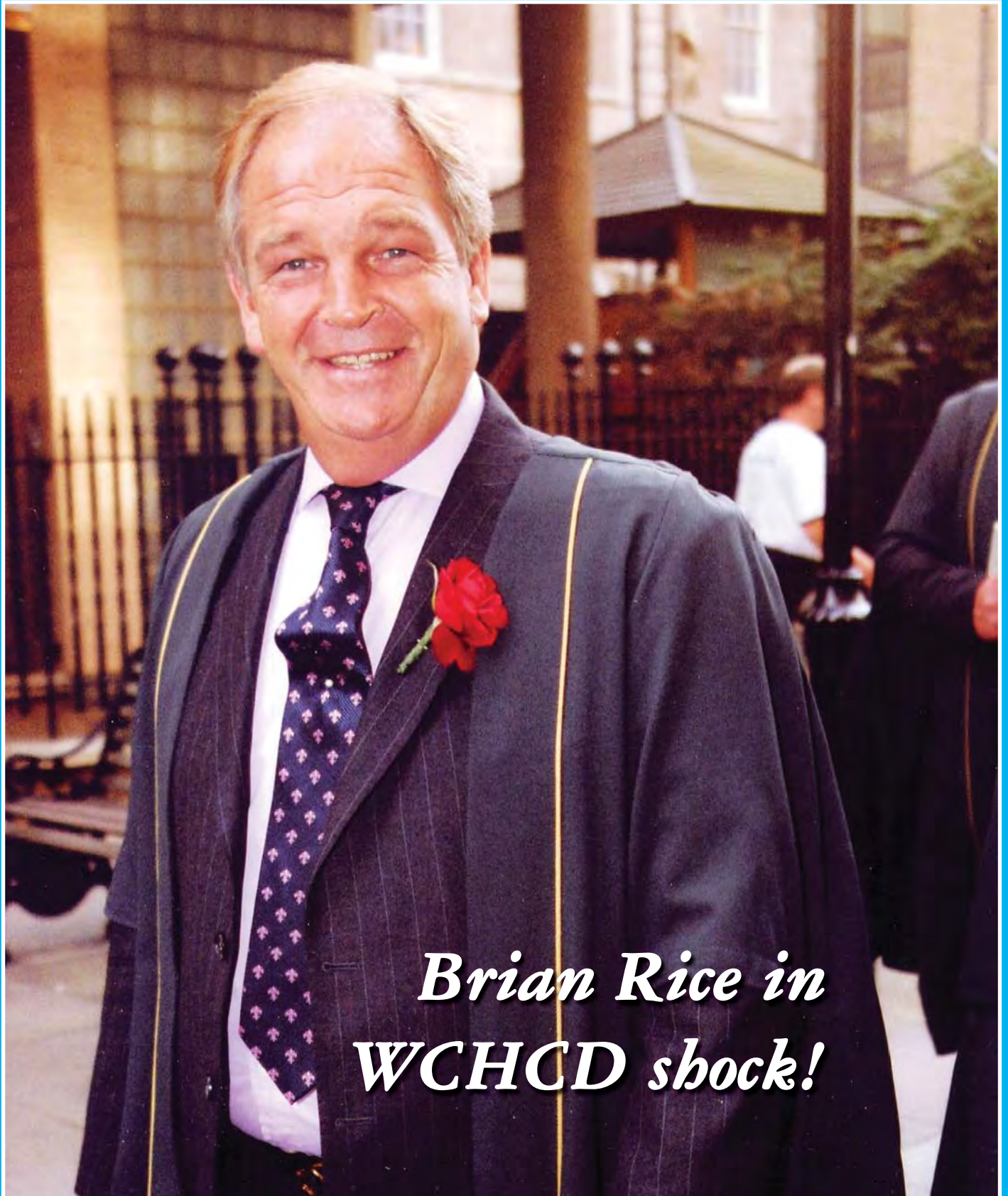


August 2011



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*Brian Rice in  
WCHCD shock!*



# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

It would have been better to issue the new Eurostar arrivals time table in last month's issue as it's valid from 3 July to 10 December, but Eurostar could not let me have an advanced issue and it only became live on their website at the end of June. But better late than never...!

Arrives	From	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Notes	Train #
07:56	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9109
07:59	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9005
08:28	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9007
08:56	Brussels						✓			9113
08:59	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9113
09:36	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9011
10:26	Brussels						✓	✓		9119
10:34	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9015
10:56	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9121
11:28	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9019
12:29	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9023
12:33	Brussels						✓			9181
12:59	Paris					✓			3	9025
13:29	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9027
13:29	Paris						✓		5	9027
13:33	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9129
14:36	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9031
14:59	Paris							✓	4	9033
15:03	Brussels						✓			9137
15:26	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9139
15:29	Paris					✓	✓	✓		9035
15:29	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓				5	9035
15:56	Brussels							✓		9141
15:59	Paris					✓			3	9037
16:36	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9039
17:03	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9145
17:34	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9043
17:59	Paris							✓		9045
18:06	Brussels							✓		9149
18:29	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9047
18:34	Paris							✓		9047
18:59	Paris							✓		9049
19:03	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9153
19:29	Paris							✓		9051
19:34	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9051
20:03	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9157
20:11	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9053
20:34	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9055
21:09	Brussels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9161
21:09	Brussels						✓		1	9161
21:29	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9059
21:33	Brussels							✓		9163
21:33	Brussels						✓		2	9163
21:36	Paris						✓	✓		9059
21:59	Paris							✓		9061
22:29	Paris						✓	✓		9063
22:34	Paris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9063

Note 1 runs 30/08/2011 to 10/12/2011

Note 3 runs 03/07/2011 to 26/08/2011

Note 5 runs 03/07/2011 to 29/08/2011

Note 2 runs 03/07/2011 to 29/08/2011

Note 4 runs 03/07/2011 to 27/08/2011

Don't forget that all back issues can be found at [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk). The Nash's Numbers 'Useful Information Document' contains separate parts with clubs, hotels, restaurants, fare table, postcodes, lap dancing clubs, city livery companies, police stations, Eurostar arrivals, London City Airport arrivals, Heathrow and Gatwick terminals, Heathrow hotels and more. To get this information, go to [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk), click the register button, enter your name, email address and importantly enter 'taxi' in the 'unlock code' field. You will be sent a password. Use this to log on and you will see a button marked Taxi. Click this and you will find many icon links to the UID and other useful taxi related websites. And of course it is free...



# from the editor's desk

***I know we say it every year, but can you really believe that it is already August? It seems only yesterday when I was trying to decide what to put on the cover of the January 2000 issue to celebrate the new millennium! But on with the show...***

## **This month...**

We seem to have kicked up something of a storm with our last issue in revealing the loss of driver's CRB papers as they made their way from LTPH at their Palestra offices in Blackfriars Road to CRB's home turf in Liverpool. This month we follow that up with a DaC driver telling *Call Sign* how he received another driver's papers, made even worse by someone at the TfL end of the phone trying to pretend that they belonged to a minicab when the papers plainly belonged to a licensed London taxi driver.

Also inside this issue, the surprise news that DaC Chairman **Brian Rice** has resigned his position as Lower Warden within the WCHCD and just remaining as a normal member. *Call Sign* will explain the real reason for his resignation as against the ridiculous rumours of his having had rows with members – none of which is true.

Then we have a piece on the new *Bribery Act 2010* which seems to suggest that accepting a tip is a form of bribery, even though it is given at the end of the journey. *Call Sign* has confirmation of that fact from a legal secretary who happens to be married to a DaC driver.

Then we have DaC driver **Malcolm Levan** telling us about what he believes to be a minicab scam that even LTPH seem to agree is happening. The problem is of course that there are so many "licensed" minicabs – they must total around 70,000 by now – that it has become almost impossible to regulate them all and it is left to individual drivers like Malcolm to watch for wrongdoings and then report them to LTPH/TfL.

Of course, as you'd expect, there is much more within this issue, so enjoy it – but if you don't please do not be afraid to write in and say why.

## **Problems at the LTFUC?**

I find a recent development within the **London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** to be very difficult to write about. In fact had I not read a report about it in Stuart Pessok's Editorial page in TAXI, I'm not even sure as to whether I wouldn't just have sat on the details. After all, I have the utmost respect for the charity and the committee who achieve minor miracles with the money they tirelessly raise in addition to the events they organise which bring so much happiness to underprivileged and special needs children. In fact a report of their latest venture – the annual pilgrimage to Southend – and a story about their donation to AHOY where children learn to sail boats, appear in this issue. The LTFUC have appeared in issues of *Call Sign* and its predecessors of *News and Views* and *ODRTS Monthly* ever since DaC's **Sam Harris** was their Hon Chairman in the 1960s and right throughout the years the committee has always consisted of several DaC drivers, quite a number of whom have been the charity's chairmen – the last two having been Board member Mike Son



and David Lessman (D19). Even the Hon President is DaC's Bill Tyzack (C06). All of them donate their services free of charge and I personally trust each and every one of them implicitly.

But recently a donation of £500 was received from *Addison Lee* Chairman **John Griffin** that may have been given out of the goodness of his heart and in fact I hope it was, rather than a publicity stunt. But either way, that isn't the problem. That problem involves how Mr Griffin received the information that the LTFUC were "on the scrounge" – something they have to continually do in order to raise the funds they so desperately need and they all do an amazing job with no payment in return.

But sadly, an organisation that has always kept well away from the political side of our trade has now become embroiled into something of a hotchpotch of who did what to whom. There are two main problems: Firstly, why was John Griffin's cheque not returned immediately instead of being paid into the LTFUC account and if they always intended returning it, why did they not just return the original cheque with a polite letter explaining why they couldn't accept it?

The second question is how John Griffin found out the charity was looking for funds? There are two alternatives.

i. All the committee members keep leaflets in their cabs and as we know that Mr Griffin uses taxis, it would normally seem quite feasible that he could have seen one of these leaflets and taken it home.

ii. That someone from the charity actually wrote to various organisations asking for donations and one of those organisations was Addison Lee?

If it was i then why did the charity still bank the cheque when they received it? If it was ii then why would a trade charity called the London Taxidriers' Fund for underprivileged Children start asking minicab companies for donations?

Could it be that the perpetrator was a single member of the committee and that for the best of intentions, the rest of the committee are trying to protect that person? After all, they were trying to raise funds, not nick them! If that is the case, why didn't that person just hold their hands up and say they made an error of judgement? None of us are infallible and I for one would have said that however silly, it wasn't the world's biggest crime. If, however, there is an attempt to cover up what really happened, then sadly that would leave the charity with no choice. The person involved

should stand up and offer their resignation.

As I said at the beginning, that was extremely difficult to write and I sincerely wish that I hadn't had to. But what may have begun as an act of forgivable stupidity has gone way beyond that now...

## **Sing an 'appy song?**

I see that the latest taxi app – *GetTaxi* – has arrived in a blaze of publicity. According to the blurb, based on a £20 journey with a 15 minute waiting time, *GetTaxi* is up to 24% cheaper than using current circuit's account facilities. Well, that definitely sounds a good way to get more clients. The only problem is that I can't help but wonder just where this 24% saving is going to come from? After all, no circuit charges 24% or anything close to that in admin charges, so that leaves just the actual fare. Hmmm? Perhaps no run in by putting on the meter when you arrive? Some even talk of not putting your meter on for the first 5 minutes and of course there is hardly likely to be a minimum... and you are all going to pass people in the street to cover that? I don't think I'll be joining you, but if you decide to take a chance then good luck. In my view it would be the first step to us all becoming minicabs.

## **Thank you Matthew!**

Again nothing to do with DaC but everything to do with me! Readers of the FT will know **Matthew Engel**. Whether it's a story about Tony Blair, the horrors of 9/11 or the England cricket team's battle for the Ashes, Matthew Engel's name will often appear as the writer. But it's a recent piece he wrote for the international arm of the BBC that earned my thanks.

I sometimes feel that I am totally on my own when I refuse to spell the American way. Even worse, some would say, I edit out Americanisms in BoM reports and even press releases from LTPH (sorry Mr Mason)! Most readers probably couldn't care less, but I feel so much better knowing that I'm not alone, so thanks to Matthew Engel I shall keep referring to *licence* and not *license*, *night* not *nite*, *hospitalise* not *hospitalize*, *capitalise* not *capitalize* and so many other words where the s has been replaced by a z. Thank you Matthew Engel, you have well and truly made my day!

## **Call Sign online**

Those of you that read the online version of *Call Sign* – and there are several thousand regulars – will know that although the whole mag is there in all its glory, only half of the mag has a 'search' facility tied to it. That search button allows the reader who is looking for something specific, type in a word that they believe will be in the article and the magic from within should find the article – if it was in the 20 pages that were linked.

However, that no longer applies and since last month, every single page can be tracked via Call Sign's 'search' facility. This mag's IT department consisting of **Vince Chin** has undoubtedly made *Call Sign Online* the foremost taxi online magazine anywhere. Vince has been with me from the beginning and has been putting that mag online since February 1998 – years before any other taxi mag ventured out of their drives! My thanks to Vince and I hope the new facility is of use to you...

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# reflections of the chairman

## August again!

Just when we all thought things were getting a little busier, along comes August, the quietest month of the year. We'll all no doubt complain about August and the lack of work and then remark that it's quieter than last August – just as we did last year and probably every year before that! I suppose we could all go on holiday in August, but because families with school age children are forced to go away that month, all holiday prices shoot up. Consequently, if you do not have to go away in August, the money you will save on your holiday will go some way towards compensating for the lack of work in during the quietest month of the year!

Although in the main business is still quite tough, our figures for this year have shown a slight improvement over last year's and come the end of this month and our financial year, we will be showing a bottom line that is in the black - no mean achievement considering the downturn the trade has experienced and of course taking into account that there has not been an increase in member's subscriptions for several years.

## Cost of buying a taxi?

I wish I'd have known earlier that the Editor had interviewed the Sales Director of the London Taxi Company in this issue because I'd have asked Alan to pass along this question to Rob Laidler. No doubt you have read in the trade press that they (the London Taxi Company and not Alan!) had recently sold 1,000 taxis to Baku in Azerbaijan for the sum of \$27,000,000 and it got me thinking. I know the TX4 Style is £30k and I believe the Elegance is £2k dearer, so why the vast difference in price between here and Azerbaijan? If we divide the \$27m by 1,000 units, that works out at \$27,000 per unit. If we then convert at \$1.6 to one pound sterling, then each taxi would cost £16,875 - around half the price we are paying here. I'm sure the vehicle would not be exactly identical to the ones sold here, but the difference in price is phenomenal. I am sure the LTC could give us a list of the differences between the two vehicles, but half price? Now that will take a bit of explaining...

## The WCHCD

As many of you are aware, I am a member of the *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* and have been so since becoming Chairman of Dial-a-Cab. In my view it is a very worthwhile organisation and does much to enhance the reputation of the London Taxi trade.

Some years ago, I was asked to sit on the Court of Assistants and duly obliged. What it actually meant was that I attended four meetings a year where, as you can imagine, 'Company' business was discussed. Then last year I was asked to become *Lower Warden* and I must admit I was a little sceptical at the time because it actually means you progress to become *Renter Warden* then *Upper Warden* before finally becoming *Master*; a position that is held for one year. Attending four meetings a year has not been a problem, but since becoming *Lower Warden* I have become aware of the demands placed upon the Master, a position I



would hold from September 2013.

The current Master is Dial-a-Cab member **Jim Rainbird** and I must say that in my opinion he is doing an excellent job. However, the demands placed upon his time are enormous and I have become more aware of this scenario since becoming *Lower Warden*. Consequently, I have given the issue of becoming Master in just over two years time some considerable thought and have come to the conclusion that the position of Master would be too demanding on my time.

My priority is Dial-a-Cab and I do not wish to be in a situation whereby I could not devote the time to the position of Master and thereby commit and do it the justice it deserves. So I have reluctantly resigned my position as *Lower Warden* with immediate effect as I did not wish to put anyone in a difficult situation by resigning the position just before I was due to become Master. I believe there is more on this topic elsewhere in the magazine and I hope you are all not too bored. Being in the cab trade where rumours abound, I have already heard several rumours about why I resigned as *Lower Warden* and all of them are totally untrue! I just do not know why we seem to have so many rumourmongers within our industry.

## Cab trade v the Army

Talking of the WCHCD, our former Beadle John Sheen, who I am sure many of you know, organised a competition between the

Army and the Cab trade which was held at the Regents Park Barracks in Albany Street. It consisted of a series of events where teams of four competed against each other. There were eight events, such as manoeuvring a coach through cones and into a parking space, a similar course with a London taxi, manoeuvring a fork lift truck through obstacles and stacking a pallet – I am sure you all get the idea.

It was a fantastic day; the soldiers were excellent and made us feel very welcome. But perhaps unsurprisingly, the team finishing first was the army (they had more than one team) closely followed by the cab trade - a magnificent achievement. My team finished fifth overall, which I was quite pleased about.

Just to give you an idea; the army reps were a Transport unit or Logistics Corps that had seen action in Afghanistan. One of the events was to jack up a Landrover, remove a flat tyre, put on the spare, let the vehicle down, start it up and then park it. This was all supposed to be done under fire - fortunately, we only had to imagine that bit! My team did it in 2minutes 50seconds, which I thought was fantastic, but the winning army team knocked a whole minute off our time! It just shows how professional they are.

The first event I did was to reverse a coach through cones and park it – well, I flattened the cones, which incurred a time penalty. Consequently my time was three minutes. I believe everyone enjoyed that as I had never seen so many people taking photos of flattened cones! But later in the afternoon, my team was informed the coach we used in the morning was faulty and had to be changed after we'd used it, so we were given a second go. This time I didn't knock any cones over and did it in a time of 50 seconds. Surprisingly, no-one took any photos!

The only reason I am putting the record straight is that I believe the pictures of the flattened cones will surface somewhere and I thought I'd get in first!

**Brian Rice**  
Chairman  
Dial-a-Cab



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# AFTER THE CRB LOSSES...

## Now it's papers being returned to the wrong drivers!

Last month's *Call Sign* exclusively revealed about the lost **Criminal Record Bureau** disclosure forms that seemingly vanished on route between the new **London Taxi & Private Hire** offices at *Palestra* on Blackfriars Road and CRB's HQ in Liverpool. LTPH blamed the Post Office delivery service.

Our story told of **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Marc Turner (R97)** who after filling in the necessary forms needed to satisfy the CRB, was told that his form had been lost and that he would either need to go back to *Palestra* for an interview or fill in a new form with all the attachments that needs – although he was then told that they would accept photocopies this time!

Marc was told that LTPH blamed the Post Office for the loss and it did seem that might be the case. Either way, Marc told us that he had been impressed with the way *Palestra* had held their hands up and told him the truth. But now another DaC driver, **Steve Hodgson (H26)**, has told *Call Sign* of further problems for which he blames LTPH / TfL and their attempt to somewhat dilute the truth. Ironically, Steve – now in his fourth year with DaC – used to share a *call back* table with Marc Turner at *Beejays Knowledge School*, although he hasn't seen him for around twenty years!

Steve told *Call Sign*: "My cab driver licence was due for renewal in June and after getting all the relevant information, filling in my CRB and sending it off to TfL, I received an automated call from my bank asking if I was aware of the payment and asking permission to pay the amount, which I gave. Five days later, all my forms were returned from TfL with a note stating that my bank had referred the cheque back to me. But when I phoned the bank, they denied TfL had made a request for the payment. When I said I had received the call seeking permission to make the payment, they suddenly backtracked and said the payment request had been placed in the possible fraud file, but that they would be



The Palestra building - LTPH have offices on the 4th floor

happy to pay the demand if it came back again!"

But the bank's lie to him wasn't Steve's biggest gripe. He continued his story... "I phoned TfL to explain the reason for the non-payment and they were very understanding and helpful. But there was one thing they couldn't explain - why I had also received another cab driver's completed

documents through the post in addition to my own! I also got the other driver's cheque for the total amount he had to pay. TfL told me they would check their records and eventually informed me that the driver had not sent in his forms yet, adding that he wasn't a black cab driver but in fact a private hire driver as though that would have made up for some shocking incompetence if true. But I explained that I could see he was a black cab driver because I had all his documents!

"The-then helpful operator embarrassingly asked if I would mind returning the documents back as soon as possible! So it's not all down to the Post Office or even the bank. They all lie when it comes to covering up incompetence."

Over the years, *Call Sign* has seen many warnings about forged taxi driver documents being used by those not entitled to them, so had the forms not been sent to Steve but instead returned to a PH driver whose interest in the trade was just a passing phase, the opportunities to put even more forgeries into circulation would have had a high chance of success. Some would ask whether it was even worse to let someone else see all your personal details - including financial ones! With the country in so much financial insecurity, even one mistake like this is one too many. LTPH / TfL need to make sure incidents such as this do not occur again...

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### Call Sign August 2011

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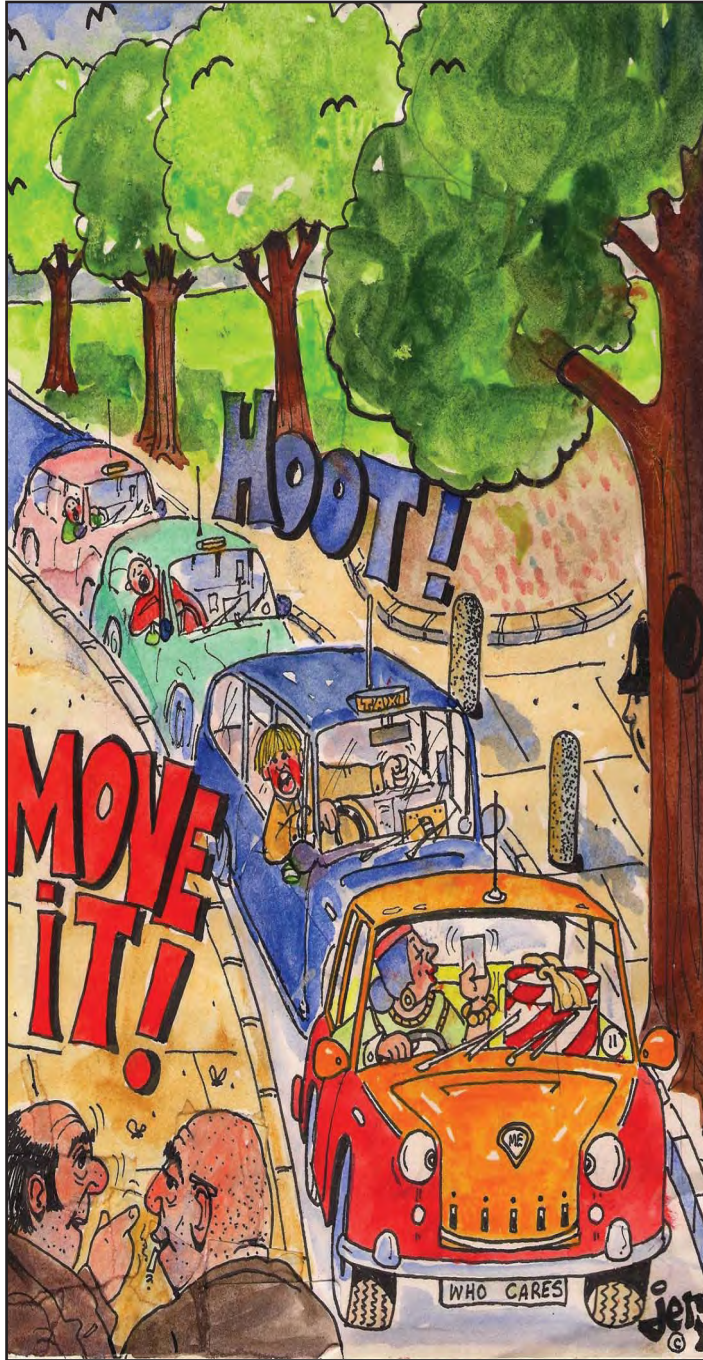
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# Jerys World



"Taxi driving has changed since they let ladies in...!"



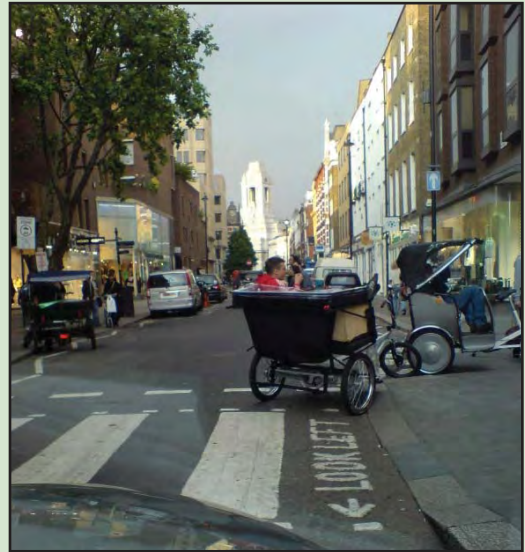
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## RMT taxi branch rickshaw victory?



A sight we are all used to – Pedicabs parked on zig zag lines

Dial-a-Cab driver and RMT member, Eddie Lambert (V37), has passed over to *Call Sign* a letter from RMT General Secretary Bob Crow that Eddie says means the RMT have won round one in the battle against unsafe rickshaws thanks to MP John McDonnell's blocking of the second reading of TfL's *Bill*. Mr Crow's letter reads:

"I am glad to be able to report that RMT's parliamentary group convenor, John McDonnell MP, has successfully objected to the TfL *London Local Authorities Bill* at its second reading on the grounds that it would lead to the continued proliferation of unlicensed, unsafe rickshaws clogging up central London

The RMT parliamentary group objection means that the *Bill* is now kicked back and will have to be presented again for second reading on September 6, at which point RMT will object again and keep objecting until the final debate on the *Bill* is given. RMT will use the breathing space to give us the leverage to force TfL to negotiate on the revised content of the *Bill* and to take tough action against the spread of unsafe and unlicensed rickshaws.

We know that rickshaws are unsafe and increase congestion and that there are no checks on who is fit and proper to operate them. If John McDonnell hadn't taken decisive action on behalf of RMT taxi drivers, it would have had dire consequences for passenger safety.

The clauses that TfL was trying to bulldoze through made little or no provision for statutory minimum standards or for checks to be carried out on the rickshaws, their riders or their operators. Nor would there have been any provisions for any training to be required or for compulsory registration.

It is shocking that TfL has refused to negotiate on this issue and is ignoring recommendations from parliamentary committees that a compulsory registration scheme for rickshaws and pedicabs should be explored. RMT and its parliamentary group MPs will continue to fight on this issue to defend the licensed taxi trade against this attack on their livelihoods."

With the LTDA also working to rid London's streets of the three-wheeled menace, perhaps something will finally be done and pedicabs can be sent back to where they should be – in London's parks...?



**The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** was plunged into shock when **Dial-a-Cab** Chairman and WCHCD Lower Warden **Brian Rice** handed in a letter of resignation from that position just two years before he would have become *Master* of the Company. He would have followed **Jim Rainbird (T25)**, who is the current Master until September, then **Eddie Crossley** and former DaC driver **Brenda Bartlett**.

**Call Sign** asked Brian why he felt he had to resign, as he always gave the impression of enjoying his involvement with the WCHCD?

"Don't get me wrong," the DaC Chairman told us, "not only have I enjoyed my time at the Company, but I considered it to be a great honour as, like previous Masters, I gradually worked my way through the *Court of Assistants*.

"However, it recently occurred to me that in just over two years I would be in the position that Jim Rainbird currently carries out so well and be required to spend much time with duties connected with the post. The problem I could foresee was one of what would happen if I were scheduled to meet an important VIP on behalf of the WCHCD – perhaps even the Mayor – and suddenly there was an urgent problem at DaC? I would then be in the position of cancelling one of them – and there would be no choice. Dial-a-Cab is where I earn my living, it's a Society that I love and as much as I admire the WCHCD and everything it stands for, DaC would always have to come first.

## Brian Rice resigns as WCHCD Lower Warden!



Brian with current Master Jim Rainbird

"Under those circumstances, I had little choice but to resign from the position of Lower Warden. Naturally I will remain in the WCHCD – and in the Court of Assistants too should they want me – and if I can help in any way I would always try to make myself available, because it really is such a worthwhile organisation. But that isn't the same as virtually guaranteeing a position of always

being available.












"I'm sure that Jim Rainbird would confirm how much of a demanding role being Master is and I have no doubt that although being Master is undoubtedly a tremendous honour, it will come at a cost to Jim in that he can't work while carrying out the numerous visits and meetings that accompany the position – most of which are written about in **Call Sign**. I'm also sure that he happily forgoes that earning ability for the honour his position carries. However, I would be in a different position as my absence from DaC for WCHCD business wouldn't just affect me on a personal basis, because if that was the case I would have been delighted to carry on."

So does that mean that Brian sees himself as being with DaC for the foreseeable future?

"That decision doesn't fall to me, but yes, I'm not ashamed to say that I love DaC and after 37 years here I still have a desire to see it do well and if it comes to a straight choice between the two, then sadly my involvement with the WCHCD will be the one to suffer. I also feel that it would be unfair to the Company to wait until the time I was scheduled to become Master to let them know. At least they now have over two years to make alternative arrangements..."

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## Knowledge Point School will be restarting their Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Vehicle Driving courses in August.

The Level 2 NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) course is a government-funded programme provided through the City of London, so Knowledge Point are able to offer the course to you free of charge. Additional incentives are also available should you achieve your Certification.

Since starting to deliver the courses in April 2009, Knowledge Point School has had more than 200 learners go on to achieve their Level 2 NVQ Certification. The course, whilst entirely based on the national qualification, is delivered with an emphasis on the London Taxi trade and builds on your existing topographical knowledge. Knowledge Point teaching staff are all vocationally competent working taxi drivers who have qualified to teach in the Life Long Learning Sector (PTLLS Grade 3/4).

The course requires you to attend Knowledge Point School and is delivered via interactive group sessions and workshops. You will be required to dedicate approximately 16 hours to the workshops over a period of several weeks and there will be additional self-study to be completed in your own time.

**The NVQ Qualification is broken down into mandatory and optional groups. The mandatory units are as follows:**

***Ensure health and safety of the taxi driver and passengers***

***Drive a taxi in a professional manner***

***Provide professional customer service in the taxi industry***

***Provide a safe and legal vehicle for trans-***

## Knowledge Point School announces new NVQ courses



Some of the drivers studying for their NVQ

***porting passengers by taxi***

***Provide a taxi service for customers who require assistance***

***Provide a service to customers using a wheelchair in an accessible taxi***

***Transport children and young persons by taxi***

***Plan routes in the taxi industry***

Once you have completed the NVQ training, you will attend two one-hour sessions with a qualified NVQ Assessor who will gauge your competency by putting you in scenario situations and listening to how you respond to them. The assessment process is purely verbal. There are no written examinations of any sort.

Prior achievements can be set against units

of the course, eg if a student has already gained their PDSA

Wheelchair certi-

cate then this will be taken as proof of their existing competency relating to customers using a wheelchair

**Having completed your assessment sessions, certification normally follows after about 12 weeks.**

Applicants must be able to provide proof of residency in the UK or any other EU country for a minimum of 3 years. The courses are open to everyone who has not yet attained a Level 2 NVQ and/or equivalent or superior qualifications.

**Applicants will be treated on a strictly first-come first-served basis. Demand is expected to be high, so if you are interested go to the Taxi Trade Promotions website at: [www.taxitrade-promotions.co.uk/taxi-and-private-hire-nvq-course.html](http://www.taxitrade-promotions.co.uk/taxi-and-private-hire-nvq-course.html) and submit your details. Alternatively, if you have any questions call Peter Osborne on 020 7700 5682.**



## MPs ask HMG to abandon fuel duty rise

A group of MPs have urged the government to abandon the fuel duty rise in January and also initiate an inquiry into why pump prices appear not to fall in line with falling oil prices. Supporting the FairFuelUK campaign, the MPs pushed a FairFuelUK branded car along Whitehall as a publicity stunt to kick-start phase two of the campaign before handing in a letter to Number 10 stating their demands and explaining that they had formed a fair fuel All Party Parliamentary Group with 22 members signed up to date.

Tory MP Robert Halfon, who is spearheading the group, told *Roadtransport.com* that his intention is to become *Mr FairFuel MP* in the House of Commons!

"Motorists and hauliers are being crucified by high fuel costs so I'm leading on this issue to urge the government not to increase fuel taxes next January and also to put pressure on the oil companies to pass down lower fuel costs to the motorist," said Mr Halfon.

Backed by the Freight Transport Association and the Road Haulage Association, FairFuelUK has over 170,000 signatures to date on its petition but is looking to reach the 1 million mark by the Autumn.

FTA chief executive Theo de Pencier added: "Both the general motorist and road transport businesses should be united behind what FairfuelUK is doing. A lot of FTA members run large car and van fleets which you tend to forget about when you're concentrating on the trucks. But there are 3 million vans on the road and however many business-users of cars and taxis, so this is a real issue. Fuel price hikes do not just hit trucks, although that's obviously where it hurts the most for our members."

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# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

## A fool in April???

Recently whilst out shopping with my partner and assisting as I normally do by waiting in the car, I found I'd forgotten to take any reading matter with me, but by chance sitting on the back seat was an old copy of *Call Sign* that I had used as fish wrapper and rather than twiddle my thumbs, decided that as *Call Sign* is always a good read - whatever state it's in - I would have another peruse. And I'm pleased I did because it was the April edition, which included the *April Fool's* ruse involving a supposed superfast service that the DaC Board were soon to launch and were looking for drivers willing to drive 8 Ferraris. It was so well written by our editor, that it made me smile more on the second read than it did the first! I don't know how many of our members were fooled, but I could just imagine our detractor's futile brains being taken in by that piece and thinking up all sorts of nonsense to put on their blogs, but had been saved from looking a jerk by their partners or offspring when they informed dim daddy that it was an *April Fool's* ruse!

Talking of offspring - a grandchild in my case - either I'm getting senile or 11year olds really are beyond their years when it comes to computers. A few months ago, a sister of mine had a duck lay eggs in her garden and when they hatched, she took a video of them setting off to the nearest pond and showed it to friends via Facebook. Until that moment, I'd never been interested in websites such as Facebook, Twitter and so on, but my partner wanted to see the video, so I registered on Facebook but couldn't open the video. So I asked my daughter for help. She suggested I wait until my 11year old granddaughter came home from school and that she would explain everything I needed to know about Facebook. My intention was to un-register myself immediately after seeing the video, but in the short time I waited for my granddaughter to contact me, I received what looked like a million photos of complete strangers offering to be my friend! Amongst which, to my displeasure, were several former members of **Dial-a-Cab** who it pains me to say I am usually only reminded of when I'm having a bad dream! I did however learn something that day when I saw the face of a **Sam Togwell**, who - whilst I have never met the chap - I discovered that he was my brother's grandson. Apparently he is a journeyman pro footballer who plays for **Scunthorpe United**. I haven't a clue where Scunthorpe United is in the league or even on the map; in fact all I know about Scunthorpe is remembering Spike Milligan once saying: *I would like the people of Scunthorpe to know that the reference I made about Scunthorpe is nothing personal; it was a joke... as is Scunthorpe.*

Some might think it a bit odd that I should need Facebook to obtain knowledge about members of my own family. The answer being, as a family of 12, several of whom in the past bred like rabbits and were scattered far and wide, keeping track of the exploits of great nephews and nieces could be a full time occupation.

Anyway I digress; so back to *Call Sign's* *April Fool* ruse. There were several in the



national press this year that made me smile, including one story that at first glance could have been thought of as a ruse, but in fact wasn't. It referred to **Eddie Stobart** dying a bankrupt with no material assets. This prompted comments on Twitter such as *'Well done Eddie, you had the last laugh, what a great tax move.'* Sadly, Eddie Stobart did die on 1 April 2011 of a heart attack at the age of 56, bankrupt with debts of £220,000 and no assets even though he had sold his business to his brother for £150million in 2004, coincidentally the required seven years after which there is no inheritance tax liability. These details apart, I mention the death of Eddie Stobart because of what an interesting person he was - the iconic name behind a huge road haulage fleet totalling some 2,250 vehicles when he died. He was a small, neat, self-effacing working class boy with a pronounced stammer and an unimpressive school record. He took over the business, comprising of 8 lorries, from his father in 1976 aged 21. From the very start he said: *"I saw a lot of potential just by changing the image of lorries and the drivers. Lorries on Britain's roads were tatty and dirty and driven by rough looking men who dressed no better than tramps."* Eddie Stobart insisted that all of his lorries, with their outside green, red and gold livery should be kept in immaculate condition and his drivers should wear a shirt and tie. Any driver caught not wearing a tie would face disciplinary action. He also gave all of his lorries female names, the first three were Twiggy - after the 60s model - Tammy and Dolly after singers Tammy Wynette and Dolly Parton. He also decreed that every driver should wave back and sound their horns when a member of the public recognised the brand. The policy of inscribing names on the front of the cab helped to attract a 35,000-strong fan club. We've all seen Eddie Stobart lorries when using motorways and no doubt over the years there have been millions of parents who have relieved the tedium of a car journey by channelling their children's boredom into Stobart-spotting.

I found it interesting reading Eddie Stobart's obituary in that it made no reference at all to any business skills he might have possessed, but simply his determination to change an image. It's truly amazing when you think how so much success could be achieved by insisting a body of professional drivers of vehicles we recognise from our roads each day and whose

dress sense is no better than tramps, must wear shirts and ties. Mmmmm, absolutely amazing!

## Volunteer nude taxi drivers???

To all of our lady members about to look at this, read no further unless you have a partner you would like to propose as a suitable candidate. Otherwise it's for gentlemen only - a statement that alone will surely make them read on...

Several months ago there was a passionate article in *Call Sign* by **David Burnetts (S43)** titled *Prostate Cancer: My Story*. It was about the passing of his father-in-law, **Alfie Jacobs**, who was also a cab driver for many years and who died from Prostate cancer. It was also about David's own stressful experience with prostate problems. Following that article, David wrote to me expressing his concern about how so little research is done in the UK on prostate cancer compared to other types such as breast cancer and was keen to play his part in raising awareness, while at the same time help raise money towards prostate cancer research. One idea David had was similar to that organised by the group of Yorkshire women who posed nude for a calendar to raise funds for Leukaemia & Lymphoma research and who became well known as the *Calendar Girls*.

**In David's case, he was looking for my help in organising a group of guys to pose in the altogether with their modesty covered by a Dial-a-Cab logo! Knowing the body shapes of most cab drivers of my generation, it doesn't conjure up a very pretty sight but I'm sure there are many of our younger colleagues within the trade who take care of their physique and would be ideally suited to pose for such a calendar.**

I'd be very surprised if many of you reading this are not smiling at this very moment at the thought of this venture - as I did - but I sincerely hope, again as I did, that looking at it seriously, think that as it obviously worked for the *Calendar Girls*, there is no reason why it couldn't work for a group of guys from the world's most recognised taxi industry - licensed taxi drivers from London!

I explained to David that whilst I admire his dedication towards a worthy cause, rather than advertise **Dial-a-Cab**, it should really be open to the whole trade with perhaps the trade organisations taking an interest, because regrettably, our Society rules do not allow us to promote commercial products outside of supplying a transport service. I also feel it would have a better chance of being successful if the whole of the taxi trade was given the opportunity to become involved. However, I did promise David I would mention it at the next opportunity I get as part of my article in *Call Sign* to get a feel of what the response would be. So Gentlemen, the first stage of the project is to get 12 volunteers, one for each month, without whom the project doesn't get off the ground...

**Allen Togwell**  
**DaC Marketing**



To save you asking, **Dial-a-Cab** phones were never 'hacked' by the *News of the World* before the paper was forced into closure! Mind you, in the old days they did use to phone for the occasional taxi before then deciding that they could save a few quid by using private hire – perhaps they needed the extra money to pay for their phone bill or those of their private investigators?

No, this small piece isn't about the reasons for their closure, it's purely to remind **Call Sign** readers of the link between the two organisations. Ok, perhaps it is the most tenuous of links, but to our late founder-Chairman **Bonnie Martyn**, it was important enough for him to keep the issue of the Sunday paper dated **29 March 1953** before eventually passing it along to **Alan Fisher** for safe-keeping at the time of Bonnie's 90th birthday. This is the reason why that issue was so important to Bonnie Martyn...

Sunday March 29 1953 was a hugely important day in the history of ODRTS / DaC because it was the day that the idea of forming an owner-drivers radio taxi service was going to be discussed. There would be no large hall hired for the meeting, it was to be held in the back of Bonnie Martyn's cab while parked on the shelter rank at Grosvenor Gardens. Bonnie was to be joined by three other cab drivers – **Arthur Cutmore**, **Albert Hall** and **Eric Stoffel** – at 6pm. All four were on a radio circuit called the **Radio Owner's Driver's Association** and known as RODA. However, that circuit was said to be suffering with corruption and drivers were queuing up to leave – including the RODA Chairman himself, **Joe Stern**, who later became the founder-Chairman of **Mountview**.

However, this article isn't about those humble beginnings, it's about the *News of the World* and DaC! Well the link that Bonnie Martyn spoke of so many times was that he had been so excited about the meeting with

# DaC and the News of the World!



Alan Fisher in his garden reading Bonnie's 1953 issue of the News of the World

the other three drivers that he couldn't wait till the meeting time of 6pm and arrived at Grosvenor Gardens soon after 4pm. However, his excitement wasn't entirely shared by the other three who all turned up at the appointed time, leaving Bonnie with two hours to kill... and he did that by reading that issue of the *News of the World* from cover-to-cover!

On his many meetings over the years with Call Sign Ed, **Alan Fisher**, Bonnie would quote the stories he read during those two hours starting with the big story of the day,

that of the police finding five bodies at **10 Rillington Place** behind Ladbroke Grove Station (it was later renamed Ruston Close and now no longer exists) and the search for their chief suspect, **John Christie**.

There was also an article on the death of Queen Mary just 5 days earlier and other stories of which the paper was famed for – many of which would in today's climate be considered not politically correct!

Bonnie also told Spurs fan Alan that his team had drawn 3-all at home to Portsmouth on the day before in front of 38,000 fans with Tottenham's scorers being Len Duquemin (2) and one for new signing Tommy Harmer.

The bottom line was that Bonnie kept the paper as a reminder of that day because not long after the initial meeting, those four drivers became eight – and this Society's first ever 'Committee of Management' – when they were joined by **Doug Naismith**, **Alec Cobden**, **David Fiertag** and **Frank Duncan**. Bonnie later passed the paper over to Alan...

**For those interested in history, some of the relevant dates to this circuit are:**

- \* 7 June 1953: Meeting at Albany Tavern, Great Portland Street where those who wanted to be part of ODRTS had to put their hands in their pockets to help get the equipment. £200 raised...
- \* November 1953 (exact day not known): ODRTS name officially registered...
- \* 12 November 1953: First Board meeting (described at time as a Committee meeting) held at Bonnie Martyn's house...
- \* 17 November 1953: Meeting at 172 Pentonville Road with Pye. Rule book sent to PCO...
- \* 12 Dec 1953: First radio job called and covered...
- \* 17 March 1954: Pentonville Road office officially opened by Sir Ian Fraser MP...
- \* October 3 1954: First AGM (held at Albany Tavern). 'Committee' officially become a BoM...

## Ahoy there LTFUC!



L-R:  
**Raymond Levy**, **Bill Tyzack**, **Susan Angel** and **Lilian Julier**

At the tail end of June, the Hon President of the *London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children*, **Dial-a-Cab's Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)** together with Fund Hon Chair **Susan Angel**, Press Officer **Raymond Levy** and Assistant Treasurer **Lilian Julier** all attended a reception on behalf of the LTFUC to celebrate the progress in establishing AHoy's new community building.

Also at the AHoy Centre in Borthwick Street, Deptford was Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal. She was received by the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Wing Commander **Michael Dudgeon**. **Princess Ann** was there to see the new building and to officially name a new Power Cat 40 boat *The Ahoy Freedom*, currently the only boat in the UK that can be crewed by young people with disabilities.

In 2006, the LTFUC donated in excess of £11,000 to the Ahoy Centre to have a boat specially built to enable disabled children to sail on the River Thames and the Fund were delighted to be told that it had brought so much pleasure to so many children.

The LTFUC asked **Call Sign** to thank the Ahoy Centre for the kind invitation and for the excellent buffet reception they provided.

Over the past five years, several **Dial-a-Cab** drivers – mainly living out of London – have written to **Call Sign** complaining that they knew of yellow badge drivers who regularly worked within green badge areas. The only way these drivers would get caught was if they were spotted in one of the occasional checks at railway stations etc. However, if they worked during the evening, those checks are much fewer and the occasional taxi and private hire check in Charing Cross Road was about the only way they would get their collar felt.

As the DaC drivers who wrote to us explained, yellow badges working in town were no better than minicab touts because if they wanted to work in London, then the *All London* Knowledge would have been open to them. And now that business has improved, the possibility of yellow badges taking a chance goes up as well. Of course, it should be pointed out that we are talking of a minority here, with the average yellow badge content to work within the rules.

But soon the chances of yellow badges working in town will be reduced dramatically with *London Taxis and Private Hire* announcing something that the late **Monty Schiman** asked for some twenty years ago - identifying colours in the taxi to differentiate between the two types of taxi drivers. And this time it isn't rumour, but fact!

Every licensed taxi driver is soon to be issued with two identifiers - one for the front windscreen and one for the rear. These will show whether the driver holds an *All London* or *Suburban* licence, together with the driver's licence number and, if they are a Suburban driver, which

# Green and yellow badges identified



Examples of the two identifiers

areas they are licensed for. The identifiers will be transferable between taxis too. Of course, should a Suburban driver deliberately attempt to mislead compliance officers or the police by using someone else's badge, then we assume that person's licence would be put at stake.

If any **Dial-a-Cab** driver sees a Suburban yellow badge driver plying for hire outside his / her licence area, you should report them to LTPH, but please, under no circumstances should any driver confront another driver regarding their actions. Also bear in mind that there could be any of several reasons why a yellow badge is in central London. They may be dropping off a fare that began in their own sector or picking up a fare that

was pre-booked when the driver was in his / her own sector.

There are also several so-called 'island ranks' where both green and yellow badges can ply for hire. These include Finsbury Park Bus Station (Haringey drivers), Garratt Lane Arndale Centre and Sainsbury's (Merton and Sutton), Tooting Broadway Station (Merton and Sutton), Southfields Station (Merton and Sutton) and Putney High Street (Richmond).

The identifiers will be introduced in two phases with the All London version first followed by the Suburban version.

**Ron Yarborough**  
Call Sign online

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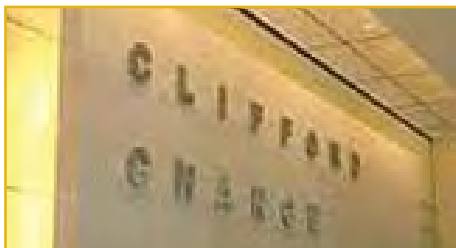


**Singers Asset Finance**

Like many of those companies affected by the recent global recession, **Clifford Chance** took the opportunity of saving money. They began by reducing the number of partners by around 15% and continued along the savings route by switching their transport suppliers. It seems unlikely that **Dial-a-Cab** would have been too delighted by the decision, but as **Brian Rice** told them at the time, we understood their reasoning and offered to be of assistance whenever they wanted us.

Although their origins can be traced back to the early days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dial-a-Cab's involvement with the *Magic Circle* law firm goes back to the 1970s when as **Coward Chance** they were based at Aldermanbury Square EC2 and were consistent users of our taxis. Some years later we began servicing another City law firm – **Clifford Turner** in New Bridge Street, where the *Crowne Plaza* is now.

## Will Clifford Chance return?



In 1987, the two companies merged and eventually set up in Aldersgate Street on the Rotunda. It is now based in Upper Bank Street, Docklands.

Except for a short break when they moved to **ComCab**, Clifford Chance had been with us since those Coward Chance days and figures released last month suggest that the law firm

has bounced right back and is now looking to expand into Asia.

The profitability per equity partner, which many consider to be the best barometer of a successful law firm, has now gone back to previous heights of over £1million. This is the first time the £1m per partner mark has been breached for over three years.

Their turnover up to April 30 increased up to £1.2billion – an increase of 2%. Clifford Chance would be welcomed back at any time. Whilst we may not be the cheapest transport firm out there, our service is still unbeatable and old friends are always welcomed back...

**Ron Yarborough**  
Call Sign online



**I've got a parking ticket (PCN), what should I do?**

**Don't pay it!** You need to get the PCN to **Driver Services** asap. You can bring it into Driver Services between 9-5 or leave it with Driver's Reception 24 hours a day. Alternatively you can post it, fax it (**0207 553 7295**) or email it to [nualag@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:nualag@dialacab.co.uk).

**What happens next?**

You probably won't hear anything for a few weeks and then you will receive a **Notice of Rejection**. With the **Notice of Rejection** you will receive an **Appeal Form**. Sign the back of the form and either post or bring both to Driver Services as we need the originals.

**Now they want £180! Help....!!**

**Nuala Glavin answers some FAQs about PCNs...**

### DRIVER SERVICES AND PCN's

This is called a **Charge Certificate**. The Council usually send one of these when they claim they have not received our first appeal. **Barrie Segal** sends everything by email and has a confirmation to prove it has been received. So again bring, post, fax or email to Driver Services.

**I've got a Bailiff's Letter! Will they repossess my cab? My TV? My wife?**

**Don't Panic!!!** If you receive a **Charge Certificate** from Westminster Council, you may receive a letter from a company called **Phillips** - they are not Bailiffs, they are a debt recovery agent. They send out 3 letters and then refer the case back to Westminster Council. They have no rights, it's just a scare tactic to make you pay. **DO NOT** at any stage panic and pay or contact **Phillips**.

**Northampton County Court sent me some forms, does this mean I will get a CCJ?**

**No!** The **TE9** form they have sent you is simply to cancel the **Charge Certificate**. Just sign the form and bring it to Driver Services. You will then receive a letter from Northampton County Court cancelling the Charge Certificate and reducing the ticket back to £60 - although the Council may send the original PCN and start the process all over again.

**I've got a letter about a Court hearing date, do I have to attend?**

**No!** Just bring, send, fax or email the letter to Driver Services and we will send a representative on your behalf.

**What Happens next?**

After the hearing date, you will receive a letter saying that the PCN has been cancelled or that we have lost the case and the PCN needs to be paid. **DO NOT** pay the PCN, just bring or send it to Driver Services and we will pay it for you. If you receive a cancellation letter, please contact Driver Services in the usual way or call us with the PCN number so we can update our records.

**Do DaC dispute all PCNs?**

Unfortunately not. **We do not pay PCN's received for parking on ZigZags, two wheels on the pavement or traffic contraventions.** Also please note we will no longer reimburse drivers that have not followed the correct PCN procedure and who have paid a PCN...

**Nuala Glavin**  
**DaC Driver Services**

## PENNY BLACK CABBY OFFER

If you read **Eating out with Call Sign** on page 28 of this issue, you will find a great offer from **The Penny Black Restaurant** in Fulham Road. The restaurant, based opposite the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, is offering a fantastic incentive scheme for all Licenced Taxi drivers.

If your passengers are looking for an excellent British restaurant, just drive them to The Penny Black at 212 Fulham Road. The tenth recommendation will get you a £50 voucher towards the cost of your dining experience at the restaurant. If you decide to continue without taking the voucher, then after the next ten they will give you a further £100 to spend towards your meal (food and wine). Once twenty reservations have been made you will have £150 in two vouchers and the reward scheme will reset itself.

Just contact the restaurant directly on **0845 838 8998** and register your driver details. Not only will you be able to look forward to a wonderful evening, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your passengers will think you are wonderful! Don't believe us? Just read the review from **Alex Constantinou (N05)**...



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



### Rip off Britain!

#### Parts 488 and 489...

Ever decided to attend an *AA DriveTech Speed Awareness Course* instead of accepting an £80 fine and 3 points on your driving licence? Did you think it was good value at £97.02? I mean, I've been on many courses in my time but they usually last more than 4 hours and provide you with a decent set of course notes, instead of the A5 size *speed awareness course worksheet* which tables 4 questions that you answer and take home to learn!

But do you know what the worst aspect of my wasted day in Station Road, Shortlands was? They didn't even provide us with snacks and beverages! I deliberately passed by dozens of coffee bars on my 20 minute walk from Bromley South Station assuming (oh yes) that a decent *Americano* would be waiting for me on arrival. Instead, new arrivals were directed towards a vending machine and told to "help yourself," but hard cheese if you didn't have a 20p piece in your pocket! Ah well, I guess that's what I deserved after being trapped speeding recklessly at 34 mph in the Limehouse Link at 2.40am one Sunday morning – silly me!

Ever been tempted to go for those *buy one, get one half price* offers in *Homebase*? Well this deal seemed perfect for me as I eyed up the wood preserver that would be ideal for my spray gun container to paint the outside of my



log cabin and decking. The only thing was that I put my trust in my supplier to honour the advertised deal – it was certainly advertised and in fact was splashed all the way down the aisle!

Because I bought quite a few other items, it didn't register with me that I had been over-charged and made to pay the full price. The penny never dropped until I returned 3 days later and only purchased more of the wood strainer to discover I was being charged the full price until I pointed out the error. I never had the receipt from my first visit on me at the time, but needless to say that on checking, I had been cheated out of my hard earned cash!

But do you know what was the worst aspect of my being taken for a ride? I spent a fortune on my mobile phone talking to cus-

tomers services trying to get back my money, only to be told that you have to return to the store that you made your purchase – that was in Dumfries, Scotland and I was calling from Sutton! Ah well, I guess I will need to make that 800 mile round trip to claim my £6.30 after all – silly me!

But it can wait – as I type these notes I am in a bar closer to the Pyrenees, heading off to watch the spectacle that is le Tour de France on its mountain passes stage. Rip off Britain? I feel better off out of it at this moment in time!

*C'est dommage!*

### Where's Woody???

Another 'Where's Woody' for you. Clue? Sounds like a lot of balls! Answer on page 22...



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

## LONDON CABBIES FAVOURITE GARAGE ~ TAXI-CAB RENTALS ~

NEW TX4'S – ALL AIR-CONDITIONED  
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The taxi trade has of late been inundated with new regulations regarding older taxis and the new 15-year rolling age limit coming in from 1 January 2012. In addition, as of 1 April 2012 all newly licensed taxis must as a minimum meet Euro 5 standards for emissions. At around the same time, taxis will face two MoT tests each year with a third, referred to as a basic annual taxi-related annual TfL inspection. The three will replace the overhaul. With so many changes coming in, Call Sign spoke to Rob Laidler, Sales Director of the London Taxi Company, to question him about the new regulations and the TX4...

**Call Sign:** The London Taxi Company has confirmed that by January 2012 the TX4 will need to meet Euro 5 emissions regulations, which means the fitting of a new exhaust system and diesel particulate filter in addition to a recalibration of the engine. However, the company also point out that other than those three items, there would be no other changes to the vehicle's specification or mechanical parts. Will these modifications bring the road tax price back down to what it was before?

**Rob Laidler:** Euro 5 is all about reducing particulate and NOX emissions, whereas the road tax bands are based on CO2 emissions. We're waiting for the official figures to come back, but we are not expecting significant changes to the CO2 output. Any reduction in the tax band would therefore be an unexpected bonus.

**Call Sign:** With all the problems for the trade involving Euro 5, when will we be hit by Euro 6 requirements?

**Rob Laidler:** Euro 6 will come into effect from 1 September 2015.

**Call Sign:** It seems that whilst the Coventry facility is struggling due to the current financial climate, the business in Shanghai seems to be working well. Is there ever likely to be a time when the whole TX4 comes from China?

**Rob Laidler:** It has been a difficult economy to do business in, but the fact that we operate as a global entity now means that the company is better protected than ever before and can weather these financial storms much more effectively. Whilst we are absolutely committed to our UK market, we are always looking at methods of reducing the cost of production for our taxis, and ultimately our customers. This includes sourcing as many lower cost items as we can, both at home and from overseas markets. Our Shanghai operation is dedicated to fulfilling demand in the export market. We have no plans to move UK production abroad and remain committed to our production facility in Coventry.

**Call Sign:** While most passengers seem to prefer the shape of the TX4 over its Mercedes rival, the recent hot spell showed that the idea of air conditioning throughout is something

Questions that DaC drivers have asked us about the TX4

## Call Sign speaks to the London Taxi Company



that is needed. Should that not be standard throughout both TX4 models?

Also, have the London Taxi Company considered a step to assist elderly or disabled passengers entering the taxi?

**Rob Laidler:** We predicted at launch that the vast majority of sales into London would be for the Elegance model (that includes full air-conditioning) and we have been proved right. The price differential between the two models means that the Elegance model is a logical choice for most drivers. Outside London however, the purchasing decisions are often fundamentally different to those inside London. The majority of regional sales remain for the manual gearbox with the lowest specification available. In the regional markets it is important that we provide the drivers with what they demand, which is the lowest possible cost of ownership for a new purpose built taxi.

With regards to accessibility, the TX4 range has the most comprehensive range of features available in any taxi, including an intermediate step, ramp, swivel seat, induction bearing loop and contrasting grab handles.

**Call Sign:** Why can't the company improve the vehicle's fuel consumption figures?

**Rob Laidler:** The TX4 tries to balance a number of competing demands including size, durability, longevity, accessibility features, emission levels and fuel consumption. It is also true that drivers can have an enormous influence through their personal driving styles and techniques. We continue to work hard in partnership with our engine supplier, VM Motori, to improve fuel economy as well as comply with our regulatory obligations.

**Call Sign:** Would the London Taxi Company consider helping out drivers who have no choice but to get rid of their cabs through age by perhaps offering an extended finance agreement – perhaps over 6 or 7 years - whilst charging a reasonable rate?

**Rob Laidler:** We're doing our best to ease the transition of drivers from older taxis into newer models in a couple of ways. Firstly, we have introduced transparent pricing onto all our new and used vehicles. This ensures everyone gets a great price; it's no longer down to

how good you are at baggling! We've seen used sales jump up as a direct result of this policy. Our used taxis can be found on-line at [www.london-taxis.co.uk](http://www.london-taxis.co.uk).

In addition we have teamed up Verifone and Black Horse Taxi Finance who have put together a £3,000 sponsorship deal for the first 200 drivers that sign up. It is available to drivers with a taxi over 14 years old and (with no other deposit) results in weekly payments of just £129 for a Style Automatic.

**Call Sign:** Although Call Sign has published articles about hydrogen TX4s running on test, when does the London Taxi Company think it will be in the position to offer a hydrogen taxi for sale and as a rough estimate, how much does the company believe it would cost to buy?

**Rob Laidler:** The Hydrogen programme has gone really well, but most industry experts do not expect to see significant volumes of hydrogen vehicles on our streets much before the start of 2020. The issues are around the difficulties of setting up a hydrogen refuelling infrastructure and also the speed at which the component costs can be brought down to a realistic level. I won't tell you what each taxi costs to produce at the moment, suffice to say it would make your eyes water!

**Call Sign:** Most, if not all of the TX4s early problems seem to have been ironed out, but are there plans for a TX5?

**Rob Laidler:** No, the Euro 5 version of TX4 will take us through to Euro 6.

**Call Sign:** Thanks for your time Rob...

## SAVINGS!

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Anyone for tea?

Every summer, HM the Queen hosts at least three garden parties at Buckingham Palace, as well as one at the Palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh. This year, one of the 30,000 people attending one of Her Majesty's Garden Parties in London was Master of The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers, **Dial-a-Cab's Jim Rainbird (T25)**, together with wife Melanie, son John and daughter Ashley. With tea, cakes and a beautiful garden to admire, the Garden Party on 29 June will stay in Jim's memory of his year as Master forever.

Garden parties have been held at Buckingham Palace since the 1860s. Originally they were known as breakfasts

## Jim Rainbird at Buck House Garden Party for WCHCD



Jim and family at the Palace

– even though they took place in the afternoon! The parties are a way of rewarding and recognising public service and are attended by people from all walks of life.

Jim Rainbird told *Call Sign*: “It was a magnificent day and I felt extremely proud to be there as Master representing the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers.”

## Eco City losses “down to £265,000...”

Following a shock announcement that the group had been temporarily suspended from the AIM market due to their “failure to post 2010 preliminary results by the end of June,” some 24 hours later **Eco City Vehicles** (better known as **KPM** to cab drivers) finally showed pre-tax losses of £265,000 for the year to the end of December. That showed an improvement over the same period last year when those losses amounted to £393,000. However, Eco City also posted an operating profit of £95,000 compared with a £135,000 loss a year ago.



Eco City CEO Peter DaCosta

Total revenue was £24.7million – identical to last year – but the figures were up 9.8% on a like-for-like basis due to higher demand for the group's Mercedes Vito, although that comparison excludes £0.1m and £2.3m revenues attributable in 2010 and 2009 respectively to sales of new TX4 taxis after their LTI dealership agreement expired in July 2010.

Eco City CEO, **Peter DaCosta**, said following the release:

“Eco City continued to grow its revenues and market share from the Mercedes Vito taxi while improving its operational performance against a difficult trading climate last year. This is because we made a timely and strategic decision to co-develop and launch the Mercedes Vito, which has proved to be a great success.

“Trading conditions remain tough and the widely anticipated launch of a new Euro V Blue Efficiency Vito taxi contributed to a soft first quarter whilst drivers waited to see the new vehicle before purchasing.

However, sales have improved since the group's launch of the new version, which provides further improvements in fuel efficiency and comfort for drivers and passengers alike. The Group is also in the process of streamlining its cost base and together with a gradual improvement in demand, expects to report an improved second half.”

Following the announcement, Eco City's share price saw a 9.9% drop to 3.75p.

In a further development, Mercedes Benz has said that they are taking closer control of the Vito. Peter DaCosta said the transferring of contracting responsibilities would help “de-risk” the business

### TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR CHARITY

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### TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR DINNER DANCE

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Tickets are priced at £62.50

A special rate will be available for anyone attending the function wanting to stay over night at the Hotel.

For any more information please call Barbara or Russell Poluck, numbers above.

No doubt many of you will have had unsolicited phone calls or texts from accident claims management agencies 'informing' you that there is a considerable sum of money, typically £3750, ready and set aside just waiting for you to claim after an apparently insignificant bump that occurred with your taxi. It may have happened so long ago that you had completely forgotten about it! The caller / text message will cite whiplash, muscle strain or various other medical conditions as the basis upon which you can claim.

Indeed, such is the extent of this *Cash for Crash* culture of which **Call Sign** wrote of in detail last year, that BBC TV's *Panorama* recently aired a report highlighting the scam. It graphically captured the scam on hidden spy cameras within a car being deliberately crashed to cause further damage than existed after an initial collision. The repairers then claim far higher fees than repairing the original damage would have suggested. Indeed, **Call Sign** Editor **Alan Fisher** is scheduled to be in court at the time of publication fighting such a claim where an accident claimed for never actually happened – not to save himself money, but to try to avoid his insurance company paying out on a false claim.

Politician Jack Straw also described this fraudulent activity as 'a racket' when he drew attention to the practice in the media a few weeks ago. Personal telephone numbers, together with details of the claim, are acquired by solicitors and other interested parties for considerable referral fees, with the expectation of screwing £000's more out of insurance companies and making quite a few quid for

## The claim culture reaches DaC...



**A photo used by many insurance companies of a minor shunt yet it could involve thousands of fraudulent pounds**

hawking his wares to every cab that passed, the company was located in - Liverpool!!

No London office address is mentioned, so the accident claims management specialists must think it worth their while to travel to the capital to pitch

themselves into the bargain.

This escalation of costs pushes insurance premiums ever higher to the concern of the honest motorist who cannot understand why a simple 'bump' comes to mega-bucks to put right! 'Set aside' £3750 per claimant and you begin to understand the scale of the problem!

**But this claim culture was given a whole new aspect recently when a Dial-a-Cab driver told *Call Sign* of an approach while on Kings Cross rank by an individual who suggested a £350 referral fee for personal injury claims and £250 for motor claims with the assurance of a replacement taxi 'within four hours' while yours was being repaired after an RTA.**

"Bear us in mind if you hear of anything or are involved," was the comment as he handed a business card to the DaC driver. But when the driver checked the address on the card of the gent

their tent! Insurance companies are steadily becoming aware of these practices and at least one taxi insurer is including an advice pack to drivers when renewing their policy with a view to minimising third party claims.

'Take full details of all vehicles involved, together with photos if possible, names and addresses of passengers and note any injuries' the leaflet suggests. How true, as it is not unheard of for fictitious passengers to suddenly appear for the benefit a claims boost!

So to protect yourself and your insurer, take whatever precautions and details you feel you need to in order to make and respond to third party claims in order to keep insurance premium rises to a minimum.

**Alan Green (E52)**

**© Call Sign Magazine MMX1**

*Discounting the biggest rumour currently circulating in the cab trade...*

## No cab companies have an Olympic Contract!

When Mayor **Boris Johnson** responded that he "didn't know" to a caller's question on LBC asking whether **Addison Lee** had won the contract to take athletes and Olympic representatives to the **2012 Games** and therefore would be allowed to use the *Olympic Route Networks*, he inadvertently set into motion the biggest rumour this trade has seen in years.

Drivers listening to the **Nick Ferrari** phone-in automatically assumed that the Mayor's reply was covering up a true story that AL had won the contract! The rumour spread like wildfire and **Call Sign** had several calls each day asking whether the story was true, but no matter how many times we denied it, the calls just kept on coming – leading to this article.

**So let's just say it in print... IT ISN'T TRUE!**

In an attempt to put paid to the rumours, we asked *London Taxi & Private Hire* Director, **John Mason**, to confirm or deny the story. He told us:

**"I have no idea where the rumour came from, but I can confirm that no taxi or private hire company has been awarded a contract by TfL, ODA or LOCOG for the provision of transport services to the games. All games family vehicles are provided by BMW and will be driven by volunteers and, with the exception of emergency service vehicles, are the only vehicles allowed in dedicated games lanes."**

**"I understand that there may be some LOCOG contracts coming up for transportation for some VIPs and journalists, but whoever wins these will also not be permitted to use the games lanes."**

But the rumours will no doubt continue and if, as seems likely, we are banned from using the *Olympic Route Networks*, be assured that no other cab companies will use them either. But of course, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try because unlike Melbourne (1956), Rome (1960), Tokyo (1964), Mexico City (1968), Munich (1972), Montreal (1976), Moscow (1980), Los Angeles (1984), Seoul (1988), Barcelona (1992), Atlanta (1996), Sydney (2000), Athens (2004), Beijing (2008) or even Rio de Janeiro in 2016, the London taxi service is, and always has been, the finest in the world and deserved of being treated with the respect that means any taxi passenger wanting to go to the Games in one of our vehicles should know that the ORN will be available to them.

After all, there are no parking facilities at the Games – you will have to walk, cycle or use public transport and after years of being 'primed' into accepting that we are a valuable part of the London transport system, what better way of showing it could Mayor Boris have than to convince the ODA that the world's best taxi system should have unlimited use of the *Olympic Route Networks* for the period of the London Olympic Games of 2012...

**Alan Fisher**







# LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE...

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

## PH drivers stealing their youth...

As diets and health get better, there is no doubt that some of the population who have adopted an active life enjoy activities that were once only considered to be for the young.

There is a limit that is being pushed too far in the guise of boy racers. When I was younger it was considered to be cool to buy a Ford Escort or Cortina, put some *go fast* stripes on the side with a set of dice hanging from the mirror, then race around like lunatics not knowing where we were going or with any care for other road users and pedestrians, generally endangering our own lives as well as theirs.

But now it seems that this scenario is being used by middle age men in Toyotas, but instead of *go fast* stripes they use PHV badges and magic trees hanging from the mirror or another lot in MPVs with *ad it on a lease* stripes in the rear window.

They fly around like buzz pilots, under and overtaking while topping it off with their *Top Gun* Maverick sunglasses and bleeping blue light hands-free aerial in their ear, as if it was some sort of sonic radar device. In fact, the way they behave on the road and the aggressive nature outside clubs and bars etc to us and everyone else makes me think that PHV should stand for Public Harassment Violators!

I say this with some amusement, but the serious issue of them racing around has to do



Oxford Circus in the late 19th century - has anything changed?

with the economics of their charges. Some years ago a leading pizza firm, launched a campaign to deliver in a certain time or you would get your delivery for free. This had to be withdrawn as there were serious safety concerns for their delivery staff, who under pressure trying to keep the promise were involved in a high number of accidents.

As the economy tightens with more people having to look for a different form of income, this has caused the market to be flooded by inexperienced drivers. Companies are reducing their outgoings so rates are being cut, set against the increased running costs in the form of fuel, insurance etc. The price of the job will always come out of the end user, that being the driver. This puts pressure on the driver to

make as many jobs in the least amount of time to make a living, which in turn puts us all in danger as road users and pedestrians.

## St James Street and Oxford Circus traffic systems

So the planners are already praising themselves on the success and improvements to St James Street and Oxford Circus areas, informing us that the removal of railings and the larger pedestrian island will make it safer for all. Well can I remind them that it was the planners who erected the railings in the first place and that St James Street was the first street in the world to have islands in the middle of the road, these were put into place at the request of the gentlemen's clubs whose clients after imbibing in their establishments would often get stuck in the mud and get run over by a horse and carriage hurtling along the street! They further praise themselves that they are converting the areas back to how they were fifty years ago (no such thing as an original idea then). I have a photo of Oxford Circus showing horse and carriage bus services with the same traffic layout as present. I don't know how long it takes to become a planner, but it may be easier to look up old town photos and just copy them.

Tom Quigley (Y33)

## WCHCD CELEBRATE FOUNDERS DAY

On 23 June, the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** held their Founders' Day dinner in recognition of the *Ordinance for the Regulation of Hackney Coachmen in London*, which was ordered by the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, together with his Council. It was this ordinance that provided the legislation for the formation of the *Fellowship of Master Hackney Coachmen* on 23 June 1654. It was disbanded some years later, but the beginnings of today's Company were based on it.

The Master, **Dial-a-Cab's Jim Rainbird (T25)**, together with his wife Melanie, welcomed liverymen, freemen and their guests to the beautiful surroundings of the Drapers Hall. The Hall was one of the settings for the film *The Kings Speech* and during the champagne reception, guests were able to see some of the rooms where filming had taken place.

The Hall, situated in Throgmorton Street, was originally bought from King Henry VIII in 1543 for around £1,200 and has been the house of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex and Chief Minister to Henry, although forfeited to the King on Cromwell's execution in July 1540.

The Hall was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and rebuilt between 1667 and 1671 to designs by Edward Jarman. Today Jim Rainbird describes Drapers Hall as one of his favourite City Halls and told **Call Sign** that he had been delighted to hold the Founders Day dinner in such elegant, historical surroundings.

Around 150 guests dined in the Livery Hall, where 28 marble columns frame the Draper's Company's collection of royal portraits including King William III by Sir Godfrey Kneller, George III by Sir Nathaniel Dance and George IV by Sir Thomas Lawrence. Richard Belt's statue Hypatia and a copy of John Gibson's *The Tinted Venus* reside in the room, whilst ceilings panels depicting scenes from *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, painted by Herbert Draper between 1903 and 1910, were admired by diners.

Guest speaker for the evening was **Sir Christopher Meyer KCMG**, British Ambassador to the United States between 1997 and 2003. He was also the former Chairman of the *Press Complaints Commission*. Sir Christopher is a Liveryman of the *Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspapermakers* and a Freeman of the City of London.

Musical entertainment was provided by the Mercury Brass Quintet and the evening was a great success, marking Founders Day in the manner that those involved in the WCHCD both present and past would appreciate.

The *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* would like to thank *Proximo Ltd* for their generous support of the event, with special thanks to Liveryman Chris Bird.



John Dixon, Brian Rice and Jean Jacyna celebrating Founders Day

## So why does Call Sign have its' doubts!!!

**Lord Sebastian Coe**, undoubtedly one of the UK's finest-ever Olympic athletes and now in charge of organising next year's London Olympic Games, has admitted that there will be challenges surrounding transport, but has denied that the *Olympic Routes Network* - supposedly reserved for Olympic traffic - will cause problems.

After saying that talk of transport arrangements being chaotic was very wide of the mark and stating that the *Olympic route networks* would cover just 1% of the roads, he added that he would bust another myth by saying that taxis and buses will use the majority of the Olympic route network roads and the committee would ensure that London keeps working. Lord Coe added that £6.4bn was being spent on improving transport ready for the Games (see article on page 18).

Hopefully the *Olympic Delivery Authority* (ODA) and the *London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games* (LOCOG) will organise something that will allow the licensed taxi trade to use the *Olympic Route Networks*. But if they do, it will be the first time in Olympic history that taxis have been allowed to use the ORNs. In fact **Call Sign** had a warning in 2000 following the Sydney Games when our correspondent over there told us that taxis had been banned from the ORNs and that nothing but nothing would change the mind of what has become known as the *Olympic Family*. Even former Mayor Ken Livingstone says we should be allowed to

# Lord Coe: Taxis WILL use the ORN...



The ORN at the Beijing Games caused chaos, will it also happen in London?

use the lanes. Electioneering? Perhaps, but if it helps...

London's trade organisations are currently in negotiations with the ODA and whilst going on previous form it seems unlikely, we await to see what actions will be taken by this trade to show our feelings. But it did seem that some drivers would accept the ban during the Games so long as Addison Lee weren't allowed to use the ORN. Now we hear that those buying tick-

ets will get free transport in London.

Worryingly, some of the London routes that will have priority lanes in force every day include the Victoria Embankment, Blackwall Tunnel approach, Stratford High Street and the A12.

Has the committee suddenly had a change of heart following rumours of taxi "action?" It would be the first time if they have and **Call Sign** somehow doubts that they will...

## Melinda 'Races 'For Life!'



Melinda shows Call Sign her medal

**Melinda Shapiro**, daughter of **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Laurie (H62)**, successfully completed the *Race for Life* through the City of London on 12 June in aid of *Cancer Research UK* taking 56 minutes to complete the 5K course that began at the Guildhall.

**Dial-a-Cab drivers contributing generously to the collecting tin in Driver Reception helped Melinda raise over £850.**

The Shapiro family know all about the battle against cancer and Melinda told **Call Sign** how touched she had been by the donations placed into the tin.

"I would like to say a very big thank you to everyone that gave me money and helped me raise such a great amount. I still have a bit to collect to get the final total.

Thank you so much to DaC for letting me leave my collection box at the office and thanks to Alan for the publicity in **Call Sign**."

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# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

*Hello ladies & gents,*

We are now in the height of the holiday season and although the weather has been far from conducive for mid-summer, it has helped generate some extra work. There seem to be more tourists in the capital this year with the weak pound certainly helping, although the visitors to London seem not to be too impressed with our British weather! Fortunately our reputation as licensed taxi drivers takes a lot of equalling, the pride and professionalism unmatched! Long may it continue.

During August we would expect it to be less busy, so it is with this in mind that I need to remind you all of a few booking-in procedures that must be followed by us all at all times (see below). I can only reiterate that when you see the regular terminal messages warning you that certain zones are at all times monitored, it is not an idle threat. So please play the game or face any possible consequences.

**\* City Airport – You must be on the back of the actual rank before booking in to CC00.**

**\* EC5 – You must be in one of the four EC zones before booking in.**



**\* E14 - (Night time rank) – You must be in the E14 postal zone before booking in.**

**\* Outlying Zones (WW99, S99 etc.) – These are physical zones at all times.**

I have mentioned all of these zones on numerous occasions and I'm sure that it becomes increasingly boring for the vast majority of you, but unfortunately there are still a few that fail to heed the warnings and have recently received a complaint form in the post and will in all probability be asked to attend a

complaints hearing, if they haven't already.

On many trips that are cleared for amounts exceeding eighty pounds, there are often differences between the stopped meter fares and the actual cleared sums. These trips are automatically rejected by the Dial-a-Cab system and need to be checked and revalidated for payment and invoicing. There are a number of reasons why the disparities occur, it may be a signal problem, it could be a trip that is amended for various reasons, but either way it can delay payment to the driver. Can I please ask you to notify the Call Centre immediately after clearing these trip types so that they can make a note on the trip logger, it will help me enormously and certainly stop any delay in payment and customer billing.

**Many of you will be looking forward to a well-earned summer break and the chance to recharge your batteries. Enjoy yourselves and keep up the good work when you return to driving your taxis. If you have any queries on any of the issues I have mentioned, please contact me on 0207 553 7222 or email Allane@Dialacab.co.uk.**

**Allan Evans  
DaC Compliance Officer**

## London's most stupid tout jailed!!!

A minicab tout who was arrested twice in subsequent weekends for trying to tout police officers has been jailed for a total of 18 weeks, leading many to ask whether Nahim Gaffer-Doud is the most stupid tout ever! The sentence follows arrests made by the MPS Cab Enforcement Unit, part of the Transport for London funded Safer Transport Command (STC).

Gaffer-Doud of Rectory Lane SW17 appeared at West London Magistrates Court on 15 June and pleaded guilty to two counts of touting for hire, using a motor vehicle without third party insurance and driving whilst disqualified. Plain clothed police officers were carrying out roadside and compliance checks on minicabs in Regent Street W1 in the early hours of Friday 27 May when Gaffer-Doud approached the officers in his vehicle and asked them if they wanted a cab! He was arrested for touting for hire and further checks revealed that he was disqualified from driving and uninsured. He was charged and bailed to appear at West London Magistrates Court at a later date.

But just over a week later, in the early hours of Saturday 4 June, Gaffer-Doud again approached plain clothed police officers, this time in Clapham High Street SW4 and asked them if they wanted a cab! He was arrested and appeared at Camberwell Green Magistrates Court later that day where he pleaded guilty to touting for hire, using a motor vehicle without third party insurance and driving whilst disqualified. Both cases were transferred to West London Magistrates Court and on 15 June, he was sentenced to a total of 18 weeks in prison.

Chief Superintendent Sultan Taylor, MPS Safer Transport Command, said:

"The Cab Enforcement Unit is dedicated to improving the safety and security of cabs and dealing with unbooked minicabs, which put the public at risk. This case should serve as a reminder that our officers are out on the streets of the capital targeting unbooked minicabs and bringing offenders to justice."

Steve Burton, Director of Community Safety Enforcement and Policing at TfL, told **Call Sign**: "This is a fantastic result for the Safer Transport Command who work tirelessly to minimise the

threat posed by unbooked minicabs. The severity of the sentence given to Mr Gaffer-Doud should serve as a warning to anyone who thinks about touting in

London. We will always push for the harshest punishment possible for those who engage in this criminal activity."



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

## Kupkake's Korner



### Think Pink???

I first saw it in Park Lane,  
driving oh so slow,  
it's true there was some heavy rain,  
but I swear I saw it glow!

A late model Bentley,  
a Turbo Coupé,  
the rear seats were empty,  
but it was late in the day.

Who'd own such an invention?  
I started to think,  
And did I forget to mention...  
That it was florescent pink!

Bentley cars are sacred,  
stately and serene,  
painted in dark tones,  
like black, blue and green.

But this aberration,  
brought pain to my eyes,  
then I saw the licence...  
it came as no surprise!

Those numbers and squiggles  
that the cameras can't read,  
when it's parked in the middle  
of some Knightsbridge street.

It turned toward Mayfair  
as I travelled south,  
I was feeling quite dejected  
and dry in the mouth.

No doubt there'll be others,  
those rich so and so's,  
with their wives and their mothers  
to shop and to pose.

We'll see the Italian sports cars,  
plated in gold,  
and the Silver Bugattis...  
none of them old!

But I'll still drive my Metro,  
sombre and cool,  
do my shopping at Tesco...  
I'm nobody's fool.

Copyright Kupkake 2011

## Where's Woody?

The correct answer to Where's Woody in this issue's *Call Sign en la belle France* is the temporary rank in Augustus Road, Southfields, which is used for the Wimbledon tennis championships.

## A DaC driver's positive attitude!



**Richard is back after his previous cab burnt out**

"I'm back," **Richard Payne (M80)** exclaimed, a broad grin steadily spreading across his face to a mystified *Call Sign* reporters' face. That look jogged Richard to explain exactly what he was back from?

"You may remember my cab caught fire a while ago, it was in *Call Sign*. I've been renting during the intervening months and it hasn't been particularly easy. I really have missed my radio enormously," Richard continued.

"It gets a bit quiet after about 9 pm and then later on you tend to get the 'p\*ssheads' which is even less fun! So I'm glad to be back on my beloved **Dial-a-Cab**," he said with a smile.

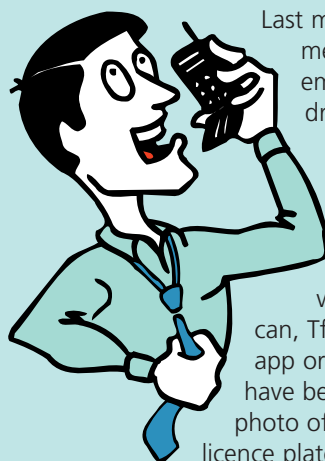
"All I want to do is keep pressing the *Accept* button and I'll be happy. I used to do a lot of account work, so the non-radio cab I had was especially tough. Now I'm back on the air-waves and glad to be here, even though it is a bit quiet on the radio, it's still so much better than street work. Different clientele altogether," he mused. "You get into a pattern of working and when that is broken – as it was after my fire – you miss it terribly when it is taken away.

But if I may respectfully make a suggestion, we need to compete with the opposition more aggressively if we are to retain the present, and even expand our client base. Our renowned superb customer service is only part of the equation and I sometimes think that we should be doing more to win work back from the cars. I know it's far easier to say than to actually do and I'm sure DaC will prevail in the end..."

Then Richard walked off. "Remember me now," he called out as he got into his DaC taxi and booked into a zone?

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## Smartphone apps bookings



Last month, **Dial-a-Cab** Board member **Allan Evans** put a message out on driver's terminals that had originally emanated from *London Taxis & Private Hire*. It warned drivers to be aware of being approached by people asking to take photos of the drivers and their badges.

Those asking for the photos were recruiting taxi drivers for a smartphone app that would provide taxi transport.

LTPH/ TfL have now told *Call Sign*: "Although we're happy to provide advice and guidance where we can, TfL does not endorse or support any single taxi booking app or service. We have received reports that taxi drivers have been approached at ranks by people asking to take a photo of the driver's badge, licence and their taxi vehicle licence plate, claiming to have permission from LTPH or TfL to collect this information. LTPH has not given authority to any company or individual to collect information in this way from licensed taxi drivers.

"While all licensed taxi drivers are obliged to provide their badge number when asked for it, they should only provide additional information or show their taxi drivers licence when they are certain that the person asking has authority to see this ie a police officer or authorised TfL Officer. Any drivers who do register with an app or other service should make sure they know how their information will be used and that the app or service is legitimate."

Several hundred licensed taxi drivers are said to have registered with one of the smartphone services. *Kabbee*, a similar service for minicabs, is said to have around 4000 signees.



We are indeed lucky to be in a trade, which is a job for life unless of course you do something silly. What's the saying: "A green badge takes years to get and seconds to lose?" Well most are sensible enough to keep on the right side of the law, however, doing the same thing day in day out for years on end is probably one of the hardest issues cab drivers face. The human brain has a unique flaw in that it likes to get into a routine and comfort zone, but then gets bored very quickly. We all have to work but we all want to get home early, so *lady luck* plays a pivotal role in our day's work. Yes, you can simply lose money because you are unlucky. Indeed learning to live with the fact that you are not in control of most of what happens during your day is an important part of beginning to enjoy the job as well. People comment on how stressful our job is and they are very correct in that observation, but there can't be very many jobs like it...

## Benefits of the recession???

One thing about a recession is that prices become more competitive as people make cutbacks and I have been a regular in phoning around to see what deals I can get. If you ever get a quote, don't accept it without a phone call first to see what deals are on offer. I recently got £10 a month off a *Sky* package, £40 of my *AA* renewal, a new wireless router from *TalkTalk* - even though it won't work if you are more than 2 metres away! I always barter with my insurance company, *Churchill*, to match last year's quote. If you mention that you get a better deal from *Direct Line* they will usually do something for you, even though both companies are owned by the same people. I am also a regular user of *ASDA's* price guarantee. Enjoy these bartering days now, because when things pick up, so will prices.

## Charity bike ride

On the 19 June, along with 35,000 other riders, I took part in the London to Brighton bike ride in aid of the *British Heart Foundation*. Even though it was 56 miles with the daunting *Ditchling Beacon* near the end, it was a hugely enjoyable day out that myself and cycling partner Steve from Wandsworth Parks Police completed in a very credible five hours. There was a really great atmosphere and I got chatting to many other cyclists from around London who did various occupations. Personally, I rarely say what I do apart from that I work in transportation because someone will always come up with some bad news story. All in all we raised nearly £400 between us for the BHF and are looking forward to the same next year.

## Fixed price debate

Well, last month's *Call Sign* regarding fixed prices certainly caused a stir! Personally I have mixed feelings about them, maybe it's a case of a little too late as recovery looks closer rather than further away and with the amount of roadworks in town, is now the right time? I recently did a FP of £22 from Redcliffe Gardens SW10 to Aldermanbury. The meter price was £41 but luckily for me the passenger

Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

# POTTER'S WHEEL



not want to be the call taker on the other end of a phone line having to explain to the customer that there were no taxis in their area. If my memory serves me right, we did a FP only account from *Credit Suisse* and then lost it soon after due to poor coverage. To me the answer is not clear, so let the *status quo* remain.

## Smoke alarm checks

Finally, in 2008 one hundred people in the UK died from fire-related incidents where they had a smoke alarm fitted but it wasn't working. Check your smoke alarm regularly and if you visit an elderly person, please do it for them as they may not be able to do it for themselves and might be too polite to ask. It only takes a few seconds to test a smoke alarm, just press the red button. Also, if you know someone who hasn't got a smoke alarm at all, phone your local fire brigade and arrange a home fire safety check and they will put one in for free. They really do save lives.

Richard Potter (T51)

kept me waiting 16 minutes so it reverted!

I recently picked up Chairman **Brian Rice** from Waterloo on his usual journey to **Dial-a-Cab** and we chatted about FPs. I commented on the fact that why did we get offered only London postal code FPs from that same account and not higher ones from outer areas. He said that he wasn't sure whether they would get the jobs covered and not everyone thought like me. I appreciate that and I would

## Celebrating the London 2012 Olympics

### LONDON/SURREY CYCLING ROAD RACE

This summer, the **London Surrey Cycle Classic road race** will see world-class cyclists racing from central London to Surrey and back on **14 August 2011**. This 140km event is part of the "London Prepares" series' testing programme for 2012. It is managed by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and brings the best cyclists from around the world to London's streets and the challenging Surrey terrain.

They will leave central London (The Mall) at 9am, racing to Surrey before returning to The Mall following the same course as the Olympic and Paralympic Road Race. It will provide an exciting spectacle for cycle racing fans as well as being totally free to watch. It will bring some 2012 practise travel chaos to central London, but it will also bring an amazing spectacle with it - the cycling road race.

Transport for London is working with the London Boroughs, LOCOG and Surrey County Council to make sure the race passes safely with as few disruption as possible, although there will be unavoidable road closures and parking suspensions.

Don't forget the date - 14 August. Details of the event can also be found on the LOCOG's website:

<http://www.londonpreparesseries.com/roadcycling/index.html>.

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The **Energy Saving Trust** and **TfL**, through **Drivesense**, have got together to offer new taxi recruits a greater awareness of driving more economically together with the benefits such advanced skills bring in terms of reduced taxi fuel bills, less wear on the taxi, improved passenger comfort and of course, a better environment for all around us! To date, **Energy Saving Trust** have trained over 20,000 drivers from more than 500 organisations including EDF Energy, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Hampshire NHS Trust and Oxford City Council. So this course has to be worth listening to.

Alan's instructor on the day was **John Chambers**, a man with vast knowledge of driving just about any type of vehicle you can think of and during the one-to-one tutorial, **Call Sign** learnt some interesting new techniques to improve the fuel consumption of a taxi. These skills can be applied to most vehicles, so there is no advantage in using your own vehicle and a vehicle with a trip computer that shows what you are or are not doing correctly is used. We had a Viano, which is similar to the Vito.

## The drive begins...

Firstly, we drove freely around the local streets near **Dial-a-Cab House** on a set course so that John could get a feel for the drivers' habits, noting the average speed and fuel consumption of the supplied vehicle. Driving normally, 21.6 mpg with an average speed of 8 mph was achieved on this first run – a comparable figure to that of many TX drivers.

Then came an intensive lesson in economical and smoother **Smarter Driving** as the EST course is entitled, encompassing all sorts of traffic and road conditions around Highbury and the City. John imparted his extensive knowledge with humour, gently pointing out where improvements to fuel economy (and driving technique) could easily be made without compromising on journey time.

"Try moving off from stationary a little more gently and try to keep moving as much as possible once you are under way," he advised, "because a lot of energy and engine power is used to get your vehicle moving from rest," adding that the secret was momentum.

"Always look well ahead to judge prevailing traffic conditions and how you may be affected by it, whether you can keep moving simply by slowing down or speeding up, which is easier on the engine and therefore uses less energy, or whether you will have to come to a stop and have to move off again from a stationary position."

"If you do have to stop," John continued, "try to judge the time you will have to wait. If it's likely to be up to half a minute, slide the auto gearbox into neutral as the engine will then simply run at idle speed without the drag of the gearbox. This eliminates the *creep* factor so familiar to taxi drivers. If you have to wait longer than 30 seconds, you can actually switch off the engine to save even more fuel, yet be ready in seconds to re-start and slip into gear when traffic conditions allow with the minimum of delay. One minute in traffic at *idle* equals a saving of 0.1 mpg. Always use the highest possible gear and the lightest touch of the throttle pedal, just enough to

**Call Sign was recently invited to participate on an Eco-Driving instruction course which, we understand, is expected to become part of the driving test requirement for new taxi-drivers in the not too distant future. So we sent photographer, Alan Green (E52) along to take a look.**

# Eco-Driving Techniques



**Alan Green and Eco instructor John Chambers**

keep you moving with the traffic flow," John said as we moved steadily through the crowded City streets, keeping the engine revs as low as we could.

"Trick the gearbox into selecting its highest gear by giving a tiny burst of throttle to force the 'box to change up and then hold that gear by just tickling the gas pedal as necessary. When going downhill, use the weight of your vehicle and a gentle burst of power to give you a run up the other side and apply only enough throttle to maintain momentum, do not accelerate uphill as this produces the worst fuel economy."

"On the topic of maintaining momentum," John continued, "it might help if I explain that there are different methods of operating traffic lights which, if understood, will allow you to turn those light sequences to your advantage and keep you moving. There are the standard 'timed' lights in general use, some lights are sensor operated which can detect traffic flow and maintain priority as needed through infrared motion detecting beams, while some lights have heat sensors that know when a vehicle is close by and will respond accordingly. Most junctions have weight sensing pads fitted below the road surface close to the traffic lights to detect the volume of traffic on a particular section of roadway. This will allow you to control the light sequence in your favour by moving closer to a traffic light and pointing your engine radiator toward the heat seeking sensor, flashing your headlights toward an infra-red beam or approaching a weight governed junction to turn the lights green in your favour so that you can keep moving. Not many people know that," John said laughing enthusiastically!

"Other little tricks to improve fuel economy are to reduce the use of air-con systems (try opening a window), turn the heater controls down to zero until the engine reaches its normal running temperature, which will be quickly achieved as less coolant circulates in the system, meaning that the engine is performing at peak efficiency. Also, try reversing onto



**The trip meter shows 28.2 mpg having been 21.6 mpg on the first run. Inset pic: A heat seeking sensor on the top of a set of lights. Hands up if you thought it was a camera**



your driveway when you have completed your shift so that you pull effortlessly away in a forward direction the next time you use the cab and not waste fuel manoeuvring on a cold engine. And don't forget to check your tyre pressures regularly, as deflated tyres produce more drag for the engine to overcome, a bit like driving up a steep hill all the time," he added.

## And the results...

So off we went again, duplicating the original route taken during the first section of the tutorial, this time putting into practice all the techniques that had been learned during the lesson. The traffic was even heavier than had been encountered earlier, with the added disadvantage of being in the Viano and not being able to use the bus lanes that a taxi would use to aid momentum and journey time, yet with all that a fuel consumption of 28.2 mpg was achieved with the average speed staying at 8 mph! The vehicle trip computer peaked at 29.3 mpg and 12 mph during our second timed run, even greater fuel economy for a similar journey time and an overall improvement of 31% less fuel used!

"If I have to boil it down to any one thing, it's to keep your vehicle moving as much as possible without actually coming to a stop, but of course all the techniques add up to greater fuel efficiency and a considerable financial saving over the year," John said in conclusion.

*Readers may wish to consult with their taxi service agent before employing some of the techniques suggested above.*

*Our grateful thanks to Mercedes Benz and Andy Hastings for putting a vehicle at our disposal and special thanks to John Chambers of 121 Drive for his expert driver training program, and of course Energy Saving Trust.*



That headline may sound daft, after all a tip is given at the end of a trip rather than the beginning. But new legislation aimed at making it easier to prosecute companies who make corrupt payments abroad, came into force in April also for the UK.

The *Bribery Act 2011* replaces current laws that often date back to the late 19th century, including the bringing in of offences carrying prison terms of up to 10 years in addition to unlimited fines. The bottom line is that it makes it illegal to offer or receive bribes and to fail to prevent bribery. The government says the act will cement the UK's position as a global leader in the fight against business corruption.

The Ministry of Justice say that giving someone a financial or other advantage to encourage that person to perform their functions or activities improperly or to reward that person for having already done so is an offence, but they do not expect what they refer to as 'genuine hospitality' to fall under the Act or companies that wish to take clients to events such as Wimbledon or the Grand Prix to be affected - so long as the hospitality is reasonable

## DO TIPS COUNT AS BRIBERY?

*Yes says HMG's Bribery Act 2011...!*



Terry and Jan Dodd

and proportionate. But the giving of tickets alone falls under the bribery label.

**Many drivers who are in the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union will know the President, Terry Dodd, (W15) and his wife Jan, who is also on the DACCU Committee.**

Jan is a legal secretary and recently took a course on behalf of the law firm she works for on the *Bribery Act 2011* and it was she who spotted the part that says – according to the Act - that tipping is a bribe. She asked how that could be for taxi drivers if a tip is given at the end of a journey rather than the beginning, but it was pointed out that companies such as **Dial-a-Cab** charge clients a gratuity for the driver with no option of the client cancelling it should they not wish to leave any tip.

We asked Terry just what Jan thought of the tip being a bribe?

"She thinks the same as me," said Terry, "it is just ludicrous!"

## CROSSRAIL: More station work, shorter distances?

Intensive construction for Paddington Crossrail station will get underway later this year with the new line said to significantly reduce journey times from Paddington to the West End, Docklands and south east London as well as providing improved access to Heathrow, west London and Berkshire. When Crossrail opens, Paddington will be just 9 minutes to Liverpool Street, 16 minutes to Canary Wharf and 27 minutes to Abbey Wood.

The new Crossrail station in Paddington has been designed to maximise the station's space while preserving the historic features of the main line station. Work began in August 2010, since then numerous utilities have been relocated away from the site of the new station box.

Passengers to the new station will benefit from a new canal side station entrance from Paddington Basin and a new pedestrian entrance from the canal towpath to Paddington mainline station.

**The Paddington Integrated Project will also build a new purpose-built taxi rank on the northern side of Paddington station. It will have greater capacity than the current facilities on Departures Road and will decrease the number of taxis queuing on the streets around the station. Passengers will be able to access the mainline station from the taxi deck by lifts and escalators.**

Crossrail will boost London's rail-based capacity by 10 per cent, delivering new journey opportunities, faster journey times and up to 24 trains per hour between Paddington and Whitechapel during the peak.

However much added work the station brings in, it looks as though the longer journeys may be lost to the licensed taxi trade...

## London voted Europe's most exciting city

*But our taxis are only second!*

**People enjoying holidays in the UK this year may well want to head to London as part of their break, as this city has been voted the most exciting destination in Europe!**

A poll carried out by *TripAdvisor.co.uk* found that visitors consider London to be the easiest to travel around, but had the nerve to vote our taxi drivers as being just second friendliest behind cab drivers in Rome!

*TripAdvisor* spokesperson, **Emma O'Boyle**, told **Call Sign**: "This research is based on traveller perception, so it is encouraging for everyone involved in London's tourism industry that, despite the concerns surrounding cost, our city is regarded by European travellers as a vibrant and accessible destination."

Travellers also recognised the efforts made to ensure London is a cleaner place to visit and for the second year in a row it did not appear on the list of dirtiest cities. However, when **Call Sign** enquired as to why our taxi drivers only finished second to those in the Italian capital, no one seemed to know but suggested that perhaps we were not as romantic as the Romans! However, whilst we may not be the friendliest, for several years in succession in various polls, London's taxi drivers have been voted as the best.

As one **Dial-a-Cab** driver said to **Call Sign** after we showed him the poll: "What do they mean about us not being the friendliest? Tell 'em to get stuffed...!"



The City wins but we came second!

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

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD

### Looking fear in the face...

On the 7 July my daughter **Caroline**, who used to work in the **Dial-a-Cab** call centre many years ago, decided to go against all of her fears and do a tandem **parachute jump**. She was to do it from a height of 12,000 feet or 2.27 miles, harnessed to a member of the **Red Devils**.

This was a young lady who used to get a nose bleed standing on a foot stool, who climbed up a steep hill in Guernsey and had to be helped down. So the fear which gives ice cold shivers down her spine was always there; her first hurdle being a case of overcoming the fear of just boarding the tiny plane.

Looking at the photos she requested be taken before boarding, on the plane and the journey from plane to ground, the fear can be seen on her face. But now she says it was the greatest experience of her life, giving her the feeling of being a bird flying down to the ground. Due to this experience, she has already signed up to repeat the tandem parachute jump next year - perhaps having a good looking instructor strapped to her may have been an incentive!

I was told the hardest part was sitting in the doorway looking down over 2 miles to the very hard ground while the wind whistles past your ears like a tornado. The sound is like a thunder clap as it vibrates against your eardrums, then there's the feeling of the wind trying to rip your trousers off by flapping them back and forth at 100mph. And that is before you have even begun your parachute jump! Now you have to leap out into nothingness with not a grab handle in sight. If you suffer from vertigo, this would be the time your head begins to feel like it's swimming and you lose all control over your faculties.

As you do everything within your power to stay within the confines of the plane, fingernails screeching as they are dragged down the aluminium door, it is now the Red Devil tutor sitting behind you who suddenly pushes and you are out into a weightless situation.

Do you dare open your eyes to see the ground rushing up to meet you at what seems to be a speed of 500mph? But you do open your eyes and you suddenly get a feeling of euphoria, a beautiful feeling of just floating as the wind rushes past your face. The plastic goggles allow you to keep your eyes open giving you a majestic view of the beautiful patchwork quilt effect of the surrounding farmland, with horses and cows looking like ants.

Looking at the far horizon of what might be some 15 miles away, you are flying above the birds that you usually stare up into the sky to watch as they complete their own aerobatic display. Meanwhile, the instructor is using air currents to help you turn and dive so you are able to simulate the bird's display - albeit in a far more simple way!

Then the instructor pulls the ripcord and you feel a sudden tug as the brakes are put



on, now allowing you to glide back down to earth slowly. If you are a male and have not spread the straps out correctly, a very high squeaky voice and a loss of fatherhood could be the result!

As you close in to what has been designated as your landing spot, you really begin to take in the beauty of your surroundings - the colour of the trees, grass, crops and rivers. As Caroline put it, the experience is the most exhilarating you will ever come across during your life. Although I believe her, I will continue to stay within the metal tube that is called an aeroplane and save on the expense of a



visit to the underwear department of M & S!

But I must congratulate my daughter for the bravery of facing her fear and raising a decent amount in sponsorship for **Help the Heroes**, the charity for our servicemen and women fighting to stop oppression throughout the world.

### The other BBC???

Over the past few months, I've been observing how we are treated as working taxi-driving tax payers; this after our ancestors fought two wars so that we could live a life of freedom.

In the last war, Hitler could not crush the inhabitants of our small island, but now the BBC (Blair, Brown and Cameron) seem to have succeeded. Between them they have brought this country to its knees by giving away our wealth - gold and democracy to the EU. If Brown sold our gold at its lowest price, Cameron is now doing that with the planes of our Air Force - the Americans must be laughing their heads off if the sale goes through. If we want to fight a decent sea battle, we need to rent ships to complete the task and aircraft to give them cover.

We are told this is because we do not have the money to keep the ships and aircraft on active duty, yet we see Cameron giving our money to other countries who are improving their nuclear power, which they could then use to overpower our nation in the future.

### Taxing problems...

Even the simplest parent will tell you that you cannot keep having children if you do not have enough money coming in to feed or clothe them. This simple fact seems to have escaped politicians, as they let every murderer, rapist, thief, fraudster and sponger travel from all over the world to live here. They then allow them untold benefits, with no thought of where this money is going to keep coming from as more jobs disappear. Our utility companies, factories and other money making organisations are being sold to foreign buyers, so more money leaves the country, money that should be supporting you as a tax payer.

We have just seen *Southern Cross*, the largest retirement homes group collapse but not before many investors abroad had made a fortune from them. There was also the promise that the *Cadbury* factory would not close, this was made to MPs who believed them. But the new owners knew nothing would be done by our soft MPs, so they closed it.

As I've said before, when you go out to work you (and your loved ones) expect you to be protected, but because your taxes are being given away you now have a reduced police force.

Then you have a Justice Minister who seems to indulge himself far too much in the subsidised life in the House of Commons so that when he emerges, he falls over giving himself a black eye! This man wants to put criminals back onto the streets before they have even let the ink dry on the jail entry papers. That is if they ever get to court as police can now give cautions and warnings so they are back on the street before the officer even arrests them!

I believe they are now going to put revolving doors on the prisons and police stations so the miscreants can get back to their villainy much quicker as their families do not want to lower the standard of living that they have become accustomed to from their proceeds of crime.

The standards of most professional jobs are being watered down by keeping the number of taxis down while putting thousands more private hire vehicles onto the roads. Keep down the number of nurses, but put more poorly trained nursing assistants on the wards. Keep down the number of teachers but put more poorly trained teaching assistants into the classrooms.

If you have an accident, do you get urgent assistance from a qualified doctor? No, you spend half an hour or more parked in the kerb while a paramedic pokes and prods you. As good as a paramedic may be, they are not doctors and they do not have access to the equipment that a hospital doctor has at their fingertips.

*continued on page 27*



TX4 manufacturers **Manganese Bronze Holdings** announced their interim results on 29 July, too late for publication but a spokesperson told **Call Sign** that they expect the shape of the business to remain unchanged with conditions difficult in the UK, but strong internationally. The continued weakness of sterling is unhelpful for costs, particularly with regard to engines from Italy. They expect further working capital improvements, which along with strong international trading, are reducing the company's debt exposure. In the medium term, there remains the possibility of a further order from Azerbaijan in addition to the 1,000 taxis contracted for delivery this year. Their 115p target price remains unchanged.

\* At the four-month stage, UK sales were down 5.2% and MBH see little in UK market conditions to indicate a change of tempo for the better. Sales in the southeast look to have been reasonably strong, on target for 1,000 units ordered over the full year, but demand outside London is likely to be subdued in line with the rest of the retail economy. Their UK forecast of 1,900 looks

#### THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD (CONTINUED)

On our streets, you do not see police officers patrolling and deterring criminals from committing crimes, you have unfit PCSOs who spend most of their time chatting on personal mobile phones or hiding around corners in case they become involved in a confrontation with members of the public.

How much longer is the taxpaying public going to allow incompetent MPs to send our money out of the country, while hospitals, police stations and coastguard stations close putting lives at risk while old people are dying in hospital of bedsores and malnutrition, both of which can be easily avoided with the correct care.

After being ridiculed for supporting the Conservative party for the last 48 years, I can now see no difference in the incompetence of the different political parties. So come the next General Election, instead of voting I will stay at home and watch CSI on the television!

I just feel so sorry for the future we are leaving our children and grandchildren because England is fast becoming a third world country. If you think I'm just ranting on, look at the past 30 years at what I've said and published and how much of it has become reality.

Well, now the *News of the World* has gone, somebody has got to speak out to try and keep the "Great" in Britain...

**Tom Whitbread**  
DaC Board member



# MANGANESE INTERIM RESULTS

## And will MBH become Geely's European distributor?

unlikely at this stage without a substantial regional pick-up. Assuming around 1,600 units sold in the UK vs their forecast of 1,900 equates to a possible downside of £1m at the PBT level, all things being equal.

\* At least partially offsetting the UK weakness is a strong overseas business, where orders of 1,500 in the year to date compare with the original forecast of 1,400 over the year. Although revenues per unit of the SLTI overseas variant are much lower than the UK model, a strong second half could be useful. With regard to the Azerbaijan order, half of the initial 1,000 unit order has either been delivered or is in build in Shanghai. Discussions about follow-on orders following the initial deliveries have been promising.

\* The first four months saw an improvement in working capital, ahead of their own forecast of flat working capital over the course of the full year. Given concerns in the past about the company's

net debt position, they say they view this as very positive and see cash generation upside potential over current forecasts of a £2.2m reduction in year-end net debt. January/February will see the usual peak in the working-capital cycle, assuming no follow-on Azerbaijan order, but the company is positive it can manage this peak through existing facilities. \* There remains the possibility that MBH could be appointed as Geely's European distributor, as mentioned in the Q1 trading statement. This would present a very significant growth opportunity. They claim that the company's relations with Geely remain very good.

\* They maintain their 115p target price based on economic value analysis (EVA). MBH are at an early stage of the recovery cycle, so take the 2012E fair value of equity based on a WACC of 8.4% and a post-tax ROIC of 10.7%. The main risks to their view are that UK sales fall further without being offset by international sales.

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**David Kupler (Y74), David Ballard (N28) and Alex Constantinou (N05) are Call Sign's restaurant reviewers. These DaC drivers and their guests visit restaurants periodically and give their honest opinions. This month Alex Constantinou visits The Penny Black in Fulham Road...**

## EATING OUT WITH CALL SIGN

I had a feeling we were in for a treat when Alan Fisher phoned and told me the next restaurant to be reviewed was **The Penny Black** at **212 Fulham Road SW10** and I wasn't wrong!

The Penny Black is almost opposite Chelsea and Westminster hospital with plenty of parking around, especially after 6:30. Their food is described as British and in all honesty that makes a welcome change. British food in England and not sausages and mash? Whatever next!

The restaurant's interior was modern yet very comfortable and the warm and cheerful greeting as we entered helped put us in the mood. My fellow reviewer for the evening was son Jack, who had just finished work at his Lincoln's Inn office and was pretty hungry.

The service from our waiter was very discreet and knowledgeable and he helped us choose a wine that would complement our main courses perfectly.

We could have started with *scallops*, *corned beef hash* or some beautiful looking *oysters*, but after huge indecision, Jack eventually selected the *cider-roasted belly of pork*, *baked apple* and *grilled radicchio* while I went for the *devilled mushroom*, *chicken livers with cognac cream*. Both were beautifully presented and plentiful. Jack's pork was cooked to perfection and tasted fantastic. Mine was every bit as good and as we chatted waiting for the main course, we couldn't help but wonder whether that type of standard could be maintained? Not to worry, head chef Jan Chanter made sure that we were not to be disappointed. Of course, having previously worked with Jamie Oliver and Ben O'Donoghue at Monte's in Chelsea, the much-missed Atlantic in Piccadilly and having heard of his love affair with British food, perhaps that wasn't too surprising.

Selecting was difficult with so many long-forgotten items to choose from. There was *toad-in-the-hole*, *seared Tiger prawns* or a rack of *Welsh lamb*, but we were both blown away by the tastes and textures of both our selected main courses. I quite fancied some fish and went for the *herbed roasted monkfish*, *roasted beetroot with leaves* whilst Jack went for the *beef wellington*, *potato and fennel bake with rocket salad*. Jan Chanter's recommendation was for the beef to be cooked medium rare and Jack wasn't about to argue!

Our waiter suggested some side dishes to accompany the meals and we ended up with *duck fat chips*, *nutmeg mash* and *sautéed spinach*. The plates were filled with great tasting food and ultra-fresh produce as the beef melted in Jack's mouth and I didn't want my beautiful-tasting monkfish to come to an end! Not only was it just stunning in taste, there wasn't a glimpse of any pasta anywhere! And doesn't that make a change.

Neither Jack nor I really had room for a dessert, but then we thought of **Call Sign** and knew you would all be disappointed if we didn't give it a go! So as it was a British food restaurant, for me that meant biting into some gorgeous hot bread and butter pudding. I'm not sure if it helped my diet, but it certainly made my taste buds sit up and beg for more! It oozed warm rich

butter and cream and was just totally stunning. Like most who work in legal offices, Jack wanted something richer (!!!) and went for the chocolate fondant and toffee butter washed down with a white Russian cocktail.

Yes, we know that reviewing restaurants is a tough job, but someone has to do it and if it sounds as though we enjoyed The Penny Black, then yes, you'd be right. The food just seemed to get better and better, complemented by excellent service and a friendly ambience.

Whilst The Penny Black isn't cheap, the prices are very fair for such amazing fare! Starters were around £8 with mains courses varying between £15 and £25 and desserts around the £6 mark. If you are happy to take my word for it, then those prices represent excellent value for the quality and quantity of the food on offer. And it makes a pleasant change to find a restaurant not just serving the occasional British meal, but which proudly bases a complete menu on it.

The ethos of The Penny Black Restaurant fits with Jan Chanter's vision of the finest British cooking. It is resurrecting British classic dishes using the highest quality ingredients with whole-

hearted support of the British farming industry. They believe that British food has a huge amount to offer a public that has grown too accustomed to great food being Italian or French and they are determined to show the world that British food does not just involve sausage and mash or fish and chips!

If you hadn't already guessed, I wholeheartedly recommend The Penny Black! And you never know, you may have a grateful passenger who is looking for advice on where he/she can find a very good British restaurant. **See below for some exciting news on taxi recommendations...**

**The Penny Black is at 212 Fulham Road SW10. Opening hours are:**

*Tues to Sat: Lunch 12pm - 3pm, Dinner 6pm - 11pm, Sun: Lunch and dinner 12pm - 10:30pm.*

*Bookings on 0845 838 8998, email [info@thepennyblack.com](mailto:info@thepennyblack.com) or you can book online by going to [www.thepennyblack.com](http://www.thepennyblack.com) and clicking on reservations. The Penny Black is closed on Mondays.*

**Alex Constantinou (N05)**

### The Penny Black Taxi Driver's Incentive Scheme

The Penny Black Restaurant is offering a fantastic incentive scheme for all Licenced Taxi drivers. If your passengers are looking for an excellent British restaurant, just drive them to The Penny Black at 212 Fulham Road. The tenth recommendation will get you a £50 voucher towards the cost of your dining experience at the restaurant. If you decide to continue without taking the voucher, then after the next ten they will give you a further £100 to spend towards your meal (food and wine). Once twenty reservations have been made you will have £150 in two vouchers and the reward scheme will reset itself.

Just contact the restaurant directly on 0845 838 8998 and register your driver details. Not only will you be able to look forward to a wonderful evening, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your passengers will think you are wonderful!

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# Mailshot Answer?



In this issue's *Mailshot* pages, there is a letter from **Dial-a-Cab** driver **John Stowers (K40)** who has written a follow-up to one he had published last month. He is obviously concerned about inroads made by companies such as Addison Lee. Under the heading of *exclusive accounts*, part of John's letter asks for views from Board members in addition to the Chairman's, who had responded last month. Editor **Alan Fisher** asked **Brian Rice** whether his views had changed from the answer given the previous month. As they hadn't, the Editor decided to respond himself and sent a copy of that response to every Board member asking whether they disagreed or wanted to add anything.

**John's letter and Alan's answer can be read in Mailshot, but these are the BoM responses**

Both **Keith Cain** and **Tom Whitbread** told *Call Sign* that they agreed with the Ed's answer with Tom adding that the Society could always reinstate a minimum trip number per driver should the need arise.

**Mike Son** agreed with the answer but added that it was about time we made more use of our wheelchair facility. "I have covered T attribute minicab jobs because the passenger required a wheelchair. The last one was from the London Hospital out to Dagenham and it turned out that the passenger only needed the 'chair to get to the cab and then climbed out and got in. The point is not that I got a good job, but why is it that we need the facility yet minicabs don't? There must be a way we can capitalise on that situation.

**Allan Evans** told *Call Sign*: I agree with most of what the Editor said, but I'd like to add a few thoughts. Yes, it is busier at the moment but should a trip from Charing Cross to W10 at 9:15am on a Tuesday morning need a premium added after 25 rejects? Not really, but that's what happened to me last week on my way to a meeting on behalf of our Society at the LTDA offices. I understand about horrendous traffic conditions, but Clients will complain and can we really blame them? We scrub trips on many busy occasions without even offering a time on the trip for the client to accept or refuse - what happens then? I'm sure we all know the answer!

As a long serving member of many years, the climate has changed and it is certainly now a buyer's market; coverage during busy periods as well as quiet times is essential, customer care imperative, but unfortunately from my role as Compliance officer that is not always the case. The newer members who may be younger but have many years ahead of them, should be even more aware that accounts do have a number of choices. Our professionalism will never be equalled, but sometimes that isn't enough and although the cheaper option is not the best as many of our accounts have experienced, the perceived reduction in price may still be appealing and for this reason alone the Chairman's job is far from easy.

As regards being noticed, I get more and more reports of DaC members not displaying the Society logo, once perhaps with a reasonable excuse, but not continuously! Surely that is a *no brainer*?

**Allen Togwell** also agreed with Alan Fisher's response but wanted to add a few points of his own. He told *Call Sign*: There has always been one simple solution to guaranteeing the retention of clients and getting new clients. **Stop the cherry picking!** All trips should be AD and none non rejectable - exactly the same as when you are on the point of a station rank.

AL have the perfect sales pitch when chasing new business, particularly the £million accounts and that is: Don't bother with Dial-a-Cab because no matter how big your account is, there is no guaran-

tee of a service because Dial-a-Cab drivers can cherry pick. So if your MD wants to go from the city to Liverpool Street on a rainy Friday, then forget it!

Hypothetical Question: You are the MD of a company with £5million worth of taxi business on offer and cost is not an issue. Outside your office are the final two of the firms you have interviewed - Dial-a-Cab and AL. Dial-a-Cab can't guarantee a service, AL can. Who do you choose? The words *no brainer* seem to fit well...

**These are just personal points of view for discussion purposes given by Board members because *Call Sign* asked. None are hidden in secret BoM plans...**

## LIONEL JOHN GOLDING

### Larry, Pearly King of the Old Kent Road dies

Larry was born in South London, son of a licensed taxi driver and nephew of actor Alfie Bass. All his uncles were taxi drivers. His demob from the Navy came in 1946, which was when he decided to follow in the family footsteps and enrolled in the British Legion Knowledge School.

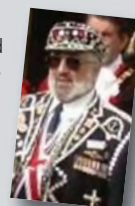
He lived at the time in Loughton and did the knowledge on a push bike! He later became Secretary of the Night Drivers Union and was at the forefront of the battle with minicabs during the 60s. His nickname was *Shakespeare* because he used to write about characters frequenting the taxi cafe in Aldgate Avenue. He married his wife Doreen in 1979.

He was always a supporter of local and national charities and in 1995 the couple were asked to become Pearly's Prides. They received their title of Pearly King & Queen of the Old Kent Road in 1997. His background, youth and years as a licensed taxi driver made him a supporter of the LTFUC. He felt this particular charity to be very worthwhile, giving it a great deal of support and coming along over many years to help at the Southend outings, the Lord Mayor's Shows and of course, the Mad Hatter's Tea Parties. Larry arrived always with a smile and a song and he will be fondly remembered with pride.

He is survived by his wife Doreen, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

**Susan Angel**

**Hon Chair, London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children**



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



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If you were passing London's *Victoria Park* on the warm and sunny 5 July morning and saw *six large furry tail dogs*, *Peppa Pig*, *three Clowns* and *Miss Ballooniverse* running around the park, you were not hallucinating! They were there to entertain 300 special needs and underprivileged children being taken on the LTFUC's annual outing to Southend-on-Sea and we thank them all so much for coming, some travelling great distances to be with us. We also give special thanks to *Blanco the Clown*, *Misiz*, *Clown Jolly Jack* and the two furry tail folk, *Rob and Tom* who as well as coming to the park, also came with us all the way to Southend to make sure the children were kept entertained all day and what a great job they all did. Also at Victoria Park to greet the children and wave the huge convoy of taxis off was the *Alderman and Sheriff of the City of London*, *Fiona Woolf CBE* and *Councillor Mizan Chaudhury*, *Office of the Chair of Council of Tower Hamlets* and we thank them for giving up their valuable time to be with us. We also thank the staff and management at Victoria Park for providing breakfast for the *drivers and helpers* and at 10am the huge convoy set off with the usual crowds waving and lining the route to give us a loud cheer. Here we congratulate and thank the *City of London Police* who carried out an excellent job getting us safely to our destination and back and we really appreciate their continued help and support. The Police escort riders were *PS Bill Holder*, *PC Taylor*, *PC Scarr*, *PC Wilshire*, *PC Shead* and *PC Massey* (see pic) and in the rear car *Jack Warner* and *Steve Adams*. We are also deeply grateful to the *RAC* and *St John's Ambulance* for joining the convoy and for all the excellent help and support they give us every year.

At midday we arrived safely at a hot and sunny *Southend* and had a wonderful greeting from all the sunbathers on the sea front, many leaving the beach to come up and give us a supportive wave. The convoy finally arrived at the *Cliffs Pavilion* and we thank the management and staff for their help and co-operation. After lunch, the children, drivers and helpers were then ferried down to *Adventure Island* in three mini-buses and once again we extend grateful thanks to *Brian Houssart MBE*, Hon President of the *Southend Taxi Charity Fund for Children* and his friends from *AC Taxis* for providing these buses for our use. We also thank the management and staff at *Adventure Island* for all their help and assistance. The children had a brilliant time demolishing ice creams, donuts, rocks and candyfloss in between the rides - just great! At 5pm it was back to the *Cliffs Pavilion* for tea, followed by a brilliant disco with *DJ Dave Davies*, who always does such a great job. The LTFUC's Hon. Chair *Susan Angel*, gave a speech on stage welcoming everyone and gave special thanks to the Mayor of Southend, *Councillor David Norman* for sparing the time to be with us and he in turn gave a speech welcoming everyone to Southend.

Prizes were presented by Susan and the Mayor of Southend to the winner of the best decorated taxi (the Army camouflage taxi)

# LTFUC outing to Southend



which was Steve Pulham and helper Kay Molineux and he received the *Terry Stapleton Memorial Rose Bowl* with a large bottle of Champagne and Chocolates for Kay. Runner up was the LTFUC logo taxi from Steven Bell and wife Wendy and he received the *Peter Lucas Shield* with a Bottle of Chardonnay and Chocolates for Wendy. The free raffle draw then took place and H.Hussein won an overnight stay for two in a deluxe room at Mayfair's *Connaught Hotel* including a full breakfast (hope he takes the wife!) The runner up was Jacqueline Gray and she won a selection of comedy DVDs.

The *Southend Carnival Court* had very kindly come to greet the children at the *Cliffs Pavilion* and we are extremely grateful to *Alan and Sheila Jones* for bringing them along and extend our grateful thanks to the girls for coming. We also thank *Salvo the Clown* and Balloonist *Tony Hanscombe* for joining us and the three face painters, *Jackie*, *Donna* and *Brook* for working tirelessly and creating some amazing faces which the children proudly showed off!

Another treat was in store for the children. Students from *The Sandra Singer Stage School* had very kindly come along to perform a great cheerleader routine for the children. Pink pom-poms were flying everywhere and the children loved it, but the icing on the cake was still to come. It was announced that there was a very special cheerleader among the stu-

dents - *Maisie Smith* who plays *Tiffany* in *Eastenders*! The ecstatic children let out loud screams when she came on stage and if this were not enough, *Bobby Lockwood*, who plays *Mick* in *Nickelodeon's The House of Anubis* joined Maisie on stage and the screams got even louder when he appeared! Maisie and Bobby signed numerous autographs and it was great to watch the children having so much fun and holding on tightly to their autographs with such happiness on their faces. We are very grateful to *Sandra Singer* for making this all happen and thank all the cheerleaders and Maisie and Bobby for coming.

At 6.15pm the disco ended and on leaving, every driver was given a *Taxi mug*, kindly donated by *Marks & Spencer*

Marble Arch to whom we are very grateful. Each mug contained an LTFUC key ring, LTFUC tax disc holder and £20 which had been anonymously donated by one of our sponsors to cover the drivers' fuel and we thank them very much.

The Hon President (*Bill Tyzack C06*), Hon Chair and Committee thank all the wonderful drivers who came, many of whom were new drivers and we really hope to see you all again on our future outings. Great to have so many new lady drivers on board as well to watch the men!

Finally we extend grateful thanks to all the carers, helpers, sponsors, *Radiocom Systems Ltd*, *E1 Entertainment*, *The Connaught Hotel* and anyone connected in any way with making this day such a special treat for the children, as without them and you the outing would not be possible. Hopefully we haven't, but we apologise if we have omitted anyone in error.

It was a brilliant outing, the sun shone almost all day and the children had the most wonderful time. The rain began to come down just as we were leaving, so it was a wet journey home but that couldn't detract from another great Southend outing and one which I am sure the children will remember and talk about for a very long time.

**Raymond Levy**  
LTFUC Press Officer



The last time we spoke to **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Malcolm Levan (F24)**, he was donating an old taximeter to the *London Vintage Taxi Association*. But this time he sounded extremely annoyed when he phoned **Call Sign** to tell us about what he perceived as a private hire “scam.”

“I was driving along Old Street,” Malcolm told us, “when I pulled alongside what appeared to be an out-of-town people mover with a ‘TAXI’ sign on its roof. That in itself wouldn’t be unusual, but in this case the TAXI sign was lit. I told the driver and he switched it off. Then for several seconds I thought nothing else of it until he was in front of me and I could see that in fact he had no out-of-town plate, but actually had a private hire roundel in the rear windscreen.”

Malcolm then made a note of the car’s registration number and took a photo of the vehicle, even though it was from the rear and sent both to **London Taxi and Private Hire**.

Malcolm continued his story: “Then a few days later I was in Temple Fortune when I saw another people mover, this one had a minicab ad in the back window but I couldn’t see any PH roundel. However, the screen had heavily tinted glass, so I presumed that I had missed it and that it was in fact beneath the darkened

# Minicab Scam??



**Malcolm Levan on his last Call Sign appearance when he donated an old meter to the LVTa**

glass. So I phoned LTPH and spoke to **Hailey Sturgeon**, who had dealt with my previous Old Street query.

“I gave her the registration number of the Temple Fortune car and asked if she would mind checking that this “cab” was actually licensed and after a few seconds she came back to tell me that it wasn’t registered as a PHV – yet it carried that ad for a PHV company. Why would it do that other than to try to infer that it was a cab – yet according to LTPH it definitely wasn’t. And so far as I can tell, there is nothing in law to stop any car putting a minicab ad on its rear window. It definitely sounds like a scam to me and as it gets busier out there I can see more and more private cars putting minicab ads on their rear windows to give prospective passengers the impression that they are licensed minicabs and that the passenger they are *waiting for* hasn’t arrived, so anyone asking them will jump into their car in the mistaken and dangerous belief that they are getting into a licensed PHV – even though it would have been illegal anyway to just get in. It’s the perception that is important and I hope that any DaC driver that spots any examples of the two pretend cabs that I saw will make a note and report them...”

## Call Sign book review... Call Sign book review... Call Sign book review



### BLACK CAB WISDOM

#### Knowledge from the back seat

Forgetting the fact that some out there do not like being referred to as black cab drivers, because that’s what the world refers to us as, I doubt that many in our trade will object to the added word ‘wisdom’ – after all, there isn’t much that we don’t know!

Around two years ago, London licensed taxi driver **Mark Solomon** began asking his passengers for their favourite quotes or proverbs, his reasoning being purely personal at first in that he felt he needed more purpose and direction.

His new idea must have helped, because many of his passengers – with nothing in common to Mark other than riding in the back of his taxi – seemed to get a purpose and direction from the chat and listening to other’s quotes.

**Black Cab Wisdom – Knowledge from the Back Seat** (Summersdale £5.99) is filled with Mark’s collected quotes, in fact Mark is still out there earning a living and no doubt adding to his collection!

Some of his collected quotes include one from former WBA World Heavyweight Champion – no doubt some time before his bout with **Wladimir Klitschko** – **David Haye**: *Set the bar twice as high as you ever think you can achieve, then if you only go half way you would have achieved a great deal.*

Another nice one comes from a company CEO whose favourite quote could be relevant to a radio taxi driver’s predicament: *The road to success is filled with many tempting parking spaces!* Perhaps **Call Sign**’s favourite quote comes from a Mongolian passenger called just BB which seems to show the difference between licensed taxi drivers with their hard-won knowledge and our minicab competitors with their ability to fill in a form. BB says: *Smooth seas do not make skilful sailors.*

This hardback is filled with quotes and is never less than an interesting, yet easy read. Well done Mark...

**Black Cab Wisdom: Knowledge from the Back Seat** is available from all good bookshops and internet sellers or from the publishers, **Summersdale**, on 01243 771 107

## Win a Toastmaster competition RESULT!

We called last month’s competition the strangest in **Call Sign** history, but nevertheless those few that entered it who were making a function obviously disagreed, because hiring a toastmaster doesn’t come cheap! One **Dial-a-Cab** driver even entered with no planned function, offering to donate the prize of the services of *Fellow of the Guild of Professional Toastmasters* **Keith Reading** to the LTFUC!

But after looking at the caption entries to the photo of Keith with Brian Rice, we’ve taken a chance that there are no calls of “fix,” because the winning entry was selected as Board member Allan Evans! His winning entry was: **“All the Chairman asked for was toast at the early morning Board meeting!”**

All other entrants have won a £25 discount voucher from Keith if they use his services at their function in addition to the existing 10% discount that he offers all our drivers and staff (see ad). So well done to Allan, who will be using Keith’s toastmastering skills to celebrate his 60th birthday in March.

Keith Reading is a *Fellow of the Guild of Professional Toastmasters* and is both confident and qualified to assist you in the planning and running of your event. He has the experience and sensitivity to provide the correct level of attentive service whatever the occasion. Knowing that your function or event will be looked after by your Toastmaster will allow you, as host/hostess to give your full attention to your family, friends and guests and more importantly, enjoy the occasion, stress free. See the ad in every issue for Keith’s contact details...



**“All the chairman asked for was toast at the early morning Board meeting!”**



### Kids Summer Learning Tools

As we're well into the summer hols, I thought it would be the perfect time to mention a bunch of computer-based learning tools I've used that can keep your kids busy and their minds active. These are tools I've either used personally or my son has used, so you can rest assured that this is good stuff. Even if you don't have kids, or if they're all grown up, many of these tools are great for learning new skills yourself. **And best of all – they're all free!**

### W3C Schools

This website was set up by the *World Wide Web Consortium* (aka W3C) to provide people of all ages with free online courses in programming for the web. You can start as a complete novice in any area of web development and go from novice to ninja in a short period of time! Covering all major current (and upcoming) web programming languages (such as HTML, XHTML, CSS, JavaScript, ASP.NET, PHP etc), you can learn to code through their intuitive 'Try it yourself' editor. You can even sit online exams and gain recognisable certification (for a small fee). This website is suitable for all ages (my son is 9 and he's currently learning HTML; I'm 35 and learning jQuery).

Go to <http://www.w3schools.com> (suitable for all operating systems and web browsers).

### Ribbon Hero

*Microsoft Office Labs* have released a free plugin to *Office 2010* called **Ribbon Hero**. This is a nicely crafted graphical learning game that teaches you how to use the 'ribbon' (that's the control panel at the top of *Word*, *Excel*, *PowerPoint* etc) to perform everyday tasks with *Office 2010*. Each level has individual 'missions' that award you points when you get them correct.

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

# Gaming: What's worth playing?

This is really popular in my house and all of us have benefitted from the knowledge we have gained through playing the missions. The tool is suitable for all ages and available for free download (Windows only) at <http://www.ribbon-hero.com>.

Don't forget you can get *Office 2010 Professional Plus* for only £37.89 (at time of writing) at <http://www.software4students.co.uk> if you have children in school, college or university.

### Timez Attack

Do you have primary school children who are struggling with their times tables or division? Then they need struggle no more! *Timez Attack* from *BigBrainz* really helped my son conquer his difficulties with his times tables and he did it by doing something he loves - playing computer games!

This is a fully-fledged 3D computer game that allows children to improve their maths skills level by level. Computer games are proven to be excellent learning tools because they reward the player with achievements as they progress. Without a doubt, I can say that this is the only tool you need to solidify your children's understanding of multiplication and division.

There is a free version available, but you can also buy add-on worlds for when your children have beaten the standard worlds (though this is not at all necessary). You can see some in-game footage and download the free software (Windows or Mac) at <http://www.bigbrainz.com>.

### Autodesk 123D (Beta)

The makers of *AutoCAD* (professional 3D modelling software) have released the beta version of their new software *Autodesk 123D*. If your child is interested in becoming an engineer or designer, this software will help them to design precise and makeable objects using smart tools by starting with simple shapes and then editing and tweaking them into more complex shapes.

This software is suitable for all ages and is free (Windows only) at <http://www.123dapp.com>.

### Unreal Development Kit

This software is more advanced, so I'd recommend secondary school or above. If your child (or even you) has ever wanted to design and create computer games, now they/you can! I'm not talking about silly stick-man games or other such low-quality games, the UDK has been used to make some of the most astounding 3D high-quality premium games out there, including huge titles like *Unreal Tournament* and *The Ball* on PC as well as *Infinity Blade* and *Epic Citadel* on *iPhone*. With some perseverance and a decent idea, you can make high-quality computer games which will run on PC or *iPhone*. There's lots of community support and documentation, which will make learning the UDK framework easier. Have a look at the showcase of games created with this free kit and download the kit itself (Windows only) at <http://www.udk.com/showcase>.

### Kodu

If you have younger children and they want to create computer games, but UDK is too complex for them, fear not! *Microsoft* has made available a nice piece of software that makes it easy for young kids to make their own 3D computer games on *Windows*, *PC* or *XBOX 360*. This great piece of kit provides them with a solid introduction to programming without boring them; they can build games quickly and easily, allowing their imagination to take over. You can get *Kodu* for free (Windows only) at <http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/projects/kodu>.

*Well, that's all for now. If you're looking for any specific education software, by all means email the Ed who will pass your request onto me and I'll see what I can find for you.*

*More news next month!*

Jon Winterburn  
DaC Network Administrator



The London Taxi Company

## EURO 5 TX4 PRICING



The London Taxi Company has confirmed its Euro 5 strategy by releasing the following additional statement with regards to pricing...

As previously announced in March, the only change to the current TX4 range of vehicles is that by January 2012 they will need to meet Euro 5 emissions regulations. There will not be any other specification or mechanical differences to the vehicle. However, due to the engineering changes including the new exhaust system, a Diesel Particulate Filter and the engine recalibration, there will be a £3000 increase in price across the range. This will make the TX4 (Euro 5) Style models £32,995 and the TX4 (Euro 5) Elegance models £35,995. The Euro 5 TX4 models will go on sale in the last quarter of 2011.

**This price increase will be introduced only on the Euro 5 versions of TX4; the current TX4 (Euro IV) will remain at the price it is today, starting at £29,995.**

Euro 5 requires all automotive manufacturers to reduce the level of particulates and Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) released into the environment through the tail pipe. To achieve this, the London Taxi Company has worked with their partners at VM Motori to modify the exhaust and Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) aspects of the existing engine. Apart from changes to the exhaust and EGR design of the existing engine, there will be absolutely no other internal or external differences between the Euro IV and Euro 5 versions of the TX4. Final calibration and testing of the system is currently taking place in Italy, but The London Taxi Company do not anticipate any significant changes to fuel economy or CO2 emissions between Euro IV and Euro 5.

In London, all new vehicles registered after April 2012 must be Euro 5 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* statement.



# Mailshot

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

## Leaving gift?

*Dear Alan*

Almost 20 years ago, I made a suggestion at an AGM that when any Dial-a-Cab driver who had been on the circuit for over ten years was on the verge of retirement from the trade, that the Society made their last four months free of any subscriptions. Do you know what happened to this idea because I thought I remembered a driver benefitting from the suggestion?

Changing the topic, can I also say how lucky we have been over the past 15 years to have a Chairman as good as Brian Rice. The majority of those 15 years have seen this Society going from strength to strength, but the mettle of a really good leader is how they operate when the business climate is not so good. Even during this worst of recessions, when businesses were collapsing around us, we haven't done too badly at all. I do not believe that the taxi business has ever seen a better leader than Brian. It is the easiest thing in the world to blame someone else when things aren't going so well, but Brian Rice and the Board have kept us going with not even the smallest sign of a return to those bad old days of the late-1980s when this company was almost on its knees.

Brian doesn't always get the appreciation that he deserves and I offer that appreciation. I also suspect that many others would like to say the same thing, but consider offering praise as being a bit woosy!

Also, I have just finished reading the excellent July issue of *Call Sign*, but I just wanted to talk about one particular item. On page 23, **Nuala Glavin** from Driver Services wrote a guide as to what you should do if you get a PCN. This article was so clear and concise that no one but no one could claim not to understand it! It explained in extremely clear language exactly what you should and shouldn't do in the event of getting a PCN. Would it be possible to reprint this article every month, because it really is the complete guide? Can you please thank Nuala for putting it together.

**Sid Nathan (K88)**

**Sid, that sounds like a letter from someone who is thinking about retirement? Surely not! Who would provide the smiles for our AGMs! I'm sure I speak for the Chairman when he recovers from his sudden attack of blushing, that he thanks you for your kind words.**

As for your main question, Company Secretary of the time Trevor Clarke told me when I asked if he could remember what actually happened, that your suggestion was never put into practice as the Chairman of the day, Ken Burns, left before it was taken any further and that during Trevor's time as Company Secretary, they never extended this suggestion to anyone. However, nowadays anyone with over 30 years at DaC pays no subs at all other than a nominal £1 per month

As for Nuala's article, I have put it into this issue again ...Ed

## PSA test

*Hi Alan*

I spoke to Allen Togwell around two months ago about my PSA test and last month I got my results - the bi-op was clear! It seems that I have severe inflammation on my prostate, which may be the reason my PSA reading was high. In fact the info Allen gave me about reasons the PSA can be high were exactly what the doctor also told me.

Can I say here how good it was to talk to Allen Togwell about my problem and I can honestly say after speaking to him that I felt much better whilst waiting for the results. I know Allen has written in *Call Sign* about prostate problems and I hope he continues to do so because I think his advice was a tremendous help for me and could be for our mag's readers as well.

My sincere thanks again to Allen Togwell...

**Ken Hardy (G36)**

**Since writing about problems involving the possibility of prostate cancer and of the Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test, Allen Togwell has had several drivers contacting him by phone concerning prostate problems prompted by Allen's articles on the topic in *Call Sign* and later reprinted on various internet sites. Ken Hardy was one of those drivers and according to Allen, he unsurprisingly sounded rather stressed. Allen assured him that there were a number of reasons for a high PSA reading that were not cancer related. Happily for Ken, that's exactly what happened ...Ed**

## Exclusive accounts?

*Hi Alan*

In response to Brian Rice's answer to my letter (*July Call Sign*), he gave an example of a cash job in Surrey Quays to Deptford that we would be hard pressed to cover. That has always been the case and always will be, so let them have it! My point is now as it was in my previous letter, what about the account work? What is being done to safeguard that? Brian said that we had retained JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley and Citi and also extended the 'House' for another year despite interest shown in those accounts by AL. Perhaps I'm being a tad paranoid, but what's to stop AL getting them next time? None of the accounts mentioned are exclusive to us anymore and at least two - if not all three - are already serviced by AL. Did Brian intentionally fail to mention this? I'd be interested to hear of any corporate accounts that used AL or any other PH company in the past, but then got rid of them, but I doubt there are any. Why would they? They're licensed and even if the staff don't want them, I'm sure that the way the economy is, that would be of little interest to the bosses.

Brian said that he wasn't stating anything that most sensible taxi drivers were not already aware of, but what I am aware of is that AL and other PH firms are making deep inroads. Imagine this. What if next time around, the aforementioned accounts do go - and why wouldn't they if they are satisfied with them - what would happen to us then? Why would any decent sized account come back to the trade if the costs are cheaper and they are satisfied? We can't even use supply and demand

as our saving grace anymore. We know Brian agrees, he has more or less said so in the past and I just think it would be nice to hear every Board member's opinion individually.

How many of our loyal accounts will remain as the likes of AL continue to grow and become noticed everywhere - just like we used to be - and undercut us by a long way and their reputation is sound?

**John Stowers (K40)**

**Thanks for the letter John. If I passed it over to Brian Rice, your answer wouldn't be much different because there isn't another answer. Your letter is factual but what it doesn't have is an answer. Nothing we say will make AL smaller and there is little we can do about that. As you read exclusively in the last issue via the internal letter we came across from Ford, AL have ordered 1200 new Galaxies - most of which have now been delivered. They are probably already as big as us, with every driver in an identical vehicle but not allowed to pick up off the street, therefore a much higher percentage of their work will be covered because human nature being what it is, many of our drivers will pick up a street hail rather than run a mile to pick up a trip that is struggling in the bids.**

And there's your answer! What do we have other than service because you are right, John, loyalty won't last forever. We do have technology that is still better than the others, but when it comes to it, if you were the CEO of a large account what would you consider to be more important - having management information reports containing info that is still second to none or a cab outside your door on time? To be honest, I get a bit peeved off covering trips in the bids and having to explain why the cab was late. I also need to earn a living and I know damn well that there are nearer cabs to some of the pick-ups than I am. Of course, when it's quiet, our service is exemplary but it has suddenly become busy and that is reflected by the bids column. AL and others aren't perfect either and they don't cover everything, but neither do they have drivers responding to street hails. They just get overrun by radio work. And please don't tell me they pick up off the street because whilst some no doubt do, the huge majority don't and we can't really compete against that because that's not how we work. Fortunately our fate is still in our own hands. If we all decide to cover just one or possibly two more radio trips each day, then our reputation will carry us through because Brian Rice has convinced many of them that we are still the best.

This isn't personal John and perhaps it's just a ridiculous ramble from someone who has been on DaC for 37 years and who allows sentiment to take over, but I'm



## Mailshot

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hoping that at least a few of you out there will agree with me. I don't expect new drivers to because that isn't why they come to DaC, but drivers such as John - who has done almost 20 years - obviously care about our reputation. The question is more what they do about it because asking others what the answer is doesn't solve anything and older drivers will know that now it's much busier, we just won't cover in-town fixed prices. But, even with the same number of drivers, we still have the ability to provide a better radio service than any PH company - the question is whether we have enough drivers who believe that as well.

Incidentally, I have sent John's letter and my reply to every Board member and if any disagree, then of course I am sure they will say so ...Ed

### Fixed prices debate

Hiya Al

Re the articles by Mike and Keith (*July Call Sign*); although they both have a case I am inclined to agree with Keith. But I'd like to make a suggestion. My idea is that we carry on charging the customer the gratuity, but rather than give it to the driver we use it to reduce the admin charges because as Keith says, that is the big stumbling block when we negotiate new or existing clients' accounts. Surely if we were to do this it would create more work, which in time would make up for the loss of the gratuity. I know it's tough out there, but I feel we have to give a little as drivers to enable the Sales team to really have a go at the likes of AL and all the other leeches. It's just a thought and I realise that once again the same drivers will bear the brunt, but I think that's a price we will all have to pay...

Terry Jackson (E56)

**Brian Rice responds:** Hi Terry, nice idea but as you are probably aware I am not happy with anything that reduces the return to the member. I believe this has a detrimental effect when things get a little busier as we have seen during Ascot and Wimbledon. Many members are under the impression that we charge an exorbitant administration charge and that is not true. In fact the member's gratuity is often more than the administration charge. In many cases, if a taxi waits more than four minutes for the passenger to come out on tariff 3, then that cost is more than the administration charge.

I have always treated the member's gratuity as sacrosanct and if any negotiation takes place, then it is on the administration charge and not the gratuity. We should protect that as long as possible before we have to give ground - if we ever do! Unlike some of our competitors, I do not believe in varying gratuity or charging the customer a certain gratuity and then claw some of it back from the driver to subsidise the administration charge. Customers soon hear what others are paying as a gratuity and I can assure you they always want charges to percolate downwards.

Anyway Terry, thank you for your suggestion, but I think you will agree we do not agree on that one...

### And again...

Hi Al

I say no to fixed prices and am in total support of Keith Cain's opposition to them. I personally haven't done cut-price work for more than 10 years. Given the horrendous traffic conditions 24/7 which is predicted to get worse with the Olympics coming up, why a driver would do a job for less than the official rate is beyond me. I don't think any London postcode should carry a fixed price! Factor in the time a driver has sat in a zone and then reluctantly accepts a fixed price ride because it's invariably the 5th time it has been offered to him (reject number 6 is dusty bin time), the ride is now of no value to man or beast.

With most cabs doing a meagre 20mpg and at £6+ a gallon, where's the value in "mates rates?"

Cash punters readily jump in and pay the going rate and in my experience never ask for a discount. We must be doing something right given the amount of cabs we provide on a weekly basis and yes, work is never easy to win and retain but cut-price work in my opinion spells certain disaster. I also feel this new technology with smart phones and apps needs to be looked at as I can see it having an effect on radio taxis.

Finally, having read Michael Son's article, it wouldn't appear to me he's happy to "toe the party line" as Brian Rice states. At this time I feel we need the captain and the officers sober and singing off the same song sheet to guide us through these turbulent times!

Colin Jenkins (Y22)

**Thanks for the letter Colin. Let me assure you that so far as Mike Son was concerned, he feels that there is nothing wrong in giving his view on anything he perceives as being in the Society's interest but also added that he believes in majority decisions and always supports a majority BoM decision. That, I believe, is one of the successes of *Call Sign* - Board members are no longer afraid to put their views in print for fear of drivers thinking there is about to be a coup!**

**Apps?** There is a danger, but in my view more of a threat from the private hire one which is said to have around 4000 drivers signed up (Kabbee) and which several newspapers have described as having taxis on. The real taxi ones are a different kettle of fish and remind me of Zingo - it worked ok-ish when it was quiet out, but flopped as soon as it became busy with drivers reluctant to pass a street job in favour of one on their phone. Also, I'm not 100% certain but I have a feeling it is against our rules for a DaC driver to be a member of another circuit. The question is whether any of the 'apps' classify as a radio circuit. That rule arises from an incident in November 1954 when ODRTS Committee member David Fiertag (D05) was discovered to also be Dog 21 on the York Way radio circuit. He was expelled and Charlie Young (A24) was co-opted onto the CoM ...Ed



### And fixed prices - another way?

Dear Alan

In answer to Mike Son's article in the *June Call Sign* promoting more fixed prices as a way to retain our customers and generate more work for us, I have to ask why? What point is there? And is there another way? Let's look at my first question, why fix? It seems to me that we still wouldn't be competitive on longer journeys and service would suffer as we have seen recently and drivers would lose out at certain times. What point is there in fixed prices, because I think we must do something right otherwise all of our customers that have accounts with minicabs wouldn't use us at all! So is there another way? Mike obviously thinks we are too expensive with certain trips. If we fix a price, how long before we will have to fix prices for all? Anybody who works the Finz will have noticed the work has changed; even when it gets a little busy there are a lot of short trips. Why haven't we lost that kind of trip? Because our service is good! Brian Rice and Keith Cain often tell us that some people are prepared to pay a little more for service. So we need a balance.

Another way to keep our service yet still be competitive would be to carry on as we are except for longer journeys ie to outer London Postcodes and airports. These journeys charged on the meter but nothing else, no booking fee, no handling charge (so no vat), no run-in, no waiting time premium, no tip or surcharges. That's a big saving. Driver and Dial-a-Cab giving a little, but the driver paid the full fare unlike a fixed price fare and DaC. losing the booking fee. This idea may generate extra income for both driver and DaC as some smaller and medium accounts have reluctantly switched to minicabs and may return to us. Drivers could of course opt out of this type of trip and reject in the normal way. I'm sure most of you daymen have been approached on ranks by people promoting a taxi app service for smartphones, many of these companies want you to arrive with a dead clock! I think there is one service that wants you to give the passenger 5 minutes to get their hat and coat, so that's even competition from within our own trade! How long before they offer account facilities? I worry that if the economy remains as it is for the next 2 years or the Euro debt gets worse, DaC's profits will continue to be squeezed. So a question here for Brian Rice. How much would it cost to buy a good private hire company? Could we then use the profit to subsidise our own booking fees? A huge step but we could do it. Please think about it. Times are changing. So hands up, who wouldn't do a fare to the coast with no run in?

Jon Robinson (E88)

**Brian Rice responds:** That is very interesting Jon and it would appear that we hold similar views on many issues. Regarding



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the FPs, at the moment we do not have a run in, there is not a gratuity, neither is there waiting time and as I have stated many times, our admin charge is very small, sometimes just a transaction charge and VAT only applies to the administration charge. However, there must be a time element involved before it reverts to a metered fare otherwise some clients would keep the cab waiting for an eternity.

One of the problems we experience is perception; as you are probably aware, the public thinks minicab cheap, taxis expensive! Likewise many members believe metered fare fine, FP always well under the meter – and that is not the case. We have one particular night account (not mentioning any names) where the vast majority of their work is on FPs and where they are charged at £3.70p per mile. But it gets a little busy and we struggle!

It is a fact that some of the more reputable private hire companies charge a minimum of £14, which also gives you 15mins and the first three miles and then £2.16p per mile - I know you can do the equation. Consequently, as you can see the longer the journey the cheaper they become compared to us (if you know what I mean). However, on shorter journeys there is not a lot in it. A six mile journey in a taxi would be £22.20p, in a minicab it's £20.48, but as the journeys get longer the price differential becomes greater and that is why they get the longer journeys. However Jon, I'm sure I am not telling anything you do not already know, but you do make interesting points and as you can see, if we scrapped all charges as you suggest, there would still be a considerable disparity.

So how much to buy a car company? Not very much and yes we could do it, we'd probably have to change our rules first. You pay the minicab drivers 60% of the fare and keep 40%, which is the norm. All taxis on the circuit free subscriptions, but they would have to do a minimum amount of trips to clear up all the work that is outstanding - there Jon, you really have opened a can of worms! I can just hear some of our members saying: "I don't want their leftovers," and I can understand that, however, there is a difference between being intransigent and running a commercial enterprise. Addison Lee would probably then get a run for their money. But of course you have now made a noose for me and yes, I put my neck right in it! Bet the Editor loves you Jon! You've really opened up a debate!

Finally, I would like to make it crystal clear that the above is just a view and not necessarily workable, it is not something that is going to happen - only the members can decide that and I believe there is too much 'anti' feeling for it to happen in the short term.

## Blackfriars underpass

Hi Al

Brian is sidestepping the main point of Mike

Appleby's letter (*July Call Sign*) regarding the suggestion that many drivers think is a good idea, ie putting the Berwin account into SE1E or W while the ridiculous Blackfriars underpass disruption continues. How far is the account from SE1? One or two hundred yards? Drivers all know how difficult Southwark Bridge is to reach from the north during the roadworks...

John Addis (K97)

Hi John, to get an independent view I asked to see the coverage on that account (without seeing who the drivers were). Some trips were covered quicker than others but generally speaking all were covered within 10 minutes. The ones that took longest were the locals and even they didn't take much longer as the prices are very good. All were on the non-physical EC5, which means that drivers aren't taking that long and I assume that if a driver is west of the Bank, they will cross via Blackfriars anyway...Ed

## Old Cab Wanted

I am a London taxi enthusiast, trade historian and member of the London Vintage Taxi Association and would be interested to hear from any taxi owner that may have an old London taxi that he/she is willing to donate to preservation as we come towards the implementation of the new age restriction. I am looking for an FX4, Fairway or Metrocab that I can restore / preserve for the future. I intend to use the cab for events such as taxi trade shows and, hopefully, children's outings after its restoration. With older, traditional cabs being replaced with newer models - and now the Vito too - I feel that it is time to ensure that the history of our trade is preserved. If any owners have a cab that they would be willing to part with - for a good, genuine cause - then can they please get in touch with me on 07852 561 368 / 0151 677 7067 or email vintage-taxis@gmail.com.

Age and condition of the cab is not too important, but a running cab requiring just a little or medium restoration would obviously be preferable. I'd like to try and get the cab into the trade press and will make a sizeable donation to one of the major taxi trade charities and of course, I'd arrange collection myself.

Many thanks for your interest...

Ross Campbell

LVTa member

Good luck Ross. Call Sign is a big supporter of the LVTa ...Ed

## Black is the colour...

Alan

'Black' has been the trademark of the London taxi trade for a long time, so the next time we think of buying a cab just think how much a whizz kid from an advertising agency would charge to come up with that. Never forget that we are our own marketing tool. As much as we don't like the expression of us being *black cab drivers*, well that's what we are! The days of old cabs are long gone and we have to face facts - it's gonna cost us all a lot more money to go to work in the future. So really, anything for free must be good - and 'black' is a free ad! Why the hell do you think AL copy us? If you



can't see the wood from the trees, then go and drive a minicab and let somebody else think for you as well as taking your profit money. All most folks want is a clean cab, a driver who knows where he or she is going and with a bit of style about them. And on time? Well that bit is up to Boris! We get the easy bit because as we all know, driving a cab is easy! We are going to win this one because we are us and let's face it, if we get it right we can demand more from that nice lady in the Sales team...

Gary Cox (046)

I have been writing for years how silly we are to campaign against the words 'black cab drivers'. Ok, so I don't like it either but the world over knows who you are talking about when you mention black cab drivers. I assume Gary is responding to my last month's editorial when I queried the mentality of our trade driving different vehicles in a multitude of colours, whereas our biggest competitor has now almost taken delivery of his complete order from Ford of 1200 Galaxy cars - every single one in black! The difference is narrowing with young people referring to both halves of the trade as cabs - but still calling us black cabs. And we don't like it! ...Ed

## Parking or loading?

## Do wardens know the difference...

Dear Call Sign

I received a PCN at the St Martins Lane hotel on 7 June at 09.24. I was at the front of the rank and called forward by the concierge to pick up passengers. When they got in the cab, they asked him where their luggage was? He then had to go back inside and retrieve it whilst they waited in my taxi. This obviously took more than 4 minutes, so a ticket was issued as "...there was no visible sign of loading/unloading" for the video operator. I wrote in and of course they refused my reasons, so I now have to appeal.

I will ask concierge for a written confirmation, but this is a real pain as it is obvious I would not sit in front of a rank and get a parking ticket when I could sit on the rank! Any suggestions?

Jim Cunningham (S88)

Barrie Segal said: "My view is that Jim is entitled to the picking up exemption AND the loading exemption. Both these exemptions apply in this case at the same time because the passenger loaded his/her luggage as well as being picked up. Interestingly, the pick-up exemption also includes luggage but as the council may argue that the luggage was not with the passenger when they came out but that they went back to collect it, then the loading exemption would apply."

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