

May 2010



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*Just what do they
discuss nowadays
at Board meetings!*



*Jim's strangely logo'd taxi
bits the movies!*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

List of theatres and shows on in the West End, which hasn't appeared here since March 2000...

Theatre	Address	Show
Adelphi Theatre	Strand WC2E 7NA	Love Never Dies
Aldwych Theatre	Aldwych WC2B 4DF	Dirty Dancing
Almeida Theatre	Almeida Street N1 1TA	Ruined
Ambassadors Theatre	West Street WC2H 9N	Stomp
Apollo Theatre	Shaftesbury Avenue W1V 7HD	Debbie Reynolds till 9/5/10
Apollo Theatre	Shaftesbury Avenue W1V 7HD	All My Sons opens 27/5/10
Apollo Victoria Theatre	Wilton Rd SW1	Wicked
Arts Theatre	Great Newport Street WC2H 7JB	Naked Boys Singing
Barbican Theatre	Silk St EC2Y 8DS	Les Miserables
Cambridge Theatre	Earlham Street WC2	Chicago
Comedy Theatre	Panton St SW1	Mrs Warren's Profession
Criterion Theatre	Piccadilly Circus W1	39 Steps The
Dominion Theatre	Tottenham Court Rd W1P OAG	We Will Rock You
Donmar Warehouse	Earlham Street WC2H 9LD	Polar Bears
Drury Lane Theatre Royal	Catherine St WC2B 5JF	Oliver!
Duchess Theatre	Catherine St WC2	Fantasticks The
Duke of York's Theatre	St Martin's Lane WC2	Bedroom Farce
Fortune Theatre	Russell St WC2B 5HH	Woman In Black The
Garrick Theatre	Charing Cross Rd WC2	All The Fun Of The Fair
Gielgud Theatre	Shaftesbury Ave. W1D 7 ES	Hair
Haymarket Theatre Royal	Haymarket SW1	Sweet Charity
Her Majesty's Theatre	Haymarket SW1Y 4QL	Phantom Of The Opera The
Leicester Sq Theatre Basement	6 Leicester Place WC2H 7BP	Austen's Women till 9/5/10
Leicester Sq Theatre Basement	6 Leicester Place WC2H 7BP	Children Of Darkness 11-29/5/10
London Palladium Theatre	Argyll Street W1A 3AB	Sister Act
Lyceum Theatre	Wellington St WC2E 7DA	Lion King The
Lyric Theatre	Shaftesbury Avenue W1D 7 ES	Thriller Live
New London	Drury Lane WC2B 5PW	War Horse
Noel Coward Theatre	St Martin's Lane WC2N 4AH	Enron
Novello Theatre	Aldwych WC2	Grumpy Old Women Live
Old Vic Theatre	Waterloo Road / The Cut	Real Thing The
Palace Theatre	Shaftesbury Ave W1V 8AY	Priscilla Queen Of The Desert
Phoenix Theatre	Charing Cross Rd WC2H OJP	Blood Brothers
Piccadilly Theatre	Denman Street W1	Grease
Playhouse Theatre	Northumberland Avenue WC2	Dreamboats & Petticoats
Prince Edward Theatre	Old Compton Street W1V 6HS	Jersey Boys
Prince Of Wales Theatre	Coventry Street W1	Mamma Mia
Queen's Theatre	Shaftesbury Ave W1V 8BA	Les Miserables
Royal Court Theatre Downstairs	Sloane Square SW1W 8AS	Posh
Royal Court Theatre Upstairs	Sloane Square SW1W 8AS	Empire closes 1/5/10
Royal Court Theatre Upstairs	Sloane Square SW1W 8AS	Ingredient X opens 19/5/10
Savoy Theatre	The Strand WC2	Legally Blonde The Musical
St Martin's Theatre	West St WC2H 9NH	Mousetrap The
Shaftesbury Theatre	210 Shaftesbury Ave, WC2	---- No Shows in May '10 --
Trafalgar Studios 1 Theatre	Whitehall SW1	Holding The Man
Trafalgar Studios 2 Theatre	Whitehall SW1	Dirty White Boy
Vaudeville Theatre	Strand WC2	Private Lives
Victoria Palace Theatre	Victoria Street SW1E 5EA	Billy Elliot : The Musical
Wyndham's Theatre	Charing Cross Rd WC2H ODA	Avenue Q
Young Vic Theatre (Main House)	66 The Cut SE1 8LZ	Elegy For Young Lovers till 8/5/10
Young Vic Theatre (Main House)	67 The Cut SE1 8LZ	Joe Turner's opens 27/5/10
Young Vic Theatre (Maria Studio)	66 The Cut SE1 8LZ	Eurydice

For a full list of theatres, including fringe, sign up to the FREE UID. Simply go to www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click on *Free 70+page info*. For *What's On in May* click *What's On...* Well, what else!

from the editor's desk

Call Sign and the RMT

I have never made any bones about the fact that I am an LTDA member and that I believe it to be the best trade organisation to join because it already has far more taxi-driving members than all the others added together. However, even though **Call Sign** and/or **Dial-a-Cab** have found themselves under attack by some of the other driver organisations, I have always believed in the right to respond and over the years, I have published letters or articles by those that would criticise.

I also said when the RMT Taxi Branch came into being, round about the time of the Whitcomb Street demo, that I would never join an organisation that had Bob Crow as its leader. That hasn't changed. Whilst this trade could use a bit of militancy, I don't like Bob Crow's version of it. However, I have a lot of time for the RMT Taxi branch's outgoing Chairman, DaC driver **Eddie Lambert (V27)**. Eddie is one of the most trustworthy reps of any trade organisation that I have ever met and even though that representation is for the RMT, I dislike the fact that one trade paper is constantly attacking them, but without giving them an opportunity to respond. So **Call Sign** has done that in this issue and Eddie tells of the RMT's position re the Working Time Directive, Tachographs in taxis and what goes on between the RMT and the GMB. His answer is something that the trade should have the opportunity to see, whether they like the answer or not...

Fame!

Call Sign is often contacted by outside organisations asking for quotes, articles or interviews on various subjects concerning the London taxi business. Whether it's permission to take something from this mag's website or speaking to BBC Scotland, the BBC's excellent World Service or NBC, I always try to give Dial-a-Cab a plug and over the years this Society has become probably the best known circuit of all.

The best example came with long-time *Evening Standard* cartoonist Patrick Blower, who whenever he drew something with a London taxi, always put the DaC logo and phone number in it. Allen Togwell purchased many of them and the originals can be seen at DaC House. Now we have *The Sun's* favourite strip cartoon, *George and Lynne* trying to hail a cab in the street and guess whose logo is on it? I'll give you a clue; it's not ComCab, RTG or Xeta! You can see the cartoon inside this issue, but however quiet it is – the dreaded 2 months following Easter – there is no disputing the fact that DaC is seen as the face of London taxis!

Election

Not too many general elections are looked forward with talk of all-night results parties and the like, but as we get to within days of Thursday 6 May, there still seems to be a large 'floating' contingent who still aren't sure where to put their cross – and you can add me to that list! However, whilst I'm not sure who will get my vote, I know for certain who won't – and that's our unelected PM, Gordon Brown. Why? Well, yes, I want to see fairness in society but not continually at the expense of people such as those reading this. Do we go to work as a hobby or because we need the money? Well, I for one am fed up with being told that this country must do more for the working class and to help them by making people



such as me – who will probably never be able to fully retire – pay through the nose for everything via one tax or another. We in this business have to work and I'm just sick of being spoken about by Alistair Darling and his predecessor – er, what was his name – as having to support the world by constantly paying more.

No doubt you'd be surprised to know that our diesel is the cheapest in Europe – until HMG get their grubby hands on it. After they add their tax to spend on some scheme or other that will benefit no one that has to work, our diesel becomes the most expensive in Europe.

In December 2003, the Labour government increased stamp duty when you buy a house, from 1% to 3% on properties over £250,000. If you are a first time buyer then HMG (posing as HMRC) let you get away with no stamp duty. Of course there are only a small percentage of first time buyers who can get a mortgage anyway, so that leaves the rest of us.

If you are thinking of moving home and spot a nice house somewhere for £250,000 then you will have to donate to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs the princely sum of £2500. Buy a home for £250,001 and that tax will shoot up to £7500 – but many areas don't possess homes below £250K and that isn't referring to Knightsbridge or Chelsea. Why £250,000? Well to catch people like us who can't really afford it. I'm not in the slightest bit jealous of anyone who has done well in life, can afford a £5million pad and while finding the added tax to be irritating, can easily afford it. No, we in the taxi industry, together with those in similar ones who earn enough to live and possibly have a decent holiday and the occasional nice meal out are the ones this government aims its taxes at – both hidden and otherwise – and they will not get my vote this time. Who will? Hopefully I'll have decided by midnight of 5 May...

Carole Fresco

One of the most moving **Call Sign** articles over the past 12 months was written by my wife, Linda, in the September issue. Called simply: *Thank you for being my friend*, it told of the friendship she had with Carole Fresco. Tragically, Carole died of cancer in August at a very young age, but even now that article keeps resurfacing on the internet with those who moved from the area and perhaps lost contact, phoning to say they had just seen it. Carole has left a void that can never be filled as well as a devastated husband in TAXI columnist, Al Fresco.

With so many asking to be told when Carole's

memorial stone is to be consecrated, I promised to publish the info. It will be at Cheshunt Jewish cemetery, Bulls Cross Ride on 20 June. The service commences at 2pm. You don't have to be Jewish to attend...

The end?

Well that's another **Call Sign** year behind me – the completion of my thirteenth year in the Editor's hot seat and just five months away from Jerry Craig's record of thirteen years and five months – although back then and for some years, the mag came out every two months. Will I beat Jerry's period at the helm? Well that isn't in my hands, but whatever the Dial-a-Cab Board decide about my future, I must say that I have enjoyed every second of the job and appreciate the incredible freedom I have always had in producing a magazine that I hope many of you have enjoyed reading. I consider the position of Editor to be an honour and I am proud to say that other than having the traditional month of June off each year, during my tenure there has not been one single month where an issue has not appeared.

I am also proud of the fact that I took over a twelve-page black and white mag and over time turned it into a 36 page full colour one, with the cost now being less than it was back then – thanks mainly to the use of computerisation.

Of course, if you were to believe the internet's Mr No-Name – *The Nissen Hut's* "Russell Wilson" – then the DaC BoM write this magazine. Of course I don't really care what this expelled former DaC driver says, most readers know that **Call Sign** is edited only by me and that even Brian Rice – although reading it before publication – never attempts to edit it. And unlike Mr No Name, anyone that writes in **Call Sign** has to give their name because again, unlike him, they aren't afraid of being identified. And as I've said before, if anyone can show me over my 13-year tenure a case where one single driver has been expelled because of something they wrote in this mag, then I'll eat "Russell Wilson's" hat!

I've just taken another quick look at his blog to see whether – at last – it contained anything of use. Sadly it continues on its merry way just attacking others but not giving them the opportunity to respond. Mind you, as most drivers seem to read the other website (edited by Thomas the Tank but whose name is common knowledge for anyone interested) at *The Anderson Shelter*, I don't suppose Mr No Name poses any relevance anyway! So at the risk of repeating myself, whilst *The Anderson Shelter* has attacked Dial-a-Cab in the past, generally speaking it is an excellent purveyor of up-to-date taxi info and leaves Mr No Name standing.

But back to me! If this is it, then can I thank all those people who have written letters and articles over the years because that's what has made **Call Sign** so widely read with our on-line version having the biggest readership of any London taxi mag – including the one that "...has more readers than the rest put together!" This mag used the internet when blogs and website were names that few had even heard of, while my 2 email addresses have been around since my first issue back in 1997. But as usual, with or without me, there will be no June issue...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

And just as we thought it was getting better!

Just as we began to see business increase slightly, we were suddenly hit with the *Asb from Iceland*, which in turn has had a detrimental effect on the London economy as well as the rest of Europe too, due to the disruption forced onto the aviation industry.

March 2010 was the first time in two years that the Society had shown an increase over the corresponding month of the previous year. In other words, we turned over more in March 2010 than we did in March 2009 and suddenly the world looked to be a slightly better place.

Then just as suddenly, the volcano by the unpronounceable *Eyjafjallajökull glacier* in Iceland decided to erupt for the first time in 200 years. Someone once said that timing was everything, but I think they may have got it slightly wrong this time as the eruption grounded most European flights and had a detrimental effect on our business. It stopped many tourists from coming here and those that couldn't leave London, just ran out of money with shopping centres such as Oxford Street reporting a 10% + drop in takings in just one week.

However, no matter what the situation, there is always someone or something that will endeavour to capitalise on other people's misfortune. In this instance, it was other forms of transport and hotel accommodation.

Several days before writing this and following BA boss Willie Walsh's decision to go up and about in a 747 to "prove" that in his opinion it was safe to fly, UK airports were given clearance to resume services and as I sit here tapping away at the keyboard, that situation has been maintained. The Royal Navy has come out with flying colours – but few others have.

I always remember at school one of my teachers explaining that the first rule of economics was greed! That was also portrayed in the 1987 film, *Wall Street*, where Michael Douglas played the fictional character of Gordon Gekko. In the movie, Gekko states that 'Greed is Good', a saying that may well have epitomised the 1980s and quite probably continued right up until the financial crash of a few years ago. From that time on, the esteem in which brokers and bankers were held has somewhat diminished or indeed for some, even evaporated totally!

However, my point is that we never seem to learn and whenever an opportunity to make money from other's misfortune comes around, many just seem to jump onto the bandwagon. The more polite among them call it supply and demand!

I recently read in the *Daily Telegraph* various comments on how different companies were exploiting the situation. For instance, although Eurostar trains had been fully booked and transported an extra 50,000 passengers while the airlines were grounded, the operator was charging £223 for a single ticket from Paris to London, which is substantially more than the £69 the fare will return to now that the eruption is subsiding and life returns to something approaching normality.

The cost of taking a car from Folkestone to Calais went up to £147, but that fare will eventually return to £53. Again, while all domestic flights were grounded Virgin Trains were charging £93 for the cheapest one-way fare from London to Glasgow, which is more than double the price you would be charged the following month.

On the day the airlines were first grounded - Thursday 15 April - the cheapest available room at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Heathrow was £355. With no 'eruption disruption' that price drops back to the regular low rate of £99.

The *Telegraph* article went on to say that two banks, Nat West and RBS - which we know are really just one - had increased limits on credit cards 'where necessary' to help customers cover unexpected bills for emergency travel and hotel arrangements.



When a spokesperson was interviewed from these organisations, they all voiced the same rehearsed piece that they were not 'cashing in' on the situation, *they were just reacting to current trends and not exploiting a supply and demand syndrome*. All I can say is that I hope the public - when things return to normal - remember those that exploited the situation. Perhaps they weren't doing anything illegal, but I'd place it in the unethical tray.

Although flights are pretty much back to normal now - probably thanks to night-time landings at Heathrow, authorities hastily arranging for late buses and the Jubilee Line running later than usual, they also, of course, required the assistance of the London Taxi industry for drivers to

work through the night in order to transport some of these passengers.

I know we have a reputation that some like to portray of being greedy, but I bet you will not find any taxi drivers that were demanding treble the normal fare and exploiting the situation!

Summer!

We have hardly had a winter to remember, but if Spring is anything to go by then it could be a nice summer. We certainly could use one!

So as there is no June issue of *Call Sign*, can I wish to those of you who are going away for a deserved break a very relaxing time, untroubled by any financial problems.... or volcano eruptions!

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab



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Glasgow NHS "Scandal"

PH Company Denies Gangland Dealings

The April issue of *Call Sign* contained an article written by **Robert Dunabie**, Secretary of **Glasgow Taxis** - a driver's cooperative run on similar lines to **Dial-a-Cab**. The Glasgow taxi company have a fleet approaching 1000 purpose built cabs, but the story of their involvement with an NHS tender is nothing short of astonishing.

They had serviced the NHS account for many years with any necessity for contracts being rare. But in 2007 and in order to comply with European law, **Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS Trust** invited interested parties to submit tenders for the supply of taxi services for the various hospitals under their control. The £2 million contract accounted for around 15,000 trips per month. Glasgow Taxis submitted a tender and were later advised that their tender had been successful, but this was rescinded following a legal challenge from a private hire company that claimed Glasgow Taxis had not properly followed the correct tendering process. They re-tendered. The contract required vehicles carrying 5/6 persons with a safety partition and to be wheelchair accessible. It seemed certain that Glasgow Taxis would win.

Yet they soon heard that **Network Private Hire** - once at the centre of a money-laundering probe - had won the contract and that they would be given time to bring a percentage of their cars up to the level demanded in the tender.

The **Scottish Taxi Federation** became involved and they in turn asked the **Scottish Government** to step in. **Strathclyde police** then issued a warning to the Health Board that they should be wary of dealing with a group (Network Cars) that were alleged to have "links to



Chief Constable Steve House doesn't want Xpress cars to be licensed
Pic courtesy Life Magazine

organised crime." But the NHS board refused to bend to pressure and on 15th December 2009, the decision to award the contract to Network Private Hire was ratified.

Now we have been told that Strathclyde Police have officially objected to Network's bid. In a statement, Strathclyde **Chief Constable Steve House**, said:

"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."

In the meantime, Network Private Hire have changed their name to Xpress Private Hire. Six years ago, Network were raided by police under *Operation Magpie*, in which police seized £5million of assets. But Xpress boss **John Cassidy** - in charge of Network since 2005 - has insisted that he has no links with any organised crime ring, that his company was a "family run business" and that the police had been "torturing him."

So what does the Scottish NHS say? Well their response was that even if the firm were to lose their licence - something the police want to see - it need not stop Xpress from getting the contract. The NHS view is that even being an unlicensed booking office would not prohibit the minicab firm from providing a cab service.

Did we say astonishing? More when we get it...

Olympic view from the A12



The Anish Kapoor Arcelor Mittal Orbit Tower will stand by the Olympic Stadium

For the many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers that make their way into town along the A12, the growth of the Olympic Park site is soon to have something out of the ordinary poking out of its centre.

Said to be twice the height of Nelson's Column and leaving behind Manhattan's Statue of Liberty, the **Arcelor Mittal Orbit** structure will dominate the skyline close to the Olympic Stadium. The downside is that it will cost over £19million to put up, although a large proportion of the funding will come from steel magnate **Lakshmi Mittal**, said to be Europe's richest man. The artist selected for the structure is **Anish Kapoor**, with the engineering side from **Cecil Balmond**.

Mayor of London **Boris Johnson** said he is thrilled to see the project go ahead. When *Call Sign* showed several DaC drivers a mock-up of the tower, none were complimentary with comments ranging from an East London spaghetti junction to an Olympic sized cock-up!

What it will certainly do is to give the A12 drivers something different to look at!

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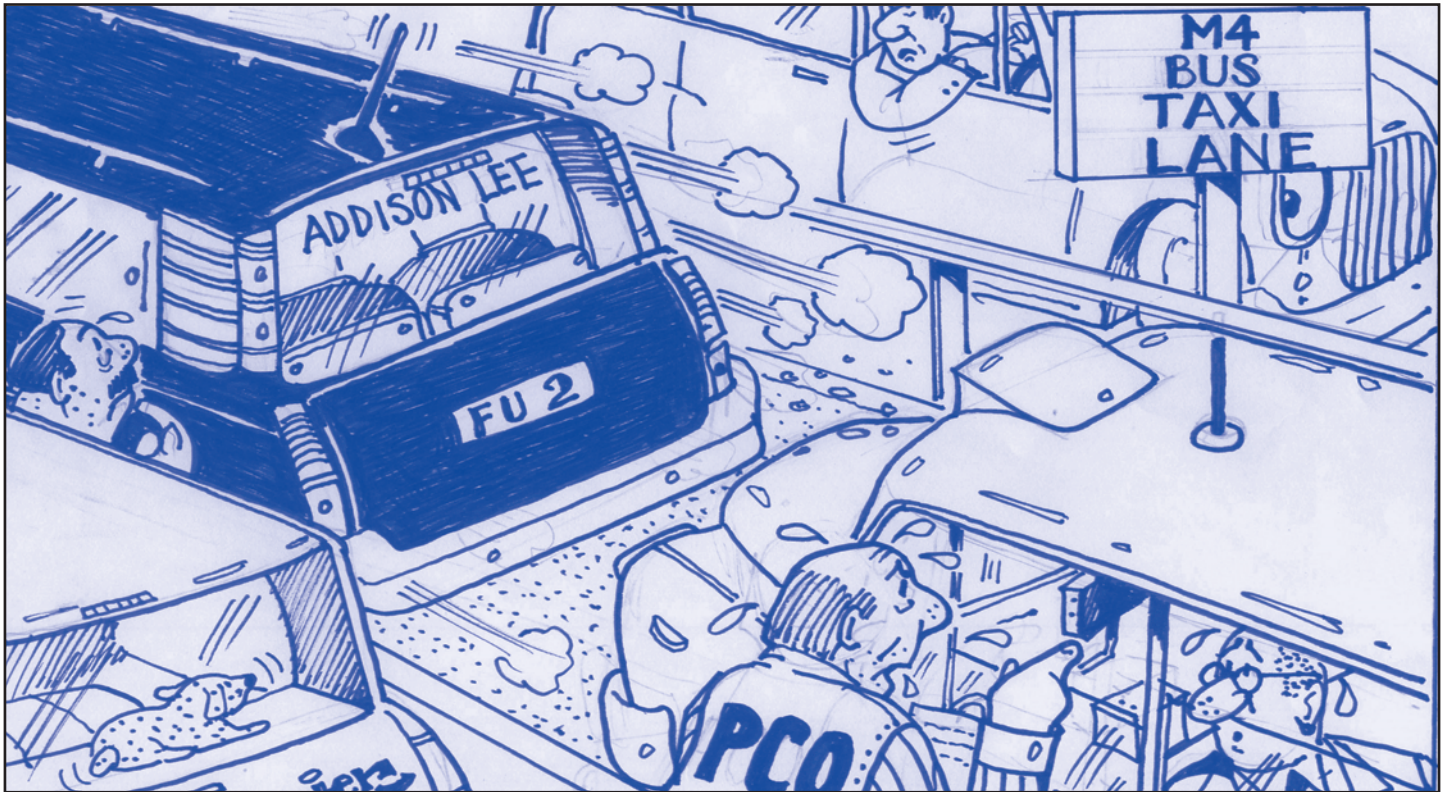
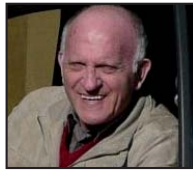
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Jerys World



"Never mind about Addison Lee in the bus lane, why have you got that unauthorised sign on your partition? Don't you read our book of rules???"

The Mayor's Answer to Pollution...

Confirming a **Call Sign** story from the last issue that even the *Evening Standard* didn't have concerning taxi emissions, **London Mayor Boris Johnson** has now set out detailed plans for a public consultation in a bid to tackle air pollution that it is hoped will help London meet legal targets for particulate matter by 2011. As a result, it is hoped that 150 miles of the capital's dirtiest roads will meet NO2 legal targets by 2015.

Clearing the Air, the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy, contains a range of pollution-busting measures to reduce concentrations of particulate matter (PM10) by an estimated 10-20% at priority areas such as Marylebone Road, Euston Road, Marble Arch, Hyde Park Corner, Victoria Embankment, Upper Thames Street and Tower Hill.

London is currently on schedule to meet PM10 legal limits by 2011, but poor weather often causes the limits to be breached and actions to target these areas will be undertaken in partnership with local boroughs and TfL following months of detailed discussion. Some of the suggestions include power washing the roads to remove harmful particulates from traffic, applying dust suppressants on road surfaces and something the cab trade has been suggesting since Ken Livingstone was shown the door - change signal timings to smooth traffic flow!

The Mayor has also committed to work with taxi manufacturers to develop an "affordable taxi" that emits 60% less pollution by 2015 and a zero-emission taxi by 2020. The Mayor has already put forward propositions that will introduce age limits



Boris: Talking to manufacturers about developing a taxis that emits no fumes by 2020

for taxis. He suggests an extended scrap-age scheme to assist in the changeover.

The Mayor said: "We are taking tough action to clean up London's air by targeting measures where they will have the most impact. These are creating a city where buses and taxis are becoming progressively less polluting, where cycling and transport choices such as electric vehicles will become more widespread.

"As part of this drive for a cleaner city, from January 2012 I am proposing to push ahead with the inclusion of heavier vans and minibuses in the *Low Emission Zone*. We are also planning to introduce age limits on taxis to eradicate the oldest, dirtiest vehicles. As part of this

work, we are talking to manufacturers to develop a wonderful new black cab that emits no fumes by 2020. But London simply cannot crack this pressing problem alone, so I am calling on the Government to implement and provide adequate funding for initiatives that will tackle pollution in London. We've set out specific measures we are calling on Government to adopt that we believe will enable compliance with all limit values."

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A prototype electric version of the **Mercedes Vito** taxi has been designed and built in just six months by a consortium of British technology companies. Part-funded by the Government's *Advantage Niche Vehicle Research & Development Programme*, the prototype vehicle meets PCO requirements and can carry up to six people around 120 kilometres on a single six hour charge.

The E-Vito uses a new 70kW version of Zytek's proven electric drivetrain and a custom-designed Vocis gearbox built by Graziano. To maximise interior space, the vehicle has been converted to front wheel drive to allow the 35kWh Valence Li-Ion battery pack to be installed beneath the vehicle floor. By lowering the centre of gravity, the low mounting point also improves vehicle stability and ride quality. A steerable rear axle provides the 25ft turning circle.

The Vito electric drive uses existing engine mounting points with minor revisions and requires just three additional connections (water, high voltage electrics and low voltage electrics). It interfaces with all existing vehicle systems including ABS (Antilock Braking System), ESP (Electronic Stability Programme) and OBD (onboard diagnostics). Performance at city speeds is said to be "lively".

Zytek Automotive sales and marketing director Steve Tremble told **Call Sign** that all the technologies are market-ready and thoroughly proven in vehicles already in

The electric cab race is on!



The Vito electric version

production. "We could easily have electric taxis in service in-time for the 2012 London Olympics," he says.

The partners in the programme are Zytek, Valence Technology, Penso and Mercedes-Benz UK, which donated the base vehicle.

In the meantime, Manganese Bronze, parent company of the London Taxi Company, are working with electric vehicle maker Tanfield to make battery-powered taxis that were said to be ready to go into production before the end of the year. The **TX4E** is said

to have a top speed of 50mph, making it more desirable for in-town working rather than on the motorway. It is expected to be able to run for at least 100 miles (160 kilometres) on one charge of its innovative iron phosphate lithium-ion battery pack, but can also be topped up midway and has a 25% fast charge in one hour.












Both the Vito and TX4 electric versions would cost substantially more than ordinary taxis, but would be much cheaper to run at less than 4p a mile – well under half of the diesel versions. Both would escape the "showroom tax" that began on April 1 and would benefit greatly from reduced road tax.

In the meantime, Kit Malthouse, Deputy to Boris Johnson, has spoken of London's plans to construct a "hydrogen highway" – a network of filling stations to provide fuel for hydrogen vehicles that are planned to be in service prior to the 2012 London Olympics. These include 50 LTC taxis, 50 cars/vans (for police and fire brigade) and 8 buses.

Regardless of whether it's electric or hydrogen, it does look as though diesel is on the way out...

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When a **Dial-a-Cab** logo'd taxi was seen flying along their screens in BBC TV's *Mike Bushell Sports News* followed by the driver then being interviewed, **Call Sign's** phone began ringing incessantly for two days with drivers telling us they had seen it and could we explain what it was about? So we set up a meeting...

"Hello, I'm **Bill Cornish, Tango 76**," was how the quietly spoken, slightly built DaC subscriber introduced himself in an unassuming manner to **Call Sign's** reporter.

Bill was the **2005 UK Tai Chi Champion** in the Under 75Kg weight bracket, beating all-comers in this prestigious competition and bringing home a Gold Medal in the process. But what is Tai Chi and how did Bill get into the martial arts regime to such a degree that he became the UK Champion?

"**Tai Chi - or HaoTaiji - is an ancient Chinese healing art using a series of gentle focused exercises for mind and body**," Bill explained. "It is also referred to as the ancient art of well-being. By increasing stamina, flexibility, relaxation and overall quality of life, the body's natural healing process is in turn, encouraged."

Bill continued by saying that Tai Chi consisted of slow connected movements, used mainly to keep the body in good shape and to relieve stress. Accomplished practitioners can also use its techniques for self-defence.

"By focussing the mind, you can open your skeleton joints and release a powerful force like an arrow being released from a bow. And just like the archer who decides to release the arrow when he wants to, you can release the force within yourself when you want to."

Going back to how it all started, Bill recounted how he used to run a snooker club attended by world class players such as Stephen Hendry and Ray Reardon, but was involved in a motorbike accident suffering whiplash and a damaged arm.

"I was later invited to attend a seminar on Tai Chi and it felt good. I felt comfortable with what I saw the body could be trained to do, and I was hooked," he said with a smile, adding that was now almost ten years ago.

Going into the art itself, Bill explained about the 13 internal requirements that have to be put into place at the same time - regardless of whether you are standing or sitting - in order to focus the body's natural strength. He demonstrated by slowly raising his arms above his head and very gently bringing them back down to waist level again, describing how he was opening his

DaC's Tai Chi Champ!



Bill in Tai Chi mode. Inset pic: Bill the DaC driver

shoulder, elbow and arm joints as he stood firmly rooted to the ground. He offered several other examples of the power that the human body can achieve when our specially selected reporter - himself a former Judo instructor - attempted to dislodge Bill from his chosen posture, but to no avail. Bill did not budge one inch and showed no sign of discomfort at being jostled.

Bill also told **Call Sign** that he studies under the guidance of his teacher and coach, Ugur Osman - himself a disciple of Grand Master Liu Jishun.

The art of Tai Chi goes back around 3000 years and was originally used on the battlefields of

Asia. Judging by the power of the human body as demonstrated by Bill, its use must have had a catastrophic effect on any foe.

On 25 September 2005, Bill won the coveted Gold Medal that he proudly wears today. He also continues to develop his mental and physical abilities.

If you are interested in learning more, or perhaps would like to join a class to take up this ancient craft, Bill would like to hear from you. Leaflets are available in Driver's Reception or you can call Bill Cornish on 07791 142170...

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HOW CAN WE WIN BACK OUR WORK?

Mike Son continues the debate he began in the January issue...

Sign that members consider Dial-a-Cab to be their Society, so perhaps our members could also help improve their revenue? A few years back during a previous downturn in the economy, the Board asked drivers to give to each of their passengers - whether an account, credit card or cash client - a Dial-a-Cab business card as the passenger left the cab. This proved to be quite successful and a number of enquiries led to accounts being opened. So please pick up a pack of business cards from drivers reception.

Technology

Technical advances in all areas of business and the reliance on new and innovative technologies has increased dramatically over the past few years. Advances in development of new interactive software and programmes built by the IT department at Dial-a-Cab has been astounding. New emphasis is being addressed as to how we can use different types of technologies to allow us to increase our market share of both the private and corporate public travelling sectors. Without going into specifics, our competitors should be very concerned about what Dial-a-Cab, its members, staff and Board will achieve in the very near future. Onward and upward ladies and gentlemen - and I do mean upward.

TfL/PCO

I don't know if it's my imagination, but whilst out working I've noticed an increase in the number of PCO and Police checks that

are made on drivers and taxis. Can someone - maybe from one of our representative organisations - tell me if this is correct because the minicab fraternity still seem to me to be hanging up on street corners and picking up fares illegally.

On one occasion, a TfL/PCO representative pulled me over and wanted to check my licence and examine the cab, OK, I have to adhere to that request, however, I had a passenger on board. At the time, I said yes, of course you can make your checks but you will have to pay for the passenger's extra cost in both time and fare. I was then told to move off without the checks! Come on fellows, what's going on? Has the Mayor given instructions to harass cab drivers and is there an agenda from the building by the Tower to decimate our industry by restricting the age of cabs allowed to be licensed? Is it to allow minicabs to use bus lanes? Is it allowing minicab drivers to have minimal checks on their suitability to drive fare-paying members of the public? Is the strategy to increase the number of minicabs on the streets leading up to the London Olympics - now just 26 months away?

Mayor Johnson, I know you read **Call Sign**, therefore can you let us know what your future plans are? After 45 years as a cab driver, I believe many others like me have a right to know...

Mike Son

DaC Special Projects

And so it goes on! Again I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the drivers that have contributed both verbally and responded in **Call Sign**. I understand the concerns and anxiety many have with the future of the trade and especially for the radio circuits. Nonetheless it was extremely gratifying that among the many responses, there were no political one-upmanships or discourteous comments as has been prevalent in the past. The comments and ideas that came from members was confirmation that all members consider **Dial-a-Cab** as their Society.

It appears there is now an increase in work. However, the marketing and promotion of any industry or service is paramount to that organisation's success. So here's the thing...

Sales Strategies

Introducing Dial-a-Cab to potential users and also contacting our existing clients for them to be assured of the high level of service we provide is high on the BoM's agenda. Our Sales Exec is doing her best to attract new business, but as any sales person will tell you, it can be a very difficult and sometimes soul-destroying job.

It is clear by reading driver's responses over the past months to my initial article in **Call**

ARE GEELY MAKING THEIR OWN TAXI???

In the July 2009 issue of **Call Sign**, we reported that Shanghai Maple Auto - the joint venture between Geely and LTI - were ready to sell the TX4 in China under the name of the Shanghai Englon TX4. It went on sale in the Chinese market with a price tag of around 220,000 yuan (approx £20,000). The Chinese TX4 gives buyers the choice of a 2.4litre manual petrol gearbox or a 2.5 automatic diesel cab. The international market also opened up to the joint venture.

With an annual capacity of up to 20,000 taxis, the July **Call Sign** estimated that the Shanghai factory would soon be producing over 90% of components for the London TX4. The recent announcement concerning the removal of TX4 body parts to the Chinese factory seem to help confirm that figure. We also estimated that because of the gradual shift to China, the price of a new TX4 could come down by around £2000 and possibly even more.

Since then, Geely have made more headlines with their purchase of Volvo from Ford. But so far as the taxi business is concerned, another Geely sensation could be about to break. Are they about to build their own version of the London taxi for sale in London and the UK?

Renamed as the Englon TXN, the new taxi was revealed at the Beijing Motor Show on 26th April.

LTI have already asked Geely to become the major shareholder in LTI, so could this be the beginning of the end for the Coventry company? Many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers have visited the Holyfield Road factory via **Call Sign** organised trips to watch with fascination how a sheet of metal becomes a TX4. They may also have spoken to the staff and know they are probably as loyal to the London taxi as any workers could be to a company. But the Chinese influence now seems to have become a torrent and could signal the demise of LTI as we know it.

The only question left to ask is this? Are Geely about to take over LTI completely? After all, if they can afford to buy Volvo nothing is impossible.

Managing Director of LTI, Peter Shillcock, told **Call Sign** in response: "LTI Vehicles have stated that the TXN Concept vehicle is not intended to replace the TX4 London Taxi. The TXN is a concept car that is intended for international markets. We have always said that our relationship with Geely would allow us to explore other vehicle designs and the TXN is the first example of this. This Concept Vehicle does not conform to UK disability legislation nor does it have the famous 25ft turning circle and therefore would not comply with PCO regulations for London. The vehicle is designed to showcase what we do best, which is our taxi knowledge and unique interior design ideas. This is definitely not the TX4 replacement and is aimed at international markets that need a smaller vehicle than the current London Taxi but would still benefit from our taxi experience with vehicle design. Manufacturers are always showing concept designs to test market reaction and refine their design ideas."

At a meeting on April 12, Geely President and Executive Director, Gui Shengyue, confirmed that they would probably buy more shares in Manganese Bronze Holding.



The new Geely TXN on show in Beijing

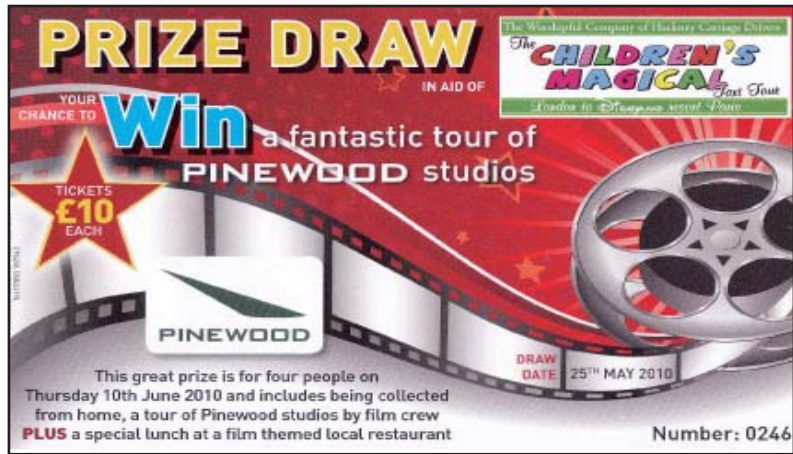


You can win a tour of the world's most famous film studios – Pinewood - including lunch for 4 people and be picked up and taken back home afterwards...!

EON Productions are responsible for making the James Bond films and through their kind donation of 007 related goods last year, they were able to make sure that with the proceeds raised, three taxis went on *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers Children's Magical Taxi Tour to the Disneyland Resort Paris*.

This year, their production colleagues at Pinewood Studios (where much of the 007 footage is shot) would like to try to raise enough funds for 10 taxis. They have organised a Grand Prize Draw within the film production industry and have opened it up to the licensed taxi trade as well, giving others a chance of winning the prize.

This amazing prize will consist of the following: A full day private tour for four people of Pinewood Studios by **Terry Bamber**, Production Manager from the James Bond Film Crew, James Bond expert and author and Editor of *Cinema Retro* magazine, **Dave Worrall** and **Julia Hilsdon** of Pinewood. Also Terry Bamber will present the winner with stills and a video of the day! The itinerary of the



You have to be in it to win it! Call Jim Rainbird NOW...

GRAND PRIZE DRAW

IN AID OF THE WCHCD CHILDREN'S MAGICAL TAXI TOUR...

prize day, **Thursday 10th June 2010**, will be:-
9am: Prize winners (four people) picked up from home.

1030: Arrive at Pinewood for coffee and to meet the team.

11am: Start tour of studios and visit *Technicolor* - the brand new state-of-the-art film and digital post production suite.

1pm: Drive to the film-themed restaurant close to Pinewood - The Palm Suite - for lunch.

2.20pm: Return to Pinewood and continue your tour visiting *Alpha Grips*, who supply the film industry with cranes, tracks and dollies etc for those amazing camera angles that make you wonder 'how on earth did they shoot that!' Visit the 007 stage and sets of *The Pirates of the Caribbean* films (subject to the shooting schedules of these productions) and the *Pinewood archives* to see clips of some of the iconic films

made there. Apart from the Bond films, hundreds of classics produced at the studios include Superman, The Pink Panther, Battle of Britain, Aliens, Bugsy Malone, Batman, Star Wars and of course... Carry On Cabby!

The day will finish at around 6pm and the winners will then be driven home.

The tickets will be strictly limited to 1000 and priced at £10 each. They are expected to sell out very quickly, so get in early to avoid disappointment.

The prize draw will take place on Tuesday 25th May 2010 at Pinewood Studios and the prize tour will take place on Thursday 10th June 2010.

If you would like any tickets, please contact Dial-a-Cab's Jim Rainbird on 07973 341 295.

All proceeds from ticket sales will go to The Children's Magical Taxi Tour...

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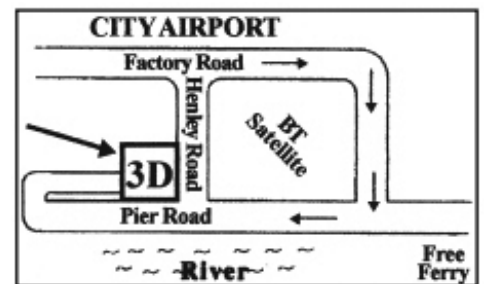
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When **Call Sign** recently met **Jeff Rowell (Y30)**, he didn't particularly look as though he had itchy feet, but as he gradually recalled his numerous travels around the world it became obvious that he and his partner, **Theresa**, do not stay at their Essex home for too long a period before they start yearning to explore yet another exotic corner of our planet!

Jeff told **Call Sign** that with Theresa approaching a rather special birthday – staying gallant, he wouldn't say exactly how special – he wanted to give her a present she would remember. Somewhere special for a special date – and he certainly managed that!

No day trip to Southend or UK week-end break for them... Malaysia and the Rain Forest of the Far East was his intended destination, as Jeff showed Call Sign his travel diary...



After a 16-hour flight they landed at Kuching airport, **Sarawak** – one of two Malaysian states on the island of **Borneo**. As he stepped off the plane, Jeff said it was like walking into a steam room, such was the heat and humidity.

Early next morning, their adventure began with a drive to the **Semenggoh Nature Reserve** in the middle of the rain forest. Rangers led them to viewing platforms where they hoped to see semi-wild **Orangutans**. As they walked along, the trees were moving "like one of those monsters creeping through the trees in King Kong," Jeff suggested! "Suddenly our guides shouted at us to move quickly and to our amazement, a huge Orangutan named Ritchie moved slowly and majestically out of the forest and into the clearing. Just amazing...!"

Then they travelled on to **Batang Ai**, an island surrounded by mist from the forest fires in **Indonesia**. They set out in longboats through the Batang Ai National Park where a tribal chief danced for them while they drank rice wine prepared by the local villagers – who all live together in one building, living off the rainforest and the river that surrounds them. The happy couple then took a boat trip to **Gaya Island** where thousands of tropical fish with a myriad of radiant colours nibbled harmlessly at Jeff and Theresa as they swam in the warm clear waters.



Jeff back paying for the trip! Inset pic: A pair of Orangutans having a natter...

The next day they flew to **Lahad Datu**, before travelling along a bumpy logging road to reach the **Borneo Rainforest Lodge**.

"The noise of the forest creatures was deafening, the humidity oppressive and we were permanently soaked with sweat, but the sight of those exotic animals and fauna made it all worthwhile," said Jeff, "Theresa was almost expecting to see a dinosaur pop its head above the trees at any moment!"

Over the next few days they explored the forest, watching the Orangutan and other wondrous creatures in their natural habitat. Jeff also recalled one particular highlight where an Orangutan, high up in a tree, seemed to be watching them swimming in a lake whilst a waterfall came cascading down! David Attenborough at his best – but this was real!

Their travels later took them on to the **Gomantong Caves**, which Theresa described as *disgustingly fascinating* as the overpowering smell of bat and bird droppings filled the air!

"We saw ladders that reached high up into the roof of the Caves where collectors would risk their lives to harvest the ingredients that make

birds nest soup. Very interesting, but it could put you off the soup," said Theresa!

Next stop was **Selingan Island** – known as Turtle Island – with tropical trees and sand resembling a scene from Robinson Crusoe. A BBC2 program recently showed the Island's amazing turtle colonies.

"It was there, sitting on the beach together, that Jeff cracked open a bottle of champagne that he'd brought all the way from the UK especially to celebrate my birthday," said Theresa grinning proudly.

Several more days of exploration, swimming, snorkelling and observing the local wildlife, before eventually flying back to London and of course the way he pays for his trips – with **Dial-a-Cab!** And it must be getting busier because within a few days of our meeting, the intrepid pair of travellers were off again... this time a little nearer to home... **India!**

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Times may be tough in Coventry but...

Nothing Stops LTI Staff Charity Support

With redundancies and the removing of TX4 bodywork fitting to the Chinese factory, you would have thought that LTI's factory in Coventry would have been concerned only with themselves. But no! Their longstanding tradition of helping charities has still continued with staff digging deep into their pockets to benefit two local ones.

Throughout 2009, staff at LTI's Holyhead Road factory have taken part in a range of fundraising activities to raise £645 for the **NSPCC** and **Myton Hospice**. The money will be used to support abused young people at the NSPCC *Boole House* project and to help staff at Myton Hospice continue the care provision for patients and their families.

Peter Shillcock, MD at LTI Vehicles, told **Call Sign**: "This is a tremendous effort by our workforce and a huge thank you must go out to each and every one of them. Times may be hard, but staff have parted with their money to help those less fortunate than themselves."

Photo from left to right: **Tina Hayes (NSPCC)**, **Margaret Hitchens** and **Emma Weaver (LTI)**, **Claire McDowell (Myton Hospice)**...



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Mann & Overton

Seamus Reilly (F64) was fuming with rage when *Call Sign* met him recently.

"I've had this *Nokia N86* mobile phone just a few weeks and it has cost me a sizeable sum of money in both £s and Euros," he gushed while waving his newly acquired technological wizardry in the air as if to launch it into orbit.

"I was at Luton airport recently en route to my holiday apartment in Tenerife. I lifted the phone out of the tray having passed it through the security scanner and it was then I noticed there was a Spanish telephone number showing on the screen. I called the number and it turned out to be the lady who manages the apartment block in Tenerife asking me if all was well, because I had apparently called her three times from London but not spoken! I still don't know how it happened, but the calls cost me £12 for nothing," he said.

"Then when I arrived in Tenerife, I swapped my English pay-as-you-go phone card for my Spanish Euro card and used the mobile freely, calling friends locally and staying in touch with the UK as you do when soaking up the sun on holiday. But when I checked my phone bill statement in Tenerife, I was staggered to find that I had run up a mysterious €15 in internet charges over and above my usual telephone calls. And I don't even know how to access the internet on this phone," Seamus exclaimed excitedly!

"It must all have been because this phone slides open to access the keypad, which I

Just an (expensive) phone call away...



Seamus and phone!

probably inadvertently did, and the slightest movement whilst in my pocket sets it off into doing its own thing and costing me money! The reason I got the thing in the first place is because it has a superb camera, taking absolutely brilliant pictures," he told us while at the same time demonstrating by deftly flipping open the mobile to reveal an image of a crystal clear-blue sky and sun-drenched beach

of the Spanish island, recorded in fine detail on the phone's screen.

"Such clarity makes it all worthwhile," he said "but I shall keep my eyes on that errant sliding keypad," Seamus said warily, "otherwise it could work out cheaper to hire my own photographer!"

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

Kupkake's Korner



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the councils just don't care
cos no one wants to fill 'em!
When those cyclists hit a trench
they feel their bodies wrench
and it's enough to kill 'em!

I don't really care
if the peddys fall in there
in fact I'd rather like it.
They're like a curse
and what makes it worse
the Mayor wants all to bike it!

But it's no joke
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and my tyre walls are damaged!

In my view
nothing out there's new
and all is badly managed.

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sweep the mess clean
or will it stay the same forever?

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WARREN MEETS ABBY THE CABBYY!



Under cloudless skies, Abdul waits for passengers in his TX4

Dial-a-Cab's *Financial Controller*, **Warren Smith**, recently returned from a cruise around the Emirate states – and no, he used his own money! Back at *DaC House*, Warren showed *Call Sign* a photo of a cab driver with his new TX4 that he saw at the docks and who offered to show him around Bahrain.

"I was stunned to see a TX4 so far away from London," Warren told us, "and it looked to be very clean and in very good nick as well considering how much sand there is around the place! The driver's name was Abdul and his mastery of the English language – and apparently several others – was excellent. But what amazed me even more was his offer to accept not only Bahraini Dinars, but also UK sterling, American and Australian dollars, Euros and virtually any other currency you could think of. He had his converter ready and waiting!"

Abdul turned out to be one of around 200 of Bahrain's taxi driving community who are now – or soon will be – driving the latest LTI TX4 cabs around the streets of Manama, picking up in Saar – home to where most of the ambassadors and wealthy Bahrainis live – or waiting for tourists at the docks, as part of the newly formed **Arabian Taxi Company**.

The last word went to Warren: "I have to admit to being impressed, not just by the fact that he had a new TX4, but by his general demeanour and business acumen. I just wasn't expecting it. And the weather wasn't bad either!"

Dial-a-Cab driver **Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)** enjoys listening to BBC digital radio channel, **Radio 1Xtra**. The station describes itself as the home of new black music and that may well be the case, but the real question is whether it is also the home to private hire company Addison Lee! Why? Well this is what Divyesh told us:

"It was Tuesday 13 April and I was listening to the **Tim Westwood** show, which airs Monday to Friday between 4 - 7pm. Tim was interviewing rapper **Tinchy Stryder** – aka the star in the hood. At about 6.23pm, they were discussing what car Tinchy drove but he wouldn't say, so Tim Westwood suggested that he used **Addison Lee!** After that mention, AL got another four mentions within ninety seconds! Then again at 6.57pm, just before the end of the show, there was yet another mention making five in all for them.

Then on the following day at 4.10pm, there was a replay of the previous day's show and the same mentions of AL!

Dac Driver complains...

Addison Lee getting Free BBC Plugs



Divyesh: Annoyed at AL free plugs

I wrote to the BBC, but there was no response from them. I still felt annoyed because I'm sure their charter forbids advertising of this nature. The days when they weren't allowed to mention any product by name have thankfully gone, but this blatant plug for Addison Lee was surely way out of line. Eventually I emailed **Call Sign** and they managed to get hold of the producer and a response for me. An apology won't undo the damage but at least they are now aware of what went on. My sincere thanks to **Call Sign** for at least getting me some satisfaction..."



David Kupler (Y74), David Ballard (N28) and Alex Constantinou (N05) are Call Sign's restaurant reviewers. These DaC drivers and their guests will visit restaurants periodically and give their honest opinions. This month David visited the Tike by Fenchurch St Station

EATING OUT WITH CALL SIGN

On a rainy Monday evening, we visited the **Black & Blue** restaurant located at **90-92 Wigmore Street**, just a short hop from the hustle and bustle of Oxford Street. Black & Blue are a small chain of restaurants serving up an American steakhouse experience, but with British quality produce set in elegant surroundings.

The brick-lined walls, hardwood floor and high ceiling give a light and airy feel to the place, while situated around the edges are black leather booths for a more intimate meal. The walls are adorned with many modern art paintings – most of them available for sale. There are open tables on the main floor and a counter running along the centre of the dining room for a less formal dinner.

Ok, so the place is nice you say, but what about the food? Well, for a starter I ordered a *Goats Cheese Salad*. It was huge and looked more like a miniature garden than a salad. More importantly, it was extremely tasty! My wife went for the *Smoked Salmon and Scrambled Eggs*. As that arrived with a side order of toast, that too was not just delicious but almost a meal in itself. Other starters included *Tortilla Chips with Guacamole, sour cream and salsa*, *Crispy Chicken Wings with Salt & Lime*, *Warm Artichoke & Spinach Dip with Tortilla Chips* and *Butterfly Prawns in Crisp Breadcrumbs* with all very reasonably priced between £5 - £7.

Black & Blue prides itself on serving the finest quality, 28 day aged steak, locally sourced to ensure that it is both ethically and environmentally sound. The cuts are Sirloin, Ribeye, Fillet, T-bone, Rump or a Cote de Boeuf for 2 to share with prices starting at £14 for 180g Sirloin. All steaks come cooked to order, ranging from black (well done) to blue (rare), with fries, house salad and choice of peppercorn, béarnaise, herb and garlic butter or foie gras sauce.

The restaurant also serves dishes of Tuna Steak, Salmon Steak and Half a Rack of Lamb with prices varying from £14 - £16, together with handmade Beef, Chicken or Vegetarian Burgers that come with various toppings such as cheese and bacon to foie gras. Prices start at £9.

We both opted for the *200g Fillet* at £21 - mine ordered rare and my wife's medium. My Fillet was cooked to perfection, charred on the outside with practically a heartbeat on the inside! However my wife felt that hers was slightly overcooked. Fortunately that didn't deter from the excellent flavour, but worth pointing out. The pleasant side salad consisted of *crispy lettuce with walnuts and emmental cheese*, but the chips were strangely hollow!

For dessert, my wife sensibly ordered a refreshing *Champagne and Peach Sorbet* while I opted for a huge slice of mouth-watering *rich chocolate brownie and ice cream*. All desserts are priced at £6 and the two we selected both went down extremely well..

Black & Blue are also proud of their extensive wine menu and employ *Ellis of Richmond* to advise them. Prices start at £5 per glass and £15 per bottle. *Peroni Nastro Azzurro* beer is £3.

Even with the hollow chips, we both enjoyed the meal and considered the service to be very good. Black & Blue certainly provide reasonable priced good food in pleasant surroundings right in the heart of the west end. And they use linen napkins – so much nicer than paper!

Black & Blue is open 12:00 - 23:00 Sun – Thurs and 12:00 - 23:30 Fri and Saturday, phone 020 7486 1912...

David Ballard (N28)

Butterfly Exhibition at the Natural History Museum

The **Natural History Museum** is displaying **Butterfly Explorers**, a new family exhibition featuring hundreds of butterfly species, the vast majority of which are never seen in the UK. A highlight will be the warm hatchery room, which will give a close-up view of the butterfly life cycle, from pupae to butterfly, a rare opportunity to see tropical butterflies emerging from chrysalises and if you enjoy the beauty of butterflies, then this is an opportunity not to be missed – especially the *Danaus plexippus* monarch butterfly (see picture)...



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster
Master of Ceremonies

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10% discount for DaC drivers

Fellow of the Guild of
Professional Toastmasters

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 1999 and a Mike Son article on the possibility of DaC running a helicopter service...

From Call Sign, November 1999

DaC Helicopters hit the launch pads!

I'm pleased to say that the Board has now agreed to pass over any client's requests for a helicopter to a charter company that will be representing Dial-a-Cab.

Some of you may remember that I proposed this service when I was previously on the BoM. I know the idea brought a smile and the odd joke from some individuals, but I make no apology for that idea or any other - some of which could be considered as too forward thinking. But my research has indicated that some of our clients do use the services of helicopters and executive jet charter companies. Although it is most certainly not our intention to buy a helicopter or jet plane, we just need an association with a company who can supply this service to customers via Dial-a-Cab.

After an investigation, we decided on Thurston Helicopters who are based at Redhill, Surrey. Thurston MD Mark Souster and his wife founded the company in 1991. They employ one engineer and are based at a private airfield near Brands Hatch. In just one year, the business had grown to such a degree that they relocated to Redhill. Thurston now employ twenty personnel, including pilots, engineers, flying instructors, support staff and a Chief Pilot.

The services currently provided include maintenance to helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, self-fly charter, flight training, sales and of course helicopter and fixed wing charter. So how will it work and what benefit will Dial-a-Cab derive?

Quite simply, if someone at Goldman Sachs needs to get to Paris or Aberdeen in a hurry and they need a helicopter, they would phone the Dial-a-Cab control room with the relevant information and we would then contact Thurston Helicopters with all information required. When the customer has agreed costs etc, the booking is made. The Dial-a-Cab driver would pick up the customer and take them to Battersea Heliport, Redhill, Biggin Hill or wherever. The account client will, in due course, receive the invoice for taxi usage and the helicopter service, plus of course our normal service charges. Dial-a-Cab would receive a commission from Thurston Helicopters.

Our customers may or may not be regular users of this add-on service, but having the means to offer such a service can only be a plus factor for the membership and our customers.

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects



The DaC helicopter

Taximeter updates required by 9 May

Following the 2.3% increase in taxi fares that came into effect on 10 April, TfL is reminding drivers / vehicle owners that meters must be updated by 9 May to reflect the changes. Vehicles presented for inspection after 9 May will fail if they have not had the meter software updated. A vehicle that is examined by a member of the compliance team and found to have not had its meter updated, may also be subject to an Unfit Notice. Taximeters can be updated free of charge, in most cases in under 30 minutes at a number of approved taximeter agents. These are:

Lucas-Tronic and **Cygnus**: Richmond Road E8 3NJ Tel: 0207241 2444
Digitax: Ascott Cab Co: 125 -127 Evelyn Street SE8 5RJ Tel: 020 8692 1122
Digitax: Ascott Cab Co: 80 Dunbridge Street E1 2HJ Tel: 020 7033 4144
Global, Mattig and **Cygnus**: KPM: Hemming Street E1 5BL Tel: 020 7375 2086
Aquila: Frankum and Kaye: 38 Crawley Rd, Wood Green N22 6AG Tel: 020 8889 5537
Aquila: Camberfield Taxis: The Ham, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 8EX Tel: 020 8658 9643
Aquila: E3 Taxis, Standard Industrial Estate, Henley Rd E16 2ES Tel: 020 7474 6592
REM: Taximeter Sales, 94 Cowley Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QD Tel: 01895 234616
Halda: Hexagen Taxis, 164-169 Lukin Street, Stepney E1 0BN Tel: 020 7790 6991

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As with most issues, things are never as simple as they look and winning work back from our competitors is something that is currently topical in **Call Sign**. But to most people outside of the London taxi trade, they must think we are a little mad.

Firstly, discussing such things in such a public fashion and why the need to debate the topic in the first place? Then there is the length of time it is taking to come to an agreement about the best way forward; or should we just leave things alone or fight back? The trade has always been very reactionary, but we should start looking at ourselves when we begin getting advice about how to run our business from the PH industry! Perhaps we're all just giving the issue lip service whilst things are quiet, knowing that all the issues will go away when the work comes back - which it eventually will. But even when it does, I feel there are two issues that need to be seriously looked at. Firstly, as DaC drivers we bemoan the fact that private hire has taken a lion's share of the work that we used to call ours. But this wasn't our work, nor is it private hire's. It is work that's distributed to a provider who gives the client what they want or nearest to what they want and that could be anyone and is liable to change.

What I'm talking about is competing in the open market place. Yes, we have a monopoly when it comes to plying for hire, but not in the pre-booked market. Recently we lost major accounts because we don't supply them with the type of service they want. When I buy items online, I usually buy with the company that wants my custom the most - but not always at the cheapest price. Ask any advertising agency executive and they will tell you that companies advertise in a recession simply to try and keep their market share. In essence, drivers want to get back big city company work that has left us for PH after previously asking us to lower their prices - but our drivers then tell the DaC Board to get the work back without lowering prices! It sometimes feels that when it comes to competing, we in the taxi business feel we don't have to and as I have said before, unless something changes - things won't change.

Secondly, I think the gulf between DaC drivers and the DaC Board has never been greater and by this I mean that we drivers have only a limited understanding of the competitive market place in which we work. One of the reasons for this is that the Board have to maintain a silence so as not to alert our competitors as to what we are doing, but the rate of change and demands of clients has accelerated this during the recession. What we must do is to allow the Board to shake off the shackles and restrictions placed upon them by the DaC membership and allow them a proper role in running the company they are elected to manage. The Chairman can only tender knowing what the drivers will do and within the parameters of the ODRS resolutions, which must often be a huge disadvantage. Let's face it, DaC's Board must be the only management structure that I know of that has so little say over what its members will achieve! Imagine you are the CEO of a major bank; he doesn't have

Richard Potter asks:

WHOSE WORK IS IT?



to phone the Chairman to ask what DaC has to offer, he knows. It's the same in every tender! Then when the Board do something radical - like introducing Concierge - something JPMorgan asked DaC to produce and which has since been copied by many others, a minority of members were up in arms and almost brought the company to its knees - even to the extent of reporting the Society to the *Financial Services Authority*, causing a time-wasting period of several months, after which DaC were given a clean bill of health anyway.

Yes, change causes stress and is never liked, however if DaC is to survive as a company and still be a force in 10 years time and be worth anything, we have to begin tackling our weak points. If clients are asking for the wait premium and / or the fixed gratuity to be scrapped and this could lead to more business, then we should address it. Personally, I feel the gratuity should be

optional and account customers should tell the driver at the end of the journey whether it should be applied. Tips have never bothered me at all; I don't give a tip if I receive bad service. Clients should have a choice and yes, the £4 station premium should be withdrawn. These are known outside the trade as hidden extras. Personally I think that it would be far more beneficial if we as a company spent more time telling clients what we can do for them, rather than what we can't do.

Finally, let me leave you with this thought. I never used to buy flowers because they were expensive and didn't last long. Florists must have thought that the quicker the flowers they sold perished, the quicker people would come back to buy some more - but not in my case. I spent my money on other things. But a few years ago I brought some flowers from Tesco and they had a little packet of plant food on the stem. By adding this to the water, the flowers would last two weeks instead of a few days. Now I am a regular buying of Tesco flowers and even though they are cheaper at the point of sale compared to that of a florist, over the course of a year I spend much more on flowers than I ever did and I am happy to do so. Indeed, a very clever piece of marketing. It's all about giving the client what they perceive is value for money and looking at the big picture. Short-term losses can reward you with long-term gains.

Richard Potter (T51)

THE SALIERI RESTAURANT

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On Thursday 12 November 1953, the first ever ODRTS Board meeting took place at the home of founder-Chairman **Bonnie Martyn**. Among the topics discussed were items such as where our office would be (*Pentonville Road*) and could we afford an extra phone line (yes)? Nowhere in *Call Sign's* extensive files did it mention children being on the agenda?

Yet we have to ask about the Board meetings taking place over 56 years later, with Chairman **Brian Rice** becoming a grandfather in November when Charlie appeared, followed soon after by **Mike Son's** latest offering, Oliver, who said hello from the Swedish city of Norrtälje. Now **Keith Cain** has joined the club for the first time and hit the jackpot first time round with twins – or as a former member of the Dial-a-Cab football team, he might refer to the new arrivals as a brace!

The twins were born to Keith's eldest daughter Samantha and her husband Andrew at Darent Valley Hospital in Kent. They arrived on 14 March – very appropriately on Mothering Sunday. That also happened to be on the day before Sam's 30th birthday. Those two days are shaping up to be pretty expensive in future years!

The gorgeous duo arrived 12 minutes apart with Emily weighing in at 6.02 lbs followed by Ethan who was 6.2 lbs. Mother and children were all said to be

Call Sign has to ask: What's going on at DaC Board meetings...

NOW KEITH CAIN BECOMES A GRANDDAD TO TWINS!



Keith with Emily and Ethan

doing well – although mum Sam was said to be “a little tired!”

As for the Board meetings, the latest one

was said to have discussed several matters, with the main one involving the correct age to begin potty training!

Curls Celebrates 25 years with DaC!

Curls, champagne and the Chairman!



At a DaC Xmas party 20 years ago, the name of the lady on the left has been lost with time



Most long-time Dial-a-Cab drivers know **Curlette Villiers** as just Curls! A cousin to former West Indian pace bowler **Curtley Ambrose**, Curls fame as a DaC telephonist, back channel operator whilst we were still on voice dispatch and now *Night Shift Controller*, have become almost legendary! There aren't many at DaC to whom you could say the name Curls, who wouldn't straightaway know who you were referring to!

At the end of March, Curls reached a milestone - 25 years with the Society! To mark the occasion, the DaC Board gave her a reception in the boardroom in recognition of Curls achievement.

Curls told *Call Sign*: “I've enjoyed all my 25 years here and even though the prime purpose is to pay the rent, it's lovely to work in an environment where there are so many nice people.” When Curls took the job as a telephonist, **Peter Fennymore** had just stepped down as Chairman and was replaced by **Kenny Burns**. It was also just after DaC's senior dispatcher **Dennis Samuels** had passed away and Control Room Manager, **Charlie Ruben**, had advertised in *Call Sign* for new trainee dispatchers.

“I never even thought about dispatching in those days,” said Curls. “I had a one-year-old son to look after and I just needed a job. My supervisor was **Maggie Brynjolfsson** and I could tell straight away that DaC was a friendly place to work. Mind you, with thousands of paper dockets floating there and back between various desks, it certainly gave the impression of being one big mess! But once you knew what was happening, it became easy and DaC became a part of me. But had you told me back then in 1985 that I'd be having a 25-year celebratory party in 2010, I'm not sure if I would have laughed or cried! And that one-year-old son, **Jermaine**, is now 26 and has worked for Dial-a-Cab for the past five years!”

Happy memories? “So many, mostly involving friends that I've met here, seeing people who just came to work at DaC but who later met their partners here. Sad times? Again it's seeing those staff and drivers who I got to know purely through work, yet found myself becoming a friend to, who have died along the way. I don't even want to think of how many, but I do remember them all.”

Ending on a happy note, Curls told *Call Sign* that the reception had been a wonderful day and that she, together with her guest and Night Shift Supervisor, **Julie White**, had had the most wonderful time. Sipping on a glass of Champagne, Curls told us with a huge grin:

“If this was for 25 years, I can't wait to see what they'll do after fifty years!!!”

The usual requisite for when a **Dial-a-Cab** driver and taxi are called on for a role in a movie is that any advertising of the radio circuit is removed. In the case of **Jim Rainbird's (T25)** most recent film job, it was quite the reverse. Jim takes up the story...

"Ninety nine percent of all TV and film work I do starts with a phone call asking if I have a plain black taxi without any adverts or logos? I can answer yes to the question, hopefully without fear of being put on complaint by **Allan Evans**, because I've had magnetic DaC logos made up which are easily removed, specifically for this purpose.

Regarding this particular shoot, I had not one but three phone calls, none that would usually be expected. The first came from the assistant director, another from the producer and finally one from the art department to make sure that I would allow advertising - and specifically a phone number on my cab as it was an important part of the scene.

The shoot involved the usual - waiting for an actor / passenger, helping them in with luggage and then driving away - all shot from three different angles. The necessity for the phone number in this scene was that as we drove away, another actor runs out but just misses us and then takes down the phone number to call the taxi company. I asked if it was ok to use a real phone number and logo and not the usual fake film prop ones? The answer was yes, so guess which taxi company I suggested - but in a slightly different way than usual.

When I arrived at the location - the beautifully stylish art deco flats of Lichfield Court in Richmond - the director came down and said they were shooting from one of the first floor flat balconies and that the phone number on my cab was too low down. Could I move it to the centre of the rear door, as it needed to be in shot for as long as possible? I explained that it wouldn't be PCO approved (!!!) but as the director pointed out to me; within the poetic licence of the film industry, why let the truth get in the way of a good story!

So no problem - I lifted off the magnetic phone number and replaced it onto the back door. The director then said that he wanted a phone number on the back window too so that it could be filmed as we drove off. As I said at the beginning, 99% of all TV and film work etc, so I do not have the new lower rear window adverts for obvious reasons. But I did have a spare cash phone number sticker, put it onto the rear window and hey presto! The director was happy as he got a phone number in shot for as long as possible to reinforce the scene, and of course **Brian Rice** is *very* happy as he gets DaC's phone number and logo shown nice and clearly in a feature film - and for free! Surely that's got to be worth a month's subs Brian...???

Onto the actor / passenger I had to pick up. It was no less than Sylvia Syms OBE - someone who may not want it, but deserves to be referred to by that old cliché - a national treasure!

She is not just a tremendously talented and experienced actor, but also a very funny and

Film studios often call on Dial-a-Cab drivers when a taxi and / or driver is required for a movie. Last month it was Tony Arnold (F03), now it's Jim Rainbird (F25) in a movie with screen legend Sylvia Syms. But this time it included an unusual request...

Dial-a-Cab Free Advertising...



Jim Rainbird with screen legend Sylvia Syms
Inset: The incorrectly placed logos on Jim's Cab



lovely lady. When the cameras weren't rolling, it really was laugh out loud stuff from the whole crew. She

has starred on film, television, stage and radio for over 50 years. Her credits include *Hamlet* at The National Theatre, starring as Margaret Thatcher on television in *The Final Days*, whilst on film as the Queen Mother in *The Queen* with Dame Helen Mirren. She also starred alongside Julie Andrews and Omar Sharif in *The Tamarind Seed* and most memorably with Sir John Mills, Anthony Quayle and

Harry Andrews in *Ice Cold In Alex*. Last year she appeared in *Is Anybody There* with Michael Caine and Anne-Marie Duff. She is, and always will be, a true star, gaining her OBE in the 2007 Queen's Birthday Honours list.

This latest film is a romantic comedy provisionally called *Booked Out*, but that could change by the release, which is scheduled to be later this year. Perhaps the new title could be something to do with Dial-a-Cab!!!"

Jim Rainbird (T25)

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In the last issue of **Call Sign**, Dial-a-Cab driver **John Hudson (W34)** said that while out working he saw what looked like a Mercedes Vito parked round the back of St Pancras. At a second glance, John became so shocked at what he saw that he took a photo of the offending vehicle – which this magazine then published. John told **Call Sign**:

"It wasn't a Vito at all, it was an upgraded Peugeot E7 that looked like the Vito, right down to the orange 'flash' along the side – albeit saying Eurocab rather than taxi. I have reported it to the PCO because I am astounded that they could licence something that is obviously made to look like a taxi. It shows the danger of using vehicles that PH were already using. If anything has confirmed my view of the Vito not being a real taxi, it was this!"

John also wrote to **John Mason** at PCO/TfL. He has now received a response from the Director of Taxis and Private Hire. John Hudson has allowed us to publish the letter...

Dear Mr Hudson

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Peugeot E7 vehicle you saw recently.

As you are aware, only licensed London taxis are allowed ply for hire in London and two of the most distinguishing features of these vehicles, which are not pre-

THE PCO RESPOND...

WHICH ONE IS THE REAL TAXI!



The Peugeot E7 that John says looks like a Vito taxi

sent or acceptable on private hire vehicles, are the presence of the yellow "TAXI" sign on the roof and the presence of a taximeter. However, the presence of the vehicle's logo and the orange livery stripe are not valid reasons for rejecting this vehicle for licensing as a private hire vehicle.

I fully accept that there are some key problems with touting activity, which we are working hard to address. We will also be consulting in summer 2010 on various

proposals that I hope will go some way to ensuring the distinction between private hire vehicles and taxis is maintained and clear. This is likely to include plates with much clearer signage that the vehicle can only be used for pre-booked journeys and could include some proposals on vehicle colours.

I hope this clarifies the position.

John Mason

Director - Taxi & Private Hire

It does appear that the offending vehicle was attempting to deceive the public into believing it was a Vito and this magazine sincerely hopes that the TfL summer consultation will include regulations on not attempting to deceive possible passengers into believing the vehicle they are looking at is a taxi. After all, most people see the front of the vehicle and don't rush round the back to look at the plate...

Ron Yarborough

Call Sign online

Lee's Egham Forget How to Lose!

Dial-a-Cab driver and Egham Town goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, left Bedfont Green at the end of last year after helping them gain promotion from the Combined Counties Premier League, but then dropped back into the league he had just left to join Egham Town. And no one can deny the difference Lee has made as Egham took their recent unbeaten run to 13 games – 12 of which were wins – following a 3-1 win over Raynes Park Vale.

RPV were obviously a bit miffed about a 1 – 6 home defeat a few days earlier by runaway league leaders, **North Greenford United**, and looked as though they meant business. But **Matt Grave** led the way with a goal in each half – making it 27 for the season – and with **Kian Siabi** taking the third, it turned into a saunter. That was followed a few days later by a 1 – 0 home win against Molesey FC, making it 13 wins and a draw from the last 14 games!



Another flying save from DaC's Lee Pearce!

Lee – who is also the goalkeeping coach at Ryman league club **Hendon** –

told **Call Sign**:

"There is a real buzz around the ground. It's such a pity that we didn't start the season a bit better because we'd be challenging for promotion now, but the way we're playing certainly bodes well for next season."

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	P	W	L	D	G/F	G/A	Points
North Greenford United	36	25	7	4	91	37	82
Chertsey Town	38	24	8	6	84	47	80
Egham Town	39	23	5	11	91	57	74
Camberley Town	36	22	8	6	73	41	74
Epsom & Ewell	36	20	4	12	77	47	64

Long-time Dial-a-Cab driver, **Jim Moore (M58)**, recently recalled to *Call Sign* an incident he had with a tax inspector quite some years ago when many of his then work colleagues had received tax bills of around £300, while Jim's was a staggering £3500! Proportionally, bills have obviously gone up substantially since then, but the system is still the same. Jim explained:

"I was working in the construction industry many years ago and it was usual to expect certain tax allowances for tools and work clothes etc. Company cars were taxable however, and the smarter the car, the more tax you could expect to pay. Those of us on the workforce were driving modest Ford products built in Dagenham, while the company directors were driving posh sports cars made in Stuttgart, Germany.

"I had written to my tax office on numerous occasions trying to clarify my tax position with regard to those allowances etc, but had not received any replies. At the end of that particular tax year, my workmates and I opened our Income Tax liability notifications to see the usual £300 or so - all except me. I opened my envelope and was confronted

I Beat the Taxman!



Jim Moore still smiling at beating the taxman all these years later!

with an eye-watering demand for £3500! At first I thought I had misread it, but even a second look didn't change anything! So I went to the tax office in Gloucestershire determined to get it all sorted once and for all.

"I entered their car park in my trusty Ford car and parked. As luck would have it, that turned out to be directly across from the office window of the tax inspector I was due to visit. We talked and when I asked why I had such a huge tax demand, the Inspector answered that if I chose to drive around in a Porsche sports

car, I should expect to pay tax accordingly. I was staggered! When I explained I drove a modest yellow Ford car and pointed through the office window to where I had left it, the Inspector stared in disbelief. She then hurriedly phoned the DVLA in Swansea to verify my registration details and that's when it came to light that the Porsche registration number was just one digit below mine, 992 instead of my 993. It appeared to have been a clerical error at the DVLA where an operative's finger had 'slipped' and caused me such grief.

"So that's how I got my tax rebate sorted and the whole saga closed. Mind you, as I was leaving the inspector's office she did say that she would be watching me like a hawk, but I think can honestly claim to have 'beaten' the taxman - or in my case, the taxwoman!"

As he left *Call Sign's* interviewer, Jim was still smiling broadly at the successful outcome - even though it was all those years ago...

©Call Sign Magazine MMX

CHANGES TO TAXI WORKING



Following a formal consultation with the taxi trade in late 2009 regarding taxi fares and other regulation changes, Tfl's Director, *Taxi and Private Hire*, John Mason, has told *Call Sign* about a number of changes that are due to be implemented throughout 2010/11. As a result, Tfl has approved the following, which took effect from last month (April).

- A fares increase of 2.3% that reflects the cost index increase of 1.9 per cent and an additional one-year 0.4 per cent adjustment to rectify an error made in 2007.
- An increase of 40p to £2.40 for the Heathrow 'extra'.
- A maximum processing charge for bankcard payments to 12.5% of the metered fare or £1, whichever is the greater.
- Approval of fixed fare sharing arrangements from Euston along with special arrangements for contingencies.
- Approval of a 40p additional charge to be implemented during 2010 to help drivers meet increasing costs in the event of a significant fuel price rise.

• Greater freedom for drivers to apply discretion and charge less than the metered fares where appropriate.

Other planned changes being implemented during the course of the 2010/11 financial year are:

- A late night fixed fare scheme from Leicester Square.
- A "Green Badge identifier" to be placed in taxis where drivers hold an *All London* licence.
- A sticker containing safety information for wheelchair users, to be displayed in all taxis.
- Stricter rules governing hand written receipts

to ensure no inappropriate advertising.

Mr Mason continued by saying that Tfl was also committed to providing passengers with additional information regarding drivers and that they would continue to identify the most suitable forms of identification throughout the year along with further investigation to determine the best form of displaying fare information in taxis.

A report containing detailed information of all the consultation responses will be published on the Tfl website.

SIZZLES

The barbeque that comes to your home!

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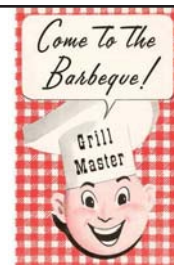
Sizzles can provide all the food and salads or we can cook your own food. The decision is up to you.

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

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

Bookings and information at Sizzles:

0208 518 8765 or 07902 246 354



In 1976, a new cartoon strip appeared in *The Sun* newspaper. **George and Lynne** created something of an uproar among readers who, having become accustomed to a page three beauty since 1970 when *Stefanie Rahn* launched the first "birthday suit" girl, drew the line at a cartoon strip featuring a young lady who constantly appeared in the buff, together with her boring, pipe smoking husband who looked to be at least twice her age!

Now in 2010, George and Lynne are still going strong and among *The Sun's* 3million regular readers, even have their own fan club! George is still 50 and boring whilst Lynne is still the sex goddess who is never afraid to show a boob or two whenever the occasion demands it – which seem to be several times each week! But what do they have to do with **Call Sign**?

One recent cartoon strip – the word seems quite relevant in George and Lynne's case – saw them in the street trying to hail a taxi. George looks boring and Lynne is wearing a full-length raincoat. Unfortunately no cab will stop, probably because having seen boring George, the drivers are afraid he might send them to sleep! The last of those is a **Dial-a-Cab** driver!

So Lynne goes away for "for a moment" and returns minus her coat but with a tight top showing her best attributes. She then flags down a cab by sticking her chest out! Needless to say the cab stops! Life in the fast lane!!!

At Least She Isn't Naked!

George and Lynne and the DaC driver!



Almost 25 years on and Lynne still flaunts herself this time to a Dial-a-Cab taxi

Call Sign's theatre reviewer and Dial-a-Cab's freebie ticket provider, Tom Whitbread, went to the Garrick Theatre to see David Essex in "All the Fun of the Fair..."

All the fun of the Fair...

On Tuesday 20 April I was happy to attend the opening of the new show **All the Fun of the Fair** at the Garrick Theatre in Charing Cross Road. The show stars **David Essex**, **Christopher Timothy** (TV's *All Creatures Great and Small*) and relative newcomer **Michael Pickering**, who is making great strides on the stage as a new musical star and who in the show plays David Essex's son.

I was accompanied by my wife, who is a great David Essex fan, and my nephew Fergal Quinn who is studying at the Performers College in Corringham, Essex. Fergal actually knows Michael Pickering and like all those involved in the theatre, will pick up on the smallest problems, whether it involves the music, scenery or the performers themselves.

This allowed me the benefit of myself as the layman, together with my nephew's experience to gain a review on the show. Fortunately we both thought the show was very well put together to include David Essex's hit recordings. As it was a first night, you would expect the occasional mistake or hiccup, but it went very well and the show will be a challenger to some of the other musicals currently in the West End. It may not be quite powerful enough to unseat *Sister Act* or *Jersey Boys*, but it will certainly be a show high on the list of those to see in London.

The story revolves around fairground owner Levi Lee (David Essex) whose wife dies in a tragic accident on the fair's *Wall of Death* ride and his rebellious son (Michael Pickering). It tells a love story of the son falling for a local gangster's (Christopher Timothy) very attractive daughter.

I must say that I never expected to see Christopher Timothy in a West End musical, but he handles it well and is very believable in the role. The show has lots of action, love and great music! All in all a show well worth booking up for and the first night audience gave the cast a deserved standing ovation.

As an aside, my nephew has been asked to perform alongside the *Jersey Boys* on 24 April at the **Daisy Ball, Grosvenor House**. This is a charity function in aid of **The Anthony Nolan Trust** raising money to fight Leukaemia – a very deserving charity. If you would like to support this charity go to www.anthonynolan.org.uk.

Tom Whitbread
DaC Entertainment



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compliance officer's update

Hello Ladies & Gents,

The competition out in the market place has never been greater and if you listen to the media, it's hard to ignore the constant phone-ins on our industry, some positive and some not so positive, which seems always to have been the case.

The late evening and early hours taxi-sharing scheme at **Leicester Square** has also drummed up a lot of debate. I am sure I do not need to remind you that we are in the service sector and must always be aware of our commitment to the Society and the need to show true professionalism – it is what keeps us ahead of the rest and will continue to do so.

It is almost impossible not to notice that we are fast approaching a general election and we must hope that whichever party takes Government - new or old - will help maintain the economic recovery, albeit very fragile at the moment but nonetheless an improvement.

Although I have mentioned customer care in many of my previous articles, I feel that the time is right to remind you once again of the need to be helpful,



obliging and respectful of client's wishes at all times

Many passengers use the services of Dial-a-Cab on a very regular basis and in the main are fully aware of their *terms and conditions*. Quite rightly, they expect the high levels of service that they are accustomed to. They are within their rights to question meter run-ins and may even ask you, the driver, to take a preferred route - **Please be respectful to their wishes.**

Complaints received of passengers treated less than courteously or even rudely, does not bode well of our Society and although far from commonplace, it is my duty to once again politely ask you to treat clients the way you would like to be treated yourselves. Some of our customers may occasionally require assistance and may need a brief explanation of why a meter run-in is slightly higher than normal, so at the risk of repeating myself - unless otherwise authorised - please do not exceed the relevant amounts on the meter at booked time or on arrival if it is an ASAP trip.

Finally can I remind you that unless you joined the Society prior to 1996, it is a procedure rule that the company logo be displayed at all times on your taxi. The up-to-date list of procedure rules are available from the on-line edition of the *Drivers Manual*, which can be found at www.dialacab.co.uk, following the link to the Member's Portal and then the Driver's Manual.

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

The Seyhan and Mehmet Memorial Cup Tournament

Upton Park Sunday 16th May 2010 Kick Off 18.00 Entrance by donation

Please come and support us at this unique charity event at **West Ham United FC, Boleyn Ground, Green Street, Upton Park, London E13 9AZ**. This event will host a gathering of London Taxi drivers and friends with all money raised going towards helping to find a cure for **Ewings Sarcoma** (a form of bone cancer) and helping to save future lives.

This annual charity event has been organised since 2005 in the memory of two brothers, both of whom died from Ewings Sarcoma. Seyhan Ali had Ewings Sarcoma from 2003 and passed away in 2005 aged just 14. Seyhan's brother Mehmet had a different form of Ewings Sarcoma from 2007 and in 2009 he too tragically passed away, aged 29. This is truly awful disease, which we must find a cure for. With your support and the wonderful work of the **Bone Cancer Research Trust**, we can all work together to find a cure.

To find out more information about this event in memory of Mehmet and Seyhan, you can visit *The Memorial Cup* website at <http://memorial-cup.moonfruit.com>.

Come along to the Boleyn Ground on 16 May and support this memorial event to raise money for the Bone Cancer Research Trust.
Many thanks...

Stephen Powell and Russell Hall

Around the World in a Day!

With the London Taxidriers' Fund For Underprivileged Children



Feeling fit? All London taxi drivers are welcome to come along and help the LTFUC "**cycle around the world**" on Friday 4 June, when the children's charity will attempt to beat last year's record total in this **Sponsored Fixed Bike Ride**, with thanks once again to the **Hilton London Euston (Hilton Foundation) at Upper Woburn Place**.

All you need do is to dust down your trainers, pop into the hotel on Friday 4 June and help us rack up the miles to break last year's record and raise much needed funds for the LTFUC.

Come along and make your miles count!

For more info, please contact LTFUC Chairman, David Lessman on 07831 867723, Secretary Malcolm Shaffron on 07050 105408 or any LTFUC committee member.

You can read all about the LTFUC at www.ltfuc.org.uk...

Until recently, Eddie Lambert (V27) was Chairman of the RMT Taxi section. Call Sign has asked him to respond to attacks from other trade organisations against the RMT...

In the last issue of *Call Sign*, Alan (the Ed) stated that he would like to see just one driver trade group representing drivers. Whilst I can understand his thinking that this would give the trade a possibly much stronger voice than it has, I must disagree with him. I think it would actually weaken the trade. (Ed's note: To save confusion, I suggested the LTDA)...

Due to the forthcoming election, many Bills have been pushed through Parliament in a process known as the *wash up* with huge amounts of horse trading going on, whereby parties from all sides of the House have agreed to amendments to Bills that they would normally have opposed, in order to get through other amendments in Bills that they strongly favoured. But one Bill that has not undergone this horse-trading is the *Transport For London No2 Bill*. The reason this Bill has not gone forward to be added to the Statue Book, is that following a meeting we held with the Hayes and Harlington MP - RMT sponsored John McDonald - about what Clause 19 would mean to the London Hackney trade, he organised a campaign inside the House to oppose it. Clause (19) would give Westminster Council the power to have a voluntary registration system for the pedicab / rickshaw trade. It would also have given these pestilent vehicles waiting / ranking spaces in the west end. Had this come to pass, how long before the fully licensed, drivers and vehicles insured, CRB-checked (?) road tax paying Private Hire industry, would demand - at the very least - parity with this vermin?

So why is this relevant to my argument? Well, at the moment we appear to have the "United Trade" comprising of LTDA, LCDC and Unite altogether representing possibly 40% of the trade and until the RMT taxi branch formed, the only voice of the working driver on the streets of London. Well that was **their** opinion of **their** position. I personally think differently and I think February 5th 2009 and the huge trade demonstration, proved it. There was a huge turnout of drivers and although I take my hat off to the work that went into organising such a fantastic turnout, it must be open to debate whether the majority of drivers that turned out were actually members of these organisations or just wanting an opportunity to express their frustrations with the powers-that-be over many issues and not just the illegal minicab rank in Whitcomb Street. This demo gave them their chance to show TfL, PCO, Westminster and others how they felt.

However, I feel that the so-called "United Trade" has been neutered by the appointment of its highest profile trade leader to the TfL Board. When I was with the T&G Cab Section (before their love-in with the LTDA) we constantly opposed the appointment of a taxi trade member to this Board, as we knew that when it actually came to dealing with taxi trade items, the Board member from the trade would not be able to take part due to a possible conflict of interests. It could easily appear to some that not rocking the TfL Board's boat is now the name of the game. After all, the "United Trade" has not run up its flag and attacked the *London No2 Bill* - with the slight exception of the LCDC occasionally making some noises about the Bill, but for some reason or other generally not making too much of it. The other two members seem to support

Working Time Directive? Tachographs?

Former RMT Taxi Branch Chairman, Eddie Lambert, responds...



the Bill, although how much of this support is actually from the working drivers of the organisations and how much is from the leadership, is difficult to tell.

The demo also saw the first public outing for the RMT Taxi Branch - a bit earlier than I would have liked as much organising needed to be done before launching, but the opportunity was too good to miss with the RMT Banner claiming many press photos. Since then we (the RMT) have come under regular attack, with many of those attacks against its personnel - including the high profile General Secretary, Bob Crow and for some strange reason, Janine Booth, the Chair of the RMT's London Regional Council. Her crime appears to be that she attended a branch meeting and spoke for about 8-10 minutes before going home to relieve her husband of his child-sitting duties so that he could go to work. Admittedly, she did not say much about taxi matters other than that she would be giving support to a few items we had brought up at a Regional Council meeting relating to taxi issues.

I do not wish to get into a mud slinging contest, as all this does is to generate much pleasure within the offices of those that wish ill on the cab trade and those who constantly seek to exploit it, but I will answer a couple of points that keep being dragged up...

Working Time and Tachographs...

Yes, the RMT supports a restriction on working time and the compulsory fitting of tachographs - **but this applies only to vehicles of over 3.5 tonnes!** This is also something Unite have campaigned for in the past. The reasoning isn't rocket science. Tiredness and stress are major contributory factors to RTAs. As taxi drivers, we spend far more time on the road than most of the general public, so we have an increased chance of being involved in an incident with a driver in a 3.5+ tonne vehicle who's been at the wheel for hours at a go facing unrealistic timetables; these restrictions and the fitting of tachographs to help enforce them must help improve safety on the roads.

We see no need for tachographs in London taxis - or any other taxis for that matter!

Just for the record, the Department for Transport have said they have no intention of this either. However, if certain parties keep bring the issue up, it is feasible they could change their

mind, so my advice to them is to shut up and let sleeping dogs stay asleep...

And "joining with" the GMB...?

The other issue is that of the GMB who in London turn away taxi drivers - although they do recruit them outside of town. That is possibly one reason Unite - who have always claimed to be the biggest Union organising the trade nationally (doubtful now) - saw an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. The RMT have not joined with the GMB to promote anything. We have no agreements with the GMB, other than if a PH driver wants to join, we turn them towards the GMB. This is the policy nationally; we do not say one thing in London and another everywhere else, unlike Unite who do have large numbers of PH drivers across the country.

Be it partitions in minicabs or outsourcing of topographical tests that new PH drivers must take before getting a licence, (currently conducted by companies seeking to take £70- £80+ per week off these prospective drivers - not much of an incentive to fail them there). Then there's the stopping of the PCO telling PH companies when they are coming to inspect their books. With the exception of fitting partitions in PH vehicles - which the RMT oppose - nearly every hack driver in London would agree with the other policies. Strange that we have not heard much about these from the "United Trade."

The quote on the bus lane issue by the GMB minicab leader originally said that he was sure he "would fight us (RMT) to the death on the issue." Make no mistake, of that he is right. There must be no PH in bus lanes.

So back to the opening issue of one trade body representing drivers. If you have only one body, then the leaders of that body become complacent, they get used to agreeing with the *powers that be* and corrupted by nice dinners and plenty of stand down pay etc. As Leon Trotsky said: "To continue the revolution, you have to keep renewing your leaders." What is really needed is two large driver organisations who have to compete for members against each other, so they keep trying to give their members the best deals and representation.

On Monday 12 April, I stepped down as Chair of The London RMT Taxi Branch due mainly to time consuming problems following the death of my father late last year. I wish all the best to the new committee that was elected, thanks to all those who for their own reasons have also decided to take a back seat for a while, but especially thanks to all those who gave me the great privilege of being Chair in the branch's first year. Over the past year or so, many **Dial-a-Cab** members have asked me questions about the RMT or raised trade issues with me and where possible I have tried to answer those questions or take their concerns further. Although I have now stepped down, I hope DaC members will continue to ask me questions and raise issues and I will try to answer them if possible, or point them towards another sources of information on the points they have raised.

Eddie Lambert (V27)

Some months ago, following a Transport for London press release, **Call Sign** questioned the point in closing the Blackwall Tunnel for maintenance work for a period that meant it would still be shut when the Olympic Games commenced on 27 July 2012. Our conclusion – which was denied – said we believed that the tunnel would be opened and used as part of the Olympic Route Network, which bans all traffic from that lane and which will cause total gridlock to all traffic including taxis.

When it comes to the Blackwall Tunnel and the fact that Olympic events will be held at the Olympic Park, O2 and Blackheath, it is a vital link. But the Olympics are nothing without spectators and our question was that if the tunnel is used as an ORN, how do they get there?

Now our fear has come true with Conservative London Assembly Member, **Garath Bacon AM** saying he has discovered that the Olympic Delivery Authority – the organisation behind the Olympic traffic movements or lack of them – is planning to cordon off one lane of the Blackwall Tunnel in each direction during the Olympics, giving the

The Olympics and Blackwall Tunnel **WE TOLD YOU SO!**



Gareth Bacon - keep the tunnel open

exclusive use to athletes and officials.

According to Mr Bacon: "It would be scandalous to close off half of the tunnel for so few vehicles. Londoners would end up sitting in traffic jams for hours, crippling large

swathes of east and south London. If the Olympic authorities insist on these horrendous measures, there will be an enormous backlash from Londoners and a lot of the goodwill towards the Games will evaporate. Residents and businesses in Greenwich and Bexley and surrounding areas need a promise that the tunnel will remain open in all lanes to ensure traffic is kept moving."

Mr Bacon is referring to the fact that around 5000 vehicles an hour travel through the tunnel as against an estimated 200 Olympic vehicles over the same period.

Of course, if the tunnel remained closed for "maintenance" work for the Olympic month, no one could say anything other than issue the occasional curse...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign online



Continued from April

Attitudes of passengers and cab drivers have changed. Today's cabs and drivers are nothing like those of yesteryear when police demanded the cab was washed and cleaned in and out every day - twice if doubled. Put yourself in the place of a top businessman going out with his wife. He might well be wearing a suit costing £2000 or more and the lady's white dress could easily fit into the same price bracket. Would you honestly feel happy in that attire in some of today's cabs? I know I wouldn't. If I could afford clothes like that, I'd call a limousine.

Back in the early days of my FX3, people that had no doubts about hailing a cab and stepping in. They knew the cab would be spotless and the driver polite and courteous, because the driver knew that jobs were his living. Play it right and you would get your tip, which if you remember at the beginning of this article back in July, the Taxman valued as a third of your income. I think some of today's drivers believe the world owes them a good living. Remember me in that first cab shelter and the tips I learnt from older cab drivers...

Cab drivers today can sometimes be their own worst enemy. A common example is when chatting to the passenger in the back. He tells the driver about the holiday he's just had in Spain and asks the driver if he's been away? "Yes, me, the wife and two kids had three weeks in Florida and then later, a few weeks in Bermuda." The passenger thinks: "Tip this bloke, he should tip me!" The driver forgets to mention that he is one of those drivers who sends their wife the odd postcard to let her

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***

know that he is still alive and she sends him the odd photo of the kids because he's never home. He works 7 days a week so does have the money to go on extravagant holidays. Forty years ago, the driver would answer that he was hoping to have a week in Brighton later in the year "...if we can afford it when things are a bit cheaper."

As younger men came into the job, their idea of service tended to alter. Being 'clever' became more common. Chatting to him, you learnt he had

taken a delivery job two hours ago and not yet delivered because he had been "hoping to get a job in that direction!" It probably never crosses his mind that the reason he'd been hailed was that they wanted an instant delivery and not when it suited some driver's agenda. So now motorcycles are used. The attitude of driver's convenience first has resulted in the diminishing of many jobs.

John's story concludes in the next issue...

John Edwardes (ex-H05)

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call centre chat

Working at the "House"

I have just a couple of reminders for all drivers to mention this month. The first is after you accept a trip for the House of Commons and House of Lords accounts. The reminder is for you to please make a note of your mileage.

The reason for this is solely in case you are diverted from the normal route. With late night closures to some major roads and motorway junctions for the seemingly never-ending maintenance work, diversions have been put into place that can add substantially more miles onto the journey.

In order for drivers not to lose out, the correct number of miles covered is essential for us to recalculate a revised fix price. Although we can calculate by using our computer software, the exact mileage covered is a far better way of doing it.

Providing the correct information

The second reminder is in connection with driver's contact information. In these times of free phone upgrades, we constantly find a number of drivers who have changed their



mobile phone number, but who haven't informed Driver Services.

It really is essential that we are made aware of any change for a number of reasons. Having accepted a trip and the call centre not being able to contact the driver can be very frustrating, let alone looking bad to the client if we are not able to make immediate contact. Should a driver find him or herself in an emergency situation, for the controllers to not be able to contact that driver to see what their situation is could put them in danger, but more likely create a hold-up in the call centre as message requests are sent out asking for the

fleet to assist in finding the driver, when in all probability it is a false call and a quick phone call could have sorted it out!

If you have altered your personal details in any way please contact Driver Services either by phone or email at DriverServices@dialacab.co.uk.

Twin joy...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone out there who sent my daughter, son-in-law and myself their best wishes on the birth of my twin grandchildren.

Both of them are doing very well, although mum and dad - with a little help - are managing to get some sleep back into their lives. I was told that there was no feeling quite like having grandchildren and you know what, its true! It's not something that can be described, except to say having twins only gives you a double whammy!

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

Ed's note: Photos of Emily and Ethan can be found in this issue on page 18 and another on the cover...

LONDON ACCORDING TO DAVE



THE GRAVY TRAIN?

A friend of mine once told me he became a London Taxi driver because he thought it was a licence to print money! How many people think that now? Former mayor Ken Livingstone said he would do the job again for half the money, because he loves London so much and wanted to make a difference. Now that's the soundbite of soundbites. Easy to say if you are rich, harder if you are poor.

Tony Blair gets lambasted every which way for minting his past status, but he's not the only one and can you really blame him? Some will argue that politicians of a bygone age were not interested in riding on the gravy train, but many were wealthy already with a few exceptions like Harold Wilson, bless his Gannex Mac and bottle of HP sauce. If he were alive today, could you imagine him on a freebee holiday perched on a Russian billionaire's yacht in the Med, sipping cocktails and debating how Britain could get more millionaires? No, his idea of

perception was one man's wage increase being another man's price increase. He was happy to have a picnic on a windswept Scilly Isles beach! He'd have been mortified at the number of MPs today running for and riding on the gravy train.

GOLD CUP ELECTION RACE

The gold cup election race is under starters orders; who will DaC driver's money be on?

The clever money is rumoured to be on the two youngest thoroughbreds in the race, with the impressive bloodline pedigree from the renowned stables of Eton...er sorry, I mean

Lambourn. However, insiders suggest they may need a first outing to get race fit!

Or will it be with the two oldest and more experienced runners, proven stayers when the going gets heavy? But they have suspect form.

Or will **Dial-a-Cab** drivers pick an outsider - the young thoroughbred who was a promising juvenile, together with his older stable mate who is something of a course specialist and held in high esteem by many! Certainly a good each way bet that many believe could hold the balance of power.

The Gold Cup Election Race has all the makings of a photo finish with objections and another steward's enquiry when the dust settles.

David Heath (ex W27)

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Those old enough to remember the Monty Python sketch featuring Eric Idle and “nudge, Nudge” may sympathise with Board member Tom Whitbread one recent Sunday. Tom takes up the story...

“It was Easter Sunday morning and I decided to go for a walk with my son and dog down along the Shadwell Basin and Thames shoreline, behind the *Prospect of Whitby*. This was to allow me to indulge in my favourite hobby of photography.

It was so quiet and peaceful as we walked alongside the canals between the basins – until suddenly I heard what I thought to be a Shire horse thundering down on us, nostrils flared with lungs pumping out extraordinarily huge amounts of air. As I was about to turn to look at this frightening sight, a voice boomed out: “*What are you doing down here, Tommy Whitbread.*” I turned to see an even more frightening sight, a rather large West Ham clad jogger - aka **Saleem Raja (S46J)** - along with his minder/brother **Saeed Raja (S46)**. I quickly focused my camera on these Olympians as they covered the disappearing distance between us and shot the photograph! I do have to admire the bravery of anyone prepared to wear a West Ham tracksuit! Both threatened me with a fate worse than having to watch West Ham play every day for a year if my photo ever appeared in **Call Sign**, but our mag is fearless and as I’m off on my holi-

Nudge, nudge - it's Tom!



Saleem (with the West Ham hat) and Saeed: “Don’t put this in Call Sign!”

day anyway...!

It only goes to show that whenever you are out in the public eye, always look presentable and be polite, as you never know who you may come across! This backs up

what Allen Togwell is always preaching: you are always a part of **Dial-a-Cab** whatever you are doing! Nudge, nudge!”

Tom Whitbread

Drivers moan at ‘number twos’ over Bank Holiday

No, silly... not THOSE number twos!

If you and your neighbour both worked on Easter Sunday covering identical trips, one of you may well have still earned more than the other. Why? Well **Lucas Tronic** meters – who have been involved with the London taxi trade for many years - programmed their meters incorrectly for that day so that it worked on the normal Sunday rate 2 rather than what it should have been for Easter Sunday – rate 3.

Dial-a-Cab dispatchers were inundated on the day by drivers querying whether their Lucas meter was correct in going to rate 2 and came to the conclusion that as every other make of meter was on rate 3, that Lucas had cocked-up!

One of several DaC drivers who contacted **Call Sign** was **Jon Tremlett (Y32)**. He wrote to Lucas asking for some financial consideration for his financial losses due to their meter not being programmed correctly on that Easter Sunday. Jon told us that, rather tongue in cheek, he asked for a cheque or a refund on next year’s rental! But with no real comment other than to confirm they had incorrectly programmed the meters, Jon, along with several other drivers, contacted **Call Sign** to see if we could speak to Lucas Tronic.

We spoke to GM Linda Cain and with complete honesty she admitted the company had been contacted by around 60 or so drivers. Each of them had to get their meters down-

loaded to find out exactly how much they had lost, but other than for real roaders the drivers won’t have lost any fortunes. Obviously the mis-programming wasn’t done deliberately, so **Call Sign** has suggested that Lucas Tronic, as a sign of goodwill, make a donation to a trade charity

on behalf of all the drivers that may have lost a few pounds each. Linda thought it was a good idea and has put it forward for discussion.

As someone once said: Computerisation is brilliant – but only when it works!

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Long-term subscribers will recall that inspiring war cry from former Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Jack Taylor**, a man sadly no longer with us but whose ethos and advice lives on in the guise of **Eddie Goodhall (S26)**.

"Drivers bemoan to me that there is no work about and yet that is not at all how I've found it - even in this current downturn," Eddie told **Call Sign** when we met recently.

"I start early in the morning and work steadily through the day, taking jobs as they pop up on my terminal with increasing regularity as the economy steadily improves and we get further into the year," said Eddie.

Continuing in an evermore upbeat way, Eddie continued: "Yes everyone works differently it's true, but the work is out there and coming through a data terminal near you! You just have to press the *accept* button and maybe go that little bit extra to keep the clients happy and retain our client base by

DaC's Eddie Goodhall does a 'Jack Taylor' as he tells drivers...

COVER THE WORK!



offering a 'first class, cannot be beaten' service."

"Those drivers that just sit around rejecting jobs are actually losing out," Eddie said, "because while they are busy *rejecting* there

are plenty of drivers *accepting* the work as soon as it's despatched. I sometimes have a quiet chuckle to myself when drivers tell me there is not much work on the radio, because when I show them on their terminal how many trips they have rejected from those they have been offered, they look at me in amazement!"

On a natural high, Eddie ended by telling **Call Sign**: "DaC is the finest radio circuit in London and we have won many accounts on the strength of our technology and service levels. So when I meet drivers who are despondent, I tell them - just as Jack Taylor did before me - cover the work, because that leads to more work coming into the Society as our reputation grows!"

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

Call Sign En La Belle France

Winter is well and truly over and the sun is in the air. Swimming pools are now 'open' - well for children anyway - and beaches are being visited by the more intrepid individual(s). Not long before the season starts in earnest and numerous holidaymakers begin to make their way down here to the sun-kissed Mediterranean.

During my research, I have come across **Greg and Penny Hannaford** who run a delightful guesthouse called **La Maison Rose**. You may recall me mentioning them in a previous missive. This charming family-run haven, set in the pretty village of **Montblanc**, is in an ocean of vineyards - not to be confused with its slippery namesake - and is very close to the renaissance town of **Pezenas** and the historical city of **Beziers**.

The accommodation is set over three floors and blends the natural stone / granite and wood fabric of the home with the clean, contemporary and practical. New facilities include modern insulation and velux windows affording comfort whatever the weather, en-suite bathrooms, and a brand-new swimming pool with built-in Jacuzzi, surrounded by a large patio and terrace to facilitate those who wish to sun-worship or otherwise. Their website address at **www.lamaison-rose.fr** should answer any queries.

In addition, the couple have further refurbished their accommodation and are now able to offer a bar facility refashioned from the historic *caves* and fully operational Function Room(s)



within the ancient Cave. Specifically they are now open as a *Resto SportsBar* with this summer's World Cup football sharply in focus. Greg has installed a Home Cinema with 7-speaker amplified surround-sound, plus flat screen options. *Plat du jour* will be available with refreshments at a very modest *prix fixe*.

There is also potential joy in exploring and unfolding the hidden layers... sports aside. **Languedoc** is exceptionally well worth visiting and Pezenas in particular. They suggest an email dialogue to establish your exact specifications. Just send it to: **penny.hannaford@gmail.com**.

If you would prefer to do your own thing - with or without guidance - then that's clearly not a problem. Simple, yet amenable, B&B are absolutely welcome.

By coincidence, Greg is also a licensed financial intermediary... so if there happen to be any property hunters amongst **Call Sign's** readership, then Lord-only-knows there are some serious bargains to be found. His

email details are:

greg.hannaford@gmail.com or call UK mobile number **07837 946 966** (and don't worry, he pays the international surcharge bit if you happen to catch him when he's in France).

By the way, I've negotiated a 30% discount for the first 10 bookings by email quoting **Call Sign**.

A bientot.

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

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

Call Sign's phone reached meltdown proportions last month after we published diesel prices going back to 1996, when a litre of diesel would cost a **Dial-a-Cab** driver 51.9p or a not-too-hefty £2.35 a gallon!

But with a litre of diesel already up to 123p in some garages and a further two fuel duty rises of 1p - plus the added VAT on top which will end up pushing prices up by around 3p a litre - in the pipeline, many cab drivers are now spending over £150 a week just on fuel. Add the general costs of running the cab onto that and we can see why taxi driving is far from being the licence to print money that some would have us believe.

It was back in July 2008 that the record high for petrol of 119.7p per litre was reached when a barrel of oil was close to \$150 a barrel. The price for a barrel at the time of writing this was around \$80 - close to half what it was in 2008, yet fuel has somehow climbed above the former record price. The blame has been put onto the weakness of the pound.

But as Cilla would say: Surprise, surprise! Hands up if it would surprise you to know that we have the cheapest fuel in Europe? Well we have - but that is before duty and VAT are added on! After that, it goes from being the cheapest to being the most expensive! As a rough guide, for every pound you spend at the pumps, 70p goes to HMG in duty and VAT, so of the £25 diesel bill you paid yesterday, £17.50 went to HMG towards putting in new cycle lanes and ridiculous bus lanes crossing against the Piccadilly Circus one-way system

Call Sign looks at...

FUEL MADNESS!



John Dixon may have a weird way of working out how much the Black Cab Fuel Card saves him, but it does save drivers money...

to cause taxis nothing but grief. Oh yes, £7.50 was the actual cost of your £25 fuel!

Many DaC drivers are now using the Black Cab Fuel Card. That gives a weekly rate every Friday for the following seven days that you will pay regardless of the pump price and something that must help, with up to 5p a litre off the price.

But DaC driver **John Dixon (B67)** has a different way of combining the fuel crisis with a way to save a fortune. However, we think young John may be trying to pull one's plonker

with the way he estimates his fuel saving.

John uses what must be the second highest-priced garage in London after Holland Road - the **Texaco** garage in **Sloane Avenue**. When John contacted **Call Sign**, he told us he had just filled up there using his **Black Cab Fuel Card**. That week's litre rate was 117.9p whereas Sloane Avenue's pump price for a litre of diesel was an astronomical 139.9p! So by John's weird logic, that one transaction saved him a mighty £7.85 and at that rate, after a year he will have saved £2750. Of course, had he gone to a cheaper garage he would probably have saved a worthwhile - but far smaller - £2 or at the 350 days a year John is using as a guide, £700.

As we are approaching an election and in the cause of fairness, we should add that regardless of which party wins, fuel duty is unlikely to go down and if the pound doesn't start recovering soon, the price will go up even further!

The last word goes to John Dixon: "With a **Black Cab Fuel Card**, even an expensive garage such as Sloane Avenue with its ultra-convenient position, becomes a good deal - if you can call today's fuel prices good...!!!"

Applications for the Black Cab Fuel Card can be made at www.blackcabfuels.co.uk.

PRAGUE AWAITS THE TX4



Left hand drive, otherwise it's the TX4 for Prague!

It seems that the whole world is now looking to import the London TX4 taxi. **Call Sign** has reported over the past year of movements in Poland, Ukraine, Saudi, Bahrain and many other capitals. Now its famous lines will soon be transporting passengers throughout the streets of the Czech Republic - more specifically Prague.

Hotels, local companies and businesses are set to take advantage of the unique TX4 as they extend the facility to their guests and international business travellers, who will want to use the legendary vehicle for their visit.

According to London Taxi Company International Market Development Director, Matthew Cheyne: "We know the London Taxi is going to be a hit in Prague as we have received a large number of advanced enquiries. A search has now started to source a partner who will import the vehicle into the Czech Republic and provide sales and aftersales support. We believe this opportunity will give businesses a unique advantage over the competition and I'm sure that very soon we will start seeing the taxi being used on Prague's streets."

The current export version of the TX4 is built in China by LTI Vehicles and their joint venture company Geely, however it is built to British standards.

Details on The London Taxi Company are at www.londontaxis.co.uk or www.lti.co.uk.

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Call Sign's General Election Poll

With the Election days away, Call Sign asked 16 DaC's drivers who they'd vote for?

Francis Robinson (G18)

I voted Labour at the last General Election, but I'm undecided this time. There's too much bickering between the parties and much negative talk. I'm unclear about their intentions, so I just might vote **Lib Dem** when I get into the polling booth.



Ian Sewell (C04)

I voted Labour at the last G.E. and will vote **Labour** again this time around. I have considered the other parties, but have gone back to Labour. We cannot put the recession down to them alone, it was an international event.



Andrej Iwanoff (E92J)

I voted Labour the last time but I'm undecided this time. I don't trust any of the parties and Cameron cannot relate to the 'real' world and the problems of normal working class people. I think Liberal is a wasted vote, but I might possibly still vote **Lib Dem** in my area of Watford. Yes, I have previously voted other than Labour, but I normally vote for the party that I feel has done the best for my local area. I look upon politicians in a new light of contempt since the expenses scandal...



Richard Bond (P03)

I voted Lib/Dem last time but I might possibly vote **Conservative** on this occasion. I think the current government have not adequately handled the economy or the NHS particularly well; it's all going down the plughole!



Nicholas Fielding (O52)

Voted **Conservative** at the last election and I will do so again. In my opinion the only good thing this present government has done is to bring in a smoking ban... wonderful!



Gary Dyer (M20)

I voted Labour last time around but will vote **Conservative** on this occasion. I'm a floating voter and I understand the state of the economy is not altogether Labour's fault, but they must surely take much of the blame.



Dave Creber (C46)

I voted **Conservative** last time, but I am undecided at present. Perhaps I will vote the

same again, as I am disillusioned with the present government. I've discovered that I tend to vote Tory as I get older!



Bernie Silver (G08)

I voted **Conservative** last time and I shall do so again this time. I am very unhappy and disillusioned with this current government and the only time I voted for a Labour candidate was Ken Livingstone as Mayor of London.



Steve Bolton (R66)

I voted Labour last time but I'm not too happy with the present executive and even less happy with the Cons. I don't think one would necessarily be any better than the other although the current government do have the experience of being in power, so I may continue my supports for the Reds! Probably **Labour** then...



Laurence Short (E68)

I voted for **Conservative** last time and will do so again this time. I'm not happy with the current government and the way they have handled the economic situation. There have been too many mishaps. I have previously voted



Jackie Kott Y88

I voted **Conservative** at the last G.E. and will vote for Ilford North's Lee Scott (Con) again this time around. He's also been clean on the expenses furore so I'm happy with that! He has worked really hard to improve the lot of the local residents and the schools in the area. I would probably vote Liberal if it wasn't for Lee Scott. The present government seem to have done nothing to help the motoring trade with roads in poor condition and constant utility and engineering works restricting road space. Traffic just cannot keep moving smoothly.



Ed Gibson (O70)

Last time it was **Conservative** and I shall vote accordingly again. I'm disgusted with this government who have sold our gold reserves and plundered the pension coffers. Brown is too bland to be a world leader. He has no charisma, whereas Cameron seems to have grown up in the past few years, graduat-



ing to the point where he appears ready for government.

Philomena French (E44)

I voted **Conservative** at the previous General Election and will do so again this time. This current government have handled the economy in particular very badly, which is why it has gone to pot! I would possibly consider the Lib Dem at some time in the future, but I don't feel they are ready or sharp enough to be serious contenders just yet.



Terry Furness (V75)

I voted **Labour** the last time and will possibly do so again, don't ask why! I'm dismayed with this present government who appear to have tried hard, but as my old Head Master at school would have said... could have done better!



Ben Fearn (S60)

I voted Labour at the last G.E. but will vote **Conservative** this time. I'm not happy with the present party and find it difficult off the top of my head to remember what they did that was any good? They sold our gold reserves, raided pensions funds and left teachers in turmoil. So you could say I'm not at all happy...

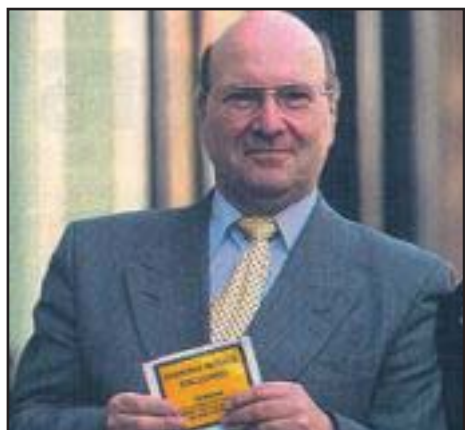


Peter Arnold (F40)

I voted Labour last time but will vote **Conservative** this time around. I'm disillusioned with the present government and the incoming administration will have quite a few issues to address. There's law and order plus the economy to kick off with. That's apart from whatever else is around the corner.



Call Sign's poll was based on the first 16 drivers prepared to answer the question: Who did you vote for last time and who will it be this time? It was conducted before the three leader's debates as we would have been too late to include the final one. The Call Sign results: Conservative 11, Labour 3 and Lib Dem 2. Would they have changed had the drivers heard the leader's debates? May 6 will provide the answer...



Westminster CCTV cameras back!

Call Sign's PCN guru **Barrie Segal** – who also acts for **Dial-a-Cab** and who has hugely reduced the money the Society used to pay in Penalty Charge Notices – has sent a warning

PCN MADNESS!

for this magazine's readers. It involves Westminster Council's CCTV cameras.

Just under 12 months ago, Government guidelines via the *Traffic Management Act of 2004* specified that CCTV cameras had to be of a minimum resolution and that 100 of the Westminster cameras failed to meet those specs. As a result, the 100 were turned off and had to be replaced. But now they're back working and according to Barrie are dishing out PCNs faster than ever! You have been warned...

PCN Stupidity as council tickets itself!

Whilst researching the second volume of his book **The Parking Ticket Awards: Crazy**

Councils, Meter Madness & Traffic Warden Hell, Barrie came across some really crazy stories, but topping the list had to be the appeal by Islington Council heard by the Traffic Appeals Service in 2007. The council had not only issued a parking ticket to itself, but then pursued itself at the Parking Adjudicator and asked for costs against itself – meaning that the council believed it acted unreasonably or vexatiously against itself! You can read more in Barrie's newsletter...

Barrie Segal is the founder of www.appealnow.com - the only website in the world where you can appeal your parking ticket online in 4½ minutes. He also has a free newsletter if drivers want to sign up. Click onto the 5p piece on the www.appealnow.com website.

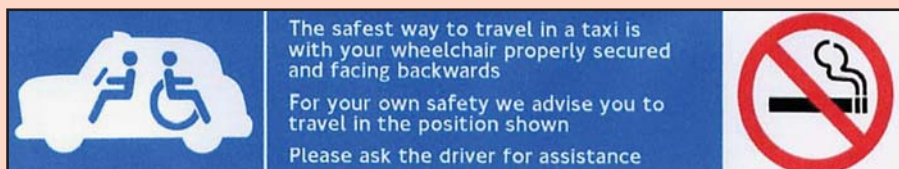
PCO: Safety info for taxi wheelchair users

A new sticker with safety information for wheelchair users has been approved for display in licensed taxis. The sticker clarifies the recommended safe position for wheelchair users when travelling in taxis.

Wheelchair users should be carried facing the rear of the taxi with their back to the partition. The attachment belts that are designed to ensure the safety of wheelchair users, will only work properly if the wheelchair is in this position. The sticker will be available from SGS taxi inspection centres and also incorporates the 'no-smoking' sign, which must be displayed in the passenger compartment of all licensed taxis.

The new sticker will go inside the taxi passenger compartment, in the offside rear quarter light window, the same side as the driver's seat and opposite the window where the Taxi Information Sticker should go.

The sticker will go in the same position in all models of taxi, whether LTI, Metrocab or the Mercedes Vito and will be rolled out to all licensed taxis over the next 12 months and will then become a mandatory requirement for all licensed taxis.



Mayor's draft Air Quality Strategy

In March 2010, the Mayor published *Clearing the Air*, his draft *Air Quality Strategy* for public consultation. This is one of a number of strategies that the Mayor is required to develop under the *Greater London Act*. The draft strategy contains proposals in several policy areas for improving air quality in London and builds on the initial *Assembly and Functional Bodies* draft published in October 2010.

The consultation document, along with related material, is available to download at:

<http://london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/vision-strategy/air-quality>.

This sets out the background to the question of London's air quality and the proposals put forward. The proposals in the draft strategy are for consultation and

views are being sought from the public and from bodies concerned with the range of policy areas affected. The consultation is open until 21 June 2010.

Taxi and private hire trade stakeholders are invited to respond to these proposals, and submit any evidence relevant to the issues. Account will be taken of the views and evidence, when decisions are made regarding the proposals, to be included in the final version of the Strategy to be published in late 2010. Details of how to respond and forms for response, to be completed online or printed for submission by post, are available on the GLA web site at the same address.

As individuals and organisations involved in or concerned with the taxi and private hire trades, you are also invited to send us

your comments and any other proposals that could contribute to reducing harmful emissions from taxis and private hire vehicles in London. We would like to receive your comments by **14 June 2010**, to allow us to collate responses for the discussions going forward. Any earlier responses will be helpful.

Responses should be emailed to TPH.Consultation@tfl.gov.uk or sent by post to:

**Taxis and Private Hire MAQS Consultation,
TfL Taxi & Private Hire Directorate
4th Floor Yellow Zone
Palestra 197
Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ**

**John Mason
Director, Taxi/Private Hire, TfL**

London's livery companies, including *The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers*, recently joined together at St Paul's Cathedral for the annual United Guilds Service, which has been held since 1943 when at a meeting of the Masters and Prime Wardens of the Twelve Great Companies, it was decided to hold a service to lift the spirits of the City following the blitz.

Today's Livery Companies are all involved in charitable works, affiliations with the military and schools; some still continue with training as they have for centuries. St Paul's has had the support of City livery companies for many years. The service began with a fanfare of trumpeters of The Band of the Blues and Royals led by Trumpet Major Grant Sewell-Jones.

A procession including Masters, Virgers, The Chief Commoner, The Court of Aldermen, The Bishop of London and the 682nd Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Nick Anstee followed. After the service, Freemen and Liverymen of The WCHCD joined other Livery Companies for lunch at The Butchers Hall. The Worshipful Company of Butchers is one of the seven oldest of the City of London Livery Companies and Lord Mayor Nick Anstee is a Warden of the Butchers Company.

Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers

UNITED GUILDS SERVICE HELD AT ST PAULS



Taken on the steps of St Pauls, the photo shows (from l - r): Mr and Mrs Eddie Crossley, former DaC driver Brenda Bartlett and Master and Mrs Michael Davies

PCO "reduced times" become none!

In the January issue of *Call Sign*, we reported that counter services at the PCO would no longer be available on Monday or Friday, but only Tuesday to Thursday and then only from 10am to 3pm. Well even that has now changed and TfL has announced that the taxi and private hire counter services at Penton Street will no longer be available at all.

Referring to it as being part of a wider programme to improve Taxi and Private Hire licensing services, existing drivers and new applicants are now to be encouraged to use quicker and more effective means of contacting TfL, such

as the internet, phone and post. This does not apply to Knowledge candidates and appointments will continue to be booked as normal.

TfL has also been working closely with the Post Office to develop and improve the existing *Check and Send* service. For a small fee, a number of Post Offices across London will be able to check and accept renewal taxi applications. *Call Sign* tried this system but gave up after 3 post offices said they didn't operate the service, so we took a chance and just posted an application using recorded delivery. We received confirmation of receipt within two days.

John Mason, TfL's Director of Taxi and Private Hire, told us:

"I know the counter service at Penton Street

has been well used over the years, but with all the other available means of contacting us, it is no longer an efficient use of licensing staff's time. I am committed to improving the service provided to licensees and I believe this change, along with others that have already been introduced, will deliver this. We will continue to improve online access to licensing services and believe that the Post Office's *Check and Send* service will provide a valuable facility for those that want to use it."

Drivers can request application packs from www.tfl.gov.uk/tphservices.

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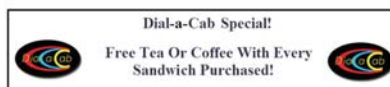
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Subs reductions

Hi Alan

I sadly think I will have to leave DaC soon as I am not even covering subscriptions nowadays. I officially retire in October, but like many will continue working - probably until I drop - because my pensions have dropped in value so much. I had hoped there would be some scheme that would allow drivers who reach retirement age to work part-time at reduced subs, but I am told this is not the case. I know I have not been on DaC long enough to qualify for the £1 per month, but I have recently met drivers who have left after many years on the circuit and it does seem a little unfair that it is 30 years or nothing to receive some benefits with subscriptions. A graded scale seems a fairer option. For every year served, a reduction when a driver reaches 65 perhaps, but they either have to or want to continue working on DaC part time. It shouldn't be too hard to work out a plan. Then at least DaC would be receiving some subs instead of losing drivers altogether and receiving nothing from them.

I found myself considering that my wages were all coming from any street work I get. It does not make sense for me to worry about earning money just to pay subs with no benefit to myself. I do not want to leave DaC and as a person who has been on all three main circuits in my 26 years of driving a cab. I can honestly say this is the best of them all.

Finally Alan, thanks again for your past help. I appreciate it very much...

Tom Reynolds (O85)

Brian Rice replies: I can sympathise with your predicament Tom, but as you can no doubt appreciate, any procedure that we adopt will prove unfair and unpopular to a small section of the membership. After all, everyone wants a system that suits them individually and there is nothing wrong with that. You want a sliding scale when a member reaches 65, but many members do not retire at that age, consequently their reduced subscription would prove a burden to the remainder of the membership and as there are three times as many drivers over the age of 70 than there are under the age of 30, you can no doubt understand my predicament.

I believe the way we do it now is quite good and that is £1 per month subscription once you have reached 30 years service, it is nice and clean.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your last three and a half years service and wish you well for the future, incidentally, I agree we are the best radio circuit.

Weekly credits?

Dear Alan,

Is there any good reason why we can't have our credits paid weekly? I realise that the payments were all over the place before we went fortnightly, but for those of us who do a reasonable number of credit trips and who are used to weekly payments, it can be a right pain, with cash flow becoming almost non-existent at times. I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking this and Mr Rice pointed out at the time of the change, the main people affected were likely to be those on weekly payments (I would guess that a lot of these are the same drivers who do a lot of credit work).

I'm sure that no one would object to weekly pay and as we are a reasonably cash rich Society, it would be nice if we could change (back) to weekly. I have given fortnightly a fair crack of the whip before writing in the hope that someone else would do it before me! No one has so maybe it is just me after all! Seriously though, it is a problem sometimes...

Mick Davis (M14)

DaC Financial Controller Warren Smith responds: Mick, the issue of reverting to fortnightly driver payments incorporated many factors. These included standardisation of payment frequencies, the introduction of a fortnightly subscription deduction to coincide with the new payment frequency and liaising with the credit union for them to introduce a fortnightly deduction. Another factor taken into account by management, which does not affect the driver however, is the amount of administration time it took to produce what you get in front of you as a Driver Statement. For weekly paid drivers, there was at least one week in the month when a payment was greatly reduced or wasn't paid because the subscriptions deduction was applied, therefore only three were payments made in the month at most. If a Driver does a reasonable amount of credit work, then the introduction of fortnightly subs and credit union deduction evens things out and they should be paid every time. I can categorically say that most drivers that do credit work are paid every fortnight. You are right that Brian said the main people to be affected would be the weekly paid Drivers, but he only meant for the first few payment cycles. Once a driver was earning double, then that would rollover to the next payment and so on. He did not envisage any Driver taking more than a month to get their financial house in order. Changing to fortnightly payments decreased the administration workload considerably, going to weekly payments doubles that workload immediately. This is something that management does not want to see as it puts a strain on limited resources. I believe that nearly one year on, fortnightly payments have been a great success as the number of complaints received can be counted on one hand. I am sorry that this is not the



answer you were looking for, Mick, but it's the only one I have, so I cannot see a change from fortnightly to weekly payments in the foreseeable future...

Thank you DaC...

Apologies for how long it has taken me to pass on this information but I just wanted to confirm that on Friday 12th March I had a Dial-a-Cab booking via my Swarovski company account. I was extremely late for an evening appointment and your driver (C28) was absolutely amazing. The traffic was awful and he got me to my destination in excellent time.

At the end of a very long week it was so nice to have someone be so helpful and go out of their way to give a good service. Please pass on my thanks...

Beverley Lowry

Swarovski Corp Comm, London W1

The driver involved was James Hale ...Ed

Volcanic taxi trips!

Reading the press, I notice Addison Lee have been boasting of jobs to and from the continent whilst air traffic space was closed. Do you know if we undertook any such trips, as I wouldn't like to think we were losing out to the said mob!

Chris Passfield (Y25)

Brian Rice replies: Chris, I think you can take Addison Lee's boast with a pinch of salt! How were they going to get their vehicle on the ferry etc? They had been booked up for days! This was simply a ploy to get their name in the press - and hope the public would believe it! However, we did get a sniff of the sea as we picked up in Dover to come back into town!

PH and dinosaurs???

Hi Alan

I hope you have space to print my views in a forthcoming issue of *Call Sign*. Much has been spoken and written about re how to win back some of the work we are undoubtedly losing to PH and I don't wish to labour the points previously made. I have held my badge for 9 years (on DaC for around 4 years) but it was blatantly obvious from the moment I started driving that the cab trade needed to modernise. Gents, we are not being pulled around by horses anymore, yet to listen to some of the rantings in *Call Sign* (and other trade papers) you wouldn't believe it. There are too many dinosaurs in the trade. We have helped create the PH situation ourselves. Is it any wonder that hotels, clubs, banks etc use cars when they see the behaviour of many drivers who still refuse work when ranked up outside those

Mailshot

Continued from page 33

same clubs / hotels / banks. Every morning people hail cabs opposite the private rank at The Hilton, Kensington because they can't get one of the 3 or 4 cabs ranked up there to take them to Paddington or Notting Hill. Cab users are astounded that this type of behaviour still exists, yet many of our drivers play into the hands of PH. I mean lets face it, what hardworking lawyer or banker wants to get into a J reg Metro or K reg Fairway? Personally, I'd be embarrassed to pick a passenger up in any cab more than 6 years old. What must the senior exec think when he gets into a 20+ year old vehicle? The situation is exasperated when a senior banker orders a DaC taxi and a 15-year-old boneshaker turns up to take him from the City to the Dorchester. He can pay the same money and get into a car that's less than a year old and travel in some degree of comfort.

We have lost lots of trade not only because of competition and restrictions on budgets, but because there's a hell of a lot of drivers unwilling to drag themselves into the modern world. There are thousands of drivers out there who still do not take credit cards and sulk when their passenger wants to pay with a £20 note. Too many of our trade are willing to moan and groan yet do nothing to improve firstly themselves and secondly the trade. Yes, we may need to change some of our pricing and practises to compete, but we also need to bring the fleet and its equipment up to date to give us any hope of keeping up with the competition. I have often asked myself why the trade is so much against change, but having recently taken possession of my Vito, a large number of my passengers are asking me the same question. For years our garage waiting rooms have been full of discontent about the quality of the product we've been forced to buy, we now have a far superior vehicle to drive so let's get the cab trade into the modern world and prove to Londoners that we are not going to let the PH industry outdo us.

I love the work I do (both street and account) so please do not keep dragging the trade down. If you don't like the trade anymore or the radio circuit you are on, then leave and see if you can do any better elsewhere.

Keith Holbrook (T92)

Thanks for the letter Keith. Whilst I agree with your sympathies regarding old cabs, what you also have to remember is that if PH drivers had to buy their own vehicles, they would be returning to the old rust-bucket syndrome. Being as rich as John Griffin must help! As for the rest of your letter, you are 100% right. The 'problem' with the Ken Hilton drivers was going on even when I drove days – and I gave that up in 1976. It's the belief that if you don't get an airport, then your day is a failure. Yet we have lost so many of those airport trips

because of passengers who no longer use taxis at all – let alone for LAP. How many of those former passengers were at one time waiting opposite the Ken Hilton and were refused, so now only use us when they have no choice? It is a self perpetuating disaster syndrome. As you infer, money is probably a factor but it's the service that often lets us down. Anyone can provide a brilliant service when it's quiet but it's when busy that people remember who provided the service they needed.

And speaking of John Griffin, for those who haven't heard, his Addison Lee company were recently awarded £4 million government contract to provide taxi services from within the M25 to the Department for Work and Pensions, the Cabinet Office, the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The contract also allows other central government departments and local authorities to join should they wish to do so. It reminds me of the quiet evening of Tuesday 6 April – just after the Easter holiday weekend. I was hailed outside the Wigmore Hall by a young lady who asked if I would take her to Herne Hill as the previous three drivers had refused. So, yes, while we say no to passengers, the opposition are cleaning up. And the Herne Hill job? Yes, it went £28, which she was happy to pay ...Ed

Black power or black empowerment?

Dear Alan,

Having read your February *Call Sign Editorial* and more recently the article by **Louie Christian (A48)** (April *Call Sign*), I have a few issues of my own concerning the use of the word *Black*. I should first probably state that I was unfortunate enough to come from an age and environment that was ignorant of the feelings of people of colour and consequently could, at times, be openly racist to anyone perceived as foreign. Consequently, I have for most of my adult life had an inner battle not to be racist and I try to treat everyone the same. I am truly thankful and pleased that my children do not have the burden of any racial bias and have many friends of different colours and nationalities. That said, being around in the 1950s, to call a person of colour *Black* was classed as being derogatory as were many other words of description. You referred to someone as being *coloured*.

We then came to the era of *Black* is *Beautiful* and it was no longer accepted to describe someone as *coloured*. Even though to describe someone as *Black* is now the accepted word, for some unknown reason I have always felt a little uncomfortable referring to someone as *Black*. For very many years I have looked after a very nice man from Africa, who I run around when he is in London. Although he refers to himself as a

Black man, I still tend to describe him as an African man. On the other hand, I have never had a problem saying the word *Black* in any other context when in his company. I use to despair when reading some council was to ban a nursery rhyme such as *Baa, Baa Black Sheep* so as not to upset *Black* children. When I discussed such things with my friend, he would just laugh and say that the *black* children back home also recite and are taught those rhymes. I would justify it as PC gone mad, white liberalism, and we would agree that *Black* people would not care less.

So I was dismayed to read that Louie, (if I may call him by his first name) wonders if you and I imagine that we readers feel the same way about the use of the word *black* when it is associated with negatives? He quotes *black ice*, *black clouds*, *black day* and then states: "No doubt, because it is a part of the English language, it seems perfectly normal?" Louie then suggests we ask ourselves "...is it normal?" He goes on to ask if we have ever seen *black ice* or a *black day* and then for some unknown reason, he suggests that perhaps this is what McPherson meant when he stated *inherent racism*, finishing by stating that "much of the White population would not see anything wrong with the use of these words. However, to much of the black population, these terms are highly derogatory."

I would like to say that as far as not seeing *black ice*, neither have I ever seen a *black man*, or a *white man*. I have seen lots of people with different shades of brown skin, as I have seen lots of people with pale pink colour skin, but never *black* or *white*. So if people want to be called either *black* or *white*, I should have no problem whatsoever, but to then imply that I, as a so-called *white man*, should not use the word *Black* in a negative term as it could offend a *black person*, is frankly just plain stupid and I would imagine just as offensive to *Black* people as it is to me. Is Louie really saying we should stop saying things like *black ice* in case it offends? Would saying "my bank balance is in the black" be OK? That cannot be a negative, can it? I accept that Louie knows more *Black* people than I, but he can't possibly know the feelings of the majority of the *black* population. Where did he get the evidence for such a claim? I feel he has done an injustice to *Call Sign's* readership, he has planted a seed that they should now fear whenever using the word *Black* in a negative context. I should first check that no *black person* is in earshot so as not to offend them. Up till now, the word was innocent, unfortunately I feel Louie has now demonised it. I am sure, Louie, that you



Mailshot

have experienced a white person asking what your profession was and on replying "taxi driver," they have responded in all innocence if you meant a "black cab driver" followed by a look of embarrassment thinking they may have offended you when maybe you were not in the slightest bit offended because you knew exactly what they meant.

Do we really want a society that is scared of saying everyday words in case they offend? Louie also defends the *Black Power* list as not a form of inverted racism, saying there is nothing wrong with a white list, but he must know this could never be. There is a *Black Police Federation* - the name suggesting that white police are excluded. What if they were allowed to have a *White Police Federation*? That would suggest blacks were excluded, but they are all British Police so why make divisions because of skin colour? As far as the *Black Power* list goes, why could they not have called it something like, *The Afro/Caribbean Power List*? There are many white people from Africa and the West Indies. Louie says they need such awards as black people are unlikely to be in the top 100 influential UK List, but is that not demeaning the ability of black people? There are many black people in very high and prominent positions within the UK, also quite a few at the very top of the list are from an ethnic background. So given time and there will be black people up there. Louie also says the award for Mr Lynch is for being black and good at his job, Why on earth would someone be given an award for the colour of their skin? Did not **Martin Luther King**, in his historic *I have a Dream* speech say his four little children would not be judged by the colour of their skin?

Louie's main concern for defending the reason for such awards appears to be for young blacks to aspire, and a need for aspiration and role models to look up to, yet Louie as a well read man had never heard of the winner, Mr R.Lynch, so I would ask how many black kids have and how many kids black or white would choose some rich businessman as a role model? It is more likely to be a sports person or pop star, but ultimately what is sadly missing from so many is a Father. I personally do not like being labelled white, I refer to myself as British / English, or half-Scottish (when Scotland do well)! I believe it would be better if skin colour was used for description only. When we see our young athletes beat the rest of the world, whatever colour their skin may be, are we not proud that they are British? So instead of 'black empowerment' should we not encourage 'British empowerment' and install in them that they were fortunate to be born in and to live in what was the greatest country in the world and that no one person born here is more British / English than any other whatever their skin colour may be. By all means they should know about their roots, but first and foremost they are British and should be taught the history of why it was Great. And as they are the future, it

is up to them to help put the Great back into Britain.

Ian Connelly (T49)

Checking up on gratuities...

Having made a comment about possibly getting rid of the 10% gratuities added onto account rides in the *April Call Sign*, I decided to keep a check myself and found that at the end of the day after adding up my cash gratuities that the tips came to less than 5% of my takings. When I check my credits, I don't take into consideration any tips, so I do not think we will not be much worse off by dropping the gratuities - especially if it gets us more work.

Ivor Belkin (C97)

Thank you for your honesty Ivor! ...Ed

Fares - the other point of view...

Hi Alan

I had to write this because sometimes I just can't understand how people think. I read the letter by **David Martin (J72)** in the April *Mailshot* and fair enough, everybody is entitled to their opinion... so here's mine. First and foremost, the run-ins: David is saying that we should lose it and run in for nothing, but why would you do that? If you do, say, 5 radio jobs in one day you would have just lost around £20! And no gratuity? That's another £10 a day - around £30 so far! And why would I go to Heathrow for £45 in the rush hour when it is a £60 or £70 ride? That's another £20 gone! It seems like he is saying that if you can't beat 'em, then join 'em. No way! That's not the attitude we need, we should stick by our guns, otherwise what's the point in doing the Knowledge? I might as well go and buy a Datsun for £2000 that costs me very little to run and become a minicab driver. The price of taxis will be going up next year by £2000 and the new Vito by even more. Petrol is going up as well and it seems like everything is on the up, yet David Martin wants our fares to go down. Please get real mate, we're not a charity, these are multi-million pound companies you are dealing with and most of the people you are taking home are probably earning treble what we do, yet you want us to cut our wages and drive around for nothing. Even my local minicab firm charge a £3 run-in. We're in London, not some third-world country, so let's stand by what's right...be proud of what we do and don't give in to these people. Remember, we know what we are doing - they don't!

Paul Dacosta (L68)

I agree with many of your sentiments, Paul. I believe that it will begin to get busier later in the summer and that we will be in demand again. While I'm not necessarily against reasonable fixed prices for airports and late-night trips, I don't think a general scything of fares would be in our long-term interests. That doesn't mean that we can't compete in

price. Arriving with £3 to £3.60 means that if the passengers come down reasonably quickly, then there won't be any shock amounts on the meter. I'd also like to see more accounts using the Aspect phone system, where it takes just seconds to get a response.

I spoke to LTI and they have no plans so far as raising prices is concerned, let alone by £2000. In fact their aim is to cut the TX4 price by getting more parts from China. But generally speaking, the sentiment of us being the best is one I agree we should play on ...Ed

Cars v Taxis

This is the first time I have ever written a letter to this magazine, but the despair I feel with the erosion of our work has inspired this momentous event. Ok, let's assume cars are cheaper. If we control the cars, why not first offer the job to the DaC fleet? At 2pm there is a trip from Jermyn St to LAP fixed at £55; if no one wants it, then pass it on to the cars. Alternatively, at 2am, Ropemaker St to Basildon fixed at £80. Again, if no one wants it then pass it on to the cars. Board members must realise there is no such thing as cab and car work, it has to be less rigid. I'm not paying subs to fatten the wallet of car drivers. If this does happen, we must keep our mouths shut. If we carry a banker, do not tell him what an a-hole he is even if it is true! Finally we need a Board passionately committed to the product it is selling. Is that this BoM? I am yet to be convinced...

Stephen Field (F68)

Brian Rice responds: Who said we control the cars? We don't, the customer does! You must remember that we only have Concierge in five of our larger accounts and they are the only accounts where we handle their ground transportation - there is not one other account in our database that requires us to send them cars. I think you will agree Stephen, these five are our largest accounts, so what makes you think they will accept a taxi when they actually ask for a car! If you believe we can actually dictate to a client and tell them they can only have what we say - then we would not have that account for very long!

Finally, to accuse me and the BoM of not being passionate; I don't know if you have put that in for effect or you actually believe it, I hope it is the former! During my stewardship, we have acquired Deutsche Bank, Citi and JPMorgan, three of our largest accounts and three of the largest in London, please don't insult me by telling me I am not passionate about DaC - just look at our achievements!





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