

February 2011



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

**LCDC say DaC require PH Operator's Licence...  
We say we don't!**



**GUESS WHO WAS TELLING THE TRUTH!**

*It could only be the  
LTFUC Mad Hatter's Ball*





# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

This month's "What's On." Due to space restraints, the table below shows 81 of the 156 that are listed on the MyFav web site. For details of how to access the full list, see below. Any times are kick off or start times. Sorry, no burst times...

Venue	Event	Day	Date	Venue	Event	Day	Date
Arsenal	v Everton 19:45	Tue	01/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Fri	11/02/2011
ExCel	Cisco Live	Tue	01/02/2011	Arsenal	v Wolves	Sat	12/02/2011
O2 Arena	Voice in a million	Tue	01/02/2011	Leyton Orient	v Bristol R	Sat	12/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Tue	01/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Sat	12/02/2011
ExCel	Cisco Live	Wed	02/02/2011	ExCel	Adult Skills	Sun	13/02/2011
Fulham	v Newcastle 20:00	Wed	02/02/2011	Olympia Grand Hall	PURE	Sun	13/02/2011
O2 Arena	Usher	Wed	02/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Sun	13/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Wed	02/02/2011	ExCel	Adult Skills	Mon	14/02/2011
Earls Court One	Holiday & Travel Show	Thu	03/02/2011	Fulham	v Chelsea 20:00	Mon	14/02/2011
ExCel	Cisco Live	Thu	03/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Valentine's Jazz	Mon	14/02/2011
ExCel	Motorcycle Show	Thu	03/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Tue	15/02/2011
O2 Arena	Usher	Thu	03/02/2011	Arsenal	v Barcelona 19:45	Wed	16/02/2011
Olympia Grand Hall	Event Production Show	Thu	03/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Wed	16/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Thu	03/02/2011	O2 Arena	Usher	Thu	17/02/2011
Earls Court One	Holiday & Travel Show	Fri	04/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Thu	17/02/2011
ExCel	Motorcycle Show	Fri	04/02/2011	ExCel	Baby Show	Fri	18/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Fri	04/02/2011	O2 Arena	Usher	Fri	18/02/2011
Crystal Palace	v Middlesbrough	Sat	05/02/2011	ExCel	Baby Show	Sat	19/02/2011
Earls Court One	Holiday & Travel Show	Sat	05/02/2011	hmv Apollo	Paul McKenna 'Thin'	Sat	19/02/2011
ExCel	Motorcycle Show	Sat	05/02/2011	O2 Arena	Russell Howard	Sat	19/02/2011
ExCel	UK Wedding Show	Sat	05/02/2011	Olympia Grand Hall	Wedding Show	Sat	19/02/2011
Millwall	v Doncaster	Sat	05/02/2011	Wembley Arena	Championship Boxing	Sat	19/02/2011
O2 Arena	Supercross	Sat	05/02/2011	O2 Arena	Russell Howard	Sun	20/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Sat	05/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	ignite - 12:00	Sun	20/02/2011
Earls Court One	Holiday & Travel Show	Sun	06/02/2011	Lawrence Hall	Cosmetic Exec Women	Mon	21/02/2011
ExCel	Motorcycle Show	Sun	06/02/2011	O2 Arena	Usher	Mon	21/02/2011
ExCel	UK Wedding Show	Sun	06/02/2011	Arsenal	v Stoke City 19:45	Tue	22/02/2011
Lindley Hall	Antiques Fair	Sun	06/02/2011	O2 Arena	Gaucha Int Polo	Thu	24/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Sun	06/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Madam Butterfly	Thu	24/02/2011
O2 Arena	Roxy Music	Mon	07/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Late Night Jazz 22:00	Thu	24/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	James Rhodes	Mon	07/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Madam Butterfly	Fri	25/02/2011
Earls Court Two	Travel Technology	Tue	08/02/2011	Chelsea	v Birmingham 17:30	Sat	26/02/2011
Earls Court Two	Business Travel Show	Tue	08/02/2011	Lawrence Hall	Philatex	Sat	26/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Tue	08/02/2011	O2 Arena	Ne-Yo	Sat	26/02/2011
Earls Court Two	Travel Technology	Wed	09/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Madam Butterfly	Sat	26/02/2011
Earls Court Two	Business Travel Show	Wed	09/02/2011	Tottenham	v Arsenal 12:45	Sat	26/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Wed	09/02/2011	hmv Apollo	James Blunt	Sun	27/02/2011
hmv Apollo	Alexandra Burke	Thu	10/02/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Madam Butterfly	Sun	27/02/2011
indigO2	The Three Degrees	Thu	10/02/2011	Wembley Stadium	Carling Cup Final	Sun	27/02/2011
O2 Arena	Premier League Darts	Thu	10/02/2011	hmv Apollo	James Blunt	Mon	28/02/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Cirque du Soleil	Thu	10/02/2011				

All the back issues of Nash's Numbers can be found on the [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) website, however, the 70+ page UID and "What's On" lists are now on the [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) website. The MyFav website is a general and very useful launch pad to the rest of the internet that you may want as your 'Home Page' (click 'Help' and see videos about this new site).

The UID and 'What's On' are on a locked page. To unlock the page:

- 1) Go to [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) (you will notice a padlock symbol below the analogue clock).
- 2) Click 'Register', fill out the details, but you must enter the word taxi in the 'unlock code' box then click 'Submit'. You will be sent a temporary password. This is automatic and you should receive it within seconds.
- 3) Log in with your email address and password. You will notice that the padlock symbol has been replaced with the word TAXI, click this button and the taxi page of icons will appear. This may seem complicated, but if you now click on 'Make Home page', every time you launch your internet this page will appear. Please use the 'Contact' button to make any suggestions for additional icon launch buttons you would like to improve this site.

\*\*\* PRIZES \*\*\* The MyFav website is being promoted by recommendation. A £100 Amazon gift voucher is available every month just for recommending the site. Click the 'Prizes' button on the [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) website for more information.

# from the editor's desk

## History...

I don't know if it's me, but things in the cab trade seem to have become rather unexciting. What's probably happened is that whereas drivers used to get concerned over anything that looked dangerous to the trade, they now carry around with them a form of anaesthetic that causes them to just look the other way.

I still occasionally get calls from some drivers who are concerned about something or other, but most just seem to shrug their shoulders and carry on whatever they were doing. Ok, my reasons are undoubtedly selfish; I'm trying to put together a magazine and without any info coming in, that undoubtedly makes it that bit harder. But I've accepted that and just do the best I can – always feeling grateful to any drivers who do provide me with material.

But it does concern me when I think that licensed London taxi drivers care nothing about the history of this trade and are prepared to sacrifice it for a quick buck. Perhaps that shows my age and in reality it's me who is wrong? Perhaps caring about our business is a dated concept?

Perversely, I used to hate history when I was at Davenant – yet in those many years since leaving school, I have found history becoming more important to me.

From 1983 until I became editor in 1997, I wrote *Call Sign's* Big Al column. It was a hugely enjoyable experience with what seemed to be an open invitation to insult anyone I wanted to on any of the three circuits! It didn't matter if they were the Chairman or cleaner, no one was safe from Big Al – indeed many older drivers still refer to me by that name, although they may well be referring to my girth nowadays!

But Big Al wasn't just about taking the Mick out of everyone, I tried to sneak in an historical background for Dial-a-Cab, because in those days no one really cared where we came from so long as we were busy. While the Chairman of the time (Ken Burns) showed a small amount of support in my digging for our past, few of the rest of the Board really cared and the bottom line was that we were a business and how we began was irrelevant. Of course, who's to say they weren't right? But I just felt it was important to have a past and as no one was really bothered either way, I started to dig.

Unbeknown to me, our Secretary of the time, Trevor Clarke, also had similar leanings and although he had not the time to take them further, he had minute books going back almost to Day 1. Few Board members even realised we had them! Trevor also had a few photographic remnants that were held together with sticky tape – one of which was of famous blind MP of the day, Sir Ian Fraser, who dispatched our first official job. When I mentioned to Trevor how I was interested in building up our history from its then total of nil, to one where we could look back to chart our progress, his help was invaluable.

He did the unthinkable and allowed me unlimited access to those minute books and anything else that was in the small safe at 144 Shirland Road. One year later, after painstakingly going through over thirty years of minutes, I had written *The Early Years of Dial-a-Cab*. It had just six pages but they were filled with names and dates from before the Society even began, right up to the time when we moved to Brunswick Place and changed our trading name from All London Radio Cabs to that of Dial-a-



Cab. 1500 copies were given away with *Call Sign* and haven't been seen since!

On that journey, I met former Board members who had been totally forgotten about and who were thrilled to have suddenly been remembered. I came across names that even Board members hadn't heard of and whose names I believed should at least be written down as part of our history – people such as our first full time dispatcher from Day 1 at Pentonville Road on 26 January 1954, a Mr Fizackerly. He left because the £10 a week ODRTS could only afford to pay wasn't really enough. Mr Defries (D03) took his place. The official opening ceremony by Ian Fraser took place some 15 months later in March 1955.

Many, though, believed our first day to be on Sunday 7 June 1953 when an open invitation to any taxi driver interested in forming an owner drivers radio circuit was circulated. It was held at the Albany Tavern at the top end of Regent Street. Those that turned up collected £200 between them and that went into the bank as Bonnie Martyn began the search for any premises they could afford and a radio manufacturer who would allow them credit, as £200 wasn't going to get them too many sets after renting premises!

I discovered people I had never heard of such as **Bernie Lyons**, who edited the first-ever ODRTS newsheets. Drivers collecting any credit money owed would pick the sheet up at Pentonville Road. What no one knew was that Bernie hated doing them! Fortunately they were few and far between and usually consisted of one page. Bernie was often heard to say that he'd do the newsheet so long as he didn't have to write anything on it – and he never did! In the mid-60s, Joe Toff took over with ODRTS News Monthly, a proper magazine!

But even more important to me was the day I finally traced our Founder-Chairman, Bonnie Martyn to his north west London home. It may sound easy to trace people living in London, but no one seemed to know where he was or even if he was alive. After all, he was 40 when ODRTS opened for business and he would have been around 70 by the time I searched for him. But eventually I did trace him, introduced myself and asked if I could have a chat about the early days. He was absolutely thrilled – so much so that he had tears running down his cheeks that anyone from Dial-a-Cab had tried to find him. Talk about the early days? He spoke for hours and not for one second did I feel bored!

I met him many times after that and eventually arranged for him to visit Brunswick House,

where much to his delight, the Chairman showed him around, with yours truly following behind. I'll never forget that look on his face as he saw how the one-room and a chair at Pentonville Road that he started, had turned into a multi-£million business. On that trip, he met up again with former founder-Board member Frank Duncan, who was still on the BoM!

In fact, Bonnie Martyn's achievement with ODRTS had been so amazing – there had never been a radio circuit that was successful before – that in November 1957, he was invited by a representative of the Government of Bermuda to go and set up a similar circuit there.

So Bonnie resigned from ODRTS – something for which many never forgave him – and on 28 December 1957 he travelled to Bermuda via New York on the Queen Mary. Sent at the same time on a freight ship were 12 Austin A55s, each fitted with Pye 'reporter' radios and which were going to be the beginnings of Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs. That company also still exists. Bonnie eventually returned and while regaining a place on the Board, his departure had left too many sour tastes and he never became Chairman again – something he really wanted as he felt he had learned much when stopping off in the USA on the way back from Bermuda.

One other occasion I will probably never forget came in June 1990 when Bonnie became 90. Unbeknown to him, Chairman Brian Rice, *Call Sign* photographer Alan Green and myself laid in wait for him at his home whilst he had been to visit family. He came in and saw Brian holding a bottle of Champagne and a specially inscribed plaque and again we saw more of the Martyn tears of joy!

One of Bonnie's proudest days would have been on 7 June 2003 when Chairman Brian Rice made a celebratory 50th anniversary Dinner and Ball at London's Vinopolis. With a who's-who of London's corporate business world representing our clients, many DaC drivers and their partners, members of staff, leaders of all the radio circuits forgetting their rivalries and the PCO with their human side showing, only one man could be made as the star of the evening – Bonnie Martyn. Sadly Bonnie had died 10 months earlier and his widow Carol represented him. A toast was made to him with a huge round of applause following as a huge thank you. Former Chairmen Jack Russell and Aubrey Siteman were there, along with the widows of former Chairmen Phil Messias (Faye) and Jack Taylor (Edna) to celebrate 50 years of Dial-a-Cab.

It was probably at that point I realised that my fight for a history had finally been successful. Soon after, a plaque went up in Driver's Reception detailing all our past Chairmen and *Call Sign* even began an ongoing series of *Flashbacks*, which detailed past events – both major and minor.

If I were back at Davenant, I'm still not sure if history would be my 'thing' but so far as this Society is concerned, I still find it a thrill when I discover new things about its' past. Kind drivers even send me memorabilia, for which I am always truly grateful. But I still wish more drivers cared about the history of our trade and not just treat it as work. I know it's an impossible dream, but it's still one that I harbour...

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# reflections of the chairman

## The facts, NOT lies...

I believe it fair to say that Mr Davis, Chairman of the LCDC is not a fan of Dial-a-Cab, neither is he an admirer of mine since he was expelled from Dial-a-Cab by three of his fellow subscribers. At every opportunity, he denigrates both mine and Dial-a-Cab's name, whether that be in their newspaper The Badge or on internet sites where he likes to write anonymous pieces - or as he sometimes likes to be called, Beccy or indeed sometimes Lulu!

The latest escapade performed by Mr Davis was to report Dial-a-Cab to the Licensed Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH or PCO to you and me) stating that Dial-a-Cab were running a Private Hire operation, which is quite ludicrous. Such is his paranoia with me and Dial-a-Cab that he will clutch at anything in an attempt to discredit us with the rest of the trade. Consequently, a piece appeared in the September edition of The Badge, with the headline: **COULD THIS BE THE END OF DIAL-A-CAB'S MUTUAL STATUS?**

The article went on to state (the typos are theirs and not mine): ***The Badge has learnt that Dial a Cab have been Informed that they must apply for a Private Hire Operators licence for their six year old Concierge booking system. The decision comes from Taxi and Private Hire following a detailed investigation into Dial A Cabs business activities.***

Well, that was quite amazing as it would appear that the LCDC knew more about the situation than we did at Dial-a-Cab! How could that be? Well the obvious answer was that the LCDC reported us to the LTPH in order to endeavour to discredit Dial-a-Cab. At the time we just supposed that was the case, we now know for a fact that it WAS the case. I just find it incomprehensible that one man's - well two really - paranoia can lead them to try and discredit an organisation within their own industry just to satisfy their own over inflated ego. More was to follow in the October edition of The Badge under the heading of:

### **DIAL-A-CAB ADMIT TO PH OPERATORS LICENSE REQUEST**

The article went on to say (again, any typos are theirs and not mine): ***London Taxi and Private Hire stated that after their investigations into the Concierge booking system, it has "positively identified that Dial A Cab are making provisions for Private Hire bookings through their call centre operations. As a result they will know be Required to become as an Operator under the provisions of the Private Hire Act."***

Once again, what complete and utter rubbish and lies the above piece was. This is what really happened.

Before the second article appeared, LTPH did in fact get in touch with me and stated that we required a PH Licence. I disagreed with them and we proceeded to have some extremely amicable meetings where the topic was discussed. I also furnished LTPH with some legal advice that agreed with my point of view. LTPH deliberated over the situation; then on the 11 January, I together with the LCDC received a letter from LTPH. My letter stated:

***After careful consideration of all the information you have provided, Transport for London is satisfied that Dial-a-Cab does not need to be licensed as a private hire vehicle operator in order to deliver the service as described.***



## So there you have it, the truth as NOT told by the hierarchy of the LCDC!

Although they did report us to LTPH, they then quite categorically stated in The Badge that we required a PH licence. Such is their dislike and paranoia about Dial-a-Cab and myself, they invented facts that they would like to be the truth!

Mr Davis has attempted to discredit me and Dial-a-Cab on several occasions and each time he has had to go away with his tail between his legs, sporting a bloody nose. When will he ever learn? I know he likes to tell anyone that will listen that he used to be a boxer and train-

er, well, I just hope he won more bouts than he has done against Dial-a-Cab.

More importantly, I am sad that at a time when there are so many problems facing our industry, that Mr Davis squanders his time and member's money on a crusade to discredit me and Dial-a-Cab and pander to his own ego. I believe he is actually a Narcissist, although he is the only person that does not recognise that fact!

Anyway, fighting with Mr Davis is boring as there is not any competition, so I am quite prepared to bury the past in order to enhance the future of our trade. I just hope Grant, Beccy or Lulu - or whatever he likes to be called today - can do the same. I won't hold my breath though!

## Tenders

I know many people become a little nervous - me included - when a large account goes out to tender. We had our largest and third largest go to tender last year and I am pleased to say we have retained them both. The second account that went to tender, I did not receive notification that we had retained it until the day before Christmas Eve - which was a nice present!

Some of our larger accounts like to become modest when it comes to publicity, so I shall not say any more other than please ensure you service the client in Canada Square as well as you have during the past four and a half years.

## AGM

Don't forget the AGM is on 6 February at the HAC in City Road, beginning at 11am. Please remember that if you do not vote by post then you should attend. If you do not attend or vote by post, you will be fined £50.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 6th.

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



**Keith Reading**  
Professional Toastmaster  
Master of Ceremonies

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# KNOWLEDGE SPEED-UP?

With stories of a possible four-year Knowledge of London causing the lowest number of candidates in recent memory, London Taxis & Private Hire (LTPH) - the body responsible for licensing London's taxi and private hire industries - are to discontinue the initial talk that candidates have to undergo before being accepted to go on the KoL.

This will be replaced with an information pack that explains exactly what is required in order to become a licensed London taxi driver. More importantly, this will allow candidates to begin the Knowledge immediately rather than having to wait the sometimes-elongated period of months before they were "invited" to attend the talk. The information pack will become the first step in the Knowledge process.

An LTPH spokesperson told **Call Sign**:

"In order to streamline and speed up the process, LTPH have removed the requirement for applicants to attend an initial talk. The talk provided applicants with a detailed explanation of what would be required of them in order to study the Knowledge of London.

"Instead, with immediate effect, a Knowledge information pack will be sent to all applicants who have been accepted onto the Knowledge. The pack will contain a Knowledge of London candidate's introductory booklet together with a covering letter, the *Blue Book* and a *Guide to learning the Knowledge DVD*.

"This means that applicants will no longer have to wait to attend an



**The new Knowledge will cut several months off the process**

initial talk before commencing their studies and will also represent better value for money for successful applicants, whilst making more efficient use of examiners' time. However, applicants will still be able to telephone the Knowledge of London team with any enquiries they may have."

John Mason, Director of LTPH, added: "The Knowledge of London examination is famous the world over and it is important for us to provide new

applicants with as much information as possible when they embark on the journey to become a licensed London cabbie.

"Having been accepted onto the Knowledge, new students have historically waited some time for an "initial talk" before getting out on the street and learning the runs and points of interest they will need to commit to memory if they want to become a cabbie.

"Following a review of the current process, we feel that replacing the initial talk with an information pack is a much better system and will ensure that students have the information they need to get cracking within days of being accepted. This also enables us to free up even more examiners' time, as they had historically given the talk themselves.

"Any new students who have questions about the process or want advice or guidance can still contact us and we will continue to do everything we can to assist and support them throughout the process."

## LONDON'S NEWEST 'WOW' HOTEL OPENS

Older drivers will remember the *Swiss Centre* at Leicester Square and the extra work we used to pick up there. Well some of that work will soon be returning when Leicester Square premieres the hottest new hotel in London, **The W-London Leicester Square**. The hotel opens its doors on Wednesday **February 16th** from the same building as the old *Swiss Centre* at 10 Wardour Street.

**Call Sign** took the opportunity to speak to Head Concierge, Josh Brown, who assured us that the new hotel would only be using licensed taxis, unless specifically asked otherwise by a hotel client. That makes it a good reason to pop by from February 16th and whenever you are passing.

The W-London Leicester Square has 192 rooms that include 9 suites, two WOW suites and one *Extreme WOW* suite! The restaurant will be world class and draw visitors from all over town.

W Hotels Worldwide® is an innovative contemporary lifestyle brand with 34 hotels and retreats in the most vibrant cities and exotic destinations around the world. Inspiring, iconic, innovative and influential, W Hotels provides the ultimate in insider access to a world of WOW, with each hotel offering a unique mix of innovative design and passions around fashion, music, entertainment, design, architecture, pop culture and everything in between. W

Hotels are unique and individual expressions of modern living, reflected in the brand's sensibility to an holistic lifestyle experience with cutting-edge design, contemporary restaurant concepts, glamorous nightlife experiences and signature spas. Chic and cool are about to hit London and hopefully such an iconic brand will only use the best taxis!



**London's WOW hotel is about to open**



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"It is at the edge of a petal that love waits"- William Carlos Williams

# Jerys World



Yes, of course my office has a plan for you. Buy a new cab on 1 April 2012, we'll give you fifty quid towards it and a free lottery ticket to win admission to the Olympics!

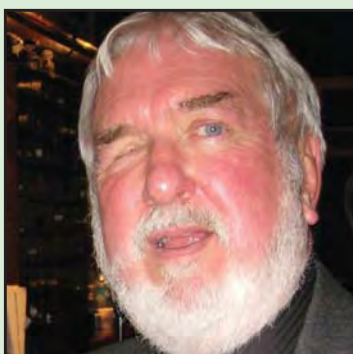
## Obituary

# Billy Osborne (1937-2011)

By trade Billy was a life-long printer, but took the cab trade to his heart in the late eighties when redundancy led him to become involved with the family print business, which came to specialise in printing material for virtually every business of renown in the trade. These included the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** and the **Magical Taxi Tour** to Disneyland, Paris for whom the family business carried out print runs at virtually paper and ink cost as their contribution to the charity.

Born in Central London and growing up in Covent Garden and Camden Town, plus his years in the print industry from a young age and concluding his career as a popular Union official, gave Billy an enthusiasm for London and its people. Combined with his passion for a good pint of ale, his colourful life made him a wonderful raconteur and one of life's characters.

His involvement with the cab trade presented him with the opportunity to join the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** and he joined with relish, as his son-in-law **John Farrell** had been very active in the Company's resurrection. He became a Freeman in 2003 and a



Liveryman in 2004. Billy thoroughly enjoyed the Company dinners and the ancient surroundings in which they took place. He also loved the social aspect, which enabled him to have a good laugh and chat with other members, having the skill to converse with anyone on almost any subject.

Typical of the man; after having many pedigree dogs he took on an abused dog, Toby from an animal refuge. When retired - and always dressed as a country

gentleman - he explored the West End and the City with the excuse of taking his faithful friend for a walk. However it was his passion for people and places and his pilgrimage for a "good pint" that led to his exploration of London. He would have made a good cab driver, as he knew his way around London very well, albeit by pub names rather than street names!

Billy Osborne passed away peacefully in his sleep on 9th January. This is a man who will be sorely missed by all who knew him and the world will be a far duller place without him.

Billy is survived by his wife of more than 50 years, Yvonne, son Paul, daughter Kay, five grandchildren and of course his beloved dog, all for whom life will now never be quite the same.

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

Former **Dial-a-Cab** driver, **Mickey Gordelier (ex-L27)**, had two reasons to celebrate recently. Regular **Call Sign** readers will know that Mick is an in-patient at the **Greenwich & Bexley Cottage Hospice** in Abbey Wood after being diagnosed with *Motor Neurone Disease* (MND) and given between one and three years to live.

Mick says that the care he receives there is nothing short of magnificent. So much so that he wrote to **Call Sign** several months ago to see if we could help a campaign the hospice is running – aptly named after Mickey because the suggestion of raising funds for another hospice nurse came from him. You can hear him online talking about both the hospice and himself at

<http://www.cottagehospice.org.uk/location.html>. You just click on *make a donation* and then click *Mick's Appeal*.

So as we began by saying, Mick has had two reasons to smile. Firstly because he felt well enough to go home for Christmas and secondly, that another £1500 has poured into the appeal fund's coffers making it 70% of the £30K target now collected!

Fifty-five year old Mickey has been married to Sue for 31 years. They have three children and if you ask him about his life, you won't hear him moaning about his situation, he'll tell you about how he has had such an enjoyable life, a

## Mickey is 70% there!



**Mick at the hospice - his appeal now needs just another £8k to pay for an extra nurse**

wonderful family, friends and job as a licensed taxi driver on Dial-a-Cab.

But Mick was diagnosed with MND and as his condition deteriorated, he was offered the chance to go to **Greenwich & Bexley Cottage Hospice** in Bostall Hill, Abbey Wood and after some initial doubts – saying he wanted to stay at home – now says how wonderful the care he receives is. As he said last month:

"I feel I owe it to Sue, my family and all the staff at the Hospice to carry on making the most of what I have. The level of care, support and friendship I receive at the Hospice is just magnificent and I've made many friends from all walks of life. I'm proud to be here. If I had to say thank you to all the staff and volunteers who are now so close to my heart 1000 times, it would not be enough. I am so lucky and grateful to have met each of them and will always be in their debt."












Care at the Hospice is completely free, so fund raising is how they have to get most of their much-needed revenue. As we all know, taxi drivers aren't famous for minding their own business, so Mickey decided to step in and launch his appeal! Out of his initial target of £30,000, just £8K is left to raise. The hospice are delighted, as are Mick and Sue. It will be a remarkable achievement on the day that Mick is able to tell **Call Sign** and the world that his target has been reached and that extra nurse walks through the hospice gates.

We also have no doubt that Mick will be there to welcome them...

[Http://www.cottagehospice.org.uk/location.html](http://www.cottagehospice.org.uk/location.html). Click on *make a donation* and then *Mick's Appeal*.

## Martin Cordell & Co. ACCOUNTANTS

*Does your accountant supply you with the following?*

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There can be no doubt of **Westfield Shopping Centre's** success. It has also brought work to the taxi trade and given us the welcome facilities of a toilet and hot drinks whilst waiting for a job or just taking a rest from driving.

However, we are not too sure whether the centre's security services are quite as enamoured with us if reports of their attitude over the holiday period is anything to go by. As soon as Christmas day came to an end, the maniacal period known as the *January Sales* began – and with it complaints from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers about the treatment to both us and our passengers.

Messages concerning the number of passengers waiting at Westfield were constantly being passed to DaC dispatchers and put out onto driver's terminals. Those first Sale days were undoubtedly busy and drivers were doing their best to provide a good service for those doing their shopping there.

Suddenly the tone of the messages changed. Drivers were being stopped from going into Westfield by security guards – some with Tfl uniforms on – who used the ludicrous excuse that “the car parks were full.” Driver after driver phoned **Call Sign** to tell us of the strange occurrence, after all, we don't require parking facilities – just somewhere to set down and pick up again. One driver even claimed that the rank was being used by private hire for the day – although there was never any confirmation of that.

**Stuart Lockhart (A41)** has been with DaC since September 2004, so is unlikely to be in a position where he wouldn't understand terminal messages. He was one of those affected by Westfield's security people and told **Call Sign** what happened.

**“I had a job to Westfield on December 27th and approached the shopping centre from the Westway and West Cross route.**

## Manganese back in profit in 2011?

**Manganese Bronze Holdings plc**, parent company of the **London Taxi Company**, has said that sales recovered during second half results following a shortfall in the first half. A statement from MBH said its full-year result would be in line with market expectations and that it was well positioned to return to profit in 2011.

The company also said there would be an extension of credit terms with the Shanghai Maple Automobile Company Ltd. Shanghai Maple is 90% controlled by Geely's parent company, Zhejiang Geely Holdings.

In the fourth quarter trading update, MBH said that UK TX4 sales were slightly up compared to the 2009 equivalent. Although yearly sales at 1,653 in the year to December were down by 71 cabs, they had recovered in the second half from a second-quarter shortfall caused by the Icelandic ash cloud.

The report ended by saying that results for the year ending December 31 would be in line with market expectations. With the extension of credit terms, continued support from its bankers and improved operating profit margins, the group believed it was well positioned to return to profitability in 2011

# PROBLEMS AT WESTFIELD



**Excellent facilities for taxis – but does Westfield want us all the time or only when it suits them?**

This took about 20 -25 minutes from the White City turn off on the A40, as the traffic was really bad. As I approached the slip road to take me into Westfield, I was told I couldn't go up because the car park was full. I tried to explain to the Tfl traffic marshal that I did not want the car park, just the taxi rank to set my passenger down. I even showed him messages on my Dial-a-Cab screen stating that Westfield needed cabs! He still wasn't having any of it and threatened me as I was holding up the traffic. He came round and opened my driver's door asking me to get out of my cab, whilst at the same time being very aggressive and abusive. He then opened my passenger door and told my female passenger that she would be better off walking as he was not letting me up to what was now a clear road.

All of this happened on the very busy West Cross route. As it became obvious he was not going to let me up, I drove off

around Holland Circus and back up the north bound West Cross route which was equally as busy, only to get the same response from the traffic marshal at the slip road on that side!

Whilst I can appreciate it was very busy that day, surely they must make allowances for taxi drivers to get to the rank to drop off and pick up passengers. My passenger was so disgusted with the marshal's attitude that she asked me to take her to Covent Garden and vowed never to return to Westfield.”

**Call Sign** asked Westfield for a comment but we have as yet to receive anything. No one would argue that the *Taxi Lounge* at Westfield is a very useful facility, but let's be clear on one thing – if we are not treated fairly, then when it becomes busy again, our drivers could wonder whether going out of their way up to Westfield is worth any hassle we could face on the way. Our pages are still open for a Westfield response...

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# PEDICABS: THE NEXT DANGER



Waiting for a radio trip in Fazilka! Pic courtesy LoveFazilka

The Indian town name of *Fazilka* is translated into English as the *town of learned people*. It is one of the major rice exporting centres in India and was once known as the biggest wool market in the undivided Punjab. But it wants more and somehow **Dial-a-Cab** has come into the equation in a manner that **Call Sign** doesn't think its subscribers would be too pleased about!

The town – which has run rickshaws since the 1920s – has now taken the “service” one step further and one that could possibly be picked up by London Pedicab companies such as *BugBugs*. The new facility is called *Ecocab* and apparently based on our **Dial-a-Cab** service – except that the owners call it *Dial-a-Cycle-rickshaw*. They describe it as being similar to the **Dial-a-Cab** service by “...balancing its demand and supply through equal distribution of fleet and automation using the latest IT tools.” In other words, pedicabs via data dispatch!

In response to a **Call Sign** enquiry – although we failed to say who we were – *Ecocab* said that the idea was to strengthen their existing and unorganised network of rickshaws and reorganise them into a “a post modern technology of intermediate public transport for Fazilka.” For short – *Dial-a-Cycle-rickshaw*!

Five call centres have been established within the city to provide *Dial-a-Cycle-rickshaw* facilities. The service isn't aimed at tourists – you'd be hard-pushed to find many Americans or Europeans going to look at billions of rice grains – but it is expected that the service will be taken up by many normal households. The blurb cleverly adds that the reason for the service is to help slow down the increase in polluting and expensive motorised trips within the city that they claim average around 3km each.

The UK *Green Party* would undoubtedly love it! Our only concern is that if we know about it, then so do *BugBugs*!

## TAXI AIR CONDITIONING

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### Kipper season 2011

Another kipper,  
Another new year,  
Once again we show  
No fear.  
And tax time  
Is drawing near,  
Pay the bill  
Shed a tear...

Taxis looking for a fare,  
Yellow lights everywhere,  
Make for the nearest station  
Join the queue in anticipation.  
Read the paper, scan the news  
Move on up,  
That's what we do.

Eventually get to number one,  
Look for punters  
But there are none!  
Oh here comes a single pin,  
Not a word, just gets on in.  
You strain to hear  
The destination  
It's a cheap hotel near the station.

Another legal, but still you smile,  
That job went almost a mile!  
Back to the rank  
Now it's moving;  
Less dead time  
Life's improving.  
A 4-hander across town...  
Smile again, lose the frown!

Every year it's the same  
It's the time  
Of snow and rain.  
No mortal can we blame.  
For sure there is no  
Rhyme or reason  
We must just accept...  
It's the kipper season.

**Kopyright Kupkake 2011**

*Keith Cain looks at...*

# CHANGES TO DRIVER SERVICES PHONE LINES

Some of you may be aware that we have introduced some changes to the Driver Services telephone lines (020 7553 7201). This has been implemented due to the number of drivers who were expressing disappointment at not being able to talk to a member of staff.

Previously, all calls went through to an answer machine and when possible were retrieved and drivers then called back. This method was considerably time consuming and also prevented staff from completing all their tasks promptly.

We have evaluated the type of calls received by Driver Services and found that most calls were either a request for an instruction of what to do with a parking ticket (PCN) or to relay information to us to deal with a variety of issues. In most cases and on a regular daily basis, the calls were very similar.

**So when phoning Driver Services now, we will offer seven options to choose from:**  
**Option**

1. Parking tickets (PCNs)
2. Roller bond requests



3. Request to have your statements sent via email

4. Instructions regarding cab licences

5. Change of personal details

6. Any payment queries

7. Any job queries

**Press 0 to hear the options again...**

For any other issues, please wait to be answered by a member of the Driver Services team. However, if they are busy dealing with another driver then there is a facility to leave an answerphone message and your call will be returned at the earliest possible opportunity.

**To speed up the call, if you press the**

**option number you require as the message numbers are being explained, your call will go straight through to the option selected. This will save time by bypassing the alternative choices.**

All drivers are encouraged to use the options wherever possible and only speak to the team on issues that are not catered for above. We will be constantly monitoring calls to Driver Services and making improvements to offer an excellent service to all members. If you find the new system does not work for you, please let the team know. But we would ask that the changes are given time to settle in.

## Driver's Line

Speaking of telephones, a recent incident of a wife trying to call her husband during the student strikes caused her unnecessary worry, because instead of calling the Driver's Line, she called the Driver's Reception and just happened to catch a security guard on his first day.

**If someone in your family needs to contact a driver, the best number to use is the Driver's Line on 020 7426 3411.**

**Keith Cain**  
**Call Centre Manager**  
**Driver Operations Manager**

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Several **Dial-a-Cab** drivers who decided to work over the Christmas holiday period were surprised and less than amused when their *Global* fare meters failed to recognise Monday December 27th as a Bank Holiday. The meters continued to register at Rate 1 as though it was a normal weekday, when they should have been clicking over at Rate 3, causing drivers to be confused and as one driver put it "less than impressed!" After all, who would bother going to work on that day working on rate 1? After all, it certainly isn't the busiest day of the year.

**Stephen Durham (P47)** came out to work at around tea time and was taken aback when he saw Rate 1 showing on his fare meter.

"I thought I'd missed a day of the week," he told **Call Sign** rather cheerily, having by now put it aside. "My Christmas celebrations were merry indeed, but I had to think hard that it was a Bank Holiday and was expecting my meter to have recognised that calendar fact. I even checked my Fare Table on the back door of my taxi and then telephoned my brother in law, who is also on **Dial-a-cab** and has a *Global* meter, to confirm what the situation was! I only did a few street jobs anyway, lost interest and then went home when I realised that other taxis were operating at the proper Rate 3. It wasn't particularly busy out there, so I was not greatly concerned that I may have lost too much money," he added philosophically. "However, a quiet day on Rate 3 can still provide you more than a normal Monday on Rate 1.

"I went to KPM on the following Wednesday morning when they re-opened

# Rate three holiday meter mishap!



**Stephen Durham lost interest and went home when his Global meter showed the incorrect rate....**

after the holiday to see what had gone wrong and was told that it was a software glitch within the meter. The funny thing is that the software *did* recognise Tuesday 28th as a Bank Holiday! Now isn't that strange to have missed out a day," he said quizzically to **Call Sign's** reporter!

"I am not going to be complaining to *Global* because they have a very good deal by way of a two-year rental premium and also the staff have been extremely helpful to me in the past when I've needed light bulbs and stuff, so I'm just going to wipe it off as no huge loss," he concluded with a shrug.

**Tony Hizer (E63)** also decided to work that Monday, his intention was to do a long day and be able to spend Tuesday with his family.

"I did a 12 hour shift that day and was very disappointed when the fare meter failed to

read the appropriate tariff. I completed numerous TaxiCard trips and some street work and I'm very unhappy that I did not realise my full earning potential on the day. I suppose that's life and it's not the end of the world and they won't take my house away. But it is none the less still very galling," he said with a sigh.

"My brother Martin also worked that Bank Holiday Monday with a *Global* meter and he feels equally strongly," Tony continued.

"I know Gary Elliott at KPM and have made representations to him. He apologised, explaining about the software hiccup and has passed my concerns to Ray Attwood at *Global*, whom I hope will do the right thing and act professionally to retain my custom. I am awaiting his reply."

"One of the joys of being on *Dial-a-cab* is the fact that I can prove conclusively I was working that day, and show the number of hours and trips I did. Non radio cabs with a similar meter problem that chose to work that day cannot even verify they were out there!

"This is not the first time I am grateful for being on *Dial-a-cab*," Tony continued, "some while ago I was involved in a major RTA, necessitating several weeks off work, but I was able to prove my earnings to the third party insurers from my *Dial-a-cab* loggers. It was a big worry off my mind," he added positively.

No doubt the correct programming of fare meters for the coming upgrade in April will take account of additional Bank Holiday dates around the time of the royal wedding. Naturally, the pages of **Call Sign** are open to *Global* Taximeters should they wish to respond...

© **Call Sign Magazine MMXI**

## 2010 DAC AGM



All members should by now have received an individual notice informing them that the 2010 Annual General Meeting will be held at The HAC, Armoury House, City Road, London EC1 on Sunday 6th February 2011 at 11:00hrs. You should also have received voting papers and an End of Year report.

The meeting this year was to consider an agenda including the Election of Officers and any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions, however, none were received by the closing date and no more of the above can now be accepted.

There was one Nomination for the Board in addition to the sitting BoM received by the due date.

You are required to vote; if you do not do so by post you must then attend the AGM in person to vote, otherwise a fine of £50 will be levied against you. If you do vote by post then you are not required to attend, but you must do one or the other. If you do vote by post, you are still welcome to attend the meeting but you cannot then vote again.

**Howard Pears**  
Company Secretary

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As the industry gets used to a new name for an historical icon, there has been another change within this traditional market. **Andrew Overton**, whose grandfather, founded Mann & Overton in 1899, has decided to retire from The London Taxi Company after more than 41 years in the taxi trade.

Andrew has held many roles over the years, including Managing Director of Mann & Overton, when the company was owned by Lloyds and Scottish. He remained an integral part of the business, taking on the role of Sales & Marketing Director, following Manganese Bronze's acquisition of London Taxis International in 1985.

Latterly he was Market Development Director for LTI Limited, the next incarnation of the recently renamed company, a role that was adapted approximately 7 years ago, allowing Andrew to reduce hours, whilst still acting in a consultative capacity.

In 2009, he became The Master of the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers, an organisation that he intends to remain a part of for years to come.

Andrew told **Call Sign**: **"I have always enjoyed my roles, whatever it may have been, and in particular I have enjoyed dealing with so many wonderful people within the trade. The taxi trade, whether in London or in the regions, has so many genuine people who want the best for this industry. It has been my pleasure to deal with these people over the last 40 years. I will be sorry not to be a part of this any more, but there is a right time in life for everything and I take this opportunity to**

# ANDREW OVERTON RETIRES

## New beginnings for historical name



**Andrew Overton with Brian Rice on a visit to Dial-a-Cab**

**Brian Rice**, who knows Andrew both from The London Taxi Company and Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers where he is a Lower Warden, told **Call Sign**:

**"I have known Andrew for many**

**wish the London Taxi Company and all those who work so hard in this trade a prosperous and successful future."**

**Peter Shillcock**, MD of The London Taxi Company said: "It really is the end of an era for us all here at The London Taxi Company. Andrew has been such an important and passionate advocate for taxis and is known across the UK for his expertise and knowledge. He will be sorely missed. We wish him a wonderful retirement and thank him for his contributions to the institution that is now The London Taxi Company over the past four decades."

**years and he is one of the nicest people I have ever met. He has a great sense of humour and I always looked forward to our meetings as he is also a real gentleman. I am really sorry he is retiring as his knowledge of our industry is immense, however I am delighted that he is remaining within the WCHCD as it means we will not lose contact and our paths will continue to cross. I hope he enjoys his retirement, giving him more time to spend with his wife Carol and his family – it is well deserved."**

## Electric vehicles: Is the infrastructure there?

On 1 January 2011, the Department for Transport introduced individual grants of £5,000 to purchase electric vehicles. This was part of the Office for Low Emission Vehicles' £400million fund to reduce emissions from road transport.

**Steve Bratt**, Group CEO of the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) told **Call Sign**:

"Whilst I welcome the introduction of the Electric Vehicles grant, for EVs to be truly successful we must first make sure we have the infrastructure in place. This means having enough charging points throughout the country, all with a common installation standard to ensure that they work properly. If this initiative is successful and the number of EVs on the road does increase significantly, it will be vital that the National Grid can cope, as without the correct infrastructure the public could be left stranded as their cars run out of electricity."

Mr Bratt concluded: "Before the Government takes steps to incentivise the purchase of electric vehicles, it first needs to address the issues which stand in the way of their future success. If we're not careful we could see a rerun of battery cars, which became an object of media and popular ridicule during the 1980s."

The ECA represents the interests of 3,000 member companies involved in electrical installation work. Collectively, member companies have an annual turnover of more than £5 billion, employ over 30,000 operatives and support 8,000 apprentices in craft training. The role of the ECA is to provide a focus for the electrical industry in terms of safety, training, qualification, technological development and industry performance.

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# LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE...

with Tom Quigley

## Western Congestion Charge

So Boris has made the decision to cancel the congestion charge in West London and we are all supposed to be happy? Well I'm not! I don't believe the whole congestion policy carries out what it was supposed to do and feel it was always just another motorist tax.

I find it hard to swallow that our trade has had a 15-year rule implemented on it that will omit around 2000 cabs in the first year due to emission regulations. If you divide that into three shifts over a 24-hour period, it means a maximum 700 of them would be on the road at one time – probably less – in the total 12-mile Knowledge radius zone.

Then there is the other equation. The estimated loss of up to £70million revenue to TfL equates to £280,000 per day; divide that by £8 equals 35,000 individual vehicles every day in that one zone that have no effect either way on air quality or any other pollution issues.

I know we don't pay it, but we've had to suffer the hardships of constant traffic delays caused by putting all the cameras and roadworks into place when the system was introduced and then extended. It seems no one is accountable for the so-called carbon footprint in the manufacture, construction and installation of this expensive equipment.

This is one of my favourite Irish jokes – and if you know my background, you can forgive me for telling it!

When Pat was taking his driving test, the examiner failed him as he was driving too fast down the centre of the road. Paddy replied: "But on my licence, it says tear along the dotted line!" Well Pat was right. You cannot tear down the centre anymore.

In the first early days of the charge, apparently there were flaws in the camera systems that meant a vehicle driving down the middle of the lanes could not be detected. Is it coincidence that wherever the congestion charge is implemented, roads are narrowed down to one or at most two lanes, with the inevitable traffic lights at the entry points so that cameras can zap vehicles? Just two examples are St John Street at the Angel and all the entry points at Aldgate. We know that even the heavy banks of cameras at entry points do not always catch everyone, so they need to cause further delays in order to make sure everyone in the zone is photographed. Is it just coincidence that during congestion charge times you cannot turn right from Finsbury Square into Chiswell Street and are forced down Moorgate through even more camera zones? Have they stealthily applied these changes under the guise of traffic calming or pedestrian safety, thus keeping the green lobby happy?

Will the road narrowing for this project inside the old Western Zone be kept in place? I suspect so. Will Park Lane become a 30mph zone – not that I ever reached it!

Just to cheer you up, there will be another 6000 Boris Bikes available in the Western Zone. Of course that wouldn't be a coincidental compromise reached to overcome the previous reluctance of councils involved in not allowing bike bays into the area, would it? What do you mean I'm just being cynical...!

## Transport Forums

It's fairly rare that I read online forums, just the occasional allotment one for my vegetable plot. But while looking up some statistics on Boris Bikes, I came across a cyclist forum that was criticising the BBs. It seems the cyclists have been complaining about sites chosen for some of the bays. Apparently the worst is in Bouverie Street EC4, as it is at the wrong end of a one-way street and they then have to break the law by riding up Bouverie Street the wrong way! Actually they don't really have to, but the thought of having to go down the right way and then up Whitefriars Street is obviously too difficult and a real inconvenience for them! So the next time you dart into Bouverie Street

and almost run over a cyclist coming up the wrong way, it's not their fault but TfL's...

## The Apprentice

After another excellent series of The Apprentice, which I am sure you know pits young get up and goers from different backgrounds to compete for a £100,000 job as an apprentice to Sir Alan Sugar, congratulations go to mother of two Stella English, who left school with no qualifications after growing up on the Thamesmead Estate. She proved a worthy winner and good role model to show how hard work pays off.

Though most of the time they are shown in MPVs (surely only to get the cameramen and equipment in), I enjoy watching the different routes that are taken and the editing of those routes, sometimes showing them heading east along the Embankment – only to end up at the Serpentine Gallery! Could it be the quality of the driver's knowledge – or lack of it?

But the icing on the cake is when Sir Alan makes his decision, points that foreboding finger and fires them! With the contestant, heartbroken, shattered, lonely and at their lowest ebb, the best decision is made – ditch the MPVs. The only driver and vehicle to get them home safely is the Licensed London Taxi!

See you soon...

Tom Quigley (Y33)



2 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 4/5



4 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 8/9



6 Bedroom 5 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 12



Pool and conservation view at 6 bedroom home.

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

# DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

**This month's Flashback returns to 1970 and just for a change, to a London newspaper. They were interviewing drivers about the Maxwell Stamp Committee report. It also gives a wonderful snapshot of the time...**

**From the Evening News, October 1970**

## TAXI DRIVERS ON MAXWELL STAMP!

*With London's taxi drivers all talking about the forthcoming Maxwell Stamp Report, the Evening News took a closer look at some of their views and went for a ride with some from the ODRTS taxi radio circuit...*

First **Jack Taylor**, known among other things as Dan 19. If I were out on a big story and were in a cab, I would wish my cab driver to be Jack Taylor, he is quite the most talkative cabbie I have ever met! The first thing that Jack and every other cab driver must do is to learn the Knowledge and that takes about a year.

"You have to learn every street in London," says Jack, "and it's a bastard, I'll tell you! You have to cotton-up 468 point-to-point runs from a pink book which is called the Blue book and then Scotland Yard test you rigorously on it. Then with your Knowledge and clean bill of health, you look to 'wangle'. That means you go to a garage with a fleet of cabs and learn to drive one of them. There were five wangers at my garage and I ended up teaching them! Maddeningly, they all passed their 'drive' first time whereas I failed my first two!"

Jack remembers his first day well. "From my first trip from Shoreditch to St Pancras right to the end of the day, I was working solidly. They call it butterboy luck because in this game you can't be a clever driver, only a lucky one. That's why when we say goodbye to each other, we say 'be lucky' and not cheerio."

Jack's days aren't typical, because he is Chairman of the Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service in Maida Vale and spends much of his day at the office. But on a working day, Jack puts his 'for hire' light on straight-away. "Mind you, I live in Tottenham and rarely get a job before reaching Manor House where I usually put onto the rank. All ranks are free for all drivers to use, but my favourite is the one at Hanover Square because that's where I usually eat! The food is cooked by Arthur and is great."

When Jack and I walked into the Hanover Square Shelter, everyone calls out "Hello Curly" – rather strange, as Jack

doesn't have a hair on his head! But the food is very good.

Over lunch, Jack explains why he enjoys cab journeys to places such as Blackheath and Finchley:

"Being on ODRTS, there is always the chance that someone will dial 286 4848 wanting to go into town. And while I have the chance," said Jack, "I find it to be very rude when people keep asking me how much I earn. How would passenger react if I kept asking them the same question! Don't forget, we only earn when someone is in the cab; So if I do a 12s 6d fare from Shaftsbury Avenue to Highgate and I don't trap on the way back, that means that after expenses that I probably earned 7s 6d in that hour. I think that there should be a minimum fare of 4 shillings, then we wouldn't have to spend up to 30 minutes waiting for a 2s 6d ride."

Before I could say "Thanks Jack," he had already changed the subject: "And what about those minicabs" he shouted, "we do the Knowledge and then they get away with murder."

Jack has recently bought a new black Austin FX4 for £1365 and now had to get back to work to help pay for it...

We next spoke to **Joe Toff** – also known as Black 4. Like Jack, Joe Toff isn't shy to pass his opinions. Joe is the Editor of *Steering Wheel*, the journal of the British taxi industry and until recently also edited *ODRTS News Monthly*, so he knows a fact or two about the taxi trade.

"It's about time that we had taxi sharing," said Joe, "sometimes you can go into Euston Station and see a huge queue. My job may go to Liverpool Street as may many of the others

waiting, yet even if the passenger doesn't object, I'm not allowed to see if anyone else is going the same way. The queue would shrink and we'd all be happy. But I'm not allowed to!" Joe wants to see legislation to permit taxi sharing. Currently, anyone caught doing it faces a £10 fine.

"All we would need is a retired cabbie controlling the queue and Bob's your uncle. Cab sharing is in place. It is so simple."

The scheme has been recommended to the Maxwell Stamp committee by London's youngest trade organisation, the **Licensed Taxi Driver's Association**. General Secretary **Bill D'Arcy**, claims that taxi sharing, would mean each of the four passengers would pay half the meter fare on exit, giving the driver a good profit and the passengers a good service.

London's other taxi organisation, the **Transport and General Workers Union**, are against it fearing that it could lead to abuse.

Their spokesman argued that it could lead to accusations from strangers sharing the cab of a male trying to pick upon an innocent girl or a prostitute trying to solicit custom. They also asked how much the driver would charge if only two were sharing. Would they still pay half each or what if four from the same family jumped in, would they end up paying double?

Maxwell Stamp may well have his work cut out.



## Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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For some time now, the *London Cab Driver's Club* has been threatening **Dial-a-Cab** by saying they had sought legal advice over the "damaging accusations made after (Call Sign) articles were published." This magazine claimed that the LCDC was wrong when it put into print that London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH) told DaC it would have to have a Private Hire Operator's Licence.

**It was in the November issue of the LCDC's newspaper, The Badge, that their Chairman and editorial board put out the following statement:**

*"It has come to our attention that in recent issues of Call Sign Magazine, allegations have been made about articles printed in the Badge. We would like to put on record that both the Badge newspaper and the London Cab Drivers' Club stand by the accuracy of the content of the articles printed in relation to Dial-a-Cab requiring a Private Hire operator's Licence.*

*In addition, we strongly object to the personal attacks and unfounded allegations made in this publication over the past four months, and have now sought legal advice over the damaging accusations made after our articles were published.*

*We sincerely hope that the editorial board of this magazine will properly consider its responsibilities, both to the cab trade and to its readers, before any further issues are published.*

**The statement was signed by Grant Davis, Darryl Cox, Alan McGrady, Danny Sullivan, Tony McGrady, Tony Lawyer and Mark Davis.**

**Now LTPH have confirmed in a letter signed by their Head of Compliance, Dave Stock, that it is satisfied Dial-a-Cab do not require a PH operator's licence.**

Perhaps more relevant is that *Call Sign* had also previously asked the question of the LCDC Chairman just how it managed to publish an article in *The Badge* claiming LTPH had told Dial-a-Cab it would have to have a Private Hire Operator's Licence some time before any letter was even sent out – unless it was the LCDC who informed LTPH in the first place?

As we have said in previous issues, we know they snitched on us – specifically about

# LCDC WRONG ON DAC "PH LICENSING"

**LTPH confirms DaC do not need a PH Operator's Licence...**



our Concierge system. But they were wrong in their assessment of just what Concierge actually does. No one at DaC was asking the LCDC to go on their knees begging forgiveness, just for an honest admission and apology. In return, they threatened to take legal advice.

Someone at the LCDC "reminded" LTPH that both RTG and ComCab had PH operator's licenses. However, both of those circuits either run PH fleets or have done so in the past, therefore their decision to have a PHOL is unsurprising. DaC has done neither.

**As we said in our last issue, The Badge can stand by its articles all they like, the question is not what they wrote but how they got the information and how they managed to publish it weeks before DaC were even asked the question by LTPH? Well, of course we know the answer, but some honesty from LCDC would have**

been nice. And we have to wonder whether all seven of those that signed their statement actually realised just what they were signing?

Grant Davis dislikes Dial-a-Cab as well as Concierge. That dislike has obviously festered since his expulsion from DaC by three of his peers. But his position as the Chairman of a trade organisation that purports to care about the trade should surely have overridden that dislike. But it appears that Mr Davis cannot let go and under his Chairmanship, *The Badge* has consistently attempted to deride this Society – ending with this false accusation and refusal to explain how he could have something published before it had even happened. DaC could provide evidence that he provided the information to LTPH about us, but it wouldn't be to him because quite frankly, his actions have shown that he is not someone we can deal with.

As we also said last month, this Society would never instigate legal action over such a trivial matter, especially against a trade organisation with not even one third of DaC's membership on their books. Should they wish to continue with their charade about "allegations" against them, that is of course their prerogative. Neither is it any of our business who the LCDC has as its Chairman, however we cannot help but wonder whether that organisation's membership is happy to see its money wasted in an anti-DaC program that has no truth in it?

DaC has nothing to hide and Dave Stock even thanked this Society for its co-operation in the matter. We wonder whether the LCDC was thanked for wasting its time...

## STARDUST IS BACK!

Many of you will remember back in your younger days a theatre workshop group known as **Stardust**, which led you to an older pupils group known as **Stagestruck**. The group were responsible for many talented actors beginning their careers. One of the biggest was **Tamzin Outhwaite**, who went on to star in *Hotel Babylon* and West End musical *Sweet Charity*, among many other things.

Now **Phyllis Borden B.A.Hons** has re-established the **Stardust Children's Theatre Workshop** in the Essex area. It runs between 4 and 5pm at the **Steepleview Memorial Hall, Osier Drive, Laindon** (opposite Costcutters and close to the A127). You can pre-book your child by phoning 01268 928 004 or just turn up on the day and look out for former **Dial-a-Cab** driver Brian at the entrance!

The age group is 5-9 years old and for an hour or so see how your children gain confidence, sociability, imagination, good speech, self-discipline and of course, have fun!

Past students have achieved distinction, not just on stage and TV, but also in the fields of medicine, law, science, art and teaching.

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

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



**Phyllis and Brian - Stardust is back!**

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# It's Mad Hatter

Sunday 23 January at London's JW Marriott Grosvenor House Hotel saw tourists and Londoners out for the day stand and look on in amazement as 650 children arrived in coaches from all over London to have the party of their lives at the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's annual Mad Hatters Ball.

Unfortunately the LTFUC's new Patron, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall couldn't attend due to other prior engagements, but she missed a real treat with a four-hour non-stop feast of top class entertainment and enough food to feed an army of young people, their helpers and probably anyone else feeling peckish!

Once again the Fund has asked *Call Sign* Grosvenor House for allowing such a large influx of guests afterwards must be a nightmare and the hotel's

Huge thanks also go to the stars that turned up. Included were Elvis Shmelvis, the Bournemouth winner of *Britain's Got Talent*, the winner of Sky's *Got to Dance*, Ed Ault and Yasmin Priestly from *Star Dance*, (Jodie Gold) and Jacqueline Jossa (Lauren Bran



Su Pollard and two friends



Kids loved the characters



Was he getting the bird or giving it!



So I said to Mickey, you get that other mouse out of here!



No Brian Rice hasn't signed up!



Elvis Shmelvis and the (very) Cheeky Girls!

# rs time again!

to thank the management of the *JW Marriott* of people into the hotel at one time. Clearing up efforts are really appreciated.

ed up on the day to keep everyone entertained. with Carnival Band, Taboo Street Dancers from *ance*, Akai, the Cheeky Girls, Lumilie & Friends, the Blue & White Skippers, Kylie Babbington (singing) from *Eastenders*, John Adelaye, who fin-

ished 12th on *X Factor*, Joe Swash and the irrepressible Su Pollard. There were also the many characters that filled the hall and thrilled the children. Thanks also to the Hilton Foundation in the shape of the Hilton Euston for making the Fund their sponsored charity for the year, presenting them with a cheque for over £200. And of course a huge thank-you to the LTFUC Committee - especially to new Chair, Susan Angel - and the man who held it all together, Dave Davis.

Yet another brilliant success for the *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children*.



Some of the LTFUC Committee grabbing 30 seconds to pose for Call Sign: (L-R) Mike Son, Malcolm Shaffron, new Hon Chairlady Susan Angel, Bill Tyzack and Gerry Dunn



Dave Davis asks Joe Swash what happened to his shirt!



Got to Dance winner Akai



The Taboo Street Dancers from Britain's Got Talent



A cheque presentation from the Hilton Euston



Ballroom dancers Ed Ault and Yasmin Priestly from Star Dance

For **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Bernard Doyle (B37)**, it had been the shortest trip of his shift. It was just before Christmas when a woman hailed his cab from the kerbside. Bernard recalled it with his hands widening in an ever-growing circle as he described the amount of freight she had next to her!

"The lady went from Sloane Street to Harrods," he told **Call Sign**, "and as she loaded the numerous bags and other assorted luggage into my cab, she confessed she was worn out from all that shopping! With that she flopped onto the back seat of my taxi."

Bernie spun the cab around and £2.40 later, they were outside the famous Knightsbridge store where the passenger offloaded her packages. With so much pre-Christmas traffic around, there was no time to check the back of his cab, so off Bernie went.

"I had a cab service booked at the **Ascott Cab Co**, so I thought I'd start to make my way towards Evelyn Street. At Vauxhall Bridge Road a hand went up. I was still quite early so I took a chance and stopped. He was going to the City and I figured I could get him there, shoot over London Bridge and still be at Ascott's in good time," Bernie continued.

"But as the man entered my taxi, he called out that someone had left a bag on the cab floor. He immediately handed it to me for safekeeping. I dropped him off and made my way to Ascotts. Then while waiting for the cab to be serviced, I looked into the bag – it was a **Mulberry** – to see if there was any identification and that's when my heart skipped a beat. There was the usual flotsam that ladies tend to carry around with them, including a purse, an obviously very expensively wrapped gift box and £1200 cash in assorted notes, all stuffed into the Mulberry bag in no apparent order," he said with something of a gasp as he recalled the sight of so much money!

"I also found her **Harrods** credit card and they offered to email her at her residence in Eire, but bearing in mind she was here in the UK, that didn't seem a particularly practical suggestion. So I telephoned my wife Carol, to see if she had any ideas of how I could try to contact a female passenger whom I assumed would be pulling her hair out by now at the loss of so much money and everything else in the bag, including a huge bunch of keys!"

So Bernie and Carol began phoning around all the usual credit card contacts but nobody seemed to be particularly interested or helpful, no doubt due in part to the *Data Protection Act* and client confidentiality.

Bernie continued his story. "Eventually, someone from the **Allied Irish Bank** in Eire saw sense and offered to call her at her London home. The passenger called me back within a short time and agreed to meet me the following morning, while her husband was visiting his dentist in Wimpole Street. I couldn't begin to describe the sound of relief in the ladies

# It's in the bag for Bernie!



A happy outcome for Bernie

voice," Bernard exclaimed, his face breaking into a broad and satisfied smile!

It turned out that the lady passenger and her husband were racehorse owners with equine interests both in the UK and Emerald Isle.

"Carol suggested that the **Mulberry** bag itself that all the stuff was stuffed into was probably worth about £2000 just by itself, so getting everything back intact was obviously particularly pleasing for my lady passenger. Then when I met her the following day and handed back the bag, she all but kissed me in gratitude -

but don't tell my wife, it might not go down too well," he said with a huge grin.

To say that the passenger was impressed with Bernard's honesty and determination to return her property would be a huge understatement. She telephoned **Dial-a-Cab House** and a fleet message was sent out proclaiming Bernie's efforts.

While speaking to **Call Sign**, Bernie recounted an earlier incident where a passenger had left a child's **Ralph Lauren** coat in the cab - still with the £250 price tag attached.

"I took it back to The Boltons in South Ken where I'd set the lady passenger down and she too was naturally delighted at its return, but it's just so amazing how people can spend a fortune on something and then just leave it in the cab," he mused.

This magazine's reporter referred to the honesty and reputation of London's taxi drivers that makes us the envy of taxi services around the world. Bernie's modest comment was simple:

"Old driver, old values," he stated modestly! That can also no doubt be said of our younger colleagues as well – this being the most honest taxi driving service in the world in addition to being the best...

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**Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)** has been on **Dial-a-Cab** for more years than he cares to remember – in fact had he not had a short break to try his hand with a retail outlet at the old *Royal Oak*, he would have been up there as one of the Society's longest-serving drivers.

He is heavily involved with the *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children* and is also a DaC Marshal. He rarely gets wound up but admits there is one thing that does get right up his nose and that is the subject of minicabs. While he has accepted that they are here, he dislikes them pretending they are taxis. Now with the help of *Network Rail*, they no longer need to pretend at **Paddington Station** because so far as *Network Rail* are concerned, there is no difference.

Most drivers providing the valuable service to Paddington for passengers coming in on the *Heathrow Express* will have seen the radio rank for taxis on the left side opposite the main taxi rank. There is a sign that says '**pre-booked taxis only**' together with the international symbol for a taxi, but it mentions nothing about private hire. Yet more often than not, when a DaC taxi has a Paddington Station pick-up, they find difficulty in getting onto the pre-booked rank thanks to an assortment of minicabs all claiming to be waiting for someone. In all probability, they are telling the truth, the question is whether that means they should be allowed to park on our rank. So Gerry wrote to *Network Rail* to ask that very question.

He wrote: *"As a London taxi driver, I am grateful to you for providing parking spaces for licensed taxis to pick up pre-booked passengers. However, yesterday when I had to pick up a pre-booking, I was unable to use the facility due to the parking of several minicabs. Even though you have provided a large sign forbidding minicabs to wait there, the drivers of the two Addison Lee cars ignored the warning."*

*"I feel that a letter to this company advising them of your instructions would go a long way to alleviate this problem."*

*Network Rail* responded via Station Manager **Nick Hartnell**. After thanking him for his let-

DaC driver Gerry Dunn asks Paddington's Station Manager the question...

# When is a taxi not a taxi?



**This minicab driver isn't with AL yet still refused to move from the pre-booked rank**

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

If anyone sees Mr Hartnell, perhaps they'd like to show him the photograph accompanying this **Call Sign** article, because that minicab driver is definitely not with Addison Lee, yet he was parked right below the sign and when

challenged by the Editor of this magazine, refused to move as he too claimed that his company had permission to wait on the pre-booked rank. If Paddington thinks so much of these minicabs, perhaps they should use them to pick up the long queues of incoming passengers waiting there during many evenings. Of course they couldn't do it without sacrificing all their other work – including those staff jobs to Northwest London! Paddington Station might then realise what an excellent service we give and should be deserving of some consideration in return???

## Ashford's Wembley dreams end!

A single goal from **Dartford's** George Purcell sealed a 1-0 Dartford victory in the **FA Trophy** over **Ashford Town (Middx)**.

**Dial-a-Cab** driver and injured Ashford Town goalkeeper, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, told **Call Sign** before the game that whilst it was a tough draw against the Blue Square team that knocked out FA Cup heroes **Crawley Town** in the previous round, the team felt they had a chance and that with some luck in the draw, felt they had a chance of reaching their first Wembley final. Sadly that Purcell goal ended the dream and even though Ashford came close on several occasions, they just couldn't finish the job. Dartford now move into the last 16 with a trip to former Football League club Gateshead.

As for Lee, he recently underwent an operation on his knee and although he will be able to drive his DaC taxi, he won't be lacing up his goalkeeper's boots until four weeks or so into next season.

"I do miss playing," said Lee, "but as you get older, recovering from these injuries takes longer. But I am determined that I will be back between the sticks for Ashford."



**Lee hopes to be back in goal early next season**

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I hope you had a good Christmas and New Year, whether working or spending time with your families. My wife, Maxine and I spent Christmas with some of our family who live in Sweden. Although our daughter lives in Barcelona and we visit her as often as we can, we also travel to Sweden to see our son, his wife and our two young grandchildren. We obviously want to watch our grandchildren grow, especially in their formative years.

In the early years of our marriage and after becoming a cabdriver in 1965, like most *but-terboys* I worked very hard so I could give my family the best I could manage. The downside was that I now find it difficult to remember our children when they were young - probably because I was always working. So travelling to Sweden to see the grandchildren has now become a very important part of our life. Just like many families, spending Christmas with them is a real treat.

Sweden celebrates Christmas a little differently with Christmas Eve being the big day for giving and receiving presents. Watching the excited looks on the kid's faces as they unwrap them is something you can never forget.

This is also the day of the Swedish Christmas feast, which comprises a smorgasbord - including a few traditional dishes such as ham, jellied pigs feet, rice porridge and Lutefisk (sun-cured cod served in cream sauce). The Christmas feast also includes a tradition called *doppa i grytan* (dipping in the kettle), in which the assembled family and guests dip bits of dark bread into a pot filled with drippings of pork, sausage, and corned beef - this is apparently not kosher!

We also still had our traditional fare of turkey with stuffing and vegetables and then my favourite, Christmas pudding washed down with a glass of Glogg (mulled wine). Then it's games with the children, a bit of ye old Swedish TV and then sleep.

The following day I thought we'd give our son and his wife a break and take the kids for a drive into the Swedish countryside. The one thing I didn't expect to see was an Elk blocking our way! I was aware that although not massive in size, they are tough and powerful animals. So what to do? A first I thought we'd wait until it moved on, but after 10 minutes it was still there.

So I decided to try to scare it by driving up to it, but still no movement. After making sure the children and my wife were safely secured in the car, I got out and approached the animal hoping it would go on its way. I was about 3 metres away when the Elk turned full face on as though it was going to charge me! Not being the bravest of the brave, I ran back to the car with the beast following me. As I started the engine, the Elk came over to the car, peered in and trotted off! There was only one thing to do - back home for more Glogg!

## And now for something different...

I have read with interest all the hype with regard to the 2012 Olympics, the millions being spent on 'Stratford International', new shopping complexes and hotels, plus the expectations of much needed tourism.

**Mike Son says he worked so hard when his children were young that he doesn't remember watching them grow up. Now grandchildren give him something he treasures...**

# A SECOND CHANCE!



**Mike and Maxine - not missing anything on the second time round!**

The one thing that appears to have been overlooked is the disgraceful state of the roads both in the City, Central London and the suburbs.

**The following piece was written by Municipal Engineering Board Chairman of the Institution of Civil Engineers, John Sanders.**

*"The condition of three-quarters of Britain's local roads, footpaths and cycleways has deteriorated over the past year. Research compiled from Britain's local authorities estimates there is a £8.3 billion backlog of maintenance to be carried out. The poor state of the local highways network means the government will fail to meet its 10-year Transport Plan targets.*

*The Transport Plan, published in 2000, included a commitment to halt the deterioration in local roads by 2004 and eliminate the maintenance backlog by 2010.*

*The problem is being exacerbated by evidence that local authorities are spending money meant for roads, on other things such as health and education.*

*At present, it is up to each local authority to decide how much of their allocated highways maintenance budget they spend accordingly. In some instances, little more than half is currently used to address the deterioration. Road planners are frustrated by the 'patch and mend' mentality of road maintenance and money for roadworks should be 'ring-fenced'."*

*He ended by asking: "Do we want to sit back and watch our local roads disintegrate into a network of potholed cart tracks? Are we happy to have streets in a state of constant disrepair?"*

Due to the government cutbacks, does that mean roads will deteriorate even more? At this moment, driving in London is like driving through a third world country. I am aware the Mayor for London and his colleagues - plus the Highways Agencies and Transport Ministers - do read **Call Sign**, therefore my

question is that although there are various strategies in place and more to come with regard to cleaner air etc to make London the number one destination for visiting, especially leading up to and during the London Olympics, I suggest more attention be given to the disgraceful state of the roads.

**Ladies and gentlemen of those various authorities, if you find you are a bit strapped for cash, provide me a shovel, a wheelbarrow and a road repair kit and I will give you a hand. That is on the important assumption that it does not stop me seeing me grandchildren or include working with Elks! However, my charges are reasonable.**

Ladies and gentlemen, as interested parties, have a moan at your local MP...

**Mike Son  
DaC Special Projects**

**For a great deal in taxi tyres**

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**As we enter Prostate Cancer Awareness Month (1 – 31 March 2011) I felt the need to share with you my experiences and memories of what this means to me.**

Christmas Day can have a multitude of meaning and significance. For me and my family it brings back memories of my late father-in-law **Alfie Jacobs**, who sadly lost his long battle with Prostate Cancer on Christmas Day 1992 at St Joseph's Hospice in Mare Street, Hackney, after several months of being treated with dignity, care and sensitivity by the wonderful staff there.

Alfie had become quite a character at St Joseph's and his passing after the Morning Service, just as the preparations for the Christmas Day lunch were under way on such a usually joyous day, had a great impact on staff and patients alike.

Alfie was a licensed London taxi driver for many years and worked nights, mainly on the Mile End and Bishopsgate ranks. When I decided to go on the Knowledge 35 years ago, it was to Alfie that I turned for advice and direction. He was a truly great mentor.

Like so many of Alfie's generation, he served his King and Country and had focussed his life on providing for his family by working long, arduous hours in his taxi while often neglecting his own health. It was a great shock when in 1983 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Back in the early 80s, the simple PSA blood test was not widely available in the UK and the symptoms he may have been suffering with, which may have indicated a problem with his prostate, were probably put to the back of his mind in the hope that they would go away. He would suffer in silence, thinking that most men of a certain age had waterworks problems. Alfie was in total denial of what his body was telling him. Sounds familiar?

After various surgical and medical procedures at the Middlesex Hospital in Mortimer Street, the medics were able to stabilise his condition and give him a reasonable quality of life for several years before he had to succumb to palliative care at St Joseph's.

Alfie had been under the care of the Urology Department at the Middlesex and treated by a young registrar, who was dynamic and sensitive to the needs of the patient and relatives alike. This was where I became aware of young pioneering doctor, **Roger Kirby**. His manner made such an impact on me that I knew should I need ever need any Urological treatment in the future, this would be the kind of doctor I would wish to treat me. Dr Kirby's directness and informative dialogue were both refreshing and illuminating.

During the intervening years, it wasn't difficult to keep tabs on Dr Kirby, indeed it seemed that any advances, comments or opinions that the media needed an expert opinion on in regard to men's health and in particular prostate related conditions, were aimed at this eminent doctor.

Due to the loss of someone so close to me, I became very aware of the importance of regular PSA blood tests, particularly as I entered my 50s. Now whilst PSA results are not conclusive, they often give an indication, together with the other symptoms and tests to build up a clearer picture of the prostate.

The PSA blood test can be organised by your own GP and measures the *Prostate Specific Antigen* in the blood. Depending on the PSA read-

# PROSTATE CANCER: MY STORY...

*by David Burnetts (S43)*



**David Burnetts and wife Maureen**

ing, your GP may suggest a DRE - *Digital Rectal Examination*. Now believe me guys, this is not as uncomfortable or painful as you may think. The fear of the unknown can be far more stressful!

Depending on his diagnosis, the GP may suggest active surveillance and repeat the process in a few months, as I understand PSA levels can fluctuate a lot. On the other hand, he may opt for a referral to a Consultant Urologist and there are numerous Urology units within the NHS – some of which I understand offer a 'one stop shop'.

**When my own PSA level rose considerably in February last year, coupled with the usual symptoms of regular visits to the bathroom during the night and urgency to go whilst I was at work, my GP felt that it was time to seek the help of the professionals.**

It was at this stage that I decided to track down Dr Kirby, who is now a Professor and founder of the **Prostate Centre in Wimpole Street**.

After a further PSA and yes - you've guessed it - another DRE, it was suggested that I have a prostate biopsy. The prostate is a walnut sized gland that is present in men and located in the pelvis at the exit of the bladder and surrounding the urethra, the tube through which urine is passed. The biopsy showed that I had a condition known as BPH, *Benign Prostate Hyperplasia*, which is a common condition affecting men beyond middle age. It also showed that some high grade PIN cells were present; these are *Prostate Intraepithelial Neoplasia* that are more commonly known as pre-cancerous cells.

Although BPH is non-cancerous, the effects can have a significant impact on a man's quality of life and if left untreated, can lead to dire complications as the prostate gland increases in size and causes obstruction to the urine flow. This has caused me considerable problems in my day to day activities as a London taxi driver, as I have to literally plan my day out to coincide with frequent toilet stops, sometimes as fre-

quently as every two hours.

I'm sure I am not the only one who finds it difficult to find somewhere safe and convenient to park to answer the call of nature without coming back to the cab to discover it has been decorated with a PCN! The lack of toilet facilities for taxi drivers needs to be urgently addressed (see *Call Sign January 2011* and **Dave Raymond's (F56)** problems as a diabetic on medication needing toilet facilities at sometimes very short notice).

There are surgical and medical treatments available for BPH and in the interim I have opted for medication, which will hopefully reduce the size of my prostate. But in time I will need a surgical procedure known as *Transurethral Resection of the Prostate* or a TURP, where part of the prostate tissue is cut away to decrease the pressure on the Urethra.

When my PSA rose further in August 2010, an ultra-sound examination of my bladder and prostate showed that I had a Polyp in my bladder (although this had nothing to do with the raised PSA), which thankfully was removed within a few days of discovery. Unfortunately, this was found to be malignant, but with regular surveillance I am now on the road to recovery - which beats struggling along the Euston Road on a wet Friday evening! As you can see, I haven't lost my cab driver's warped sense of humour!

Had I not been having regular PSA blood tests, this tumour would not have been detected, as I hadn't had any symptoms associated with bladder cancer, so I am truly thankful to the medics for their diligence.

**I hope that by relating my own experiences, it will encourage you all to go to your GP and request a PSA blood test, if only for your peace of mind, but which could turn out to be a life-saver! As a final thought, do it for your family as well as for yourself...**

© David Burnetts (S43)

In 2008, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Steve Bryant (Y41)** and NHS *Practice Development Facilitator*, **Jane Barr** went to Uganda on something of a mercy mission. Jane's mission was to give advice to Ugandan medical staff and hopefully help extend the lives of their patients. With HIV and AIDS so prevalent in many African countries, Jane's task was difficult and included showing staff how to re-use wheelchairs for young children, often who are landmine victims.

Steve, although going mainly to help where he could, also cheered a local group of young footballers – many with severe injuries – from the **Kampala Kids League** by getting **Dial-a-Cab** to provide them with a set of football shirts and thanks to some intervention from **Call Sign's** editor, the tops were replicas of those worn by Tottenham Hotspur. The kids were soccer mad and knew all about the English Premiership.

But this time, Steve isn't talking about a trip to the heat of Africa, but more about an amazing incident involving **Stanley** in the cold of a London winter. The company's been in existence for almost 100 years and are famous for their fine quality steel implements. But there is something else they have produced for many years that is worth mentioning. Steve told us:

"In this cold winter, I've started taking a hot drink with me in the taxi, buying cheap flasks and even if they just last a few months, just go and buy another one because it doesn't take long before it has paid for itself.

"Then whilst looking through some old bits and pieces at home, I found a heavy duty **Stanley** flask from almost twenty years ago

## FLASKING WITH STANLEY?



Steve with the DaC Spurs tops worn by the Ugandan children in 90 degrees

Inset Steve and new flask in chilly London



when I was on the Knowledge! It was now rusty from lack of use, the handle was broken, its cup was missing

and it was not much use as a flask. So I thought I'd buy another one, went onto the net and found the Stanley website for flasks. It wasn't cheap at £30, but the ad said that it came with a lifetime guarantee.

"Then a really cheeky thought hit me; holding the old rusty one in my hand, I phoned Stanley. They were very polite when I told them that my old one hadn't lasted a lifetime but that I no longer had the receipt. Amazingly they said they wouldn't need the receipt and

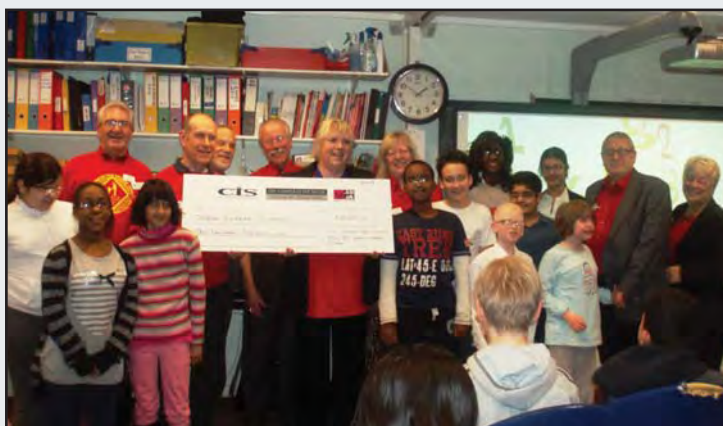
would send me a replacement! I returned the old one to a free postal address and within two weeks, a new Stanley flask together with lifetime guarantee arrived. To say I was shocked would be something of an understatement, because claiming on lifetime guarantees is usually sought with problems. But not with Stanley! If anyone is interested in one of these excellent flasks, just go to **www.Stanleyflaskshop.net**. £30 for a lifetime's use is pretty good!" Then Steve walked off into the winter sunset, his cup in his hands, a smile on his face and a thought in his mind...

"I wonder if they do flasks in Spurs colours???"

## LTFUC presentation to school for visually impaired

On Wednesday 12th January 2011, the Hon Chair and Committee of the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** attended the **Joseph Clarke School for the Visually Impaired** at Highams Park, London, E4 to officially present the staff and children with some much needed equipment consisting of notebooks, computer touch screens, projectors and tripods etc. The total value was around £10,000 and followed an appeal that we had received from the school.

The Assistant Head Teacher, **Mrs H L'Aimable**, told us that the school had 84 pupils and following the presentation, Clive – one of the 84 – kindly showed us around. We were thrilled and delighted to see the children using the new equipment. With



The LTFUC committee make the presentation

access to the latest technology, many of them can go on to compete successfully with their sighted peers and proceed into higher education, training and equipping themselves for employment opportunities.

The LTFUC's new Hon Chair, **Susan Angel**, introduced each committee member to the school and we left there feeling very proud and privileged to have been able to assist and help such a worthy cause.

We enjoyed the afternoon and thank the school most sincerely for the refreshments provided.

**Raymond Levy**  
LTFUC Press Officer

In May 2006, **Call Sign** published an astonishing article that had been passed onto us by **Dial-a-Cab** driver **David Marks (R22)**. Originating from *Motor Cycle News*, we saw straightaway the benefit that drivers who had been caught speeding might gain from it.

Whilst never wishing to encourage drivers to break the speed limits, we all know that some limits – especially late at night – are ridiculous and how easy it is to creep up to 45mph in a 40mph zone or pass the yellow Gatso in East Smithfield that goes off at 34mph. Those “crimes” would have earned you three points on your licence and could go towards costing you your licence and with it, your livelihood.

The article printed a letter that if sent to the police following a **Notification of Intended Prosecution**, often meant that the case would be dropped and instead of three points on your licence, you would be obliged to attend a one-day refresher course, but there would be no points going onto your licence.

The letter was based on a legal technicality that claimed when someone was questioned regarding any offence – be it in person or via a form – they should first have received a formal caution and a camera cannot give any caution. Even if the police were to visit an offender's home, it would then be too late as only statements given after that time would be eligible in court and a caution would allow the accused to remain silent.

The letter, designed by road traffic lawyer **Robert Dobson**, complied with the *Road Traffic Act* (section 172) by identifying the driver. It was known as the **PACE Witness Statement**. But because no caution was given, even though the receiver of the NIP was admitting being the driver, that statement could not then be used against them. The result was that police forces throughout the UK were suddenly dropping NIPs and replacing them with the one-day refresher courses.

Included in that were a number of DaC drivers. However, in the intervening years it does

# Speeding loophole shut?



**David Marks originally passed the letter onto Call Sign – now it no longer seems to work...**

seem that many police forces have closed the technicality and several drivers who had since contacted **Call Sign** to get a copy of the letter, have told us that it had no longer worked.

One DaC driver, who doesn't want to be identified, sent **Call Sign** the rejection letter he received from the Camera Enforcement Section at Essex Police. We have published it below. *Funke v France* 1993 and *Mawdesley v The Chief Constable of Cheshire* 2004 were two precedents mentioned in the original letter.

Whilst we are more than happy to pass on the original letter to any driver, it does look as though this speeding loophole is well and truly shut...

Dear Mr \*\*\*\*\*

I refer to your reply to an alleged camera enforcement offence. In reply I would advise that under Section 12 of the *Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988*, any response by a driver to a notice is admissible in any subsequent court proceedings. This is true of any signed response, whether it be a Section 9 statement, letter or the form provided.

The judgement in *Funke v France* 1993 was finally dealt with by the Privy Council and it was decided that there was no breach of the right to a fair trial. Section 172 provided for the putting of a single, simple question, the answer to which could not itself incriminate the suspect since it is not by itself an offence to drive a car.

The case of *Mawdesley v The Chief Constable of Cheshire* 2004 is also quite clear that the form is admissible as a confession and that C.10.1 of the Code does not impose an obligation to caution in such circumstances.

Consequently I enclose a conditional offer of a Fixed Penalty Fine, which if not settled within 28 days will automatically default to a court summons at which time you may test the evidence before Magistrates.

For further information please visit [www.drivingcasualtiesdown.org](http://www.drivingcasualtiesdown.org).

Yours sincerely

**Kevin Brown**  
**Safer Roads Bureau Manager**  
**Essex Police**

The 'offer' included three points!

**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



Whenever I talk to other cabbies at this time of year, I find a lot of them 'on the back foot' having had a decent run up to Christmas work-wise. Work levels are down, so there are many negative vibes being expressed and even some doom and gloom merchants going as far as to suggest that the cab trade is in serious decline as private hire encroaches ever more on our regular work.

I even read in another trade paper recently a story proclaiming that in 20 years time black cabs would be a small fleet of vehicles just providing sightseeing tours for the tourists. I do not subscribe to that point of view myself BUT a point of order – cab drivers really should consider more the idea of adding another string to their bow.

### Why not take up a course so that you can become a tourist guide?

There are some excellent courses available, so why not make it a New Year resolution to take one on? Both the *City of London Guiding Course* and the *City of Westminster Guiding Course* are well worth consideration, as is the immensely interesting *Clerkenwell and Islington Guide Course*. But, I would suggest that any newcomer would be very much at home with the *Cabguide Course*. Funded by the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** and accredited by the *City University*, this 12-week course at the Museum of London is the perfect way to start! It's great fun and after you have got yourself 'badged up' and got your business cards printed, you will be able to conduct sightseeing tours of London, giving a running commentary from the seat of your cab!

If any **Dial-a-Cab** subscriber would like further information about the *Cabguide Course* or any other courses mentioned, please drop me a line at [rob@blackcabheritagetours.co.uk](mailto:rob@blackcabheritagetours.co.uk). You can check us out at [www.blackcabheritagetours.com](http://www.blackcabheritagetours.com).

A bientot...

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



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Contact Steve on **07939 503 132**

# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

*Hello Ladies and Gents,*

With such a long Christmas holiday, it has taken a while longer for work to get back to some semblance of normality. But it is important that we all work within the Society's procedure rules and guidelines and it is up to me as Compliance Officer, along with the help of the Call Centre, to monitor the system and ensure that we are all working on an equal playing field.

Every month I try to inform you all of the most common problems and this month is no exception. As I have mentioned on numerous occasions, if any member has a grievance then it will be investigated and it is surprising what anomalies are thrown up and how complaints are brought to light just from a simple phone call.

**Listed below are a number of common complaints that I would once again like to bring to your attention...**

● **WW00:** Please ensure that you are within the perimeter road of Heathrow Airport before booking into this zone. It is monitored daily.

● **EC5:** Between the hours of 9pm and 6am, this rank is in operation and you must be in one of the four EC postal zones before booking in. Trips that have not been dispatched will appear on the *Bid Trip* screen and it is then that you can offer a delay if you are outside of the city zones. This is still a constant problem and one we continue to monitor.



● **E14:** The two ranks E14C and E14S operate Monday to Friday between 6am and 9pm. At all other times you must be in the E14 postal zone before booking in. Again, if trips are uncovered then they will appear in the *Bids* in the normal way. When the two ranks are in operation, they are at all times physical.

● **CC00:** You must be on the actual taxi rank in London City Airport before booking in.

● **General rule for Booking in:** You must be able to reach the furthest part of any inner London primary zone that you intend booking into within 15 minutes. All outlying zones are physical and trips in secondary back up zones will automatically be offered to you. You are

able to *Bid* for zones further away in the normal manner.

**There are regular trips in some outer zones and it is a procedure rule violation to book into an outer zone to gain the number one queue position and maintain that position in order to gain an unfair advantage, especially if you are outside of the taxi. Outer zones are constantly monitored for this reason.**

## Goldman Sachs

Finally, as you are aware we have equal right to use the **Goldman Sachs** rank in St Brides Street during evening periods each and every day. The rank is within the EC perimeters, so why not join the rank when you are booked into EC5. It would be nice to see it filled with DaC taxis.

**The GS employees have a double-sided card for ourselves as well as ComCab and waiting there gives you two strings to your bow. The trips are plentiful, so why not give it a try?**

There is a Marshal on site to lend a hand and I would be more than happy to assist you if you haven't tried this rank for a while. If you have any queries on any of the issues I have raised, please ring me on **0207 553 7222** or email to [Allane@Dialacab.co.uk](mailto:Allane@Dialacab.co.uk) -

**Be Very Lucky...**

**Allan Evans**

**DaC Compliance Officer**

# WOODY SEZ

*Win free tickets to see the life & music of Woody Guthrie...*

In January 2009 at the inauguration of the new US President Barack Obama, Pete Seeger joyfully led a crowd of hundreds of thousands in singing *This Land Is Your Land*. The spirit of the song's writer, American Folk legend **Woody Guthrie**, is celebrated in the new musical, **Woody Sez**, which has blasted onto the stage of the **Arts Theatre** until **2 April**. Guthrie's music lives on and continues to inspire. The hundreds of musicians that acknowledge their debt to the man who performed with the slogan *this machine kills fascists* emblazoned onto his guitar include the mighty Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash and our own Billy Bragg.

Weaving together Guthrie's enduring words and songs, **Woody Sez** paints a powerful portrait of this revered cult figure's fascinating and often tragic life. Considered as the Godfather of American folk music, Guthrie was an altogether original protest singer, fighting for and lifting up the spirits of people beaten down by the hardships of the great depression.

Playing the lead role, British trained Broadway veteran **David Lutken** is joined by singer / songwriter and fiery fiddler, Darcie Deaville, multi-instrumentalist Helen Russell and Andy Teirstein, himself a classical composer - and former circus performer!

Directed by Nick Corley, also a Broadway regular who collaborated with Lutken on the book, the musical was first brought to life in 2007 at the Edinburgh Fringe. Since that time, with *Mary Cossette Productions*, the show has grown through festival productions in Belfast, Brighton (Argus Angel Award), Recklinghausen's Ruhrfestspiele and back in the US in Woody's home state of Oklahoma, where it was voted Musical of the Year for 2009.

**Woody Sez** is a story of survival, passionate belief, timeless music and the flawed and fated trail of a singular and determined American poet. It is also a foot-stomping and heartfelt theatrical journey through the life of America's greatest ballad maker. Bob Dylan isn't famous for making statements, so it must be worth listening when he says that "Woody ain't a folk singer, he's genius, genius, genius!"

**Call Sign has two pairs of tickets to give away for this great show. Just tell us who led the crowd singing *This Land Is Your Land* at Barack Obama's inauguration? Answers to Call Sign with a contact phone number and email address if possible...**

**The Arts Theatre is in Great Newport Street and the show runs until 2 April. Performances are Monday to Saturday at 7.30pm with a matinee on Wednesday and Saturday at 2.30pm.**

**Tickets are from £20 to £39.50. The box office is on 020 7907 7092.**



**You can win tickets for Woody Sez**

Many **Dial-a-Cab** readers seem to like leaving their copy of **Call Sign** in the cab to read at quiet times, while glancing at the online version when in front of their PC at home. But it also appears that many non-Dial-a-Cab drivers seem to enjoy reading the mag and taking a look through DaC history in the magazine's online library, which contains back issues going back to 1967. In fact, so many so that the latest stats have shown record numbers!

**Call Sign was the first taxi magazine by many years to go online – with our Internet guru, Vince Chin, first putting it up for us in February 1998.**

We have often had letters from outside of the UK, but never realised quite how popular it was until we recently glanced at our online statistics. That showed a single issue total of 8004 online readers – the first time we have pushed past the 8000 mark. Unsurprisingly, over 70% of those (5611) came from the UK, but we also had a not insignificant 1382 readers from the USA, where taxi mags aren't always so easy to come by unless you live in a big city.






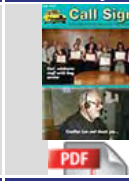

The rest of the world come in much smaller numbers with 23 English-speaking French people taking a look, 21 from Australia and 10 from Canada. However, we are at a loss to know what the regular reader in Belarus is looking for or the ten Chinese readers. But it's nice to know that Philippe in Chile is still there!

However, we get more queries about how the site works from DaC drivers than from any others. That query is usually why we only publish 19 pages online? Well, the answer is that since May 2006 there have been two issues of every **Call Sign** put online.

**Firstly, you need to go to [www.dac-call-sign.co.uk](http://www.dac-call-sign.co.uk) and click on the year you want (on the left side of the page). Then you get an option. If you click on the cover of the month you want, you will get a 19-page version containing all Board reports, the Mailshot pages and a few other stories.**

# CALL SIGN ONLINE HITS A RECORD!

If you would like to read the complete magazine, use the **PDF** link. The search facility will not work on the complete PDF version.

January	February	March	April
 PDF	 PDF	 PDF	 PDF
May	June	July	August
 PDF		 PDF	 PDF
September	October	November	December

Click the cover you require for a 19 page version with search facility, or click the **PDF** sign for the complete mag

With that version you can also use **Call Sign's search facility**. Again on the first page left side towards the bottom, you will see the option of **search Call Sign**. Click that on with the 19-page version and you will find the **search** box. Type in a clue word and the facility will hopefully find the article or letter you were looking for. If you want the whole mag, click on the small red **PDF** mark at the base of the selected cover and the complete magazine – ads and all – will appear - but there is no search facility with that.

**Call Sign** online has eventually dragged the rest of the trade press online, although none have bothered with a library such as we have where you can take a look at much older issues – as far back as 1967 - that came out when internet referred more to a way of catching fish!

Hopefully this article clarifies how you can get all the latest DaC info on your PC. If you still aren't sure, just write to **Call Sign**...

**Ron Yarborough**  
**Call Sign online**

## The man with no name!

It might have been writer George Orwell with his futuristic premonition of what life could be like in 1984, or perhaps it was a leaf out of sixties cult TV series *The Prisoner* starring Patrick McGoochan where everybody had a number rather than a name, that prompted this passenger to decline to give his moniker, preferring the apparent anonymity of a mobile telephone number when giving details to our Call Centre staff!

Either way, the *Nom de Plume* presented our semi-amused driver with quite a conundrum.

"How do I know I'm picking up the right person? Do I refer to them as Sir or Madam if I only have a phone number," came the vexed query to the **Dial-a-Cab Driver's Help Line**.

Continuing with his query, the driver – who of course is also known by a number, albeit with a single letter prefix – asked the *Help Line*: "Er, do I greet them with a 'welcome aboard number 07787?'"

Of course, the DaC third floor operator remained in non-panic mode:

"See if they offer the correct destination and check the account name," came the wise reply.

A few minutes later the mystery was solved when the passenger appeared at our driver's taxi window and did indeed introduced himself as 'number 07787' much to the amusement of our on-street ambassador!

Not nominated for **Call Sign's** most exciting story of the year, but the incident gave us a chuckle!



MR 07787 calls for a cab (we have deleted the account details).  
Inset Patrick McGoochan as number 6 in *The Prisoner*

**There was little else to talk about following the release of a story to the press where 33 men were sentenced to a total of 200 years in prison for running one of the UK's largest ever cocaine smuggling and money laundering operations. Two words caught the attention of London's taxi drivers – Royal Oak!**

However, most **Dial-a-Cab** drivers hearing the name had assumed it referred to the restaurant – but that wasn't the case. It applied to the garage section, which was said in court to have repaired and rented out cabs. However, the heavily fortified building was also said to have gained substantially more revenue from its other business – receiving and repackaging huge consignments of cocaine.

It was in February 2008 that *Operation Eaglewood* saw over 500 police officers swoop simultaneously on 30 addresses in London and the south of England, but details of the case and court proceedings were not made public until the final member of the drug and money-laundering syndicate was sentenced in January and reporting restrictions were finally lifted.

Among those sentenced was Simon Ford, who received 14 years for supplying drugs. Mr Ford had been presented with a London Fire Brigade Gold Award for rescuing passengers from the 7 July 2005 bus that had been blown up by a suicide bomber and where 19 people were murdered. He was arrested at his apartment while dividing and bagging up 100 kilograms of cocaine worth around £5.5 million. The drugs were to have been delivered that day to a ring of couriers waiting at garages around London. His bravery medal was sitting on the table as he was arrested.

With many drivers turning up daily at the much-missed Royal Oak for their breakfast, tea, lunch, dinner or just to use



## Coke... but no sandwich at the Royal Oak!



**2 cabs filling up at the old Royal Oak. Inset Eyad Iktilat**

the toilet, fill up with diesel – or, yes, to use the garage – few seemed to have noticed criminals from across the southeast of the UK almost queuing up at the garage to drop off holdalls that were apparently stuffed full of sterling notes, getting them replaced with a stack of 500-euro notes valued at around £415 each. UK currency exchanges rarely hand out the 500-euro notes because of its popularity with money launderers.

Eyad Iktilat was said to have been the owner of Royal Oak Taxis. He received 30 years for money laundering and possessing and conspiring to supply cocaine. Police said that among possessions at his north London home was a Bentley Continental and Ferrari. He also owned several properties. According to one **Dial-a-Cab** driver, who said he would rather

remain unidentified, he thought he recognised Eyad Iktilat from the photo and had seen him briefly at the Oak, adding that if it was him, he had seemed very pleasant.

Detective Superintendent Steve Richardson told *Call Sign* via a statement: "The sentencing of 33 criminals to more than 200 years in prison represents a huge blow to the illegal drugs industry in the UK. These criminals had been living the lives of wealthy businessmen through their criminal activity. The lives they are leading now could not be more different."

At the time of the Royal Oak's closure, John Anderson, who ran the restaurant told *Call Sign* that he was hopeful of opening a new restaurant close to the Edgware Road. That has yet to come about. Over the years, Mr Anderson has raised much needed funds for the LTFUC taxi charity through various functions held at the old **Royal Oak**.

### Call Sign February 2011

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Hello to you all! I hope 2011 is treating you well so far. You may recall last month I listed what I consider to be the best PC games in the main genres. In this month's *Call Sign* I'll take a look at the remaining genres and hopefully help you to find the right game out of the veritable myriad of titles available. I hasten to add that you should also check other reviews on [metacritic.com](http://metacritic.com) and similar websites.

### Genre: Racing...

If you've ever played racing games on any of the main platforms – PC, Xbox 360, PS3, PSP, then no doubt you will have heard of at least one of the *Burnout* series of games. The most recent addition to this series is **Burnout Paradise**. Admittedly this game is over a year old, but in my experience it's definitely the best value for money. Available on all major platforms it sports beautiful graphics and exciting gameplay in a massive online world called Paradise City. You can play single-player, working your way through tons of racing and stunt challenges, collecting more and more cars (and bikes)! But the real fun kicks in when you play in multiplayer mode against your friends or thousands of other online players. Don't fancy racing? You can go into *freeburn* mode and smash up opponent's cars or compete in crazy nitro-fuelled challenges, driving through traffic and breaking all the rules of the road!

Many similar games have tried to mimic the *Burnout* franchise, but none of them come close.

### Genre: Sports...

To be honest with you, I don't do team sports – neither in real life, nor in games. I enjoy physical exercise (swimming, hiking and biking) but team sports really aren't my cup of tea. So it's impossible for me to recommend a sports game! However, I've asked my friends and other gamers what they think and based on their recommendations, I would suggest you try **Football Manager 2011**. Apparently Football Manager 2011 returned for the new season bigger and better than ever. The game designer has, so I'm told, improved the world's best selling football management series, bringing more realism and immersion to your quest for glory. I've also been told that there are over 50 playable countries to manage in and you will have full control of all aspects of the club.

So give it a try and let me know what you think. Perhaps this is the perfect way for all you football fanatics to put your opinions on the beautiful game to the test! This game is

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

# Gaming:

## What's worth playing?



Action in Burnout Paradise

available on PC, Mac and PSP.

### Genre: Adventure...

This is one of my favourite genres as there are so many quality games out there to choose from; in fact so many that there's never enough time to play them all! Many action games retail for £24.99 each, which is why I'd recommend you download trials of games you are interested in through *Steam* (see December *Call Sign* – Jon's stocking fillers – for details about *Steam*). The game I recommend is actually cheaper than many (£9.99 on *Steam*), which goes to prove that just because many action games have premium prices, it doesn't mean that they *are* premium games! Be warned: The price doesn't always reflect the quality, especially in this genre.

Released a couple of months ago, **Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light** is the latest *Tomb Raider* game – and the first to not use the *Tomb Raider* name. If you've played any of the excellent *Tomb Raider* games in the past, you'll know how engaging the action is, coupled with tricky puzzles and cool acrobatics. The reason they've dropped the *Tomb Raider* name is because although this game is in the same vein as previous *Lara Croft* games, it has more of an RPG feel to it with optional challenges and the choice of single player or multi-player. It's a great game that will satisfy your action, adventure and puzzle thirst all in one go! You can play this game on PC, Xbox 360 and PS3.

### Genre: Casual...

This genre is by far the largest, inasmuch as there are so many games available within the sub-genres of puzzle, platform and indie. However, many of the games available are average at best; but then this is reflected in the

cheap price of many titles.

But one title outshines all the rest in the genre. The original version of this game came out many years ago and has had many clones, none of which have been able to recreate its famously addictive gameplay in quite the same way. The game is **Bejeweled 3**, truly the world's number 1 puzzle game. If you haven't heard of the *Bejeweled* series, it's basically this: You swap one gem with an adjacent one to form a chain of three or more gems of the same colour. When this occurs, the gems disappear and a new bunch of gems, which are randomly generated drop from above to fill up the empty space. And so on and so forth until you suddenly realise you have just spent 5 hours playing this seriously addictive game.

Now I'm sure many of you who have been playing casual games for years will wonder why I didn't recommend **Tetris**. As much as I love *Tetris* (which is similar in some ways to *Bejeweled* and I guess it could be considered to be *Bejeweled*'s granddaddy), I've never liked the fact that it was primarily designed for and functioned best on Nintendo platforms. *Bejeweled* has always been a multi-platform game and in my opinion, the best and most addictive casual game of all time.

Previous versions (**Bejeweled**, **Bejeweled 2** and **Bejeweled Twist**) are available on pretty much all platforms (PC, Mac, iPhone, Wii, Xbox). This latest episode is currently available only on PC and Mac, but it's just a matter of time before it's available on every platform under the sun.

Well, that's all for now folks! See you next month...

**Jonathen Winterburn**  
DaC Network Administrator

Just in case you were too busy thinking about Christmas and the New Year holidays still ahead of you at the time, a reminder of the biggest story to hit the taxi business for many years that broke just before those holidays.

The *Mayor's Air Quality Strategy* was published in March 2010, with a consultation period where for the first time the trade replied as one. It was probably that response that saved the trade from the calamity of a 10-year maximum lifespan for its taxis. On December 14, the Mayor's final document was published and if you took little notice when reading a report in the January **Call Sign** (*It's January and Euro V time*), then here is a rundown of the main points...

**From 1 January 2012, no taxi over 15 years old will be licensed. Then from April next year, all new taxis must meet the Euro 5 standard, although in theory the manufacturers COULD go straight to Euro 6 (scheduled for September 2014), but that seems unlikely – although imagine the advantage either manufacturer would get in terms of sales if they achieved that?**

**From April 2013, the era of the taxi overhaul will fade into memory and be replaced by two MOTs per year, but with what has been mysteriously referred to as "a basic annual taxi-related inspection undertaken by TfL." This check could possibly be carried out at the taxi owner's home.**

The Mayor said he would be working with taxi manufacturers to develop "an affordable taxi with 60% better fuel economy than at present" by 2015, whilst heading towards zero emissions by 2020. Whether the latter also falls under the banner of "affordable" wasn't mentioned – although for drivers going down the emissions-free route, a financial incentive scheme is to become available.

The Mayor also wants the taxi industry to identify and mandate tyre and brake pads that

# MAYOR'S AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

*And the mystery of the third check...*



**John Mason: No return to them and us!**

will help to reduce PM10 emissions and also to reduce idling and empty running with the introduction of additional taxi ranks, while suspending 'stopping and waiting' restrictions.

Finally for new taxi drivers; by the end of 2011 there will be a requirement that all new drivers must undertake a mandatory eco-driving course before becoming licensed. The course would also be open to existing drivers should they wish to participate.

But what about this third "basic annual taxi-related inspection undertaken by TfL?" **Call Sign** was concerned that this sounded very much like a trip back to the dark days of Penton Street when *stops* were dished out for the most insignificant reasons that had no bearing on the safe running of the vehicle. A

time when presenting a taxi for its annual overhaul was very much a battle between "them and us." So we told *Director of London Taxi & Private Hire*, **John Mason** of our fears and asked whether it was just a cost-cutting exercise? He told us:

"The last thing I want is to have a *them and us* type regime or a throwback to the bad old days of taxis being failed for minor issues that have no impact on the taxis safety and performance. I can assure you this will not happen and we have already made progress in this area through the introduction of advisory notes and a more flexible approach rather than a *them's the rules* type stance.

"It's too early to say exactly how the third test will be carried out, but it will cover key elements that are not covered by the MOT. This could include meters, signs, advertising etc. I agree that these are simple, straightforward issues hence the strong possibility the checks could be undertaken at the driver/owners premises at his/her convenience.

"In terms of costs, any savings will be passed back to the driver/owner.

"We have much work to do in working out the finer detail and, like everything in this trade, whatever we implement we are likely to face some opposition from one quarter or another, but I firmly believe this is the right way to go."

If this TfL check is as simple as John Mason describes, then the new MoT system could well save the trade some of the money it looks likely to need as we head towards 2020...

## Fog lights Fury!

Some say they're blinding, the beams dazzle and therefore they are dangerous, while others say they help them to see the kerbside when visibility is reduced. Some say it's legal to use them at anytime, while others claim they can only be switched on during foggy conditions. So what's the answer.

**Call Sign** has looked into the proper or improper use of fog lights during inclement weather - particularly in foggy or snowy conditions.

On **taxis**, the front fog lights - where fitted - can be switched on independently of the headlamps, whereas on **cars** the accepted practice is to operate the front and rear fog lights sequentially through the main lighting switch.

Vehicle fog lights can indeed be annoying to oncoming traffic when incorrectly aligned or used inappropriately for the prevailing weather conditions and the *Highway Code* does offer guidelines for their use.

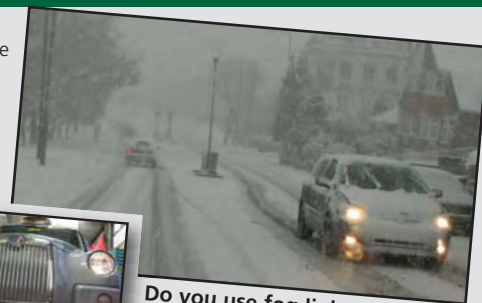
**Paragraph 114** states: *You must not use any lights in a way that would dazzle or cause discomfort to other road users, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.*

*You must not use front or rear fog lights unless visibility is seriously reduced and you must switch them off when visibility improves to avoid dazzling other road users.*

**Paragraph 226** urges the use of headlights when visibility is seriously reduced and clarifies 'seriously reduced' by stating 'generally when you cannot see for more than 100 meters (328ft) ahead' and the *Highway Code* also allows the use of front or rear fog lights but reminds drivers that 'you must switch them off when visibility improves'.

Some say they keep the fog lights on to pick out the kerbside in falling snow or foggy conditions, which is all very well if those conditions fall within the above parameters. Otherwise you just might find yourself conversing with an enthusiastic traffic cop looking to score Brownie points...

It is true that vehicles such as 4x4s and trucks etc have their lights set higher on the bodywork than sleeker cars, bringing their light beams nearer to the eye-line to drivers of oncoming vehicles, yet even so such fittings must comply with legal requirements as set out in the *Construction & Use Regulations for Vehicles* and should therefore be used with caution in accordance with the guidelines set out above.



**Do you use fog lights in the snow? The fog lights on a TX4**



**According to an article in the January Private Hire & Courier magazine, London Taxis & Private Hire (LTPH) is reportedly receiving 700 applications each week for private hire licenses!**

The article is written by the union claiming to represent many PH drivers, the GMB. It goes on to say:

"No wonder the proprietors are appearing so smug these days. It seems there is a never ending stream of people believing the propaganda and then being ripped off by the proprietors.

Coming to your circuit soon – dozens more drivers all freshly through the topographical test plotting up for £30-a-day, if they're lucky. Hundreds more rents for the proprietors. They love it! Surely it's time for a limit on the number of PH licenses in London?

We reckon around 28,000 would be more than enough. Currently it stands at over 60,000. How many of those are actually earning a living? We will keep on saying it - this industry is now nothing more than a well organised scam to swindle the innocent into believing they can earn a living. Transport is now secondary to ripping off drivers.

Morality? Some have never heard of it. Drivers are there to be cheated, swindled, lied to, exploited and abused. This is the PH indus-

# Too many minicabs in London?

**That's what the organisation representing them says!**



**Too many minicabs in London? Obviously not enough parking spaces!**

try today.

Let's get a limit on the number of PH licenses, ensure proper tests for drivers and remove

proprietors from any involvement in that testing and impose criminal record checks on all proprietors and office staff, immediately!"

## THE LONDON TAXI SERVICE TRAVELS TO FRANCE

Passengers in Paris will soon benefit from *The London Taxi Service*, which was recently launched in the nation's capital.

*London Taxis France*, the official representative of *The London Taxi Company* in France unveiled the world famous London Taxi and the associated service at the *Salon Des Taxis* for the first time in Paris on 29th and 30th January 2011.

The tenth edition of *Salon Des Taxis* took place in Porte de Versailles, Paris - an exhibition dedicated to the French taxi trade and its drivers.

*London Taxis France* is a partner of *The London Taxi Company*, manufacturer of the iconic London Taxi and they exhibited the London Taxi and London Taxi Service throughout the two-day exhibition.

Elisabeth Young, Madame Président of *London Taxis France* told the crowds coming to look at the TX4 to "...test drive the iconic London Taxi for yourself. If you want to drive a vehicle that is recognised the world over and offer the most professional service to your customers, then we look forward to meeting you."

Ross MacKerron, International Sales Manager from *The London Taxi Company*, accompanied Elisabeth. He commented: "I enjoyed presenting the London Taxi and all its features to the local taxi trade. There is no other vehicle in the world built purposely to be a taxi."



**The TX4 arrives in Paris**

## CHIPPED WINDSCREEN?

**Just go to DaC at Roman Way**

*Autostone Chip Repairs can almost invisibly fix a chip in your windscreen with most insurance companies paying for it.*

*They are at Roman Way every Tuesday and Friday from 8am to 5pm.*

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Or phone at 0800 612 7950**

# Mailshot

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

## DaC elections

*Dear Alan*

Following the CVs in the *January Call Sign*, I would like to ask Joe Brazil a question...

It very nice to have these good ideas to put forward, but unfortunately you are only one voice. You say you would like to put more income to drivers, so why don't you then think like the big multiples who are offering very big discounts to entice people to buy?

As I have suggested before, why not do away with the 10% gratuity? To a company spending nearly £1million a year, that represents £100,000 a year, which they can then invest in using more cabs, which then increases our income?

We are suppose to be businessmen, so how about thinking like them? Dangle a carrot and see what happens...

**Ivor Belkin (C97)**

**Joe Brazil responds:** Hello Ivor, thanks for your suggestion regarding gratuities, you are a man of almost unrivalled experience in the cab trade and have always held interesting views. This issue, as you know, has been looked at many times and I think that the balance struck by our Chairman Brian Rice is correct for the marketplace we are in at this time. The creation of new markets and increasing driver's incomes will be the future for us and whilst keeping costs to a minimum is important, building in value for clients keeps drivers in a stronger financial position. Things that can be viewed as negative costs by clients must be approached in a different way... if run-in fees are viewed as negative parts of a product, approach the problem from a new aspect. Make the run-in fee a positive part of the product, donating as little as 20 pence from a run-in fee from trips to a charity picked by the clients, an amount this small could easily equate to £250,000 pounds by the end of the year for worthy causes - an idea based on micro-economics or penny shares as they were once viewed. Instead of constantly trying to reduce our costs, rehabilitate the product. We have a future, we must build towards it as soon as possible. Marketing will be important for any idea to work and if elected I would give the project the title "fare trade." New projects would be evolved under that banner.

## Dress Code?

*Ladies and gents,*

We all know how AL drivers and other PH firms ask their drivers to dress and it does make a difference. We all wore smart casual

clothes or a suit to attend our PCO appearances in order to get our green badge. I suspect you also did that when you were interviewed and had your instruction day at DaC House by Allen Togwell - or whoever it was at the time - to become a member of the best radio circuit in London. Were you not informed then of the Board's wishes re dress and cab cleanliness? No doubt you said ok, fine! So why change? Why do some of you go to work looking like last night's washing when there is no need? As has been said before, Primark /M&S etc do a range of clothes - shirts and trousers etc - that are not expensive, are easy to wash and make you feel so much better. Our clients do see you (even night men) and even if you don't have to get out of the cab. They can smell too!

We are lucky to have a job and the trade now has its biggest-ever threat to it in PH. So what do we do? We give the public a great service, but let ourselves down by our non-dress code and cab cleanliness - and at times, our manners. Of course, this does not apply to all our drivers, but the few can ruin it for the rest.

I for one would not object if the BoM were to introduce a dress code - nor I suspect would many others. In fact I believe that TfL should introduce one for all drivers so we can improve our image to the world. So come on ladies and gents, lets make 2011 the year we really did our little bit and made such a big difference.

**Martin Freeborn (C67)**

**Allen Togwell responds:** Hello Martin, sadly a compulsory dress code by DaC or TfL is unenforceable. I say sadly because a) how would it be policed and b) do self-employed adult taxi drivers really need to be forced to look presentable when commonsense says it's the only way to compete against the biggest threat to their livelihood - Private Hire?

By coincidence, I've just read a full-page article in the *Sunday Times* on dress code in the financial sector. Apparently they are banning 'dress down' days because dressing down appears to be becoming the norm on normal working days. It was a damning article on the sloppy dress of male and female members of staff, so much so that a strict rule of dress is to be introduced, which if not adhered to will have a bearing on the member of staff's future in that company. Their argument - and one that I gave in response to a driver at an AGM 20 years ago - is that appearance equates attitude. Dressing like a slob intimates you are a slob and it's the wrong image when dealing with

the public. I agree Martin, it doesn't cost a lot to look presentable; proof of that is the shirt shown in my regular article mugshot which was bought at Primark for £7 with the tie costing £4!

## Credit card signing and GPS calling...

*Dear Alan*

A couple of articles in the last two *Call Signs* need comment. Allan Evans update in the *December* issue states that you should check the signature on the card with the one on the receipt. Since chip and pin came in, 90% of my credit card users do not sign their cards and as for Americans with Amex cards, forget it. Some 99% of users do not sign their cards, so what do you do then? I just process the card and send it through.

Also in the *December* magazine was a page devoted to complaints, almost all about EC5. This seems to be a recurring theme in almost every issue, someone writing about changing calling etc. As someone who does not work that area, I am getting fed up with the all the comments about EC5. Anyone would think this was the only zone we use. How about the lack of work in the west of town in the early morning? I think that needs some comment.

With regard to the comment about terminals in the *January Call Sign*, we have GPS. Could this be used for dispatching as let's face it, the zonal system has had its day. I think that by the time we get new terminals I will have retired - at the moment around April 2012. Any chance of seeing a change before then?

**Ray Sorene (A53)**

**Allan Evans replies:** Hi Ray, can I first clarify that the reason I stated signatures on a receipt should be checked against the cardholder's signature, was merely to ensure driver payment. I also mentioned that if you are without a signal and unable to print a receipt, then a manual receipt with a rubbing of the card at the end of the journey is essential to again guarantee payment - especially if it turned out to be a lost or stolen card. You may have read in an earlier issue of *Call Sign* about a member who didn't gain a signature on a receipt, was originally paid and then had the money clawed back following non-payment by the relevant bank some weeks later (not very nice on a reasonably large amount). This is becoming a fairly regular occurrence and as a driver myself, I would find this hard to take! You also say that if there is no signature,



# Mailshot

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you just process the card and then send it through. If I'm honest, I feel that you are taking an unnecessary risk of the same thing eventually happening to you as happened to the driver I mentioned earlier and again it could be on a lucrative trip. I am pretty sure that when you receive a new credit card, you are instructed to sign and verify the card immediately. I would suggest that until our new terminals that will have chip and pin are available, you should take the safer option.

EC5 is the zone that a majority, if not all of night/early morning drivers book into at some stage during their working week. I'm sure that members using this zone agree that it must be made fair and equal for everyone - along with all other zones that are constantly monitored. Terminal warning messages are not always a big enough deterrent and are occasionally ignored!

In the weeks leading up to Christmas there were many uncovered trips in the West and South West zones, predominately early morning and it was a major cause for concern as some very senior accounts were not receiving the coverage they were used to, so much so that I believe lead in times were temporarily modified in an effort to improve an ongoing problem during busy periods.

The zonal system is by far and away the fairest system. GPS doesn't necessarily pick the closest taxi to a location or rank, however it can bypass a taxi if it picks up stronger signal from another cab. Although still at the research and development stage, when the new DaC system is fitted to the fleet it will use GPRS/3G across the whole network - so lost signals in outlying areas will be a thing of the past and a trip offer should never be lost. You only have to ask some of our ex-members who have gone to another circuit that uses GPS as a means of dispatching and now want to return to see why we strongly believe in our data system and why we do not intend changing.

## All great!

Hi Big Al,

Could you please remove my motor home for hire ad from *Call Sign* as it has now been leased out for a year. Thanks for your help Al; great mag, great editor and a great society!

Dick Francis (T15)

Anything to help ...Ed

## No left turn mess...?

Good morning Alan

The Oxford Street no left turns eastbound never really hit me until recently when I had a job from the Selfridges rank to St Pancras International. As usual, the traffic was horrendous. Whereas we used to be able to turn left at Duke Street, that is now ahead only. The next available left turn is Marylebone Lane, which is shut for roadworks that I have heard are expected to take up to four years. So that meant going down to Oxford Circus - by which time there was almost £10 on the meter! Of course I could have attempted to u-turn into the non-moving traffic going west and then join the shorter crawl so far as Portman Street and make a right turn there, but then you have to somehow assure the passenger that you are going in the wrong direction in order to save them money and that can be embarrassing if they don't believe you.

I don't see what benefit there can be from stopping the left turn into Duke Street - it certainly won't make Oxford Street any worse. Surely someone at Westminster Council has enough common sense to see that? Mind you, you have to doubt that as they must have known about Marylebone Lane when stopping the left turn at Duke Street. Incidentally, the fare to St Pancras on *rate one* came to almost £20. I would also have been irritated to be asked to pay that much...

Sid Nathan (K88)

**Richard Massett, Chairman of the London Cab Ranks Committee responds:** The left turn into Duke Street was banned as part of a series of measures to improve Oxford Street; in particular it was prohibited because of the very high flow of pedestrians crossing that junction. The package of measures implemented at the time also included benefits to the taxi trade in the form of rank improvements and as far as I am aware, the requirement to close Marylebone Lane was not then known. All the measures were discussed in detail with Martin Low at the time and he was well aware of our objections, but decided to go ahead with the ban. All this was set against the backdrop of requests from the Oxford Street traders to reduce traffic in Oxford Street, primarily by removing taxis.

There is not much point in bringing the matter up again at the moment as that part of Oxford Street is to be closed to eastbound traffic from next month for Crossrail works, with traffic diverted via Wigmore Street.

## Road tax problems...

Dear Alan,

Can you help, I need to contact someone high up in the Mayors office. Briefly, my road fund licence ran out on 31/12/2010, which was the day that the renewal reminder arrived. I know that I'm in the 21st Century, thus I renewed it online (£425, plus £2.50) and printed off two separate official replies detailing all relevant documentation. The DVLA said that the disc should be with me in 5 working days, but owing to the backlog there was an especial order this year that their official replies were effective up to 11/01/2011.

Sadly I did not know (but should have suspected) that the Cab Inspection dept is still in the 19thC. Thus when trying to plate the cab on 4 January, it failed because the paper disc was not stuck to the windscreen.

I wrote to Palestra ASAP and today spoke to Mr Edmund Davies, who was sympathetic. I told him that all I wanted was for him to ring SGS and tell them to accept the DVLA's response. But his reply was that we were all bound by and unable to vary the 'London Cab Act' (date unknown but would like to know, suspecting sometime in the last century). He promised to take the anomaly up with someone further up the food chain.

Do you know whom, or which office to address in the Mayors office so that I may put a few rockets up some dopey officials fundament?

In my letter to Palestra and today on the phone, I mentioned that we were in the 11th year of the 21st Century and that if one government department said that the web download was all that was needed, why, how can another department not accept them as reliable? But to no avail, thus I'm unable to work until the post office gets through its backlog.

Jon Tremlett (Y32)

I gave Jon the contact details for both the Mayor and John Mason. Hopefully he got some satisfaction from one or the other ...Ed

## Greenwich wastelands!

Dear Al,

I'm glad my last letter made you smile, the wife says it's the first thing I've raised in years! You're right when you say I don't need a map to find the O2, but it might come in handy at Greenwich Millennium Village where we have a number of account customers, but which appears on our map as a wasteland. Similarly we all know Boardwalk Place, which isn't on our map but there are thousands of addresses within



# Mailshot

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a couple of miles not shown. Surely you are not saying we can't have a decent map because we did the Knowledge 30 years ago when the modern day Docklands was a distant dream? You say you have only used your SatNav three times in 4 years. I understand you work the Finz so I can believe that. I would guess that your knowledge of Croydon, Bromley and Bexley is similar to mine of Upminster, Romford and Enfield. I can get you there but away from main roads and shopping centres I'm a bit sketchy and if it's a choice between driving along with a map book on my lap and using a SatNav, well the SatNav is safer and I believe more professional - although you disagree.

Yes Geographers did pull the plug, but there must have been provision in the original agreement for regular updates to the map? You say the fact that the terminals have lasted this long is a testament to their durability; I see it more as an indictment of a lack of investment at the sharp end. The map is only one symptom, how much would it have cost to get a reject counter that actually counted the rejects? I agree that we shouldn't spend millions just to get a new map, but if we had spent some money in the past maybe we wouldn't have to spend a fortune now to leapfrog the opposition we have fallen behind.

On the subject of the new terminal, I have heard about it and yes you are right it is supposed to be the business and you are of course privy to better information than I, but I am sure I can remember you saying almost exactly the same thing 3 or 4 years ago. Let's hope it is as good as you say because we will probably still be using it in 2024.

We are constantly told in *Call Sign* that we have to give the customer what he wants and not to forget he has a choice. Well I'm sorry Al, but what he wants overwhelmingly is the Vito. It's here and it's not going away, just take a look around. And I can't see anyone uninventing the SatNav anytime soon. If we ignore the technology and the opposition embrace it, then we are doomed.

Finally regarding pictures of Board members, a couple of drivers have told me they conduct what they call a Rice-Watch where they count how many photos of the Chairman appear in *Call Sign* each month. I must have picked the wrong month because the average is 5 and the record is 8. You will be pleased to know you were back up to average in January. I wouldn't worry too much about this obsession with photos of the Chairman though, I was the same about Debbie Harry and despite dire warnings from my dad, it never affected my eyesight! Well that's my letter writing days over you'll be pleased to know. Thanks for indulging me; I'm off to the opticians now...

**C.S.Clark (F25)**

**Ok Charlton, let's look at the important part of this letter – your infatuation with Blondie, ie Debbie Harry. Mind you,**

**there are quite a few younger people reading the mag, so perhaps we'll skip that bit. But I can recommend a good doctor!**

**You're right that I was probably talking about new terminals at least four years ago. What happened? I believe it was called a recession and anyone in this business spending £millions on new terminals when their current system worked adequately well would have been deemed as being totally irresponsible. Have you seen the differences between our terminals and those of the opposition? Theirs may have more bells, but the bottom line is that they all send out trips. Not rushing out to buy new terminals at a time of recession when not only was it dead out there, but a time when cash was something you hung on to for dear life, I believe showed far more sense – even though I too would have loved a new terminal. Ask drivers on those other circuits what they think of their systems and you won't hear anyone fawning over how wonderful they are. In all honesty and contrary to what you obviously think, I know very little about what our new terminals will involve, but I do believe that providing we don't go back into recession, that we'll see them sometime this year. As it will probably have a built in SatNav, mapping will be irrelevant anyway.**

**But speaking of SatNav, I don't think you understand my point about having them on display. We are supposed to know our way without them, that was the whole point of the Knowledge. If we now rely on them, we become no different than private hire and as they are often cheaper than us, could you blame passengers for wondering why they use taxis? The vehicles are often older than PH, we are often more expensive on longer rides and using SatNavs, drivers will end up using the same routes as PH. That's why I keep saying that we should not keep them on show! So no, Charlton, I will never agree with you on that until the day arrives when it no longer matters and we are all the same.**

**And the Vito? Well I suppose if you are using a tool that minicabs use, then does it matter if you drive their vehicle as well? Probably not – except when in 5 or 6 years time and our Vitos are ageing, while PH are still updating theirs every two years. As I've said many times - and Vito owners are obviously sick of hearing me say it - private hire can use the Vito (mind you, they did have it first) but they cannot use a TX type vehicle, because that is a real taxi and only real licensed taxi drivers are allowed to ply for hire in them. But I don't suppose we'll agree on that either!**

**Finally, Rice-watch! I know it was writ-**

**ten in jest, but I often get asked the same question. Well, firstly he IS the Chairman and represents us all over the place. They say he'll go to the opening of an envelope and when he does, someone takes his photo! I couldn't possibly comment as I quite like my job! But surely no subscriber would rather he attended nothing and not enhance the name of DaC? Yes, you'd have fewer photos of him in the mag, but by the same token we would constantly be overlooked. As it is, believe me when I say that everyone knows Brian Rice and Dial-a-Cab – from LTPH to the Mayor!**

**As for you, Charlton, I hope your letter writing days to *Call Sign* aren't really over because it's been an interesting exchange - and I like your sense of humour! ...Ed**

## Photos at Goldman Sachs?

*Hey Al,*

Mike Galvin of Addison Lee was at Goldman Sachs last night for ages, standing by the front door bold as brass having photos taken. Was he looking to wind drivers up?

**Gary Cox (O46)**

**I couldn't believe how many drivers phoned me that evening! I wasn't at GS otherwise I would have asked Mike whom I've known for many years and contrary to some who have a built-in dislike of him from his time at ComCab, have always got on well with. Mind you, I'm not mad on his boss! So for Gary and all the others that phoned, all I know is what I've pieced together – Danny Sullivan from LCDC's The Badge was the photographer and Mike wasn't there to have his photo taken. That means he was there for a GS chat, Danny saw him and flash! Sorry, but that's all I know. However, no doubt the photo will appear on some website or other with a criticism of Dial-a-Cab thrown in! ...Ed**

## Kenya calls!

*Hello Alan*

I just wanted to say thank you for providing your magazine so that it can be read on the internet. We have no magazines for taxi drivers in Nairobi and although we do not claim to be anywhere near as knowledgeable as taxi drivers in London, by reading *Call Sign* we can at least have something to aim at.

**Lipapwiche Kibaka  
Nairobi, Kenya**



# Mailshot

continued from page 34

## Addison Lee

Hello Alan,

John Griffin isn't anything new to our trade and everyone knows who and what he does. However I do find it a little outrageous that he writes to *Call Sign* with "a butter wouldn't melt in my mouth" attitude. It was plain to see that he had an "if I can't have it, you are not having it either" approach to the M4 bus lane and even though the Conservatives have had a long term ambition to take it away, I believe that it was through Mr Griffin's self righteous behaviour that sped up the process. It's a simple argument that the more time London taxis spend in traffic, the more the cost of the journey and it is part of the Addison Lee marketing jargon about fixed prices against the cost to customers using Taxis and sitting in traffic. He wanted access to the bus lane so that his drivers could do a greater number of journeys from Heathrow in a day.

Mr Griffin speaks with forked tongue and you only have to read the article at the following website (especially paragraph 13) to see how he holds the London taxi trade in complete contempt. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/36cypma>.

I wrote to my MP as regards the M4 bus lane and received the standard reply from the DfT. The problem that the Taxi trade has is that without a London Taxiboard-type committee, we are chasing shadows when we need to be part of the consultation and negotiation process as and when these decisions are being made - not when they are announced as going to happen. We can all kick up a stink, but it's too late by then.

Finally, I would like to congratulate **Barry Spear (Y16)** for picking up Mr Griffin, as it speaks volumes that Mr Griffin preferred to use the best on demand taxi service in the world rather than Addison Lee... the company he owns!

**Richard Potter (T51)**

**Interesting letter Richard. An unusually high number of Dial-a-Cab drivers phoned regarding my publishing a letter from AL Chairman, John Griffin. Some said that I shouldn't publicise his company, while other agreed with my philosophy that it's better to know how the opposition thinks rather than to pretend that it doesn't exist. Mr Griffin was responding to a *Call Sign* article from former Tory Minister of Transport for London, Steve Norris, who said that licensed taxis would always have the advantage of London bus lanes even if they had lost the M4 one. And as this magazine seems to be the only one with an open and pretty-much uncensored forum for drivers, then I feel it's important for us to know what is going on out there because Private Hire isn't going to go away. And if John Griffin would like to write to *Call Sign* to say whether he**

**still intends giving his drivers a similar instruction as he did re M4 bus lane – but this time in regards to a London bus lane, I'll publish that too. But I somehow think he may keep that one to himself until he says "go!" Now see the next letter ...Ed**

## Publicising the opposition?

Dear Alan,

I make no apologies for writing and complaining about the content of the *Mailshot* pages in *January Call Sign*. Why on earth do you give space in OUR magazine to the opposition, the enemy? To make matters worse, in the December issue there is a full page with headlines praising the opposition and enemy. In my book they don't have the right to exist. If you look at their *modus operandi*, no official training of drivers, no disabled vehicles, no legal tariffs, no separation of driver and passenger, no respect for the laws ie M4 bus lane. Well Mr Griffin, lets see if you have the balls to instruct your drivers to ignore the bus lanes in central London?

Now onto another subject close to my heart and that is old cabs. Old cabs have not done us any favours and I welcome the new limit on aged cabs. I really think 10 years should be the maximum operating life of a London cab. I have always replaced my cab on a three year cycle, as the economics dictated that this was the correct way and there is great pleasure from operating a new vehicle – although that was up until now. My current cab, a TX4 is nothing but a p\*ss take from the manufacturers. £420 for the road fund licence tells me it's an old dirty engine and I know that within the next 12 months Euro V will be the requisite. So who's fooling who? Anyone considering buying a new cab now must think very carefully. It took almost three years for M&O to diagnose and repair a leaking front heater matrix, which started leaking from day 1. I lost count how many times I returned the cab for the same fault. They finally fixed it and it's blown again and yes, my warranty has expired. I won't even talk about the fuel consumption.

Returning to my first point, I know you take the moral high ground regarding what is

acceptable and what is not to advertise in the pages of *Call Sign*, and for that I hold you in high esteem, so please no more enemy articles or letters.

**Stuart Benjamin (B10)**

Thanks for the letter Stuart and I understand your point about allowing the enemy onto *Call Sign's* letter pages. However, should we then pretend that they don't exist while they go into all our accounts, making them offers they find hard to refuse? I can't do that any more than I can now just throw insults at them, because like them or not, whether they give driver training or not, they're here and they do exist. You only have to read driver's letters to see how often the opposition are mentioned. There is certainly no chance of them ever getting their own regular pages while I'm here, but neither will I pretend they aren't there because that would be another step on the road to disaster. I take the fact that people of the ilk of former Transport Minister for London and Mayoral candidate, Steve Norris, feels he can write to *Call Sign* in response to John Griffin, as a compliment.

The full page article in the December issue was written by Eddie Lambert and brought in much interest from DaC drivers. He unashamedly took the idea from Addison Lee and I certainly wasn't too proud to publish that fact, after all John Griffin has taken enough from us – including one of his trump cards, that all his cabs look the same and are of the same colour, the one we are known by – black cabs!

I'm not here to defend M&O – now the London Taxi Company (London) – but my TX4 is just over two years old and I have had no leaks and pretty much trouble-free motoring. But you are right that Euro V is getting closer and from 1 April 2012 all new taxis must be up to Euro V or better ...Ed



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