of common assault. I totally repudiate these allegations and seek any witness's who may have seen what happened.

Please contact me on mobile **07941 172 259** or email **stevedonovan@f2s.com**.

Thank you

Steve Donovan

Badge number 64842

Tom's Blackwall Tunnel bus lane battle... continued

Hello Alan

I have now received from Greenwich Council files regarding the Tunnel Avenue bus lane that leads to Blackwall Tunnel. It appears we have no chance of using this bus lane even though private coaches are allowed through it. The most annoying part for me is that Greenwich Council are so anti-taxi. One would think they would be doing everything possible to help vehicles through the tunnel as quickly as possible! The O2 has many passengers using taxis to get back to their central London hotels, but they are obviously deemed to be unimportant by Greenwich Council. Recent horrendous problems there should make them think again, but I fear they will not alter their stance. I have never believed we were thought to be part of the *London Transport System* when it comes to any assistance from the authorities, and this just substantiates that belief.

Call me a sceptic, but I can't help wondering if their decision has anything to do with the tollgate they talked of having at the Tunnel entrance? And what will happen with the bus lane if the *International Olympic Committee* get planning permission to use Greenwich Park for the horse shows (which I sincerely hope they don't)? Perhaps it will open for competitors to use for the duration of the games? After all, they do contribute to London in a big way... don't they? Not like us nuisance taxi drivers!

One final comment on the topic; it's worth noting that Greenwich Council did at least reply to all my correspondences, unlike acting **Chief Superintendent Crundell** from the Traffic Police whose jurisdiction this road falls under. He hasn't even bothered to reply to my letter to him, even though I gave him two email addresses in addition to my home address. Why am I not surprised?

Tom Reynolds (O85)

In the May 2008 issue of *Call Sign*, Tom explained that he had been speaking to his MP, Clive Efford, about taxi access to

Tunnel Avenue where there is a gate allowing buses to bypass traffic hold-ups going north through Blackwall Tunnel. Tom has been battling for 4 years to gain us access to this gate and had finally arranged a site meeting with representatives of Greenwich Council, Police, TfL and the PCO. Sadly, Tom's feeling at the meeting was that the matter wasn't really going to have the remotest chance of coming to fruition and that out of all the parties present, only the PCO spoke up for the taxi trade. The police claimed that out of town cabs would use it and even more ludicrously that while motorists stuck in north-bound traffic would allow buses out, they would do all they could to stop taxis pulling out! I wonder how the police would feel if taxis deliberately obstructed them when they had their 'blues and twos' flashing to get to an emergency? Both suggestions are just as ludicrous as they sound! The TfL rep claimed it would probably require a bus lane of some considerable length to be effective. Tom explained to him that a mile or so away there were bus lanes that were just 25 feet long, had a camera and which were very effective (Kidbrooke Park Road). Sadly he remained unconvinced. The PCO's Robin Gillis was on the trade's side and said that a bus lane with a camera should be all that was needed. As Tom has said in his latest update, the Council seem anti-taxi anyway.

Tom won't give up, but you can't help feeling that banging his head against a wall would have been as much use. However, my sincere admiration goes out to him for his undoubted battling qualities and as they say – it's not over 'till the blond Mayor sings!...Ed

Accountants?

Dear Sirs

We would like to offer *Call Sign's* taxi driver readers a great accountancy / tax offer. PHT Accounting & Tax Resource are a practice with clients throughout the UK specialising in self employed and individuals who are a part of self assessment.

The PHT offer is to complete taxi drivers accounts and tax return for 2009/10 for a fixed rate of £350. Additionally, if they sign to our services before April 2010, we will offer them the same service at the same rate for the 2010/11 tax year. Not only is this a great offer, but we also add an incentive; if any driver recommends another to our services and they successfully become a client of ours, the driver that introduced the new client will receive £50 for each successful referral made - this is paid as soon as the referred client has paid for the work done by ourselves.

As we understand our clients and realise the economic climate is hitting everyone to a certain degree, as of April 2010 we will be offering the option to clients to pay by a

monthly direct debit of £29.16, spreading the cost over the whole year, rather than paying in one lump sum!

If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Hayley Thompson at our office on 01723 512572. We look forward to hearing from you...

Hayley Thompson

PHT Tax Resource

Forged note detectors

Hi Alan

Wondered if you knew which edition of *Call Sign* did you have an article about forged note detectors?

Peter Graovac (O54)

In August 2005, *Call Sign* gave away 50 Counterfeit Cabbies – a device for tracking forged banknotes. I'm not sure what later devices are on the market, but I'm pretty sure there must be a selection. It was 4700 years in Mesopotamia (modern Turkey) where people bartered with goods, but some individuals would put differing values on similar items leading to controversy and confusion. After all, is a bearskin really worth two bales of hay? So money came into being. But had they had the hassle we get with those deliberately passing forgeries, perhaps they'd have thought twice! ...Ed

The T-word!

At last years AGM when the contentious issue of T work arose, it was mentioned that many drivers, when busy, choose to ignore this work in favour of other account work. I adopt this attitude myself as I sometimes feel that T accounts often just use us to cover their less lucrative work, especially if it is pre-booked. For example, I did a N1W *True AD* but when I asked for the destination, the passenger said: "You should know, I gave it when I booked, we're going to St Pancras." Despite this, I feel there is one T account I would like to offer a better service to and that is *McKinsey*. This is because I have noticed that on many occasions the job notes state that the passenger should always be sent a black cab, but this information is not made available until the job is accepted. Do the passengers demand this because they realise we offer a better service than WestOne cars?

There is a lady wheelchair user I have picked up from Dolphin Square who, whilst championing DaC, says she dislikes having to go through WestOne cars seeing as she only wants to use us and feels we should be doing all their work. Another user missed a train because the WestOne driver got lost on route to Paddington, even asking if she knew the way - another convert to 'always send a



Mailshot

black cab' I think! So if the *customer only wants to be sent a black cab* was seen on the trip offer, perhaps the account could blossom?
Terry Felvus (M86)

Keith Cain responds: Terry, we would welcome being able to show more information on the trip offer, not just for the reasons you state, but for many others too. Unfortunately, to change the current set up would mean a major rewrite of the dispatch system. The long term plan, however, is to redevelop and update the system and the trip offer screen is high up on that wish list.

How can we win back our work – the PH view?

Hi Alan

I would like to respond to the article written by **Michael Son** (*How can we win back our work*) in the *January Call Sign*. Mike was the very first trade representative I ever met whilst on the Knowledge and since then I have always held him in high esteem and respect both his knowledge and integrity with regards to cab trade business.

I'm not on Dial-a-Cab, nor do I drive a cab at the moment; I have however worked within the private hire industry and currently own a small PH company in Central London. There are many factors as to why the cab trade is losing market share and I for one believe with some real commercial thinking that the situation can be corrected, but it needs commercial not political solutions. Companies such as Addison Lee have become a major threat to the cab trade because they are well run and give the cash and account customer a good service at a cheaper rate than the cab trade; their coverage of London is far superior than that of any cab company and the earning expectancy of their work force is approximately 50% less than a taxi driver has for the same hours worked! Plus they have benefited enormously from the PH industry consolidating to a point where there are not a great deal of companies or competition left in the corporate sector. So how do you combat this and win back market share?

1/ A merger of a radio circuit is vital; the need to create a super circuit will give the real differentiator needed in the market place. A fleet of 6000 taxis will win work! Having three major circuits, all with the same selling points, actually works against the cab trade; one major force will be able to dominate the market in so many ways - be that financial strength, coverage ability and economies of scale that will add to this new super power. It will also improve coverage of London as a whole, because at the moment the cab trade has only focused its efforts on Central London, which is complete and utter madness. Dial-a-Cab and Radio Taxis becoming one seems to me to be a good call?

2/ Forget being a taxi company and start being a *Ground Transport* supplier. Oh my God! I can hear all the dinosaurs roaring already! Giving the client what they want is not such a bad idea. It works in every other business sector, so why can't the cab trade grasp this fact? Some have played with the idea, but whatever has been done thus far has been done badly - due to trying to play politics instead of being commercial.

3/ On account work and cash work, the biggest issue the private hire industry highlight is the run-in fee charged. Cease charging it and work will return; clients fail to understand that they get into a cab and there can be £7 on the meter and they haven't gone anywhere. Easier option? Charge a simple £2.50 charge at the back end and pick the client up with a clean meter - any waiting time can also be charge separately too! By keeping the average docket price down, it assists the client's budgetary targets.

4/ Gratuity Charge - stop it - it works against the black cab trade and no PH company would dream of charging this.

5/ Smarten Up: It is well known that a cab driver is a far superior driver than a PH one, so why don't they look like they are? I see cab drivers entering international company receptions looking like slobbers and I assure you it gets noticed and works against the trade. Have a sensible dress code and enforce it. I believe it should be part of the PCO remit - we can put a *stop* on a dirty cab, but we can't do anything about a driver that looks like *Worzel Gummidge*!

6/ Flexible Charging: Be prepared to do more for less in a downturned market; to have a sensible pricing structure and giving Sales teams of taxi companies some flexibility to negotiate will win you

contracts back that have been lost.

FACT: Accounts that have been lost in recent years to the PH industry are due to cost; service is secondary when Facility Managers are tasked with saving money! Especially when the service they choose is good; the cab trade can no longer portray PH drivers as the seedy characters they could during the last recession.

7/ Stop running your businesses as political clubs and start facing up to the reality that the PH industry is a real threat; if you ignore it and don't react, the cab trade will lose the corporate sector entirely within 5 years. You have some quality businessmen in place within the industry, but they have their hands tied due to political issues.

Why as a PH proprietor would I advise the cab trade? Because I truly believe in it; I still believe becoming a cab driver is the greatest achievement of my life, but this is mixed with the feelings that running a radio circuit is like jogging through treacle. To win back London will need some drastic action, but I don't feel the will to do this is there. So you will continue to lose work to Addison Lee and other companies and the damage will soon become fatal!

I would love to be proven wrong on this and I hope you don't mind me entering your debate.

Martin Cox

Chauffeur First, London E1

The last time I published a letter from someone in the PH industry, I was inundated with drivers telling me I shouldn't have done it! But I disagree - if I feel the letter is constructive. And in this case, I feel that the view of someone like Martin Cox who besides having great experience of the PH industry, also holds a green badge and was on the BoM of Radio Taxis for several years, is one worth at least listening to ...Ed

Harvey Allen: We haven't retired!

Hi Alan

I would like to thank you and your team for such a good article that was put together about **North Eastern Motors** and our father, **Coleman Allen**. However, at the end of the article it says that we are retiring from the trade. This is not true! We are still working every day and managing our fleet from **L&P Motors** premises (as the article stated) in Dunbridge Street, so if anybody wants to hire a cab from us, they still are able to!

We would appreciate if you could publish these facts in your next issue, so that drivers know that we are still available to give personal service to our existing drivers and any new customers.

Harvey Allen

Dunbridge St, E2

02077299900

Pleased you like the article, Harvey. I've told my reporter that if he doesn't get the facts right in future, he will be retiring early! ...Ed



Keith Reading
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