

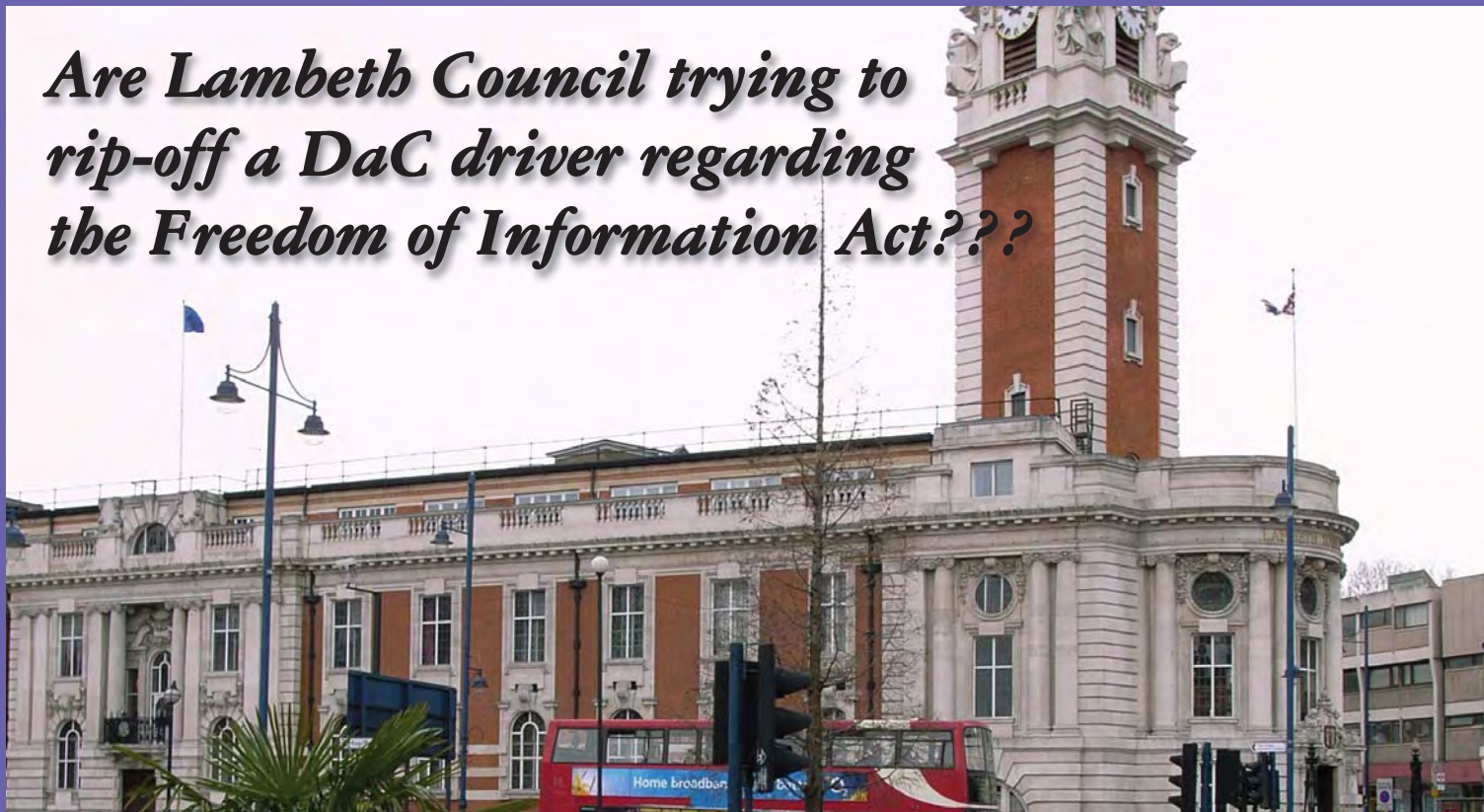
May 2011



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*Are Lambeth Council trying to
rip-off a DaC driver regarding
the Freedom of Information Act???*



Colin Salmon and his Euro V Vito



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

"What's On" at local home football matches, O2 Arena, ExCel, Royal Albert Hall, Troxy, Hammersmith Apollo, Wembley Arena and Stadium, Oval, Lords, Earls Court and Olympia.

Please note there are no 'burst' times. Where times are quoted, these are the kick off or start times. Other events normally start at 19:30. Your guess when they come out is as good as mine...

Venue	Event	Day	Date	Venue	Event	Day	Date
Wembley Arena	Harlem Globtrotters	Sun	01/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Fri	20/05/2011
Arsenal	v Man U 14:05	Sun	01/05/2011	Lord's	Mddx v Glamorgan	Fri	20/05/2011
Lord's	Mddx v Netherlands	Sun	01/05/2011	ExCel	Business Startup Show (T/P)	Fri	20/05/2011
Lord's	Mddx v Kent	Mon	02/05/2011	ExCel	Landlord & Letting Show (T/P)	Fri	20/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Russell Watson	Tue	03/05/2011	ExCel	Property Investment (T/P)	Fri	20/05/2011
O2 Arena	Barry Manilow	Wed	04/05/2011	Wembley Arena	BAMMA (martial arts)	Sat	21/05/2011
Lord's	MCC v MCC youngsters	Wed	04/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Sat	21/05/2011
O2 Arena	Barry Manilow	Thu	05/05/2011	Lord's	Mddx v Glamorgan	Sat	21/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Dusty Tribute	Thu	05/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Sun	22/05/2011
hmvapoll	Katie Melua	Thu	05/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	The Straits	Sun	22/05/2011
Lord's	MCC E.Ang v MCC W.Mids	Thu	05/05/2011	Fulham	v Arsenal 16:00	Sun	22/05/2011
O2 Arena	Barry Manilow	Fri	06/05/2011	Tottenham	v Birmingham 16:00	Sun	22/05/2011
hmvapoll	AC/DC	Fri	06/05/2011	Lord's	Mddx v Glamorgan	Sun	22/05/2011
O2 Arena	Barry Manilow	Sat	07/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Mon	23/05/2011
Tottenham	v Blackpool 17:30	Sat	07/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Tue	24/05/2011
ExCel	ESTRO Conference (T)	Sun	08/05/2011	hmvapoll	Olly Murs	Tue	24/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Mike and the Mechanics	Mon	09/05/2011	Royal Hospital	Chelsea Flower Show	Tue	24/05/2011
Fulham	v Liverpool 20:00	Mon	09/05/2011	hmvapoll	Olly Murs	Wed	25/05/2011
ExCel	ESTRO Conference (T)	Mon	09/05/2011	Royal Hospital	Chelsea Flower Show	Wed	25/05/2011
ExCel	ESTRO Conference (T)	Tue	10/05/2011	ExCel	EULAR (T)	Wed	25/05/2011
Wembley Arena	L'Oreal Movie Awards	Wed	11/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton & Steve Winwood	Thu	26/05/2011
ExCel	ESTRO Conference (T)	Wed	11/05/2011	hmvapoll	Olly Murs	Thu	26/05/2011
ExCel	ESTRO Conference (T)	Thu	12/05/2011	Oval	England v Sri Lanka	Thu	26/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	ABBAPHONIC	Fri	13/05/2011	Royal Hospital	Chelsea Flower Show	Thu	26/05/2011
Wembley Stadium	FA Cup Final	Sat	14/05/2011	ExCel	EULAR (T)	Thu	26/05/2011
Troxy	indoor sports 17:00	Sat	14/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton & Steve Winwood	Fri	27/05/2011
Arsenal	v Aston Villa 16:00	Sun	15/05/2011	Oval	England v Sri Lanka	Fri	27/05/2011
Chelsea	v Newcastle U. 13:30	Sun	15/05/2011	Royal Hospital	Chelsea Flower Show	Fri	27/05/2011
ExCel	kbb (T)	Sun	15/05/2011	ExCel	EULAR (T)	Fri	27/05/2011
ExCel	kbb (T)	Mon	16/05/2011	ExCel	MCM Expo -Comic Com (T/P)	Fri	27/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Tue	17/05/2011	O2 Arena	Duran Duran	Sat	28/05/2011
Lord's	Mddx v Worcs.	Tue	17/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton & Steve Winwood	Sat	28/05/2011
ExCel	kbb (T)	Tue	17/05/2011	Oval	England v Sri Lanka	Sat	28/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Wed	18/05/2011	ExCel	EULAR (T)	Sat	28/05/2011
ExCel	Plastic Design & Moulding (T)	Wed	18/05/2011	ExCel	MCM Expo -Comic Com (T/P)	Sat	28/05/2011
Wembley Arena	Premier League Darts	Thu	19/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton & Steve Winwood	Sun	29/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton	Thu	19/05/2011	Oval	England v Sri Lanka	Sun	29/05/2011
Royal Albert Hall	The Monkees	Thu	19/05/2011	ExCel	MCM Expo -Comic Com (T/P)	Sun	29/05/2011
Lord's	Mddx v Glamorgan	Thu	19/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton & Steve Winwood	Mon	30/05/2011
ExCel	Plastic Design & Moulding (T)	Thu	19/05/2011	Oval	England v Sri Lanka	Mon	30/05/2011
ExCel	Business Startup Show (T/P)	Thu	19/05/2011	O2 Arena	Sade	Tue	31/05/2011
ExCel	Landlord & Letting Show (T/P)	Thu	19/05/2011	Royal Albert Hall	Eric Clapton & Steve Winwood	Tue	31/05/2011
ExCel	Property Investment (T/P)	Thu	19/05/2011				

For the full 175 entries list of 'What's On' in a larger type face that you can print off and keep in the cab, go to www.myfav.co.uk and register as a member using the unlock code 'taxi' to show the "What's On" icons. Plus there's lots more. Use www.myfav.co.uk, recommend it and win £100 - how good is that! T&C apply...

from the editor's desk

Minicab advertising

Several years ago when the PCO announced that minicabs could have identifying marks on the rear of the car, **Brian Rice** in his *Call Sign* Chairman's Report warned that all anyone then had to do was put a sign on the back of their car - such as Fred's Cabs - and that might just be enough to encourage females to assume it really was a minicab and get in.

Well nothing has really changed. Those of us that work in the evenings see the myriad of signs out there stuck onto the backs of cars, which to many looking for a ride home means that they are a licensed minicab - or more to the point just a cab, because the word licensed is rarely mentioned. They are just cabs - a word that now seems to apply to all of us.

When Swindon woman, Sian O'Callaghan vanished, police asked for anyone who had "seen a green Toyota Avensis that had taxi markings." Can you imagine that request in London?

Of course that doesn't mean that all minicab drivers are potential rapists or murderers and although, being from the old school it pains me to say it, some probably do a good job. But more and more now seem to have door logos and markings all over their car and unless the rules have been changed recently, that is still not allowed.

The TV and bus shelter ads shouting out that if your minicab's not booked, it's just a stranger's car are very good. It adds that ten sexual assaults are committed by illegal cab drivers in London every month and it will be interesting - if that's the right word - to see whether the ads have any effect on the figures of women that are attacked by "minicab" drivers.

The answer? I don't have one because minicab markings are now accepted and it's too late to reverse the practice, but it's sad that what was obvious to everyone in the licensed taxi trade at the time - and Brian Rice repeated the warning over several issues - wasn't obvious to those at the previous PCO administration several years back.

UCG mag

The United Cabbies Group are intrinsically linked to the London Taxi Drivers Forum online chat list - a list that I have been told often attacks me. Now they have brought out their own magazine - United Cabbies News - so you'd expect me to attack that. But you'd be wrong. For a first issue, it wasn't bad at all with lots of taxi related stuff rather than filling it with press releases. Ok, so it looks a bit like *Call Sign*, but there was one big difference - we don't allow anonymous articles or letters. If you don't have the balls to put your name to something, then it doesn't carry quite so much weight. Even the editor (was that photo really him) remained unnamed. However, he would certainly stand a chance at the Gurning World Championships held annually at the Egremont Crab Fair since 1297!

I know that producing a magazine isn't easy - hence the number of casualties along the road. Not many will remember Taxi Times, Maurice Levinson's Cab Driver, London Taxi Times, Our London, Taxi Trade Times, London Cabbie News, National Cab, Taxi Gazette, The Point and Taxi Trader. We know they all existed because sad people that we are, *Call Sign* has copies of all their first issues! Not too many had a second



one, although we also have copies of the first issues of both Taxi Globe and Taxicab News and they haven't done too badly!

That aside, to whoever produced United Cabbies News, well done and good luck. You may need it!

So long as it's black?

The Ford Motor Company and the London taxi trade have two things in common. In 2001, LTI announced they were replacing the Nissan engine for one made by Ford. But long before that - on 1 October 1908 - Henry Ford began selling his Model T car, famously advertised with the slogan: *Any customer can have a car painted in any colour he wants... so long as it's black!*

Then there's us - possibly even more famously known as the *Black Cab* trade! Like it or not, that's us and we're known around the world by that title.

So where's the connection so far as this Editorial is concerned? Well I recently replaced my Ford 1.25 Fiesta with ...a Ford 1.25 Fiesta! Ok, I like the car and this makes at least 4 Fiestas off the trot.

When you buy one, Ford like to give you 7 days free insurance. The idea behind that (so they tell you) is to allow you to bring your old car in and drive the new one away without having to change your insurance - just in case for any reason your new car isn't ready.

But we all live in the real world and know that once we make the call to *Ford Insure* to take up the free offer, they are going to try to convince you that when the policy is up for renewal (you have to give them the date) that they can send you a quote. Not really a problem because if you don't like it, then you can always say no.

So I phoned, went through a 5-minute rigmarole of answering questions including the one that asks what your occupation is? When they came back and said their files didn't differentiate between licensed taxis and minicabs, I began to worry a bit! Then the operator put me onto 'hold' while he got confirmation. He came back some 30 seconds later to tell me that I had been refused. With a no-claim going back many years, I admit to feeling rather agitated and asked why it had been refused? The poor man, who sounded rather embarrassed, said I was considered a bad risk because I might pick up famous celebrities in the new car!

For several seconds I couldn't answer, feeling rather stunned. Then I enquired how many celebs would want to travel in a 1.25 Fiesta? He

told me that he didn't make the rules and... well I didn't hear the rest of the sentence because I quite rudely slammed the phone down before phoning my own insurance. They sorted it out in a minute.

So, yes, both Ford and the London taxi business have that TX1 engine in common and also the colour black. I will also probably buy another Fiesta 1.25 in 2 or 3 years time, but if *Ford Insure* ever send me any trash mail in regard to insuring my car, I shall write 'wrong address, please send to a celebrity' on the envelope and have it posted back without a stamp!

Vitos

Call me silly, but I always thought I was the Editor of this mag! As a driver on Dial-a-Cab, I also assumed that I knew which way was up? And as a human being, I have my own views on life. Add the three together and I feel that I can give my honest opinion on any subject - more so if it is connected to the licensed taxi business. So when I say that I think the Vito is a nice vehicle to drive, but because of its minicab-looking shape I don't like it as a taxi, I say it because it's my view. I have published articles from Vito owners saying how much they like it and will continue to do so because the magazine belongs to DaC drivers and staff. But I can't publish articles that aren't sent!

So I did feel rather surprised to find that a driver had complained to a Board member about my anti-Vito stance. Why would anyone do that? All they have to do is to send me an article on their Vito and if it's interesting, it will get published.

And even more surprising - perhaps bordering on rudeness - is the fact that *Call Sign* wasn't invited to the Euro V Vito launch. Does that colour my attitude towards the Vito? Nope, not in the slightest, so if you want to say something nice about your Vito and it is of interest, then just send it to *Call Sign's* usual address and it will probably get printed. Don't go whining to a Board member, it will make no difference to the contents of the magazine because that's why you have an Editor, although I must admit to still smiling at the small number of drivers that still believe the BoM edit this mag! In the meantime, you can read what DaC drivers think of their new Euro V Vito inside this issue.

Credit Union

I recently bought two new Michelins from Tiger Tyres in Hackney Road. As the DaC Credit Union is upstairs, I decided to let them pay for it and I'd pay them back. They came to £172 including vat and I'm paying it back at a tenner a week. Interest? Yeah, around 20p a week!

If that isn't a real bargain, I don't know what is. If you're not a member, you are losing out!

Holiday time

As usual, *Call Sign* takes its summer break next month so there is no June issue. If given another contract, I'll see you again for the July magazine. That doesn't mean you can't send me anything you believe to be worthy of publishing. I'll still be at the PC or laptop most days. In the meantime, for those of you lucky enough to be going away, have a great time...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Flying figures!

It's amazing how time just flies. It's already a year since the airline industry was in turmoil with flights being grounded because of the ash cloud from the volcanic eruption in Iceland. I knew that to be the case because I was comparing the current year's figures with those of last year and there was a sudden turnover drop in April due to the ash cloud.

However, when we think about the situation, we all know how much work we have lost over the years that went back and forth to London's Airports. That same work that now uses another mode of transport to the same airports.

Consequently, it got me thinking that although we have lost much of that work going to and from airports, they still generate an enormous amount of work for the taxi industry. We only really become aware of the situation when aircraft are grounded and passengers are not travelling, so our work declines even further. Yet we are not being used to the same extent as in the past when passengers are actually travelling to and from the airports!

What I find particularly strange is that our account work fell last April, yet as I've just said, in the main account clients do not use taxis for their trips to the airports to the same extent as they did in the past. Yet closed airports and grounded aircraft do have a detrimental knock-on effect to our business. Yes, it is strange...

Also, talking of time flying, we have been in our new - or now not so new - building for four years this month - amazing!

Returning to my original point of comparing last year's figures, you will be pleased to know that turnover is up this year on last by just over £1.3m, which represents an increase of 8%. In reality, that is a fairly modest increase but at least it is moving in the right direction - up as opposed to down. Let's hope it continues in that direction during these uncertain times.

Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers and DaC

The WCHCD is a City Livery Company representing the Taxi industry. It is a very worthwhile organisation that generates much respect for our trade. It also has a charitable side, part of which is the annual taxi trip to the Disney resort in Paris.

Currently one of our members, **Jim Rainbird (T25)**, is Master of the company (perhaps I should call him James) and I am the Lower Warden. This organisation is open to all within our industry or indeed anyone whose income is derived from the taxi industry. If any of you are thinking of becoming a member, even leading up to becoming a Freeman which has the added perk of allowing you to



drive your sheep over London Bridge without paying a toll, then you should seriously consider joining. From being a Freeman, you can move on to being a Liveryman.

I believe I am correct in saying that once you become a Liveryman, you are then in a position to move on to being the Lord Mayor of London. If that is not correct, then I am sure another of our members **Phil Davis (F10)**, a past Master of the Company, will soon correct me. In other words, to become Lord Mayor you must be a Liveryman and wouldn't it be wonderful to see that position being held by someone from our industry?

The Company have dinners every three months in various Livery Company halls and you get to meet different types of interesting people from different walks of life. At one dinner I was seated next to the founder - now retired - of the **Kwik Fit** organisation whilst at the next dinner, I was seated at the side of an optician from Cheshire.

One of our Liverymen is **Graham Woodhouse** and he runs a recognised guiding course for the Company, one that I am reliably informed is excellent. I believe the next course starts in September. If you are interested, just contact WCHCD Clerk Mary Whitworth,

on 01494 765 922 or email her at wchcd@tiscali.co.uk.

Dial-a-Cab are prepared to sponsor any of our members who are interested in attending the course. Obviously there will be a limited number of places and it will be on a first come first served basis. You will be informed through **Call Sign** about arrangements closer to the time. The course costs £260 and what we intend doing is that our DaC member will pay for the course and when he/she has completed it, they will be reimbursed by Dial-a-Cab via their subscription. This is not only good for our members that complete the course, it will also be good for Dial-a-Cab in having more recognised guides as members of the Society.

Mafia?

Finally, although I have not been informed by the Editor (he likes to surprise me), there is not normally a **Call Sign** in June so I can now go a whole two months without him badgering me. I'm not sure where our Editor actually goes in June other than to meet up with the printers that used to publish our magazine - once you have read this month's issue, you can make up your own mind what they do - or should I now say did!

Incidentally, I am not serious regarding the above paragraph. I thought I had better mention that because a former member once wrote on an internet site that I had connections with the American Mafia (and now a counterfeiter) and that the Editor of our magazine was arranging to have this ex-member 'clipped' - yes, I watched the Sopranos!

I hope you all have a wonderful and hopefully profitable summer...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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Is Lib-Dem MEP Baroness Sarah Ludford launching an...

AIR POLLUTION BATTLE AGAINST TAXIS?

London Liberal Democrat MEP, **Sarah Ludford**, who campaigns for cleaner air in London, has quizzed European environment Commissioner **Janez Potocnik** on what action the London Mayor and government need to take to clean up what she describes as its "dangerously polluted air." The European Commission recently held off from taking the UK to court for failing to meet EU limits on health-damaging particles (PM10) in London's air, which come particularly from diesel and are said to cause a host of health problems and premature deaths. A reprieve was given on condition that the London Mayor and UK government put together an action plan by June on how they intended to tackle the problem. According to Sarah Ludford, London's air is the dirtiest in the UK. She added:

"It seems Brussels doesn't believe current plans that London has any chance of complying with the European clean air standards that the UK government signed up to. It's time to stop trying to fob off the EU with meaningless 'air quality plans'. We must really put our backs into making London a city where people can - literally - breathe freely and not die young."

The Lib Dem proposals include measures such as retrofitting the most polluting vehicles with filters, speeding up the modernising of London's bus and taxi fleets and making central London a Clean Air Zone in which old diesel engines would be banned. She added: "This is not about Europe's demands, it's about whether we Londoners want to live in a city which keeps people healthy or kills them off. Mayor Boris Johnson and Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman must deliver urgent action, not platitudes."

EU clean air law states member coun-



MEP Sarah Ludford talks of "suspending activities" that prevent cleaner air

tries need to make sure PM10 pollution does not exceed EU limits more than 35 days per calendar year. On April 20, 2011 in Marylebone Road, we exceeded EU limits for the 36th day this year.

Prior to that date in a question to the Commission about London PM10s, Baroness Ludford asked what action it would regard as satisfactory and how long-term its perspective would be?

The Commission answered that it has given us until 11 June to adjust our air quality plan and after that date, the exemption ends and PM10 daily limit value will have to be met. It added:

"In view of the very narrow margin by

which compliance is projected and the risk of further exceedances, the Commission has asked UK authorities to adopt further measures effective for controlling or, where necessary, suspending activities which contribute to the risk of the limit value being exceeded. Measures falling under this category could be in relation to motor-vehicle traffic, construction works, use of industrial plants or products and domestic heating. They could consist of controlling and where necessary suspending those activities contributing to the risk of the limit value being exceeded.

Specific actions aimed at protection of sensitive population groups, including children, may be considered..."

The ongoing battle doesn't bode well for London taxis and even taking into account the 15-year rule, there could still be future battles in an attempt to lower that total. If, of course, the Mayor's office agreed to fund the cost of taxis becoming retrofitted with hydrogen when the technology is fully completed and available, perhaps that could help sort out the problem? The sum involved would be substantial, but far, far less than any fines to London would be.

Parking concerns at Waterloo

Transport for London have asked **Call Sign** to point out to **Dial-a-Cab** drivers about concerns that have been raised regarding taxis obstructing emergency access routes, junctions, bus stops and bus lanes in the area.

They ask that while waiting on this rank, to please make sure you do not block any of the above locations and that if the rank is full, to take care not to obstruct the highway and consider looking for work in other locations.

Enforcement in this area is going to be increased to ensure that the important emergency routes and highway facilities are kept clear.

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Please bring along your badge or Bill as ID

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Reservations: 020 7836 1318

Jerys World



Are you sure Allan Evans won't mind us being booked into the S99 Gatwick zone while we're on holiday!

Now we need cycle awareness courses!



Taxis need cycle awareness courses? Pic courtesy Road.cc

Following her rant in the *Evening Standard* accusing London's taxi drivers of being a danger to cyclists, **Jenny Jones** - the Green Party's candidate in next year's London mayoral elections - has claimed that we as licensed taxi drivers should undertake cycle awareness training, similar to that now being provided to bus and lorry drivers.

She said: "Both black cabs and cyclists are a big feature of London life and they really must get used to sharing the road. Black cabs have a job to do and can take cyclists by surprise when they have to manoeuvre quickly to pick up a fare. Cyclists often need to take up space in the

middle of the road and get in the way of faster traffic, in order to do their own manoeuvres safely. We need to increase the funding for cycle training, but we also need to ensure that everyone who drives for a living in London understands how they can help keep cyclists safe."

Ms Jones issued her appeal to **London Taxis and Private Hire**, following the storm over her comments where she claimed she had twice been forced off the road by taxis while cycling and had also been the recipient of abuse.

Ms Jones, former Deputy to Ken Livingstone, said she wasn't making generalisations about taxi drivers and admitted

that we had a "difficult job." She also admitted that she was referring to the attitudes of a minority of taxi drivers, which she said detracted from the behaviour of the majority of them.

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If you are looking for suggestions as to where to take your children during the May half term break, consider the great selection at London's Science Museum. Among many other exhibits that cater for all ages, Call Sign has selected three...

Inventions with LEGO bricks!

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, May 31 + June 1 and 2, your children can let their imaginations soar to new heights by helping build a giant invention inspired LEGO display. The museum is offering visitors the chance to build a variety of inventions out of LEGO bricks. Join them to assemble any invention you like, from computers to cars and space rockets to hot air-balloons! The kids can get building tips and tricks from the team of the LEGO store at Westfield who will integrate your child's creation into a giant invention-themed scene. The event is free and there is no need to book - just drop into the Science Museum for as long as you like. Budding builders will receive special offers at the official LEGO Stores and the chance to win great surprises! No need to bring your own bricks!

The Time-Eating Clock – a story of invention

Running until October 2011 and with free admission, the celebrated time-eating Chronophage clock designed by Dr John Taylor OBE is on display at the Science

Fun at the Science Museum...

ENTERTAINING THE KIDS AT HALF TERM



**What can your child do with LEGO?
Prizes are up for grabs...**

Museum in *The Time-Eating Clock – a story of invention*. It will be displayed alongside an original Harrison clock in an installation designed to give insight into the mind of one of today's most creative and successful inventors. Walking atop the 1.5 metre golden face is a large kinetic sculpture of a mythical beast. The creature, an integral part of the mechanics of the clock, appears to devour time and the name Chronophage literally means Time-Eater from the Greek *Chronos* – meaning time and *Phago* (I eat). The hour is tolled by the sound of a chain clanking into a small wooden coffin concealed in the back of the clock – this is said to be a reminder that our

time on earth is limited. Fortunately, no such limitation is put on visitors to the museum!

Legend of Apollo – the ultimate 4D simulation theatre












In addition to some amazing IMAX 3D films at the Science Museum, you can also see, hear, feel and even smell what it would be like to venture into space with a ride in the Science Museum's extraordinary multi-sensory experience. You can journey deep into the unknown with the *Legend of Apollo* film and discover what it felt like to be part of the Apollo missions. The experience utilises the latest simulation technologies to place the audience in a truly experiential environment where they not only see, but also feel what it was like to be part of this major historical event. *The Legend of Apollo* has been created with participation from former NASA Apollo astronaut Col David R.Scott. The film draws on Col Scott's own experiences, actual Apollo archival footage, recent satellite imagery of the Moon and exceptional 3D computer animation. Charges apply to this exhibit...

Science Museum, Exhibition Road is open daily 10.00 to 18.00, except 24-26 December.

You can see all the goodies on display: www.sciencemuseum.org.uk / Tel 0870 870

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If you have been reading **Call Sign** for more than a few years, you will remember our ongoing campaign to replace minor speeding offences with speed awareness courses.

It began in the *May 2006*, **Call Sign** when we 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.

Of course **Call Sign** would never want to encourage drivers to break the speed limits, but we all knew that some limits – especially late at night – were ridiculous and how easy it was 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 have gone towards costing you your licence and with it, your livelihood.

The article spotted a legal technicality claiming that when someone was questioned regarding any offence – be it in person or via a form – they should first have received a formal caution and, of course, a camera could not give any caution. Quite a number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers benefited by sending off the letter we published to the prosecuting police force with the result that the three points were scrapped in favour of a half-day speeding awareness course. Even as late as 2009, some drivers were writing into **Call Sign** telling us that the letter still worked. Most police forces have now blocked the technicality and the three points again went onto driver's licenses.

But there has been a sudden move

Is there a new ‘points for speeding’ revolution on the way?

Points OUT - Awareness Courses IN!



David Marks first spotted the original article that went on to save many DaC drivers getting 3 points on their licence

towards the awareness courses with 37 out of a total of 44 police forces throughout England and Wales giving drivers the option to take a course instead, avoiding points on their licence. The decision came at a meeting of the *Association of Chief Police Officers* (ACPO). The decision seems to mean that if you are caught doing 10% above the speed limit plus 9mph, you will be offered an alternative to the points. The previous policy to allow

for possible speed camera malfunction was 10% + 6mph.

That now means that the limit in 30mph areas would rise to 42mph, while on a motorway and other major roads it would increase to 86mph. Caught at those speeds means you may be asked to undertake a speed awareness course, but you would avoid the dreaded 3 points on your licence.

According to ACPO, the changes would allow more drivers to “undergo an invaluable educational experience, rather than receive driving licence penalty points and a fine.”

There are still 7 police forces that have not signed up to the new initiative, so drivers would have to make themselves aware of the forces that do agree with it. Those caught would only be allowed one course in three years.

The courses, which cost £95, last half a day and contain lectures from outsourced companies (not the police) and assessment tests. There is no pass or failure but they are designed to show how well those attending judge speeds, distances and road hazards as well as to show the outcome of bad driving.

ACPO added that the speed at which the awareness course could be offered was also a decision for individual forces, so there would be no real warning should any changes be brought in...

SORRY BUT NO FERRARI...

No, the majority of you sussed out **Call Sign's** April Fool joke when this magazine informed readers that **Dial-a-Cab** was about to launch a Ferrari service for important passengers who were in a hurry. In addition, the eight supercars could be taken home each night by the selected drivers who would remain on permanent standby at the rate of £45 an hour!

The clue came in the last sentence when interested drivers were told to contact Rapol Fris at DaC administration – who of course doesn't exist other than on April First! However, **Call Sign** was told that at least twenty drivers phoned to enquire about the possibility of being a DaC Ferrari driver, while two were quite abusive about the suggestion!

One driver definitely sussed us out when he emailed **Call Sign** to say that although he had been interested, he was now going to enquire about a

position with Addison Lee instead as their suggestion of looking for volunteers interested in taking part in a possible time travel service sounded better!



Sorry but it doesn't exist except on April fool's Day!



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Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

Diesel comparisons

On searching the *Call Sign* archives recently, by chance I came across an article by our Editor under the heading *Diesel rip-off*, which at the time was 65.9p a litre! On seeing that piece (dated November 1999) and being conscious of the hike in fuel prices since then, I was curious to compare the present day's cost of fuel against earnings to 1955 when I got my first car, and particularly to the 60s when I got my Green Badge. I was surprised at the result...

The car in question was a second hand Ford Popular, which seemed to go forever on a single gallon of petrol. But the next car I had was a huge Humber Super Snipe, followed by a V8 Pilot, then a Wolseley 680 which was an ex police car, then a Sunbeam Alpine and lastly during that period came a white convertible Armstrong Siddeley with running boards and white rim tyres. All second hand of course, and if any of **Dial-a-Cab** members remember those cars, they might also remember how heavy some of them were on fuel. Especially the Armstrong Siddeley, which had a pre-select gearbox and averaged 15 mpg.

I was loathe to drive it any further than from where I lived in Camden Town up to the Tottenham Royal dance hall and only then because the car was a magnet for 'pulling' the young ladies!

Petrol in the 'fifties was 5/- (25p) a gallon and I was earning around £3.10s a week. Records show that the cost of petrol was the same in 1956 as it was throughout the 1960s. I'm not sure what diesel cost in the 1950s, but I do remember in the mid-1960s buying a new Ford Capri 3.0 Ghia and petrol was still 5/- a gallon. I was running my own business during that period as well as driving a cab and diesel then was 4/- (20p) a gallon. The average earnings at that time were £15 per week compared to today's average earnings of £450 per week.

Now this is the interesting part. Back in 1965, the average weekly earnings could buy 75 gallons of diesel. Today the average weekly earnings buying diesel at the price some garages are charging as I draft this article of £6 a gallon, would be exactly the same - 75 gallons!

Cost of clothes...

Another interesting fact is the comparison with the cost of clothes. In the 1950s during the *Teddy Boy* era, I paid £70 for my Edwardian drape jacket suit with velvet collar, 20 times my weekly earnings. Today you can buy a very good top of the range *M&S* suit made in Italy for less than half of an average weekly wage, proving that looking scruffy has nothing to do with wealth. And I refer not to the cab trade in this instance, but to people in general. One only has to look at the standard of dress of those appearing on TV. Can you imagine Trevor McDonald appearing on TV in the state some presenters do today? On several occasions I've seen one presenter unshaven, hair in a mess, wearing no proper shirt, tie or jacket, just an unflattering T-shirt and a pair of jeans. How a man who regularly appears in front of millions of viewers is allowed to present himself in that manner is



beyond comprehension, especially when he claims to earn over a £1million a year. Yet for all that money, he evidently doesn't feel his job or his viewers are important enough for him to look sensibly dressed. What is concerning is the influence that has on young people? How much respect will they - or anybody for that matter - expect to receive if they think it's cool to go to work looking as though they've been sleeping rough amongst the homeless? To think that in the 1930s on BBC radio, men had to wear dinner jackets just to read the news!

Cash and credit card charges

Following details in my last article about joining the Met Police with our own mailshot in an attempt to generate more cash work, I have had a number of drivers tell me they refuse to cover cash work or credit card work off the radio because they feel uncomfortable with the extra charges. Personally I feel their concerns are unfounded and they are losing out on valuable income. I can understand instances where a driver has run-in with the full £4.20 on the meter and perhaps with a bit of waiting time, what it adds up to at the end of the journey. This being the case, if they feel that concerned, there is the option of running in with less on the meter or even setting the meter on arrival. It should be remembered that people who use credit cards for any service expect a surcharge of some description and those surcharges are clearly stated when they use the phone or internet to book their cabs. And as for the £2 booking fee on cash trips, this shouldn't be a problem being that it's clearly displayed on the fare chart for the passengers to read. If truth be told, I think the majority of drivers are quite happy to accept these charges, but simply don't like asking for them.

A few also said we shouldn't accept cash bookings, because the driver loses out when there is a no-show. This is a gripe I've heard for years, particularly from those who have this peculiar perception that they should be compensated whatever the situation. For example, if they are pulled off a trip to the Airport, a scrub equivalent to what the fare would have been should be given, or if they run for an *As Directed* trip and discover they have travelled further to the pick up than where the trip was going, they should be compensated. The ear bashing I've suffered when hearing these gripes! I've tried to explain that with certain work there is an element of risk -

especially cash trips when there is a no-show. It's a gamble and if the passenger has gone, so the gamble didn't pay off. Is that not what gambling is? Maybe I'm wrong, perhaps in future when I've put my 50p wager on the Grand National and as usually happens, my nag goes a**e over tip at the first fence, I should ask for my money back...!

Bilks

And talking of losses, for some odd reason I've heard of a number of instances recently of drivers being bilked - not drivers on our circuit, but from conversations I've had with drivers of cabs I've hired off the street. I've no idea whether there has been a sudden surge in bilking or whether by chance I just happen to hail the very guys that had been turned over in this manner. In all the years I've had a badge, I can honestly say I have only been bilked just once. It was close to midnight when I picked this person up near Shepherds Market. It was dark and I couldn't tell whether the passenger was an aging *fille de joie* or a guy in drag! I was told to go to a block of flats in Kentish Town and when I got there a deep voice in the back of the cab - high pitched when we started off - asked me if I would like the fare paid off in kind, or words to that effect. I began laughing and the poor soul got quite offended, accusing me of being an ungrateful git and stomping off in a huff, which made me laugh all the more. It was only when I drove away did I realise that I hadn't been paid!

Seat ads

For those of you that would like a bit of colour to brighten up the back of your cab as well as advertising your Society, why not pop into Roman Way or the drivers entrance at Dial-a-Cab House and collect a set of our new stick-on tip-up seat ads. The ad colours and their common connotations - should any deep thinkers ask - are associated with happiness, friendliness, optimism and energy. Plus the all-important reminder to those passengers that might moan about the cost of the fare, that where else can 5 or even 6 people travel for the price of one?

Prostate Cancer awareness campaign

Continuing with the Prostate Cancer awareness campaign, some great news has just been published on tests for prostate cancer. Especially for those who are reluctant to have the PSA tests because of a fear of needles. The latest tests are not only twice as accurate as the present PSA tests, but all it involves is a quick urine sample instead of a needle jab to extract blood. The other advantage is that the urine test can be done at your local surgery and results can be given within a few minutes, saving weeks of anxiety waiting for hospital results. This new test is not yet available, but will be later in the year

**Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing**

On Sunday 17 April, myself and 38,000 other runners lined up on Blackheath for the start of the 2011 **Virgin London Marathon**. Having decided to raise some funds for the **Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice**, I considered the task ahead; running 26.2 miles of those oh so familiar streets of London. From the 'Heath you could see Canary Wharf and the Gherkin miles away shimmering into the sunny distance, yet nowhere near the end of the run! It was a daunting task, but I felt safe in the knowledge that I had prepared for the day - 447 miles of preparation to be precise.

Not all in one go, of course - that would be from London to Frankfurt - but over the previous 4 months with each week showing an increased number of miles, not to mention variation in the scenery! The 12 miles of Thames Cycle path from Erith to Woolwich via the Crossness Sewage Works, contrasted with the 20 miles of stunning scenery at Forest Way between Groombridge and East Grinstead. Training went well and I set myself an optimistic target of completing the marathon in 4 hours.

After banishing my pre-race nerves in the portalo, the race started at 9.45. The shuffling masses slowly broke into a jog and then we were off and running. I got off to my target pace of just under 9 minute miles and tried not to think of the distance ahead, instead staying focused on the 6 mile point where my family were no doubt enjoying a Full English at *Hardys* public house on the Trafalgar Road!

Hardys came and went and I was still on target for my 4-hour marathon. Tower Bridge was just before the halfway point and I crossed it bang on time. Miles 14, 15 to 18 were no problem. Then it happened! Mile 19 on Canary Wharf. Not exactly hitting the

David Completes London Marathon

In aid of Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice...



David will stick to driving after completing the 26 miles of London Marathon

my name printed on it and every time I faltered, total strangers would call out my name urging me on! The family reunion came and went but with only 3 miles to go, there was no giving up now.

Big Ben was now in sight, then onto Birdcage Walk. With 385 metres to go I can see the end. I hobbled over the finishing line in 4 hours 28 minutes and 20 seconds. I felt dazed, slaughtered but elated at the same time. I had run the greatest marathon in the world and raised a couple of quid for my charity at the same time. But I won't be doing it again...!

If you want to help, go to:
www.justgiving.com/David-Ballard.

David Ballard (N28)

proverbial wall, but the wheels were definitely coming off. My pace began to slow.

By mile 20, I was down to 10-minute miles and thinking of every excuse to give up. If only I could make it to mile 23, I could join my family who by then had moved onto the *Walrus and Carpenter* on Lower Thames Street to grab a cold beer!

22 miles and by now the crowds are huge and the noise and encouragement from them is truly amazing. My charity running vest had

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The heading to this article may sound silly, but recent events suggest that the social networking site of **Twitter** might be trying to enhance itself at the expense of **Dial-a-Cab** (and the other two radio circuits). Of course, if those enhancements were to be achieved by getting their own drivers to cover their own account work, then that classifies as legitimate competition.

But the problem so far as **Call Sign** is concerned is that around twenty DaC subscribers are also on Twitter. On its' own, that poses no problem and in fact two years ago this magazine published an article by former subscriber **Richard Cudlip (ex-V23)** in which he told how he used Twitter and how he saw its' future progress. He referred to it as a useful tool for cab drivers, going on to explain how it allowed drivers to stay in contact with each other via short text messages, mainly via their smartphones.

"It's like messages sent via our DaC terminals, but potentially open to a much wider audience," Richard told us – but that is where our worry emanates from. He went on to add:

"I have already had people that "follow" me (ie read my Twitter blog updates) asking if I could pick them up from somewhere when they know I'm working. I haven't acted on any of these yet as I've never been in the right place at the right time. But I can easily see how even a small network of drivers could start using Twitter to try and get work. I think the potential is huge, but then I'm a great advocate of technology and the web."

Then in the August issue of 2009 Richard told **Call Sign** that together with another driver, Karl James, he had helped to set up **Tweetalondoncab** when around 30 drivers got together via Twitter and between them claimed to have "hundreds of followers."

Richard admitted that his group of Tweepers hadn't received many bookings, but he was



Richard Cudlip: Co-Founder of Tweepalondoncab

hopeful that the message would eventually get out there and that those operating the system would benefit with extra work. This magazine had no doubt that Richard was a genuine believer in the Twitter system and had no intention of hurting anyone else in the process, but the possibility is there if someone on Twitter uses DaC equipment to further his network.

They now have around fifty drivers and you – the **Call Sign** reader – might be asking how that could possibly be a danger to the three major circuits? Well one DaC driver who isn't on Twitter, but is on the LTDF chatroom told us of an email that had come from a Tweeter and our driver asked what we thought about

Can Twitter be a danger to DaC?

it? The email to the LTDF list claimed the driver had seen a terminal message on DaC about there being work at the Savoy riverside entrance, so he then tweeted it out and also went there himself. Firstly that meant that a DaC driver might have lost a good job because a message meant for DaC drivers then went out on Twitter. And sure enough, a Tweeter apparently tweeted in that he had "got off" to Mill Hill – a nice ride at any time, but one that should have gone to a DaC driver. The writer himself got a trip to Surbiton. No problem there until he announced that his passenger had been the director of an insurance company and he was then told all about the Twitter empire and the possibility of using a service such as that – in a DaC taxi!

Because the coverage on Twitter is very hit and miss, in fact sounding like the former Zingo system under a different name, that could end up sending an account over to private hire. When the work picked up, Zingo couldn't cope and Twitter could well go the same way. The question is at what expense to the radio taxi trade?

Now Tweepalondoncab are advertising themselves as a viable system and asking potential passengers to contact them in a partnership with **TaxiStop**. Those interested are asked to download a smartphone app in order to access the service. That is a legitimate service – unless they then use their association with DaC via their terminals and passenger contact – to further enhance that service. Will those 20 Tweepers begin chatting up every DaC account client they pick up? No doubt those DaC drivers on Twitter will tell **Call Sign**...

AL loses legal battle over adbins

Just before the Easter break, minicab firm **Addison Lee** lost their legal battle with Westminster City Council over its unauthorised installation of 19,000 cigarette adbins outside pubs and restaurants and one even outside **Dial-a-Cab's** East Road headquarters! Now a judge has ruled that AL acted illegally by erecting some of the bins without planning permission.

Westminster brought the action over 21 advertisements at seven sites – six of which were said to be in conservation areas. Addison Lee was ordered to pay the council's costs of £21,407. In addition, they were fined £480 and were ordered to remove the 21 bins.

According to AL Chairman John Griffin, the action contradicted the council's doubling-up of PM David Cameron's 'Big Society'.

After the case, John Griffin told the press: "I stood up in court today and told them that their Big Society is nothing but a farce." He added that no complaints had come from the public.



John Griffin paid Westminster's £21,000 costs

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And yet...

I recently stopped in Camden Town for a seemingly English couple in their sixties who asked to go to Little Venice. As we drove up the High Street with its mix of shoe and leather shops, chicken and kebab joints and crowds of kids in fashionable gear, my passengers looked around in wonderment.

"What a fascinating place," the man said. "Is this the part of London they call the East End?"

"Oh no," I said not certain if they were serious or whether my assessment of them as being English was actually correct.

"So where is the East End then," my passenger asked?

"Well," I replied slowly, "it's places like Whitechapel, Stepney or Hackney," and thinking I must have got his accent wrong, I asked him which part of the world he had come from?

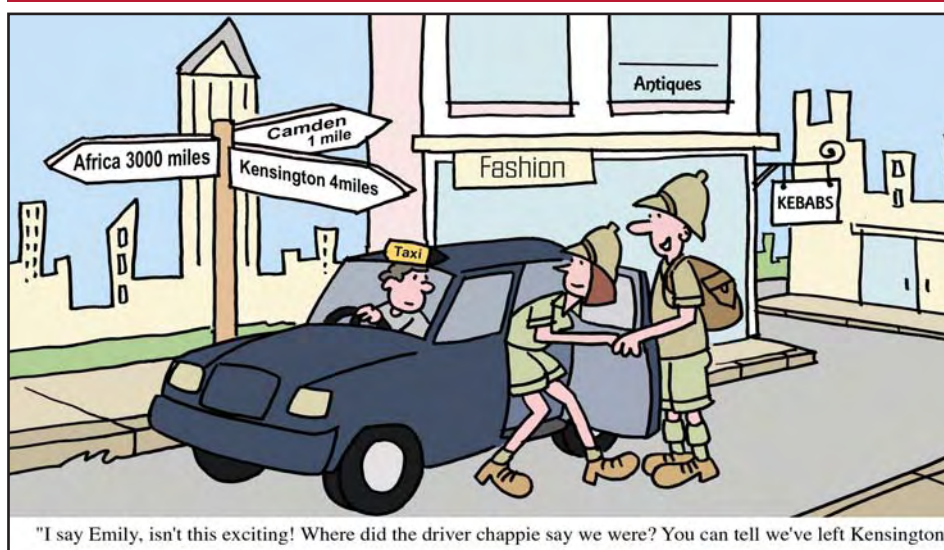
"Oh," he said, "we're from Kensington."

I was a bit taken aback with his response. I was about to be even more shocked as the male passenger uttered his next sentence.

"We've just never been out this far before!"

Another true short story from Geoff Levene...

Travelling the world???



Now my late Mother was not what you'd call a traveller. Born in St Anne's Court, Soho, she spent the next 94 years in D'Arblay Street, Cleveland Street, Finchley, Cricklewood, Wembley, Neasden, Golders Green and West Hampstead.

She sheltered from the Blitz under Peter Robinson at Oxford Circus (now Top Shop)

and also in Lancashire and Sussex. But apart from those two stays and many holidays along the South Coast, she never left London.

But even she would not have considered a visit to Camden Town as a day out...

Geoff Levene (K43)

The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers

TAXI GUIDES VISIT BIG BEN

Students on the WCHCD Tour Guide course and members of its Education Committee recently went on a tour of the clock tower at the Palace of Westminster – better known perhaps by the name of the large bell – Big Ben!

The group began with a trek up 182 spiral stairs to the first level. While getting their breath back, they were told about the architect, Charles Barry. In 1844, Parliament decided that the new buildings for the Houses of Parliament, by then under construction, should incorporate a tower and clock. One of the requirements was that "...the first stroke of the hour bell should register the time, correct to within one second per day, and furthermore that it should telegraph its performance twice a day to Greenwich Observatory, where a record would be kept." Most clockmakers of the day considered such accuracy unattainable for a large tower clock with its driving striking mechanisms and heavy hands exposed to wind and weather and they lobbied for a lesser specification. But the clock was installed - the first tick coming on 31st May 1859 with the first strike of the great bell following on 11th July of that year.

A further 88 steps up and the Guides arrived at the four clock faces. They measure 7 metres in diameter with hour hands of 2.7m and minute ones of 4.2m. The clock face is made up of 312 separate pieces of opal glass, illuminated by 28 energy light bulbs.

A final 64-step climb and the group were at the bells, Big Ben in the centre at 2.2m high, 2.7m in diameter and a hefty 13.5 tons in weight! BB is surrounded by 4 more bells weighing between 1 and 4 tons each. These toll out the 1/4 hour and chime bells. The original bell was cast in Stockton on Tees, brought to London by train but unfortunately cracked when tested, so a new bell was cast in 1858 at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and brought to the Tower. This also cracked but was repaired and returned back to full voice by 1863. The Guides heard the 3pm strike and fortunately had been given earplugs beforehand! With a ringing noise still in their ears all agreed that the view from the Tower was something special.

On the way down they saw the clock mechanism, which is actually quite small being only around 12 inches in diameter. The pendulum ticks every 2 seconds and to keep the clock in time, old fashion pennies are used on the pendulum for adjustment! The pendulum is 4.4m long and the weights that drop to strike the bells weigh 2.5 tons with the actual hammer that strikes Big Ben weighing 200kg. They didn't call it 'Big' for nothing!

If you would like to go on the next Tour Guide course, see the Chairman's report on page 4 for a great offer



The clock tower of which Big Ben is the largest of its bells

In a brilliant victory over **Westminster Council** while acting for **Dial-a-Cab** driver **James Field (W73)**, who received a PCN in November for stopping in Brewer Street, **Barrie Segal** showed that Westminster's CCTV parking cameras were illegal! Now the council faces cancelling thousands of parking tickets and repaying £millions of illegally collected fines.

Parking ticket expert, Barrie, founder of parking ticket website **www.appealnow.com** told **Call Sign**: "Westminster Council will have to cancel tens of thousands of CCTV issued parking tickets after my landmark ruling by the Parking Adjudicator. In my view they must now stop using these cameras immediately. Furthermore, the council also faces the prospect of repaying millions of pounds, which they collected using these illegal cameras."

In two far reaching-decision for motorists, the Parking Adjudicator decided that Westminster Council's CCTV parking cameras did not comply with the law. The challenge was mounted by Barrie – undoubtedly the UK's leading parking ticket expert - who claimed that Westminster Council's CCTV footage as individual frames were not numbered sequentially as required by law and therefore did not comply with that law.

After considering further evidence from Westminster Council and Barrie Segal, Parking Adjudicator Carl Teper, decided in PATAS cases 211000697A and 2110013024 " **... that the failure to sequentially number the captured images by means of a visual counter, to be a procedural impropriety as so defined. In coming to this conclusion, I have accepted the argument advanced by Mr Segal in his written submissions, that the numbering of the visual counter is not**

In another victory, DaC parking guru Barrie Segal tells Westminster Council...

YOUR CCTV CAMERAS ARE ILLEGAL - AGAIN!



Westminster Council Parking Dept must hate the mention of Barrie Segals name!

sequentially numbered. The appeal is allowed."

Barrie went on to say: "These decisions and the evidence I have seen in several other cases I am conducting, show that the CCTV cameras used by Westminster Council do not comply with the law and therefore parking tickets issued using them cannot be enforced. Westminster Council should stop using those cameras immediately and cancel all parking tickets issued as a result of their use. They should also refund all parking tickets paid by motorists who were

caught by the cameras, believing the cameras were legal."

If Westminster is forced to switch them off again, it will make the second time in two years!

Under paragraph 2(c) of the Schedule to The Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (Approved Devices) (England) Order 2007, it states: "**Each frame of all captured images is timed (in hours, minutes and seconds), dated and sequentially numbered automatically by means of a visual counter.**"

In another landmark case in 2009, Barrie got Westminster's Controlled Parking Zone "F" – covering virtually the whole of central London - declared illegal when he claimed the zone did not have the correct signs at each vehicle entry point. After a site inspection, the Parking Adjudicator agreed with Barrie. It's a safe bet that Westminster Council do not like our Barrie!

But it's another safe bet that DaC drivers such as James Field believe if PCNs were an Olympic sport, Barrie Segal would undoubtedly win a gold medal!

Barrie Segal deals with DaC's arbitration appeals and has won virtually all of those he has been involved with. He is also the founder of www.appealnow.com - the only website in the world where you can appeal your parking ticket online in 4 1/2 minutes...

Victoria Station upgrade

The next phase of traffic management for the vital upgrades to Victoria Station starts on 3 May. This involves:

- * **Closure of Wilton Road north of Neathouse Place to all traffic except buses and taxis and cycles**
- * **Closure of Allington Street at the junction with Victoria Street**
- * **Removal of the feeder taxi rank link in Neathouse Place**

Restrictions will apply in this area until the project is completed in 2018. Further bulletins and highway signage will be used to advise drivers of significant changes.

Vehicles serving Allington Street should access the road from Buckingham Palace Road.

A monitor at the head of the taxi rank in Vauxhall Bridge Road will show the back of the rank in Wilton Road. Taxi drivers should not proceed into Neathouse Place until they can see that there is room in Wilton Road.

More information will be available on the Transport for London website at tfl.gov.uk/vsu.

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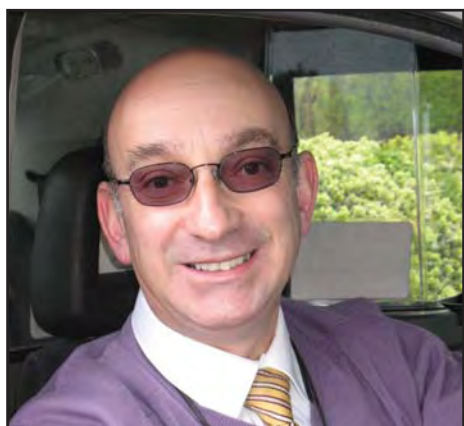


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It is often said that events come in threes and for three of our subscribers that proved to be the case!



First there was **Ivan Sobell (P69)**. He had his cab keys stolen, meaning his cab was at risk of being driven away at any time without his knowledge or consent.

"I had to have all the cab locks and the ignition lock changed for security reasons and then, of course, the door/ignition keys had to be re-programmed, which was not such an easy chore. I tried to claim on my household insurance, but they rejected my claim on the basis that the cab is a business and my policy does not cover me for such losses, only domestic ones," he explained to **Call Sign**, making it sound as if the insurance company had found a loophole in their responsibility to dismiss his claim.

"However," he said with a smile returning as he waved a plastic key ring in the air, displaying the logo of a car key held securely within cupped hands, "I have a specialist key loss insurance policy that I'm hoping will meet my expenses!"



Michael demonstrates how to get into the trunk via the radio speaker facia

By complete contrast, **Michael Lewis (Y37)** managed to lock his door/ignition key into the trunk of his cab!

"I feel a bit silly now," he told **Call Sign** when we met. "I usually add a performance enhancing liquid into the fuel tank when I fill up with diesel that is supposed to help improve engine performance and clean up the exhaust. I was on the Tower Hotel rank when I remembered I had not included the Upper Cylinder Lubricant as it's called - a bit like Redex - with my last fill-up, so I decided that while I was waiting on the rank, I would pop some fluid into the fuel tank."

Continuing his tale of woe, Michael told us: "I opened the trunk lid, removed the fuel cap

DAC DRIVERS AND THE MISSING KEYS...

with the ignition key and laid it with the ignition key still attached on the trunk floor while I poured the additive into the fuel tank. I returned the can of fluid to its space behind some cab cleaning materials and automatically closed the trunk lid without thinking about the fuel cap and ignition key still lying on the trunk floor!"

Michael began laughing as he recalled his thoughtlessness.

"It was a completely thoughtless act - I did it without thinking, I was just completely out of sequence," he admitted, a slight embarrassed grin spreading slowly across his face and replacing the laughter.

"I called my garage, GJ Services in N18 who are Metrocab specialists and spoke to the manager, Vince, who told me to remove a radio speaker facia from the rear parcel shelf, which would then give me access to the trunk area. Then with a bit of arm wriggling, I should be able to reach in and release the trunk lid lock with a firm pull. This I did and bingo, the trunk lid popped open and I retrieved my ignition key and fuel cap!"

His voice rose in jubilation as he recalled the relief of being mobile again.

"It also brought home to me how important it is to be loyal to your garage so that they get to know you and will help you out when you're in trouble," Michael affirmed. "Shortly after that I had a phone call from the DaC call centre to check if I was ok or needed any further assistance. So I would like to publicly thank them up there on the third floor for their concern and of course, Vince at GJ Services

for his invaluable advice."

While Michael's Metrocab was in overhaul, he demonstrated the principle of his actions on a TX1. A little more fiddling with a long probe is likely to be necessary to work around the ramp and spare wheel on that or a TX2 model to reach the lock. But, due to the nature of the interior trim on a TX4, it does not seem possible to gain access to the trunk area by that method.

Some motor accessory shops stock small magnetic boxes, capable of holding a spare key, which can be hidden underneath the cab and are for just such emergencies. Alternatively, the internet can offer a wide range of 'key safe' choices at a modest cost.

The third driver to have key problems was **Roger Davidson (E38)** who suffered his cab being broken into by way of the door lock being rammed with a sharp implement and dislodging the central locking arm within the door lock.

"I did get it repaired fairly easily," he told **Call Sign** "but it was inconvenient and an expense I certainly didn't need. My garage told me that when the door lock is attacked, the internal rod that operates the central locking mechanism can jump off its fixing within the door lock and it becomes necessary to remove the plastic door trim to access the lock from inside the door space to effect the repair. I also had to have the lock replaced," he added, "but I did at least eventually get it sorted."

Keys, who needs 'em! Er, well we all do...

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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE...

with Tom Quigley

No CCTV in London?

As we are all aware, our lives are caught on camera and many have been subjected to PCNs via CCTV cameras in the central part of London.

I generally work nights and into the small hours of the morning. Like most taxi drivers, when I wake up the first thing I listen to is the radio to get an update on any problems with traffic, or especially the rail services to see if it's worth an early start. Whilst I can more or less predict the same hotspots being reported on, a strange occurrence happens when I watch local regional traffic reports on TV.

We all know that traffic will generally be diabolical at Trafalgar Square, Knightsbridge, Lower Thames Street and Russell Square to name the obvious areas and still leaving out many others. But it appears that those who control the camera shots being released for TV usage have a different agenda as they very rarely show any live relays of traffic delays shown inside the Congestion Zone. Instead you get views of jams on the North Circular hotspots such as Hanger Lane, the M11 coming into town or the Westway - all of which are probably predictable and expected.

It is totally weird that I have never seen cameras showing buses backing up from Oxford Street to the top of Gower Street and Cannon Street must always be empty as that is never shown either!

If these cameras views are not being shown to the public to assist in relieving traffic congestion, what are they there for? Please don't phone or text as you may still be charged!



CCTV never shows buses blocking Oxford St

So next time you watch a traffic report, study what they are not telling the public.

Marathon funding

Another year over and the London Marathon completed - not by me, I hasten to add - but around 40,000 runners collecting over £4million for various causes and charities.

Along with the record amounts raised by the *Children in Need* appeal, there is no doubt that the British public once again have proved that in hard times they are prepared to give with their hearts and pockets and they should be thanked.

But will the money cruncher section of the Treasury look upon it the other way and think that things can't be as bad as they appear and look at ways to tighten the strings even further?

Census 2011

So the time has come around once again to fill in the 10 yearly census. Many groups have taken the opportunity to have a particular subject deemed to be passed as a religion, because apparently if over 10,000 people put something down as their religion, then it must be counted as such.

The last census saw the Birth of the Jedi (from Star Wars) arrive as a religion. This time campaigns for Cycling and Dudeism (after The Dude in The Big Lebowski) are being put forward.

As for returning the Census forms in the oversize envelopes (thank God or The Dude - whatever suits) that they were prepaid. Imagine the queues at the post office as we tried to get them weighed and measured! This was strange timing and I hope that the bill for the postage was negotiated before the treasury put an extra 5p on the cost of a stamp in the Budget - or did they have some inside information? Either way we paid...

Have a nice summer and see you soon...

Tom Quigley (Y33)



Melinda's Race for Life

Melinda, the daughter of **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Laurie Shapiro (H62)**, will be running in the **Race for Life** on 12th June in the City in aid of **Cancer Research UK**.

Driver's reception has a **Race for Life** tin to help Melinda collect as much as she can before the race and kind-hearted DaC drivers have already sponsored her for almost £100. All donations, no matter how small, will be welcome and help in the battle against Cancer - a battle the Shapiro family know all about.

If you would like to help, just go to Driver's reception...

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Colin Salmon (N81) was the first **Dial-a-Cab** subscriber to own a **Mercedes Vito** taxi after its groundbreaking launch back in 2008, giving DaC access to a wider market and higher profile in the people-moving business. Now Colin has reprised that historic moment by becoming one of the first subscribers to own the next-generation **Euro 5 Vito** taxi fitted with a 'Blue Efficiency' **Euro 5** emission standard engine.

"I'm delighted with it," Colin enthused to **Call Sign** when he showed us around his new mode of transportation. "I thought the original Vito was smooth to drive and I was very happy with it, but this **Euro 5** version is even better. I didn't think there was anything to improve on the old Vito, but the engineers have taken this new version to another level, there are so many goodies!"

With that Colin grinned excitedly, an outstretched arm gesturing towards his new cab parked close-by. "Let me show you some of them..."

Taking a deep breath, Colin began to itemise some of those 'goodies' to **Call Sign**.

"It has 'S' Class suspension, so the ride is smoother, the rear wheel steering has been completely re-engineered and is superb now, the air-con can be controlled digitally from the central console above the windshield, the leather upholstery is a standard feature and both the carriage and driver interiors have been re-designed to have a cleaner look and be even more user friendly. I can adjust the music radio and other equipment via buttons on the steering wheel and my mobile phone automatically connects through the Bluetooth

Euro V at DaC!



Colin in his new Euro V Vito. See cover pic for a better look...

facility that is also part of the standard spec. Did I mention that the passenger doors open much more quickly now," he enquired proudly? "And then there's the Cruise Control," Colin added almost as an afterthought!

"But the biggest bonus is the new **Euro 5** emission spec engine and its increased power. I have not checked the fuel consumption yet

as I'm still running it in, but so far things are looking promising."

"To sum it all up, the engineers have done a marvellous job with this new version of the Vito," Colin concluded, obviously fairly content with his new taxi!

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As you will read on page 19, Call Sign wasn't invited to the new Vito launch, so we asked DaC drivers buying the vehicle to let us know how it goes. This is Gary Cox (O46)...

GARY AND HIS NEW VITO

What's good...

Get the new Vito on Park Lane and feel it sedately go through the gears - but you'll never know you've hit 60. The Euro V engine now pumps out 136bhp - that's 20bhp up on the old Vito and if the boffins in Stuttgart have got it right, we'll get 28mpg - to you and me that's London City to LAP for a gallon on a good day. That also means we could save £580 over 3 years if the Chancellor doesn't come in for a nibble on the road tax.

Servicing is up to 20,000 miles. I would say around town reckon on 18,000 if you're lucky.

The big problem with the old Vito was the rear steering. This new Vito 5 feels a lot more substantial due to its machine casting. Without doubt its electrics have been completely reworked to the rear and encased. I'm an expert on intercoms now having had the Vito 4. I don't need to be anymore - it's almost perfect in the 5. And where the doors previously had a delay before opening, now it's 'stop and open'. Trust me - that's gonna please the passengers!

The new Vito also features an easier to use heating and aircon system with temperature controls in your front cockpit alongside the latest instrument panel, which will tell you how many miles to the next fill up, will check coolant temperature... oh, and also check the oil for you without you having to leave your leather seat or the luxury leather steering wheel to die for. The dials go back to what they should be - not unlike the FX3 - pure class and design.

Mercedes have also re-designed the low step with the name Penso stamped on for all to see. They must be confident and I reckon they've got a right to be.

The list of toys is endless - if you call parking sensors front and back, cruise control for big girls and boys, MP3 connection, electric wing mirrors, bluetooth (if you understand it) and a proper cup holder - toys!

The lights in the interior have been upgraded to be good enough to light up Blackpool Tower if you wish, or just a romantic light for you and your map and if you can cope with your little darling, you can pay the extra for a nice little seat next to yours. Well that's the hols in France sorted! And it's a Merc, so the hotelier won't turn his nose up. Breakdown is Euro wide for 2 years and they provide a service plan.

Hey - it's even got sexy leather seats in the rear and a more practical, almost black finish to the interior panels... and at last - a spare wheel! OK, the shape's not iconic, but so long as there are only two London cabs to choose from, buy a black one and you'll get away with it. But if they offer you a parcel shelf, say no. You can get a medium sized suitcase in without it.

And what isn't...

Now for the downside. The VAT is £6,885 plus first road tax of £580 due to showroom tax, which takes a £35,000 vehicle up to £42,000. You can't blame KPM for that one, but you can blame them for making you feel green.

One thing's for certain, now the Germans have got their foot in the door, their good name is at stake. And even I can change the headlight bulb...

Gary Cox (O46)



Gary's two young neighbours Laila and Max give their approval to Gary's new Vito

When **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Paul Hodge (D46)** told **Call Sign** of his attempt to speed along his re-licensing process by hand-delivering the paperwork direct to **London Taxi and Private Hire's** swish new home at **Palestra** in Blackfriars Road, we knew exactly what was coming next. Paul is one of many drivers to tell **Call Sign** that their envelope was refused. He told us:

"I wanted to renew my taxi license, but because of the CRB check you also need to include important documents such as your birth certificate. So I decided to take the packet of documents to work with me and drop it into **Palestra** when I was close to the City – which happened fairly quickly.

I parked up and walked into this very impressive building and asked where I could leave my envelope for the attention of LTPH? The security said that I couldn't, so I asked if they had a post room and that I would be happy to take it there myself. But no, even though they did have a post room, I couldn't actually do that either. So I explained that I had to be re-licensed in order to drive my taxi and that this was where the paperwork had to come. How could I get it here if no one was prepared to accept my envelope?

"No problem, sir" came the response without any hint of a smile, "there is a Post Office over the road. You can post it there and we'll probably get it tomorrow!"

I was rather shaken and asked whether they realised that if I took it to that Post Office, then they would bring the same packet of papers back to this reception tomorrow? They nodded in agreement, again without a smile!

I just cannot understand the logic of it, the sheer bureaucracy is more suited to a TV comedy show."

Why Palestra does not accept hand delivered post...



Palestra: Taxi drivers can't leave licenses there...

Penton Street, which was only occupied by the PCO and so it was much easier to provide such a facility, to a large serviced office occupied by many thousands of people from across TfL. The general policy for this building, which we have to abide by, is that for various reasons (including the need for all incoming post to be correctly scanned and checked) post cannot just be dropped off at reception. This applies to all areas, not just Taxi and Private Hire.

Whilst it may seem strange to be directed across the road to the Post Office, there is good reason for this and in fact applications processed in this way are much more likely to be processed quicker and without the need for us to go back to the driver asking for more detail.

Because so many drivers have come up against the identical problem, **Call Sign** asked LTPH Director, **John Mason** to explain the logic of the process. Mr Mason told us:

"I appreciate that some drivers may be frustrated by the fact that they cannot simply pop in and drop off their renewals as they used to. The simple fact is that we went from a single serviced office in

Through the work we are doing on our licensing re-let and IT service procurement, we expect to significantly improve the way that drivers can re-apply for their license - including the ability to manage their license and renewal on-line and so never have to fill in a renewal form ever again!"

NEW VITO EURO V TAXI LAUNCHED

But Call Sign can't tell you about it...

If you read the trade press, you will know that the updated version of the Mercedes Vito was launched at a press conference in Coventry. Sadly, the manufacturers / sales people didn't feel that **Call Sign** was worthy of inviting, no doubt because we have been critical of the vehicle's design. That it shows total disrespect to **Dial-a-Cab's** 2000 drivers is probably of little relevance to them.

We have, when necessary, criticised LTI (now the London Taxi Company) but they have never felt the need to avoid asking **Call Sign** to any of its' launches. So apologies to DaC drivers, but no doubt if you go to KPM they will be happy to show you the vehicle. Just don't tell them you read **Call Sign**.

Alternatively, you can read our own reviews of the new Vito on the opposite page from two DaC drivers who have just bought them. Hopefully you will agree that these mean more than a **KPM** press release...



A photo of the new Vito would have appeared here, but sadly KPM do not recognise Call Sign

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We've often wondered about the difference between those **Dial-a-Cab** drivers that work "very late" compared to those who work "early mornings?" **Marc Turner (R97)** works late yet is often still out at 5am when others are just signing on. So while some drivers are still rubbing their eyes at the thought of another day stretching out in front of them, Marc is thinking about that last job to go in the direction of home.

So it was in the early hours of Thursday 16 March. It was just coming up to 3.15 in the morning and Marc spotted a few people getting into taxis outside the **Whiskey Mist** club in Hertford Street, just around the corner from the Park Lane Hilton. So he decided to "dwell" for a few minutes to see whether anyone else would come out.

Marc told **Call Sign**: "Because of the ongoing tout problem in the area, the police never bother us when we provide unofficial ranks at that time of the morning. They are happy to see people getting taxis, rather than having to hang around until one comes along with the possibility of a tout appearing on the scene. Over the previous few weeks, there had been a number of uniformed and plain clothed police in the area specifically looking for

MARC'S EARLY MORNING PCN!

Is that how to get rid of the touts???



Marc Turner: PCN at 03.13am for helping in getting rid of the touts

touts and they seemed happy to see taxis waiting - provided, of course, they didn't block the road. I have yet to see them move us on."

But even though the police were happy, Westminster Council – via their camera above the Metropolitan Hotel – obviously weren't because they sent Marc a *Penalty Charge Notice* timed at 03.13am!

"It makes you wonder," said Marc as he told us that he would appeal the PCN, "on the one hand we are assisting the police by providing an excellent service, while on the other Westminster are penalising us for doing so!"

Call Sign believes that Stratton Street also has a 24 hour CCTV camera.

Marc is currently on the 10-week LTDA *Krav Maga* course and joked that perhaps he could practise his newly learned martial arts skills on the camera operator – while at the same time wondering whether in PCN operator's language, 03.13 is working very early or very late!!!

And 12 hours into the day...

WESTMINSTER STRIKE AGAIN!



Westminster photo of Gerry waiting on a single yellow line while his passenger went into the chemist

This time it was 3.13 in the afternoon and DaC driver **Gerry Tobin (L32)** was heading towards Kings Cross Station as his passengers had a train to catch. There was a mother, her three-year-old son and the grandmother. The traffic had been horrendous and Gerry was struggling to get there when suddenly one of the passengers asked if there was a chemist on the way as they needed something urgently for the young child.

The cab was in Wigmore Street, so Gerry stopped close to John Bell and Croyden on a single yellow line. The mother got out and said she would be "just one minute." But one minute turned into several and Gerry became concerned about getting a PCN and suggested they moved around the corner, but the grandmother was concerned her daughter and grandson wouldn't find them and they'd miss their train. So Gerry waited, the passenger returned several minutes later and Gerry got them to Kings Cross with literally just minutes to spare.

The passengers were very grateful and Gerry soon forgot about it - until a CCTV generated PCN fell onto his mat.

"I wasn't too worried," Gerry told **Call Sign**, "as I felt sure that Westminster Council would understand and after all, it wasn't a double yellow line, just a single one."

Gerry wrote down all the details including the age of the child, but they rejected his appeal. He has decided to go for a personal Arbitration appeal, but told **Call Sign** that whilst he understood getting the PCN, he failed to see why Westminster act in such a heartless way having felt certain they would cancel it after reading the details.

"What did they think I should have done," he asked quizzically? "I had a very young child and a grandmother in the cab and they were concerned that the child's mother might not find them if they looked for a legitimate parking space. According to Westminster, Gerry should have looked for a 'pay and display' parking bay as single yellow lines only allowed taxis to set down or pick up.

Gerry's last word? "Maybe the CCTV operator's grandson will one day need something urgently from a chemist. Then he'll understand why we do what we do..."

Call Sign takes its' annual break in June, the month that marks a year since **Dial-a-Cab's** dispatching legend, **Lou Gitlin** passed away. A memorial service was held this month and this magazine wanted to mark the affection many held for a man whose history with this Society stretched back almost as long as ODRTS itself, after walking into the office that was then based in Pentonville Road in late 1957.

Then in 1961, he formed a Saturday dispatching team with **Ivor Belkin (C97)**, Lou doing the evening shift and Ivor the day. Their partnership ran till 2006 – 45 years – when Lou had to undergo a double cataract operation and on his return to the dispatcher's box at Brunswick House, found the VDU glare to be too much to take.

On that retirement, Call Sign was inundated with dispatchers and drivers all wanting to say how highly they thought of Lou.

It's hard not to think of Lou without smiling. He loved telling jokes, with his wife Ruth being the butt of so many of them. Yet there was a deep love between the two that would have amazed drivers brought up on those joke sessions!

Then there were the Saturday football scores. Lou disliked footie and during the voice years he would often wind-up drivers by refusing to give out the scores until drivers virtually begged him! That was, of course, before

In memory of Lou Gitlin...



many had FM radios in their taxis.

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

April 29th 1989 was a Saturday and the day DaC became the first radio taxi organisation in Europe to go live using just data dispatch and no voice. So being a Saturday, who would be the two dispatchers to see the process through but Lou and Ivor.

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

Lou Gitlin will forever be a legend in Dial-a-Cab's history and such was his association to DaC that the whole Board attended the funeral. Now one year on, we sincerely hope that

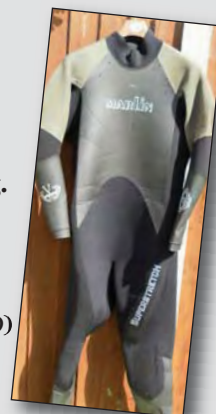
Lou has found the peace he so richly deserved...

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

Kupkake's Korner



An Olympics wish...

One year 'till the Olympic Games
but I don't really care,
as London goes sport insane
I swear I won't be there!

Four long weeks of torture
but I'll be far away,
California with my daughter...
I have a place to stay.

Official cars and minivans
will sweep out from Park Lane,
heading east as per plan
rushing to the Games.

Of course the Tube will not break down
and there'll be no "roadworks pending,"
as thousands flock to Stratford Town
in numbers never ending.

But what's for us amid the throng,
wherein do Taxis fit?
I know for sure it will go wrong...
and I want no part of it....

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

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD

Do you look but not see?

We've all done the knowledge; I did it well over 30 years ago - before Tottenham Court Road was one way and a little after the horses stopped pulling the Hansoms! But in all the years I have travelled around the capital, there are numerous places I've passed and taken very little interest in, just that I know their location for any prospective passenger. There are museums, parks, art galleries, canals and rivers containing many interesting things to see, view and photograph. But most taxi drivers just look at the outside of a building and dismiss it as bus drivers would a 'request' stop!

Just last week my wife asked me what Holland Park was like as a friend had said it was beautiful inside and I had to admit after the 30 odd years of passing it, I did not have a clue. So on a very warm Wednesday three weeks ago, I polished up my *Freedom Pass*, kindly supplied by the Mayor of London that allows me to travel speedily across London on the underground or a little slower on the bus. It enables my wife and I to get from Dalston to Holland Park in less than 30 minutes.

We left the station and crossed Holland Park Avenue, where we were able to look at the wonderful architecture of the houses in Holland Park itself and feel a little envious of those that lived in these splendid properties. It was only 100 yards to the entrance of Holland Park itself, situated inside the large white wall on the left of Holland Park.

As you pass through the entrance, there is a nice covered seating area overlooking some flowerbeds and a wooded area. You then climb steps up to a path that leads through a little wooded area to the statue of Lord Henry Holland set in the middle of Lord Holland's Pond. At this location you have the choice of a few paths; we chose the one leading to Holland House, which was built around 1605. The last person to own the house and estate before the old LCC purchased it in 1952 for the general public, was the 6th Earl of Ilchester.

In front of Holland House is the open air theatre; as you pass this you go into the Portuguese Garden with its beautifully set out flowerbeds encircled by small bushes, in the centre there is the beautiful sculpture of Milo of Croton. Milo was a legendary Olympic Athlete in the 6th century, he died after trying to split open an oak tree but got his hands stuck and was devoured by wild beasts. Well, it sounds logical to me!

As we continued our walk, we passed a large chess board set into the gardens with a game being played by two children. Then onto the Iris garden with its lovely ornamental fountain in which the pigeons were cooling themselves off! On through the covered walkway with its wonderful wall paintings into the Orangery - now a café with an open air seating area.

Close by is a fenced-in children's playground and drinking fountain with a few drinking bowls for dogs exercising their owners! Passing a large cricket/football field and other games areas, you are now at the back of the Commonwealth Institute in Kensington High Street.

If you then swing off to the west, you head towards the tennis courts going through and underneath trees in blossom and beautiful flowers, passing by sculptures - one of which is Dhurva Mistry's *Walking Man*. This leads onto the two enclosures, which have peacocks and peahens; you are up close to these birds, so you have the added attraction of being able to feed them - if you have the appropriate food. Strolling past those



colourful peacocks, you pass more sculptures and then enter the Kyoto Japanese Garden. This area is so peaceful and picturesque, it really gives you a feeling of calm as you wander around.

As you walk alongside the pond you can see some very large Koi Carp. These add to the tranquillity of the area. In the background is a large waterfall, which cascades over large rocks and settles into a still pool under a walkover that you use to continue your amble. In this area there are various Japanese articles for you to gaze on or information plaques to read.

Then it's on to view the conservation area and pond or sit in the shady edge of the woodland. It was at this point that we came across three parks policemen on patrol. This was a sight I had not seen for a very long while due to my living in Dalston!

We then completed the circle back to the original point of entrance by way of another woodland path; on the way we just had a sit down to inhale the air and forget the hustle and bustle of the pedestrians and traffic just hundreds of yards away.

If you have not been inside Holland Park and would like to view some scenes first, you can do so by going to my *Facebook* page and viewing the 143 photographs that I took on the day!

To get to my *Facebook* page, search for Thomas Whitbread - it is the one with the **Dial-a-Dream** logo as a profile picture, you can also view some other days out that you may like to view whilst looking at the photos. There are over one thousand! You may even want to be a friend of mine on *Facebook* and get further information about hidden treasures.

Hopefully, I will be travelling around London in the future months and viewing behind the façade of many buildings or open areas. Then I hope to put the photographs onto *Facebook* so you will be able to see a place before you decide to go yourself. So far there are photographs of Holland Park, London and Whipsnade Zoos and some older ones of Singapore.

To slim or not to slim...

About three weeks ago a lady who runs slimming clubs in Leytonstone and the City of London, contacted our Charity **Dial-a-Dream** with the suggestion that the ladies and gents of her Leytonstone branch did a 12 weeks slimming program for charity.

I went along to see how they were going to complete this marathon slim, having visions of limp lettuce, bendy celery and a batch of unappetizing salad vegetables for the whole of the 12 weeks. I gave the group a talk on **Dial-a-Dream** and its advantage over the other large charities competing for the same work, as we are the ones where all money collected goes just to making a

terminally ill child's dream a reality.

I checked a few of the other charities and saw that before realising a child's dream in 2008, volunteers had to raise £284,708 just for wages and salaries for their workers! This is when some of these children only have weeks or months to live, so money needs to be available immediately and a time when every penny is precious to them.

Other similar charities have very similar figures for wages and salaries, I am proud that for the 20 years we have been realising the dreams for children with life threatening diseases, not one of my committee have been offered or requested a working wage, all of our hard earned cash donated by volunteers goes directly to the children. On more than one occasion my committee has even turned down expenses they have personally paid out.

But back to the diet, the group belongs to the rather larger organisation **Slimming World**, which allows you to eat nearly all the food you like, the difference is the way you prepare it. The lady in charge, Debbie, had prepared meat balls as a main course and a massive glass bowl of trifle for dessert to demonstrate you can still have enjoyment whilst eating. Debbie informs me that if anyone would like to join their group, they have men and women of all shapes and sizes so anyone can join without feeling embarrassed. They meet at the Methodist Hall (the newer one) in **Cann Hall Road, Leytonstone** on a Wednesday evening at 5.15pm and 7pm. You can call in just to see if it would suit you, or you can phone **Debbie** on **020 8558 6671**. Debbie also runs a session at **St Katherine Cree Church, 86 Leadenhall St EC3** on Tuesdays between 12.00 and 2pm, then on Thursdays at **The Dutch Church, 2 Austin Friars EC2** between 12.00 and 2pm.

If you would like to join Debbie's Slimming World or help her raise money for **Dial-a-Dream**, pop along. You can donate to **Dial-a-Dream** at www.bit.ly/dialadream. When you join you get a plastic card, which you bring along and it goes into a computer connected to a set of scales. It records your personal record of weight loss. They will also advise you on how to lose weight and you can purchase weight losing cookery books, there is also a prize for each class at **Cann Hall Road** for the biggest loser (weight wise).

They will not try and embarrass you if you gain a little weight one week, because everyone has a party, wedding or retirement party to go to now and again.

And speaking of **Dial-a-Dream**, we are asking if you know of a child who has a life threatening illness and is in need of a dream wish to give them the will to fight and say *Let Me, Live Another Day*. Please contact me by email at tom@dialadream.org with details so we can contact the parents. We have two rules. One is that you do not mention it to the child just in case a problem arises and two, it must be the child's dream not a parent or guardian's wish. The child must be between 4 and 18 years old.

I am trying to build up a photograph history of **Dial-a-Dream** on *Facebook*, if you would like to view some of the photographs just type into the *Facebook* search **Dial-a-Dream**.

If you are going away on holiday, have a good rest and even better weather...

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board member

Luke Johnson is the Chairman and joint founder of private equity firm *Risk Capital Partners*. He is also the chairman of the Royal Society of Arts, sits on several Boards and among other things is the former chairman of the Channel 4 Television Corporation.

Unashamedly, *Call Sign* tried to find a few of his failures to list but failed! So in all probability, he runs a good company and is a nice guy - but not to the London taxi trade, which is considered by most to be the best in the world and as good an equity firm that Risk Capital Partners are, this magazine would bet that they aren't the best in the world!

But in a recent issue of **Management Today**, Mr Johnson decided to have a pop at the London taxi business, claiming that he prefers to use Addison Lee - his choice - saying that they are 20% cheaper, which suggests that financially perhaps he isn't doing as well as he thinks he is! He also hints that they should be allowed to ply for hire because their drivers are smart and friendly whereas we are grumpy, dress in shorts and vest and talk on the phone the whole time. And God help him should he dare suggest we take his preferred route... we then act as though he has sworn at us! I dislike myself already - even though like the vast majority of drivers on **Dial-a-Cab**, we probably don't recognise his description of us.

And by the way, according to Mr Johnson, we are white, male, over 50 and don't work too many days in the week thanks to our lucrative earnings! We also use "adroit tax management" - obviously suggesting that we don't pay what we should, whereas we have no doubt that the financially astute Luke Johnson makes sure that he and all his clients pay every penny that they can, no doubt making his business far

Risk Capital Partners and the taxi trade?



If you are wearing a vest and are on the phone when this man enters your cab, then watch out!

more attractive to HMRC... doesn't it???

His answer? Cheaper vehicles and more drivers with SatNavs so that the Knowledge can become redundant. Who needs a "best in the world" tag! Oh yes, he doesn't like the LTDA because they "intimidate" regulators. I can't think of a better reason to keep them!

He ends by saying that consumers are being cheated by a "poor value monopoly" and that the world's greatest city deserves better.

Of course, *Call Sign* could answer each individual point, but

we do not need to convince our readers what a lot of tosh Mr Johnson is speaking, so please, to all the taxi drivers that pick up Mr Johnson - because we'd bet that he really uses us all the time - don't forget that he prefers his drivers to be subservient to him.

Oh yes, did we mention that as fuel prices go through the roof, Mr Johnson wants our prices slashed? It suggests that this is a man whose ability to run a financial institute may be slipping from his grasp. And I'll happily withdraw that comment if Mr Johnson can show *Call Sign* that he works 6 days every week and runs his business at a loss...

Alan Fisher
Editor

OXFORD STREET CLOSURE

Oxford Street (Eastbound) will be closed between Regent Street and Great Portland Street from Sunday 8th May to Friday 13th May. Traffic will be diverted left onto Regent Street, right onto Mortimer Street, right onto Great Portland Street and left onto Oxford Street...

TX4 recall: MB to be sued by drivers

In a stock market announcement at the end of March, **Manganese Bronze** - parent company of LTI (now the London Taxi Company) - revealed they were being sued by 436 owners of the early version of the TX4 following 12 under-bonnet fires in 2008 and a mass recall of the vehicles.

Manganese said it was being pursued for the alleged financial losses suffered by the TX4 drivers following the fires when over 5,000 taxis were affected by a recall. Around 4,400 taxis were fixed reasonably quickly with no problems, but 867 required more substantial modifications. The recall ran from September 19, with the last TX4 back on the road by November 11. The taxis were taken off the road as a safety precaution while modifications were carried out to minimise any further fire risks.

Manganese set aside £3.77m to deal with the cost of the recall - with total costs set at £2.6m so far - and says it has become aware of the claim form issued at the High Court.

In a statement, Manganese said that although the claim was at an early stage, "it appeared that all except one of the claimants was alleging loss of income alone for when the taxis were off the road. An application is being made for a group litigation order so that points of principle can be decided together."

It was also said that the drivers had yet to provide details of their alleged losses. The Group intended to contest the claim and was satisfied that it had taken adequate steps to cover the cost of the litigation going forward.



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Call Sign Editor **Alan Fisher** told this magazine: "To say I feel stunned is just a gross understatement! I knew these guys well, but I knew them just as friendly people who always seemed to put themselves out in order to make sure **Call Sign** went out on time! I never dreamed I was standing on top of £millions of fake £20 notes. All the messages that went out over the Dial-a-Cab terminals about watching out for dodgy £20s and here I was sitting down next to the actual printing press that probably produced them!"

Now three men, including the two owners of **John Brown Printing**, this magazine's former printing firm, have been imprisoned for a combined total of over 24 years for producing £17.5million of fake banknotes!

Following prolonged surveillance by the *Serious Organised Crime Agency* (SOCA) on what appeared to be a legitimate printing business in South Norwood that had contracts with **British Home Stores** and **Call Sign**, brothers Phil and Christian Brown, who ran the commercial printing firm after their father John Brown's retirement several years ago, were said to be key players in an operation to print and distribute fake £20 notes. Also found guilty was Mehmet Altinfinican.

To date, notes with a face value of over £17.5million and which were said to have been printed in the Portland Road printing business, have been removed from circulation. Intelligence gathered by SOCA officers finally closed the John Brown premises after establishing that it was really a front for buying materials needed to produce counterfeit currency including a toner foiling machine and rolls of foil along with a computer containing images of scanned notes.

The three were arrested by City of London Police officers in June 2010, not long after **Call Sign** moved over to a new printer because the satisfaction that this magazine always felt suddenly ended when the typesetter **Alan Tarant**, who Editor Alan had worked with for almost 13 years, was suddenly laid off and his replacements never matched up to Alan Tarant's high standard.

The Editor mentioned his concerns to Chairman Brian Rice who decided to put the account out to tender.

Alan Tarant told **Call Sign**: "I never once suspected that £millions were being printed under my nose. It just seemed like a normal printing business. I'm just pleased that I was laid off before the police became involved because I assume that at first everyone that worked at John Brown Printing would have been a suspect – perhaps even Alan Fisher!"

Following a raid on Phil Brown's home, the contents of a shredder were retrieved and analysis of that material revealed counterfeit notes printed on the back of a poster. A memory stick containing images of scanned notes in a print-friendly layout was also discovered.

SOCA's Trevor Symes told **Call Sign**: "This investigation demonstrated that organised criminals will pursue any form of illegal activity they think will turn a profit. They need to know that whatever they try, they will find SOCA and its partners ready to stop them and make them pay."

The investigation also discovered the three men were part of a wider organised crime gang involved in a range of criminal activities

Call Sign former printers sensation...

Print firm was really counterfeit business!



Christian (L) and Phil Brown: Call Sign worked with them!

and during the investigation, they found a full cannabis production facility in Phil Brown's home. Christian Brown, who **Call Sign** always relied on to sort out production dates and who Alan Fisher described as always being friendly and helpful, kept what was described as a 'business plan' that set out projections for a £100,000 return on every 2-3 month cannabis plant cycle.

SOCA officers also discovered counterfeit £1 coins in varying stages of completion, as well as equipment for forging £2 coins.

Daniel Brown, who is a cousin of Christian and Phil, was said to be responsible for distributing fake 50euro notes. However, it is not known if the Browns were responsible for producing these notes as well as the £20 notes. A quantity of 50euro notes with a combined face value in the region of 350,000 euros was taken from Phil Brown's home. Following that, over 9.3 million euros of the same series have to date been withdrawn from circulation across the EU.

Another gang member, Bekir Arif, who had been released from prison on licence following a previous conviction for supplying heroin, was involved in making and distributing counterfeit one pound and two pound coins.

At Kingston Crown Court on 5 April, Phillip Brown, pleaded guilty to cultivation of cannabis and abstraction of electricity. He was convicted at trial of conspiracy to make counterfeit £20 banknotes and conspiracy to deliver counterfeit 50euro notes. He was sentenced to nine and a half years.

Christian Brown pleaded guilty to conspiracy to make counterfeit £20 notes, conspiracy to make counterfeit coins, conspiracy to deliver counterfeit coins, conspiracy to deliver counterfeit 50euro notes, cultivation of cannabis and abstraction of electricity. He was also sentenced to nine and a half years.

Mehmet Altinfinican got five and a half years, Daniel Brown received two years, while Bekir Arif was convicted of conspiracy to make and deliver counterfeit coins. He received eight years. He had been released from prison on licence in 2009 following a 1999 conviction for conspiracy to supply heroin.

Last word to Alan Fisher and one supported by **Allen Togwell**, who knew him for many years: "I feel so sorry for Christian and Phil's father John. He is such a lovely man and he must be totally devastated."

Dennis Latchett
Call Sign Online



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Call Sign

May 2011

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At a time when the Green party's **Jenny Jones** was taking a pop at London taxi drivers, **Dial-a-Cab's Craig Woodham (P23)** was having his own problem with a cyclist.

"It was a nasty moment, but it could so easily have been very much worse," Craig told **Call Sign**, a tremble still in his voice as he recalled the incident in graphic detail. "I was travelling along Stamford Street, heading east approaching the junction with Hatfields. I saw another taxi stopped on the corner of Hatfields, obviously intending to emerge onto Stamford Street so I slowed down at the pedestrian crossing and it's just as well that I did, because a woman on a pedal cycle came out of Hatfields onto Stamford Street from between the waiting taxi and the kerbside. In other words, on my blind side and on the nearside of the other taxi! Would you believe how stupid that is? She couldn't possibly have seen me nor I her," he told this magazine.

Continuing his story, Craig said: "This thoughtless woman just suddenly appeared in front of my cab! I slammed my brakes on and the cab juddered to a halt, but she impacted the front of my taxi and her bike went under the front bumper, causing several scratches to the forward surface and deep gouges to the underside of the bumper where her bike disappeared under the cab." His tone lowering at the recollection.

"As she lay on the road," Craig said, his recollection coming back as though it were just 10 minutes previously: "she pulled the speakers from her MP3 player out of her ears and stuffed them in her pocket before the medics and police arrived, so she was obviously listening to something instead of concentrating on road safety - her own road safety and mine! She clearly was not paying attention!"

Craig Woodham v Cyclist!



Craig looks happier now but was very concerned just a few weeks ago at the actions of a cyclist!

"Cyclists are just so vulnerable compared to four wheeled vehicles that they should take far more control of their own safety," he demanded. "It sounds crazy I know, but I wonder if the other cab had deliberately waved the cyclist out onto the main road, knowing she could not see me as if to see what would happen because with that, the other cab started to pull out onto Stamford Street, stopped momentarily to glare menac-

ingly at me and then simply drove off aware of the incident behind him, but choosing not to stop at the scene?"

Craig continued, his voice cracking with disbelief at the apparent callous act of a fellow cab driver. "Suddenly I was surrounded by several other cyclists who had stopped and began verbally abusing me. A passing police car stopped, yet the officers did not take any details but did insist that the cyclist and I exchange personal data. I gave her my details, but she gave me an incomplete address at which the police did not show any concern at all!"

"A motorbike medic soon arrived and checked the cyclist over and thankfully signed her off as medically fit and with no personal injuries, as did the police I found out later. So I don't expect her to be lodging any sort of insurance claim," he added, "but there were several other cabs in the immediate area, yet disappointingly none of them stopped to offer support or proffer their witness details unlike the cyclist who quickly found 'mates' within seconds of the incident," Craig stated coldly.

"As a matter of caution and on the advice of a police friend, I reported the matter to Marylebone police station who confirmed that the attending police officers should have taken full details, but thankfully the desk officer assured me that once back in their car, had in fact cleared off the cyclist as not being injured, so that is a big headache off my mind. But we will have to wait and see if anything yet comes of it..."

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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



Monsieur l'Editor had asked me to write something inspirational for this month's edition. I was sitting on a Med beach at the time with the sun blazing down, so even if I had my laptop with me I would never have seen the screen with the glare of the sun and even if I had, by the time I got to the bar I wouldn't have felt inspired to start typing! So I tried the following day!

By the time you read these notes, the kipper season will be all but forgotten – for another 8 months at least – and there should be plenty more work on the streets to supplement your **Dial-a-Cab** account trips. I hope I'm right!

Many thanks indeed to those DaC subscribers who have referred clients to 'Black Cab Heritage Tours' recently – I know you were impressed with your £30 commission paid so promptly!

Our bookings were up in the weeks either side of the Royal Wedding – that event certainly brought more folks into the capital! Anyway our website spiel goes something like this:

"Great Britain's Royal Family has interested and intrigued both Londoners and tourists alike for many generations. Our 'Royal London' Tour will take you to the very heartbeat of the Sovereign - see the home of the Queen of England. This has become a very popular Tour option - one of our most requested Tours. Please book early to avoid disappointment. 'Black Cab Heritage Tours' will take you through the procession route as part of our 'Royal Wedding Tour' - new for 2011."

In short, if you have a client for us give the office a call. Our landline (in office hours) is 01707 696034 or mobile (24 hours) 07766 332 938. Explain you are a DaC driver claiming a referral fee and that brief phone call could earn you thirty smackers! So even a Republican can earn on the back of a Royal celebration! Be inspired!

A bientot...

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

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COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello Ladies & Gents,

I have been asked to reply to the letter (reprinted below) sent to *Mailsbot* by a fellow member and felt it best that I include a more detailed explanation that I hope will further clarify the current situation and emphasise just how important it is that the procedures that are now in place are followed, not by just some, but all of us. I can understand fully how disgruntled a driver could be if he is following procedures whilst others are not, especially if it puts him at a disadvantage. The letter reads:

No lights at E14?

For the attention of Allan Evans.

What is the point of having rules if 90% of drivers ignore them? I was the only DaC driver with his light on at the rank in Bank Street E14 tonight (April 15 at 00.25). So I was the mug who took the walk up job to All Saints DLR station thanks to all the other drivers who ignored the message put out by despatch. I returned later and still no lights were on with eight cabs on the rank. Is there anything that can be done? Unfortunately, I don't think there is. None of us want our lights on as we want a radio job. But unless we all play the game, the only ones losing out are the mugs that play by the rules.

Just one further thought on this. If you enforce the 'lights on' rule, it will immediately lead to all cabs trying to get on the back of a rank to avoid being on point. How you get around that one is even more of a challenge!!

James Whiting (E83)

As you know, procedures were changed after the recent AGM at the request predominately of day drivers. They wanted to use all ranks within the Canary Wharf Estate to help generate street work, other than from the two ranks that existed prior to the changes and which



would then allow them the added option of gaining a queue position on the Island for account work. *The new rank is now E14C and as long as you are inside the security gates with your light on, you can book in and use any of the official taxi ranks.*

The 'lights on' rule

During the weekday period (06:00 to 21:00) it would surely be false economy not to have *For Hire* lights on and would most certainly defeat the object of generating additional cash work from all parts of Island. The Canary Wharf Management (CWM) have already given us strict instructions that although they have no desire or intention to restrict our operation on the Estate, they will take appropriate action if taxis are on ranks with their lights off, especially if drivers refuse walk ups, as seems to be the case at the moment.

As you know, in the past they (security) have and can refuse entry at any of the four entry points and this could seriously affect coverage of all of our accounts in this area,

something we must all be aware of and prevent happening.

There will now be spot checks and any reported registrations that are deemed to be violating Procedure Rules 2 and 3, if found guilty will be brought to task.

Rule 2: *Conducting him or herself in a manner likely to bring the Society into disrepute.*

Rule 3: *Conduct liable to prejudice the Society.*

These changes were made at the request of the members to assist you in a positive way, but they must be also be followed in a fair and consistent manner and in accordance with the request of Canary Wharf Management.

In order to further prevent drivers breaking any procedure rules, I would like to remind you that after 21:00 and up to 06:00, there is no need for any driver to be inside the security cordon as all trips are dispatched to the physical area zone of E14. If you have a trip on your screen prior to entering, there will be no problem. It is when you are inside the estate and booked into E14 with your light off and without a trip on your screen, that the security staff will question your actions - especially if you are seen to refuse a cash paying customer.

As mentioned in James Whiting's letter, it is concerning when drivers are ignoring the messages on their terminals that are sent out for a reason and now that the changes have been in place for quite a while, it will continue to be strictly monitored and now is perhaps the right time to take the appropriate action.

You have been politely forewarned, please play the game, drive safely and be lucky!

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer



COMPLAINTS RESULTS

A Complaints meeting was held on 7 April 2011. The results are below...



Maurice Evans (B35) – 3 weeks suspension plus additional training

Complaint: Driver unable to find pick up location on more than one occasion and pulled off trip without notifying dispatcher or obtaining authorisation from Call Centre, causing passengers to miss train and flight connection.

Paul Pryor (E05) – Expelled, reduced at Appeal meeting to: Rule 3 (2 weeks), Rule 11 (2 weeks) - Total 4 weeks suspension

Complaint: Driver accepted trip from EC5 when his true location (GPS) was Nine Elms Lane. You must be in one of the EC zones before booking in to EC5 at all times (repeated violation).

Geoffrey Rowe (J28) – 3 weeks suspension, upheld at Appeals meeting

Complaint: Driver booked into E14 when his true location (GPS) was Snaresbrook and accepted trip. You must be physically in the E14 postal area before booking in to E14 after 9pm and up to 6am.

Keith D'Urso (M57) – Expelled on both counts, reduced to 4 weeks suspension at Appeal meeting

Complaint: Driver booked into EC5 on a number of different occasions when his true locations (GPS) were Camberwell Road, Lambeth Palace Road and Belsize Park. He accepted trips on each of the dates. You must be in one of the EC zones before booking into EC5 at all times. Driver did not adhere to the correct procedure regarding run-ins.

John Wild (D029) – 3 weeks suspension

Complaint: Driver accepted a trip from EC5 when his true location (GPS) was Holloway Road near Furlong Road. You must be in one of the EC zones before booking into EC5 at all times.

Cheques no longer guaranteed

As of 30 June 2011, most banks will no longer guarantee cheques. Should you accept one for the taxi fare and even though it was signed in your presence with the card number written on the back, the bank will not guarantee its payment. That doesn't mean that all cheques will suddenly bounce, but accepting one from a stranger will now carry more of a risk that it does at present.

With the steadily increasing cost of fuel on an almost daily basis, **Call Sign** conducted an unscientific and totally random survey of our driver's attitude towards maximising fuel economy and minimising fuel costs where possible. The results were surprising...

Jackie Kott (Y88) admitted she was not technically minded, but that she was aware that using the air-conditioning system did consume additional fuel, which is precisely the reason she operated the system sparingly. "I drive fairly steadily as a matter of course and avoid braking heavily for example, because this TX4 is not good on fuel economy anyway so additional services such as running the air-con except in really hot weather does not help. I use Shell fuel at the cheapest garage I can find it locally. I cover about 120 miles a day using around £35/40 worth, although I do not check the cabs' fuel consumption."



Jim Coleman (B21) lives in Tunbridge Wells and uses several arterial roads including motorways to get into London before he even starts work and spends around £220 a week on diesel. "I never go above 60mph on motorways and consciously drive with economy in mind driving very steadily, keeping a light touch on the throttle pedal and being gentle on the brakes so my TX2 returns around 27/30 mpg on a run and 24/25 in town. I use a local Shell garage."



David Hughes (A73) drives in from Chelmsford, which is a round trip of 60 miles each day. "I do about 50 work miles each day, so my total daily mileage is in the order of 110/. I use Bio fuel when I can, or my local Esso fuel, which is cheaper than anywhere at £137.9 per litre. I am gentle on the accelerator pedal and equally soft on the brake pedal, so my cab returns about 23/24 mpg overall. I also use ranks a lot, sitting there drinking my tea and covering the shorter account rides that nobody else seems to want, but it's money in my pocket and I haven't gone very far! It suits me, although I accept it is not everyone's way of working."



Stephen Hassan (P95) has a TX1, which achieves about 25 mpg. "I don't do racing anymore because the emission system I was forced to have has zapped the power from my engine, so I have to take everything much slower now. So racing away from the traffic lights is not an option anymore, but one of the benefits of living in N10 is rolling down

Muswell Hill to pick up speed! Winston Churchill once said that if you are late, you should have left earlier! Surprisingly, my exhaust emissions were less before the power killing conversion was fitted. I'm 59 years old and my cab has got a few more plates before it is retired so I will not be buying another one. I will probably rent a cab when we do finally part company. If I cannot find a cab on **Dial-a-Cab** to rent, that will be a big disappointment for sure and a pitfall I will have face, because losing my radio would be hard."



Lawrence Short (E68) is another Chelmsford resident, driving around 50 miles a day to and from work along the A12. "You need the stuff to work so just put it in. I try to use BP fuel for the Nectar points!"



Brian Harris (L30) said he uses a couple of Esso garages locally, attracted by competitive pricing. "I don't check the fuel consumption but I do spend about £30/35 a day depending on how the day goes."



I'm a grafter and just go to work, cruising rather than ranking. Life's too short to worry about saving pennies by wafting along gently. My TX4 is out of warranty in 25,000 miles and I am seriously thinking of having that 're-mapping' process to improve the cabs' performance. But like I said, you need the fuel to go to work!"



Michael Kennedy (M30) said he did not consciously drive with economy in mind and did not usually check his TX4's fuel consumption figures. "I deliberately

bought a new cab with a manual gearbox, originally thinking there might be cost benefits, but it does not seem to make a noticeable difference. We need the fuel so I just put it in and go to work."

Shane Nelson (M5) drives a Mercedes Vito. He said he did drive with fuel economy in mind, but didn't bother too much about consumption figures. "I live in Sidcup, so it's not too long a haul into work like some other guys."



I'm spending about £130/150 a week on fuel and I'm not particular which brand it is either. I work both days and nights as my circumstances demand. The traffic gets a bit easier later in the evening, which I reckon makes a slight difference, and yes, I do take it easy on the 'loud' pedal!"

Call Sign's resident motor engineer confirmed what several drivers had said in the survey about being gentle on the throttle pedal and minimising use of the brakes, but added that we shouldn't forget to regularly check the tyre pressures, as under-inflation drains power, reduces the cabs' momentum, and makes the engine work unnecessarily harder

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Hello again!

Three hotly anticipated games for 2011

The weather may be lovely (for now), which means more time in the garden and so on, but that doesn't stop gamers like me from playing in the evenings! So this month I thought I'd take a look at 3 of the most hotly anticipated games due out this year and give you a preview and my thoughts on each one.

Diablo 3 (PC, Mac): The predecessor to this game (Diablo 2) is widely known as *the definitive RPG*, the game that brought the role-playing character building fantasy board game *Dungeons & Dragons* to the PC. Exploring dungeons and killing all manner of evil beings, you customise and "level up" your unique character. Diablo 3 is probably the most anticipated game of the decade, but Blizzard - the developer of the Diablo and World of Warcraft series - still has not given us a release date. However, it is generally assumed that the game will be released towards the end of the year. Until then, video and developer previews are available online and if they're anything to go by, Diablo 3 will possibly be the best game in 20 years.

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

Gaming: What's worth playing?



Some of the action from Deus Ex

More about Diablo 3 at:
<http://us.blizzard.com/diablo3>

Portal 2 (PC, Mac, PS3 & XBOX 360): Touted as "the best game of the year" by *PC Gamer*, this is a first person action/puzzle game that is the sequel to the award-winning Portal. This futuristic game involves using a portal gun to open up temporary worm-holes on almost any flat surface, which allow you to traverse the levels and solve the puzzles. I played the first Portal game a few years back and loved it; it was very addictive and provided me with hours of first-person shooting action, whilst solving puzzles. The video previews and developer blogs certainly don't disappoint - this looks set to smash its predecessor's record! Portal 2 was available from 19th

April - get it on Steam:
<http://store.steampowered.com>

Deus Ex: Human Revolution (PC, PS3 & XBOX 360): This is the upcoming third game in the Deus Ex trilogy, although it's actually based 25 years prior to the first Deus Ex game, in the year 2027. In this dystopian future, mechanical augmentations are widely available to the population, allowing them to modify their bodies with upgrade "features" such as Combat, Stealth, Technology and Social. You play Adam Jensen, a private security officer, chosen to protect an experimental biotechnology company. But after experiencing a chilling attack on the company, in which he is mortally wounded and has to undergo augmentation to survive, his life changes and the conspiracy begins. Video previews show that every objective you need to complete can be done through one of three paths: aggressive, adaptive or stealth. This should make the game more interesting as you can tackle each problem differently, rather than the usual "run in and shoot like crazy" approach to so many first person shooters. Deus Ex: Human Revolution is due out in August 2011. More here: <http://www.deusex.com>

Well, that's all folks! See you in July - till then, great gaming...!

Jonathen Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

Shanghai Motor Show displays their TX4!

LTI's Chinese partner, Geely, have displayed their version of the London TX4 at the Shanghai Motor Show to much curiosity from the taxi fraternity. The cab is called the Englong SC7 and is aimed primarily at the lucrative Chinese taxi market.



The Englong SC7 at the Shanghai Show

As soon as you look at the Englong, there is no mistaking which vehicle it is based on. There is a section for the driver with room for five in the back. It also has two jockey seats and rear-hinged doors rather than sliding ones.

The original intention was to bring the TX4 out to China, but few taxi drivers out there could afford it, so the inscrutable Chinese built their own cheaper version!

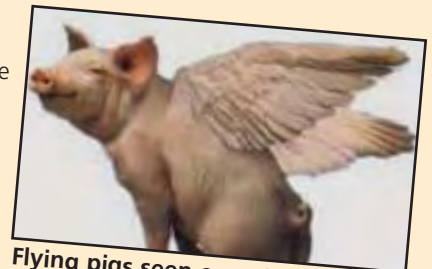
But Geely haven't just copied the London taxi, their Enggrand GE looks to us very much like a Rolls Royce - but without its famous flying lady bonnet mascot! A sign of the times?

The boroughs must be running short of readies... PARKING FINES INCREASE!

Not content with the huge income they already receive from the poor motorist, London boroughs have now increased the cost of *Penalty Charge Notices* for parking offences. The two biggest benefactors of the taxi trade's unbounding generosity - and especially **Dial-a-Cab** on behalf of its drivers - are Westminster and Camden.

Their £120 fine will now increase to £130, whereas Barnet and Haringey go from £100 to £110. However, the usual 50% decrease if paid within 14 days remains. The reduced rates for overstaying your time at a parking meter remain unaltered.

According to Nick Fairholme of TfL's traffic enforcement, they do not levy fines to raise finance, but to help the traffic keep moving. At the time of writing, several pigs were seen to be flying over Camden and Westminster...!



Flying pigs seen over Camden and Westminster?

In 2009, *Call Sign* Editor **Alan Fisher** wrote to what was then the **Public Carriage Office** to request copies of all the files they had on him stretching back some 38 years. Rumours going back years suggested that the PCO had secret files on drivers that they shouldn't have had!

It wasn't too difficult. Alan sent a *Data Protection Act 1998 Subject Access Request Form*, two items giving proof of his identity, a cheque for £10 and asked for copies of all files associated to his name from 21 May 1971 when he passed out as a licensed taxi driver, and also anything for the 16 months prior connected to his Knowledge of London appearances beginning in late 1969. He also asked for any files relating to him as Editor of *Call Sign*.

"It took around 3 weeks," Alan told us, "but true to their word, a huge folder arrived. I looked through it eagerly – especially to see what Mr Finlay had said about me during my time on the KoL. But the whole file was a huge disappointment if I was looking for scandal! It consisted mainly of licence applications and generally boring details. All the KoL forms had on them were ticks and straightforward comments. But the bottom line was that the PCO did what I asked as the Act says they should. They went up several notches in my estimation after that."

Now jump forward two years and Dial-a-Cab driver Barry Spear's (Y16) attempt to use the Freedom of Information Act after being captured via CCTV in Waterloo Road for picking up on a zigzag. Barry decided to email Lambeth Council for information under the FOI Act regarding the camera that caught him. He asked:

1. How many Penalty Charge Notices have been issued to Transport for London buses since camera 137 located on Waterloo Road has been in operation?

2. How many Penalty Charge Notices have been issued to London Taxis (Hackney Carriages) since this camera has been in operation?

The answer to both questions came

Freedom of Information Act? Don't bother asking Lambeth...

GOOD – IF YOU CAN AFFORD IT?



DaC's Barry Spear may have opened a can of worms

back the same. Lambeth Council said that while they held the info, it would take 18 hours to extract each batch, so a fee would be required for each. However, LBL did inform Barry that since that particular camera had been in operation – 1 January 2003 until 23 March 2011 - a total of 16,989 PCNs had been issued. But that wasn't what Barry wanted to know. Under the FOI Act, he wanted to know how many of that total were issued to buses and how many to taxis?

Barry told *Call Sign*: "The reply I received basically fobbed me off because I would have to pay for the information I had requested under the Act. It does seem that this camera has been a nice little earner for the council."

So how much did Lambeth Council ask Barry for? How about £450 for each of the two requests! Understandably, Barry said that he

couldn't afford it for just two answers. That gives the impression that the FOI Act is for the rich only, so *Call Sign* asked the **Information Commissioner's Office** which is based in Cheshire and is the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest. We told them about Barry's request and the two bills for £450 each he would have to stump up to get the info.

"They can't do that," was the reply from a very helpful person. "18 man hours, calculated at £25 per hour with a total of £450 is the maximum they can say the search has cost them, but that isn't passed onto the enquirer!" That just leaves residents and their Council Tax!

He went on to explain that any extra cost over and above that £450 would be chargeable should the organisation wish to charge it. *Call Sign* explained the intricacies of LBL adding up a few numbers and asked whether the Information Commissioner's Office would say that would take 18 man hours? There was no reply, just a hearty laugh and an adjective that *Call Sign* can't use unless it wants to appear in court!

What we can say is that we believe the London Borough of Lambeth should be ashamed of itself for attempting to get out of genuine Freedom of Information requests. They end all their posts with 'Lambeth - Making a difference'. They certainly do, but not how they should!

**Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online**

For those new to Dial-a-Cab, Call Sign has been following the progress of Sam Bezzina - son of Dial-a-Cab driver Dean Bezzina (M10) - and his ambition to box for England. He has now achieved that and won a silver medal for his country...

Disappointment for Sam!

It was that time of year once again for the first round of the Junior **ABA Championships**. The Elmbridge centre in Hainault was to host the Northeast Division and Sam was drawn against his old team mate from his days at the Repton Boxing Club, Romario Wallace. Wallace is an accomplished champion in his own right and renowned for his power strength and stamina, so this was never going to be a bout for the faint hearted!

The bell sounded and it's off! With both boxers trying to establish superiority, it was obvious from the start that Sam was going to be in one of his usual toe to toe battles from bell to bell. The first good shot of the bout was a thunderous right hand from Wallace followed by a left hook, Sam took them well, stood his ground and returned with his own combination forcing Wallace onto the back foot. The going was tough and with both boxers throwing leather, Sam was having to take shots in order to get inside to get his own shots off. The first round finished with Wallace just edging in front with the heavier eye-catching shots.

Out for the second round, this time it was Sam landing the eye-catching shots, forcing Wallace once more onto the back foot. Sam was now growing in confidence and looked to have Wallace's number, landing with combinations to the body and head. With the back hand working well, Wallace was now starting to blow and as the bell sounded, the bout looked to be going Sam's way. It was one round each.

Out for the third and final round and this had already been a great bout, but there was more to come with both boxers wanting to finish big – and this last round didn't let us down. With the boxers' heads locked together, both began throwing shots to the body, upper cuts and hooks; it was a battle of stamina and conditioning and to see who had the biggest heart.

With the crowd cheering, the lads battled on to the final bell. It looked like Sam had done enough, but after a short delay and a second look at the judges' scorecards, it was announced that Sam had lost the bout on a split decision.

It was a great bout and it's always a shame when a good boy has to leave the competition in the first round, but with so many good clubs and great boxers competing against each other in London, it becomes inevitable. Romario Wallace will probably go on to win the National Title and Sam showing a big heart, wished him all the best...



Sam lost a controversial split decision in the ABA Championships

On 15 March **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Eddie Lambert (V37)** along with **Brian Whitehead** and acting on behalf of the RMT, attended the second hearing of the Transport Select Committee at the House of Commons. The original subject was one of Cross Border Hirings and the RMT stated their position that private hire vehicles and taxis should not dwell out of their licensing area once they have completed a job outside that area. Questions then moved to one of taxi and PH operations and a verbal battle between the two parties.

Also at the meeting was **Steve Wright MBE, Chairman of the Licensed Private Hire Association and Paul Brent and Tim Gray for the National Taxi Association.**

During this part of the session, Steve Wright claimed that in London and its thirty five boroughs there was no private hire "ranking" and that it was actually a myth.

"Well if that's the case," Eddie told **Call Sign**, "then what are the long line of cars queuing up outside Fabric in Smithfield every weekend doing? The same question can be asked time and time again at countless venues around London."

Steve Wright also claimed that it was a fact that PHVs on average and pre-booked through an office were 25% cheaper than taxis.

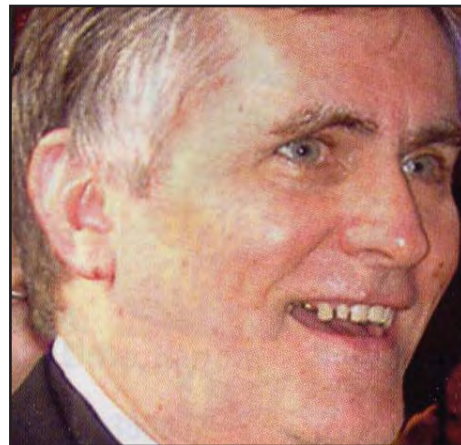
"I looked on the Addison Lee website about a trip from 126 Baker Street to Selfridges - a trip of about 600 yards," Eddie continued. "It quoted a cash cost of £11, whereas the cost in a taxi might make a fiver if you caught the lights a few times! Even in a pre-booked taxi on account, I doubt if it would make £7 on the meter. Of course there would be other charges, but it's still likely to be no more than the £11 that Addison Lee charge."

Mr Wright also claimed: "Assaults don't take place in private hire vehicles at all, they take place in illegal cabs. The Public Carriage Office has no records of any assaults whatsoever in the 4million journeys a day in pre-booked private hire vehicles. They take place with touts."

Eddie challenged Mr Wright on that and told the hearing that recently there had been a private hire found guilty of a sex assault on a young lad under social services care in Camden Town. A couple of licensed drivers from Stratford had also

Eddie Lambert v Steve Wright

...at the HoC!



DaC's Eddie (left) took on Steve Wright at the House of Commons

been done for rape over a period of years. To say there is none was a fabrication.

"As I had not expected this topic to come up," said Eddie, "we did not have evidence of these events with us, so did not want to start rolling out allegations that we could not substantiate there and then, but I'm sure that there are plenty out there who could give chapter and verse."

Mr Wright came back to say that a company such as Addison Lee had done 27 million journeys in London without a single complaint or prosecution against a driver for anything.

"I was quite surprised at Mr Wright's mention of Addison Lee by name," said Eddie, "as I had not named them, although it's well known that in the case mentioned above the person involved was indeed an Addison Lee driver. It is also well known that Steve Wright and John Griffin do not get on. Mr Wright, referring specifically to the RMT, also said that the assault they were referring to was subject to a police inquiry, so that it was currently still an ongoing process. What the investigation was actually doing was

to look at how a driver with previous convictions actually got a PH badge in the first place."

Eddie continued by asking: "Can I just query the Addison Lee reference? One of their drivers was very recently done for manslaughter when he deliberately ran over a homeless person in Old Burlington Street. To say that none of their drivers has ever been done is once again a fabrication."

Eddie ended by saying: "I always thought that when a person appears before a House of Commons Select Committee, they were duty bound to tell the truth when speaking of facts and to deliberately not do so was an offence? I'm sure Steve Wright knows far more than I do about offences committed by the private hire trade and to stand before the Select Committee and make out that the PH trade are all paragons of virtue, must be in itself an offence?"

The complete transcript of the hearing, which later included a session with Transport Minister Norman Baker, can be found online by searching for Hansard, clicking on committees and then Transport Select and 15 March...

Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner and Dance

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

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

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

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

Tickets can be obtained at the following address:

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

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 1997 and Call Sign's infamous 'Big Al' column...

From Call Sign, Nov 1997

No One Hides from Big Al...

Is something wrong, or in the case of Computer Cab, is something Wong! Glancing through a list of the Directors in our NW London friends' company, those names appearing are Hung Khim Wong, Boon Leong Ong, Tin How Phua and Hung Siang Lim! Look, I only went to Rye in Sussex for three days. Did I miss something while I was away or has the Com Cab Rugby Club changed tack and opened up a take-away business???

Mr T the diver? He's got the wet suit!

News to cheer the heavy heart! The loveable Allen Togwell (well, I like him!) together with his sidekick KC - minus the Sunshine Band - had decided to invest in a spot of lunch on the opposite side of City Road. With the recent changed weather from summer back to winter, the heavens had opened leaving pockets of rain all over the place. Puddles were combining to form multi-conglomerates! Yup, it sure was wet!

So out of the building went our two smart heroes - totally ignoring the unkempt waiting press, but then again everyone ignores me - out towards the main City Road they strode with their Dial-a-Cab golfing broly's stretched open to their full extent, while still looking immaculate. But fate decrees who looks immaculate and who doesn't.

Looking both ways before stepping out (are you listening, kiddies), the mighty twosome put their best feet forward allowing the necessary two seconds for the one approaching car to get past. It passed, but didn't keep to the straightest of lines, deliberately swerving in order to go through the biggest puddle seen this side of Armageddon! The result was a total soaking for Mr T and a slightly lesser dampening for Keith Cain who was gallantly protected from the gushing tide by his taller compatriot!

Who was responsible, I know not. It wasn't a taxi, but the driver could have been anyone. Of course none of our drivers would be calous enough to deliberately drench a fellow human being. And as for the waiting press, there was no need for him to doff his cap as they squelched back into the reception before being told by Tammy to go through the drivers entrance as she didn't want her carpet to get wet...!

Sad, but it could always have been worse. They may have been on their way to the AGM! Of course, had they been wearing the new waterproof uniform, all problems would have been cured using a quick wipe down with *The Sun*!



Flashback
1997

BA

Tweeting theatre tickets?

There are some drivers on **Dial-a-Cab** who are passing on messages meant for those on this circuit, regarding complimentary theatre tickets. Those messages are going out on *Tweetalondoncab*, although often when all the tickets have gone. This still causes problems at the box office, which could lead to any further complimentary tickets being withdrawn. If you are involved, please stop now otherwise you could cost your colleagues this facility. **Messages on DaC are not meant for anyone other than Dial-a-Cab drivers.**

Tom Whitbread: DaC theatre tickets



IN IT TO WIN IT WINNER!

A lucky Scottish taxi driver was given a grand start to Spring after winning **The London Taxi Company's In It To Win It** free prize draw, when Glasgow Taxi driver Brian McGarvey scooped the £1,000 in the Coventry-based manufacturer's quarterly draw.

On being told that he had won, Brian said: "I can't believe it! I actually thought that someone had set me up! This is absolutely fantastic news and has come just at the right time!"

Brian had entered the company's grand giveaway after visiting the London Taxi Company's flagship Glasgow retail outlet.

London Taxi Company General Manager, Gary Ranson said: "We're obviously pleased that we had a Scottish winner this quarter. *In It To Win It* does provide us with customer information, but given that the odds of winning are substantially better than the lottery and entry is free, it also rewards drivers for letting us stay in touch with them."

In It To Win It can be entered at any of The London Taxi Company's seven retail outlets or online at www.london-taxis.co.uk. The London address is in Brewery Road N7...

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DIESEL COSTS SINCE 1996



As this Freaking.com picture shows, we may soon need finance to pay for fuel!

With the cost of diesel going ever upwards, Call Sign has looked back through its files at the cost of diesel over the past 15 years...

1 st June 1996	- 51.9p per litre -	£2.36 per gallon
1 st June 1997	- 54.9p per litre -	£2.50 per gallon
1 st June 1998	- 65.9p per litre -	£3.00 per gallon
1 st June 1999	- 72.9p per litre -	£3.31 per gallon
1 st June 2000	- 81.9p per litre -	£3.72 per gallon
1 st June 2001	- 77.9p per litre -	£3.54 per gallon
1 st June 2002	- 75.9p per litre -	£3.45 per gallon
1 st June 2003	- 77.5p per litre -	£3.52 per gallon
1 st June 2004	- 89.0p per litre -	£4.05 per gallon
1 st June 2005	- 89.7p per litre -	£4.08 per gallon
1 st June 2006	- 96.9p per litre -	£4.41 per gallon
1 st June 2007	- 97.9p per litre -	£4.45 per gallon
1 st June 2008	- 128.9p per litre -	£5.86 per gallon
1 st June 2009	- 101.9p per litre -	£4.61 per gallon
1 st June 2010	- 121.9p per litre -	£5.51 per gallon
1 st April 2011	- 140.9p per litre -	£6.37 per gallon

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Stardust Children's Theatre Workshop

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- Sociability
- Imagination
- Speech
- Self-discipline

...and to have fun in the process!

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

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

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

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Pay via PayPal ziggystardust1000@hotmail.com (Enter promo code DAC 10)



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

WestOne Cars

Alan,

I have to ask whether Dial-a-Cab should be associated with WestOne cars? It would seem from what I'm told that the reason we are no longer used by a major account in SW1 close to Piccadilly Circus is because WestOne have lost this account where they supplied the cars and DaC supplied the taxis - rumour having it due to very poor service on WestOne's part. A member of staff from the lost account told me there had been over 100 complaints from the account against W1C in just one month alone and he even thought that DaC were part of the WestOne group! He was surprised when I told him about our proud history and our mutual society, he hadn't realised our taxis occasionally arrived late because WestOne are slow to offer the work to us.

The reason I feel compelled to write and bring this to everyone's attention is because of another incident with WestOne Cars on behalf of a different account, this time a City Law Firm. On arrival, my passenger said to me: "I knew you wouldn't be 30minutes!" I was actually at the pickup within 5mins of booking. Shocked at why he should say that, it appeared this account was no longer ours but now with WestOne cars. They had offered a car or taxi, only to add that a DaC taxi "could be 30minutes!" The passenger still requested a DaC taxi - WestOne cars must be rough!

At the end of the journey, I contacted the person at DaC responsible for the W1C account and after returning my call, he explained that a DaC Board Member had contacted W1C only to be told that they had no idea why this had happened and it certainly wasn't their policy. Surely they have the tapes at WestOne Cars? While on the phone, I asked why this account isn't dispatched with a T attribute and how many more of our accounts are now WestOne's? He wasn't able to say.

Please don't feel that I am anti-Concierge, I'm just asking if DaC with its proud history of good service, should be associated with companies like this? I think it is very disappointing how after we have given years of excellent service during times of industrial action, extreme weather and even during and after terrorist attacks, that these so called *Blue Chip* companies drop us just because they think it will save them a few pennies.

Jon Robinson (E88)

Brian Rice responds: Couldn't agree with you more Jon, you absolutely hit the nail on the head when you state: *"I think it is very disappointing how after we have given years of excellent service during times of industrial action,*

extreme weather and even during and after terrorist attacks, that these so called Blue Chip companies drop us just because they think it will save them a few pennies."

We have a simple choice; the car company has the account and either we cover the client's taxi work or we don't! I know all the arguments for and against and the fairest way of doing it is to let the driver decide, he either does the trip or he doesn't. I do not believe the Board should make that choice; it is up to the individual.

Do not be confused Jon, the accounts in question have absolutely nothing to do with Concierge, that is a totally different scenario. However, the law firm you mention now has a 'T'. The two accounts in question are the only two we have operated by a car company and in theory do not require a 'T' because the clients involved rings the car company who state "car or taxi" and the car company handles the request. The client has clear guidelines. A 'T' attribute should really only come into play when we cover a trip for a car company on their own account because they cannot cover it. Consequently, both the clients you mention should not really have a 'T' but as one has, then probably so should the other.

Your information is correct, WestOne have lost the account near Piccadilly and I believe it could be going to AL and ComCab. However, it was not lost due to DaC as our service in the main was good, but it is also a little unfair to presume our taxis were sometimes late to arrive as the trip was 'offered late' to us. When the client ordered via WestOne, they would order "car or taxi" and the trip went to the appropriate source.

I am not happy with the situation, but unfortunately as I have stated many times, some clients want to move their work into cars so they can make economies and unfortunately the larger the account, the greater the savings. Depressing, but still a fact!

Licensed?

Do you think the "Night Stalker" minicab driver was LTPH licensed and passed fit by the CRB???

Stephen Field (F68)

John Worboys definitely was and while, like most Editors, I like to blame authority when the opportunity arises, in this case the only ones we can blame were the idiots from the Met who had him in 1999 and let him go without a stain on his character after having "caught" the

wrong Delroy Grant ...Ed

Account holders now and then?

Dear Alan

As you will remember, we used to have a lovely, friendly lady account holder called Adele Rootstein. She once gave me a book to read and keep while I was waiting for her at a hospital. Then there were the times when she paid us to take her dog for a walk in Hyde Park giving the driver a pair of wellies in case the weather was wet! What a contrast with today.

Let me give you two recent instances. There is an account in Tavistock Square that demands you wait outside the door in a bus lane (I almost lost a wing when a bus cut back in) instead of opposite where you could then u-turn to pick up. Our Sales department might need to look at the roads when an account is opened! If it ever gets that far, then this driver won't stop for anyone on zigzags! The driver should be able to decide where to wait, bearing in mind safety and road markings. Then in the last snowy period I was offered a delivery to the Home Counties. I accepted without thinking - well when did you last get a roader? A vague address didn't help and I don't use SatNav - fortunately as it transpired. I agree with the Editor about SatNavs, I'm amazed drivers using them aren't embarrassed. Anyway, I stopped at a garage for directions and by a lucky chance in a million, the driver I asked lived in what was the same dirt track as was my destination. But it was totally impassable! He had to ring his wife to be collected from the town and offered me a lift. A SatNav wouldn't have told me the track was impassable, so this Good Samaritan saved me the risk of an accident or a long hike in the snow with the resulting higher fare (had I walked from where he parked it would have taken at least an hour). When I made the delivery, the expression in her voice betrayed her surprise at my appearance - especially as she had smashed her car a few days earlier on the track! Why was there no warning or consideration for the driver from the account holder?

Changing tack, many collect car/aeroplane numbers or follow cricket/football statistics. I collected fishing boat names and numbers as a child. But I've often wondered about the composition of the Dial-a-Cab taxi fleet (though obviously changing) and a more stable list of the longest serving subscribers - something you touched on recently. Is this something *Call Sign* could do?



Mailshot

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Alasdair Kay (C47)

Nice story about service, Alasdair, so it isn't just the post that always (supposedly) gets through. DaC seems to also manage it! As for a list of old drivers, we have interviewed a few already and perhaps one day I'll publish a list. But as a starter, according to my files – which are as official as a Spurs Champions League Final souvenir shirt – I have Alan Lewis (A44) as the longest serving subscriber having joined in August 1962, followed closely by Bill Tyzack (C06) who came just 4 weeks later in September 62. There is then a 7-year gap with Ray Sorene (A53) who joined DaC as a subscriber in July 1969. The longest serving driver we know of is Mike Walsh (H63J) who joined in April 1961 but who is now a DaC journeyman, having sold his cab several years ago ...Ed

Call Sign gaming reviews

My grandfather is a DaC driver and I occasionally used to see *Call Sign*, but now I ask him to pass it over to me every month! Why? Well can I thank *Call Sign* and Jon Winterburn for the series of *iPhone* gaming reviews (*Gaming: What's worth playing*). At 17 and in the sixth form, money doesn't flow in and getting a review of available games before buying them saves me wasting money. It's also nice to know that there are so many free games as well. With so many rubbish ones out there, this to me is a great service. My favourite game so far is *Associate 2*. I'm now getting a waiting list of friends waiting to borrow the magazine! Thank you Jon...

Taylor Harvey
Romford, Essex

Thank you for Jon Winterburn's gaming articles, but I wonder if he could put some in for the Android as not everyone wants to have the iPhone. My uncle is on DaC, but is there any chance of me being sent a copy of *Call Sign* rather than having to wait for him to finish it?

Marc Greenberg
Basildon, Essex

I'm sure Jon appreciates you both taking the time to write. He will have to decide about the Android reviews and whether there is the time and space, but sadly I can't start sending the mag out otherwise we'd have to send it to everyone that asks – and there are hundreds! ...Ed

Good service...

Dear *Call Sign*,

I wonder if you can print this letter to emphasise the excellent customer services at **Just Taxis** of Benfleet. I had a major diesel leak on the way to work last Friday night and they had me back on the

road with all the pipes replaced by lunchtime Saturday. I have been using them since 2005 and they haven't let me down.

Stewart Matthew (J53)

Call Sign is always happy to publicise good service ...Ed

Cab windows?

Dear Al,

My brother was on Terminal 1 at Heathrow in his M-reg Fairway behind three Mercedes Vito taxis. A passenger came out, walked straight past the 3 Vitos and got into the Fairway.

"Cabot Square, please driver," said the passenger just as the 3 Vito drivers came rushing over and heard the nice destination.

"S'cuse me guv," said one, "there are taxis in front of this one!"

The passenger said that if they insisted, he would wait until they had all gotten jobs and then get into the Fairway because he refused to use a Vito. The drivers asked why, after all the three cabs looked very presentable and modern?

"I have just come off a flight after nine hours and there is no way I want to get into a cab with windows that don't open, thank you." The three drivers walked away...

Jon Robinson (E88)

Two letters in one issue? I couldn't possibly comment, Jon! ...Ed

A cheaper Vito please...

Hello Alan,

I've just read the letter by **Gary Cox (O46)** in the April *Call Sign* (*A Cheaper Vito Prayer*). He does have a point – even if you do need an enigma machine to decode what he means! I've been driving a cab for nearly 19 years and in all that time of driving FX4s, TX1s, TX2s and TX4s, I have never had a cab that I could get a comfortable driving position in. My present cab – a TX4 – for example; the driver's seat is offset to the right by at least 2 inches, it slopes down to the right by 4 or 5 degrees, my left knee is pinned to the dash board and my arms are almost at full stretch! Oh, I nearly forgot the best bit – the driver's seat must be some sort of northern joke played on us soft southern cockneys. And there's more... the air con has never worked properly, the driver's compartment is like a Swedish sauna even during the coldest winter we've had for years! The heater in the passenger compartment doesn't work, the passengers love that while they're freezing to death.

I'm looking forward to the summer, I'm sitting up front in a tee shirt with the windows open trying to stay cool – and there's more! When it rains the windscreen fogs up and the only way to demist it is? You've guessed it, to put the bloody heater on! There are just too many faults to list in this letter, the only thing the TX4 has going for it

is its iconic shape, something that I do like. But I decided my next cab would be the new Vito, until someone told me how much their new Vito was costing them – £42,000 and with finance over 4 years that could really cost you £51,240 at 5.5% APR. That's £1,067.50p per month plus insurance and running costs. This could cost you as much as £290 per week, and with the cost of diesel that could easily push your weekly outgoings past £450 per week before you earn a penny for yourself. I'm afraid that's just too expensive for me.

John Walker (B74)

Thanks for the letter John. Being just a 5foot 9-er, I don't have problems with the TX4 seat or its position. My air con works as does the passenger heating, but we do have the windscreen misting-up in common! The new Vito is being sold as an upmarket taxi and with its leather seating etc, it sounds very nice – although I'm not sure why any London-based vehicle would need cruise control.

It's also worth bearing in mind that the 5.5% rate you say is being offered (I assume by KPM) would be the flat rate and not the APR. It could be that going direct to a finance company that specialise in taxis, such as Singers, could save money over a dealer's offer. When talking about a huge figure like £42,000, it can't hurt to make an enquiry ... Ed

And speaking of Gary Cox!

Hey Al

I got it very wrong! This new Mercedes Vito is no van and certainly very different from the last model. Yes, it's overpriced by £3000 but maybe that's the vat. This vehicle is something very special. If you thought the Nissan engine was special, wait till you arrive in the 21st century. If you can't afford it, one bang on the door of KPM and demand a lease plan!

Gary Cox (O46)

Thanks Gary, your name is appearing in these pages more often than mine! And yes, the new Vito sounds like a cracker if you can afford it. If only minicabs didn't also use a similar vehicle, I'd have been tempted ...Ed

Ten percent of nothing is...?

Alan

I would like some help from **Alan Lipscombe (T50)** to see if he can explain to me how you are able to buy food with 10 percent of nothing? I feel that he is being a



Mailshot

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little short sighted (*March Call Sign*) when saying that keeping gratuities will assist drivers struggling with rising costs and buying a new cab at £30+. If accounts stop using us, then what good would a gratuity be? So I have to wonder how he suggests we increase our workload because the competition is undoubtedly cheaper when it comes to accounts. You can phone a minicab company up and ask for a cash cab, which could possibly have a similar price to a taxi for an in-town trip, but it's their account prices that are cheaper and the problem.

I believe we should offer our accounts something to encourage them to use us more, because you cannot help but notice we are taking more passengers to account addresses for cash and a receipt. Does that not tell you what is happening? A £1million a year account could save almost £100,000 per annum if there was no gratuity added. Is that not worth thinking about because a £20 ride is £20 in your pocket whereas 10% of that is nothing if that trip went in a minicab...

Ivor Belkin (C97)]

Anyone have a view on whether to tip or not to tip, because that is the question! ...Ed

An email for Mike Son

I am a composer and cab driver living and working in the San Francisco Bay area. I recently saw your piece - *Would you like to be in an orchestra* in the May 2011 *Call Sign*. Incidentally that's me on page 31 of the issue being quoted about the Uber Cab business model.

I have several pieces for an orchestra that you might want to consider for your projected one. Most of these would require a lot of rehearsal, but one might not. *The Lantern in the Crypt* is for a Double String orchestra and is what you might call *ear candy*. I can have parts ready for you if you give me some lead-time.

Please let me hear from you so I know your spam killer didn't get this email!

Christopher Fulkerson, PhD

San Francisco taxicab driver

Mike Son has now responded to Christopher. Mike is looking for taxi drivers or any individuals associated with the London taxi industry who are proficient musicians and either are, or have been professional musicians in the past. Applicants with a Grade 8 might have an advantage, but that may not be essential. The orchestra conductor will review all CVs. If you are up for the challenge, send your contact details together with details of which instruments you play, how long have you been a musician and which orchestra, band or group if any, you have played with to Mike at m.son@btclick.com or call his mobile on 07710 388 588 ...Ed

Heathrow enquiry

I drive a taxi in Dusseldorf and I enjoy reading your excellent magazine online. I now intend taking my first trip to London with my wife and two children (aged 14 and 17) and while I would like to use taxis, money is tight in Germany at present. So I wonder if you would be so kind as to tell me whether it would be much more expensive than taking the Heathrow Express that my agency tell me is so cheap?

Johann Klenze

Dusseldorf, Germany

No problem, Johann. It will be good value for you to use a taxi into London. The Heathrow Express fares will be £18 single or £32 return each. So four singles will cost you £72 – more than a taxi into town costs! Enjoy your stay ...Ed

Where is Rapil Frist?

I enjoyed reading *Call Sign's* obvious April Fool gag, which sure enough was delivered on 1 April. I like to think I sussed it out fairly quickly and gathered that we weren't really going to have eight Ferraris for clients, all supplied by Dial-a-Cab with the selected drivers able to take the cars home when not required - and on top of that being paid £45 an hour!

A few days later I was doing an account ride from 33 Jermyn Street along with another DaC driver.

"What do you reckon about these Ferraris at DaC, then," the other driver asked? I asked what he meant? "Didn't you read *Call Sign*," he asked without the merest hint of a smile? DaC are getting Ferraris for its' posher customers!"

I asked when he had the mag delivered? "Last Friday, I think," came the reply. "And



what date was that," I said? The reply came a bit slower than his previous comments... "Er, April 1st!" With that he let out a grin and the subject was dropped!

Mark Tiller (K90)

Quite a number of drivers phoned Call Sign to ask about becoming a Ferrari driver or complain that we were wrong to offer the service. Others phoned DaC to ask for the non-existent Rapil Frist! Thankfully April 1 only comes once a year! ...Ed

No lights at E14?

For the attention of Allan Evans.

What is the point of having rules if 90% of drivers ignore them? I was the only DaC driver with his light on at the rank in Bank Street E14 tonight (April 15 at 00.25). So I was the mug who took the walk up job to All Saints DLR station thanks to all the other drivers who ignored the message put out by despatch. I returned later and still no lights were on with eight cabs on the rank. Is there anything that can be done? Unfortunately, I don't think there is. None of us want our lights on as we want a radio job. But unless we all play the game, the only ones losing out are the mugs that play by the rules.

Just one further thought on this. If you enforce the 'lights on' rule it will immediately lead to all cabs trying to get on the back of a rank to avoid being on point. How you get around that one is even more of a challenge!!

James Whiting (E83)

See Allan Evans article in this issue ...Ed

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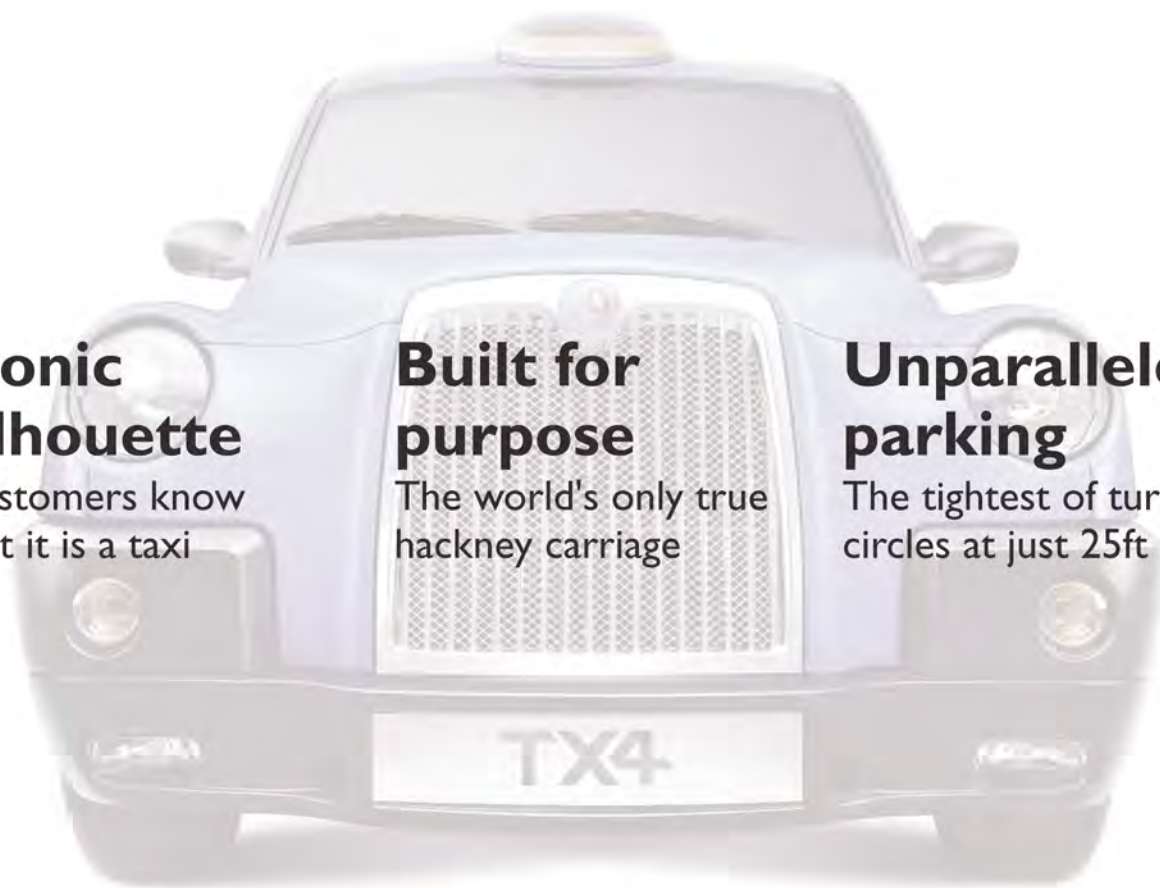
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