

July 2010



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



***DaC celebrates
staff with long
service***



Goodbye Lou and thank you...



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

The Editor's column in this issue makes reference to Addison & Lee's PR machine, which usually claims they are 30% cheaper than licensed taxis. The result is that more and more people are believing this propaganda - similar to clipboard Johnny's telling punters that black cabs cost a minimum of £40. So I've set out a few journeys - the charge made by AL for a cash fare, the mileage and what this would cost in a hailed licensed taxi (based on distance only at Tariff 1). All drivers should help in our own propaganda in promoting our own service in that we are not as expensive as we are made out to be...

From	To	Addison & Lee	Miles	Licensed Cab
Paddington	Heathrow T3	£ 54.20	14	£ 42.00
London Wall	Heathrow T3	£ 68.70	18	£ 55.00
London Wall	Stratton Street W1	£ 13.60	3	£ 8.80
London Wall	Upper Bank St	£ 13.60	4.1	£ 11.40
Parliament Square	Streatham Station	£ 16.50	6	£ 15.80
Appold St	London Bridge Station	£ 11.00	1.5	£ 5.40
Appold St	Upper St	£ 11.00	1.7	£ 5.80
Appold St	Finsbury Sq	£ 11.00	0.25	£ 3.20
Appold St	London City Airport	£ 22.30	7	£ 19.00
Euston	Royal free Hosp	£ 11.00	2.5	£ 7.80

Many of you that use the Black Cab Fuel Card have asked the editor if they can have a list of Texaco and Morrisons fuel stations. There aren't as many Morrisons as you would imagine in the London area, but the list is below in post code order.

S/STN	Address	Post Code
Texaco	168 Shoreditch High St	E1 6HU
Texaco	77 The Highway	E1 W 2BN
Texaco	127 Bow Road	E3 2AN
Texaco	51 Grove Road	E3 4PE
Morrisons	6 Salisbury Hall Gardens	E4 8SA
Texaco	40 Cotton Street	E14 0EL
Texaco	219 Caledonian Road	N1 0SL
Texaco	Tottenham Lane	N8 8SE
Texaco	White Hart Lane	N17 7RP
Texaco	575 Lordship Lane	N22 5LE
Morrisons	Chalk Farm Road	NW1 8AA
Texaco	Watford Way	NW4 3AQ
Morrisons	Honeypot Lane	NW9 9RL
Texaco	875 Harrow Road	NW10 5NG

S/STN	Address	Post Code
Texaco	38 Albert Embankment	SE1 7TJ
Texaco	Brownhill Road	SE6 1AA
Texaco	212 Kennington Road	SE11 6PR
Texaco	1 Sidcup Road	SE12 8BL
Morrisons	Rye Lane	SE15 5EW
Texaco	300 Norwood Hill	SE27 9AF
Morrisons	2 Twin Tumps Way	SE28 8RD
Texaco	474 Wandsworth Road	SW8 3LT
Texaco	29 Roehampton Vale	SW15 3DX
Texaco	275 Streatham High Road	SW16 3BS
Texaco	666 Garratt Lane	SW17 0NP
Texaco	383 Edgware Road	W2 1BT
Texaco	235 Scrubs Lane	W10 6AH

If you know any more, email me – alan@nashnumbers.co.uk

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from the editor's desk

Back again!

Well, I seem to be back following my month off! So a big thank you to all those of you who phoned thinking I was leaving rather than waiting to be reappointed. I guess the latter must be the case, as I appear to be writing this!

As **Call Sign** is usually monthly, this first issue for two months could contain some articles you may have already seen in the trade press, but I have tried to keep them to a minimum. So here we go again...

How can we win back our work?

Call Sign may well be an in-house magazine, but I believe that over the years we have gained a respect from others in the trade as a forum that doesn't just promote Dial-a-Cab, even though we always try to, but as a magazine that allows freedom of speech. It was this magazine that began the debate about *Yellow Badge* drivers illegally working in town – one that TfL/PCO now take very seriously with many of their teams out on the road specifically for the purpose of trapping them. And in my view, *Yellow Badge's* working in town are no better than touts.

More recently, we asked the question *how can we win back our work?* This led to an ongoing debate both in the mag and then spread onto the internet! It even involved PH's Martin Cox, with me being criticised for allowing him the space to write, but I am still delighted that I did because you can't say you have freedom of speech but that it doesn't include x, y and z! It's always better to know what you are up against and in all honesty I have nothing against Martin Cox or many on the other side of our industry – provided they work within their rules and just as importantly, within the spirit of those rules. That doesn't mean I have to like them, but I do accept that they are there.

One thing many drivers, either through **Call Sign** articles or via our *Mailshot* pages, regularly brought up in the debate was the question of offering cheaper fares so that we could compete more with private hire. Even the PCO joined in by permitting licensed taxis to charge below the meter fare – although how many realised it was against the rules to do so anyway?

Personally I don't mind doing fixed price trips that work out a little below the meter if they are of a reasonable distance and quite honestly, my experience tells me that fares when passengers come down straightaway are pretty close to the meter anyway. But things are changing – and in my view dangerously – with the advent of not just fixed price trips, but dangerously low-prices.

First came *TaxiLight*, who have come up with a good idea in theory. If a fare is going your way and you are finishing, will you do it cheaper? Well the answer from most of us would be yes, but that would be unofficially on a one-to-one with the passenger. My problem is the scheme isn't just between a passenger asking the driver how much to wherever and the driver cutting the fare drastically because he's going that way anyway. It asks passengers to make an offer and propose a fare for their destination with drivers browsing through a list to see if any suit them. *TaxiLight* also proposes a shared cab scheme mentioning places such as Canary Wharf and Heathrow. These again are good ideas, but only in theory because how long will it be before individual rides become decimated and passengers just look for the cheaper rides. If a passenger goes from Canary Wharf to Fulham – similar



trips that many of us have done – on a regular basis, why should he get a taxi from DaC or off the rank when Bill Smith says he lives in Merton and is happy to take the job each night as a 'going home' trip at a greatly reduced price? Before long the word will get round and a large number of passengers currently using us will start looking for those 'going home' drivers. And who could blame them, just as I don't blame the organisers of *TaxiLight*, because the idea has much logic. But to do it to compete against PH is a non-starter because we just can't compete. Their drivers work far cheaper than we could ever think of doing and even 'going home' trips would soon be seen as a novelty.

And now there's *Radio Taxis* new cut price fares idea. As Editor, I very rarely comment on other licensed taxi companies. We all have our own ways of working and it is far better that we all remain as close as possible rather than compete as enemies. But they have also jumped onto the cut-price bandwagon and plan on offering trips marked as *discounted*. These will be cutting the fare rate once 6 miles has been passed from £3.28 per mile down to £2.50 a mile, with the noble intent of competing with private hire. But again, how can we compete against a group whose drivers work so cheaply?

Take a late-night 45-mile trip from the London Hospital to Reading in Berkshire. On *TaxiLight* it could be as low as £30 if it takes you home, but that passenger would never expect to pay anywhere near the full price again. Then on RTG's new discount scheme – account only – that 45 miles on rate 3, which would normally work out (without traffic) at £151 forgetting any run-in or gratuity, will now pay the RTG driver £125. Out of that he will be using around £30 in diesel and taking up around 2 hours including the return. That £95 clear may be more than he would have got in town in two hours, but will that passenger ever be prepared to pay a normal price again? Incidentally, as a cash ride, Addison Lee advertise that particular trip on their website as £147 (*figures courtesy Nash's Numbers*).

Mike Galvin with AL

My views on Addison Lee are well known.... I don't like them! I remember their comparison chart between them and us, where their fares sounded reasonable while ours looked horrendous and were obviously either a one-off exception with huge amounts of waiting time, or just made up! After all, W1 to EC2 for £50! I don't think so! Even allowing for a gratuity and admin charge, this is nowhere near the norm. Yet they used it for a comparison.

However, they are a reputable company and I should have no problem with them just because

they have the advantage of being able to do exactly whatever they want with drivers. These men (I don't think I've seen any women) pay far more on a weekly basis than DaC charge for a month and then only keep just over half the fare! Drivers can't reject work, they cannot ply for hire (!) and as such their radio work coverage is high and getting higher. In reality, AL probably earns more as a company leasing out their cars and radio equipment than they do from the PH business! I suspect that if DaC charged AL rates, it would be Addison Lee who were moaning about how cheap our prices were – but then again we have this silly thing about not working for now!

But taking all that into account, I don't blame former ComCab MD **Mike Galvin** for accepting a job with AL and I sincerely wish him the best of luck. I don't know his official position, although I did hear that it might be as Chief Operating Officer. I've known Mike for many years, going back to our time in the LTDA north-east branch when we sat alongside drivers such as Cecil Selwyn, Steve Hawes and Richard Massett. However, that doesn't change my personal view of AL, I still don't like them...

The C&G* version of democracy?

At a time when I needed a smile, there turned up the cowardly *Nissen Hut* internet blog to give me one! Pages and pages – not of news, but of just criticising others without giving the option of reply. On their hit list recently was yours truly; inferring that I am a DaC Board member (!) they wrote of **Call Sign's** freedom of expression and criticised it.

More particularly, they wrote of my decision to allow former RMT Chairman and DaC driver **Eddie Lambert (V27)** to give his point of view in answer to criticism in other trade magazines and constantly in the *Nissen Hut*. That is called freedom of the press – something the *Nissen Hut* wouldn't have a clue about because you can't respond to it. They also tell their readers – I can't imagine there are many – that I am a regular on the LTDF internet forum, another group they constantly have a pop at. I've been told that there is someone who uses my name, but that no one seems to use their real names anyway, so why can't someone use mine? In fact I have never visited the site, although I quite like the *Anderson Shelter* blog that seems to be linked to the LTDF and which, unlike the *Nissen Hut*, actually gives taxi news and the opportunity to respond. However, according to the NH, it is filled with BNP and EDL members! Well if there are, I'd bet that it's probably a tiny minority. And quite honestly, I no longer believe the NH.

So the blog asked why I gave Eddie Lambert space? Well I would trust Eddie – one of the trade's nice guys – far more than I would trust the NH authors, said to be two former DaC drivers no longer with the circuit, one of whom who was helped on his way via three of his peers! If correct, then C&G were two of the members that reported DaC to the FSA, instigating an inquiry into it's affairs and costing DaC a substantial amount. Not surprisingly, the FSA could find no evidence to warrant further investigation. But I'd still like to thank C&G for giving me a smile – pity it has to be because they write such garbage and are obviously being used by others...

*No, not the Cheltenham & Gloucester!

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Weekly Payments to Members

I recently received a very nice, polite letter signed by 33 subscribers, requesting that we return to weekly payments for members. As I am not sure who actually composed the letter, I'm taking this opportunity to reply through the magazine rather than contact all 33 members personally.

As you may recall, members used to be paid at different times - ie weekly, fortnightly and monthly. As you can imagine, our IT and Finance departments were processing payments to members on a weekly basis, which was obviously taking up time and there was also an unnecessary cost. When this latest recession began to take effect, it reduced our income from clients; consequently we had two alternatives, which were to increase member's subscriptions or make internal cost savings with staff and other overheads.

We decided to take the latter option, as that was the correct decision and in the member's interests. One of the exercises we undertook was to advise members that we intended to pay fortnightly as from May 2009 as this would make a financial saving for the Society and in turn would be in member's interests once they had adjusted their financial situation. That's why we gave six months notice, as we knew it could be a problem for some members. Consequently, I am a little surprised that a new financial system that was given six months notice and has been in operation for over a year, is still a topic of consternation to some members. For many years now, any new member that joined Dial-a-Cab was automatically put onto either fortnightly or monthly payments because it was easier for us to administer.

As I stated previously, this system has been in operation for over a year and is working extremely well with the vast majority of members. As a result, our Financial Controller informs me that by implementing this method of payment, we have made substantial savings over the past year. Of course we do not want members to suffer any financial hardship with this system, but after eighteen months, perhaps those members concerned should be accustomed to fortnightly payments.

As you would expect, I looked at every member who signed the letter to see if they were in any financial predicament with the Society and none were. In fact, one member had only joined the Society four weeks previously, so he would not have known any different than fortnightly payments.

One of the suggestions in the letter was that we cancel paper statements to members in the future and make e-statements (statement via e-mail) compulsory and then return to weekly payments. We have 700 members who currently receive e-statements, so as a consequence, the overwhelming majority of members obviously require us to continue with paper statements. The point I am endeavouring to make is that it would suit the author of the letter to have an e-statement otherwise he would not have suggested it, which proves that individuals only want what they consider to be best for them. That is perfectly natural and I do understand and agree totally. However, my job and that of the BoM is to do what we consider to be in the interests of the Society, the majority of its members and in



this particular case, it was in the interests of the Society by streamlining and making our payment system more efficient.

I hope the member(s) concerned can appreciate our position, I have discussed the situation with the Board and we have decided that we should not be taking a retrograde step regarding the payment system. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the author of the letter for his courteous approach.

Work Improving?

Just when I thought we were coming out of the woods in March, having turned over more revenue than we did in the corresponding month for the previous year, we hit April with Easter and the ash cloud and unfortunately events took a backward step. However, I am delighted to report that May was just like March and showed an increase on the previous year. Let's hope this trend continues in the future and that work levels continue to improve.

Barking Physical Therapy Centre

I know there are several of our drivers that use the above centre for all types of therapy, so much so that the centre advertises in *Call Sign*. Consequently, the Editor of the magazine, Mr Fisher, asked a young lady that I work with to

visit the centre and write a piece for the magazine about her experiences. Unfortunately, or perhaps that should be fortunately, she is quite young (brownie points for me!) and fit and does not suffer with aches and pains. Consequently, she had to think of someone old and decrepit and generally full of aches and pains to attend the Centre. As Mr Fisher was otherwise engaged, she asked me!

For around nine months, I had been suffering from a pain in my left arm between my elbow and shoulder (yes some would call it my wallet side), so off I went to see Andy at the Centre. He diagnosed my problem immediately and used a combination of massage, electric pads and sonic pads (I'm sure there must be a technical name for the equipment) and after just my second visit, the difference was remarkable. Now after four visits, the pain in my arm has almost disappeared and I can now put on my jacket without groaning through the pain - something I certainly could not do before.

I cannot believe I spent all those months with pain and yet Andy remedied the situation within a month! He is certainly very, very good and I don't know if it's because he is blind that his sense of touch is so acute, but he certainly knows what he is doing. So if any of you are suffering from any aches or pains, give Andy a visit. I would certainly recommend him and he also charges a reduced rate for Dial-a-Cab members.

Lou Gitlin

I, together with the BoM, recently had the sad duty of attending the funeral of former DaC dispatcher, Lou Gitlin. Lou was already working at DaC probably long before many members were even born and was always held in the highest esteem. I believe there is an article on Lou's time at DaC inside this issue.

On behalf of the Board and myself, we would like to convey our deepest sympathies to his family.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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Malcolm's Halda Finds a Home

When Sheila, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Malcolm Levant's (F24)** other half, ran the **Temple Shelter** from 1982 until 1984, she decided to decorate it with taxi memorabilia. One of the items she managed to get hold of was a **Halda taximeter** from the late 1950s / early 1960s. The initial hiring charge "dropped" at the pre-decimal rate of 1/9p – equivalent to around 9p today! Since then, it had been kept in the shed and Malcolm decided to ask **Call Sign** if we could find a good home for it. So we asked **Keith White (A16)**, a former Chairman of the **London Vintage Taxi Association** if he knew anyone that could make good use of it. Keith now gives an update of the meter's final resting place...

"You may recall in the December issue of **Call Sign**, a genuine London Halda taximeter was featured. It had been on display in the Temple Shelter and was given to me - via our Editor - by Malcolm Levant so that I might find it a good home.

I had in mind almost immediately a member of the London Vintage Taxi Association, who over the past few years I know has been restoring my favourite taxicab of all time! **Richard Buckles**, in Headley Down, Hampshire, is a devout Morris enthusiast and has added a **Series 1 Nuffield Oxford** cab to his stable.

This 1947 cab was the first post-war cab and had an ash frame with pressed steel panelling. The petrol engine is an 1800cc dry-sump unit



Keith (left) with Richard Buckles and his new meter
Inset: Malcolm says goodbye to Sheila's Halda

and they were not the most powerful cabs in the capital, being beaten by pre-war **Austins** when it came to the cavalry charge for the gap in Admiralty Arch. But what a beautiful cab! Although a fixed head, there were no rear

quarter lights, no glass to the left of the driver and artillery wheels were fitted.

Richard Buckles bought the cab about three years ago and hopes to have it on the road by the end of this year. There has been substantial reframing and panel work to do but the mechanics seem in pretty good order. This is the only cab of its type in the UK and I never thought I would see one again.

Richard was delighted to be given the Halda meter, which will be mounted on the cab as soon as a suitable meter table has been engineered. He asked me to thank both **Malcolm Levant** and **Call Sign...**

Keith White (A16)

LibDem in charge of Taxis!

With a coalition government now well and truly bedded in, the licensed taxi trade (and the private hire side) are suddenly dwelling within the realms of a LibDem Minister with the MP for Lewes in Sussex, **Norman Baker**, being recently appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport. Mr Baker will be answering to Secretary of State, **Phillip Hammond**, as well as the new Minister of State for Transport, **Theresa Villiers**.

Among Mr Baker's responsibilities are buses, taxis and bikes. He is also a sort of Minister for Walking (not silly ones) and he will be pushing for alternative ways of travel.





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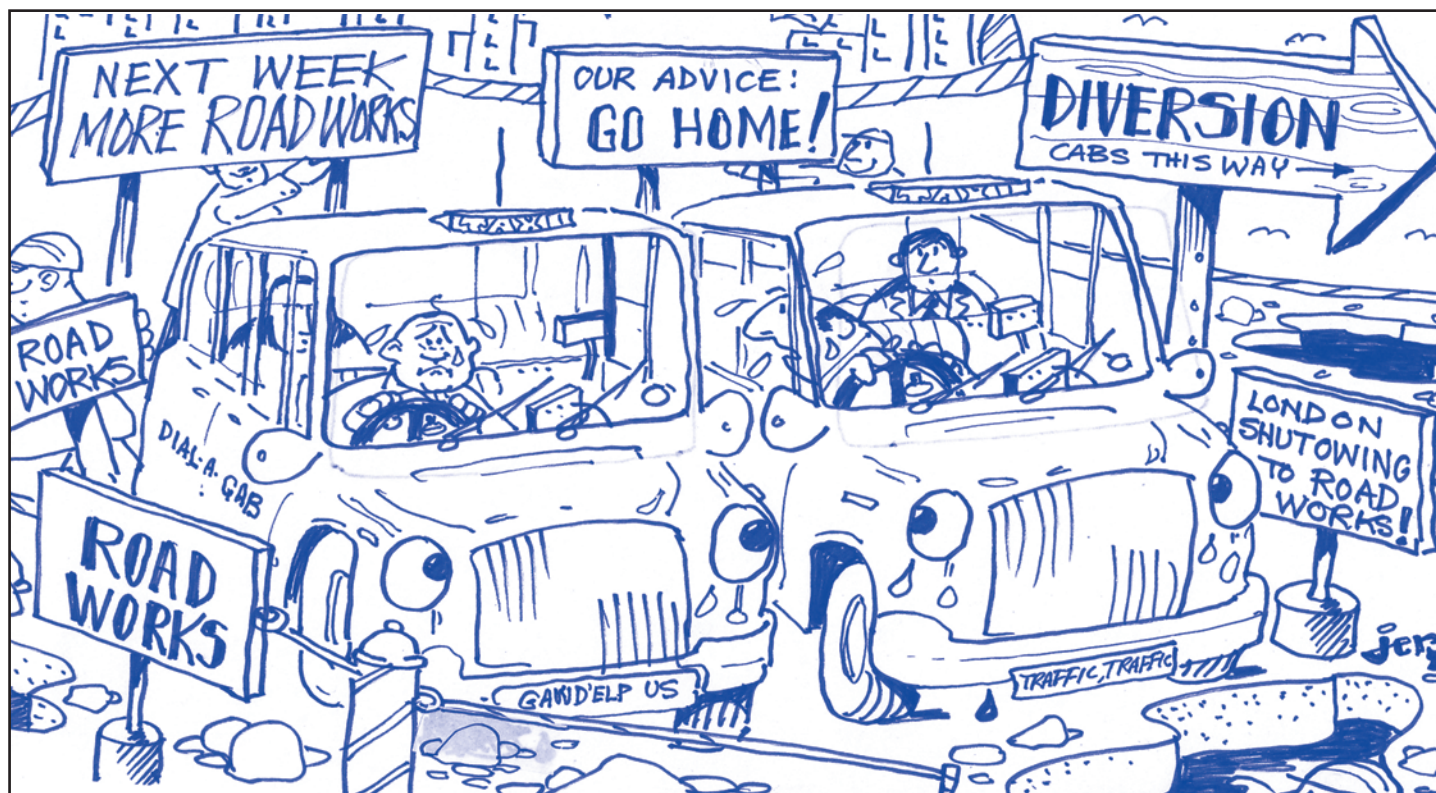
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Jerys World



"I don't fink we needed to go to the Aldwych to demonstrate, we could 'ave just gone to the nearest set of roadworks. You can't move anyway..."

Anthony Asks: Are 'Taxi Bikes' Legal?

telephonist at that end announce herself as "Taxi bike with a y?" We don't think so and in our view this is just another addition by TFL to equalise the taxi and private hire sides of the business. And of course, it's Mr Griffin so they won't want to upset him...

Alan Fisher

"Of course," say TfL, "why should they cause confusion???"

Anthony Mitchell (T88) decided to dwell on the St Martins Hotel rank in St Martins Lane for a while. After all, miracles sometimes happen!

Anthony takes up the story:

"I suppose I was on the rank for some 15 minutes when a motor bike pulled up and parked outside the hotel. This was no ordinary motorbike, it had the full logo of **Addison Lee**, together with the words **Taxi bike** also displayed.

"I always thought that the use of the word 'TAXI' or any corruption of it was illegal for display by any other vehicle other than a vehicle licensed to carry the name - namely us! As I always carry a digital camera with me, I took a few pictures. With that, the driver of the motorbike came up to my cab and asked if I had just taken photos of his bike? My answer was yes and he then went on to "inform" me that the wording was correct and that "it was a done deal" – whatever that means!

Call Sign can find out the PCO view of the wording?"

Of course, in reality the PCO no longer exists and it's Transport for London who have virtually taken over. So we asked TfL for their view and support against the illegal use of any word that infers something is related to the Licensed Taxi



industry – and that certainly should not involve Taxy bikes.

A Transport for London spokesperson told **Call Sign:**

"Whilst the word *Taxy* closely resembles the word *Taxi*, it is clear that this prohibition was included in the regulations to ensure that passengers would not be confused between private hire vehicles and London taxis. As such, TfL will not be taking formal action as the use of the word *Taxy* is not going to confuse the travelling public."

Call Sign disagrees with TfL's argument. If we wanted to phone for a Taxy bike, would the

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It was a chance sighting of **Peter Turnham's (O83)** vito on the back of an AA recovery truck that led **Call Sign's** reporter to discover a story about this 40-year old driver who has been on Dial-a-Cab four years. But firstly, why was the cab not moving under its own steam? Peter shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly.

"As I pulled into the kerbside in West Harding Street behind Fetter Lane with my Vito, a piece of broken glass penetrated the sidewall of the tyre, splitting it wide open and rendering the taxi immobile. Vitos don't come with a spare wheel! An AA motorcyclist arrived after a substantial wait and agreed that the cab needed to be recovered by a *Relay* truck, a fact I had mentioned to the telephonist when I originally called the breakdown service! I waited 3 hours for the recovery vehicle to arrive, only to be told by the driver that we could not move from the spot because his **tachograph** dictated he had exceeded his time on the road in getting to me. So we had to sit at the kerbside for another 40 minutes until his rest time had expired and we could get underway again to sort out my tyre problem!" Meanwhile Peter contemplated the cost of a replacement tyre while becoming resigned to the fact that his day was ruined.

"It was a shame really, because I was on a high after an exciting, if exhausting, weekend having run in the Virgin London Marathon for the first time, raising around £1200 for the Albany

KEEP ON RUNNING

Peter runs the Virgin London Marathon in aid of the Albany Taxi Charity!



Peter proudly displaying his Marathon medal

Taxi Charity Fund for children with special needs."

Continuing with his story, Peter added: "I do quite a bit of running to keep myself fit and a friend asked if I would like to join him on a marathon because the charity he was with had a spare place. I readily agreed, thinking it was a half-marathon. So imagine my shock when I discovered it was the Virgin London Marathon," he said smiling broadly.

"The idea felt a bit daunting at first, but I knew I had to do it. Suddenly my jaunts around local streets and the Heathrow cab park took on a whole new meaning and it was obvious I had much more training to do if I was to complete the course - all 26 miles and 385 yards of it! But I was determined not to let the kids down and with the support of my family, friends and generous contributions from numerous cab drivers through sponsorship, I was spurred on to succeed."












Peter began his training regime by running 60 - 70 miles a week and also on occasion, together with his friend, running from Heathrow to Windsor and back to get fit.

"I completed the course in 4 hours 14 minutes, a time I'm happy with for a first Marathon. And yes, I would definitely do it again if given the chance!"

The Albany Taxi Charity Fund was formed in 1972 with the aim of bringing a little fun and joy into the lives of youngsters with learning difficulties. For further info visit their website at www.albany-charity.org.uk.

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It has stopped now, but over the past months, Call Sign has received a number of stories from DaC drivers whose holidays were spoiled by the Eyjafjallajökull glacier volcano spewing out its huge molten ash cloud and causing so many flights to be cancelled. This is the story from David Lessman – DaC driver and Hon Chairman of the LTFUC...

"On Tuesday 13th April, my wife Sandra and I along with another couple, left Luton Airport for the Tuscan countryside. The route from **Pisa Airport** to our hotel base in Radda-in-Chianti was a mixture of motorway and B-roads and as we looked forward to a relaxing week, little did we know what was to be in store for us.

When I'm on holiday, I try to avoid newspapers and television, so the text I received from our son wishing us good luck in getting home, was initially regarded as a joke. But I soon realised there would be a problem and so began a series of telephone calls and internet surfing that would lead to quite an adventure.

If our return flight was cancelled, the travel agent would only be able to put the four of us onto a waiting list and as they were not registered as train travel operators, suggested I investigate alternative ways of getting home. Fortunately, a contact in Air Cargo was able to arrange road transport from Pisa to the Channel coast via Nice and all we had to do was cross the Channel to get back to London. We kept hoping that air travel would resume in time and to an extent, we did not relax as much as we would have liked. By Sunday 18th, it was fairly obvious that the problem still existed, so we trawled the internet for a ferry crossing. Absolutely nothing available for a week! We then tried Eurostar from Paris, which would have reduced our driving time, but that too was fully booked. Panic was beginning to set in until we found out that the Eurostar service from Lille was still OK and we booked tickets on line for the 9119 train leaving Lille at 10.05 on Saturday 24th April. The car rental booking was changed from dropping off the car in Calais to Lille and we all breathed a sigh of relief.

Our return flight for Monday 19th was duly confirmed as being cancelled, so the next day we drove back to Pisa and returned our hire car as planned at about noon. The first stage of our homeward journey was in two small Fiats, but as rented Italian cars could not be driven across the border, we had to book a shuttle service - the last one leaving San Remo on the Italian / French border at 6pm. At speeds reaching 130kph, we raced to San Remo, arriving at 5.30pm. The Mercedes minibus then took us to the car rental office at Nice Airport and we were prepared for the long 1150 km haul to Lille over the next three days. Then disaster struck...

Although we had a confirmed reservation with National for a Citroen C5 from Nice to

The Italian Job

...beaten by the volcanic ash cloud!



David Lessman

Lille, the extremely stropic French receptionist (my polite version) refused to release the car, stating that all rentals had to be returned to the point of origin! After trying another five rental companies, we were left with a choice between a Fiesta for 750 euros and a Mercedes 'S' class

for nearly 2500 euros. As the four of us neither wanted to be cramped, nor buy the Merc, we opted to stay the night in Nice and try to book a train to Lille. Of course, we weren't to know that the French train drivers were on strike! However, six o'clock the next morning saw us in the booking office queue at Nice railway station and an hour later, hugging each other having successfully purchased tickets on the TGV service from Nice to Lille via Marseilles for later that day. After an uneventful journey of almost nine hours, we booked into a Best Western in Lille and enjoyed a good night's sleep.

Now that we knew we could get home without further problems, we were able to unwind and spent two very pleasant days in Lille before arriving back at St. Pancras on Saturday at 10.26am.

For the accountants amongst **Call Sign** readers, our costs for that return journey - some of which we hope to recover from airline/travel agent/insurer - totalled about £3000 for the four of us. So I think you can safely say that we have no desire to holiday anywhere close to Iceland in the immediate future...!"

David Lessman (D19)

In memory of Anita Flavin, Howard and his three children are setting up...

THE BLACK & GREEN GALA BALL

In October 2009, Dial-a-Cab driver **Howard Flavin (A18)** wrote to **Call Sign** about his battle against Hackney Council regarding an appeal against a PCN. This was sent to him for stopping briefly in what transpired to be an incorrectly marked out yellow box junction outside the new Olympic site where temporary traffic signals had been set up. It was inevitable that some motorists would get stuck. The article appeared in the November issue...

What we didn't know at the time was that Howard's wife, Anita, was battling against kidney cancer. Her aim had been to come through it and raise awareness of the disease by organising and hosting a gala ball.

Sadly Anita never made it and she died in October 2009 at the young age of just 50. While she never got to host her gala ball, Howard and his three children have made sure that Anita Flavin's desire for awareness of the disease to continue is indeed going to go ahead - via a gala ball with funds going to the UK's leading specialist kidney cancer charity, **The James Whale Fund for Kidney Cancer**. This charity seeks to help reduce the harm caused by kidney cancer through increased knowledge and awareness, providing patient information and by supporting research into the causes, prevention and treatment of the disease.

Those who regularly listen to James Whale's phone-in programmes - he is currently on LBC - will know that he lost a kidney to cancer in 2000, but now - 9 years on - James leads a full life, as do the majority of people whose kidney cancer is diagnosed and treated early.

Sadly Anita didn't make it, but you can help bring some awareness just by buying tickets to the Black & Green Ball, coming along and enjoying yourself.

The ball takes place at the Marriot Hotel, Waltham Abbey on Saturday 11 September 2010. Tickets are £45 each and include a 3-course dinner, dancing and entertainment. The event is black tie, but you are asked to wear something green.

For tickets call Leanne on 07743 641 931, Rachel on 07980 765 623 or see ad on p17.



The ball is in aid of the James Whale Fund for Kidney Cancer

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The April issue of **Call Sign** ran an article by **Robert Dunabie**, Secretary of **Glasgow Taxis** – an organisation run similarly to **Dial-a-Cab** and one where all members drive purpose built taxis. He had what sounded to us like a very legitimate complaint against the Glasgow National Health Service when a tender for its £2million account was given to a minicab company – **Network Private Hire** – after having been successfully run for the past 15 years with the Glasgow taxi company. More astonishingly were the attributes needed to tender for the account. These involved vehicles carrying 5/6 passengers, the need to have a partition between driver and passengers and also the need for a wheelchair facility. Every one of the Glasgow Taxis had these, yet only a few cars from Network could claim all of them.

How did it happen? Glasgow Taxis had originally won the contract, but Network's legal team appealed that the licensed taxi company had "not followed the correct tendering process." Network were then awarded the contract – even though Strathclyde Police advised the NHS not to deal with the car firm as they were alleged to have connections to organised crime following a raid on their premises 6 years ago, when police seized £5million of their assets.

Strathclyde **Chief Constable Steve House**, said in the *May Call Sign*:

"We endeavour to ensure that inappropriate individuals or groups are not allowed to operate where we have reliable information to show they are not fit to hold a licence."

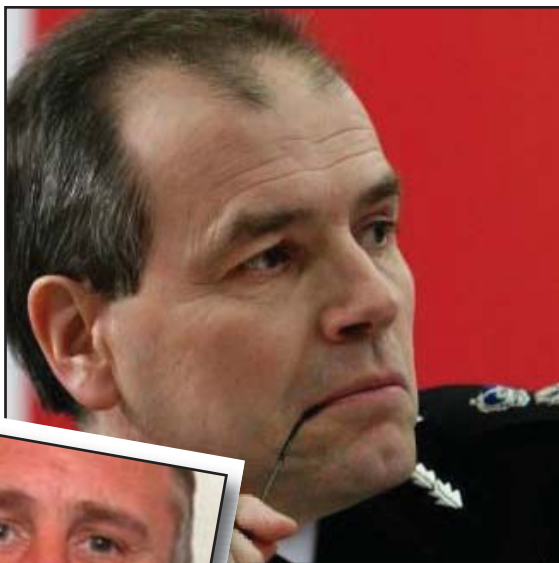
It made no difference. The contract was awarded to Network, who then changed their name to Xpress Cars. The car firm's boss since 2005, **John Cassidy**, claims he runs a family firm and that the police are "torturing him" over the affair.

Now Scottish police have blocked another car firm from being taken over in what they describe as a money laundering plot. According to **Chris Musson** of the **Scottish Daily Record**, Scottish police have blocked a bid for an associate of a money-laundering gang to take over private hire firm, **United Cars**. The person blocked was said to be 30stone *Man-mountain* **Greg Campbell**, who was set to take over the running of United, which in turn had been linked to a money-laundering gang led by jailed underworld boss **Jamie "the iceman" Stevenson**. However, Campbell's application was blocked due to a booking office licence offence under new Scottish anti-gangster laws designed to weed out criminal elements from the trade by allowing police to object if they have evidence that a firm is a front for other parties. Until last year, Campbell had manned the phones for the firm, said to be run by **George Mullen**, a friend of Jamie Stevenson.

When Mullen realised he wouldn't be allowed to run the car company under the tough new laws, he allegedly sold the firm to Campbell, who had no previous convictions.

George Mullen appeared in the dock alongside Stevenson after the operation, which led to *the Iceman* being jailed for 12 years for money laundering. Charges against George Mullen were

GLASGOW MINICAB GANGSTERS!



Chief Constable Steve House battles to avoid licensing for dubious Scottish PH companies. Inset: Jamie 'the iceman' Stevenson



dropped as part of a "secret plea deal" even though he was also the passenger in a car in which police found £400,000 of drugs money. Although Mullen escaped prosecution, his business partner, **Peter Smith** – said

to be another Stevenson ally – was jailed for three years.

The cab company are said to take up to £30,000 a week from its 286 drivers, who pay £105 a week each. Strathclyde Police head of licensing, **Chief Inspector Stuart Neill**, said:

"Mr Campbell stated he purchased the company from Mr Mullen on November 2009 – a week before the deadline for booking office applications. A £5000 down-payment was paid to Mr Mullen with an agreement made to pay him a total of £500,000 over 54 months. Since then, Mr Campbell has been the sole owner of the company."

But police said the business was being carried out "for the benefit" of Mullen. At a recent licensing meeting, Greg Campbell's lawyer claimed the deal was legitimate and Mullen no longer had anything to do with the firm. He added that they were reviewing Glasgow City Council's decision.

Chief Inspector Neill said: "We know criminals have been benefiting from their involvement in the booking offices for taxi and private hire companies. The new legislation has given us the opportunity to do something about it."

In the meantime, another Scottish car firm – **Castle Cabs** – was also closed by Strathclyde police and said to have been run for the financial benefit of a convicted criminal who once threatened to have police officers shot and had boasted of being the *heavy from Dumbarton!* The licence was refused under the same changes to the law. Strathclyde Police said owner **James King** was running the Dumbarton firm for his son, Stephen, 36, who had spent convictions for housebreaking, possession of drugs and carrying a knife – crimes that would have prevented him from applying for a licence under his own name.

Perhaps the concerns itemised by Glasgow Taxis Robert Dunabie in our April issue can now be understood more clearly. It does, perhaps, make London taxis problems with London private hire firms look to be rather simplistic...

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Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

DaC 'Rear Window' decals are now available at Roman way...

Whilst on the subject, there have been a lot of words in *Call Sign* of late about *winning back the work* - most of it centred on the abolition or reduction of various charges. Yet nobody, not even **Paul Dacosta (L68)** who wrote saying the charges should not be touched and with which I totally agree, has mentioned a word about what our members should be doing to win back that work. For example, in 2008 we took delivery of 1000 sets of cash telephone number door ads for the purpose of generating more business, yet to date just 31 drivers out of our entire fleet have bothered to have them fitted.

Millions of pounds are spent each year on advertising everything from cars to toilet paper, be it on TV, the press, billboards or through your door. WHY? Because experts say advertising sells products. But not, it seems, our members including **Stephen Field (F68)** who feels that what sells products is a Board of Management with more passion. Personally, I find that comment to be not only offensive, but also showing total ignorance of how this Society is run. I'm pleased to see that he has now apologised.

During my time on the Board, I've willingly worked hundreds of hours for this Society without pay, including standing in the freezing rain marshalling - before it became a paid job - until midnight having started at 7am that morning. I would give out envelopes containing lucrative trips to 60+ drivers, only to be verbally abused by those who had been given lesser valued trips than others. Over the years I alone, or with the aid of marketing companies, have devised numerous methods of generating new business involving DaC members with prizes for the most industrious, only for the projects to fail dismally because of apathy and a total lack of interest. I'm often asked why do I do it? I do it, as does our Chairman and my colleagues on the Board, because we have an impelling desire to make this Society a success.

Imagine how successful we could be if all our members had a similar attitude? GTI research claims that advertising on just one London taxi for a year is seen by over 40 million people. It's called transit advertising; multiply that number by 2000+ carrying the Dial-a-Cab telephone number on both sides of their cab and that's an awful lot of exposure - and it wouldn't cost the Society a penny.

Cutting charges doesn't work and I speak from experience. During the infamous 'Black Monday' recession of the late 80s, we were forced into a price war with our two main competitors. Charges and costs were cut to the bone and the only winners were the major clients. A typical example is our gratuity, which was 12½%. It was cut to 10% and has been that figure ever since.

What we need is to attract smaller clients but in greater numbers. They are more lucrative and if you lose one, it has no adverse effect. And to win that work - and not just in the city but all over London - it needs maximum exposure. And to make that happen, it needs ALL of you to play your part.



The Joy of Reading

During the course of Chairing complaints meetings, there have been instances where a complainant has violated a procedure rule that our Compliance officer, Allan Evans, has repeatedly explained in *Call Sign*. To which the complainants in their defence foolishly claim they do not read. I say foolish because such an admittance, rather than being accepted as an excuse, is regarded as being totally irresponsible and has made complainant's misdemeanours even worse.

The reason being that *Call Sign* is more than just a magazine to give you pleasurable moments in its' reading matter, it is the Board's primary means of communication with members. Thereby making it your responsibility to read the articles - especially by the Chairman, Keith Cain and Allan Evans - because in addition to important issues concerning the members and the Society, there could be a change of procedures that, if not followed, could well result in a member being put on complaint. What surprises me when I hear complainants say that they don't read *Call Sign*, is when they add that they don't read anything - newspapers, magazines or books etc. Which makes one wonder how anybody can get through life not knowing what's going on, not just around the world, but more importantly in London! When asked this question, the usual response is they have no time. Which again is a rather weak excuse when one considers the amount of downtime involved sitting on slow moving ranks or waiting for clients, when having something to read would help to break the boredom.

With this in mind I decided to undertake a little survey. I asked the first twenty-five DaC drivers I came in contact with what their interest was in reading matter.

Fifteen said they regularly bought a daily newspaper. Eighteen made a concerted effort to pick up a free *Evening Standard*. All twenty-five regularly bought a Sunday paper. Ten did not always buy a daily paper but read the freebie *Metro* or a trade paper. Every driver said they leave a copy of *Call Sign* in their cab to browse when the opportunity arose. And finally, just three had any interest in reading books, which was a surprise as it's generally accepted that it's only amongst the young where there is little interest in reading.

It is said that happy is the person who has acquired the habit of reading. With a book at hand they need never feel lonely or bored.

As a lad I cannot remember ever being

bored. When I wasn't enjoying myself with my mates or busy drawing, I was reading. I remember having a fascination for Western novels by *Zane Grey*, a writer who died in 1939 but during whose life wrote over a 100 novels about the Wild West. We had no TV in our house and very little money, so I would read the same books over and over again.

The school I went to, like many particularly in London, was bombed during the war. We had a shortage of teachers, the facilities were very poor yet records show the vast majority of pupils who left school during that period aged 15 to start work, were more proficient in the three Rs than those leaving school today. In fact, considering the facilities in modern day schools, it's hard to believe that nearly 50% of teenagers left school last year unable to read, write and add up to a standard expected by employers. Many had the educational skills of a 10 year old. Which is worrying, because if children can't read they will have no chance of real employment and no chance of bettering themselves. It's no coincidence that our prisons are full of people who cannot read. How many could have avoided that fate had their parents taught them at a young age the joys and benefits in reading books?

I remember during the early 60s listening to the wireless and hearing David Kossoff, a Jewish actor and clever story teller as many Jewish people are, narrating wonderful stories, many of which he had written himself and that were so enjoyable, it encouraged you to read.

Mentioning David Kossoff reminds me of when I was in the fashion trade, which at the time was predominantly Jewish. I had for several years a partner who was a Frummer (Orthodox Jew) which included the ringlets, wide rimmed hat and the prayer vest with the tzitzys (tassels) hanging outside his trousers and like David Kossoff, he was a great story teller and used to keep me enthralled with stories that were fascinating and at times absolutely hilarious! It was his stories that prompted me to read Philip Roth's **Portnoy's Complaint** and Gail Parent's **Sheila Levine is Dead living in New York**, the first of many books I've read by Jewish writers over the past 40 years.

As an aside, every American and English novelist I've read who've had their characters using taxis whilst in London, have all portrayed them in a positive way. One American author was so complimentary about London's cabs, I sent him an email saying how much I enjoyed his books and as a London cab driver how I appreciated his portrayal of London's taxis. He replied saying that when he is in London, his only means of transport is using London's Black cabs because his tight schedules meant getting to places on time and only London's taxi drivers renowned knowledge could guarantee that. He said no way would he use gypsy cabs (minicabs) and have the trouble he has in the USA where they don't have a clue where they are going and you can't direct them because they "don't speak a dam word of English!" Which is encouraging to hear because lest we forget, no matter how big a minicab company might be, they are still minicabs, gypsies, pirates or whatever title they are given and will always be tarred with the same brush, no matter where they operate. And we should always capitalise on that fact...

**Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing**

At the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* recent election court, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Jim Rainbird (T25)** was elected to take over from Michael Davis in September as the new **Master of the Company**.

The Company first saw the light of day as *The Fellowship of Master Hackney Coachmen* in the mid-17th century, but lasted just a few years following allegations of bribery etc. But then again, in the 1650s that was pretty much how things were for Coachmen!

Although similar brief resurrections were attempted over the years, it wasn't until 1990 that a permanent return took place and it appeared again as *The Fellowship of Hackney Carriage Drivers*. Just four years later, they organised the first *Magical Taxi Tour* to Disney in Paris. In 1997, the Fellowship became the Company and in 2004, gained its current status as *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers*.

Prior to becoming the new Master in September, Jim is currently the Upper Warden and is also heavily involved in the *Magical Taxi Tour* trips and raising funds to pay for them. Jim joined **Dial-a-Cab** in January 1994. He told **Call Sign**:

"I feel honoured to accept the position of Master and look forward to representing the WCHCD for the year."

Another appointment at the same meeting involved *DaC Chairman* **Brian Rice**. He will become the Lower Warden and have to take orders from Jim Rainbird! Other appointments were **Eddie Crossley**, who

IT'S SOON TO BE MASTER JIM!



Master-to-be Jim Rainbird with current Master Michael Davis (right).

Inset pic: Brian Rice becomes Lower Warden

moves to Upper Warden and former DaC driver **Brenda Bartlett** who becomes Renter Warden.

As the days of the Coachmen's scandals are long gone, WCHCD elections tend to follow a pattern, which would suggest that from

September 2011 Eddie Crossley will become Master, followed in 2012 by Brenda Bartlett and then, in September 2013 it will be Master Brian Rice! Now that will be interesting!

For more information on the WCHCD, contact Mary Whitworth on 01494 765 922...

WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN ...and that includes volcanic ash!

According to car care experts, *Turtle Wax*, an after-effect of the volcanic eruption in Iceland is set to cause even more turmoil for Brits, when the highly corrosive ash starts to fall through the earth's atmosphere and on to our cars and taxis!

The ash, which has to come down eventually, will engrain itself within rain droplets falling directly onto paintwork. This could cause major damage to vehicles when washed off, as volcanic ash is primarily small jagged pieces of rocks, minerals and glass (silica) the size of sand. Khalid Boston of Turtle Wax explains how this ash will affect cars / taxis and advises owners on what to do to make sure they don't seriously damage paintwork after a downpour.

"Once the ash/rain mixture has fallen and settled on the vehicles' paint surface, a fine film of hard, abrasive and mildly corrosive dust will be left over. It is important NOT to simply wipe off the ash, as this may cause micro scratching, resulting in dulled paintwork and scratched windows. Even using just water or household detergents may cause problems as the particles are not soluble in water. The physical action of the water displacing the ash particles may also cause scratching – an effect similar to sand blasting on a micro scale."

Khalid continued: "Using a Turtle Wax shampoo, such as ICE shampoo, will negate the effects of the ash's properties as the detergents in the car wash are designed to lift dirt away from the vehicle surface as well as lubricate it, assisting in removal of the ash particles. The pH-balanced formulation will also help neutralise the corrosive nature of the ash, unlike household detergents, which will not have a neutralising effect."

Turtle Wax products are stocked in Halfords; to check availability, call 01695 716610...



Call Sign July 2010

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By the time you read this, our relaunched website will be live at www.dialacab.co.uk. If you have not visited it recently, why not have a look now and feel free to e-mail your comments and suggestions to me at web-master@dialacab.co.uk.

During the first quarter of this year, we in IT have been working on several projects. The main project I have been working on is the complete redesign of the Dial-a-Cab website.

This project has comprised of a multi-faceted approach:

- * Redesign the website using the very latest technologies: ASP.NET 3.5, Ajax and jQuery. These coding languages provide the customer with a richer and more pleasant experience.

- * A complete overhaul of the credit card booking system. We have retired the old system and replaced it with a modern, user-friendly wizard-like interface making it easier for credit card customers to book a taxi quickly.

- * Target credit card customers who prefer to use their smart phone (ie iPhone, BlackBerry, Nokia or Android) by adding a clean, lightweight, web-based credit card booking. This system is optimised for **ALL** major (and several minor) smart phone devices and is accessible by clicking the link on the front page or directly at www.dialacab.co.uk/mobile. The application will detect the customer's device and resize the screen according to their specific model's resolution.

- * Implement sophisticated SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) strategies to promote Dial-a-Cab on the major search engines (Google, Bing and Yahoo) and provide us with powerful analytics data so that we can continue to improve the online experience for our users.

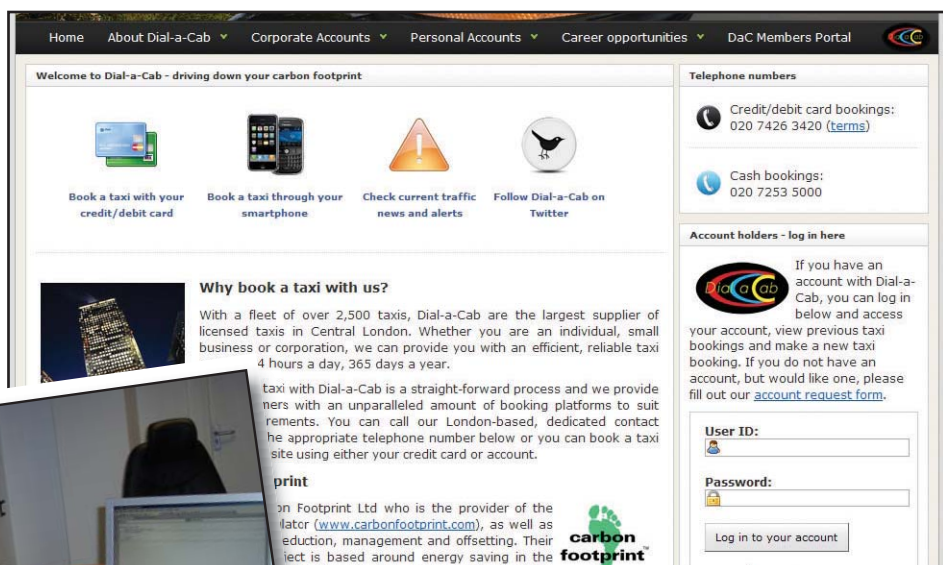
- * Utilise the social phenomenon that is **Twitter**. We can reach our followers and potentially hundreds of thousands of other Twitter users and provide news updates to our customers and members alike. You can follow us at www.twitter.com/dialacab.

So what's coming next?

As no doubt most of you are aware, the Apple iPhone has taken the world by storm. With over 150,000 apps currently available on the app store, Apple's current 55% market share of UK mobile

Over the past year, many DaC drivers have written to Call Sign asking why we had no apps on the iPhone. Well now the secret is out – DaC has gone far beyond that and it's all been designed in-house by DaC's Jon Winterburn. Jon explains to Call Sign readers...

Apps, Twitter and Co...The new DaC Website



The front page of DaC's new website. Inset: Jonathan Winterburn who designed the new site

phone users is going to continue to grow rapidly over the coming months.

We are currently in the process of developing an iPhone app for credit card customers, which will be available on our website and the Apple app store in the next few months. You can follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/dialacab for updates.

You may wonder why we hadn't developed our iPhone app sooner like a competitor did recently. There's a valid reason for this: Dial-a-Cab cares about our customers and I'm sure you'd agree that we would not want to target just 55% of the mobile user market and alienate the remaining 45%! Instead we decided that the best approach would be not to rush an iPhone app out to the public just yet, but instead provide **ALL** mobile users with a web-based mobile booking application *first* and then work on delivering the iPhone app.

And finally, are you aware that there is a member's portal for DaC drivers on the DaC website? This provides you with access to your e-billing and other useful information. This part of the website is specifically for **you**, the drivers, so please feel free to email me with your sugges-

tions for other content and services you'd like us to make available to you.

Thanks for reading!

Jonathan Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator



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

John Edwardes: *My Life as a Taxi Driver*

Continued from May

Well, the past ten issues of my story in **Call Sign** have looked at the more serious side of the game; how about the bits that I can laugh about now but where, looking back, I could have cheerfully killed someone at the time!

For example; at the northern stations in the early mornings there was usually work with servicemen arriving and looking for transport – these were simply known as the *earlies*. One morning I picked up a drunken sailor who wanted to go to Leyton, but before getting in he made very sure I knew his address and even gave me a piece of paper with it written on! Arriving in E10 at about 2am, unsurprisingly he was out cold in the back of the cab. Shaking and shouting made no difference, so I went and knocked hell out of the door. Eventually a big burly bloke wearing just shorts and lots of muscles wanted to know who I was and “*what the **** did I want at this ****ing time of the morning!*” I explained that his son was in the back of my taxi and that I couldn’t wake him. He shouted at me: “*I ain’t got a ****ing son, just **** off!*” So I went back to the cab – which was empty! My drunken sailor had disappeared and I was left

with no money and a burly gentleman who seemed a little upset that a moron of a cab driver had got him out of bed!

Then there was the morning when, also around 2am, I was driving down Piccadilly and stopped at the traffic lights. A bald, fat gentleman in evening dress fell into the luggage compartment and drunkenly waved two pound notes at me saying Twickenham. I happily agreed. For £2 in those days you could go a lot further than Twickenham! But I tell him he can’t travel in the luggage compartment. He says he can because it’s too hot in the cab, but I managed to get him inside. Arriving at Twickenham, he tells me there is a big jewellers shop on the left with an alleyway alongside and to stop there. He gets out of the cab, leans into the luggage area and drunkenly asks if I was a fit man. I tell him no. He says thank God for that because he has no money and staggers off bouncing from side to side! But I had my £2, which he had obviously forgotten about and I continued on my way with yet another funny cab story stuck inside my head for posterity!

Traffic in the 1950s

Another thing – people think there was no traffic in those days. By today’s standard, perhaps, but the traffic still moved no faster than today, it’s just that the hold-ups were different. The baker, big stores, council

dustcarts, coal carts, brewery carts – all had their horse and carts still! Then there were the trams, with me in my *low loader* stuck behind one of them waiting for the last person to cross in front of me. The conductor hits his bell, the ruddy thing takes off like a rocket and by the time I’ve caught up with it, people are getting on and off again and I’m stuck behind it yet again. We’re not talking hundreds of years ago – just the 1950s when petrol, food, clothes, sweets and so on were still rationed following WW2.

As my **Call Sign** story reaches its end, perhaps you, the reader, would like to know if getting my licence was worth the effort and did it pay? The answer is yes to both. In those days, if you did six jobs in a shift you were doing very well, even though most of your time was spent on ranks chatting to other drivers. But we reckoned we were earning about double the wages of a skilled man, so it was worth all the hassle of the Knowledge *et al*.

Well, if you have waded through to here since last July, then I hope I haven’t bored you, but if I have then it’s your own fault – you’re obviously just a devil for punishment!

Yours, a hairy old ex-Dial-a-Cab driver...

**John Edwardes
(H05 wot woz)**

LONDON ACCORDING TO DAVE

Roadworks: a brief biblical history...



In the beginning there was God; and the roadworks were with God and the roadworks were a God.

And God ordered that the roadworks should go forth and multiply and cultivate the capital.

And God decreed there should be councils set up to administer the roadworks; of these councils, Islington was the chosen council. And t’was they that were blessed and told that their council would prosper and grow.

But Islington did forfeit the right to be the chosen council, because through greed, selfishness, and corruption, they failed to maintain the roadworks in a proper and orderly manner. And their uncaringness did result in myriads of potholes and humps.

So God set up a new order in his time. He did override these councils to bring harmony and the maintaining of the roadworks to a high standard, and He will bring to ruin to those that have ruined the roads...

Amen...

David Heath (ex-W27)

Calling all taxi drivers
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Park for free



If we're honest, there has probably been at least once in our lifetime when we have mistakenly put the wrong fuel into the car/cab fuel tank. In the case of your cab - which is probably topped up daily - the risk of filling with petrol rather than diesel is always there.

Diesel engines run to much higher (closer) tolerances than their petrol counterparts, while diesel oil also lubricates internal moving parts - especially the injectors and pump. So adding the wrong fuel can be very expensive in terms of component damage, as well as a major inconvenience! But alas, mistakes can and do so easily happen...

Call Sign has now met someone who can help! Recognising that there is a growing demand for incorrect fuel retrieval due to occasional mishaps of the motor-ing public, the AA have launched their 'Fuel Assist' service.

So what is **Fuel Assist**? If you have just accidentally put petrol into your taxi, the service will attend your vehicle, drain the fuel tank of its errant contents and supply £10 of the correct fuel to get you safely on your way to the nearest fuel stop to refill - this time correctly!

Call Sign recently met **Warren Kerley**, an **AA Fuel Assist** technician, together with his Area Manager, **Joe Roots MBE** at **Dial-a-Cab House**, where they explained the procedure of fuel retrieval. Everything is, as you would expect when dealing with highly flammable liquids, about safety first. Technicians undergo a 6-week training course in their field of expertise, covering ADR and SPA Forecourt accreditation, their clothing and all equipment is treated for anti-static / flame retardant properties - including the battery powered torch for seeing into dark, under-bonnet corners! Even the van itself is heavily strengthened and has isolating compartments at the rear, housing the fuel-retrieval equipment and contaminated-fuel holding tank.

"Everything is designed to be mega-safe, no messing and no short cuts," Joe Roots told us,

Ever Put Petrol into your Diesel Tank?

Make a note now because help is at hand...



The AA 'Fuel Assist' service can save you a lot of money...

stressing the safety aspects of the retrieval of what is undoubtedly a highly flammable liquid. "The van and all its contents are just about bomb-proof - short of a nuclear attack," Joe told us with a broad grin, "and we dispose of the contaminated fuel ecologically, as you would expect of the responsible company that the AA is. Every technician undergoes a great deal of training and we carry equipment that will deal pretty much with every scenario, allowing the safe retrieval of soiled fuel in a wide variety of situations," Warren Kerley added.

"We work from 06.00 to 22.00 hours every day, covering the UK and we aim to be with you on site within 90 minutes, or the next

morning if you are stuck out of hours. If necessary, our Control Room will send a patrol to assess the situation, either way we will make every effort to resolve the problem speedily," he told **Call Sign's** reporter.

There is a one-off fee for the service, with a 27% discount for AA members. The procedure takes around one hour.

Information leaflets and Warren's business cards are available in Driver's Reception or the AA Fuel Assist service can be accessed via *TheAA.com* website where the Fuel Assist link can be found. Alternatively you can call Central Assistance on 0800 0727 337.

© Call Sign Magazine MMX

Jimi Hendrix's London home to open as new exhibition marking 40th anniversary of his death...

JIMI HENDRIX AT THE HANDEL HOUSE MUSEUM



A new exhibition exploring the London life, music, performances and enduring legacy of Jimi Hendrix soon to open at the Handel House Museum, 25 Brook Street W1...

Hendrix in Britain commemorates the 40th anniversary of his death on 18 September 1970 and runs from 25 August until 7 November 2010. Handel House is the Mayfair townhouse in which composer George Frideric Handel lived and worked for 36 years and where he wrote his most popular and enduring music, including *Messiah*.

Handel died there in 1759 whereas Jimi Hendrix moved into the top floor flat at number 23 - now used as an admin department for the Museum - with his girlfriend Kathy Etchingham in 1968 and it became his home during long periods of playing venues across town. It's now used as the admin offices of Handel House, but to mark the anniversary, the 23 Brook Street flat will be open to the public for a 12-day stretch during the run of the exhibition - including the 18 September anniversary. It has previously only been open for guided tours on one-off dates.

Tickets for visits to Hendrix's flat (including admission to the exhibition) can be booked at www.seetickets.com/events.

Hendrix in Britain will explore several aspects of Jimi Hendrix's life and career and feature exhibits rarely seen or never previously displayed in the UK, as well as a host of images, film clips and music. The exhibition will trace his rise to fame, his songwriting, his extraordinary guitar playing and his lasting impact on music and popular culture.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Hendrix in Britain exhibition from 25 August to 7 November 2010.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday: 10am-6pm; Thursday: 10am-8pm; Sunday: 12-6pm.

23 Brook Street flat opening dates: 15 to 26 September 2010.

Admission charges: Handel House Museum & Hendrix in Britain exhibition: £5 adults; £4.50 concessions; £2 children. 23 Brook Street flat visit (15-26 Sept only): £8 adults; no concessions (includes admission to *Hendrix in Britain* exhibition and Handel House Museum).

Free admission to *Hendrix in Britain* exhibition and 23 Brook Street flat on Sat / Sun 18 - 19 September for *Open House* weekend. Advance booking essential. Tickets available from 16 August 10am by telephone only on 020 7495 1685. Strictly limited availability...

Call Sign recently attended a meeting with **LTI** at which we were told that there was no hidden agenda regarding the sudden appearance of a TX5 taxi. Confirming that the TX4 was staying, **CEO John Russell** said that the only major alteration in the pipeline was to be in 2012 when the *Euro 5* standard would be needed for new TX4 models. Euro 5 would be reached by adding a *Diesel Particulate Filter* to the existing VM engine, adding that they were happy with the VM engine and that there would be no move to a different one – even though Geely now owned Volvo as well!

Mr Russell said that incorrect rumours concerning both the taxi and the Coventry facility needed to be cleared up and although it was true that 60 staff would be lost from the Midlands firm and that the bodywork section was indeed moving to China, Coventry would continue to manufacture the TX4 for UK sales and that **Call Sign** was still welcome to take parties to watch the process and ask questions.

Together with **LTI MD Peter Shillcock** and **International Marketing Development Director, Matthew Cheyne**, John Russell took questions from a large group that had been invited to M&O for a lunchtime Q/A session. Part of the meeting was to give an update on their Chinese partnership with Geely – who according to Executive Director of the their Board, **Hong Shaolun**, are soon to take a 51% share – and answer questions on various rumours. This follows the *May Call Sign* when we wrote of the TXN, a saloon car that was designed to look like the TX4. Was it

LTI” “No TX5 on the way!”

And the VM engine is here to stay!



John Russell: “No TX5 and no new engine on the way!”

going to become available as a cheaper version of the TX4? The answer was no – so far as London was concerned anyway. The TXN concept will become a real vehicle in 2012 and be sold to international markets where it will compete with local saloon cars and taxis.

In response to another question, John Russell admitted that there would be some savings on using Chinese parts and that once they had built up their profit margins again – they were losing money on sales with the special offers currently being promoted – savings

would be passed onto customers via further Aftersales improvements in customer service.

LTI were currently reviewing their entire *Service Dealer* network to make sure they come up to the company's standards and he then introduced M&O's new *General Manager, Mark Brown*. Mr Russell also spoke of a new *Aftersales Division* to improve the way they deal with drivers. Speaking to Mark Brown after the event and telling him of previous complaints DaC drivers had, he admitted that his knowledge of the cab trade might currently be small but that it would be compensated by his automotive experience from his previously held position as GM of Fiat Direct. “I obviously can't comment on problems before my time, but one of my first priorities at M&O is to ensure that our *Service Network* is constantly being improved. I may not have been here long, but that's long enough to see that we have some very good people working here.”

Having a final word with Peter Shillcock, he emphasised that there was no new TX5 coming and with VAT rising to 20% in the recent budget and some special offers still available, this was probably as good a time to purchase a new cab as we are likely to see.

Alan Fisher

02 Marshalled on Event Nights

One of the biggest complaints taxi drivers have about the O2 is in regard to picking up passengers from the North Greenwich station taxi rank following events at the arena. That problem has now been solved following discussions between Transport for London and AEG Europe, the owners and operators of The O2. TfL has agreed to provide marshals for the taxi rank between 9.30pm and 12.30am on Thursday to Sunday nights when there is an event at the arena.

Taxi marshals have been used at North Greenwich taxi rank in the past and proven successful and popular with drivers and passengers alike. The marshals will manage passenger queues and will ensure people get a taxi quickly and safely.

Full details of when events are being held at The O2 can be found at www.theo2.co.uk and also on **Call Sign's Nash's Numbers** website. For Alan Nash's free UID (useful information document) go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click on 'free 70+page info'. Then click 'What's On'.

TfL's Helen Chapman said: “We hope this scheme will make journeys home from The O2 easier. The marshals are experienced cab drivers and their purpose is to ensure people get home safely at the end of the night and also to make it easier for the cab drivers using the rank.”

Geoff Symonds, AEG Europe's Head of Transport Strategy, added: “At The O2 we take the customer experience and safety extremely seriously. We very much welcome the new scheme which we hope will increase the taxi supply and deliver a service to complement our world class venue.”

*The Anita Flavin Kidney Cancer Appeal
Presents...*

The Black & Green Ball

Saturday 11th September 2010
@ The Marriot Hotel, Waltham Abbey

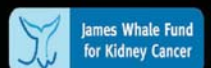
A night of dinner, dancing and entertainment to raise money and awareness for the **James Whale Fund for Kidney Cancer** - the UK's leading specialist kidney cancer charity

Tickets in advance only: £45 incl. 3 course dinner

Dress Code: Black Tie, wear something Green

For tickets contact: **Leanne** - 07743641931
Rachel - 07980765623

Facebook Page: Anita Flavin Kidney Cancer Appeal



Charity Number: 1120146. Fundraiser ID: JW1009

Dial-a-Cab driver **Scott Ross (C15)** was very close to his grandfather **Frank**, who died of prostate cancer three years ago. Frank passed away peacefully at home at the age of 84 with his wife Ivy and the family around him.

Scott told **Call Sign** that his grandfather's peaceful end, considering the seriousness of his illness, would not have been achievable without the support and care received from the nurses of *Marie Curie Cancer Care*.

"They were just so wonderful at a time when we needed help," Scott told us, **"and I really wanted to do something to raise funds for an organisation that has helped many families like ours at a time when they are so needed. Unfortunately I was on the Knowledge at the time and just couldn't spare the time. But now I can..."**

So on September 24, in memory of his grandfather Frank and on behalf of *Marie Curie Cancer Care*, Scott will be attempting to trek up **Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania** (East Africa).

Scott now needs to raise a minimum of £3750 sponsorship for Marie Curie, with 75% of that amount due in by the end of July.

"I know taxi drivers are famous for giving and I appreciate that they can't give to everyone, but I hope that **Call Sign** readers and their families will consider that Marie Curie is a cause well worth sponsoring. There can't be many of us who haven't lost someone to cancer, but Marie Curie helped our family so much and made my grandfather's end as comfortable and dignified as possible. If you feel you would like to help, I have set up a *Justgiving* website for online sponsorship. The address is: **origi-**

DaC's Scott to climb kilimanjaro...!

In aid of Marie Curie and in memory of his Lighterman grandfather Frank



Scott and his late grandfather Frank

nal.justgiving.com/scottross. Alternatively cash/cheques can be sent to me or I can collect. Just give me a call on **07801 215 825** or **01279 874 865** and I can meet you or give you my address for posting."

Frank had been a *Lighterman* on the Thames. These were the people that followed on from the *Watermen* – the predecessors of London's licensed taxi service. These stalwarts of the river

carried passengers and goods up and down and across the Thames from 1193 when the Corporation of London began licensing boats on the river. Then in 1514 Parliament introduced an act to regulate the fares charged by London Watermen. Just over 100 years later, taxis on land were first licensed and the Watermen began decreasing in numbers, with people preferring to use dry land. However, the Lightermen continued, mainly working on cargo boats and unlike the Watermen, demand for their services increased.

Good luck to Scott on seeking further sponsorship and hopefully, his trek. A report will appear in *Call Sign*...

WCHCD AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

NEW GALLERIES REVEAL THE STORY OF MODERN LONDON



The Victorian Walk
© Museum of London

Earlier this year, the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers Cab Guide Course* students visited the Museum of London and whilst there learned that the Galleries of Modern London were almost ready for the public to view. Some students and course tutor Graham Woodhouse were amongst those invited to the opening of the new galleries. This spectacular £20 million redevelopment of the Museum's galleries tell the story of London and its inhabitants from the Great Fire of London in 1666 to the present day. Supported by an £11.5 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the new galleries provide an inspiring vision of the world's greatest city. Over 7,000 fascinating objects are on display, telling the story of Londoners over the past 350 years. Inside the new galleries is also a reconstructed Georgian pleasure garden, a Victorian Walk and the magnificent Lord Mayor's State Coach, which is now housed in its own gallery with street level windows for passers-by to see in for the first time. The Museum of London offers a unique experience for all - exploring London's history from 450,000BC to the present day. There are five new galleries, changing exhibitions, fascinating tours and talks, plus a new restaurant and café to make the Museum of London a must-see destination for tourists and Londoners alike. The Museum is open daily 10am – 6pm and is free to all.

The next Cab Guide course will commence in September 2010. Anyone looking for more details can contact The Clerk, Mary Whitworth on 01494 765922 or email her at wchcd@tiscali.co.uk.

THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

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And as a thank-you for helping our clients come and go over the years, we are happy to be able to offer you a genuine 25% discount on your bill

We are certain that you will be delighted



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376 Strand, WC2

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When Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice made the short statement on driver's terminals to the effect that former dispatcher Lou Gitlin had died, many would have asked just who he was, whereas those drivers that were around when Lou's famous voice came over the ODRTS / DaC airways would have felt a huge sadness. Lou wasn't just a name from DaC's past, he had been a big part of its history from that first day he walked into our office in Pentonville Road in late 1957.

His death also puts a definitive end to the trade's longest running radio taxi partnership – that of Lou and Ivor Belkin (C97) – which ran from September 1961 up until 2006, when Lou had to undergo a double cataract operation and on his return to the dispatcher's box at Brunswick House, found the VDU glare to be too much to take. He had told *Call Sign* at the time that he hoped he could return when his eyes improved, but sadly his general health also began to deteriorate and that opportunity never came about.

Ivor – who still dispatches on Saturdays – told *Call Sign*: "I was so sad to hear of Lou's passing. I'd known him for almost 45 years and worked with him for most of that time. He had been very ill for some time, but it is still so very sad to have lost a long-standing partner. I remember how sad I felt when he told me he was retiring from his dispatching job at DaC because it was getting too much for him following his operation. He used to talk of his passions in life – besides wife Ruth and sons Adam and Simon – the main one of being a Mason, followed closely by collecting toy soldiers and cooking! He also loved reading and would often be seen with an historical tome. The sense of humour that kept Saturday evening drivers amused during the DaC voice years may have covered up a very intelligent man. He was one of the last of the old school of dispatchers and I will miss him..."

Fellow dispatcher, **Curls Villiers**, also wanted to pay tribute to Lou. She told us: "It was very sad to hear of the passing of Uncle Lou Gitlin. He was not just a knowledgeable taxi driver, he was the fountain of knowledge for anything you cared to ask him. Any question – whether it be difficult or even insane – he would have the answer for you! I remember in the early days looking up to him for advice, as he was always good giving it but would never look down on you for asking. It has been an honour to have met a wonderful person like Lou and he will be sadly missed. God bless..."

One thing Lou never liked was football and during those voice years he would often wind up drivers by refusing to give out the Saturday footie scores until drivers virtually begged him for them! That was, of course, before many had FM radios in their taxis. He also loved telling jokes, with his wife Ruth being the butt

A Dispatching legend ends as Lou Gitlin dies



Lou Gitlin, former Chairman Aubrey Siteman and Ivor Belkin

of so many of them. Yet there was a deep love between the two that would have amazed drivers brought up on those joke sessions!

But it wasn't all jokes because anyone that regularly worked on a Saturday knew that when it got busy, both Lou and Ivor had just one priority – to cover the work first. Joking came a long way down in second place!

April 29th 1989 was a Saturday. It was also the day that Dial-a-Cab became the first radio taxi organisation in Europe to go live using just data dispatch and no voice. So naturally, being a Saturday, who would be the two dispatchers to see the process through – bearing in mind that this was our second attempt at going live, with the first one failing the previous November on a busy weekday? The Board

of the time decided that a Saturday might be easier with the flow of work being a bit lighter, giving us a chance to "bed" in the new system.

Call Sign has a video of the day and when you look at both Lou and Ivor at work with a system that took us years into the future literally overnight, you would have thought they had been using it forever. There was no joking, just their sheer professionalism shining through.

Lou Gitlin will forever be a legend in Dial-a-Cab's history and such was his association to DaC that the whole Board attended the funeral.

Wherever you are now, Lou, rest in peace because you deserve it...

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I would like to respond to **Ian Connelly (T49)** who commented on my article in the April issue of *Call Sign*. Mr Connelly, in my view it is testament to who you are if you cannot at least appreciate there is something inherently wrong with the negative terminology I wrote of. And no, I certainly do not expect you, or anyone else for that matter, to choose their words carefully in my presence. We are who we are irrespective!

It is somewhat nonsensical to delve into whether a person is actually black or white. It goes without saying that you are not pure white; neither am I pure black - dark as I am. Like it or not, these are the terms that have become acceptable in the UK and almost every society. Time does not stand still, thus whereas the term 'coloured' was once acceptable, it no longer is! As a corollary, there are many British citizens who no longer wish to be called British, but English. Would it not be foolish to refer to individuals as brown, pink, almost white, darker brown etc? I am sure you get the point...

The President of the USA is not the voice of all Americans - or black Americans for that matter. Moreover, the newly elected David Cameron is not the voice of all Englishman. How then can I, an ordinary Blackman be the voice of all blacks? Despite this, I am better placed to comment upon and know the feelings and sentiments of blacks than you are! There is an old cliché: *"Who feels it knows it."*

I do agree with you on the point of nursery rhymes ie baa baa black sheep. However, if you cannot see the difference between this interference by the politically correct brigade and the negatives I highlighted, then you are not as colour blind as you assert and you really have no insight or understanding of how a black person would feel by the use of these comments. That said, you are aware that there are black sheep. Have you ever seen black ice or a black day? In the English language, black sheep is an idiom used to describe an odd or disreputable member of a group, especially within one's family. The term has typically been given negative implications, implying waywardness. It is derived from the atypical and unwanted presence of black individuals in herds of white sheep.

The example of black cab drivers is somewhat simplistic and lacking merit. There are black cabs and there are black cabdrivers. The term has been used for years, because minicabs took a foot hole in the cab trade. After 25 years of driving a taxi, I have never met anyone puzzled by the term.

There is no need for a White Police Federation because 96-98% of the police force is white. Thus, by implication it could be termed the White Police Federation. In case you didn't know, white officers are allowed to join the Black Police Association; whether any have joined I cannot say but discriminatory laws do not allow the Black Police Association to exclude white officers. Have you stopped to ask or consider why there was a need for a Black Police Association in the first instance? It came about because black police officers thought they were not given opportunities white officers were, especially in relation to promotion.

The *Macpherson Report* recommended police forces should have ethnic minority officers in proportion to the community being served - something that is yet to be achieved. Between 1999 and 2008, 2 - 4% (approx) of officers were black. This is considerably below the national target (7%) set for the police service overall. At the end of 2009, almost half of the 43 forces in England and Wales had not reached their

In the April issue, Louie Christian (A48) wrote of the black community and the use of the word black. In the following issue, Ian Connelly (T49) responded. Now Louie comes back...

BLACK POWER OR BLACK EMPOWERMENT?

The debate continues...



employment target for black and minority ethnic officers set by home secretary Jack Straw almost 10 years earlier (*The Guardian*).

Ian conveniently ignored the sentence where it was made clear that we did not live in an ideal world. If we did, there would be no need for black lists or Black Police Associations. Like it or not, we do not live in such a world and probably never will. When you walk down the street, people see a white man. When I walk down the street, people see a Blackman first - then they see a man. Is that my making, I don't think so! People will always see colour and ethnicity. Like you, I wish it were not so, but there you have it.

Two 18-year-old youths, one black and one white, neither with any previous convictions both charged with almost identical crimes. They appear before a white middle class bench of magistrates and both plead guilty. One is sentenced to 3 months in a young offender prison, the other is given a community order; which one do you think got the 3 months in custody?

The Black Power list may well have been called the Afro Caribbean list. Did you take the time to contact the organisers to ascertain why it was given the title of the Black List? It is reasonable to assume it was given the title as it was considered to be more effective and appropriate. Of course there are white people from Africa and the Caribbean, but this is only after brain washing brutality and colonisation against the indigenous peoples of those shores.

Mr Connelly, my grandfather and many West Indian grandfathers fought in WW2 and to a lesser extent the First World War so that the people of this country and the wider world in general, could be liberated and free. Yet my grandfather's great grandchildren cannot settle in this country and need a visa to visit. But the Germans, who my fore parents fought against, are able to freely come, settle, work and remain without any questions asked. Why do you think this is? I suppose you think this is also fair!

Of course black kids are more likely to look up to sports personalities and pop stars. **But that is the point Mr Connelly and you really have missed it!** They have to move away from these perceptions. Black kids need to see successful business people, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals so that it is clear they could make it other than in these two genres. You really have missed the point of what I wrote, or are you so blinded by your own limitations to see matters

objectively? Are you aware of the high percentage of failures amongst pop stars and sporting professions? It is for this reason that many football clubs who take on young players ensure they continue their education whilst at their academies. From the tone of your letter, it would no doubt please you if our young blacks continue to aspire to be sporting personalities and pop stars, which in my view would continue their cycle of failures.

Boxer Maurice Hope was WBC Light Middleweight World Champion. Whilst he was successfully winning most of his fights, he was British Champion Maurice Hope from Hackney. When he began losing towards the end of his career, he was Maurice Hope from Antigua - no longer 'British Champion'. Why do you think that was Mr Connelly?

I have read and re-read your article to ascertain what it was in the contents of my article that rattled your cage and I'm still not clear what it was. I truly believe you have misinterpreted my article. I sought to respond to a question raised by the Editor. There is one thing you do say in which we are agreed, I wish this world were a better place where we saw people, as opposed to colour, and we all got on with each other. However, I make no apology for repeating that we do not live in an ideal world and I cannot see us doing so in my lifetime. There is absolutely nothing wrong with constructive criticism, however your reply to my article was totally without merit or foundation.

Not only do I see things holistically, as well as objectively, I have the blessing of being black thus suffer the experiences of being such and able to comment on the same. You are not in a position to say what may or may not be offensive to black people; you have not gone through the experiences of black people. Thus, your assertions that my comments are likely to be "offensive to blacks" are in themselves insulting to many blacks. I make no excuses for absent black fathers and of course kids need fathers, but look around you Mr Connelly, the problem is not exclusive to absent black fathers. Dundee has topped the list for teenage pregnancies in Scotland. In 2009 - the most recent figures available - they suggest 435 girls aged 15 to 19 in the city became pregnant - an apparent rate of 83.9 per 1000 girls of that age. Tayside had the highest figures in the under 20 age group, with a rate of 68 per 1000. In Ayrshire in the 13 to 15 age group, the rate was 11.9 per 1000. The Scottish average was 8.1. In Scotland as a whole, 9252 girls under 20 became pregnant (*BBC News*). So yes, there is a problem Mr Connelly, but it is not exclusive to absent black fathers.

You also assert that my comments "are frankly just plain stupid." The Oxford Current English Dictionary defines stupid as 'lacking intelligence'. With an Honours degree to my name, I would have to be awfully stupid to have achieved this distinctive honour.

Louie Christian (A48)

In January 1998, **Stanley Roth (Ex-Y53)** arrived at Dial-a-Cab and immediately informed **Call Sign** of the advantages in taxis using *Liquefied petroleum gas* – better known as LPG. And up until the day in August 2009 when he left to publicise the **Gastech LPG 2.7 TX1's** Nissan engine conversion, he never stopped telling anyone prepared to listen about the advantages of this type of fuel, especially as regards to cleanliness of it compared to diesel.

Stanley's **Gastech TX1** runs on LPG only, although it does have a 14litre back-up petrol tank in case of a very long journey with no LPG pumps along the way.

Stanley told **Call Sign**: "Over the years I've had various gas cabs, but I must say this is the best one yet. My TX1 is quieter and smoother than my LPG Metro. The current cost of conversion is £5170 including VAT and will go up with the next batch of engines to £6110 (incl VAT). The increase is due to the exchange rate on the AUS\$ against the Pound."

Stanley's TX1 has twin aircon, which he uses all the time, does between 11-18 MPG, with a litre of LPG costing 64.9 pence. Which means compared to diesel you would get between 22 and 36mpg. More importantly so far as the future of London taxis is concerned, according to the Mayor's draft air quality strategy for public consultation *Clearing the Air*, taxis cause 20% of the two worst pollutants. Firstly there is NOx and Stanley's TX1 is 90% cleaner than Euro 5! Then there's the miniscule particulate matter PM10. PM10 has the greatest chance of ending up in the lungs if breathed in. Diesels pump it out but Stanley's cab has none at all.

Mayor Boris Johnson, in response to a question from Darren Johnson – who chaired the GLA's investigation into air quality in the capital with *Every breath you take* – stated that there could be exemptions from future regulations limiting the life of a taxi, if those cabs could better Euro 4. Stanley's taxi betters Euro 5.

In 2001, Camden Council in conjunction

WAS STANLEY RIGHT ALL ALONG???



Stanley with his
LPG TX1

with **Call Sign**, offered Dial-a-Cab drivers the opportunity of having their taxis converted to LPG thanks to their offer of paying the cost, with drivers just paying the VAT. Around 15 drivers actually had the conversion. Of course back then, Euro5 was a pipe dream and no one really took much notice. Now things are different and Stanley – who was using gas taxis long before 2001 – looks as though he may have been right all along. Had we all been converted, would we even be mentioned in any clean air report?

Now Stanley is promoting the system and his TX1 is the first London Taxi to be approved to carry a full rear window advert. The contra-view Ad was produced and fitted by In-Cab Promotions.

Stanley ended by saying: "Since 1961 when I nearly died in one of London's last smog's, I have thought about a cleaner London. I was the second owner-driver to change over to

LPG in 1970 and 15 years ago had a Natural Gas taxi. At last I have found an engine that is far better than anything the Mayor wants for 2012. This engine has passed Millbrook testing as a Euro5 and in fact is well clear of the minimum set for that rating. My aim is simply to make London a greener place to live."

*If you think that LPG is a possibility for you, then you can go to **www.gastechengine.com.au** (click on London Taxi) to see what the engine is all about, or alternatively you can email Stanley at **gastaxi@gmail.com**.*

Cycling the World - Stationary

On 4 June, **Call Sign** visited the Hilton Hotel at Euston and the venue for the annual 'Cycle the World' fund-raising activity staged in the hotel foyer by the **London Taxidrivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children**. Two Committee members and various members of hotel staff were eagerly pedalling away on stationary gymnasium bikes to raise money for the Fund.

"Our aim," said Fund Hon Chairman and long-time Dial-a-Cab subscriber **David Lessman (D19)** "is to beat last year's total of £300 and 111.47 miles within the allotted eight hour time slot. Each cyclist does a twenty minute stint before handing over to the next cyclist. A bit like a relay race, except that the bikes don't move," he said with a grin as the duos sweaty polo shirts told the story!

The Fund's Hon Secretary, **Malcolm Shaffron**, added that they were already closing in on last year's figure.

"Hotel guests have contributed generously," he said with a sly smile before adding the telling remark, "although that apparently was an easier option than to take up our offer of building up a sweat by having a 20-minute bash on a bike!"

With the famous Lessman twinkle in his eye, David concluded by telling **Call Sign**: "We made hotel guests an offer they found difficult to refuse!"

For more info visit www.ltfuc.org.uk



David Malcolm - worn
out but still smiling!

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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!

To George Osborne:

How to save money...

It was a sunny afternoon and I was relaxing at home. The date was Tuesday 16 March 2010 and this was to be important as you see events unfold. This may seem personal to me as you read on, but it concerns you, your safety and of course your hard-earned money being wasted.

I had the balcony door open, which allows me a great view of Dalston Lane and Queensbridge Road; this is the balcony of the house with all the flower boxes and hanging baskets on the corner of Parkholme Road. There seemed to be a lot of hooting and shouting coming from motorists, which at first did not surprise me as they have just changed the layout of the junction. But I went out and looked at the traffic, which was rapidly building up in all directions. It was at this point that a neighbour called to say that four cars had piled into each other in Dalston Lane just before Ridley Road. After some minutes, an ambulance appeared coming down Dalston Lane from Kingsland Road and it made progress until within some 50 foot of the junction to turn towards Ridley Road. And that's where he sat with warning sirens blasting - his progress hampered by the line of traffic up to the accident - and a traffic island.

It was then the farce began like a scene out of the film *Police Academy* with the young female recruit with the high pitched voice. But instead it was a female PCSO (*Police Community Support Officer*) - coming down Dalston Lane from the accident, stopping to inform all drivers about the accident and completely ignoring the ambulance that was needed at the accident. She then tried to get some drivers to do 3-point turns but as they only had half the road, this was impossible. So the congestion turned into gridlock and in the mean time the PCSO was now doing a great impression of a windmill in a hurricane!

A bus inspector now appeared in his red van, assessed the situation and proceeded to take control of directing the traffic by diverting most of it down Graham Road and away from the accident. He controlled the traffic with clear, precise hand gestures and the occasional bit of fruity language towards rather angry drivers who were shouting abuse at him and the PCSO.

Within minutes he had the traffic moving and the ambulance up at the accident. But the traffic was still very heavy and it was then that *Wyatt Earp* appeared, swaggering down the

middle of the road - alias a second PCSO - with his hands tucked into the armholes of his stab vest. He walked down the road, not attempting to assist the bus inspector, but continued past for another 50 to 60 feet and stood in the middle of the road like he was the sheriff.

By now I had steam coming out of my ears, as it was just over two years earlier that I had written to the local Police Commander complaining about the same sort of actions of other PCSOs who appeared to be completely untrained. The letter I received in return admitted these and some other faults that they knew about, but that they would be addressing them.

Now some two years on and this incident proved to me that the letter I received was a total brush off by a senior officer. Your hard earned cash pays these PCSOs starting rate of £20K a year plus many other reward packages. According to the internet, there are in the region of 16,000 PCSOs, which cost us around £315million. This money could be much better spent on employing a further 16,000 real police officers whose pay also starts at £20K a year. Who would you rather see on the streets - a fully trained police officer that could help and arrest a thug if you were in trouble or a PCSO who would stand there and try calling in to get a police officer? Meanwhile, you are still being assaulted and robbed!

Anyway, I digress; on 26 March 2010 I wrote to *Chief Superintendent Bending* at Shoreditch Police Station, as the Met Police call centre instructed me to. On 15 April - some 20 days later - I phoned again to say that I had received no reply only to be told the officer was actually at Stoke Newington police station and his PA would phone me. On 16 April, a Karen Miguel called to inform me the letter had probably got lost, but if I emailed her a copy she would get the appropriate office to contact me. I complied with her request and emailed the letter. After a further 19 days had passed, there was still no activity so I emailed her again to say that I had not received a response. I still await an answer to that email. I did inform the young lady that if I did not get one then I would take the matter further.

So on 10 May I wrote to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police *Sir Paul Stephenson*, putting the word *Personal* in large letters on the envelope. I included a copy of my letter to *CS Bending* for him to peruse and try to make a decision as to why I had not received a reply. Then I sat back and waited... and waited!

Contact – at last!

By 27 May I was getting frustrated with a police service that I have watched deteriorate over the past decade and it made me wonder whether they just ignored letters unless they were complimentary. So on that date I again wrote to the Police Commissioner, including all relevant documents and I'm still awaiting a reply to any of this correspondence. Could you imagine this type of service from a private company? Anybody treating their clients or customers in this manner would soon be out of business. But it seems that any government department since the election of the previous government, treat all taxpayers with contempt.

It was the morning of Monday 7 June when the phone rang. I answered and was surprised to hear a voice say that it was *Sergeant Gordon* from *Hackney PCSO Transport Division*. To say I was taken aback after all the time I had waited would be an understatement, this applied to any type of reply to my one-sided correspondence with the Metropolitan Police.

The Sergeant apologised by saying he had only received my letters two hours earlier and he was surprised it had taken so long for them to reach him. He requested that we met and that he was happy to come to my home at 2pm. I agreed. Dead on time the door bell rang. The Sergeant was an officer with 20 years service, a hell of a lot of experience and a very nice person. He was the type of officer that you could talk to without getting a complete PR job. Ok, you know he has to support the line set by the higher ranks, but he was honest with his answers and if he knew there were failings within the training, he admitted it. But he did admit you can only work with what you are given.

Some of the PCSOs were afraid of confrontation, so how could they ever think they can do a job that the Commissioner hopes is a back-up for the overworked Bobby on the street? We both agreed that there were also some PCs who could put a lot more effort into their job, this is the same as any company and you always get a small amount of rotten apples in any barrel.

You also have Sergeants and PCs in charge of the PCSOs and if they do not keep on top of them and get the work out of them, you will never see any value in the money that has been spent. If a PCSO does not come up to standard then they should be dismissed, but as in any civilian public service job, we know this is like coming across a unicorn in Dalston Lane!

So as a lone voice I did not expect any change, but if more people thought the way I

continued on p23

LTI ELECTRIC TAXI MYSTERY SOLVED!

In the February 2009 *Call Sign*, we published an exclusive story based on the words of Bas Vos, then-director of Dutch organisation *Taxi Centrale Amsterdam* (1200 cabs / 2000 drivers) in which he claimed he was purchasing 50 electric TX4s. Mr Vos told us that he had "visited the LTI factory in Coventry where he claimed he had been told of plans for the TX4E."

Mr Vos wouldn't go any further and the project was shrouded in secrecy, but we found out enough to know that the plan for the driving mechanism of the rear wheels of the proposed Dutch left-handed electric TX4s, could be carried out by two battery-operated electric motors that were being developed in Germany and which were expected to give around 150 kilometres before needing to be recharged. In addition, a one-cylinder diesel engine could be added as a generator and that would recharge the batteries while driving along. This would increase mileage to around 200Km (125 miles) before an overnight recharge was needed. The only question was whether the mechanics would be fitted by LTI or would they just provide the body? We asked LTI at the time but they denied all knowledge of Mr Vos.

Now, little over 12 months on, we have been told by *Remi Kemperman*, who is based in the Netherlands city of Almere and who drives his own TX1, that Bas Vos – no longer with TCA – was recently interviewed on Dutch radio station *BNR Newsradio*, where still sounding secretive he claimed he was buying the first 5 taxis "...built by the biggest cab builder in England who also have a factory in China." In the view of *Call Sign*, that represents a fairly large-sized clue!

Mr Vos now claims that he may take out the LTI engines and replace them with the ones described above but that the process would mean the cabs costing around 100,000 euros (£87,000) each – although half would come in a Dutch government subsidy. He also now claims that the electric TX4 will go for 300 km (185 miles) without a recharge. LTI denied knowledge of Mr Vos when we asked them last year, but according to him they have said they can deliver the cabs without the



Bas Vos at TCA with a diesel taxi

engine or they can build an electric engine in China with the delivery date of July 2010.

In the radio interview – with thanks to Remi Kemperman's translation – Bas Vos spoke of the first instalment of 5 electric taxis by the end of July and also added that Amsterdam was busily creating additional charging points for electric vehicles. He said he had been looking for a cleaner and cheaper alternative to their current fuel, had thought about natural gas but dis-

covered that current batteries can provide enough hours of operation to provide a viable alternative. He believed seeing electric taxis in operation would convince others to go electric too, adding that cab drivers fuel costs could decrease from 40 euros per day down to below 2.

Mr Vos said he would have got the taxis last year, but LTI had problems putting in a left hand drive but that he was determined to go for the LTI cab because of its recognisable shape, in addition to the wheelchair accessibility. He said he had spoken to the taxi producers who had told him that if he wanted a left hand drive, then their Chinese factory could do that and then ship the taxi to Holland where the engine could be changed – albeit a hugely expensive process – but not before adding that the Chinese factory could build the engine as well.

Speaking of the finished product, Bas Vos said that drivers could have a charging point in their own home and that there would also be some at busy ranks. He went on to say to say to BNR listeners that although most drivers would like to drive a Mercedes taxi, that vehicle was not built as a taxi whereas the TX4 was.

So *Call Sign* asked a man who would know. *Matthew Cheyne* is LTI's International Marketing Development Director and indeed he had heard of Bas Vos. He believed Mr Vos had bought and converted an old Metrocab last year. "But he has bought nothing from us!"

Ah well, another story bites the dust! Perhaps *BNR Newsradio* should have come to *Call Sign*!

The World According To Tom Whitbread continued

do regarding this issue and were prepared to put pen to paper, we could get the protection we are entitled to. But if Chancellor of the Exchequer, *George Osborne*, really wants to know how to save in excess of £315 million a year, then disband the PCSOs! They were only brought in by the last government as a *smoke and mirrors* illusion to fool people into believing there had been an increase in the number of qualified police officers on the street.

If we can believe what we read in the papers, then the Met Police wasted £200K on the recruitment of new Police Officers but then never took on any of the persons offered places at Hendon – a complete waste of taxpayer's money. Yet they found money for Plastic Police!

As I look back over these events, I can now see where the American system might be needed for electing a Chief of Police, with them being more accountable to the general public. The impression I get is that past Police Commissioners were only interested in taking the position so that they could get a knighthood at the end and that even if they made a complete hash of the job, they could still walk away with the knighthood and a large sum of taxpayers' money.

So if you ever (which I hope is never) get assaulted or robbed whilst you are out trying to earn an honest living so that you can pay taxes for these public servants to waste, just think for a moment about what I've written and you may

agree I had a good reason to complain.

Another point to ponder; the crime rate has escalated no matter which set of manipulated figures you're given with prisons bulging at the seams. You'll never convince me that Judges had not been secretly "asked" to reduce sentences to keep more convicts out of prisons. The effect being that criminals no longer fear going to court – assuming they even bother to turn up! Then if by some stroke of luck they are sentenced to be incarcerated, they have the pleasure of TV, games, sports equipment and many other amenities. Paedophiles or sex offender get a private cell with computer games and television. Not only that, if someone has threatened them, they get their own personal group of warders.

So, getting on my soapbox again, how would I address this problem? Well how about using one or two of the old air bases and build a massive prison or two with just the basic needs? Stainless steel wash basins and toilets in the cells with no TV. Make prisoners read and educate themselves so that some realise they have to improve to live in a civilised country.

These prisons would be staffed first and foremost by ex-military staff who are at the moment ignored when they leave the armed forces. These men and women would be ready trained to handle people of the calibre of those that are being sent to prison. Then you are addressing two problems in one go. We hear of MPs bleat-

ing that they want to help ex-military personnel, well here's a way to achieve it.

We also need to abolish the stupid idea of halving a sentence if a prisoner has behaved themselves with the prison governor saying they have been good just so he can keep his prison population moving. How many of these so-called rehabilitated persons leave prison and commit a crime again within weeks or even days? How can child killers be given 14 years, yet be back on the streets within 7 years; or a drunk driver who has killed half a family be given 3 years, yet be out again in months to kill someone else?

I know this government has a lot to do addressing the economy, but they have the Ministers to start to tackle the problem. So they can start by disbanding the Health and Safety Executive so children can once again play conkers and compete in the school sack race! There are many non-jobs that were created by the last government, which could be made redundant to let the ordinary taxpaying working person go back to work and reap some benefits.

You may agree or disagree with me, but if you do want to let me know then please email me at TomW@dialacab.co.uk or let the Editor know...

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member

Dial-a-Cab drivers never cease to amaze us at **Call Sign** with what they will put themselves through in order to help a worthy cause. The latest in that long line is **Brian Dixon (O12)**.

It was 24 February 2009, Brian and wife Lyn were looking forward to their son Mark and daughter-in-law Lisa's first child and the DaC driver's first grandchild. The birth was due at the beginning of June, but that was still four months away and there were lots of other things that would fill up the time in between. But one person disagreed with all that as the baby – Molly – decided to leave the comfort of Lisa's womb to see what the outside looked like! Arriving feet first, some 25 weeks premature, Molly weighed in at just 25 ounces. According to Brian, her head was the size of a Satsuma and her hands matched a normal sized thumbnail.

Brian and Lyn were told and their emotions need no describing here, because the chances of their granddaughter's survival were minuscule at best. Even specialist paediatricians, doctors and midwives at High Wycombe Hospital had to resort to a *Tesco* carrier bag to wrap tiny Molly in just to try and retain some heat! It was decided that Molly's best chance would be at the **Royal Berkshire Hospital's** famous **Buscot Ward**. This Reading hospital specialises in premature babies requiring intensive, high dependency or special care. Then the fight to save Molly would begin and for the next 13 weeks, little Molly was watched 24/7 by the dedicated team. There were 9 blood transfusions in addition to regular scans for most parts of her body including her brain.

Mark and Lisa were there all the time as they watched for any signs of a miracle. They were allowed the occasional cuddle and to change Molly's nappy – which according to Brian almost reached her neck! Speaking to *Sunshine Magazine*, Brian described Molly's 13-week stay as being akin to a roller coaster ride – one day Molly was making progress, then that joy would come tumbling down when they were given bad news and they would again fear the worst. Just seeing their still-tiny granddaughter having to fight for her life was bad enough, but Brian and Lyn had to also watch the distress that Lisa and Mark were going through.

"It was just a nightmare," Brian told **Call Sign**, "we just prayed for them all every day while our lives were put on hold."

But brave Molly was getting bigger and stronger and on the 25 May – 13 weeks after being admitted with what must have been just the merest chance of survival – Lisa and Mark were told that they could take their daughter home! Even then, she weighed just 3lbs but was incomparable to that little girl with

BRIAN'S WALK FOR MOLLY

192 miles coast to coast!



Brian and Lyn with their now healthy granddaughter Molly
Inset pic: Molly the fighter arrived 25 weeks prematurely
Photos courtesy Sunshine Magazine



the head the size of a Satsuma three months earlier. Not surprisingly, Brian described Molly as "our little miracle!" Six months on and Molly was heading towards the 10lb mark, eating and sleeping well and acting like a normal baby!

It was then that Brian decided to try to say a special thank you to the amazing Buscot Ward for saving Molly's life. So to raise funds for BIBS (*Babies In Buscot Support*), he decided to take a leaf from the late **Alfred Wainwright MBE**. In 1972, Wainwright devised the east-west **Coast to Coast walk** – later used in his guidebook – on foot! The 192-mile route goes through the north of England from St Bees in Cumbria to Yorkshire's Robin Hood's Bay, passing through the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors national parks. The scenery may be magnificent, but to walk it? It was a big project, but it was set up and on Tuesday 4 May Brian, Lyn, friends Andreas and his wife Priscilla and Barney the dog set out from the St Bees beach, collecting a few pebbles to drop onto the Robin Hood beach and towards their first overnight stop in Borrowdale, ready for the second day which

involved a 1000ft ascent. But that was nothing compared to day 3 when a planned 2000ft climb somehow went wrong through a mapping error and they found themselves doing another 2000ft climb when they should have been going down! As the planned route already involved scaling over 15 peaks between 1000ft and 2560ft along the way, they didn't need any extras! But they gamely continued, facing all that nature could throw at them, until day 17 when the group finally reached Robin Hood's Bay and ceremoniously discharged the stones from the beach at St Bees. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Barney hasn't barked for a walk since!!!

So well done to all of the walkers. You can donate at www.justgiving.com/walkformolly if you'd like to help Brian reach his target of £10,000 or alternatively you can send a cheque made payable to 'BIBS' and together with a completed gift aid form that allows them to generate even more funds by claiming a percentage of tax back for free to:

Walk For Molly, Clematis Cottage, 9 Whitehouse Close, Wooburn Moor, Bucks, HP10 0NU.

Gift aid forms are available at: www.bibs.org.uk/object/form_gift_aid_reclaim.pdf.

LTFUC outing to Southend



Tuesday 13 July 2010

Drivers we need you - come and have a fun-packed day by the sea with a chance to win a great prize (draw to take place on the day). Also enter our best decorated cab competition

The London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's outing to Southend-on-Sea is on Tuesday 13 July 2010.

Drivers, we welcome you to join us to give 300 'special needs' and disadvantaged children a brilliant and memorable day. As well as giving a great deal of pleasure to so many children, we promise you will have a brilliant and fun-packed day out yourself.

Please contact our driver's liaison Susan Angel on 07958 280881 or enter your name on the Volunteer Page of our website at www.ltfuc.org.uk.

The Hon President, Hon Chairman and Committee would be very grateful if you could join us and we look forward to seeing you on the day.



Keith Reading
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10% discount for DaC drivers

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On a busy cab Saturday in June but what should have been a quiet one for **Call Sign**, our phone suddenly burst into life with drivers telling us that a load of slogan-carrying men and women with paint-decorated bodies, were cycling nude through London! We had to disregard the jokes about kicking them in the bells!

It was the seventh *World Naked Bike Ride* taking place in over 50 locations besides London. The ride is an environmental demonstration against oil dependency – with many mentions of the BP oil spill – in addition to a celebration of cycling and the human body.

The cyclists are naked – although the nudity is optional – to highlight their vulnerability on city streets and draw attention to what they call the destructive effects of car culture. We tend to disagree, but didn't object to the protest!

EAGLE EYED DAC DRIVERS SPOT NUDE CYCLISTS!

The question is how could they miss them!



The World Naked Bike Ride

IS THERE NO END TO MINICAB TOUTING!!!



Touts come in all shapes and sizes nowadays!

With the able assistance this month of **Dawn Cooper (C80)**, **Call Sign** is continuing its fight against minicab toutting. Last issue saw a photo of private hire vehicle that looked identical to the Vito, right down to an orange stripe along the side. That photo was sent in by **John Hudson (W34)** however, TfL said it broke no rules. So this month we ask them about this obvious tout. The driver has even tried to copy the **Dial-a-Cab** logo, but if you look carefully enough, you can see that there is a small scuffmark to the left of the 'D'! Don't let the strangeness of the vehicle deceive you – ok, well maybe some can...!

Thanks Dawn, we needed a smile...

Was there an Election Then?



The General Election may well have come and gone, just as the former PM has! However, **Call Sign** received photos from several **Dial-a-Cab** drivers regarding the advertising antics of **Addison Lee**.

The photo accompanying this article was sent in by **Steve Thomas (N10)**, who also added the wording that was very similar to the other drivers.

Steve said: "After donating to the Mayor's election fund, no doubt AL see no problem in displaying Conservative election posters. I'm sure Boris Johnson doesn't have a problem either!" Of course the PCO could tell them off, but as Mr Griffin and co have made it quite clear how little notice they take – reference the M4 bus lane – then we doubt that any political party would have too much to worry about!

John Griffin famously donated to the Mayor's election fund. Did that have any bearing on the General Election???

On 25th May, the *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children* took 280 'special needs' and disadvantaged children on an outing to **Woburn Safari Park** and I must start by extending grateful thanks from the Committee to all the wonderful drivers and their helpers who enabled the children to experience a brilliant day they will cherish forever. Thankfully the mini-heat-wave ended the day before and the weather was perfect, being cooler yet still dry and sunny. The children came from the **Carlton Primary School** in Kentish Town and we thank the staff there for the most welcome refreshments provided to us in the morning.

There was a buzz of excitement as the children began to arrive. For many of them it was their first ride in a real taxi, let alone the treat of going *On Safari!* Once they had been allocated to their taxis, the convoy departed and we were pleased to be accompanied by **Sgt Peter Morrell** and his team of the **Met Police Safer Transport Command** and **City of London Police** officers **Sgt Jack Warner** and **PC Steve Adams**. **Chief Inspector Anspin** and **Inspector Bonner** of the **Bedfordshire Police** later joined us and we are very grateful to all of them for ensuring the convoy reached our destination safely.

On arrival at Woburn, half the convoy headed straight for the **Road Safari** whilst the others went straight into the **Safari Lodge Restaurant** to enjoy a great lunch. Then both halves swapped over! The rest of the afternoon was left for everyone to sample what was on offer; the great *Foot Safari* - where the children get closer to the smaller animals, the *Swan pedal boats*, the *Great Woburn Railway*, the *Avery* and the *Mammoth Play Ark* for indoor fun. Some chose to go back round the Road Safari again, as it was

Taxi Safari To Woburn



The two happy Safari children. Inset: Anyone else would have got stuck behind a bendy bus!

possible to go round as many times as you wanted to see the animals.

Then it was time for tea and as the weather was so nice, we were able to sit outside on the steps of the *Amphitheatre*, where everyone received a goody bag. Then it was a breathtaking bird display before the convoy - by then with some very tired and weary children - left for home.

On behalf of the LTFUC, I'd like to extend sincere thanks to our main sponsors, **Bartle Bogle Hegarty Ltd (BBH)** and **Lovells, LTDA, Martin Cordell & Co, Dial-a-Cab, Quotax, Radio Taxis and Michelin** for their contribution in making this wonderful day possible.

We'd also thank the anonymous donor who kindly enabled the drivers to receive free diesel vouchers. We are also grateful to the **RAC** and **St**

John's Ambulance for joining us and also to **London Communications** for their help. We appreciate the coverage the press and media gave us and in particular, **Hannah Pettifer** of **ITV Anglia** who joined us on the outing and quickly rushed back to make sure we featured in their evening news!

We are, of course, very grateful to Woburn Safari Park for their help and hospitality and to **Alastair Crawford** and all the staff in the Safari Lodge Restaurant. Going to Woburn Safari Park this year was extra special as it saw them celebrating their 40th anniversary and we send hearty congratulations and thank them for their continued support.

We were a little upset at the low number of drivers who joined us on the day, but over the many years the Fund has taken so many thousands of children to a variety of destinations, there have been instances of plans going awry. We pride ourselves on the fact that whatever problem arises, it is not insurmountable and on this occasion, the ingenuity of the committee and the kind assistance of others, combined to ensure a fantastic day was enjoyed by all. We are so grateful to the drivers who did come for not only giving up a day's work, but for putting themselves out to ensure the children had a fantastic day. I must thank Chelmsford licensed taxi driver **Martyn Oakley** who travelled from Chelmsford to join us. Without the drivers and helpers the day would not be possible and the committee are extremely grateful to all of them.

One final thank you must go to **Ford's Welfare Department** at Dagenham for the loan of their minibus, to **Bob Collins** for driving it and Dave at **Davian Coaches**, Enfield, for his help and kindness. It really was a brilliant, superb and magnificent day and we look forward to our legendary outing to Southend-on-Sea on Tuesday 13th July.

Images of the Woburn outing can be seen in the LTFUC photo gallery at www.ltfuc.org.uk.

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

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

Kupcake's Korner



Humps, bumps and chumps!

Liverpool Road has 32 bumps,
Almost 3 dozen concrete lumps!
They break your springs, scrape your sumps
invented by environmental chumps!

Wimbledon Park Road's just the same,
ask the locals who's to blame?

A 'Green' planner with half a brain -
now in a 'nut' house, quite insane!

Islington, Camden, Hackney and too,
have their men who all hate you!
Awake at night, planning obstructions,
for streets ravaged by construction.

Obstacles just to slow you down,
reduce the speed in London Town.
"It's for safety," the Greenies cry,
"we don't want no one else to die!"

Believe me, I understand the NEED for care,
but why are these humps everywhere?

We pay road tax to drive in streets...
not to be bounced from our driving seats!

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For those new to **Dial-a-Cab**, **Call Sign** has been following the progress of **Sam Bezzina** – the 16-year old son of **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Dean Bezzina (M10)** - and his ambition to box for England. To do that, he needed to win a **Golden Gloves Championship**. And early last year he did exactly that when the ABA Schoolboys Championship honours were decided at Dagenham's Goresbrook Leisure Centre.

Sam boxes for the **West Ham Boxing Club** where the walls are a who's who in the world of boxing and West Ham "old boys" including a pair of signed gloves used by 1956 Melbourne Olympics gold medal winner, **Terry Spinks**.

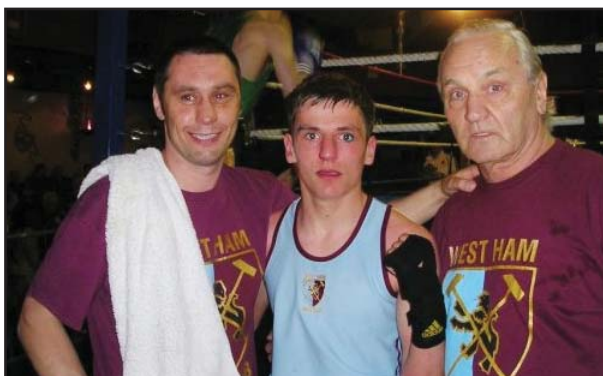
"How can that not inspire you to want to be the best," Sam told **Call Sign**, with dad Dean adding that Sam was really fired-up and feeling as though success could be very close. And indeed the first part of Sam's success story has already started to come when he recently won the **London ABA** title in addition to taking silver in the **Junior ABA** national final.

The season began with an all West Ham affair, when Sam had to box team-mate **Alfie Price** in the first round of the Junior ABA Championships. It was rather unfortunate that the two West Ham lads - both of whom are national champions in their own right - had to box each other, but with boys at the West Ham Club in every weight division, Sam would have had to box a teammate regardless of the category he entered at. The bout was a strange affair with Alfie and Sam boxing in front of a sold-out crowd of spectators, yet in silence with no one really wanting to cheer for either boy! It was a closely fought contest, but after 3 rounds Sam's sharper, cleaner shots gave him a majority win and sent him through to the next round.

A few weeks later and Sam was back in action at the same venue for the London finals with **Rudi Michael** supplying the opposition. Sam had a great first round, scoring well with his jab and boxing at range, eventually causing Rudi to

Sam Bezzina Back in Action

...and he starts by becoming London Champion!



Sam with his two trainers, Mickey Driscoll (left) and Mickey May

take a standing count. The second round saw Rudi try to up the pace and get back into the fight, but Sam was having none of it. Sam is never happier than when it comes down to a toe-to-toe and more often you get the best from him when under pressure, although with his eagerness to perform and his thoughts of stopping Rudi, Sam probably worked harder than was needed. After 3 rounds, no one was surprised when the judges returned a unanimous decision in favour of Sam and he was crowned the new **London Champion**!

Another two weeks on and it was London v The Eastern Counties at the Merlin Knight Club in Leysdown. Sam's opponent was Arnold Allen – who unfortunately had to pull out at the last

minute, which gave Sam a walkover to the national semi finals for the **U57kg class**. His opponent in the semi was **Michael Ballinghall**, who boxes out of the Stacey ABC club. From the first bell, the two boys went hard at it. Ballinghall tried to impose himself on Sam by attempting to push him back, but Sam was having none of it. It was hard and fast with Sam beginning to get the best of the exchanges. By the end of the first round, the computer score showed Sam ahead by 8pts to 1.

The second round saw Sam work well behind his jab but with a good tight defence. Michael Ballinghall was well behind and Sam began to relax slightly and wait for his opponent to make a mistake. By the end of the second round Sam was 9 – 3 ahead.

As the third and final two minutes began, Ballinghall's corner undoubtedly told their boxer to give it all he had and the round was very lively, but Sam was still well in control and finally Ballinghall began to fade. Sam finished the round and contest with a great 13 - 3 victory and just as last year, made it to the national finals. Joining Sam at the national finals will be club mates Charlie Driscoll and Luke Saunders. A report will appear in the next **Call Sign**.

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The entire Dial-a-Cab Board of Management recently held a Champagne reception to celebrate the long service of several members of Dial-a-Cab's staff. The event involved 25, 20 and 10 years of service.

Curls Villiers, who had celebrated 25 years in the last *Call Sign*, was re-invited to celebrate alongside **Donna Johnson**, who joined the Society just over 25 years ago (11 March 1985) as a Customer Service Representative and who is currently working part-time as a Supervisor on Sunday Evenings in the Contact Centre. Unfortunately, Donna was unable to attend.

There to celebrate 20 years with DaC was **Teresa George**, who started on 18 January 1990 in the call centre as a CSR on the evening shift and who is now a Team Leader on the evening shift. Also there was **Jane Bower**, who began working with DaC on 15 February 1990 as a CSR on the day shift, as did **Sue Coates** who arrived on 19 March 1990.

Jason O'Brien was the last of the current 20-year batch. He started on 15 March 1990 as a CSR in the Call Centre and after filling several positions, including the one most drivers may remember on the DaC Help desk, he moved floors and began working with DaC's IT Support. He is currently the Billing and MIS Administrator in the IT department.

There were two members of staff invit-

DaC Staff "Long Service" Champagne Reception



The winners line-up! inset: Brian with Sue Coates

ed to the reception after having been with Dial-a-Cab for 10 years.

Georgina Newton arrived on 21 February

2000 as an Evening shift Call Centre CSR, while **Claire Ottley**, who came to Brunswick House on 21 February 2000 as a CSR on the Evening shift, later moved down-

stairs and is currently a Customer Account Manager in DaC's Admin department. Claire also used to write a regular column for *Call Sign*. Claire Care took advantage of her knowledge of food and drink, she having previously worked for *Oddbins*. Claire probably told the event's organisers whether the Champagne was any good!

Our thanks to **John Rogers**, Head of DaC Human Resources, for the info and congratulations to all the above..



Maria won't flag as she runs for Cancer Research!

Many of the **Dial-a-Cab** drivers who have been on *Call Sign* trips to the LTI factory in Coventry, may remember seeing **Maria Holmes**, LTI's UK and International Marketing Manager. Well on this occasion she won't be promoting LTI Vehicles, but is running in the *Race for Life* in aid of Cancer Research UK on 15 July.

Maria has worked for LTI for over 5 years now and this isn't the first time she has raised money for charity, having previously jumped out of an aeroplane to induce friends and colleagues to give generously! This time she is running 5K to raise cash for this good cause.

"I'm fitting in training round a busy work life and looking after my 3 year old son, but it's certainly a great motivation to get fit," said Maria. "And believe me, you won't catch me flagging in the *Race for Life*."

Maria's inspiration comes from having lost close friends and family to cancer and hopes that her efforts will, in some small way, help the fight to find a cure for the disease.

"Research goes on all the time," she added, "but there's never enough money and I hope that I can do my bit. If I complete it this year and survive, then I'll do it every year."

Maria does a lot of walking to help keep her fit, but rarely breaks into a jog. However, she is committed and enjoying the challenge, knowing that the thought of reaching her target of £1000 will help keep her on (the running) track.

Anyone who would like to sponsor Maria can visit her at her website:

www.raceforlifespensorme.org/mariajholmes. You can also send a cheque made payable to **Race For Life** and post it to Maria Holmes, LTI Vehicles, Holyhead Rd, Coventry, CV5 8JJ.



Maria in training. She is aiming for £1000 sponsorship

compliance officers update

Hello Ladies & Gents,

We are now fast approaching the holiday season and what with the World Cup on our television screens and the weather rather hit and miss, it seems that the football season has never really ended! While I can't say that I am over confident about England's chances, at least the best team won the double this season (sorry all you Man U, Gooners and Spurs fans)!

The dollar is very strong against the pound and although the Euro has weakened slightly of late, this is still a good time to visit the UK and we would hope to see more tourists in the capital this summer.

You will see by the complaints results in this issue of **Call Sign** that similar complaints crop up on a regular basis. I do sometimes feel that I am constantly repeating myself, but it really is done for your benefit and regular warnings in the magazine or on the terminal still do not seem to prevent some rules from being violated by a small minority of members. By now I am sure you are all well aware that our technology is highly reliable and sophisticated and it is relatively straightforward to prove or disprove whether or not a complaint is warranted or in actual fact relevant to proceed on to a hearing.

A few Procedure rules to remember...

- You must be able to reach the furthest part of any London inner or outer postal zone within 15 minutes of booking-in.
- Outlying zones (e.g. E50S, SE99, NN99 etc) are physical zones and you must be in the actual zone when booking in. If the trips are unmatched, they will be offered to the rele-



vant back up zones and then appear as BID TRIPS after 2 minutes.

- Between 9pm and 6am, all trips in city zones are dispatched to EC5. Please be aware that you must be in EC1, 2, 3 or 4 before booking-in to this zone.
- E14 is a physical zone between 9pm and 6am weekdays and all times at weekends. Between 6am and 9pm on weekdays, normal booking-in procedures apply.

Can I also please remind you that the *arrival* button is pressed when you are physically outside of the pick up and the *PoB* button should be pressed as soon as the passenger enters your taxi. This is particularly important on fixed price trips and trips that incur waiting time charges over set periods of time.

It is also important to inform the call centre if you are requested by the client to take a

preferred route, which may be appreciably longer in distance but deemed by the passenger to be quicker. Using the M25 from Heathrow to certain outlying areas may well be faster than driving through town, but it can significantly increase the amount on the meter - sometimes more than doubling the normal fare. So please inform the dispatcher before using an especially longer route.

Chipped windscreen repairs at Roman Way

Finally and for a trial period, **Auto Stone** chip repair will be on site at the Roman Way fitting bay on certain days each week to offer our members a high standard, quick and convenient windscreen chip repair service designed solely for the taxi trade. On most occasions, repairs can be carried out at no additional cost through your insurance company and without any excess to pay. Apart from being unsafe, it can prevent a chip turning into a crack, which in turn will almost certainly result in a failure at the PCO. Messages will be sent out over the terminal regarding exactly when the trial will start and even if your insurance does not cover you for such repairs, there is a special rate for Dial-a-Cab Members. It is also hoped that you will be able to turn up without the need of an appointment.

Anyway, enjoy the summer break, it's a time to recharge your batteries and more importantly... be lucky!

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



COMPLAINTS RESULTS

A Complaints meeting was held on 12 May 2010. The results are below...



Name/call sign	Nature of Complaint	Verdict
Clement McHale (F26)	Driver booked directly into S50E and accepted a trip from this physical zone when true position was SW16 <i>Rule 11</i>	2 weeks susp
Russell Tiller (P19)	Driver booked directly into NN99 and accepted a trip from this physical zone when true position was NW3 <i>Rule 11</i>	2 weeks susp
Robert Mason (Y46)	Driver booked directly into S50E and accepted a trip from this physical zone when true position was WC2 <i>Rule 11</i>	4 weeks susp
Richard Potter (T51)	Driver booked directly into SW19 and accepted a trip from this physical zone when true position was SW1 <i>Rule 11</i>	Expelled <i>Reduced to 4 weeks susp on appeal</i>



None of Call Sign's regulars this month, just Martin Hizer (M47) who now claims to be a regular tosser! If you find diets a bore, Martin may be able to help...

EATING OUT WITH CALL SIGN

I have been referred to as a salad dodger in the past. Not because I'm overweight, but because I, well... ok, because I'm overweight! Grrrr! Anyhow, I used to hate salads and I mean really hate them - which considering my constant weight battle is not a good thing.

I recently went to Florida and was out for the day with some friends who horrified me when they decided to grab some fast food and chose not a hamburger joint, but a place whose main product was salad! Nightmare! However, the salad they made was full of great stuff and served in a lovely dressing that I enjoyed so much, I was actually tempted to order more.

So where is this leading? Well there's a new eat-in or takeaway place opened in **Mortimer Street** on the corner with Wells Street called **Tossed**, which gives you various choices of delicious salads served in very different ways. Tossed is run by **Ajay** and his friendly, helpful staff who will happily guide you through your choice. You just pick your salad; for example you could choose say, Japanese chicken, Asian Tuna or Spicy Crayfish. Then choose your base, which might be Cos lettuce, mixed leaves, egg noodles, basmati rice, couscous, wholemeal pasta or even a wrap! Then add your dressing. One of my problems with salads is that with the best will in the world, even if I make an effort to eat salad I very quickly get bored, but by varying the bases or dressings you can have the same salad everyday and it would still always be different! Of course, if a bespoke salad is more your thing, you can choose from the wide range of ingredients available to make your own salad. And they all taste just delicious!

I chow down on those salads no less enthusiastically than virtually anything I care to mention. And if like me you are with **Weight Watchers**, they can even give you Weight Watchers points value on anything they serve you with! Fancy something sweet afterwards? No problem! They have a range of healthy fruit Smoothies and natural yoghurts. I like their frozen yoghurt - fat free of course! It's really good! They also offer various drinks and snacks to accompany your meal and also do breakfast dishes such as Granolas. There are coffees and teas too. And you always know the food is fresh because if it isn't sold by the end of the day, they give it away to the homeless. So whether your weight is an issue or you just want to try and cut down on the junk food, there is now an alternative that's tasty, healthy and pretty hard to get bored with!

Tossed are also at Westfield Shopping Centre, Baker St, St Martins Lane, Tottenham Court Rd and Sheldon Square. See their website at www.tosseduk.com and as they say, lettuce be friends! Opening hours: Mon-Fri 7.30am to 5.30pm / Sat from 10am to 4pm.

Martin Hizer (M47)

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

Call Sign En La Belle France

Obviously the World Cup is all the rage in France, with every match being screened in every bar of every city, town or village in the countryside or on the coast. And of course the Brits over here had to smile when they heard that ITV managed to miss Stephen Gerrard's 4th minute goal against the Yanks, because they suddenly showed an advert!

So spare a thought for my mate Greg Hannaford (I painted a lovely picture of Greg's B&B in the last **Call Sign** and quite a few DaC subscribers have contacted him), because this is a copy of an email that came from his mailbox just as the World Cup began...

Hi All,

Rather reluctantly, we have no choice but to defer the launch of our World Cup venue until next week. Granted only an hour or so until France vs Uruguay and 25hrs prior to England's campaign commencing. I'm distressed - but not desperately so - as the first matches are often dull and somewhat negative affairs, with neither team feeling able to afford to lose. The competition gets better as it progresses. So we'll be ready - full fayre - for the latter stages.

The major reason is that the engineer/technician has failed to keep his rendezvous. This means that the installation of our 7-speaker surround-sound system hasn't materialised. Many of you will have large screen TVs at home - but maybe not such a sound experience aka home cinema. I'm told that it's superb - the next best thing to being at the game itself - and with several like-minded sports fans, we should be able to provide a fantastic atmosphere. So next weekend it's back to business with France vs Mexico and England vs Algeria. With Penny proposing to



serve a selection of buffet food with salads and chilli served with rice (or tortillas) and naturally I will have beer, wine and soft drinks available

(plus tea / coffee for drivers), you will all be in for a great time!

May your team do well and please accept my apology for a delayed kick-off!

Greg

One thing is for certain, Greg isn't laughing at ITV! But knowing Greg, I can tell you he would never allow this to happen again. ITV? How many times is it now? And to any DaC subscribers who had their World Cup party delayed, Greg sends his apologies even though by now you are there eating, drinking, watching and listening on the most incredible sound system!

A bientot...

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

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NATALIE PLANTS MORE DAC TREES!

To Celebrate the Year of Biodiversity

2010 is the Year of Biodiversity, so when **John Buckley**, MD of *Carbon Footprint Ltd* invited me to join him in the London Tree Planting event at the West London Academy, I was more than happy to accept the invitation.

Out of the 2,500 trees that have been planted at the Academy, **Dial-a-Cab** has contributed almost 1,000 of them over the past three years as part of a larger project to offset the climate change and carbon-offsetting programme.

As there were over 100 trees to plant on this occasion, I enlisted the assistance of **Caroline McGowan**, Dial-a-Cab's Customer Service Manager, to come along with me.

Also joining the event was none-other than **David Bellamy**, who gave a short and informative talk on what this means to the UK. Then along with some young volunteer pupils from the Academy, it was off to plant some trees and of course many stops en route as our famous botanist took every opportunity to stop and calculate how many different species of wild plants were growing among the trees, whilst explaining the purpose of every tree to us.

Tree planting, is part of a larger offsetting project that Dial-a-Cab have in place. In addition,



pic left: Natalie, Caroline, John Buckley and David Bellamy together with some of the Academy Children

tion, DaC are also funding reforestation projects in Kenya and Guatemala, along with helping renewable energy projects in developing countries through the purchasing and cancelling of carbon credits from projects such as a Small Hydropower Plant in Guizhou Province of China. For more info, take a look at this website:

<http://www.carbonfootprint.com/offsetalternativeenergy.html>.

Natalie Ezekiel
DaC Sales



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The 37th Taxi Driver of the Year dinner dance will be held at:

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With your support The Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund is able to make substantial donations to the taxi trade charities that support them. Don't miss one of the year's great nights. Great food, great company! It will prove to be an enjoyable and memorable occasion for all

Please complete and return form to the Hon Chairman.

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*For further information contact: Russell Poluck 07850 056 765 - Tel/fax 020 8952 1357
Registered with the Charities Commission No: 1000761*



Wandering through a taxi driver's brains

In 2004, *Call Sign* made the mainstream press when under the auspices of **Dr Hugo Spiers** at the Wellcome Department of

Taxi brains on the Science Museum menu!

Imaging Neuroscience in Queen Square, the first detailed examination of taxi driver's brains took place using **Dial-a-Cab** drivers as volunteers. Suddenly everyone knew the word *Hippocampus*! Then two years later, *Call Sign* was again involved when we spoke to scientist **Eleanor Maguire** about her study into whose brains had more learning ability between taxi drivers (mainly from DaC) and bus drivers. We won!

Now the **Science Museum** in Exhibition Road has brought the topic up once again, this time using non-radio driver and *Taxi* columnist **Al Fresco** together with a fairly new driver. The results are now there to look at in the recently relaunched 'Who Am I' gallery. Among many other things, 'Who Am I' brings the story of taxi drivers' brains to life!

In addition to we brainies, 'Who am I' presents the latest in brain science and genetics through a mixture of interactive exhibits and object-rich displays. In other words, what makes you, you? How do your genes impact on your brain, your actions, your thoughts and your appearance? Visitors to the redeveloped 'Who am I' gallery will get the chance to explore answers to these questions and more by encountering striking object displays, contemporary artworks and by sharing their opinions on ethical issues in science.

'Who am I' is supported by principal funder The Wellcome Trust with major sponsors being GlaxoSmithKline and Life Technologies Foundation.

More info at the Science Museum's Who Am I gallery at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk



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**For all Windows/Mac problems
Viruses or Trojans?**

As **Call Sign** revealed as far back as July 2008, a new emissions-free version of the TX4 taxi was on the cards and now the prototype has been unveiled at City Hall by deputy mayor, Kit Malthouse together with Manganese Bronze CEO, John Russell.

According to LTI, the new vehicle drives just like a normal cab, but unlike the more traditional engine, this one is powered by a hydrogen fuel cell system that only emits water vapour. The claim is that the taxi is capable of 80mph with a 250-mile range – much further than most previous estimates.

The TX4H is the result of a partnership between Intelligent Energy, LTI, TRW Conect and Lotus Engineering.

While some were expecting the taxi to go via the electric route, it was thought that those batteries would not get a long-enough range and recharging would take too long. It was also acknowledged that the hydrogen fuel cell technology and infrastructure are new and need time and money spent on them, but that it was hoped government would help.

Deputy mayor Malthouse said at the launch: "The black cab is a much-loved London icon, but also a significant source of pollution - especially in the city centre. This prototype fuel cell taxi emitting only water from its tailpipe, is an exciting glimpse of how hydrogen technology could play a vital role in cleaning up air

Hydrogen TX4 Unveiled!



The prototype TX4H

quality for urban dwellers." Mayor Boris Johnson has committed London to making all taxis emissions free by 2020. A fleet of at least 20 fuel cell TX4H taxis should be running by the 2012 Olympics.

Mr Malthouse also confirmed that six

hydrogen refuelling stations – a key issue in the implication of fuel cell technology – were being developed across London with the first of these to be used to refuel the five hydrogen-fuel cell buses due to be introduced to the capital's streets later this year.

ALL POINTS NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST...

But not Antarctica - at least not yet!



Yusef with his two friends Chicki and Mohamed

As a reflection of today's ethnic London, so the diversity of candidates within the Knowledge community is changing at a similar pace, resulting in the fact that **Knowledge Point School** has now trained a candidate from every continent in the world. Well except, of course, Antarctica - but you never know!

This month is typical with Afghanistani, Yusuf Rahrow, acquiring his Green Badge. Yusuf is Knowledge Point's first trainee from that country and is seen in the photo being flanked by his two friends and call-over partners, Chicki Teeluck (left), originally from Mauritius and Mohamed Yermak (right), originally from Morocco. Both of them are recent Green Badge qualifiers. Between them they speak a substantial range of languages and are looking forward to the opportunities such skills will bring them during the run up to London 2012.

In addition to having qualified as taxi drivers, all three have also now qualified with an **NVQ Level 2 in Taxi, Road Passenger Vehicle Driving** and so are even better placed for what the future may bring.

For more info on the Knowledge Point School, call them on 020 7700 5682...

**Malcolm Linskey
Taxi Trade Promotions Ltd**



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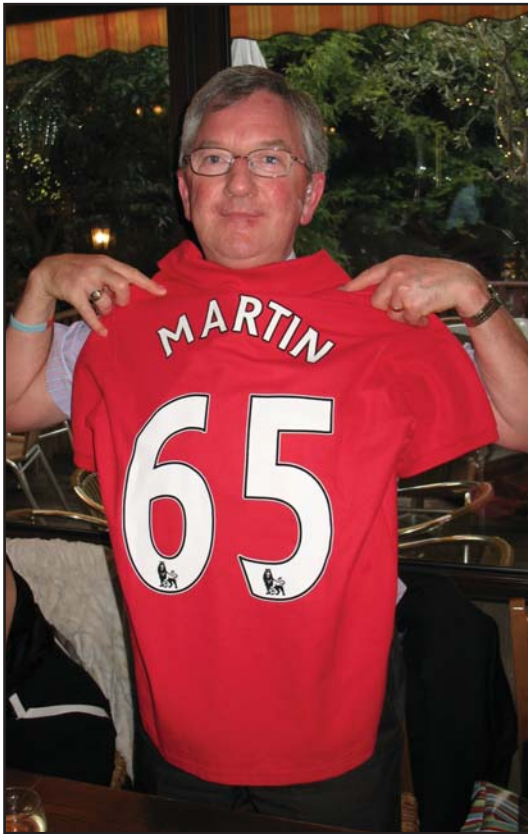
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DaC Pensioner Martin!

Martin Freeborn (C67) - together with wife Joy, relatives and some close friends – recently did his bit to help prove that there are more older licensed taxi drivers than younger ones, by celebrating his 65th birthday!

A slap-up dinner at his favourite restaurant, before the group continued the partying until long into the night (some even say it was after 11pm), well away from the prying camera's of the nation's paparazzi who were wondering if he was to become the new face of the (warm) Milk Marketing Board!

When **Call Sign** asked Martin how he felt on becoming of pensionable age, his immediate response was that he wouldn't have to work quite so hard now – an obvious reference to his newly acquired monthly state benefit!

"He won't become a couch potato, that's for sure," wife Joy added, "we're off on holiday in few days time and there's plenty to keep him busy on our return!"

Call Sign noted a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

The photo shows Martin – a long-time Arsenal season ticket holder - proudly displaying a team shirt emblazoned with his personal number on the back! Gunners Manager **Arsene Wenger** told **Call Sign** that he wouldn't rule Martin out of first team action, after all, Sol Campbell is still playing at 36...!

Martin has been with Dial-a-Cab since 29th September 1975...

PETER RIGDEN RETIREES FROM M&O Mark Brown takes over...

Call Sign has dealt with M&O GM Peter Rigden for many years and irrespective of whether you like the product he has been associated with for 23 years – the last 19 as General Manager – we have never had any doubts about his honesty, sincerity and undoubted belief that the TX4 was the best purpose built taxi ever designed.

Now Peter has decided to retire to his house in France and enjoy life at a slightly slower pace. If a glass of the red stuff should intervene in the relaxation process, then he told us he would put up with that! Peter admitted that letting go of M&O and its everyday life might be a tad difficult. He told **Call Sign**:

"I felt that now was the right time to grab the opportunity to enjoy my retirement. I'm leaving many great friends and memories behind, but this is an exciting new chapter in my life and I want to look forward not back."

Following Peter's departure, a new face appeared – that of **Mark Brown**. He is married with three children, supports Man U – although it would be unfair to hold that against him - and he also has a passion for motorcycle racing.

Mark was previously the GM at **Fiat Direct** and has a wealth of automotive experience behind him and is looking to take M&O's business forward by bringing that knowledge to the trade, with his first priority being to improve on their current customer service levels.

"I'm soaking up information like a sponge and have quickly realised what makes this industry so special - the people! I see the reorganisation of the approved service dealer network as a monumental change for M&O alongside LTI Vehicles and one of my first tasks will be to tackle these challenges head on."

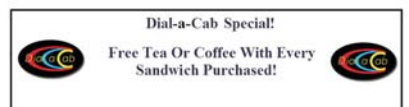
So it's goodbye from Peter and hello from Mark. And from **Call Sign** - good luck to both...



M&O new GM Mark Brown

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month we go back to 2002 when Call Sign celebrated 25 years of women taxi drivers...

From Call Sign, November 2002

Memories of DaC's Marie White live on as female taxi drivers celebrate 25 years of licensing

The first Parliamentary regulation for the Hackney carriages came 309 years ago in 1694 while Emmeline Pankhurst, the famed English Suffragette leader founded her militant group, the *Women's Social and Political Union*, culminating in gaining the vote for women almost 100 years ago in 1903. Yet surprisingly, the first female taxi driver to be licensed in London came just 25 years ago in 1977, when **Marie White** ended the seeming taboo of females gaining the coveted green badge. Today that total has reached around 350 – although they have some way to go to catch up the male drivers who total 24,050!

Back in 1977, London was buzzing and so was the licensed taxi business - considered by many to be the last male bastion. So when news that a lady was on the Knowledge first broke in 1976, drivers scoffed.

"She'll never do the Knowledge," they echoed, followed by the old chestnut, **"...what if a geezer asks to meet a bird – how can they possibly ask a lady driver to find 'em a lady of the night?"**

But Marie White wasn't to be fazed; her husband Jack was already a taxi driver and nothing was going to put her off. But she had one problem, she didn't like the idea of going around on a moped, so she did the first 10 months in an Austin Mini and often spoke about the number of times she was stopped by the police who were wondering why she kept stopping and starting. She once admitted to *Call Sign* that she was afraid that someone might accuse her of looking for "male clients!"

Then exactly 25 years ago, Marie White achieved the impossible – she passed the *Knowledge* and became a licensed London taxi driver with badge number 25292. She and Jack both worked days and were the first-ever married couple to both drive a London taxi.

Speaking to *Call Sign* many years later, Marie smiled at the memory of male faces when they saw a woman driver pull up.

"I remember one gentleman whistling through his teeth to attract my attention when I was going in the opposite direction along Bayswater Road," she said, **"then when he saw me he apologised and said the whistle was aimed at the cab and not me personally!"**

Marie came to **Dial-a-Cab** in 1983 via London Wide – the pre-runner to Computer Cab. She became the first woman to stand for a place on our Board of Management and was successful, replacing **Alun Roberts** in 1988. For almost two years she was responsible for the Society's Welfare scheme.

Her husband Jack had died some years earlier and the sight of Marie with her pet terrier in the front of the cab became a common sight as she just couldn't bear to leave it at home alone.

Sadly, Marie White became ill and died of cancer in 1993. However, as the first-ever lady taxi driver, her legacy will live on for as long as there are licensed taxi drivers...

© Call Sign 2002



Marie at the time she was elected on to the DaC BOM

MASS DEMOS A SUCCESS?

The two recent taxi demonstrations at the Aldwych – the older among us would call them drive-ins – should be termed as successes. Numbers present vary from 70 to 3000 but that becomes irrelevant compared to the publicity gained and the fact that although some Londoners were miffed, others considered the cause to be just and were prepared to put up with an hour or so of traffic disruption.

A spokesman from the organisers, The London Taxi Drivers Forum (LTDF) said they would carry on complaining and demonstrating until the authorities did what the Licensed taxi fleet pays them to do - protect our sole right to ply for hire on the streets of London.

Those opposing the demos claimed that they had been taken over by the English Defence League and the British National Party, but few drivers saw any evidence of interference.

The main items on the demo's agenda were the non-effective enforcement of satellite offices, illegal PH touting and the lack of action of the authorities. Non-enforcement of the M4 bus lane and the seeming persecution of taxis by Westminster and Camden councils also ranked high on the list.

TV and newspaper coverage made sure the points got across...



The Aldwych grinds to a halt

Mailshot

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

Making an example?

Hi Alan,

Re my letter in the last *Call Sign* (*Cars v Taxis*), it was never my intention to insult Brian and if I have, then I apologise.

When I say passion, it is more than just getting accounts; it is setting examples. If a Board member drives a cab, it should be in one less than 3 years old with all-round air-con so that he may inspire others to follow his lead, not in a clapped out Metro or Fairway. When new applicants wish to join Dial-a-Cab, the criteria should be the same.

Furthermore, air-con should be an attribute so we can ensure that when directors are being transported, they are not carried in a sh**cart that shakes, rattles and rolls. That is passion.

Can you imagine the ammunition it would give to our sales team if they could guarantee an almost-new taxi with full air-con for every trip? Well that's what Addison Lee and others are doing. Being professional is no longer enough and when clients ask for a car, they should be informed that we offer a premier taxi service. It must be more comfortable in a cab, being able to stretch your feet rather than sitting in a Prius or Merc with your knees under your chin.

Stephen Field (F68)

Brian Rice responds: I couldn't agree with you more Stephen and as for insulting me - you didn't, I have been doing this for far too long to be insulted, I just wanted you to think about what you had written!

I recently attended a meeting at the PCO where the topic under conversation was the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy (MAQS). Being discussed was at what age a taxi should be scrapped - perhaps 10,12,15 years of age - or more. Driver's associations were arguing for a taxi to be at the maximum age before being scrapped, however I do know that the two association representatives present both own taxis over twelve years old, so perhaps they have a vested interest in allowing taxis of all ages to ply for hire and perhaps should not have been present! As the meeting progressed, one association's representative - or should I say 'Club' representative, became very animated and threatened to block roads in London and was in my view, extremely confrontational and just showed himself in his true colours. I just listened to the 'bovver' boy and wondered how much harm he was doing our trade by not being capable of negotiating, but just doing what he has done all his life with people that did not agree with him - and that was to threaten them!

Anyway, the Director of Taxis and Private Hire asked me why I was so quiet, which was not usually the case, and I told him that there were a sizeable proportion of taxi drivers out there that do invest in our business by changing their cabs and how could anyone possibly argue about the London taxi fleet being more modern and greener? However, the problem as I saw it was purely finance, the trade can't afford it! Perhaps the Mayor or TfL should come up with a sizeable scrappage scheme for taxis if he wants to make the fleet more modern? The 2012 games are going to cost around £10billion and the Mayor will incur a fine of 300million euros if he does not clean up the air in London, so a substantial scrappage scheme looks to be very modest by comparison! All without any confrontation with TfL and even more importantly, members of the public. So you see Stephen, we are not far apart in our theories, the only thing that possibly separates us is the money to make our theories materialise.

Where are the Apps?

Dear Ed

Every now and then mankind comes up with a way of communicating that changes the way we go about things. From the *Penny Black* to the telephone to the world wide web, companies have had to embrace the latest technology or be rendered obsolete. Well mankind - or rather *Apple* - have done it again. I'm talking of course about the iPhone and in particular the iPhone applications. For those uninitiated, the iPhone is a mobile phone more technologically advanced than Apollo 13. It is the fastest selling phone of all time, not just in the gadget-obsessed world of the 18 to 24 year olds, but most business users too. The chances are your passenger is comparing your route on his iPhone right now. The Blackberry has all but become the *Betamax* of the phone world. There are over 100,000 Apps to choose from and the bad news is that one of the best belongs to Addison Lee. And it has just been advertised on ITV. Passengers who would normally walk out to the street to hail a taxi can now at the press of a screen have an AL car at their GPS location in ten minutes. They can even see the fixed price before they confirm the booking. This service is available to both cash and account customers.

So there you have it. Every time a passenger uses this system, another yellow light remains on and our much valued account customers have to bellow down their mobile like Dom Jolly. So my point is where is our app? Why are we left behind? We need to be on the iPhone now!

David Ballard (N28)

See Jon Winterburn's article in this issue on the new and brilliant DaC website. Never mind just the iPhone, what about

Blackberry and Android etc? Our new website does everything - bar cover the actual work! ...Ed

Still on DaC...

Hello Alan,

You may remember I was leaving DaC in April because of a lack of work, but at the eleventh hour I decided to remain a subscriber for the foreseeable future. I have decided to try different hours for the summer months and I hope this will achieve some change in the amount of radio work I will be offered. I will now work in the mornings until approximately 3pm. I thought it only polite to inform you.

I still don't quite agree with Brian Rice's view on 30 years being a fair way to distribute reduced subs, but I accept it. I will not after all be able to reach 30 years service. There are other drivers who could manage 20 years or more and they are the ones who it would help.

I look forward to continue reading *Call Sign* and maybe contributing in a small way...

Tom Reynolds (O85)

Pleased to hear you have had a rethink Tom ...Ed

Not a tank!!!

Al,

Gotta say I was disappointed with your reference to Jim Thomas as Thomas the Tank in the *May Call Sign*. I think Steve McNamara first referred to him as Thomas the Tanker, which of course is slang for w**ker. Our magazine has a lot of admirable values (no sleazy advertising, no anonymous content etc) so I must say I thought this was beneath you. Hope you take this in the constructive spirit it was sent.

Mark Sherlock (W41)

Thanks for pointing it out Mark. I hadn't realised I'd written it until I got your email. It was a pure accident with obvious thoughts of my grandchildren and the younger ones semi-addiction to Thomas the Tank engine. I should have referred to Jim Thomas (of The Anderson Shelter) as Thomas the Taxi. I emailed him to apologise and he accepted the apology ...Ed

Credit card authorisation?

Hello Alan,

Re-reading the information from Keith Cain and Allan Evans in recent *Call Signs* regarding street credit card hirings, I am a little confused. Why do I have to take a rubbing



Mailshot



of the card to prove it was present if I have to swipe the card to get authorisation? As keying in the detail is not permitted and I'm not psychic, is this not a duplication? Am I to no longer get a signature on the 'till roll' from the terminal if the banks will only accept a signature on a paper slip? On two occasions recently, my passengers have refused to sign twice fearing, mistakenly, that I am operating some kind of fraud! If the banks insist on paper rubbings, thus suggesting DaC technology is worthless, are they prepared to provide an imprint machine that will give a more readable copy of the credit card over the miserable reproduction I can currently achieve? Placing the credit card under three paper slips only gives an embossed imprint on the two flimsy bottom copies, with just the blank top copy being of a quality that will accept a signature.

David S. Lessman (D19)

Warren Smith, DaC Financial Controller responds: Dear David, I would like to clear up your confusion by answering each of your points and giving you a brief explanation as to why we do the things the way we do them. Firstly, you are equating the act of getting the authorisation code with proving the card is present. This is a common misconception among drivers. As you rightly say, you are not allowed to key a card into the terminal. But if you did, you would still get an auth code as you would with a swipe, but only with the words 'swiped on the till roll' means the card is present. It is on this slip that you require a signature.

Secondly DaC technology is not worthless, but like all technology it is limited and our limit is the periphery of the M25. If you are out of range you will not get a signal and therefore not be able to print from the terminal. It is only then that you need to make rubbing of the card and get a signature on the second copy (after calculating the fare and handling charge correctly) that you keep. Only one signature required – why did you ask your passengers to sign twice? Both the 'swiped on the till roll' and the rubbing of the card show that the card is present and so we satisfy the requirements of the bank. We still however get drivers that key cards into the terminal and if we receive notification for a chargeback on these transactions, then those drivers will lose their fare, as they would not have followed the correct Dial-a-Cab procedure.

BBC and Addison Lee

ads – the Beeb respond...

The May Call Sign contained an article by DaC driver Divyesh Ruparelia (V59). He

had complained to this mag about BBC presenter Tim Westwood, who on his digital Radio 1Xtra programme kept mentioning Addison Lee. Divyesh had previously complained to the Beeb but got no response, so he asked Call Sign to try. The Beeb then responded...

Dear Mr Ruparelia

Thanks for your e-mail regarding Tim Westwood's broadcast on 13 April 2010. I understand you felt Tim mentioned the private hire firm Addison Lee too often and thus broke the BBC's Editorial Guidelines on advertising. I've since liaised with the Executive Producer of the programme, Andy Worrell, who explained:

"As the Executive Producer for Tim Westwood's show, I do take on board your comments regarding Tim's reference to Addison Lee during his show on 13 April. Striking a balance between reflecting the real commercial world in our output and avoiding undue prominence or promotion of products and brands, poses a test for us as broadcasters. In Tim's defence, I would say that the remark came about as the result of an innocent question regarding the car Tinchy Stryder drove, rather than direction promotion. I will have a conversation with Tim and the production team to remind them of the BBC's guidelines however."

I trust this explains the BBC's view on this topic and thanks once again for taking the time to contact the BBC.

Andrew Martin

Divisional Advisor, BBC Complaints

Not ideal, but I doubt that Tim Westwood will be so careless again ...Ed

The art of taxi driving...?

Sir

I was rather bemused by the letter from **Keith Holbrook (T92)** in the *May Call Sign* regarding the state of the trade. As the owner of a Fairway of some 930,000 miles and quite a lot of years experience, my work has hardly changed. The majority of work is still the middle classes and tourists; the biggest change being the advent of the mobile phone, which is usually the first thing that clients attend to. If I may venture some thoughts regarding passengers, the prime objective is to convey them to their destination safely and swiftly.

Your vehicle should be clean and odour-friendly, your dress sober and clean. Your driving is more important than the vehicle and smooth braking and accelerating with no violent manoeuvres is *de rigueur*. Talk only when spoken to, remembering that the client is hiring a private space, so keep the partition closed. Music should be soft and neutral, I find copies of the *Guardian* and *Mail* on the rear shelf a welcome extra. Cough sweets and

tissues kept handy is an often an appreciated touch.

If you must drive an oversized van conversion with doors closing like crematorium curtains then so be it, but SatNav and copies of *The Sun* are out, as is the awful hearing aid type of phone attachment. And few passengers appreciate the egotistical ravings of a driver.

Many tourists prefer the shape of the taxi they saw in the brochure, along with Routemasters and red phone boxes.

Finally, keeping a reliable cab going is way ahead in the saving the planet stakes, as the carbon cost of manufacturing and the use of shrinking resources to make a new cab are grossly excessive. You know you are doing a professional service when you hear a quiet "thank you for a lovely journey" at the end of the trip. Surely fair reward for a job well done.

Joseph Batty (W90)

Thanks for the letter Joseph, your point is well made. One problem is that there are many out there in the passenger world that equate good with new. The other problem is that not every 900.000 Fairway is as well looked after as yours is ...Ed

Taxis and supermarkets!

Dear Alan

I would like to ask **Paul Dacosta (L68)**, who wrote in the *May Call Sign* that he would be losing out if he tried to undercut minicabs, where his partner goes shopping? Does she go to the corner shop or does she shop at the supermarkets? The reason supermarkets do so well is because they apparently undercut the corner shop. Assuming it's the supermarket, while there does she buy just what she needs or if she sees some bargains, does she buy those too because she is saving more money buying them there? Our situation could be similar to that. If we offer rides a bit cheaper, would it not encourage our clients to start using us more because they are saving money on trips? It is time we worried less about what was on the meter and more about how much we can take in an hour!

Ivor Belkin (C97)

I think we have to be careful here because once you start to reduce prices what would happen if the competition then reduced theirs? Would we reduce ours again? Don't forget that the competition couldn't care less about what their drivers earn, because if they don't like it they can go elsewhere and someone else will always be waiting to take their place. However, it is interesting that the PCO have only recently allowed drivers to charge below the meter should they want to ...Ed

Mailshot



Taking the Mike?

Hello Alan,

Having just read the *May Call Sign* article by **Mike Son**, I have been left a little shocked at his apparent naivety. Mike Son seems slightly nonplussed as to why we, from time to time, have to endure the very random and rare PCO and police checks. The reason is simple; there are a sizable number of taxi drivers out there amongst us who are Yellow Badge drivers and a number that do not even have a badge, be it green or yellow. These drivers are not just cheekily picking up a fare should they happen to be dropping off in town, they drive straight in assuming they have as much right as us! Some pop an airport pass holder onto their windscreen just to look a bit authentic and may chuck an LTDA badge holder around their neck with no badge on the end, obviously as that might be seen. You may have realised how sometimes the work picks up a bit when there is an event at the ExCel, so there's obviously no need to come into town on those days. Food for thought? I may have misinterpreted Mike's article, but I for one welcome the checks whether you are POB or not, most punters would be more than understanding once told its a security check.

Alec Wilkey (W83)

At the risk of offending a Board member, I agree with you Alec! Mike allowed himself to throw into a series of excellent articles concerning our trade, a piece on the PCO / TfL where he allowed his anti-minicab feelings to encroach onto his main point – they were still hanging up on street corners. Call Sign has, over the years, given much publicity to the fact that during quiet periods, yellow badge drivers were working in town and asked that the authorities try to do something about it (several were recently caught on the Eurostar rank). Now they are, and it may be inconvenient for us but if it catches out yellow badge drivers then that can only be a good thing because in my view, a suburban driver deliberately working in town is no better than a touting minicab driver and if anyone tells me that it's better a yellow badge than a tout, I swear I'll scream! ...Ed

Going back in time...

Dear Al,

I was interested in the **Eddie Goodhall (S26)** article (*May Call Sign*) regarding **Jack Taylor's** war cry of *Cover the Work*. I can go back even a few years earlier to the early sixties and dispatcher / Board member **Bernie Lyons (B45)**. He used to plead with us to cover the work with the saying: "Come on gents, you can only put money into the bank

– not diesel! It doesn't matter if you use a gallon a day more – you'll earn more in the long run."

These are words I have never forgotten all these years later and because of that I have always earned a good living on ODRTS / DaC...

Gerald Webber (E11)

Thanks for the letter Gerald. Bernie Lyons served the Society for many years, finally retiring in 1967 through ill health. He died later that year at the age of 52 and the Board of the time decided as a mark of respect to never re-issue the B45 call sign again. Many years later, due to a long waiting list of drivers, it returned and the current driver honoured with that call sign is Serdar Eryuzlu ...Ed

Selling your cab...

Alan,

Could you let me know how I can advertise the sale of my cab through *Call Sign* please? In addition, how do I arrange the advert to go out over the terminal?

Mark Gower (A32)

I'm publishing Mark's letter because I get quite a number of similar ones asking about advertising their cabs for sale. I used to have a page of 'cabs for sale' ads but received several complaints that because Call Sign is monthly, had they sold their cab early on in the month or even prior in a private sale, their phone would continue ringing with enquiries. Otherwise I had no problems doing it. The mag goes on-line as well, so a few drivers were getting phone calls for months afterwards! There were also complaints when messages went out over driver's terminals saying that they were getting fed up with the stream of 'for sale' ads. So now the only option is to put the ad onto the driver's notice board in the DaC rear reception. I wish I could help more ...Ed

RMT and tachographs – Bob Oddy responds

Dear Editor

Your readers will be aware that the LTDA has during recent months, expressed concern that the RMT union has supported the introduction of a restriction on taxi drivers' working hours and the fitting of tachographs in all taxis. In the *May 2010* edition of *Call Sign* you provided **Eddie Lambert (V27)**, the outgoing chairman of the RMT London Taxi Branch, an opportunity to outline the RMT's official position on this very controversial issue. Eddie denied that the RMT were pursuing such a policy and stated that the RMT

"saw no need for tachographs in London taxis". This statement is untrue. In October 2009, the RMT in its official response to the Department for Transport's Review of the Domestic Drivers' Hours Rules, stated that the current restrictions should be extended to include "all drivers who carry passengers" including taxi drivers. The RMT also stated that the fitting of tachographs should be made mandatory. Eddie would be well advised to remember that official responses to Government Consultations are a matter of public record.

Bob Oddy

LTDA General Secretary

Open letter to London's taxi drivers

Dear Colleagues

The London Taxidivers Fund for Underprivileged Children was established in 1928 by a group of well-intentioned cab drivers with the primary aim of taking London underprivileged children on days out to the seaside. Almost all of the children who went on those trips were financially bereft and identifiable as children worthy of a day out at the cab driver's expense. As the years moved forward, the committee expanded its constitution and started introducing schemes such as buying equipment for homes and hospitals, and also helping out individual children - including cab drivers children - with a variety of things to make their lives more worthwhile and tolerable. All this was done with the best of intentions and the committee's motives were never questioned about the type of children they were helping. In those far-off days, it was left to committee members to best determine how the funds that were donated were spent and what type of children benefited from its actions. The drivers who went on the outings never 'looked for clues' about the children, but relied on the committee to make the right decisions. Our fund now has a substantial database of drivers who regularly come on our outings and we thank them for doing so, as without them we could not function properly. Like the drivers of years ago, they ask no questions about the children but rely on the committee's integrity. Nevertheless we now have a problem.

It seems there are some drivers who decline to join our outings because they do not think that the children we are helping are in any way underprivileged and so miss out on what is traditionally a really important time in helping those children. Please allow me to remind you, long gone are the days when poor children walked about with their butts hanging out of their trousers and holes in their shoes, these days they are more likely to be wearing *Gap* track suits with *Nike* trainers, even

Mailshot



though these clothes are very likely hand-me-downs and maybe the only decent clothes the child has, and there's the rub. What the driver who looks at these children does not see is the hidden, usually unspoken problem, the child who has been sexually abused for most of its life, the mental scars of a child frightened to death every night when his father comes home drunk, the mental anguish of someone who is physically abused with a belt or a stick just for saying the wrong thing, a terminal health problem that you don't know about, children surviving day to day in a woman's refuge praying their father does not find them, 'Gingerbread' and foster home children, etc. All of our children are 'special needs' in one way or another and deserve all the help we can give them. None of our children have the privileges that we as cab drivers can give our own children.

I could go on, but I think you get the point. Being underprivileged does not always mean it is visible, not every child can be in a wheelchair, or walk with callipers, some children are severely deaf, but you would never know it to look at them, some are refugees from war torn countries who will never get over their scars, lots of our children are from various ethnic backgrounds who may feel lost in today's world. The list is endless and unfortunately it will probably never end, there will always be a need for our cab trade charities.

So I say to all those drivers old and new, come on these outings, maybe starting with our trip to Southend on 13th July, make a difference to a child's life, don't question the type of child we ask you to take, these children are not chosen lightly, (yes, we are aware of the 'ordinary' child who goes to the same school and has to accompany the group but sometimes we have no choice) we are in constant touch with various organisations making sure we get things as tight as possible. One day it could be a child you know who you want us to help but who may not 'look the part'. Thank you for taking the trouble to read this, I hope to see you on one of our outings.

Malcolm Shaffron.

Hon Sec, London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children

DaC's knights of the road

To my knights of the road at Dial-a-Cab, I can but use words to thank you all so much for the kindness you have shown to me and my late husband Norman whenever we used our TaxiCards. My rheumatoid arthritis may stop me running or even walking too well, but it will never stop me smiling and when

you drivers smile back in return – as you always do – it helps make my day that much better. And of course I mustn't forget to thank Carol Carpenter and your call takers at Dial-a-Cab. I can't see them but I can hear the smiles in their voices. You are all my knights of the road and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart...

Carol Plaskett

London SW1

Thanks for the lovely words Carol ...Ed

Australians and London taxis...

Hi Alan,

A neighbour of mine has just returned from the UK visiting his son who lives in the Barbican. I had given him DaC's phone number (naturally) so that if he needed a cab he could call. I gave him as many insights into London as I could, using aerial shots taken from the Flying Eye, the Master Atlas and walks around the city. He used cabs on a few occasions, two of which he came into contact with one of DaC's drivers, who I think I've correctly identified as **Debbie Hope (W18)**. He was staying in apartments in Baltic St, beneath which is a cafe run by a Turk. This particular morning he was picking up a coach for a tour at the Park Plaza, Lancaster Gate, departing at 7.30am. He went down for breakfast and talking to the owner was asked if he had booked a cab? When told he hadn't, the owner took him round the corner into Old St to that scruffy little minicab office near the junction. He said he needed a cab for 6.45am

but was told no and that it would pick him up at 7am! He expressed concern as to whether it would get them there in time. But so far as the scab owner was concerned, it was take it or leave it! They accepted and needless to say the scab had not arrived by 7.05, so they walked down to the junction of Baltic and Goswell and that's where they hailed Debbie. She got them there in time and gave them her mobile number and that of her husband **Duncan (R52)**. They did phone on another occasion, to which she duly obliged but on the third occasion, when going to Paddington for the Heathrow Express to go home, Debbie and Duncan were flying to Scotland, so he again hailed a street cab. Chatting to this driver, he learned he had a son in Oz and another one in the US. My neighbour then told him about me being an ex-DaC driver. When he dropped them at Paddington, he insisted on getting the bags out. He only had one driver who he considered a little 'off' with the rest being friendly and courteous. He also said that Debbie Hope was delightful! So well done Debbie and thank you from an ex-DaC driver for being so kind and helpful to my neighbour.

Be lucky,

Howard Sales (Ex-A11)

Many older drivers will remember Howard Sales (ex-A11) who helped train so many drivers at the time of Dial-a-Cab originally going over from voice to data transmission in 1988. He later emigrated to Brisbane, Australia. Howard still reads each issue of Call Sign online ...Ed

Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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

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

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

The cost?

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

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

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