

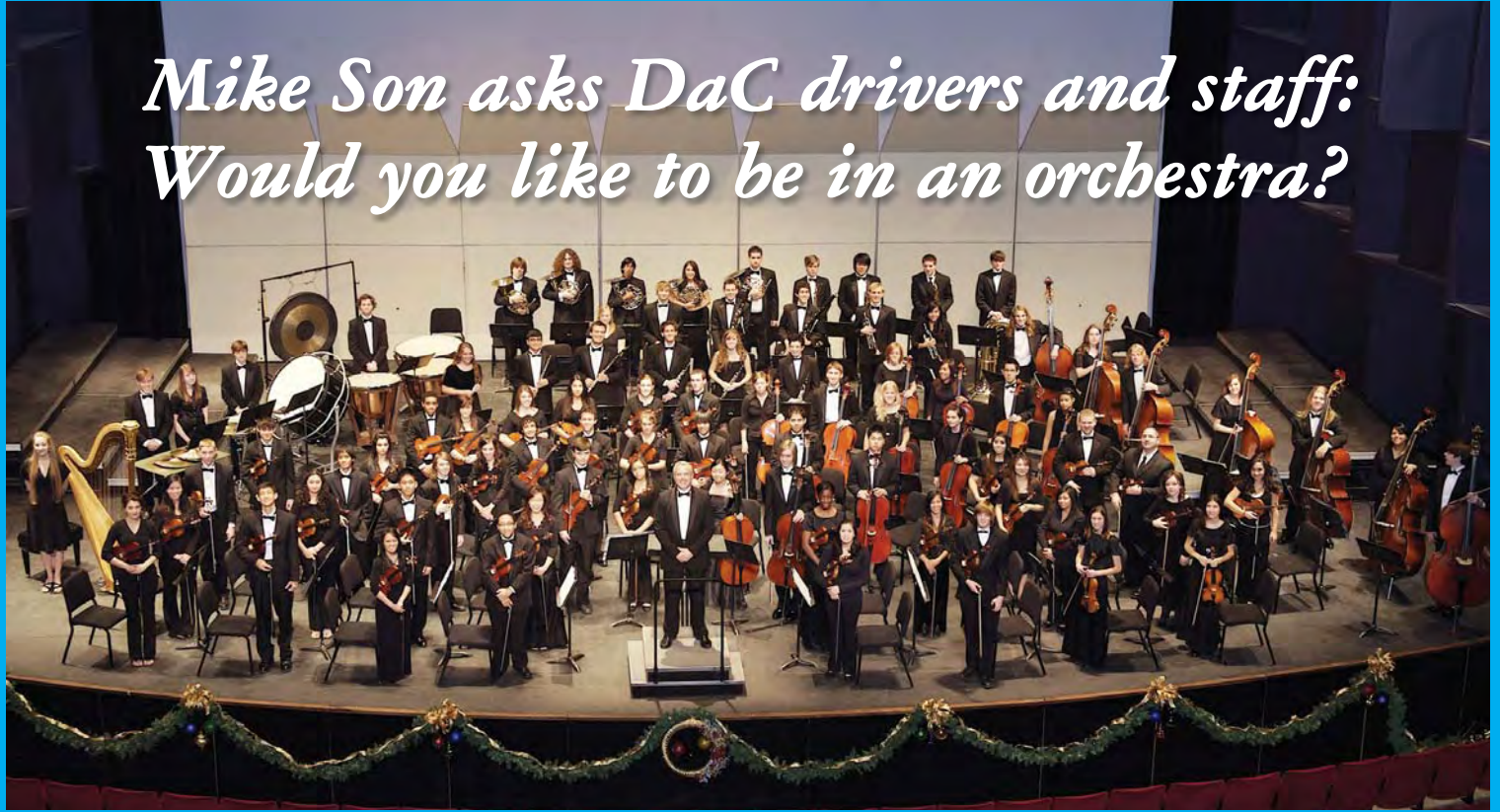
April 2011



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*Mike Son asks DaC drivers and staff:
Would you like to be in an orchestra?*



*Mike Walsh:
Fifty years
on DaC!*





NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

April's increase is an average of 2.7% (or with the increase in fuel prices more like a 2.7% reduction)! Below is the mileage table and a guide to run-in and waiting times. Further down the page is a 'What's On' guide...

Miles	T1	T2	T3	Miles	T1	T2	T3
1	£4.20	£4.80	£5.60	31	£100.80	£104.20	£108.40
2	£6.60	£7.80	£9.20	32	£104.20	£107.60	£111.80
3	£9.00	£10.60	£12.80	33	£107.60	£111.00	£115.20
4	£11.40	£13.60	£16.40	34	£111.00	£114.40	£118.60
5	£13.80	£16.60	£20.00	35	£114.40	£117.80	£122.00
6	£16.20	£19.40	£23.60	40	£131.40	£134.80	£139.00
7	£19.60	£22.80	£27.00	45	£148.40	£151.80	£155.80
8	£23.00	£26.20	£30.40	50	£165.40	£168.60	£172.80
9	£26.40	£29.60	£33.80	55	£182.20	£185.60	£189.80
10	£29.80	£33.00	£37.20	60	£199.20	£202.60	£206.80
11	£33.20	£36.40	£40.60	65	£216.20	£219.60	£223.80
12	£36.60	£39.80	£44.00	70	£233.20	£236.40	£240.60
13	£40.00	£43.20	£47.40	75	£250.20	£253.40	£257.60
14	£43.40	£46.60	£50.80	80	£267.00	£270.40	£274.60
15	£46.80	£50.00	£54.20	85	£284.00	£287.40	£291.60
16	£50.20	£53.40	£57.60	90	£301.00	£304.40	£308.40
17	£53.60	£56.80	£61.00	95	£318.00	£321.20	£325.40
18	£57.00	£60.20	£64.40	100	£334.80	£338.20	£342.40
19	£60.40	£63.60	£67.80	110	£368.80	£372.20	£376.40
20	£63.60	£67.00	£71.00	120	£402.80	£406.00	£410.20
21	£67.00	£70.40	£74.40	130	£436.60	£440.00	£444.20
22	£70.40	£73.80	£77.80	140	£470.60	£473.80	£478.00
23	£73.80	£77.00	£81.20	150	£504.40	£507.80	£512.00
24	£77.20	£80.40	£84.60	160	£538.40	£541.60	£545.80
25	£80.60	£83.80	£88.00	Additional Miles at all rates			
26	£84.00	£87.20	£91.40	1	£3.40	6	£20.40
27	£87.40	£90.60	£94.80	2	£6.80	7	£23.80
28	£90.80	£94.00	£98.20	3	£10.20	8	£27.20
29	£94.20	£97.40	£101.60	4	£13.60	9	£30.60
30	£97.60	£100.80	£105.00	5	£17.00	10	£34.00

It is important not to exceed the run in on account jobs. Below is the time to a £4.20, and £3.80 run in. The figures are very useful for Pre-Booked account jobs.

Run-in £4.20

T1 5:20m to 5:49m
T2 4:20m to 4:44m
T3 3:30m to 3:49m

Run-in £3.80

T1 4:22m to 4:51m
T2 3:34m to 3:57m
T3 2:52m to 3:11m

Waiting time is:

T1 £ 24.74/hr (for 37:30m)
T2 £ 30.38/hr (for 37:30m)
T3 £ 37.69/hr (for 37:30m)
Then at the "Higher Rate"
at £35.29/hour.

T1 first hour of waiting = £ 31.20*
T2 first hour of waiting = £ 34.40*
T3 first hour of waiting = £ 38.60*
Subsequent hours on all
three rates = £ 35.29
* includes the £1.80
flag fall surcharge.

Some 'What's On' events in April 2011

Venue	Event	Day	Date	Venue	Event	Day	Date
O2 Arena	Peter Kaye	Fri	01/04/2011	Royal Albert Hall	James Last	Mon	11/04/2011
Wembley Arena	McFly	Fri	01/04/2011	O2 Arena	Kylie	Tue	12/04/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Daniel O'Donnell	Fri	01/04/2011	hmvApollo	David Cassidy	Tue	12/04/2011
O2 Arena	Peter Kaye	Sat	02/04/2011	Troxy	Boxing Dinner	Wed	13/04/2011
Troxy	Gary Numan	Sat	02/04/2011	O2 Arena	Jamiroquai	Fri	15/04/2011
Arsenal	v Blackburn 17:30	Sat	02/04/2011	Wembley Stadium	FA Cup Semi Final	Sat	16/04/2011
O2 Arena	Peter Kaye	Sun	03/04/2011	Wembley Stadium	FA Cup Semi Final	Sun	17/04/2011
O2 Arena	Peter Kaye	Mon	04/04/2011	Arsenal	v Liverpool 16:00	Sun	17/04/2011
O2 Arena	Kylie	Thu	07/04/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Chris de Burgh	Mon	18/04/2011
Troxy	Boxing	Thu	07/04/2011	Chelsea	v Birmingham 19:45	Wed	20/04/2011
O2 Arena	Kylie	Fri	08/04/2011	hmvApollo	R.Kelly	Fri	22/04/2011
O2 Arena	Kylie	Sat	09/04/2011	Chelsea	v West Ham 17:30	Sat	23/04/2011
O2 Arena	Kylie	Mon	11/04/2011	Chelsea	v Tottenham 17:30	Sat	30/04/2011

I have added The Troxy at 490, Commercial Rd E1 to the 'What's On' list this month. For the full 141 list of events you need to log on to the website at www.myfav.co.uk. If you not already registered, click the 'Register' button, enter your details with the word 'taxi' as the unlock code. You will be automatically sent a password, click 'Log On', enter your email address and password and the button 'TAXI' will appear instead of the padlock symbol. Click it and loads of useful taxi related icons will appear including "What's On" and the UID parts. Plus you can win the monthly £100 prize simply by recommending the site. Win-Win or what!! And it's great to have as your 'Home Page'...

from the editor's desk

Taxi chat sites...

At the beginning of 1998, **Call Sign** went online – one of just a small number of UK magazines of any industry to venture along what was still excitingly referred to as the World Wide Web.

Soon after, thanks to our internet wizard **Vince Chin**, **Call Sign** began advertising the UK's first taxi chatroom where anyone connected to the taxi business and who actually had internet connections, could discuss anything they wanted to that might improve the industry. In addition to drivers, members included garage proprietors, radio circuit leaders and even Jamie Borwick, who was soon to become the Chairman of Manganese Bronze and is now Sir Geoffrey Robert James Borwick, 5th Baron Borwick – or Lord Borwick for short!

The chatroom was called **Discuss** and it soon became a huge success. No one hid behind email addresses because if you wanted to join, you gave your name. However, within a few years, **Discuss** had become so popular that it became the norm to just sign in with your email address and soon a new breed of user came along – one who realised that the internet provided ways of making up false identities behind false addresses as you went along. The emails began degenerating into slanging matches and discussion soon became impossible. Original members began leaving and soon after, Vince Chin announced that he was closing down the site as “the inmates were beginning to run the asylum.”

Another site sprung up soon afterwards, later to close and become reborn several times – including one by the late Cecil Selwyn from which I was banned.

We have now arrived at the latest one – The **London Taxi Drivers Forum** or LTDF. Ever since being banned from Cecil's list – with no reason ever given – I have not bothered joining any of its' successors, although I have been a member of the American Taxi-I list since 1989. Strangely enough – or perhaps not – having recently been sent a whole bunch of emails from the LTDF list, I have been told that there is even an Alan Fisher on there, although it isn't me!

Neither am I someone called Wicksey, who rumour also suggests is me! So what is the point of this editorial? Well it's just to ask all those well-meaning drivers who send me emails from the list when they mention either Brian Rice, Dial-a-Cab, **Call Sign** or myself, not to bother. Thank you anyway, but had I thought for one second that this list served any purpose, I'd have joined and taken part – but as Alan Fisher. But having read some of the stuff emanating from the LTDF, I can't see the point. It is filled with emails from people who hide behind silly names and who obviously enjoy slagging off others thanks to that anonymity. My days of writing fun articles as Lana Sherif and Mr X have been left well behind by this mob!

Call Sign may not be *The Times*, but I've been doing this job for 14 years and I recognise writing styles and even from the bunch of around 20 emails sent to me in February, I could tell that several were written by the same person but with different “names” at the bottom. They can't do that in **Call Sign** because since day one I have insisted that writers give their names to stop any possibility of made-up letters. And God help anyone on the LTDF list that dares to defend DaC against some of its detractors – many of whom claim to be ex-members – because they then too come under the cosh!



Several years ago, I published some emails from a previous list because they were about myself and DaC. The uproar from its members was deafening. They were going to consult solicitors with a view to stopping me doing it again and tried everything to get me to reveal who had sent them to me. I even received a solicitor's letter. I took no notice then and neither do I now. If it is a closed list and it acts like a sensible one discussing trade politics, then drivers won't feel they have to send emails to me.

Some of the posts are quite amusing in their ignorance. One writes of “the increasing panic from Rice and his propagandist, the Crawl Sign editor...” Yet someone who responded by saying that “...if the members want to get rid of this Mr Rice chap, then they can all vote him out as democracy allows, but the drivers don't so they must be content and that's their business, the same as it's their circuit,” was castigated for his views. Another response refers to me as a scab – I assume that's why he is picking on me! All the LTDF posts do is to make me smile and be glad I don't have to see that rubbish on a daily basis.

Yet another masterpiece was written by someone whose style I recognised immediately – a former driver who made two visits to an industrial tribunal to try to regain a place on DaC, the organisation he “dislikes” so much! It came in response to a **Call Sign** writer who actually uses a familiar name and who obviously – and strangely for that site – doesn't mind being identified. The subject referred to the expulsion from DaC of someone who is now the Chairman of a trade organisation. This charming fellow's response said, referring to the Complaints Committee that expelled that chairman: “People being thrown off by peers! What, peers such as Fisher and you? Peers, my arse, they are Rice's kangaroo court lackeys.” Just to clarify, neither of the two mentioned were even on the committee, but I'm sure that drivers on our complaints committee will be impressed to know how they are thought of by someone on an internet list who is afraid to give his name! That member even wrote to *The Badge* with a letter headed: The force that is Dial-a-Cab. He couldn't even give his real name there – never mind the fact that he seems to have made everything up anyway!

But there is one former expelled driver on the list whose name is known. Mark White sits on the list as the king of all he surveys – a ‘white knight’ giving out “facts” that seem to bear little semblance to reality. Writing of his Appeal, he claims he was pressurised to attend it just “weeks” after burying his mother? He boasts of

how he refused to speak at his Appeal and handed in a 7-page statement instead, going on about how DaC “refused” to give him relevant information about cabs and jobs so he could make a proper defence against being expelled after not doing 40 jobs a month at a time when it was still busy. He then claims that I abused my position as an Arbiter by publishing an article before the Arbitration deadline, which I apparently knew was wrong and how I refused to retract it or publish a correction on the rule about it being an *average* of 40 jobs and not a straight 40 per month. He goes on to talk about how I give “preferential treatment” to BMs and how “**Call Sign** is censored by Rice.”

According to Mark White's rant, Brian Rice regularly called him to say he couldn't publish his articles without verification of facts and figures as he was ultimately responsible as the publisher. Well if he did, that's news to me. Why didn't Mark White just write to me direct – unless he was hoping to make a point? In another email he boasts that he still has a DaC terminal in his taxi after four years. Well bully for him – even though it will soon be the only one of its kind! They used to call that stealing, now it's obviously just something to boast of. No doubt DaC could have wasted money chasing him and played his childish games, but they obviously decided he wasn't worth spending the money on.

I could go on, but sadly Mark's words get more and more cockeyed and bitter. They are either twisted or incorrect from what I can see. **Call Sign** is completely uncensored except in the mind of Mark White. I always published his letters in their entirety each time he sent them in – and believe me, most were extremely long. The only comments I got were from drivers who begged me to stop as they found them to be so boring. But I published them because they were a driver's point of view and as such deserved the space. I notice from the 20 or so LTDF emails I have been sent, that again his are by far the longest-winded ones. I never asked anyone if it was ok to publish his **Call Sign** letters because I don't need to. If a letter isn't published – and there have been a handful in 14 years – it's because I have decided that they are unfit for publication.

Mark White undoubtedly had personal problems. In fact I spoke with him many times, not with answers but just as someone who listened to a fellow driver's problems. I haven't a clue why he dislikes me so much, but neither do I worry about it. All I know is that if I wanted to read all the rubbish that comes from the LTDF site, I would join. However, it would be pointless because there seems to be little in the way of discussion, just a general slagging off of anyone not liked – with Brian Rice and myself seemingly coming in for much of it. Why? I haven't a clue about that either and again, neither do I particularly care! But my thanks anyway to the drivers who try to defend me, but please don't waste your time. They obviously won't allow you to put forward a case for discussion. The days of Vince Chin's **Discuss** list are well and truly gone...

Last word...

With all our troubles, nothing comes within a million miles to what has happened in Japan. In addition to the many tens of thousands that have perished, there must also have been many taxi drivers. Our hearts go out to the Japanese with the hope of a return to normality soon...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

The bad and the good...!

I know things are still tough out there work-wise and that is without the added disadvantage of seemingly weekly increases in the cost of fuel and what appears to be roadworks on every street in London! Being in the taxi trade just appears to be getting tougher and tougher.

As the price of fuel continues to escalate, which it probably will continue to do due to the conflicts in the Middle East with Iraq and Libya, then the authorities should have introduced a fuel surcharge. I'm sure most of you will agree it would be justified, but what with the 2.7% fare increase I can see sections of the media directing some unjustified criticism at us. If things are tough now, they could become even worse if a surcharge and increase were included in the fare. However, I hear that there will be no surcharge unless the average diesel price hits £1.46 per litre before the fare increase comes in – and no, LTPH don't use the garage at Sloane Avenue to base their average price on!

Coupled with the above, we now move into Easter with its' extended holiday and then May with the two Bank Holidays. However, with the Royal Wedding sandwiched in-between, that could possibly bring some extra work into London.

So now that I have thoroughly depressed you, I also have some brighter news! We are six months into our financial year and turnover is up 10% compared to the corresponding period last year. I hope that continues throughout the remainder of the year.

Also you will be aware that in the recent past, several of our clients have put their taxi business out to tender and fortunately we have retained the businesses for a further three years. Those clients retained are JPMorgan, Citi and Morgan Stanley.

And the Westminster...

In addition, the Westminster account should have gone to tender two years ago, but they extended the contract for a year. When that expired, they extended the contract for a further year until April 2011. I have now been informed it has been extended for a further seven months until November this year.

However, Westminster council have informed us that as from 1 April, the contribution from the passenger will increase from £1.50 to £2.50 while the contribution made by Westminster will decrease from £9.80 to £8.30. It would appear that many organisations are having to economise to stay in business and others such as Westminster must make economies if they wish to continue with certain services. I believe a series of messages have been broadcast to the fleet to make you aware of the above and also I believe that Allan Evans has written about it inside this issue



of *Call Sign*.

New terminals?

As you are probably aware, we are reviewing different types of hardware to be installed into your vehicles in the not too distant future. Technology is progressing at a phenomenal rate of knots and it looks very much as though you will have a *tablet* similar to an *iPad* fitted to your vehicle. However, what we have to take into account is the heat from your vehicle.

Computers do not like heat and as not all taxis have air conditioning in the front, it could be quite a problem as most of the electronics will be in the *tablet*, whereas currently the electronics are located inside the *black box*, which has its own fan.

As a consequence, there will have to be considerable testing done during the

summer (always assuming we have one) to ensure that everything is robust and can withstand the conditions that are experienced in the front of a London taxi during those summer months.

Meters?

Speaking of new equipment, we will probably limit the number of different types of taximeters to three, because as you know there are a myriad of them on the market. However, what can be done nowadays is fantastic; there is one manufacturer who is now in a position to download any tariff increase. Instead of having the chip posted to you or queuing up to have it fitted, it can be downloaded via the GPRS network.

How will you know when it's done, because with the tariff increase we receive being so small it could be extremely difficult to notice any change in the fare? The answer is that when the download has been completed, the face of the meter will change colour so that you know it has been installed. For example, the 2010 meter face might be blue and when 2011 is installed it would change to red and then yellow for 2012 and so on. So everyone including the authorities will know the correct tariff is being charged – it's all clever stuff nowadays!

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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Weak battery? Scared to switch the engine off? Beware...

£120 FINE FOR LEAVING YOUR ENGINE RUNNING?

Mayor Boris Johnson is said to be proposing to fine motorists up to £120 (£60 if paid straightaway) for leaving their engines running whilst waiting, in a bid to help cut air and noise pollution. This could seriously jeopardise the job **Dial-a-Cab** drivers do when picking up clients.

The Mayor is looking specifically at taxis, buses and delivery vans in addition to mums or dads picking up their children outside the school gates, with a spokesperson saying that the Mayor was firmly committed to cleaner air in the capital.

According to Isabel Dedring, the Mayor's environment adviser, idling engines are of particular concern in the centre of town "...and places that can affect vulnerable Londoners, such as outside schools. We are taking actions to tackle this."

These "actions" will include 'no-idling zones' although these would not apply to drivers stuck in London's numerous traffic hold-ups. The 'no-idling zones' could



Idling with your engine on will be an offence with a £120 fine

be ready in a matter of months and would be recognised by on-road markings as well as signage.

Mayor Johnson has asked Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond – the man who abolished the M4 bus and taxi lane – to increase the current £20 penalty charge for unnecessary engine tick over. The figure of £120 has been mentioned and it will be left to traffic wardens to issue tickets. **Call Sign** believes that to be a dangerous precedent as our previous run-ins with wardens already show.

The AA have suggested a three-minute time limit before a ticket is issued, but the problem is whose watch will that go by?

The danger, according to Val Shawcross,, transport chair at the London Assembly is if councils use the 'no idling zones' as a money making idea rather than to change the habits of drivers who leave engines running out of habit.

So far as taxis are concerned, the biggest danger that comes with those whose batteries suddenly become weaker and drivers being afraid to switch off while waiting for a radio passenger.

Camden are one of several councils that have fully policed no-idling zones – the same council that are forcing taxis to use alternative routes to the Tavistock Place - Marchmont Street former left turn and pumping even more emissions into the air.

The Green Party, who said the idea would save lives and money, has backed the no-idling zone suggestion.

Manganese wins order for 1000 TX4s!

While a former Manganese Chairman hits financial problems...

Manganese Bronze Holdings, the manufacturer of the TX4 London Taxi, has smashed its previous record sale after gaining a huge £16million order for TX4s from the Republic of Azerbaijan and a new private company, Baku Taxis.

The Azerbaijan Transport Ministry originally announced the deal – the purchase of 1000 TX4s – to help develop a programme updating the taxi fleet in the capital and largest port, Baku.

The 1,000 TX4s will be supplied by Shanghai LTI, Manganese joint partners in their Chinese deal with car manufacturer Geely Automobile Holdings Limited. The Azerbaijan deal is the single largest contract the Group has received for its London Taxi and can possibly be said to justify the Chinese agreement in one fell swoop!

The complete order will be shipped this year with the first 100 vehicles scheduled for the end of April. The balance of the order is expected to be built and shipped by the end of November 2011.

International interest in the Shanghai-built TX4 has increased in the first two months of 2011. In addition to the order from Azerbaijan, 180 vehicles have been ordered from a number of markets including France, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Italy. International sales of the Shanghai-built TX4 were 226 in 2010.

John Russell, Chief Executive of Manganese Bronze, told **Call Sign**:

"We are delighted to win this order, which is the culmination of considerable effort by the teams in Manganese Bronze and SLTI. The order demonstrates the potential of our partnership with Geely and the appeal of the London Taxi worldwide."

Manganese shares increased by over 50% on news of the deal.

Sadly, just a few days after the Azerbaijan deal

was completed, news broke that Modec, the pioneering electric vehicle manufacturers founded in 2004 by Manganese former Chairman, Jamie Borwick, had gone into administration with debts of more than £40million. The claim was that the recession cast a major downturn on sales from which it never recovered.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev with a mauve demonstration TX4 model



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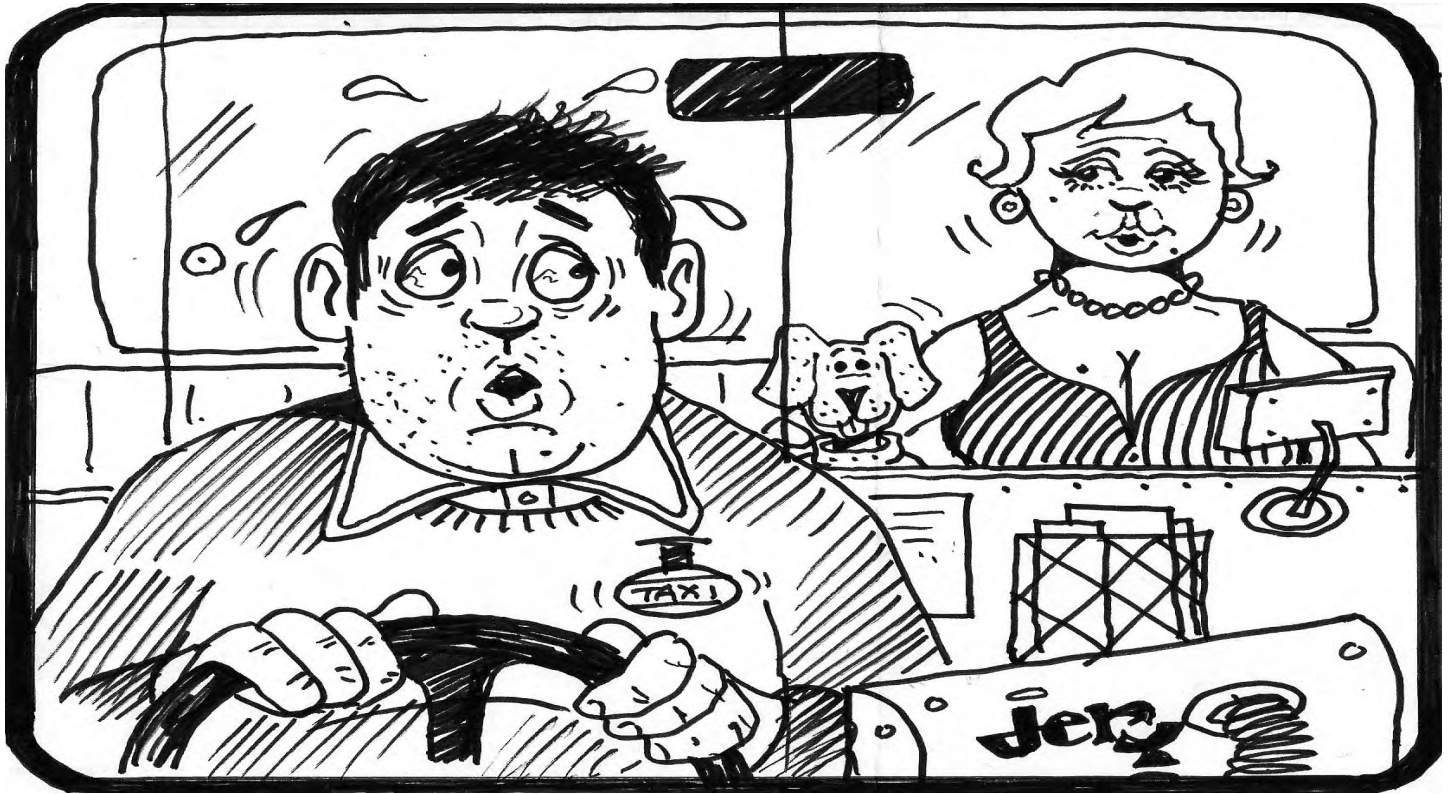
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Jerys World



Look lady, I'm pleased you won an Oscar, but I just need to know if you want the ABC or the Odeon!

The Cabcast...

London Cabbies Talking Football

New to the podcast market, **The Cabcast** is honest football debate from six London cab drivers in the back of a cab! Launched in February, The Cabcast sets out to challenge National radio's bland football shows by inviting real opinions from the gobbiest of punters, the cabbies themselves!

Former DaC driver **Russell Hall** is joined by Jacko, Hummy, George, Swaby, Danny and others

from within the cab trade to debate the week's football news – and it is already proving to be a hit. Going to number one in the *iTunes* sports chart and heavily featured in the *new and notable* section, almost 30,000 have already downloaded the first few podcasts alone – making it a global hit!

Russell told **Call Sign**: "Every lunchtime we'd pull up at the rank and talk football. Like all cabbies we thought we were quite good, so we decided that we'd go out and get our own show! Now we can launch an assault on the ears of the world with our informed drivell – and they don't even have to pay for it. If you don't want opinions, don't listen to us!"

So if you are a Hammer, Gooner, Spurs or even Orient fan, The Cabcast is for you. You can download it for free at www.thecabcast.com or you can tweet them @thecabcast or email shout@thecabcast.com.



Pic left:
Cabcast: Football isn't black and white!

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Heading towards Easter and the time of *happy bunnies*, there is one DaC driver who isn't one!

"Yes, in fact I'm a very unhappy bunny and I'm still livid about the whole sorry saga," **John Dear (L20)** told *Call Sign*!

What John refers to as his 'whole sorry saga' revolved around the first year overhaul of John's TX4 carried out at the Brewery Road dealership of the London Taxi Company, aka M&O.

"I left my TX4 with them at 8.40 on the Monday morning and by 9.10 a Camden parking camera was busy taking footage of my cab in Kentish Town Road with the video clearly showing two mechanics in overalls getting in and out of the taxi! One was getting out of the carriage, which presumably did not have any protective cover on the rear seat and swapping places with the driver who is seen leaving the cab and crossing the road (out of camera) and returning to the cab several minutes later! They are seen smoking in my cab and flicking cigarette ash out of the driver's window, so you can understand why I am less than impressed," John spluttered, his voice still quivering with anger.

"But I was absolutely astonished when that PCN came in the post. I could hardly believe it was my cab, thinking it must be some kind of mistake. Alas, it was not. The cab was late being returned to me after I was told it was ready for collection but it had to be thoroughly re-valeted because I observed it was dirtier than when I took it in. I followed up my verbal complaints by putting my gripes in

Not a Happy Bunny!



John is delighted with his TX4 - but not with the PCN!

writing regarding the poor customer service and they replied with a goodwill offer that I found unacceptable, although they did pay the PCN of course!"

Calming down from the reminder of his experience, John ended by telling us: "The TX4 itself is just brilliant and I'm tickled pink with it, it's just a shame LTC let me down."

Call Sign then spoke to **Mark Brown**, General Manager at the **London Taxi Company**. He returned our call within minutes and said that the company had been unaware of the two technicians actions while on a road test and that they had acted entirely unilaterally, something he considered to be completely unacceptable and that they had been internally disciplined in the severest

manner, including having to pay the PCN.

He agreed that the incident was an unfortunate lapse of the high standards they set themselves, and apologised again for the less than satisfactory level of customer service in this instance that he would normally expect of his team. He added that as a gesture of goodwill, he had made an offer that he hoped John would find acceptable when the cab was due for service in the future.

Hopefully John will become a happier bunny!

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McFlying down the M3!

A **McFly** fan came to the rescue after the band's tour bus broke down following their show in Bournemouth. They were scheduled to play a charity gig in London. Bournemouth Uni student Gemma Diaper was on her way home after the concert when she came across the broken down bus, but didn't realise McFly were inside until Dougie Poynter got out followed by the rest of the band! Fan Gemma gave them the number of the local radio taxi circuit **United Taxis** and three cabs turned up.

A United spokesperson told *Call Sign*: "We McFlew them down the M3 and they were delighted!"

Martin Cordell & Co. ACCOUNTANTS

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Tom Cooper (B97) greeted *Call Sign* warmly when we met shortly after what he calmly described as his *little incident*.

"I wondered what the heck had hit me, because it was like being rammed by a tank," he told our reporter.

"It was 02.30hrs on a Friday night / Saturday morning. I had just set down my passengers on Bow Road E3 and was being paid off at the kerb-side when there was an almighty bang at the rear of the cab. The force of it pushed the cab forward right up onto the pavement. I was feeling really stunned for that moment, then I looked out of my driver's window to see a Fiat Punto still spinning like a cart-wheel down the middle of the road!"

Continuing, Tom told us: "After a few seconds - and with legs that felt like jelly - I got out of the taxi to see what the damage was. The Punto had collided into the back of my taxi, ripping open the trunk lid and tearing into the offside rear wing and door. Thankfully, I was ok. Well, at least I was all in one piece - even if I felt rather shaken!" That last comment brought the first sign of a nervous smile.

"I got on my mobile to call the police and ambulance and to my astonishment, while I was still on the phone a police car arrived on the scene! I was amazed at the response time, but it turned out that the officer was actually on his way to work and stopped to see if I was ok! I was really, really grateful I can tell you," Tom told the *Call Sign* reporter.

And of course, Tom was being paid off at the time via the driver's nearside window...

"The passengers that had been sitting on the rear seat of the cab only seconds before the crash were incredibly lucky. Had they decided to pay me off from inside the cab, they would most certainly have



DaC's Tom: My lucky escape...



Tom and the remains of his taxi

been seriously injured."

"The ambulance took the Fiat Punto driver to hospital with head injuries," said Tom. "When I looked at his car with the police inspector, we noticed the windscreen was cracked and splintered from the impact, so we reckon he was not wearing his seat belt. The front of the car was a right mess too!"

Tom added that he believed the driver was later charged with drink / driving related offences. The car had belonged to his mother.

"Several fellow cab drivers stopped to see if I was ok, especially the Dial-a-Cab guys and I'm really grateful to them all. Be sure to put that in your report," he gently urged our journo.

"I've been on DaC since January 1996 and it's the camaraderie that I appreciate," Tom stated.

"I woke up the following morning with a very stiff neck and shoulder. I went to the hospital and was diagnosed with 'whiplash' from the crash and am having physio, but it still aches."

Tom ended on a sad note regarding his taxi - almost as though it had been a family member.

"My cab is very likely to be written off. After sixteen years and half a-million miles together, it's a bit sad to part company that way, but at least I'm here to tell the story," Tom said, the hint of a real smile creeping across his face.

Looking rather thoughtful, Tom said that his insurers had provided a TX4 loan cab until the matter was concluded, but he missed DaC and now had to make a decision about the future and more specifically, what to do about getting another cab.

Tom asked *Call Sign* to thank police officer 852HT for his help at the scene...

© *Call Sign Magazine MMXI*

CLIENTS LOVE BLACK CAB HERITAGE TOURS!

Since setting up the company just over two years ago, the cab driver directors of **Black Cab Heritage Tours** have seen the number of passengers looking for tours increase. The three qualified Taxi Guides that started up the company - **Call Sign's Bob Woodford**, DaC driver **Brian With (Y84)** and **Graham Woodhouse** - have just put a new tour on offer that is sure to be popular this year. The **Royal Wedding Tour** is set to take advantage of the number of tourists visiting the capital before, during and after the Royal event of the year, if not the decade! The company offers bespoke tours such as their *Classic Tour*, *Royal London Tour* and the very popular *Harry Potter Tour* to name but a few. Some of the more unusual tours during the past twelve months have included corporate bonding tours with a number of cabs involved.

The directors of Black Cab Heritage Tours are currently on the verge of securing a deal with a leading UK tour company. Details of the deal are still under wraps for the moment but could see a further increase in passenger numbers.

Last year, Black Cab Heritage Tours spread its' wings and opened an office in the US under the company name of *Hackney Heritage Tours*. **Dave Dart** in New York handles that side of the operation. He keeps in regular contact with US based tour companies to help generate Stateside business even before the 'punters' get on the plane!

Graham told *Call Sign*: "We all know how scarce work out on the street is at the moment, so the anticipated volume of tours this will generate is very welcome to us and all of our guides."

For more information about BCHT, please contact the office on 01707 696034 or drop them an e-mail to info@blackcabheritage-tours.co.uk. They'll send you more joining information.

Guide course

Some of the Guides currently enrolled with Black Cab Heritage Tours have successfully completed the Cab Guide Course run by **The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**, although this is not a requirement for the guides to join. Some also hold the City of London Guide qualification.

Any driver wishing to get more information about the Cab Guide Course run by the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers can contact The Clerk on 01494-765922 or by e-mail at wchcd@tiscali.co.uk



Call Sign's Bob Woodford receiving his Cab Guide certificate from Andrew Overton



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On behalf of the LTFUC, DaC's Mike Son asks:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE IN AN ORCHESTRA?

In December 2010, the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** sponsored by **Dial-a-Cab**, held its first concert at St John's Smith Square, Westminster.

Together with the help of the **London Charity Orchestra*** and the **Finchley Music Group**, the event became a phenomenal success and I have had many enquiries as to when the next concert will take place. This may be something the charity will consider in the future...

However, with music in mind and in association with the London Charity Orchestra, I am looking for taxi drivers or any individuals associated with the London taxi industry who are proficient musicians and either are, or have been professional musicians in the past. However, enthusiastic amateurs are also very welcome.

Applicants with a Grade 8 will be of an advantage, although not essential. The orchestra conductor will review all CVs.

If you think you are up for the challenge, please send your contact details together with details of which instrument you play, how long have you been a musician and if possible, which orchestra, band or group you have played with to:

Mike Son,
28 Dulverton Avenue,
Westcliff-on-Sea,
Essex, SS0 0HR.



Your chance to join an orchestra for taxi drivers

You can also email me at m.son@btclick.com. For further information, call my mobile on 07710 388 588.

Playing music is therapeutic as well as being an enjoyable and a creative experience. It can greatly enrich the lives of those that listen and of course, it is also a hugely enjoyable pastime!

Along with London's taxi history is the story of how some years ago, the LTFUC together with the late **David Todhunter**, founded **The London Taxidriver's Symphony Orchestra**. For those who didn't know David, as well as being a cabdriver he was also a fine organist

and would often be seen in a cabdriver's café studying various classical pieces for the next performance. That is a legacy well worth following; so if interested, please contact me.

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects

**Among many concerts given by the London Charity Orchestra have been those dedicated to Help for Heroes, British Heart Foundation, Terrence Higgins Trust and CLIC Sargent. They were also scheduled to play in a thanksgiving service at Westminster Abbey on 30th March.*

DaC AGM and the last word!

The *March* issue of **Call Sign** contained a full report – both in text and pictures – on the 2010 Dial-a-Cab AGM and there is little left to say on the subject except for one thing...

Many newer **Dial-a-Cab** subscribers may not be aware that Board member **Tom Whitbread** held a **Royal Warrant** for supplying new motor vehicles (not private hire) and relief chauffeurs to the late **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother**. Tom still has the Royal Warrant framed on the wall of his Dalston home, reminding him of the 17 years service that he gave to one of the 20th century's most respected Royal family members. During that time Tom met most of the Royal Family, be it in London, Sandringham or Scotland – often allowing him to view the family whilst they were out of the public gaze and in a more relaxed mood.

Tom, at one time or another was at all the Royal residences – from Dover to Mey (close to John O'Groats in Scotland) and from castles to mansions to log cabins!

A Royal warrant is issued to only one named person in a company and if that person dies or leaves the company, then the company has to reapply with a new named member of that company. If the Member of the Royal family that issued the Royal warrant dies, then the holder may continue to hold the Royal warrant for another 5 years. But the holder has to change their notepaper and any signage to state they were supplier to the "Late" royal member.

So the last word regarding the DaC AGM must be about Tom's seat at the Honourable Artillery Barracks (HAC) in City Road. You can see where Tom was seated on the platform. **Call Sign's** only comment must be: Coincidence or what...?



Coincidence or what...?

Did you see the article in the *Sunday Times Business* section titled *my black cab's gone green guvnor*? It goes on to inform readers that car makers *Lotus* are working on making TX4s powered by hydrogen and that a small fleet of these cabs will be used during the 2012 London Olympics.

I was told by a reporter at press day that the fleet will be only 20 cabs, but that nobody from TfL would say at what cost? I'm surprised at that because the first hydrogen bus cost Londoners £1.2million! So if we say your average red double-decker cost £250,000 that means each hydrogen bus cost an extra £950,000! So almost a £1million for a TX4? Good job APR rates are low at the moment!

It also says that a London black cab "...belches out the same pollution as a Porsche 911." It doesn't say if a 911 Porsche is good or bad? Remember those *Virgin* Porsches with the *for hire* signs? He's not silly is he, that Mr Branson. Well if I want a Porsche 911 plated, it won't be the emissions that prevent it. If you ask me a taxi weighing over 2 ton, able to carry 5 persons with luggage and packed with features for people with disabilities is pretty good. But what do I know!

The article also states that road transport is responsible for 80% of the pollution in London and that taxis contribute to 20% in Central London. Again I think that's not too bad when you think that in some places, taxis make up more than 50% of the traffic eg queuing traffic on

Jon Robinson looks at black taxis going green!

Going green guvnor???



Jon is waiting for Hydrogen - so long as the price doesn't go up!

The Mall for Trafalgar Square. Mind you, it would be nice if we were told who the other 80% were and who actually calculates the figures?

The article goes on to tell of a scheme named *Source London*, with its city-wide vehicle charging network that is said to be encouraging us to switch to electric

taxis! Nobody told me I could buy an electric cab. What's wrong with a Hybrid TX4 just like the darling of Hollywood and Tree Huggers United, the Toyota Pious – sorry, I mean Prius! Maybe a short term fix?

The range of the hydrogen taxi is expected to be up to 250 miles. At least I can still do a long day, although at those prices I'm probably never going home! Consultant's *McKinsey* say that by 2020, hydrogen power is expected to cost less overall than electric power. If that comparison includes a lifetime of electricity in the purchase price, it's still going to be very expensive.

Talking of electric cars, during the winter before last we came very close to power cuts. Old coal fired power stations were used to keep the lights on. Greens want all those turned off, so how would we power millions of electric cars?

On the flip side, the Mayor's new 15 year rule means I can keep my Porsche performing TX4 until 2020, when I can then have a taxi powered by hydrogen that performs like a Lotus!

**Signed off excitedly by
Jon Robinson (E88)**

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The March issue of Call Sign contained several controversial items that in one way or another involved Transport for London. The Director of London Taxis & Private Hire, John Mason, has now given the view of TfL / LTPH...

Page 3 (From the Editor): CRB cock-up!

*** **

Camden/CRB PH Driver

You ask "...how the driver managed to get a PH license when his offences – although committed abroad – were known by the authorities over here?"

Passenger safety is our top priority. Every person that applies to be a licensed taxi or private hire driver must undergo an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. If they are licensed, they must complete a further enhanced CRB check every three years when they renew their license.

The private hire driver in question was subject to an enhanced CRB check before he was granted a private hire license. The check did not identify his previous convictions. The reasons for this are subject to a separate investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

The driver's private hire license was immediately revoked when we learnt of his previous offences. Some further information on this matter is provided below...

Investigation into complaint about Met handling of convicted paedophile: The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) is independently investigating a complaint from a woman whose son was sexually abused by a convicted paedophile.

On 17 August 2009 at Blackfriars Crown Court, Jose Luis Chuecca (also known as Jose Luis Magana-Chuecca) was convicted of four counts of causing or inciting a boy under 13 to engage in sexual activity. He had been working as a minicab driver contracted by a council to take vulnerable children to school, when he came into contact with his victim in November 2008.

The woman alleges that during the police investigation, it came to light that Chuecca had been sentenced in 1991 in Spain to 77 years imprisonment for indecency offences. He was allowed bail pending appeal and fled from Spain. In March 2003 it is understood that Metropolitan Police officers arrested Chuecca in the UK under the provisions of a Spanish international arrest warrant.

The boy's mother submitted a complaint to the IPCC on 2 November 2009 alleging that the Metropolitan Police Service failed to place appropriate warnings on police systems after his arrest. She alleges that this meant that Chuecca was able to obtain a clean Criminal Records Bureau check, thus enabling him to become a taxi driver cleared to work with vulnerable children. She has also complained that the officers who dealt with her failed to act in

John Mason responds to Call Sign



had installed to a taxi via Cricklewood Carriers (without consulting or notifying TfL).

At the meeting, TfL representatives including myself received a presentation regarding this system and the perceived benefits of a system they would like to introduce.

It was claimed that the system could possibly bring a taxi to Euro IV standard and following discussions, there was an admission that it would not bring a taxi up to full Euro V standard. We have not and did not say that we would only consider equipment that makes a taxi Euro 6.

TfL explained that there are unquestionably many issues with retro fitting taxis and the perceived benefits of such systems. We explained we have no plans to provide exemptions to the recently announced age limits for taxis fitted with equipment that had a proven (none exist at present) benefit of bringing taxis up to full Euro IV standard. It was also explained that significant testing and trials of any such equipment would be required at a likely considerable cost to the manufacturer / supplier and as such, there seemed to be little business benefit to them in doing so.

Page 35: (Mailshot) Addison Lee and bus lanes (Legal Costs)

I can confirm that TfL have paid no legal costs to Addison Lee in relation to the M4 Bus Lane. As I pointed out previously, the penalties issued for driving in the bus lane were not issued by TfL but by the Police, so even if Addison Lee had continued and won their case against them, TfL were never involved in the case or in any danger of paying any fees or costs through this action!

John Mason
Director LTPH

Page 7: PCO put block on Euro 5 conversions!

Taxi Emission

Abatement Equipment

I summarise below the FACTS of the matter in relation to the article on Page 7:

A meeting was held on 4th February between TfL and Gerd Van Aaken, Sheldon Posner from Cricklewood Carriers and David Jackson. The meeting was arranged at the request of Gerd Van Aaken, following an exchange of emails relating to a system they

NEW YORK CYCLISTS TO BE LICENSED?

...and could London follow?

In a move that many hope will be followed in the UK, moves are afoot in New York state to force cyclists to register and install licence plates on their bikes. According to internet US news station **WIVB.com**, the sponsors of the measure say the \$25 license plates would produce almost \$2 million for the state in the first year and with annual renewal fees, around \$300,000 each year after the law becomes effective.

Queens Assembly Member **Michael DenDekker** has proposed that children's bikes as well as adults should be registered and regularly inspected to prove that they are roadworthy. Licence plates would cost \$25 or \$50 for commercially owned bikes. Critics have called the scheme a money spinning exercise while others claim it will assist in road safety by making cyclists more identifiable.

Many believe that the UK - and especially London - should follow suit, especially with so many new cyclists using Barclay-bikes and with the news from TfL that they are cutting the size of the Blackfriars Bridge cycle lane to help improve traffic flow...

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Having been driving a London taxi for the best part of 33 years, of which approaching 30 have been with DaC, I'm quite used to **Allen Togwell's** rantings about the sartorial elegance of some of our members - and on the whole I agree with his comments. However, I feel so incensed by his comments in the *March Call Sign*, that I felt I had to put pen to paper...

How dare he suggest that just because one makes the excellent financial decision to run an older vehicle, that I am a man whose dress code would be an embarrassment to the Society.

Mr Togwell starts the paragraph with the words *at a guess*. As an elected member of our Board, I do not want to be inflicted by his suppositions, I feel that his *Marketing Place* editorial should be based on factual information and not personal prejudice.

For Mr Togwell's information, I run a 15 year old taxi, which like myself is always clean and tidy. In addition, I see myself firstly as a business man and secondly as a taxi driver, and in view of this I make business decisions based upon my professional peers.

George Soros has always stated that a good business man leases a depreciating asset and buys an appreciating asset. In my case, the vehicle cannot depreciate any further as it only cost a little over £3500. **Alan Sugar** also supports the argument that the essence of good business is to keep overheads to a minimum. I feel that I 'tick the box' on both these points.

Over a three year period, working on the basis that the average repayment for a new vehicle would be somewhere in the region of £750 pm, with depreciation of around £5000 per year, that amounts to around £42,000. Now I appreciate that one would be eligible for a tax break on part of that amount, but it still means the individual driver has to physically be on the road in order to take this sum, and in this financial climate I consider it to be total madness. I'd rather be on holiday or at home with my wife.

I do so hope that Mr Togwell takes these points into consideration before we are subjected to any future diatribe.

But in closing and looking at the *March Call Sign* cover, I'd like to point out that no gentleman would ever be seen wearing a striped suit and striped tie! I respectfully suggest he changes his tailor...

Barrie Smith (K06)

DaC Board member Allen Togwell to Barrie Smith

PIN STRIPES AND OLD CABS???

It never fails to amaze me how statements can be misconstrued and taken as a generalisation. In my article I said: *At a guess, I would say the vast majority of smartly dressed cab drivers are those that drive new cabs, which makes sense.* I then went on to add: *I can understand in*

DaC driver Barrie Smith to Allen Togwell...

OLD CABS AND PIN STRIPES??



A Saville Row model seems to prove that Allen Togwell is correct when it comes to stripes!

working in that taxi, I dressed in a similar manner to how I was dressed at the AGM. Had I seen at that time a similar article in *Call Sign*, I would have taken no offence whatsoever as I wouldn't have considered it in any way referring to me. And where, may I ask, did I mention anything about drivers being an embarrassment to the Society? If I wanted to use the word embarrassment, I could easily refer it to instances when we are tendering for new business and have to submit in detail the age of our fleet, knowing it is an important consideration when judging who gets the contract.

And with regards your personal comment on my dress sense, normally I would have considered it impertinent and ignored it, but as a point of information you would be partly correct had the tie been a similar colour to the suit with a single stripe. However, a chalk stripe suit with a plain shirt and a multi coloured striped tie with a multi-coloured 'kerchief' is perfectly acceptable. If you have any doubts, I suggest you stand outside any gentlemen's club and count how many visitors you see wearing striped suits and striped regimental or club ties. As for changing my tailor - *Roderick Charles* of Bow Lane - I'm willing to take your advice. Who would you recommend...?

Allen Togwell

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When **Call Sign** met up with **Larry Miller (S35)** recently, he was not a happy man. On February 24th at around midday, Larry had parked his cab on the pay and display bays in Dingley Road behind the Barbican Thistle Hotel to use that hotels' facilities.

"I am sometimes a little absent minded," he admitted to **Call Sign**, "and I've left my money bag in some very posh hotels having then had to rush back a bit lively to retrieve it!" He grinned at the memory.

"So to save myself further hassle, this time I hid my money bag in the cab, tucking it away out of sight in the driver's compartment. Then I locked it up securely and walked into the hotel. I was gone about 5 minutes and on my return there was a lady standing by my cab saying "quick, quick!" At first I thought she was in a hurry and wanted a taxi, but then she explained that some little urchin had broken into the cab by smashing the window and stolen my money bag before pedalling off at high speed on his push-bike."

"A young kid with a *Russell Athletic* jacket," she shouted to me as, oblivious to the broken shards of glass on the seat and all around me, I swung the cab around and began to cruise the local streets - sadly without success - as the little toe-rag disappeared into the maze of alleyways of the area," Larry continued.

"At Shepherdess Walk police station, I was told the security cameras did not show anything of significance so the whole experience has been a bitter pill to swallow. It became obvious to me that I was watched leaving the cab without my money bag about my person, which meant it had to be on the cab somewhere and this kid seems to have known where to look," Larry told us with a sombre

The Thief of Dingley Road...



Larry and his new money bag. He won't be leaving this one in the cab

look as his story brought the loss back to mind.

"All in all, it's not just losing the money bag, but the time involved reporting the crime to the police and the cost and time to replace the smashed window. I reckon it has cost me around £400. An expensive cup of coffee and wee," he said with a huge sigh.

But that was not to be the end of Larry's frustrating week. Early the following morning he was bilked for a £20 fare!

"Such is life," he said philosophically, "but I won't let it get me down. Hopefully I'll have used up my year's supply of bad luck in those two days!"

Larry ended by asking us to warn **Dial-a-Cab** drivers and everyone else that now seems to read **Call Sign**, to take any valuables with them when they leave their cab, even if it's for just a short while...

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London Taxi Company announce Euro V strategy



The London Taxi Company has announced its strategy to introduce Euro V compliant engines. Like all automotive manufacturers, The London Taxi Company has to introduce a Euro V compliant engine and this is planned for launch in January 2012. Euro V compliance will be achieved through modifications to the current VM Motori engine and will be the only change made to the new model line up of TX4 Style and Elegance already in the showrooms.

Euro V is all about the reduction of particulates and Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) through the tail pipe. To achieve this, The London Taxi Company have worked with their partners VM to modify the exhaust and Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) aspects of the existing VM Motori engine. There are no other body or specification changes being made to the vehicle. It is anticipated that the introduction of Euro V engines will increase the vehicle's price. The current London Taxi Company TX4 range starts at only £28,995 on the road.

In London, all new vehicles registered after April 2012 must be Euro V compliant, however vehicles with Euro IV engines registered before April 2012 will be able to operate without modification for 15 years in line with the Mayor's recent Air Quality Strategy announcement.

Commenting on the announcement, Rob Laidler said: "We're announcing our strategy for the introduction of Euro V now so that drivers and owners understand our plans for the future. We recently made a radical change to our model range with the removal of Bronze, Silver and Gold, and the introduction of Style and Elegance models from £28,995. When we introduce the Euro V engine next year, it will be the only change to the vehicle. There won't be any other specification or mechanical differences."

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Grandchild number two for Brian Rice!

Added to grandson Charlie, Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice and wife Brenda now have a granddaughter added to the family!

Their son **Billy** – who used to work in the DaC call centre – and wife **Sam** proudly introduced **Molly Jane Rice** to the world at 10.26 on the morning of Monday 14 March. The youngest member of the Rice family weighed in at a healthy-sounding 7lbs 9ozs (3.45 kilos).

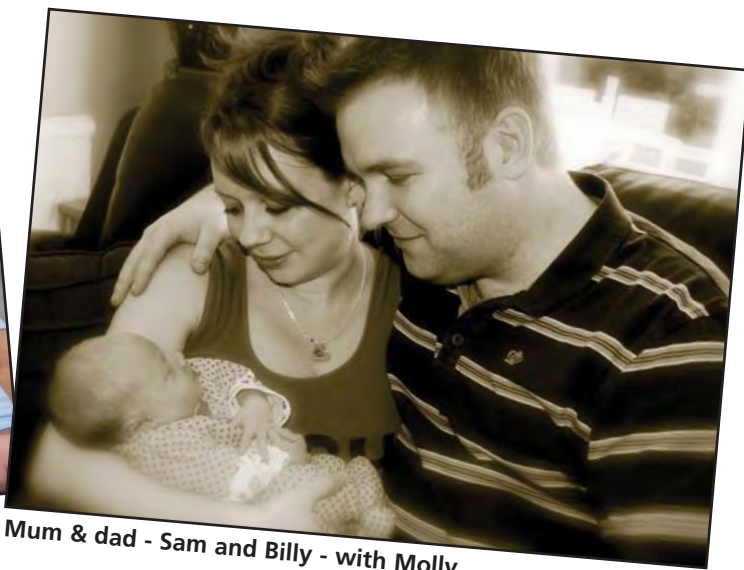
The new baby's name follows something of a strange and seemingly unconnected tradition with Brenda's middle name being Jane, their daughter being named Carla Jane, Sam having a middle name of Jane and just to add to the amazing connection, Sam's mother is called Jane!

As befits his position as Chairman, Brian – whose middle name isn't Jane - had to remain impartial while giving his first quote to **Call Sign** about his new granddaughter.

"She's absolutely gorgeous," he said with a huge grin...!



Brian and Brenda with Molly and Charlie



Mum & dad - Sam and Billy - with Molly

Manganese aims to be in profit again this year

Manganese Bronze Holdings

have posted a smaller loss for 2010 reporting a pre-tax loss of £6.3million. That compares to a 2009 loss of £7.3million. In addition, Manganese said that via their **London Taxi Company**, their share of the market has increased from 75% up to 82% since this year's launch of the two new TX4 models – the **Style** and the **Elegance** – although through difficult trading conditions and a small drop in new vehicle sales, MBH still saw its overall turnover drop 4.8% to £69.6million with their net debt increasing from £5.1million to £14.4 million.

With a substantial amount of restructuring, including many parts now being manufactured at their Shanghai facility with Geely and their agreement with Azerbaijan for a deal worth \$27 million, the company say that 2011 should see a return to profit.

Chief Executive John Russell said: "The group is well positioned to return to profitability in 2011 and make further progress with joint initiatives with Geely."



Manganese CEO John Russell



2 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 4/5



4 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 8/9



6 Bedroom 5 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 12



Pool and conservation view at 6 bedroom home.

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Your opportunity to rent one of these villas and at the same time making it possible for this charity to continue its work with children from all over the UK all of whom are suffering from a life limiting illness. All villas within minutes of the main Disney theme parks, golf courses and restaurants.

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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE...

with Tom Quigley

Prices? What Prices?

Fuel costs go through the roof and everyone moans about it. But I am not surprised that the costs are allowed to soar, for it has to be said that we the British public, will stand for anything. While the French would block the ports and the Spanish do the same with the airports, we just get our heads down and moan about it.

Why should we be surprised that the Government can get away with it? They think nothing of raising VAT, putting up the duty and then when the price soars, tell us they may delay putting a 1p increase on the duty – that's to delay, not stop! We are then supposed to be grateful. It's not the penny that's killing industries, it's the greed of all involved.

It's easy to see how the Government know we are gullible. At a time when most builders are struggling to make ends meet, one of the few industries that are having structural work carried out are your local petrol stations. Most have been upgraded into mini-supermarkets with fancy shops and petrol pumps that offer you all sorts of different ways to pay.

My local garage with its *Pay Point* facility means you can pay your gas, electric and council tax there among other bills. Incidentally, *Thames Water* bills can no longer be paid in a *Post Office*, yet you can pay at a *Pay Point*! All these facilities may be handy, but they are helping to force your local Post Offices out of the high streets. Do they care? Not really, because we no longer own these companies?

We stand in the same service station shops and buy water in a bottle at up to £2 a litre. I

admit my guilt in doing so, all because we are too lazy to pour it from the tap into a bottle at home and bring it out with us. What else can you expect when the leading bottled water brand of Evian spelt backwards comes out as Naïve? We go to the coffee machine and pay about £5 a litre for a cup of frothy milk with a teaspoon of coffee dust in a cardboard cup before grabbing a bag of pastilles or wine gums at almost £2 a bag. Oh well, we can always go to the pub and pay around £32 pound a gallon for lager or £22 a litre for the house wine!

So don't be surprised that we pay so much for fuel. I am just waiting for the price of fish and chips to soar. Remember the last crisis...

Bank Holiday and the EU...

The EU is going to fine London if we don't improve our air quality so that we fall into line with the rest of Europe. This will enable the population to live and work in a healthier environment. But have they smelled the air in **Rome**, which mostly smells of 2-stroke engines, or **Paris** where you have to avoid the array of dog mess on the pavements? And surely nothing can move slower than the traffic on Avenue Diagonal in **Barcelona**?

While by and large I agree with the principle and know the implications to our trade, it is only right that we live and work in a clean environment. But perhaps when this is all done and dusted, the EU can turn their atten-

tion to the health and welfare of Londoners and raise the issue of the lack of bank and general holidays we get to compared to the rest of Europe?

We get just 8 bank holidays a year compared to 12 in Italy, 13 in Austria with Spain and Portugal getting 14. The main power brokers, Germany and France get 11 and 12 respectively. In fact British workers are only entitled to 20 days holiday a year and some firms include bank holidays in with those, so giving only 12 paid days off. Germany tops the league with 39 days, then come France with 35, Portugal 34 and Spain 32, whilst the rest of Europe generally get over 30 days.

There are always comments that it would cost business fortunes, but surely if the rest of Europe can afford it then so can we? As for which days, I know there have been cries to give us St Georges Day off as a Bank Holiday and this year with the Royal Wedding we are getting 29 April off, but I would like to have seen St Georges Day celebrated as the last Friday in April, tie that in with May Bank Holiday being the first Monday and we can all have a long weekend! As for the rest of the bank holidays, I really don't care as with an Irish background, I will celebrate anything - including death! So come on EU, get your finger out. As some compensation for the emissions changes, I wouldn't mind some extra days - and all on Rate 3 of course...!

See you soon...

Tom Quigley (Y33)

DaC in Malta???

Malta has a new taxi company with **Dial-a-Cab Ltd** and their fleet of bright yellow cabs that are available through the rather easily remembered phone number – 234 56789. DaC (Malta) use London taxis, but without the *for hire* signs.

Speaking to **Call Sign**, the St Julians based company said that all their drivers were fluent in English as well as Maltese in addition to knowing all of Malta and its islands. They also accept credit cards and if you are off to the Med island before 31 May, they will give you a 3 euro discount!

And no, they are nothing to do with Dial-a-Cab of London...!



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster
Master of Ceremonies

Tele: 01279 465 938
Mobile: 07774 860 374
Email: kgr.2@virgin.net

10% discount for DaC drivers and staff

Fellow of the Guild of
Professional Toastmasters

Mayor Boris Johnson has asked **Barclays Bank** for another £25million for his precious bike scheme. His reasoning is that as the country bailed the banks out big time, they should give something back. My proposal is that instead of giving him this money for bikes, Barclays should use up to 60% of the amount - say £15million - to help the 3,000 plus owners of taxis that will be over 15 years old in 2012 at £5,000 per taxi.

My suggestion is that all these taxis would then be fully liveried in Barclays divisions ie Woolwich mortgages, Barclaycard and Barclays stockbrokers etc with the bank deciding on the allocation of the liveries. They could also use their personal finance departments to finance the loans for drivers - at competitive rates, of course, if not better! Thereby they would recoup most of their costs - if not all - something that will not happen with the bikes.

Personally I'm not sure of the financial intricacies of leasing deals, but I believe that if Barclays were to lease the vehicle to the drivers with the lease payment going towards the purchase of the vehicle, with a nominal payment of say £100 to complete deal, then I believe Barclays could even claim back the VAT which would pay for all designing and livery fitting costs.

Drivers would be contracted to keep the Barclays livery until they have fully paid for the taxi. Once this is done, drivers should be able to either renegotiate with Barclays to keep or update the livery or repaint the taxi in any colour they want.

Benefits

* *Huge worldwide media exposure for Barclays, especially during the Olympics and far greater than could be purchased by any other means for the same amount of money.*

* *Self-financing to a large extent - if not 100%.*

* *With the use of Twitter circuits,*

Got an older cab? DaC driver Eddie Lambert's proposal to Barclays...

SUBSIDISE THE LONDON TAXI FLEET!



Barclays' staff should be able to book liveried Barclay cabs for both corporate and personal use.

*** On a green level they would be helping to replace older, more pollutant vehicles so contributing to the air quality in London.**

If the **London Taxi Company** and **KPM** (Mercedes Vito) keep a trade-in value of £2000 per vehicle, this could mean a saving to each purchaser of £7000 per vehicle. I believe that this would even generate sales across the country in areas that do not have the Met's *Conditions of Fitness* for vehicles, as the London taxi - with its' proven history of longevity and physical robustness - would be as cheap or even cheaper than most of the so-called alternatives.

Long term I believe that as the London

Authorities (TfL) dictate what vehicle the London taxi driver uses and if, as they have proposed, they put an age limit on the vehicle then they should be prepared to help drivers when their imposed time limit is approaching.

At present, I believe that approximately 1000 to 1200 new taxis a year are licensed in London. I think that TfL should offer a £5000 scrappage subsidy to drivers who wish to change their vehicle at 10 years and those older vehicles should leave the London market forever.

An 11 year old vehicle would get a £4000 subsidy, a 12 year old vehicle £3000 and so on until only £1000 for a fifteen year old vehicle, but the 15 year old vehicle would only get the 1000 if a new taxi was purchased by the owner (a minimum time of ownership could be stipulated).

Obviously, as there are variables in the above paragraph it would not be practical to put a full cost on this, but at worst it would be £6million a year (1200 vehicles x £5000) and that would mean no taxis going beyond 10 years. Not a very likely outcome. Should a driver/owner not wish to change their vehicle - perhaps being close to retirement and not wishing to take on any more long-term financial debts - then their taxi could see out the 15 years but no longer.

The above sum of £6million could even be reduced further if the taxi manufacturers agreed to pay part of the amount (say £2000)...

Eddie Lambert (V37)

Ed's note: Green Party's Darren Johnson has since called on the Mayor for such a deal with another sponsor...

THE DAC TOASTMASTER!

Regular readers of **Call Sign** will undoubtedly have seen an ad from **Dial-a-Cab** driver and toastmaster, **Keith Reading (W76)**. Keith first appeared in this magazine in 2007, when we wrote of his entry into the professional toastmaster and master of ceremonies fields.

Even Keith admitted at the time that he had much to learn, but now almost four years on Keith is up there with the best of the red-suited devils, having taken and passed the exams needed to become a *Fellow of the Guild of Professional Toastmasters* several years ago.

Keith has been driving a taxi since 1976 and has been on DaC for the past fourteen of them. But a toastmaster's life must surely be difficult considering the state of the economy? After all, one of the first things you would expect to see the public cut back on - in addition to taxi usage - would be large functions? But life being what it is, there will always be a demand for taxis and another for toastmasters! If you are spending thousands on a function, you want to make sure that it goes well and a good master of ceremonies / toastmaster can undoubtedly make a difference.

Keith can officiate at any function, including ladies Masonic events, and promises to do so in his toastmaster apparel and not his DaC driver's outfit! Perhaps of more interest is that Keith has a standing offer to all Dial-a-Cab drivers and members of staff for a 10% discount.

So if you are looking for a toastmaster for a forthcoming function, you can contact Keith Reading on **01279 465 938** or his mobile on **07774 860 374**. You can also email him on **kgr.2@virgin.net** or visit his website at **keith@toastmasterdirect.co.uk** where he also has a video clip of himself at work as a toastmaster...



Keith is now an experienced toastmaster



Call Centre Chat

Canary Wharf

By the time you read this article in *Call Sign*, changes to the working at **Canary Wharf** will have been in operation for three weeks and I am pleased to report that the new set up is working very well with all drivers adhering to

the booking-in regulations.

But I would like to remind those drivers who work the island after 21:00 and who are booked in via E14, that it is no longer necessary for you to be inside the security cordon to book in and accept a trip - unless you choose to be. That is because after that time, E14C becomes disabled until 06:00 and E14 applies to the whole of the postcode and not just the Island.

Some of you are still going through the security blocks without trips and parking up on the ranks with your lights off. This is causing problems with docklands management and their security because the same rules apply as to those working during the day. If you want to wait for an account trip, then you

will need to find somewhere safe to park outside the security zone and book into E14.

Any driver who is inside the security cordon without a trip and chooses to park up must do so on a marked rank and their *for hire* light must be on. Please be aware and make your friends aware that security can ask you to leave the island if this procedure is not followed.

It would also appear that the flowerbeds are beginning to bloom - something they have been struggling to do for some time!

Keith Cain

Call Centre Manager

Driver Operations Manager

TX4 wedding service in Lebanon!

February in Lebanon is famous for a wedding exhibition that regularly sees huge crowds looking to see the latest trends in elaborate weddings. Named *Wedding Follies*, this year's event saw between 6 and 7000 visitors each day passing through the doors of the Beirut International Exhibition & Leisure Centre, all hoping to see something that would enhance their big day.

The trend for elaborate weddings within the Lebanese wedding industry is booming, as both profits and customers grow. As a result, the *Wedding Follies* exhibition has become one of BIEL's biggest successes.

But one new arrival and something that turned out to be the star attraction at the exhibition was the *London Wedding Service*, a luxurious London TX4 taxi presented by *National New Dawn* who are the appointed partner for *The London Taxi Company* based in Lebanon.

The Corporate Communications Manager for National New Dawn, *Rabih Dib*, saw over 1000 visitors visit their stand, 350 brides-to-be register interest, with over 20 firm bookings taken. Commenting on how busy the stand had been, Rabih also said how much he had enjoyed seeing the excitement on the faces of the prospective bride and grooms as they discovered something to make their special day stand out from the crowd...



It's a TX4 Jim - but not as we know it!

Cab Guide course students Progress



Kevin Malloy (left) takes the group around historic Southwark

On a Sunday in March, students currently studying the **Cab Guide** course run by the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** enjoyed a morning

walk around Borough and Bankside SE1. Their Guide for the walk was **Kevin Malloy**, who holds both a Blue Badge Guide and taxi driver's licence. The walk showed students this part of Southwark's literary past, covering sites linked with Chaucer,

collection includes letters, pictures, first editions, furniture, memorabilia and lovingly restored rooms. There are regular temporary exhibitions.

A new Cab Guide course begins in September...

Shakespeare and Dickens. The students had recently enjoyed a visit to the Dickens Museum at 48 Doughty Street, the building he lived in from 1837 - 1839. The

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



CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



Driving around the Minervois area of the south of France recently, I remembered that I wanted to watch the 6 nations rugby - it was France v Italy. I came across the little village of Bize and I knew it had a bar with a TV. The village was deserted, just like one of those scenes from the Wild West when a stranger strolls into town. But somehow I just knew the bar would be rammed with folk glued to the action coming from the Flaminio Stadium in Rome – and it was!

These rugby-loving, sports-mad people of the south really gave it to their team when they lost a close match against the spirited Italians. I got into conversation with one local and it came around to the 2012 Olympic games in London. It was quite obvious that most of the south of France were delighted that Paris did not win the bid that London won - definitely a case of *us and them* in their version of a north-south divide!

A few **Dial-a-Cab** subscribers have been in touch since I wrote about the options for Guiding from the seat of the cab - giving yourself another string to your bow (and you have to go back to 1066 for the origin of that expression) in these difficult times. I mentioned the **Cab Guide Course** as being a

good place to start.

For more information email me at rob@blackcabheritagetours.co.uk, but also check the following link for another place to start:

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/schools/architecture/tourism/city-of-westminster>

Where's Woody???

London once had an amazing variety of pubs and coaching inns - where was this one?

The answer is on page 20 in this issue...

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)

Saint Genies de Fontedit, Languedoc, France



Maria runs for Cancer Research UK



Maria is trying to raise money for Cancer Reserch Uk

Maria Holmes is someone that **Call Sign** has known for many years through her various positions with LTI – now known as The London Taxi Company. She is currently their International Marketing Manager.

Last year Maria raised £1100 for **Cancer Research UK** by jogging in the 5K *Race for Life*. This year her aim is to complete the 5K in an even faster time, while at the same time to try and raise even more money than last year for this very worthwhile cause.

If you would like to help Maria in her quest to beat last year's £1100, you can visit her *Race for Life* sponsorship page and pledge some money. It matters not how much, because it all adds up and Maria would be so grateful.

To sponsor Maria, go to <http://www.raceforlifesporsorme.org/maria-holmes0906>

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

Kupkake's Korner



SPRING?

Spring is sprung
the grass has riz;

I wonder where the business is?

Recession, depression
doom and gloom;
buds on trees
Bluebells bloom.

Lambs are born
cows have calved
why is it
my income has halved?

Fuel prices soar
our fares rise!
We all NEED more
that's no surprise.

Spring has sprung
the grass has riz
I wonder what the future is?

Kopyright Kupkake 2011

The February **Call Sign** published a letter from DaC driver **Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)**. The letter was addressed to Paddington's Station Manager **Nick Hartnell** and in it, Gerry wrote:

"As a London taxi driver, I am grateful to you for providing parking spaces for licensed taxis to pick up pre-booked passengers. However, yesterday when I had to pick up a pre-booking, I was unable to use the facility due to the parking of several minicabs. Even though you have provided a large sign forbidding minicabs to wait there, the drivers of the two Addison Lee cars ignored the warning. I feel that a letter to this company advising them of your instructions would go a long way to alleviate this problem."

Network Rail responded via **Nick Hartnell** in which he explained:

"I can advise you that this area is also utilised by Addison Lee who have a contract with the Heathrow Express train company for staff transport to and from their depot in Northwest London. I do realise that space is very limited in this area, however by the end of this year the Taxi Roadway is being relocated to the old Red Star area. This will provide better facilities for the Licensed Taxi drivers."

Gerry has been on **Dial-a-Cab** for many years and is also heavily involved with the **London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** in addition to being a DaC Marshal, so he knows which end is up! At the time, he told **Call Sign** that while he accepted minicabs were here, one thing that irritated him greatly was when they pretended they were taxis. As a consequence, the letter from Mr Hartnell annoyed him because it gave the impression that so far as Network Rail is concerned, **Addison Lee** no longer needed to pretend because there was no difference! After all, the sign above the bay for radio taxi pick-ups says **pre-booked taxis only**, yet Network Rail were happy for Addison Lee to wait there!

DaC driver **John Dixon (B67)** has now taken

WHEN IS A TAXI NOT A TAXI?

Paddington Station still doesn't know!



Addison Lee are still recognised by Paddington Station as a non-minicab company

a photo of the new signs alongside the pre-booked taxi pick-up bay. Contrary to what Mr Hartnell told Gerry Dunn, these seem to enforce the original sign. Under a Network Rail heading, they read:

NO WAITING AT ANYTIME. THIS AREA IS ENFORCED VIA CCTV AND IS RESERVED FOR PRE-BOOKED TAXIS (BLACK CABS). MINICABS MUST NOT WAIT HERE

Yet Addy Lee is still there – and they will be

staying there! **Call Sign** again spoke to the Paddington station manager, this time it was **Tony Martin**. He explained that the sign was to stop all minicabs stopping there – other than Addison Lee who he described as a contractual firm they use to transport staff. So sadly, they still do not recognise the difference between Addy and minicabs. However, if any other minicabs stop there, they will be picked up on CCTV and reported.

But is it not still irritating...

DAC WITH WCHCD AT GUILDHALL PANCAKE DAY!



Sean Ferry, Jim Rainbird, Tracey Davidson, John Dixon and Ian Parsons at the Guildhall Yard

The 7th annual Inter-Livery Shrove Tuesday Pancake Race took place in the Guildhall Yard on 8 March. Organised by The **Worshipful Company of Poulterers**, this is a fun event but one taken very seriously by the competitors!

The **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** were delighted to be invited to take part again this year and there was a full complement from DaC – who obviously knew everything about pancakes, including about any extra gravitational pull of the impending super-moon some 10 days later!

WCHCD Master, **Dial-a-Cab's Jim Rainbird (T25)** was joined by **John Dixon (B67)** running in the Liverymen Race, **Tracey Davidson** in the Ladies Race and **Ian Parsons** in the Novelty Race. WCHCD Beadle, **Sean Ferry (T90)** was on hand to make sure no cheating took place among our representatives – as if they would!

The sun shone brightly as the large crowd gathered in the Guildhall Yard, not only to enjoy the racing where the competitors run down their marked lanes, complete with frying pan and pancake (not forgetting to toss it twice during the race), but the fresh-

ly cooked pancake nosh available before the racing!

Most City liveries took part and although the WCHCD didn't make the winner's rostrum, according to John Dixon they had a great time and all in the cause of the Lord Mayor's chosen charities...

LONDON LEGEND Limousine Taxis



London Legend specialises in wedding transport. Our magnificent Asquith Limousine Taxis and Landaulets with drop hoods are replicas of the legendary 1930's Austin Low Loader Hackney Carriage. Special rates for Dial-a-Cab drivers on mid week and out of season weddings. We cover all areas of London and the south east.

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In the *March Call Sign*, this magazine revealed that the no left turn from Tavistock Place into Marchmont Street was actually paid for by the *Olympic Delivery Authority* ("Cyclists are more important than taxis").

The left turn was one of our most important cut-throughs and with **St Pancras** set to become a hub with its' bullet train taking passengers to Stratford for the 2012 London Olympics, we could foresee huge problems. So we decided to ask Camden why they had removed the turn. And just as last month's headline said in those six words, the response showed that so far as Camden Council is concerned, cyclists are more important than us!

We spoke to Jacqueline Saunders, who is a Traffic Planner with the Council. At first she sent us a prepared statement that among other things, told us that collision data at the junction included 1 fatality and 2 seriously injured in the three years up to September 2010.

Then to the nitty gritty. *"The primary objective for the changes to the junction is to reduce the confusion for all users and to make it safer for vulnerable road users, particularly pedestrians. The proposal included merging two signal phases in the signal cycle (ie the green signal for east-west movements on the main carriageway and cycle lane) so that green time increases and waiting time reduces for all users at the junction, including motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. As a result of removing a signal phase, all vehicles moving east/west along Tavistock Place, both on the main carriageway and in the cycle lane, now move together. It is an essential safety requirement of the scheme that the left turn from the main carriageway on Tavistock Place into Marchmont Street (north) is banned to prevent collisions with cyclists who are moving at the same time and going ahead."*

In other words it was done for cyclists benefit. The statement went on to inform the taxi trade that there were alternative routes available for vehicles "including right turn opportunities onto Euston Road." That referred to going along to the top of Tottenham Court Road and then turning right into Euston Road!

We asked Ms Saunders about all the extra Co2 that would be pumped into the air with all those extra taxis (and cars) using Tottenham Court Road and Euston Road to get to St Pancras and Kings Cross? Euston Road already provides extremely heavy traffic that continues until mid-evening. We then went on to propose that the forced-left turn only at the junction of Judd Street with Euston Road be lifted and a right turn (even if only by taxis) be implemented. We pointed out that the road opposite was Midland Road, where vehicles exited from Eurostar and that already has a filter signal allowing traffic to turn right, which could then be equalled by a filter right turn out of Judd Street at the same time.

The response was somewhat surprising. She first mentioned that she had asked the LTDA and PCO to publicise the fact that we could use Judd Street and circle back round into Marchmont Street, which would then put emissions up even further. But she then tried to justify her earlier statement by saying that Camden *"...bad not undertaken an emissions concentration / air quality impact assessment. However, from initial discussions with our Air*

No left turn at Marchmont Street

CALL SIGN SPEAKS TO CAMDEN COUNCIL



The Olympic rings hang proudly at St Pancras - but how will passengers get there?

process and could cost up to £150K. We assume that the Marchmont Street change was done "on the cheap!" Going back to *Call Sign's* Judd Street suggestion, Ms Saunders said that "...queuing and delays (particularly for buses)" would have to be taken into account. So that put us in third place behind cyclists and buses.

Responding to our comments about emissions getting even worse if cabs used Euston Road from Tottenham Court Road, Ms Saunders said:

"The Council is not saying that the increase in travel distance will not make any difference to emissions. We are saying that because the concentrations around Euston are very high

already, the increased output from additional distance travel will not increase concentrations significantly (on a % basis - less than 1 or even .5%). Moreover, this will be offset by less waiting time (and idling) at the traffic lights and the smoothing of traffic flow."

Well Ms Saunders, while we thank you sincerely for taking the time to answer questions - something not all Councils will do - in all honesty, if anything the traffic heading eastwards along Euston Road has deteriorated rather than improved. May we suggest that when planning future traffic management schemes, that perhaps Camden would like to ask the professionals for their advice - the professionals that the rest of the world consider to be the best taxi drivers of all. It's rather a pity that Camden doesn't agree.

Call Sign has now passed on our suggestion re a right turn from Judd Street to the Mayor's office...

Call Sign April 2011

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Quality colleagues, this proposed new route will not impact significantly on air quality. This is because air quality and emissions on Euston Road are already very high, so any change would have to be quite high to make a difference on these existing high levels. Moreover, this is offset by the fact that the waiting time at the junction has been reduced for all users (when engines would be running and impacting on pedestrians waiting to cross) and the longer time allowed for movement which eases traffic flow and helps to reduce emissions."

In other words, emissions were high anyway so what difference would a bit more make! She then reiterated and confirmed *Call Sign's* March headline by saying: "We cannot allow a left turn (at Marchmont Street) because cyclists in the cycle lane are moving straight ahead. This movement would not be allowed due to cutting across cyclists as they move forward. Therefore this ban is an essential requirement of the proposal."

No mention of pedestrians that time! Of course, the situation could only happen because Camden changed those lights so that vehicles and bikes moved at the same time, whereas the old system seemed to work well with few hold-ups and even fewer accidents. The fatality and two serious injuries are of course extremely sad, but they occurred over a period of three years and could surely have happened anywhere?

Ms Saunders then added that implementing a right turn at Judd Street onto Euston Road was outside the Council's control as Euston Road is part of the TfL Road Network and managed by them. She did say, however, that any change to traffic lights was not a simple

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Work at the Island

Hello ladies & gents,

It is almost a month since the new procedures were implemented at Canary Wharf and the feedback from many of you has been very encouraging and in fact seems well received from the vast majority.

I know that Keith will probably mention this point as well, but it really is very important that if you intend using one of the many ranks within the estate, you must also have your *For Hire* lights on and be prepared to accept a walk up from the rank. Canary Wharf Security is regularly checking your status and already we have received complaints of taxis stationary on a rank with their hire lights off and refusing street passengers.

This new system (during the hours of 6am and 9pm) was predominately designed to encourage and generate cash walk-ups, to advertise our services in all parts of the island and to give members the added option of cash



work whilst they wait for an account trip.

With that in mind, it makes it even more of a reason to remind you all that in accordance with Society procedures, the DaC logo must be displayed at all times.

We are still the biggest players on Canary Wharf and with a large number of staff from

one of our largest accounts relocating early next year, we cannot afford to be complacent. It just takes a small minority to spoil it for the rest of us...

Westminster TaxiCard Trips

As from 1st April, the payment charges and subsidy on Westminster TaxiCard trips are changing. The system will automatically calculate the new values in the normal manner, but please be aware that the passengers will now pay £2.50 instead of the current £1.50 and the subsidy will be reduced from £9.80 down to £8.30. Run-ins remain unaltered. All TaxiCard holders will already have received a letter of notification by Westminster of the changes.

Reducing the Council's contribution is a necessary change that will enable Westminster City Council to save money in order to continue to provide this valuable service...

WCHCD HOLD SPRING COURT DINNER

On 17th March, the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** held their *Spring Court Dinner* at Saddlers' Hall in Gutter Lane. The Master, **Jim Rainbird (T25)**, together with his Wardens including **Dial-a-Cab** Chairman **Brian Rice**, welcomed guests to the hall.

Guest speaker for the evening was comedian **Tom O'Connor** with guests including Masters and their Clerks from several other Livery Companies, many of whom continue to support the WCHCD Magical Taxi Tour event each year.

Spencer Davis, Alan Garner, Robert Hogg, John Jenden and Brian With (Y84) were clothed in the livery before dinner with the Master offering his congratulations. **Simon Thompson** joined the WCHCD as a Freeman and was also welcomed into the Company. The Master spoke of the WCHCD Military affiliation during his speech, adding that three people at the dinner were from 20 Transport Squadron, Royal Logistic Corps including the Commanding Officer, Major Hilton and that last summer, a fiercely competitive driving skills challenge day took place at Regents Park Barracks, where members of the WCHCD were just edged out of it by members of the Squadron!

Following an excellent citation from Major Hilton The Master added:

"Appropriate to our affiliation and also initiated last year was our excellence award for the most outstanding soldier in the squadron." He then presented this year's Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers Excellence Award to Private Thomas James Swan of 20 Transport Squadron, Royal Logistic Corps...



Brian Rice with William Barton of the Spectacle Makers Company

WCHCD Master Jim Rainbird with guest Speaker Tom O'Connor



Freddie Freeloaders is here!

My son said that you can get anything you want in London and it's the place to be. Yes, it's a great capital city.

For the *Freddie Freeloaders* who frequent the capital, it's also a place where you can often get away with not paying for your travel. Whether it be by taxi - although this is rather rare, on the buses and particularly the bendy variety where it happens very often and tube train journeys that are losing £millions in lost revenue. Its correct name is *negative passenger activity*...

Dodgers on the tube often use a method known as *surfing*. Without going into detail, surfing is an illegal exit and time change scan through the automatic ticket barriers, whilst on

LONDON ACCORDING TO DAVE

bendy buses with their three access points, not showing a ticket is said to be simple.

London is now a nonsensical capital of extremes; we can spend £140million over 6 years on Boris Bikes and £6million last year on government ministerial cars, but we can't afford to repair the potholes in our roads. We can spend £millions giving Victoria Station a facelift, but can't afford one decent toilet at Clapham Junction Station, which has up to 20 platforms and has been voted the second worst station in the UK!

London's underground is now unpredictable, especially at weekends. Chunks of it are now so old - its origins being Victorian - that many of its' components should be consigned to a museum and placed in glass viewing cases labelled "ancient artefacts from a bygone age."

It still does amazingly well in spite of all that - but not, however, on the night I used the network after dropping off my taxi. Both the Circle and District lines had gone belly up. So it was gonna be just like the Paul Weller and The Jam song...*'getting a cab and travelling on buses'... 'the screech of brakes and lamplight blinking'... 'that's entertainment!'*

With cuts under this coalition government

really starting to bite, I expect freeloading to become even more prevalent. If therefore, I hear another MP say that we are all in this together, I will puke into a bucket - always assuming I can afford one!

I know we have too much of a benefit culture, but I'm getting fed up with this endless spin about a deficit that has now taken on an evangelical dogma doctrine. That we must repent of our former sinful spendthrift ways that were leading us into ruination. That we can now gain eternal salvation under the coalition in their new order in which virtue has replaced greed and where we can all live happily in Big Dave's Big Society!

I'm sorry, but I just don't buy it! I do know that the old Etonian ethos of the *Bullingdon Club* has proved to be true - it is perfectly acceptable to cut and trash everything in sight, so long as you pay for it at the end. Under that ethos, I am expecting the biggest bonanza payback ever given to the electorate in political history when they try to get re-elected in 4 years time!

In the meantime why worry, there's a free train home tonight for Freddie!

David Heath (ex-W27)

Westfield Shopping Centre

Westfield Shopping Centre management have asked the trade to try and get more taxis to pick up there during peak times, otherwise they may be forced into using private hire vehicles. The shopping centre has done all it can to attract us there; giving us parking facilities, drinks machines, a lounge and of course the always useful clean loos! But they provide all that as an incentive for taxis to go there and to take their customers home. But usually on Saturdays and Sundays between 4.30pm and 8.00pm, there are queues of people. The Westfield Shopping Centre rank isn't somewhere you drive past, you have to make a special trip, but so often the work coming out is well worth that extra 5 minutes. However, Westfield is on private land so if the management decide they want to use PH, there will be nothing we can do but to kick ourselves for letting an excellent rank slip away.

We know that Westfield would prefer to use licensed taxis rather than minicabs, but they will not allow sentiment to stand in the way of providing their customers with a fast way for them to get home. So please, let's give Westfield Shopping Centre the service that the world expects from London taxi drivers... the best!

Mayor's Air Quality Strategy reminder

As a reminder for those who may need to plan for the future of their taxis, this is what the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy will possibly mean to you.

By the end of 2011, there will be a requirement that all new taxi drivers must undertake a mandatory eco-driving course before becoming licensed. The course will also be open to current drivers should they wish to make use of it.

As of 1 January 2012, no taxi more than 15 years old will be licensed, while from the following April all new taxis must meet the Euro 5 standard as a minimum.

Taxi manufacturers are to develop an affordable taxi with 60% better fuel economy by 2015 and aim for zero emissions by 2020. The Mayor's strategy also says that a financial incentive scheme for drivers purchasing new taxis that meet requirements should be put into place.

There will be more ranks set up to help reduce idling and empty running. The strategy also supports the development of new technologies that encourage taxi sharing and to enable electronic hailing

By April 2013, the yearly overhaul will become two MOTs a year with a "basic annual taxi-related inspection" undertaken by TfL...



"Yes, I mean you!"



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It was just another ordinary day for **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Robert Kirk (H78)**. After eight years with the Society, most days are similar to every other. You get the occasional good job that keeps you going in money and conversation for the week – and, of course, the occasional stinker! But most days pretty ordinary.

Even finding lost property is just part of the job. But Robert's find, while just another piece of lost property so far as he was concerned, obviously left a lasting impression with **Craig Rudolph**, who is the *Aviation Lubricants & Specialities Sales Manager* of the *Shell Company of Australia Limited*. And it may have impressed Mr Rudolph so much that DaC could possibly be looking at work coming in from Shell. Craig Rudolph wrote into DaC. He said:

"I am sending you this email out of gratitude as well as a restoration of my belief that there are still some people in this world with ethics and integrity.

What transpired on the morning of the 19th February was just fantastic. I was picked up by one of your drivers at Paddington railway sta-

SHELL (AUSTRALIA) AND THE DAC DRIVER

tion at about 9:30am. The driver - unfortunately I never did get his name - took me to my destination in Tottenham as requested, but owing to my carelessness I inadvertently left my wallet containing a sum of money and credit cards on the back seat of the taxi during the process of paying the fare. I only discovered this act of stupidity after some time at my host's, which then made me fear the worst. At about 11am, the Dial-a-Cab company was contacted to try and recover the wallet. As I was on a business trip, being without my wallet would have made it exceptionally difficult to have continued my trip without some degree of inconvenience.

Some would say *as luck would have it*, but I prefer to think *owing to a very honest gentleman of impeccable integrity* my wallet was located and was with the driver. Not only was all the money and credit cards accounted for, but the driver took time out of his schedule to deliver the wallet to the very location he had dropped me off earlier that morning.

May I congratulate your company on staff as honest as your driver. An otherwise potential-

ly very stressful and difficult trip was averted by your driver's integrity. I am not sure if your company has any recognition process in place for acts beyond the normal course of duty, but may I nominate driver (badge number provided) to be recognised for the outstanding example he has set.

I can also assure you, if I have told 1 person, I have told 100 others about Dial-a-Cab and this pleasant outcome. You can be assured many of my family and colleagues will use your company because of this unbelievable event.

All the best and thank you all once again."

Robert told **Call Sign**: "I never really thought about it. I knew whoever had lost the wallet would have been extremely worried so I just took it straight back as soon as I found it."

Robert was offered a reward that he told us he was very reluctant to accept.

"It's just part of the job," he said, "we don't need to be rewarded for being honest."

Then Robert went back to finish yet another ordinary day which may not have been quite as ordinary as it appeared...

Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner and Dance

It may only be April, but at the speed life moves on **Dial-a-Cab** driver and Chairman of the *Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund*, **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)** has told **Call Sign** that he is already getting phone calls asking when the next **Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner and Dance** is, so he has passed on the information.

It will be held on 3 December 2011 at the Holiday Inn Kensington Forum in Cromwell Road. Tickets are priced at £62.50 each.

Russell has also negotiated a special rate for anyone wanting to stay overnight at the hotel.

For further information, call Barbara or Russell on 020 8952 1357 or 07850 056 765. You can email them at brussella@talk21.com.

Tickets can be obtained at the following address:

Russell Poluck MBE, Hon Chairman, Taxi Driver of the Year Charity, 5 St Brides Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 6BT

Where's Woody???

Did you know where Woody was in this issue's Call Sign en la Belle France? The answer was in St Martins le Grand...



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A source close to the **Dial-a-Cab** Board has told **Call Sign** of plans to launch a superfast personal transportation system for the exclusive use of MDs and CEOs at our most senior accounts. The eight vehicles used will be Ferraris.

Call Sign understands that the premier service - to be called **SpeedLink** - will operate primarily between Docklands / City and Heathrow Airport when senior executives may have been delayed at London meetings and need to catch a flight.

The source explained that since the demise of the M4 bus lane, the BoM have also reviewed ways and means of bringing senior account executives into the central area as well as getting them out again on completion of those meetings.

Our source explained: "It is thought that this will be a popular premium service that will appeal to the busy international businessman, keep account clients happy and raise the profile of Dial-a-Cab."

We understand that plans for **SpeedLink** are at an advanced stage of planning and that those drivers associated with the new service will be allowed to keep the vehicles at their own homes but would need to be available at any time. Payment would be at a flat rate of £45 per hour.

Any driver interested in being one of the eight should contact Rapol Frisk at DaC administration...

DAC TO LAUNCH FERRARI SERVICE?

With drivers that can take the car home with them!



One of the eight Ferraris caught by Call Sign's Photographer

Lightless London!

With less CCTV but more wardens...?

When **Call Sign** spoke to **Boris Johnson** soon after he won the Mayoral election race, he told us that he believed that there were too many sets of traffic lights in London and that it was they that were slowing down the traffic.

But it is **Westminster Council** that has jumped in to do the job with the prospective removal of around 25 unnecessary signals in an attempt to ease traffic flow, although some lights will be replaced by pedestrian crossings. In addition, some one-way streets will return to two-way working.

There has already been some testing in the Piccadilly area and according to Westminster's Head of Transportation, **Martin Low**, traffic queues at these test sites had shortened on average from 200metres to just 20metres, although he did express some concern for pedestrians with traffic speeding up. However, he also added that although pedestrians would have to be more careful, experience showed that when drivers weren't constantly being held up by traffic signals, they were more courteous to those trying to cross the street.

There have been objections from organisations representing those with disabilities - especially the blind - who obviously rely on traffic lights to assist in crossing the road and according to Martin Low, their representations would be taken into account with a consultation that was completed on March 14 and work on the lights removal beginning soon after. If the plans as revealed go ahead, the roads becoming two way will be the whole length of Pall Mall, Piccadilly Circus to St James Street with St James Street itself reverting to two way working.

Lights to be removed include the two pedestrian signals in Birdcage Walk, the set by Maddox and St George Streets, Duke Street and Regent Street by the junctions with Jermyn Street, Berkeley Street by Hay Hill, the multiple crossing by Upper St Martins Lane and Long Acre. Moving north, also set for the chop are the lights by Wells and Eastcastle Streets together with Mortimer and Great Titchfield Streets. St Johns Wood sees the sets by Acacia Road and Ordance Hill and Warwick Avenue with Blomfield Road set for the chop.

The SW1 area sees two sets of lights at Belgrave Road by Gillingham Street and Ebury

Street with Lower Belgrave Street being dismantled.

At the same time, Westminster has also announced the reintroduction of clamping and towing away of unattended vehicles. Five years ago these were phased out in favour of more CCTV cameras - only to become the bane of many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers lives. This we assume, will also mean more wardens. However, given the choice, taxi drivers who are genuinely waiting for a passenger will feel that they have more of an opportunity to move around the block if a warden is spotted, rather than just being photographed without their knowledge. Those that park to do their shopping will find that to be rather more risky now...



Lights - better flowing traffic

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DaC Credit Union's bank to the DaC Credit Union...

"CAN WE BORROW MONEY FROM YOU!!!"

The largest attendance ever recorded at a **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union AGM** heard the amazing success story of a credit union that began in a very small way and now, with over 900 members, is probably one of – if not the – most successful credit union in the country.

In a throwaway comment, **DACCU President Terry Dodd (W15)** told of a conversation with their bank where, hearing that DACCU had money coming in and no overdraft, he was offered "the opportunity" to invest money at what the bank described as being a very competitive rate. Terry responded by saying that DACCU members invested money in the credit union at a rate that paid 7% interest. The bank – whose offer was a fraction of that – then switched tack and asked if THEY could invest with DACCU! Terry asked what links they had with DaC and with an answer of none, Terry's answer was non merci!

According to **Terry MacPherson** of DACCU's Auditors, *Appleby and Wood*, this had been a very successful year. While businesses all around were struggling and banks were being choosy about whom to loan to (with one driver adding that he had been quoted an APR of 29.9% by his bank), the DaC Credit Union had made loans of £2.7million to its' members.

Terry Dodd came back to add that they were offering quite large loans nowadays, but quoted a small loan of £1000, which if paid back within one year, would cost the borrower just £65 in interest! And probably most importantly of all to anyone thinking that the interest rate was too good to be true, the FSA made sure that all money invested to individual members up to an amount of £85,000 was 100% safe.

Any member wanting a loan just needed to make a phone call or go to DACCU's Hackney Road office and the loan would be in their bank within days!

Doug Fisher (E64) of the Loans Committee



Members listening to the credit union success story

gave his report saying that the year from 31 October to 30 September had seen a total of £2,143,983 had been loaned to members.

Overseeing things from his position in the Supervising Committee, **Roger Kensit (W31)** told members that everything was running well, but with report after report showing nothing but success, by then that was no longer surprising.

Under the ever-watchful eye of **Barry Epstein**, representing credit unions and who without the need for any notes can seemingly answer any questions about these organisations, the meeting was told that a further 139 members had joined in the past 12 months, pushing total membership over the 900 mark. According to Mr Epstein, many other credit unions looked up to the DACCU model and wanted to copy its' success but didn't know how they had achieved it! President Terry

admitted that it had been a complicated procedure, but it was now running very smoothly.

Call Sign was asked to thank **Lil**, who made what resembled a banquet for members to tuck into, and also **Tiger Tiger Tyres** for allowing the AGM to take place on their property when the hotel opposite in Hackney Road, obviously sensing the success of the CU, suddenly decided to double the fee they had originally quoted. Whilst it was affordable, the CU decided that it was extremely unprofessional and declined the offer!

If you have any queries or want to join DaC's ultra-successful credit union, call on 0207 729 8171 or go to the office at Unit 14, Peterley Business Centre, 472 Hackney Road, E2.

Special DaC drivers lunchbox at Awana...

All **Dial-a-Cab** drivers know *Chelsea Cloisters*, but did you know about the *Awana Malaysian Restaurant* next door in *Sloane Avenue*? No? Well now is a great time to find out because the *Awana* operate a special lunchbox for DaC's taxi drivers.

For just £5.99, 7 days a week between the hours of midday and 3pm, you can pick up your special lunchbox. Also, as an extra special offer, if you buy two special lunchboxes at £5.99, you will be given a third lunchbox free! For ten lunchboxes, you can get a free meal in the Awana restaurant!

The *Awana* is one of the most stylish places in which you can sample Malaysian street food. Holding the title for London's finest Malaysian experience, the satay bar and restaurant are a well-coming blend of lush silk panels, glass screens and dark wood interiors. Fine Malaysian eateries are a rarity in London, which makes *Awana* even more appealing. If you think you've had chicken satay, you won't believe how delicate and different the *Awana* offering is. It's a revelation – especially the *kari ayam* or a spicy *sambal*.

If you have never had Malaysian food before, their *Malaysian Journey* tasting menu is a great place to start. *Awana* means *in the clouds* and this is heavenly dining indeed.

Some items on the menu include *grilled duck breast* marinated in lime leaves, served with sweet black pepper sauce, or the *murtabak sajian laut* (butterfish, prawn, mustard seed and onion). Then there's the *kari udang* (fresh tiger prawn tail curry with coconut, pineapple, tomato and tamarind, served in a pineapple boat).

Awana is a culinary experience, one you can begin to enjoy with their special taxi driver's lunchbox between the hours of midday and 3pm, seven days a week!

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For all Windows/Mac problems
Viruses or Trojans?

You know how it is. You start in the suburbs at about 6am and the same faces are waiting for the same buses, which apparently run to time at that hour. So when an elderly and dapper gentleman appeared in Kenton Lane and actually put his hand out, I was surprised and delighted.

"Bleydon Crescent please," he said.

"Is that round here," I asked?

"I think so," came his response.

I looked it up, but it wasn't listed - which was probably lucky as it turned out.

"Where's it near?"

"I'm not really sure."

Something inside me began to worry.

"Where have you just come from," I asked him?

"I can't remember."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"To be honest, I haven't been sleeping too well lately."

I began to understand. The poor old chap was suffering from Alzheimer's. I couldn't just leave him there, but what should I do? I suggested the police station, but he didn't like that. And then I had an idea. I'd take him round to Northwick Park Hospital and surely they would know what to do. We got there and went into the reception, but their response was that if he wasn't sick then I should take him to the police station! So I tried a new tack.

"Have you got any ID?"

He gave me his wallet. It contained his name, some family photos, £40 and a list of

Early Morning Start?

A true story from Geoff Levene...



phone numbers. I tried the first one and a worried sounding woman answered. I explained the situation.

"That's my brother-in-law," she said. I asked where he lived and not surprisingly she said Kenton Lane with his daughter - right opposite from where I had picked him up!

I shot back there and a sleepy-looking woman opened the door and cried out: "Oh Dad, what are you doing?"

We helped him inside. "Thank you so much," she said.

"That's all right," I said, "but he asked to go to Bleydon Crescent. I couldn't find it on the map. Where is it?"

The daughter looked at me and smiled: "We used to live there. It's in Bristol."

Now that would have been nice start...

Geoff Levene (K43)

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You can try City Golf's facilities free of charge

City Golf, who are based in Coleman Street EC2, are offering **Dial-a-Cab** drivers a free 1 hour golf practice where you can play at any of fifty golf courses from around the world!

Email matt@citygolfclubs.com or phone 0207 796 5960 to use the offer. If you enjoy your time at City Golf, then there is a special deal available for DaC drivers that you can find out about using the same contact details. Members can always take a guest in with them who can also use all the facilities free of charge.

City Golf Clubs is a unique indoor golf club, combining London's finest golf academy with superb interactive entertainment and relaxation facilities. Those facilities include six full swing golfing simulators, a gym, professional swing video training systems, PGA professional trainers and London's first dedicated bio-mechanical golf training gym.

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You can read more about City Golf Clubs at www.citygolfclubs.com.

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5 Great iPhone Games

Hello again!

Last month I told you about 5 of my favourite iPhone/iPod Touch games. This month I've listed another five that I enjoy playing on my commute to work at **Dial-a-Cab**. All these games work on *iPhone 3GS*, *iPhone 4*, *iPod Touch 3rd & 4th generation*, but several require OS4 to be installed, so if you haven't updated your device in a few months you will need to update it through iTunes. Listed in reverse order, here are the games...

#5 – iAssociate 2 (free): An interesting concept in word games, iAssociate 2 is the much improved successor to iAssociate and best of all it's free! Essentially, it's a word association game with many themed levels and is surprisingly fun to play. More info: <http://iasociate2.ticbits.com>

#4 – Trainyard (£0.59/free Lite Edition): This starts out as quite an easy game, but

Cost of CRB check goes up

From 6 April 2011, the cost of an *Enhanced* CRB check will increase from £36 to £44. The cost of standard CRB checks will remain unchanged. This will impact on all new applicants for Taxi or Private Hire driver licences or drivers who are undergoing the 3-year renewal process. Any CRB applications that have been countersigned by LTPH and accepted before 6 April 2011 will be charged at £36.

The CRB say that the cost of an *Enhanced* check has remained frozen for 5 years, with the cost of a Standard CRB check actually dropping by £5 in 2009.

On behalf of all Call Sign gamers, DaC's Jon Winterburn asks...

Gaming: *What's worth playing?*



Jon's number 3 game - Wordsworth

soon gets really difficult as each new challenge becomes more complex. However, this adds to the appeal of this visually pleasing little puzzler. Combining line drawing and colour matching, you have to get the trains to their trainyards in the most efficient route. I know this sounds a bit sad, but seriously it's not! Have a go on the *lite* edition and see what you think. More info:

<http://www.trainyard.ca>

#3 – WordsWorth (£0.59): For all the Word-Nerds out there, this game is definitely top of the list. A bit like word searches, this visually pleasing app involves linking words of 3 letters or more. There are various modes to play to suit your mood and you can also play against friends over WiFi. If you're a serious Word-Nerd, you can get into

WordsWorth clubs and use your wins to climb the ladder to become a member of the exclusive Experts club. Or you can just have fun on single-player mode! More info:

<http://www.99games.in/wordsworth.html>

#2 – Bejeweled 2 + Blitz (£0.59): There have been many clones of the original match-3 game, Bejeweled, but none have ever come close to the addictive gameplay and pretty graphics as Bejeweled. This version of the game sports improved gameplay and visuals as well as various modes of play to suit your mood. The app also comes with Blitz, which lets you join millions of daily players on Facebook and compete with your friends in the weekly Bejeweled Blitz tournament. More info: <http://www.facebook.com/bejeweled-blitz>

#1 – LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 (£2.99): If you or your kids like playing LEGO games, then Harry Potter is a must-have. Played in the same vein as other LEGO character games, this RPG will let you play through the main features of the first 4 Harry Potter films. Just like other LEGO games, there's lots of stud collecting and you get to unlock no less than 100 characters from Harry's universe. Exploring Hogwarts, spell-casting and building stuff will keep you and your kids amused for hours. More info:

<http://games.kidswb.com/official-site/lego-harry-potter>

Well, that's all folks! See you next month when I'll list another five of the best apps...

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

Stardust Children's Theatre Workshop

Is your child in the 5-9 age group?

Why not help them on to improved:

- Confidence
- Sociability
- Imagination
- Speech
- Self-discipline

...and to have fun in the process!

Phyllis Borden (B.A. Hons) has re-established the Stardust Children's Theatre Workshop between 4 and 5pm every Monday at the Steepleview Memorial Hall, Osier Drive, Laindon, Essex (opposite Costcutters and close to the A127).

Phone 01268 928 004 to pre-book or just come along on the day.

At the end of next year, a scholarship of 1 years free tuition will be offered to the most promising student...

"Yes, April is a busy time in our house," **Michael Walsh (H63J)** told *Call Sign* when we visited him and wife Patricia at home.

"It was April 1961 when I became engaged to Patricia, passed the Knowledge and got my Bill. That was fifty years ago and here we are in April 2011 marking my fifty years on **Dial-a-Cab!** I joined **ODRTS** on **9 April 1961** as Black 7 within a few days of getting my Bill. I paid 2/- (10p) for a rulebook and £2.2.6 (£2.12) for one week's subscription. I have really not looked back since," he added.

"Yes, I knew several of the 'faces' that frequented our offices in Pentonville Road back then and also the café across the street, including **Alan Lewis (A44)** who *Call Sign* featured in the mag recently and the Chairman at the time, **Eli (Trixie) Solomons**," said Michael.

"I clearly remember dispatcher **Johnny Thwaites**. He was in the same army regiment as me, the *Kings Royal Rifles* - he during the war and me while doing my National Service. When he heard we had been in the same outfit, we just became buddies from then on."

Continuing his look back, Mike told us that he had been on the Knowledge with an ODRTS dispatcher who said he had heard that a Board member was looking for journeyman...

"That's how I teamed up with **Sailor Papier**. I was lucky because I had the cab to myself and could work the hours that suited me. I worked Sailor's cab for two years - mind you, that FX3 was freezing cold in the winter! The heater was pretty useless and you needed to dress up really warm to stop your hands from actually freezing to the steering wheel, while your feet often went numb! There were times when I even wore my pyjamas under my day clothes!"

Mike began laughing as the recollections came flooding back. "It was ok in the summer though, because the windshield was hinged from the top and could be opened slightly for ventilation. But in the winter there was too much ventilation - drafts came from everywhere! Oh yes, RLP 239 I remember you well," he mused.

In 1963, Michael bought his first new FX4 - 13 FGK - from **M&O** in Wandsworth Bridge Road. It cost him £1000. He teamed up with another ODRTS driver **Norman Schaffer** and they were together for many years. Mike sold his last cab in 2006 when he had to go from being an owner on Dial-a-Cab to a journeyman.

"One thing about the old cabs was the mechanical fare meter," he remembered. "Drivers worked on the clock, which meant they earned a percentage of the metered fares based on the number of trips and units recorded by the meter. Unfortunately, if you lowered the 'flag' too quickly when engaging the meter, it went right around and registered an additional trip that you hadn't done and that was 1/9d (10p) you'd lost before even setting off!"

"During this half-century on the road and with DaC, I've had some strange trips including the gentleman who asked for Buckingham Palace. I hesitated at the gate, as there was a parade in progress that I would have interrupted had I continued across the forecourt. My man was most insistent however and stuck his head out of the cab window. The policeman saluted him as I drove gently past. I set



Michael Walsh: 50 Years on DaC!



Mike now

him down at the Mews behind the main building and as I drove out, I learned that he was Equerry to **Prince Philip!**"

In full flow, Michael remembered the time he had actor **Jack Hawkins** as a passenger and he swore vociferously at a motorist who cut across the cab's path in Pall Mall. That was a surprise to Mike because it wasn't quite the eloquence he had been expecting from the wonderfully spoken actor he had seen so often in the movies!

"Then on another occasion I was going around the south side of Trafalgar Square, in the days when it was much wider and stopped just over the zebra crossing when other traffic was stationary on the line. I hadn't seen the pedestrians crossing because of the other traffic. Anyway, two policemen standing at the far kerbside shouted across to me and began walking towards me, when my bowler-hatted passenger admonished the policemen for shouting at me in that manner. They recognised and saluted the man in the back of the cab, apologised to me, and we went on our way undeterred. He did not introduce himself to me and I never did find out who he was, but it was what cab drivers have always referred to as a result!"

Mike remembered 1978 with a big smile



Mike in 1961 when he joined ODRTS

when he became the first taxi driver to win £1000 in a national lottery. The media made a big story of it and the winnings allowed him to take his family on two holidays that year - that sum of money representing a huge win 30+ years ago.

Mike could have gone on all night with his reminiscences, but *Call Sign* only has 36 pages!

"I look back now, recalling when Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road were the first highways to be made one-way streets, when Park Lane was a two-way thoroughfare and not the dual carriageway it is now and all the other changes to this capital city of ours that have evolved over the last 50 years. The changes are enormous and always on-going," he said "but these days I take things a bit easier, working a few days a week as a journeyman on DaC, while spending a lot more time on my beloved golf course!" He pointed towards the shelf full of cups, medals and trophies, which bore testament to Michael's prowess with a club and ball.

But to *Call Sign*, his most remarkable achievement is his 50 years on Dial-a-Cab - and he's still here...!

Dial-a-Cab driver **Jon Robinson (E88)** sent a *Sunday Times* article to the office for **Call Sign** to look at concerning San Francisco "cab" company **Uber**, who say they intend coming to London with their US app system of hiring stretch limo cabs.

According to the article (*A limo at your fingertips*) it will soon be possible to hail a luxury car and uniformed driver by using an iPhone mobile. The fare would be deducted from your account online.

The Uber service currently operates in San Francisco and according to co-founder, Travis Kalanick, intends expanding into European capitals after covering the USA! What London Taxis and Private Hire would have to say about that isn't known – although we think we can safely guess!

How does it work? Users just download a free app to their phone and when they need a "cab" they launch it. The app knows where you are through its' GPS hardware and the nearest Uber driver apparently turns up in his / her stretch limo to pick you up. A glass of wine for the journey? No problem!

According to Mr Kalanick, Uber currently have 120 drivers but have "successfully handled tens of thousands of trips." Using limos such as a Lincoln sedan would – according to the article by Matt Bingham - probably cost double the cost of a taxi but that the waiting time when ordered is no more than 15 minutes – at least that's the claim for San Francisco.

Would Londoners welcome Uber? Would they be allowed to operate their scheme? Are they so far ahead of companies such as **Dial-a-Cab** technically?

According to DaC's Network Administrator, **Jon Winterburn**, Uber have nothing that we don't already have. Jon told **Call Sign** that while DaC do not have a *specific* app for the iPhone itself, that is because Jon says not everyone has an iPhone, with many now using BlackBerrys (and Android) smartphones. DaC has an app that when visited on your smartphone, detects the type of phone being used and then displays the booking app in the appropriate size and format for the user's smartphone. In particular, if it detects an iPhone, it presents the user with a web app that looks and works exactly like an iPhone app. This means that DaC's app reaches all users and they do not need to download and install anything on their phone as it is all on the web.

Call Sign then spoke to **Christopher Fulkerson PhD** who is a San Francisco cab medallion holder with 20 years experience. He told us that Uber were originally working "on the sly" knowing they were in violation of certain local ordinances. They eventually got "busted" and had to reorganise but that even now, you can call them what you like but they are still sedans and not cabs. Christopher's use of the word "sedans" could be changed for "cars" in London. Either way they are not cabs as San Franciscans or Londoners recognise the word. He then makes the important point that also applies to London: "Sedan operations may only be used for pre-scheduled pickups, never for flagging with a hail. Uber and all other sedan operations push the envelope on

Stretch limos plying for hire in London?



Separated by 5000 miles but both Jon Robinson (left) and Christopher Fulkerson have the same problems

this regulation when they do not openly violate it. They try to claim that a call 10 minutes in advance is a 'pre-arranged' call and nobody but them believes this is so. When Uber boasts that they can get to an order within fifteen minutes, they are telling you they are breaking the *pre-arranged* service ordinance."

Christopher added that he believes that the chief message about Uber's success is that people are enthusiastic about spending more if they can get reliable service. As such, they don't mind being part of a black market operation. He estimates that their prices are 2.5 times higher than a San Francisco taxicab.

He ended on a note that **Dial-a-Cab** drivers

will understand only too well:

"In the sedan industry, it may be that Uber is a well-run company and its passengers are enthusiastic. But the industry as a whole is so rife with corruption that many sedan drivers simply take their licence plates off on Friday or Saturday nights - and I have yet to hear of a police officer stopping one of them for that reason. I am not saying Uber does this, but it is important to understand the *niche* in which they are operating."

As a final word, **Call Sign** took a look at the Uber app on the App store. There was just one review of Uber's app. It said: "*Absolutely useless app, pointless concept!*"

So will they come to London? You tell us...

Lee starts jogging!

Several months ago whilst playing in goal, **Dial-a-Cab** driver and **Ashford Town** goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, twisted his knee and later discovered that he had damaged his **cruciate ligament**, which runs from the *femur* to the *fibia* and usually prevents over-bending or over-straightening.

Lee underwent an operation that put paid to the rest of his season in addition to putting him out of work, as he couldn't drive his cab either for a few weeks. Fortunately it was his left knee so he was back behind the wheel soon after the operation.

Lee recently saw his surgeon and was given the go-ahead to begin jogging and light training – but not any goalkeeping dives until early next season.

"But I'll be back," Lee told **Call Sign**. "I'll be back better than ever...!"



Lee makes another save - but he won't be making more until next season

What is Wing Chun?

Wing Chun is a southern Chinese close quarters fighting martial art based on two key principles or concepts; economy of motion and conservation of energy.

The most famous exponent of Wing Chun was the late **Bruce Lee**, who later used many of the Wing Chun techniques to create his own style called *Jeet Kune Do*. Bruce Lee studied Wing Chun under the late Great Grand Master **Ip Man** in Hong Kong.

Wing Chun has flourished, is taught around the world and is considered one of the world's most efficient and effective martial arts systems.

Lillo Trupia (J34) has been on Dial-a-Cab for seven years and is a fully qualified Wing Chun Master and a certified instructor and permanent member of the elite Ving Tsun Athletic Association of Hong Kong.

Lillo has received tuition from Garry McKenzie, chief instructor of The Wing Chun School and a direct student of Grand Master Ip Ching, the son of Great Grand Master Ip Man who taught Bruce Lee. He has also trained and studied Wing Chun with Grand Master Ip Ching in Hong Kong.

Wing Chun used as a self defence should only be used when all other avenues have been exhausted. But in the real world, sometimes a confrontational situation is unavoidable. The skill is the ability to know when and how one should deal with such situations. We must also remember that the most important thing when such instances occur is not to consider the risk to your cab, the money or your taxi licence, but your life. In every situation, you should seek to diffuse the situation and only when necessary, when only unavoidable, use physical self defence. Therefore, the Wing Chun System is about resolving a situation in the least time possible, with the least harm - first to yourself and then the would-be attacker.

The problem is that the untrained person

Lillo Trupia (J34) is a fully qualified Wing Chun master and certified instructor. He explains to Call Sign readers about this martial art and how you can take it up...

Wing Chun Kung Fu – Martial Art



DaC's Lillo Trupia is a Wing Chun Master and certified instructor who will give a free consultation to any DaC driver

can sometimes allow a situation to escalate beyond the point to which it needed to due to inexperience, fear or lack of control and because of any of those, they allow the situation or themselves to get out of control.

Hence the Wing Chun way is to be completely direct in all matters where physical assault is a possibility. The first way is to learn the art of intercepting the assailant's intention. In other words, learn to read and anticipate

the situation before it happens.

For more information on Wing Chun please contact Lillo Trupia on 07930 562536 or take a look at his website at <http://www.thewingchunschool.com/html/Lillo.htm>.

Free consultation to all Dial-a-Cab members and journeymen...

Lillo Trupia (J34)

BLACKWALL TUNNEL UPGRADE

12 months ahead of schedule!

Good progress now means only three more weekend closures of Blackwall Tunnel are required as the safety upgrade continues with completion now due by the end of 2011 – one year ahead of schedule.

Southbound closures will take place across the long Easter Bank Holiday weekend (21 - 26 April) and the weekends of 10 - 13 June and 12 - 15 August, during which time Rotherhithe Tunnel will again be dedicated to southbound traffic. Closures are between the hours of 21.00 and 05.00.

Northbound will run as usual.

Transport for London (TfL) told **Call Sign** that these three weekend closures will complete the ongoing safety upgrade of the 113 year old tunnel. The closures allow contractor **BAM Nuttall** to continue vital upgrade works as well as resurfacing the entire 1.4 km tunnel, neither of which can be carried out during the weeknight closure programme.

Since work began in February 2010, new ventilation fans have been installed in the tunnel's four shafts as well as new lighting, upgraded CCTV and new communications systems installed throughout the tunnel. TfL has also begun installing 26 inlets in the tunnel wall (including emergency phones and fire extinguisher) providing a safe area for any drivers whose vehicles have broken down within the tunnel.

By working with the contractor and using innovative thinking to allow sections of the works to be



Work on tunnel should be completed by December

carried out during the day, TfL and BAM Nuttall have managed to bring the project forward to completion by December 2011 - one year earlier than originally expected.

According to Garrett Emmerson, Chief Operating Officer for London Streets at TfL, they remain committed to do everything they can to minimise disruption to drivers in east London whilst the vital improvement works are being carried out.

MELINDA'S RACE FOR LIFE

Driver's reception has a collection tin to help sponsor the daughter of Dial-a-Cab driver **Laurie Shapiro (H62), Melinda**. She will be running in the *Race for Life* on 12th June, starting at 10.30 am in the City.

All donations, no matter how small, will be welcome and help in the battle against Cancer – a battle the Shapiro family know all about. If you would like to help, just go to Driver's reception...



Neville Chapman (P99) and **Chas Kissin (P99J)** bought their first joint taxi together in 1973 and continued to buy a new cab every other year. They came to Dial-a-Cab in 1999 and had been happy here ever since – until recently when having kept their latest taxi much longer than usual and with the warranty having ended, the pair found that it was costing them too much in repairs and took the decision to rent a cab between them. That meant they had to reluctantly leave DaC and go to a radio circuit that accepts non-owners.

For several years, Chas wrote in *Call Sign* about the views of a grumpy old man – him – but wanted one final grump before probably leaving our portals for the last time...

"Although our new circuit has an in-house magazine, it does not have a driver letters page or contain any articles by subscribers and I wanted to tell this story – one that will probably only be understood by radio men. It can also act as a warning, although the end is truly amazing..."

I was in the city when my computer offered me an account trip to the suburbs where I live. As it was time to go home, I accepted the trip. The pick-up looked like a business address and as I was around the corner, arrived within minutes. It turned out to be a bar next to the address given, but no worries as it was advise arrival. I saw a few cars arrive and pick up, but as my passenger hopefully could tell the difference, I was not worried. The passenger also had to give me a password, so that both sides had a guarantee from each other.

The passenger was a female, but also had four friends in tow, all talking rather loudly and possibly having drunk a little too much. They were not paralytic, just a bit boisterous so off we went into the eastern part of the world, with the final destination just past *green badge valley*. I didn't need an intercom to hear the conversation, which at times would have made a navy blush, and this from the two females as well as the three males.

The first person to get out was one of the females and after a long goodbye to everyone, we went on our way to the next drop off. Still a lot of noise, but no worries as this was an account ride. Near to a station, I was asked to make a right hand turn and proceed about a hundred yards where one of the males duly got out. We then turned around and went back to the main road and headed along it to where the account holder lived. She got out and now I was left with two fellows. They asked me to carry on in the same direction (westerly) going as if back to the city. I was asked to stop at a garage where one got out to relieve himself with the other going to buy

Mr Grumpy has his last Call Sign rant

The bilk that never was...

a bottle of water. This seemed odd at the time, as though they both had to leave the cab at the same time when almost home. I knew they would return as there were what looked like two phones on the rear seat. They did return and I was now directed to leave the garage - turn left then right at the roundabout. I was neither lost nor worried as I live not too far away and of course it was an account ride. At this point, it was a lot quieter than earlier but as the intercom was on, I could hear what was being said. They were hunched up talking to each other as if hatching some escape plan from the taxi. At the end of this road is another roundabout and as I turned right, was asked to stop by the pub where one said that that would do for him, while the other one wanted to go just around the corner. He then directed me to turn right into a roadway where there was a cash machine as he need-

ed some money. The machine was in the wall and next to a *no entry* sign. Again I thought nothing of it as it happens all the time at night. He walked slowly to the machine and then suddenly made a dash into the *no entry* street, obviously believing that I would not follow him. He was right; I didn't follow him, but sat there for a full five minutes laughing my head off at this donut who thought he had got one over on a cab driver!

I phoned the control room and relayed the story to them to put myself in the clear of any wrongdoing, as I believe the duo also took a phone in the back that wasn't theirs! No doubt the account holder will have been impressed when told what nice friends she has!"

Call Sign's sincere congratulations go to Chas and wife Frankie on becoming grandparents with the arrival of Georgia...

NO FUEL SURCHARGE

Many drivers have asked *Call Sign* what price diesel must reach before a surcharge comes in? Up until 1 January 2011, that threshold was 146.1 per litre, but according to LTPH, no surcharge has been approved immediately after that date because of the imminent 2.7% tariff increase, which comes in on 2 April.

Then following the implementation of the fare increase, the revised threshold will be just below 160p per litre and would only apply if met before 1 January 2012...

Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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

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

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

The cost?

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

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

Call us on 020 7729 8171 or 020 7749 0585

Mailshot

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

A cheaper Vito prayer???

Hiya Al baby...

"O lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz," or so the song goes. Well son, not for much longer. Maybe it should be "O lord I'd love a Mercedes Benz - if only I could afford one."

Then again, can I afford not to? With a clever little thing that cuts out the engine as an option after three minutes, let's hope the starter motor's good. Plus a multi-function steering wheel as standard that's a Marilyn Monroe high maintenance, extra-nice-to-hold, expensive to replace object of desire. OK, so you don't need as much of the liquid gold perfume to run her on, but then again a service is not exactly a rub down with the Sporting Life - more a pair of Jimmy Choo shoes!

Wake up Boris - you old Islingtonion, because by the time we hear who the next Minister for the Arts is, that Coventry-based cab may well be made in China and shipped over. Of course, there is always the option of taking away the two-ton of metal of the rear axle and making it what it is - a posh van - and as the ad says, £16880 plus VAT. Bring it on baby!

The funny thing is that even if you could buy a Vito van anywhere, KPM would still come out on top - don't worry Mr DaCosta, no need to cancel that helicopter order yet mate! You're just gonna have to work a little harder on all that scrap, because you're gonna shift a hell of a lot more Vito vans, cos even at £27K, boy you'll shift some! Well, let's face it, they don't advertise in *Call Sign*, so I can say it! One thing you can bank on; those oriental gentlemen are going to build on the TX4 - you can have that as read! Then again, just one return trip to Beijing on the credit card, you can pick any cab colour until I get my way and as Henry Ford said: "So long as they are black!" The new Vito is out in April!
Gary Cox (O46)

Nope! Neither am I 100% sure about what Vito driver Gary is on about, but if I had to guess I think he is referring to the ongoing problems with the rear steering that so many Vito owners seem to be suffering from and wondering whether the vehicle should be sold by KPM without it? The estimated cost of the rear wheel steering that brings the Vito in line with the Conditions of Fitness is around 10K, hence Gary's wish for a £27K model. However, if LTPH said yes, then not only would the CoF vanish, but it would open the door to every single make of car that wanted to become a taxi. And THAT would leave the only group of identical vehicles - all in the same design and colour - as those belonging to Mr Griffin's mob in Hampstead Road ...Ed

Vitos and dog owners?

Hi Alan

I've always believed that dog owners even-

tually end up looking like their pets, but I never thought that those drivers who bought Vitos would end up like the people the vehicle was designed for - minicab drivers! I never really agreed with your original campaign against licensed taxi drivers using the Vito because it resembled a minicab, but I have now changed my mind after seeing Vito taxis forming unofficial ranks outside London hotels most mornings and hearing that they pay the doorman £15 commission for the "privilege" of being given an airport. So you now have a taxi that is really a minicab doing exactly what minicab drivers do and something the taxi trade has been fighting against for years. The words dogs and owners suddenly spring to mind again...

Alex Constantinou (N05)

My only problem with the Vito ever since it was launched in 2008 was that it looked like a minicab. As a vehicle, I'm sure it's as comfortable as people say ...Ed

Speeding?

Morning Al

Drove home this morning along the Westway and noticed a new speed limit painted on the road - 30mph! Are they having a laugh? It used to be 60mph, then they dropped it to 50. I suppose all the extra revenue raised can pay for the lighting they took away after the wind blew a lamppost down...

Barry Spear (Y16)

Hi Alan

Just been on the A40 Westway westbound - the elevated section - and seen 30mph speed limit signs! Is this madness for real! My passenger said she could walk quicker!

Kevin Went (N19)

Richard Massett, LTDA Executive and Chairman of the London Cab Ranks Committee told Call Sign: I am given to believe, although TfL have yet to confirm it, that the markings were put down in preparation for works that are due to take place on the structure of the elevated section. The works have been delayed but are still due to go ahead. The speed limits will only apply when the correct signage is in place by the road.

Tenders

Hello Alan,

I've just finished reading the latest edition of *Call Sign*, well done on another engrossing issue. The story regarding Goldman Sachs and Addison Lee's attempt to cover what must be one of the largest accounts in London got me thinking. When an account decides not to use DaC in favour of another company, does the account inform us why we were unsuccessful in our bid? Do they give us an explanation as to their decision or do they just give us a point blank no? I'd be interested to know Goldman's reason for not choosing to use DaC. Is there a negotiation process where DaC goes in with an initial bid, then both sides make compromises until both parties are happy, or are companies



simply asked to submit blind bids? Is there anything more we could be doing to improve our chances of winning such contracts?

I'd also like to ask how we go about winning the larger contracts from our competitors? Many years ago I was on ComCab and enjoyed covering the London Underground work that is currently covered by Radio Taxis. The extra work first thing in the morning and last thing at night would benefit both day and night drivers. Is there any chance in the future DaC will be making moves to win this lucrative contract? Also, regarding companies such as Merrill Lynch on Newgate Street, Barclays Capital, Clifford Chance and Skadden, Arps - all on E14. Are we informed when they are going to tender and invited to bid?

Mike Parkins (Z03)

Brian Rice responds: Completing a tender for large clients nowadays is quite a complex procedure. Gone are the days when it was all hard copy, today they are mostly completed in electronic format. The client will want to know details of the systems you operate, copies of your Health and Safety Policy, Diversity, Green Policy, Corporate Social Responsibility, Liability Insurance - the list goes on and on. Normally, if you are unsuccessful with a tender you receive a letter from the client/prospective client stating that you have not been awarded the contract. You can then normally have a 'de-briefing' meeting with them where everything can be discussed.

Over the past few months, we have tendered for and won/retained JPMorgan, Citi and Morgan Stanley, so we are fairly successful with our tendering process. Regarding the accounts you mentioned, Merrill Lynch is serviced by the independent 'Oscar' system, of which I have written about many times, Barclays Capital by Addison Lee and Clifford Chance again by Oscar. The independent systems such as Oscar do not have vehicles of their own, but supply the client with other vendor's vehicles, although none of the three taxi radio circuits subscribe to any independent systems - that's our choice.

DaC did actually tender for Barclays Capital and we produced an excellent tender with all the complex information they required. The final phase of the tender was to supply them with literally hundreds of Fixed Prices. We explained about meter readings, but were pre-empted to give some FPs to the most frequented destinations.

Finally, I had a letter from Barclays complimenting us on the quality of our tender, they wanted hard and soft

Mailshot

continued from page 32

copies. However, they went on to say we were unsuccessful as we did not give them the hundreds of FPs they required. I must say I really felt like saying that for all the weeks of work we put into that document, all they did was look at the last section with all the prices and probably chose the cheapest - but of course I didn't! The same applied to News International, another AL account.

Regarding the London Underground account, which is serviced at the moment by RTG and formerly by ComCab, we have never tendered for that account. In the main, that account was serviced by both companies' Yellow Badge drivers who are prepared to work well under the meter. RTG were definitely servicing the account for 75% of the metered fare and I have since heard that has now been decreased by a further 10%, although I cannot confirm that. Personally, I do not believe our members as Green Badge drivers would be prepared to service the account for that type of remuneration - yellow badges will.

Mike, the subject you have raised is extremely detailed and quite complex and I could probably fill Call Sign writing about the topic. If you require more information, I would be more than happy to talk to you one-to-one, either in person or on the phone...

A view from Texas

Alan

The *Dave's diabetic PCN appeals fail* article (March **Call Sign**) brought to mind some thoughts I've been having about the adversarial relationship between local governments and general population. By the way, what is a PCN, a ticket? Here we've developed a great method of taxation called the "red light camera." Houston voters were told that the cameras were all about safety but provided no statistics as to the decrease in cross accidents versus the increase in rear end collisions at intersections. Safety, it's all about safety.

Well the day after the vote and the cameras failed, the mayor came out and said that there would have to be some way to make up the revenue shortfall from the cameras being voted out. I laughed out loud. My shop is across the street from the city limits of Houston and thus not subject to their regulations, which saves me thousands of dollars in permits and taxes. Beyond just the taxicab industry, the local governments tax, permit or regulate everything with patrols to fine you for every infraction of the rules, real or imagined. How is it that we've managed to elect these spendthrifts at every level of government? Have we lost our minds? No matter what level of taxation, fines or fees, it never seems to be enough.

Your *CRB cock-up* commentary is a clear illustration of the issue (*Editorial*, same issue). Incidentally, your headline certainly wouldn't pass a US editor's desk unscathed!

Don McCurdy
Houston, Texas

Don writes the 'Industry in Review' page for America's TLC magazine ...Ed

Cash trips

Hello Alan,

In these trying times you would think that most jobs made available by DaC would be covered instantly, however cash trips always tend to suffer and we all know why. I was in SW5 recently and accepted an ASAP cash trip where I was virtually outside the door. I pressed the *advise arrival* button and got scrubbed with a small amount of money on the meter. About 10 minutes later I received the same job again, which I accepted and said nothing to the passenger, although it was plain to see that on the first occasion I was just too quick to the pick-up and they didn't want to pay the waiting time as they were not ready.

Another example; I ran down from SW11 to SW4 to cover a cash trip, waited 15 minutes and then heard the passenger had gone, leaving me £10.80 out of pocket. Amongst others, I also accepted a cash trip in SW2 going to W2. When I got to the pick-up, there was a PH vehicle loading up the bags. The customer came over to me and told me that I wasn't needed any longer ie phone DaC and a PH company and the first there gets the job!

My request is this; would it be possible to do away with cash bookings and introduce credit card bookings only? Then if the customer wishes to pay cash, this could be done after the journey commences just by pushing the *change to cash* button. Customers would then be informed as part of the booking process that should they fail to honour the booking, their credit card will be charged with what was on the driver's meter at the time of cancellation. Drivers would then be encouraged to cover these trips, waiting times would be reduced for customers and also should there be a cancellation, drivers would not be out of pocket.

Richard Potter (T51)

Keith Cain responds: Richard, your suggestion is one for the Board to consider. But even if it were to be implemented, it would not stop drivers losing out on certain journeys. The primary reason for this being is that if a client decided to cancel their credit card payment due to the trip not being taken, the clearing bank would then withdraw payment. Unless there is a signed receipt with an impression of the card, there is no guarantee of payment for any driver. Of course, to reduce the number of actual cash-paying trips, we can encourage more passengers to use their credit card. Allen Togwell did this recently in a joint venture with the Metropolitan Police. He had hundreds of thousands of leaflets produced, with more for drivers to hand out. Clients can also use our online credit card facility, which is very easy and



straightforward. But can we ever eradicate drivers losing out on some trips? My view is no...

What are the opposition up to?

Hi Alan,

Just a few bits I have come across lately regarding the opposition and what they are up to...

From *The News Shopper* (26 Jan) - *Chauffeur hid packet of heroin in his pants*. The police had previously found heroin stuffed down his socks in addition to 20 rounds of ammunition at his home. I wonder whether he wore a peaked cap and opened the doors for his passengers?

Also from *The News Shopper* (26 Jan) - *GMB: We warned you about Savoy*. This is about the London Ambulance service being handed over to a private company for non-urgent passenger transfers. The company go by the name of Savoy Ventures Ltd. You see a lot of these vehicles around now, especially near the UCH. The article refers to a south London healthcare trust that awarded the contract to Savoy. The GMB now say that ambulance pay has been downgraded and that Savoy's service is in disarray with taxis often being used to replace Savoy ambulances that don't turn up. According to the *aphasia* unit at Queen Mary's hospital in Sidcup - which deals with people that have a limited ability to communicate due to brain damage - Savoy's patient service has been appalling, and they are concerned at the psychological effect it could have on the patients. I can't help but wonder who is behind the firm and whether they are looking at the TaxiCard scheme for their next venture!

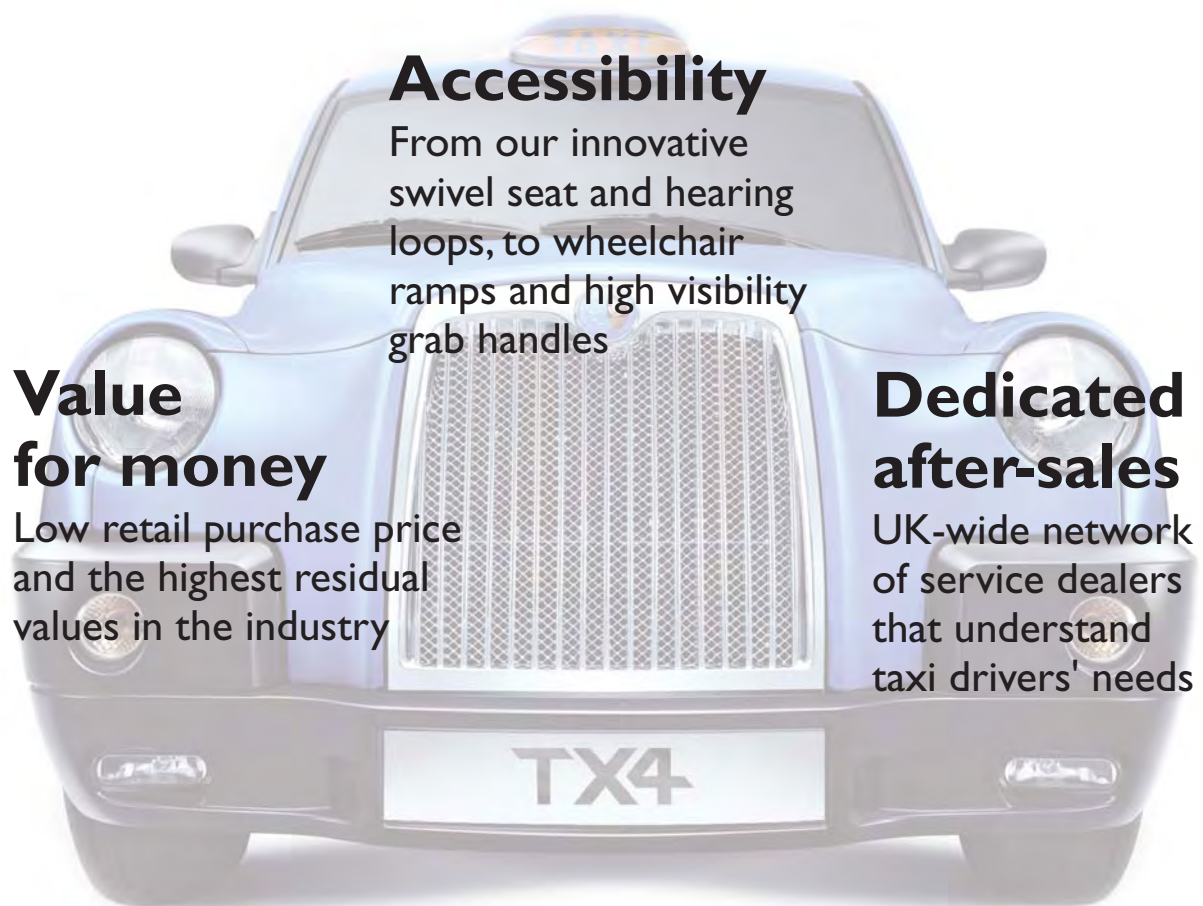
Then there's the piece from *Private Hire and Courier* - *Boss jailed over benefit claim fraud*. This involved the boss of a PH firm and two other companies who defrauded over £45,000 in housing benefit. Why does this story also not surprise me? After all, we still remember the large PH company that defrauded the NHS, yet still somehow managed to keep that account!

Lastly, it was around lunchtime and I was PoB westwards down The Mall, stopping at the lights with Marlborough Road. I couldn't help noticing a gathering of police around an Addison Lee minibus that seemed to have misjudged the right hand turn from The Mall and had crashed dead centre into the traffic island. Perhaps the police thought it was a terrorist attack! Sadly I was unable to get a picture because of all the police around - it would have looked great with Clarence House in the background!

Gordon Bennett (Y91)

I'm pleased I don't drive a minicab with you around Gordon! ...Ed

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