

April 2012



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

DaC's Director of IT on the new terminal and card reader



PLUS

What the amazing software does!



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

April's increase is an average of 5.3%, let's hope our passengers realise that a lot of this increase has gone on our very expensive running costs. Here is the mileage table with run-in and waiting times.

Miles	T1	T2	T3		Miles	T1	T2	T3
1	£4.60	£5.20	£5.80		31	£105.20	£108.80	£113.20
2	£7.00	£8.20	£9.60		32	£108.80	£112.20	£116.60
3	£9.60	£11.20	£13.40		33	£112.40	£115.80	£120.20
4	£12.00	£14.40	£17.20		34	£115.80	£119.40	£123.80
5	£14.40	£17.40	£21.00		35	£119.40	£122.80	£127.20
6	£17.00	£20.40	£24.80		40	£137.00	£140.60	£145.00
7	£20.40	£24.00	£28.40		45	£154.60	£158.20	£162.60
8	£24.00	£27.40	£31.80		50	£172.40	£175.80	£180.20
9	£27.60	£31.00	£35.40		55	£190.00	£193.60	£198.00
10	£31.00	£34.60	£39.00		60	£207.60	£211.20	£215.60
11	£34.60	£38.00	£42.40		65	£225.40	£228.80	£233.20
12	£38.20	£41.60	£46.00		70	£243.00	£246.60	£251.00
13	£41.60	£45.20	£49.60		75	£260.60	£264.20	£268.60
14	£45.20	£48.60	£53.00		80	£278.40	£281.80	£286.20
15	£48.80	£52.20	£56.60		85	£296.00	£299.60	£304.00
16	£52.20	£55.80	£60.20		90	£313.60	£317.20	£321.60
17	£55.80	£59.20	£63.60		95	£331.40	£334.80	£339.20
18	£59.40	£62.80	£67.20		100	£349.00	£352.60	£357.00
19	£62.80	£66.40	£70.80		110	£384.40	£387.80	£392.20
20	£66.40	£69.80	£74.20		120	£419.60	£423.20	£427.60
21	£70.00	£73.40	£77.80		130	£455.00	£458.60	£463.00
22	£73.40	£77.00	£81.40		140	£490.40	£493.80	£498.20
23	£77.00	£80.40	£84.80		150	£525.60	£529.20	£533.60
24	£80.60	£84.00	£88.40		160	£561.00	£564.60	£569.00
25	£84.00	£87.60	£92.00		Additional Miles at all rates			
26	£87.60	£91.00	£95.40		1	£3.60	6	£21.20
27	£91.20	£94.60	£99.00		2	£7.00	7	£24.80
28	£94.60	£98.20	£102.60		3	£10.60	8	£28.20
29	£98.20	£101.60	£106.00		4	£14.00	9	£31.80
30	£101.80	£105.20	£109.60		5	£17.60	10	£35.40

It is important not to exceed the run in on account jobs.

Below is the time to a £4.20 and £3.80 run in.

These figures are very useful for pre-booked account jobs.

Run-in £4.20

T1 4:11m to 4:39m

T2 3:24m to 3:47m

T3 2:45m to 3:03m

Run-in £3.80

T1 3:15m to 3:43m

T2 2:39m to 3:01m

T3 2:08m to 2:26m

Waiting time is:

T1 £ 24.74/hr (for 35:00m)

T2 £ 30.38/hr (for 35:00m)

T3 £ 37.69/hr (for 35:00m)

Then at the higher rate of £36.73/hour.

First Hour of Waiting

T1 = £ 31.73*

T2 = £ 35.02*

T3 = £ 39.28*

Subsequent hours on all three rates = £ 36.73

* includes £2.00 flag fall

Who needs a table to 160 miles, that's only to Stoke-on-Trent! Manchester is 196 miles, which is £696.40 without waiting time!

NB. With the Flag fall increase of 20p and as waiting time per 20p has dropped, the time to £4.20 has reduced by 50 secs on T1.

Attributes

A	ASSISTED	J	JOINT ACCOUNT	Q	TAXICARD	X	NO MIN NO RUN IN
B	BICYCLES/PRAMS	L	LAYOUTS	R	CREDIT CARD	Z	ANIMALS
C	CHEQUES	M	METROCAB	S	SMOKING CAB	5	5 SEATER/SEAT BELTS
D	DELIVERY	N	CAB PHONE	T	COLLAR & TIE		
F	FIXED PRICE	O	DOOR LOGOS	V	VITO		
I	TX 1, TX 2 & TX4	P	PUBS/WINE BARS	W	WHEELCHAIR		

This article will not appear in the Nash's Numbers website www.nashsnumbers.co.uk but it is Part 1 of the UID. Simply register at www.myfav.co.uk and enter *taxi* in the unlock field and a *TAXI* button will appear on the MyFav page. Click the taxi button for a page of taxi related icons...

from the editor's desk

Taxi demo for what reason?

On 29th February, a demonstration was held in Stratford attended mainly by Suburban drivers and organised by the RMT union. If the purpose of the demo was to bring East London to a standstill, then it succeeded magnificently. But the real question is why it was held.

Well, there's the question of taxis having no access to the Olympic Route Network and of course drivers in that part of town will be ferrying passengers from Stratford Station to the Olympic stadium so the question is legitimate – even if a demo was somewhat pointless as it is doubtful that anyone on the International Olympic Committee even knew there was one. And judging by what we know of the IOC, they probably couldn't care less anyway so long as their 5star hotels together with their unlimited and free of any charge room service in Mayfair are ready.

The drivers were also demonstrating about the lack of representation at Transport for London – the so-called *Taxi Engagement Policy* – and the apparent removal of taxi ranks by Newham Council. That third issue is certainly worthy of a demo.

But then we come to the fourth issue on the Stratford driver's agenda and the one that many suspect was the real reason for the demo – the issue of Identifiers being implemented.

Well, as *Call Sign* has published from Dial-a-Cab drivers many times over the years, a substantial number of Green badge drivers are fed up with yellow suburban drivers working in town on Friday and Saturday evenings. RMT drivers may ask whether those "few" drivers are worth worrying about when there is so much touting going on by so-called legitimate PH companies flagrantly breaking the rules of their satellite office licenses? The answer is yes! They may not be as important to catch, but if the Identifiers work then that becomes one less problem to worry about.

This magazine has already been told that the regulation will cause much suffering to some yellow badges who rely on their weekend "extra" money. Well we have news for them. If you do the All London Knowledge, you can work in town 24x7!

The driver who came out with the ridiculous notion that having to have yellow identifiers would upset Jewish suburban drivers and bring back memories of the SS death camps at Auschwitz, Treblinka and Sobibor among other hell-holes, probably brought home the stupidity of the request, with responses such as DaC's David Kupler (Y74) who sarcastically wrote in response that he didn't want a green identifier as it would signify that he wanted to become green and save the world!

Suburban drivers do a good job in maintaining the notion of licensed taxis covering London, but let's not forget that for whatever reason they declined to undertake a full KoL and as a result cannot ply for hire outside of their allocated areas. And that is still the case even if it suddenly becomes busy. They have no more right to do it than minicabs.

The view of this magazine may well have been coloured over the years by DaC drivers going into print and asking for Identifiers and although we know that not every DaC driver believes in the policy, we are now in favour of it. That doesn't mean we wouldn't have preferred an Identifier



that was a bit less removable, but the principle is there...

Westminster TaxiCard

Well, it looks as though the Westminster TaxiCard is moving home. I remember doing one of the first-ever TaxiCard trips back in the early 80s when it was still experimental and based at Camberwell Green taxi rank and when we shared it with ComCab. The passenger paid just £1 out of a £6 fare. Since then, the non-statutory scheme for people with disabilities that prohibit their use of public transport, has grown to cover much of London with the largest borough, Westminster, being exclusively with Dial-a-Cab. This Society spent a considerable amount of money in making sure it ran as well as it possibly could and even manufactured the cards in-house. But over the years, Westminster has been cutting back on TaxiCard as one of the prices for keeping the borough's council taxi low.

In 2000, together with the account's then-Transport Contracts Manager, Michael Dwemoh – who sadly died several years back – *Call Sign* ran a survey of Westminster TaxiCard user's satisfaction or otherwise with the way the account was run. Believe it or not, there were 6000 issued Westminster TaxiCards back then and taking its leave from the Millennium year, the survey took in 2000 of them. I doubt there are anywhere near 2000 actually out there nowadays, with the numbers still shrinking as shown in the *March Call Sign* when Mrs H.P. Raines wrote in to say thank you to DaC drivers and staff after her card was cancelled by Westminster. Mrs Raines is 88 and registered blind.

But back to the survey from the 2000 *Call Sign*. Of the 2000 questioned, around 450 responded. They were asked questions such as did they feel the TaxiCard service was the most suitable form of transport for their needs and 98.5% answered yes. As for were the telephonists helpful, 94% answered that they were. It wasn't quite such a resounding yes to whether the taxis always arrived on time, but considering the journeys were often going just around the corner, then 82% answering yes was pretty good. Were the drivers understanding of their disabilities? Well 85% answered yes and I doubt that number ever dropped below that figure. According to 86% of the TaxiCard users of the time, DaC drivers were very friendly with just 1% actually claiming we were rude. When it came to the DaC TaxiCard account manager, Carol Carpenter, she had almost 100% respect from those completing the

survey. The survey was far more detailed and included such aspects as administration, but in general the results were glowingly in favour of DaC. Michael Dwemoh was quoted in the magazine as saying:

"The aim of the scheme is to afford people with disabilities, greater mobility and increased independence. One of the schemes' objectives is to ensure that people have the confidence to go out, because they are guaranteed a reliable service that will get them home again. This comfortable, safe and affordable service has revolutionised the lives of many disabled people who previously had to depend on the goodwill of family, friends and charities and statutory providers."

Now it has gone and I will miss seeing some of the TaxiCard passengers. Over the years, many of them got to recognise me and cheekily asked if I had a spare *Call Sign* in the cab with me! I have also published many letters over the years from card holders – often praising the service but occasionally passing on a complaint. But they rarely moaned and often spoke as though you were a member of their family!

Yes, I know that as an account, DaC actually lost money on it and I believe that this Society deserves praise for never quibbling about the financial side, happy in the knowledge that we were doing something good for a group of people that needed that help.

Perhaps the highlight was when the DaC Board made an afternoon tea for regular TaxiCard user, 100-year old Eileen Pattison. Eileen was the Goddaughter of Hollywood legend Fred Astaire and had often told drivers that one of her ambitions was to visit DaC House to meet the calltaker she had spoken to so many times over the years, Irene Russ, who was in charge of day shift Westminster trips in the Call Centre. Eileen told *Call Sign* afterwards that this was the happiest day she could remember in many years. Eileen has now joined her Godfather up there somewhere in dancing Heaven, while Irene retired several years ago. But through it all, the account went on. But now it is no longer a DaC account.

Although I'm sad to see the Westminster TaxiCard depart, I am genuinely glad that it has remained within the licensed taxi trade and hope that ComCab take care of "our" people. The numbers may have shrunk considerably over the years, the faces may have changed and yes, we may even save money by not having it, but it became a part of Dial-a-Cab and it will be missed. If Westminster ever change their mind, then the TaxiCard will always be welcomed back...

New terminals

There is an interesting article from DaC's IT Director John Banks inside this issue. *Call Sign* still has a DVD of the Call Centre way back in November 1988 when our original MDI terminal went live to make us the first radio circuit in Europe to leave voice dispatch. Many drivers of the time had never used a computer before and asked how they would ever get the hang of it! So we wonder what those same drivers – quite a number who are still on DaC – would have thought about getting a terminal that even tells you the way to go! That's life for you!

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Westminster TaxiCard...

Many of you are aware that Westminster City Council has been reducing the amount spent on their TaxiCard scheme. There have been several letters to **Call Sign** from residents of the Borough thanking our members for the service they have received from them before their subsidised trips were withdrawn.

In the past, a resident would have needed to get a letter from their GP stating they were in need of the TaxiCard scheme and the Borough would then allow them the subsidised travel. That has changed and I am now led to believe that every resident requiring a card is means-tested and that the number of rides allowed to those accepted has been reduced dramatically.

At the scheme's peak, we were doing in excess of 500 trips a day. However, that has gradually dwindled to fewer than 100 trips a day, a great pity for the residents of the Borough and for the handful of Dial-a-Cab members who liked to service the Westminster account.

Consequently, it came as no surprise to me when we received a letter from Westminster stating they would be joining the *All London* scheme as from 1st April. There was no suggestion of the account going out to tender or complaint about any aspect of our service. Westminster had no intention for any organisation to tender for their business; they just wished to merge it in with all the other London Boroughs, which is what they did.

ComCab service the *All London* scheme and they will now also service the Borough of Westminster in with their scheme - but with one major exception. The Boroughs - including Westminster - will no longer be paying for a run-in for the taxi in order to help service their residents.

This will undoubtedly lead to a deterioration in service for the residents; I know how difficult it was on some occasions to cover their work and the situation will just become more difficult in the future with no run-ins to assist drivers.

I know some suburban drivers rely on TaxiCard work; I am not quite so sure that the *All London* green badge driver is in the same predicament. Consequently, I'm convinced that the service given by taxis to the inner London Boroughs can only deteriorate in the future without a run-in. The new situation must beg the question as to whether there is something on the agenda for the future that we are not



aware of, because I know there is not an organisation anywhere that could surpass the service we gave to Westminster. You can rest assured that the only reason Westminster have merged with the All London scheme is as a cost-cutting exercise and nothing more.

First of the new projects

You will read elsewhere in the magazine that all the new projects are in place and will be installed in the coming months. It will undoubtedly be a busy and exciting time for everyone concerned.

We will commence on 1st April with our new accounting system that has been designed and built totally in-house. Consequently, we will be paying members up until 31st March on our old accounting system, which means an extra day as the 'cut off' would normally have been

30th March, but obviously it makes more sense to pay for an extra day on the old system and commence with the new system the following day.

As you can imagine, it will be a nervous period for some of us because the new system not only pays members, but it also invoices your clients. So let's all hope it passes without too many glitches!

We have also received the first prototypes of the new Driver Terminal. This is bespoke to Dial-a-Cab and far exceeds anything that is out there in the market place, but of course we do need to test it in an endeavour to eradicate as many bugs as possible.

You will also read in this issue of **Call Sign** that we have decided to go with Knowledge Master who will supply Dial-a-Cab with their Cabbie's Mate SatNav and mapping facility. This will be fully integrated in the new terminal and I believe members will love the new addition, as in my opinion it is far in advance of anything currently available.

Although the terminal will be new and have features the current one does not possess, it will just be a continuation of the current terminal that all members will be able to decipher without the need for extra training. So for any amongst us who consider themselves to perhaps be less than computer literate, there is absolutely nothing to worry about. However, if any of you do have any concerns about its use, we will have two trainers on site who will be delighted to help.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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Call Sign April 2012

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To see or not to see, that's...

The Yellow Box Question

I suspect more than one or two members have been invited to contribute to Westminster's flagship 'Yellow "Money" Box' fund at Piccadilly and Berkeley Street. It was whilst reviewing the video of the alleged offence on their website that it occurred to me that the information on how to access it wasn't displayed on the PCN, as is normal on parking PCNs. We, as veterans, know that it's accessible, but naive victims may not. (Surely they want us to look at the evidence?) So why is the CCTV link on a parking PCN but not on a moving traffic offence one?

Hidden deep within a piece of legislation with the grand title '*The Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (England) Representations and Appeals Regulations 2007*' (which amongst other things directs councils to the procedures relating to the *Traffic Management Act 2004*, under which parking tickets are generally issued) is a clause stating the recipient's right to view evidence generated by an approved device. However, it doesn't state the right must be made clear on a PCN. In 2008, adjudicator Mr Edward Houghton took the view that if one has that right, it must be indicated on the notice, and as it wasn't on a notice issued by Harrow Council, he ordered it to be cancelled, thus setting a precedent.

The 2004 act generally replaced the old 1991 *Road Traffic Act*. Some traffic offences - including yellow box ones - remain under this act and as the 2007 legislation doesn't seem to mention the 1991



act, I suspect councils believe there is no direction relating to PCNs. My view is that a PCN is a PCN, and as the video is clearly available, the council should be directed to comply with the right regardless. There could also be an argument for the *Freedom of Information Act* to apply. The question is, is the right wrong or have they got it wrong with the right?

I asked Westminster why the link wasn't indicated on the PCN and what legislation - if any - they were applying. They replied with details of their website. I asked again and the same reply came back. For the third time, "If you don't give me the information I'm requesting, I'll assume you're refusing to answer and it will be noted on a PATAS appeal." The reply: "All our PCNs give details of the council's website, and we feel this is sufficient." With reference to what, I wondered... The only

information on the PCN is in the 'How to Pay' tear-off section, which is unacceptable. The words 'shot' and 'foot' sprang to mind.

My appeal highlighted the 2007 legislation and the Harrow case, and I attached the "sufficient" letter. Two weeks later, PATAS advised that the council wouldn't contest the appeal and the PCN was therefore cancelled. Could it be that the council are unsure of their position and weren't prepared to let an adjudicator loose on it? I'll probably never know. Will they alter the format of their PCNs? I hope not.

These PCNs are designed to contain the bare minimum of information (a photo that is meaningless, and so on). It is vital to check on the video that the operator has picked up the vehicle *before* it enters the box that you're not turning right and that the vehicle is stationary in the box (the operator sometimes plays tricks with the zoom). Write to the council requesting lots more information; they must respond if it's reasonable. It doesn't constitute a challenge - that comes later. If there is more than one box in the street, the council should make it clear which one they refer to (another possible procedural error, but that's for another day).

Finally, as the one-stop shops have now closed, and if you don't have access to a PC, the evidence can still be viewed at one of the council's libraries, where assistants must help if required.

Philip Benjamin (K20)

CardSave: Credit Card usage on the up!

Business payments specialists **CardSave** has launched a **Small Business Payments Index** which includes data from 493 small, independent Taxi, PH and limousine firms. They told **Call Sign** that card spending was up 12% in 2011 compared to 2010, with the average card turnover increasing from £22,062.62 to £24,779.24. While the average amount spent on cards in February 2012 decreased slightly from the same month last year, CardSave believe that this is because more people are paying for even shorter journeys with a card.

With 62% of the population carrying only £20 or less in their wallet (according to a recent YouGov poll), most people could not pay larger sums in cash. Taxi and limousine companies who do not accept cards are therefore likely to be missing out on high-value customers.

The YouGov poll shows that nearly 30% of the UK public have been inconvenienced in the last year by a company not taking cards. In fact, 16% of people have walked away from an intended purchase or ride because cards were not accepted, while 22% have been forced to leave to seek out a cash point.

The survey suggests the days of carrying large amounts of cash are over. 62% of people carry £20 or less in cash on them on average. 48% carry £15 or less and 35% carry up to £10. Yet almost everyone (93%) carries a credit or debit card.

Clive Kahn, Chief Executive of CardSave, which enables small businesses to accept payments more easily, comments: "The days when consumers wanted to pay by cash are over. They increasingly expect to pay by card for everything!"



Fever taxi spares at the Liver

Fever Cab Spares have been around for many years with the man behind it, **Ilyas Karim**, having been seen so often on the old **Dial-a-Cab** Finsbury Square rank in his mobile cab shop, that many must have thought he was actually a driver!

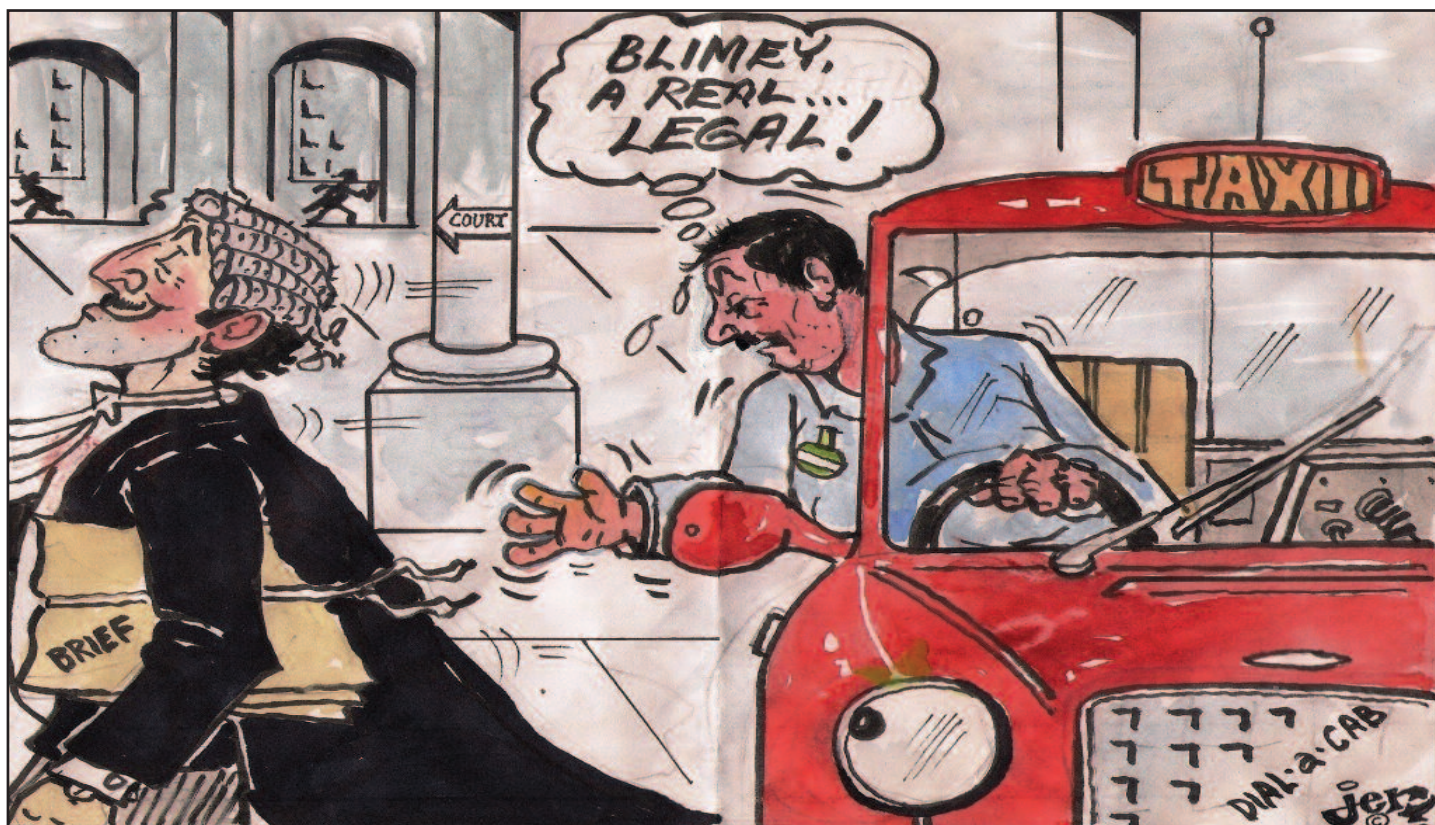
But no, Ilyas is the man who has for all those years provided licensed taxi drivers with the spare parts that you couldn't get anywhere else because those establishments inconveniently closed at around 5pm. Ilyas has been seen at all times through the evening and even into the night.

Now he has taken his taxi spares business one step further and joined

up with **Dave Williams**, whose dry cleaning and key cutting service is based next to the **Liverpool Street taxi rank** at number 28. If you need something fairly easy such as a bulb, badge holder, account book, new leather bag etc, then the chances are that Dave will have it at 28 Liverpool Street providing it's between 7am and 6pm on Tuesday to Thursday or till 11pm on Monday and Friday.

If the part is one that isn't usually stocked, then just phone Ilyas on **07984 473 111** and he will get the part for you and it will be in Dave's shop by the next day. That's what we call service...

Jery's World



Rush Hour Chaos likely for Olympics

TfL has set out its road event plans for the London 2012 Olympic Games and much of it is set to cause rush hour chaos!

We already have the problem of traffic being excluded from the Olympic Route Network – at least at busy times – but events to be held on London's streets are set to add to the disruption and cause the ultimate grief to drivers on **Dial-a-Cab** as they attempt to cover client's account trips.

Events such as road cycling, triathlon, marathon and race walking events will entail a huge road closing programme on seven of the sixteen days of the Games and on one day of the Paralympic Games. Information will be sent to residents and businesses along the affected routes about how they can avoid the obvious problems. **Call Sign** was told that praying has been ruled out as an option and that the only way round the traffic problem will be to change the times that the trips are usually made or just to avoid making them! Unfortunately, taxi drivers do not have that luxury.

Road events will take place on routes passing through Westminster, the City, Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Wandsworth and Putney in addition to much of Surrey. Closures will include Park Lane and Hyde Park Corner in addition to the already announced closure of The Mall and Constitution Hill. Between them, they cut off all routes between Strand and Kensington.

TfL told us that where possible, roads would be reopened and restrictions lifted by late afternoon or early evening. No roads would be closed overnight apart from those needed to build the *Cycle Time Trial* venue at Hampton Court.

Leon Daniels, TfL's MD Surface Transport told **Call Sign**: "The world's top athletes will be competing on London's streets this summer. We need to ensure their safety, that of the spectators and provide the best possible field of play. We're working closely with London 2012 and boroughs to ensure all affected residents and businesses are informed of where and when roads will be closed or impacted on event days."

Traffic conditions may well be horrendous, but as this magazine has pointed out before, it will also be a once in a lifetime opportunity to sample the feel and smell of the world's greatest sporting occasion. Do we want to miss it just for some horrendous traffic? So long as it doesn't get worse than horrendous!

Road event routes are at <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/london2012/22487.aspx>





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Call Sign is having trouble keeping up with the number of PCNs for non-Dial-a-Cab offences where the driver is responsible for the ticket. And yes, it does appear that councils/boroughs are targeting those considered as an *easy nick!*

Philip Benjamin (K20) has had several PCN battles with the relevant authorities, but none as amusing as one he had with Westminster following a parking offence in Devonshire Street W1.

He told us: "The ticket history relates to my wait for a disabled passenger outside the Devonshire Hospital and then driving off before the warden could fix the ticket onto the cab. The malfunction para refers to me asking whether his camera wouldn't function as the passenger, supported by crutches, boarded the taxi. So who says our friends at Dingwall (*Westminster Debt Collecting Department and other sections...Ed*) don't have a sense of humour? Or do they?"

So what was it that Philip referred to when he asked whether the warden had previously worked as a scriptwriter for 'ello 'ello! This was the warden's actual report on Philip's cab...

*'Driver said he **can parked** anywhere he want. Driver is **british**. a white man in his 50s. height 5.7 foot. Very **insultive**. Driver was told he got pcn before he drove out. Driver was **stopping** me from **photos making**.'*

Philip's message to **Call Sign** was:

"I felt deeply hurt at being accused of stopping anybody while they were photos making. I find the insinuation to be quite insultive!"

Westminster had responded when refusing to cancel the PCN by saying that if the warden

PCN MADNESS!



had been with 'ello 'ello, that would not have had any bearing on the PCN outcome! They also claimed no camera malfunction took place and that no pick-up was observed! Perhaps the passenger's crutches obscured the actual person???

Russell Bamber (N27) also doesn't give into council threats and recently secured a victory against Westminster at the infamous Berkeley Street/Piccadilly yellow box junction. His beef was that on the PCN it gave the position as Piccadilly, whereas on the CCTV evidence - provided only if you have internet access - it adds the location of Berkeley Street. Russell told **Call Sign**:

"Surely that should be specified on the PCN and not just on the CCTV footage? What about those people who do not have access to a computer - or as in my case, just cannot use one!"

Following a look at supplied photos of the incident, Russell appealed by saying he hadn't believed it to be illegal to stop on "cross hatching" when turning left or right out of a side street and onto a main road. He also said that a white van had been cut-up by another taxi and had to go into the space Russell would have taken. He added that it had been borne out by the CCTV images.

Russell continued his appeal by writing that there should have been a junction other than just Piccadilly on the PCN and that the camera numbers were not displayed. The council again responded that numbers were available on the website!












However, the PCN was cancelled due to a "procedural error" blaming that on an incorrect time being shown. Russell believes that other DaC drivers could use his lead to challenge the yellow box PCNs.

Then there was Gerry Tobin (L32) who popped into the opticians only to see a warden sniffing around outside. He went out and drove off only to be told by letter that the parking attendant had placed a PCN on his windscreen. Gerry got a letter written by the optician to say that no PCN had been written and attached, yet the council didn't accept the appeal.

"What chance do we have," said Gerry "if they don't believe what an optician says he saw!"

Martin Cordell & Co. ACCOUNTANTS

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Memories of Bonnie as Bermuda beckons

The Bermuda Department of Tourism is launching a twelve month multi-format outdoor advertising campaign in London with specialist agency *Out of Home International*, appointed by their UK based consumer and trade PR agency, *Publicasity*. The campaign is to promote Britain's love affair with Bermuda and encourage further visits to the Island.

That gives **Call Sign** the opportunity to mention a Bermuda taxi company to which we will forever be linked – whether we know it or not!

It was way back in 1957, ODRTS (now DaC) Founder-Chairman Bonnie Martyn had created a huge sensation at the time when following the successful launch of this Society at Pentonville Road several years earlier, he was asked to go to the beautiful Caribbean / Atlantic island of Bermuda to set up a radio-taxi organisation similar to the one with Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service he had launched in London in 1952. Money, Bonnie was told, was no object!

So Bonnie resigned from ODRTS, something for which many never forgave him and on 28 December 1957 travelled to Bermuda via New York on the original *Queen Mary*. Sent at the same time on a freight



Bonnie and Brian at the Founder - Chairman's 90th birthday
Inset: Bermuda flag

ship were 12 Austin A55s, each fitted with Pye **Reporter** radios and which were going to be the beginnings of Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs.

After the successful launch of Bermuda Taxis and making sure that it was on a sound footing, Bonnie returned to London and ODRTS as a Board member. But his sudden departure to Bermuda had caused friction with some other Board members and it was a short-lived return visit to Pentonville Road.

But time is a great healer and many years later **Call Sign** tracked down Bonnie and he became an honoured guest at many DaC functions. His love affair with Dial-a-Cab had been rekindled and Chairman Brian Rice even went to Bonnie's home to surprise him on his 90th birthday. Bonnie referred to it as finally coming home. He died at the age of 93 in August 2002 – still in love with DaC.

But his Caribbean legacy, Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs, still operate from Trott Road in Hamilton – although we doubt they will be advertising on the side of London buses!

Ron Yarborough

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Operation Condor swoops over London

The Metropolitan Police Service Safer Transport Command, funded by TfL, made a total of 115 arrests for touting over one recent weekend as part of **Operation Condor**, the largest MPS operation of the year to crack down on unlicensed activity.

In addition to minicab touting, the operation covered all aspects of licensing irregularities including pubs and clubs, betting shops, driving licence fraud and many others.

Working with the STC Cab Enforcement Unit, all 32 borough-based Safer Transport Teams were mobilised to tackle illegal minicabs on their boroughs.

Helen Chapman, Deputy Director of London Taxi and Private Hire, said:

"TfL is pleased to have had the opportunity to support the Met Police as part of Operation Condor. Our compliance officers worked in partnership with the Safer Transport teams across London to check all aspects of taxi and private hire licensing for the duration of the operation. We take the issue of touting extremely seriously as it puts the travelling public at risk and undermines the legitimate and law abiding taxi and private hire trades. In this operation, the Safer Transport Cab Enforcement Unit with support from the taxi and private hire compliance team has been successful in cracking down on touting to enhance the safety of the travelling public."

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DaC's Director of IT, John Banks, writes for Call Sign to say that there are now...

NEW TERMINALS AT DAC HOUSE

The terminals that we currently have installed in our vehicles have been in service for nearly 12 years, but they still stack up well against the competition today. When they were first installed, they were state-of-the-art. They were the only touch-screens in use in a taxi anywhere in the world. The terminals were designed and manufactured in High Wycombe by Microbus Ltd.

The quest-for a replacement...

I wrote the original Request for Information (RFI) document in January 2008. Chairman Brian Rice was travelling to the *Taxicab, Limousine and Paratransit Association* (TPLA) meeting in the US that month and we knew that there would be many taxi system suppliers at this worldwide event. Our RFI was distributed to several companies at the conference who were interested in tendering for the replacement terminal project and Brian held a number of initial meetings while he was there.

In the second quarter of 2008, we began to notice our revenues deteriorating. As you all know, we are a very good barometer of what lies ahead for the economy in general and our barometer was reading 'Heavy Storms Ahead!' When *Lehman Brothers* collapsed in September of that year, the world economy went into a nose-dive. No one knew how far down it would go and how long it would last. We decided to keep our powder dry, weather the storm and revive the project when the economic climate was more stable.

A number of factors led to the project being revived in 2011. Firstly, the economy had stabilised somewhat. Secondly, our terminals were now 3 years older and we began to see an increase in the failure rate of the devices. Thirdly, the explosion of mobile devices coupled with an increase in the cost of running our VHF network revealed a significant cost saving potential that could be realised by moving from *Private Mobile Radio* to public 3G.

I contacted the suppliers that had responded to the original RFI and asked them to send updated specifications and pricing information. From the initial 8 companies that sent



The new terminal/printer/card reader and fitted with Knowledge Master

information, we shortlisted 5. One was based in London, one in Canada, one in California, one in Italy and one - Microbus - in High Wycombe. After further evaluation and testing, we reduced the list to just two companies, both based in the UK. We very much liked both products and the people. In the end we decided to award business to both.

The contract to design and build the terminal hardware was awarded to Microbus. Their price was comparable to the foreign competition and all work, including manufacturing, would take place in England. Microbus had a great track record for quality and reliability and their location made it easy to have regular meetings throughout the development cycle. This locality of design and build has proven invaluable during the development time. I have been able to make regular trips to Microbus to discuss various options and evaluate various different components.

The remaining company, Knowledge Master UK, who tendered for the terminal business also offered an excellent mapping and SatNav solution, which has been specifically designed for London Taxi drivers. We have awarded Knowledge Master UK the contract to provide the CabbiesMate A-Z and SatNav solution, which will run on the terminal manufactured by Microbus. The CabbiesMate software will be completely integrated into our software. You can read more about it elsewhere in this issue.

The hardware

The terminal itself will run the full *Windows 7* operating system as opposed to the cut down version of Windows CE used by our competitors. The unit will again include an integrated printer and a touch screen. It will be slightly smaller than our current unit, but will contain a larger touch screen. The new touch screen will be a 10.4" TFT XGA glare diffuser. The processor will be a 1.6Ghz with 2 Gig of Ram. It will contain a 32Gig Solid State Drive (SSD). The main failure point in our current terminal is the mechanical disk drive. SSDs have no moving parts, which makes them faster and more reliable. The unit pictured is only a prototype. The final model may be slightly different depending upon the results of our tests etc.

Communications

As you know, our current system runs on 12 VHF private radio channels based at 7 sites around London. These sites provide radio coverage within the M25 but not much beyond. The new system will be based on GPRS/3G from 02 with widespread coverage throughout the UK. We have been considering going this route for some years, but only in the last few years has the cost and reliability points reached a stage where we feel comfortable with it.

I want to add a note of caution to this section. I have been aware that some are considering the move to 3G to be the end of all signals problems. It will not be. We expect the radio coverage and signal quality to be significantly improved with 3G, however, be cautious about believing signal problems will be a thing of the past. Just as you sometimes can't get a signal on your 3G smart phone, there will be places where the signal is weak on your new terminal. We will try to mitigate the effect of these black spots with our software but there is no such thing as 100% signal coverage in any mobile data system.

Credit and charge cards

The old card reader we currently have has served us well, however, in this age of credit card fraud it is now imperative that we move to a *chip and pin* solution. We have chosen *Pin Entry Devices* (PEDs) from a company based in Scotland called Ingenico. Ingenico is a leading provider of payment, transaction and business solutions with over 15 million terminals deployed in more than 125 countries. Just look next time you pay by credit card. The PED was to be either a Verifone or an Ingenico. We had detailed discussions with both and in the end decided that the commercial deal with Ingenico and Barclaycard was the best for the Society. The PED will be mounted in the driver compartment and handed through to the customer for payment. This may involve a slight non-permanent mod to TX2s, but we will sort that out for you.

We chose this approach rather than mounting the PED in the passenger compartment for security reasons. If the PED is mounted in the back and there is a problem during payment, the driver may be lured into the back to help the passenger. We want our drivers to be able to stay in the relative safety of their compartment throughout the trip. I will write a separate article about the new credit card procedures in a future edition of *Call Sign*.

A glaring issue

Whenever I speak to drivers about their terminals, the number one comment is always about glare on the screen. Whenever you put a screen into a vehicle, there is always going to be some

continued next page

Another true story from Geoff Levene...

The nuisance known as Abbey Road?

One Saturday evening in March 1963, I sat down with my father and an older brother to watch *Brian Matthew* introduce *Thank Your Lucky Stars* on ITV. This was the programme in which pop stars sang (or rather mimed) their latest recordings. There was also a slot where a strange new breed of young people called *teenagers* gave their opinions on some of these tracks and a girl from the Midlands achieved nationwide fame for her Birmingham accent, when *Janice Nichols* expressed approval by declaring: "Oi'll give it foive!"

At some stage that evening, on came four boys who did their latest number... and the world changed forever! "That's going to number one," I said still singing it as I went up to bed.

The following week I bought the record during my lunch hour. But I was wrong, *Please please me* by *The Beatles* only got to number two thanks to *Cliff Richard* and *Summer Holiday* which jumped up from number 20 to number 1 and delayed *John, George, Paul and Ringo's* first number 1 until May, when *From me to you* went straight to the top of the charts. But from that day, nothing in music was ever going to be the same again.

I bought more singles and at the end of the year saw *The Beatles* Christmas show at the *Astoria* in Finsbury Park. But over the years and whilst always a fan, my tastes changed. Blues, r&b, heavy metal – then there was *Cream*, *Stevie Wonder*, *Queen* and so on. Now it's *Beethoven*, *Mozart* and *Schubert* etc.

But some people never seem to change. I was in *HMV* recently and noticed *Status Quo* were due to make a personal appearance. The fans were gathering. Fifty and sixty year olds with beards, moustaches and beer bellies – and the men weren't much better!

So where am I going with all this? Well it's that zebra crossing in Abbey Road. I suppose there must be a time – maybe at 3am – when a group of people aren't walking and posing in the middle of the road or writing something pretentious on the wall of the studios!

So it was one wet and cold Sunday morning when I saw a man accompanied by his bemused young son take off his shoes and socks while his wife took the obligatory photo to re-create *Paul McCartney's* crossing on the famous 1969 *Abbey Road* album cover. Yes, ok, but his shoes and socks as well?

I reckon every US citizen except *Charles Manson* has turned up in St John's Wood at some time or other – which is tough on old Charlie because it's thought he was influenced to carry out his nefarious deeds by a song called *Helter Skelter* – which comes from *The White Album*... by *The Beatles*!



The Beatles cross Abbey Road in 1969 - who'd have thought in 2012 people would still be copying them!

Geoff Levene (W32)

NEW TERMINALS AT DAC HOUSE! continued

glare. However, there are a few things that can be done to improve the situation somewhat. Firstly there is the screen itself. We have chosen a screen that has the best anti-glare characteristics that we could find. We sacrifice a little clarity for this, but I'm sure you will all agree that the glare issue takes precedence. Secondly, we are developing a sun visor that will clip onto the terminal and which can be used on those all too rare bright London days.

Meter compatibility

When the last terminals were developed, the Society supported pretty much every meter out there. We will not be doing that this time. We will support the three most prolific meters and any other meters that conform to the electronic and software protocols of the big three. Currently supported meters are *Digitax*, *Cygnus*, *Sheriff Ultima*, *Hale* and *Viking*. We hope that this list will grow as meter suppliers validate their devices with our new terminal. Please see future editions of *Call Sign* for some excellent deals on these supported meters.

Refitting

Refitting your cab should be straightforward. We will use the same pole as well as some of

the wiring. We will need to mount a PED holster on the wall by your left shoulder. TX2s will require the tray in the window to be replaced by a flatter unit to allow the PED to be passed through to the customer. We estimate that the refit will take no more than 1 hour per cab.

The software

The software has been pretty much completely re-written in-house by our own programmers. The task to uplift the software from VB6 on Windows 98 to the latest .Net on Windows 7 has been challenging. The software is quite different under the covers, but we've made it look and feel very similar on the outside. The new software will be very familiar to you. We have basically carried on from where the previous release left off. We are considering this first release of software to be a new starting point. The emphasis is more on reliability and signal handling than flashy user interfaces.

We are planning to deliver most future updates over the air, which will reduce the need to visit Roman Way for software updates, although large software updates will still require a Roman Way visit.

The big question - WHEN?

We have just taken possession of the first prototype and need to do some vigorous testing with this unit before approving it. Once it is approved, we are looking at a further 3 months before production units start flowing off the line. Our best estimate at the moment is that we will begin fitting by the beginning of July 2012.

Upcoming IT projects

We are coming to the conclusion of another huge project, which is the complete replacement of our billing and accounting system. When this goes in at the end of this month, we will be able to provide our drivers with online confidential access to their trips and driver statements.

We are also planning to release our *iPhone* booking app to the general public. I will elaborate on both these projects in a future *Call Sign* article.

John Banks
DaC Director of IT



DaC's new accounting system...

A Note to Drivers

As you may be aware, Dial-a-Cab is implementing a new and more sophisticated *Accounting and Driver* systems on 1st April. From that date, any driver who has a new / changed badge can come into Driver Services for us to update the system as every driver now has a unique identifier.

You will still be known by your *Badge* and *Call Sign*, but this new unique number allows us to change these if necessary, much more

quickly and easier than in the past. You will also see this number as part of the file name of your PDF when you receive your E-Statement.

For all those of you who have still not sent us your e-mail address for E-Statements please do so now by e-mailing driverservices@dialacab.co.uk with your Badge and Call Sign in the subject field.

Warren Smith
DaC Financial Controller

New Smarter Driving Courses Dates

More dates for the smarter driving taxi driver courses that many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers have now taken have been made available, so if you are interested then book now. Completing the course could help you reduce your fuel consumption, save money and improve air quality in London.

Booking is easy and can be done via the **Energy Saving Trust** (EST) website by following these easy steps:

* **Visit the EST website at www.smarterdriving.net/est**

* **Login using your own email address**

* **The password is 'savings'**

* **Select the date and time that suits you**

You'll then be sent an email confirming the date, time and location of your course. When you go for your course you will need to take your DVLA licence with you, including your photocard - if you have one - and your taxi driver's licence.

The course is held at **The London Taxi Company** office in **Brewery Road N7** and only takes 90 minutes to complete. The course is completed in a licensed taxi and you do not have to pass a test or sit an exam.

The courses have proved very popular with all the DaC drivers who have already completed them and the results have been impressive with drivers managing to reduce their fuel consumption by an average of 25%.

The courses have been arranged with the EST for taxi drivers in London and are being funded as part of the Cleaner Air for London initiative.



Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

POTTER'S WHEEL

**Visiting
Room
101???**

After taking some time off sick, for the first time in many moons I was looking forward to coming back to work! However that feeling soon went and there's nothing like taxi driving as a leveller. I am not a moaner and in the early days of my taxi-driving career I have often said to myself that if you don't like this job then go and find one you do like. You usually forget the moans - but not always. But of all the things we have to put up with, the following two would go into my *Room 101*...

Firstly, feeling good and fresh I picked up a fella who coughed, sneezed and wheezed and then coughed again all the way from Wandsworth to Pall Mall. I began feeling sick after about 10 minutes, but I was too English and polite to ask him to open his windows. Instead I opened the front ones, which makes things worse as all the germs come from the back to the front via your truly's nostrils.

Well, what can you do? I haven't tried holding my breath for half an hour or more since I was a bored teenager during the summer holidays with the result that for the following 10 days I struggled into work, careful not to pass on my illness even though I could hardly breathe because of

the severity of the chest infection placed upon me by that passenger. But is it really necessary for someone to go to work so clearly sick and why did he not have the courtesy to open the taxi windows? Next time I will politely ask...

Secondly, over the years I've got used to the public questioning my routes etc and have a number of answers up my sleeve such as that I am just following the signs. Or if I get asked whether I can make Kings X by 8.30 and it's not looking good, I will ask the punter what time the following train is. But sometimes someone who simply hasn't a clue, questions you and his or her alternative leaves you staring into the rear view mirror. Here's a good example...

I picked up a lady in Kingsland Road who wanted to go to New Street Square. No problem; off I went along Old Street, turning left into Goswell Road then making a right into Long Lane. From there it was straight through West Smithfield and left into Farringdon Road. As we passed Stonecutter Street there was a tap on the window and the passenger called out to ask why I hadn't turned right there?

Speechless, I looked around. Was she serious? It's one way from the other way, complete with no entry signs! So I just said nothing, continuing to turn right into Fleet Street and then Fetter Lane etc. As I dropped the lady off, I heard the words "you

have reached your destination" coming from her phone. Aaahhh, so she was using her mobile as a satnav! That explained it. Not trusting my judgement, she used an incorrect satnav. Where have you heard that before?

The former Wandsworth Parks police!

Most of us don't go into Battersea Park very often unless it's for a break or to service one of the events that take place there, especially at Christmas time. And then you may well have bumped into one of the Wandsworth Parks police officers at an event directing traffic or sorting out drunks. A very friendly lot they were, but as of 1st April, the whole section is being disbanded and sadly Wandsworth Parks police will be no more.

The axe has fallen on them as part of Wandsworth Council's cutbacks and speaking personally, I think that cutting frontline services - not to mention slaughtering the Westminster TaxiCard - is part of a Tory agenda, even though David Cameron says otherwise.

A sad day, but well done to all the police officers at Wandsworth Parks for a sterling job done under difficult circumstances and good luck at finding future employment...

Richard Potter (T51)

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First aid?

Are cyclists really that dim or have they got a death wish? I encountered three incidents on the same morning recently, the first when I was driving through Greenwich Park; it was pitch dark and raining heavily when a cyclist suddenly appeared in front of me that I must have missed colliding with by inches. The idiot was dressed completely in black, the bike was black plus it had no lights or reflectors. Absolutely madness and people wonder why cyclists get injured.

The second incident was in Three Colts Lane, a cyclist took the corner too sharp, toppled over and I narrowly missed running over his bike. Then just 15 minutes later as I was driving up Pitfield Street - which is one-way except for cyclists - I came across a female lying in the road having come off her bike. Exactly how long she had been lying there I don't know, but what surprised me was the amount of cyclists coming in the opposite direction down the bike lane, all looking at the fallen woman, yet not one of these selfish lycra louts having the decency to stop and offer assistance. This says it all about the mentality of these pedal pushers. I parked to check if she was OK, but as I was putting on my raincoat she got back on her bike and rode away. I mention the above because since the advent of *Boris's Bikes* and cycling in London being on the increase, there has naturally been a considerable increase in accidents involving cyclists. Many of you, I would guess, have witnessed cycling accidents and possibly in some instances been directly involved. This being so, how many of you carry an adequate first aid kit and how many of you are able to administer first aid including CPR?

Much has been discussed recently about what can be done to protect our client base as well as generating new business. At Board level, attempts are being made where possible to make costs more competitive without affecting the quality of our service. Dial-a-Cab is still technologically the most advanced taxi circuit in Europe. Older cabs will soon be officially taken out of service, and with newer vehicles replacing them, it will increase the quality of our fleet and your Sales department are as active as they can possibly be in a very difficult market place.

As regards you the members, we rely on you to cover as much as possible, efficiently and without delay. Poor service is the worst reason to lose a client because once gone it's usually gone forever. Arriving promptly in a clean cab is essential. Arriving promptly looking smart, courteous and helpful leaves a lasting impression. And even more so in my opinion, if for example our members were equipped with basic first aid and resuscitation skills. Apart from raising your image, it would appeal enormously to the general public and particularly the business sector, especially in the UK which has one of the worst heart attack rates in the world. Our older members might laugh, but the cab trade has changed considerably since the cloth cap and muffler era. Today's cab drivers are younger, conscientious and are well aware that skills in addition to the Knowledge are desperately needed if they are to compete successfully with PH.



London 2012 and a fares increase?

As you receive this copy of *Call Sign*, it will be less than four months to the start of the 2012 Olympic Games on 27 July until 9 September. No doubt some of you will be following the advice of the organisers and taking a six week sabbatical at your regular bolt hole in Miami, the Caribbean, Seychelles, Butlins or wherever and leave the rest of your colleagues to scratch a living on streets heaving at the seams with traffic and tourists visiting London for the Olympics.

It is forecast that the 2012 London Olympics is expected to generate £12bn in revenue for the British economy, of which £2.1bn is to come from tourists. All very nice for those who've got their greedy sticky fingers in that £12bn pie, but not much I would guess is going to those in the cab trade who intend working. If history is anything to go by, then I can well envisage when it's all over and everything is back to normal, we will be hearing countless stories of those in the service industry hiking up their charges, including hotels and private hire laughing all the way to the bank while many in the cab trade will be moaning as usual about the income they could have generated but didn't because they felt it morally wrong to up the price of taxi fares during the Olympics games. Personally, I fail to understand what relevance morals have to self-employed cab drivers, unless it applies to doing something unlawful.

As I write this piece, I have just read an article in a Sunday national with a strap line saying 'Hotel prices soar by 300% for Games'. In the article, research undertaken by shadow Olympics secretary, Tessa Jowell, reveals that on average prices will rise by 315% during the Games compared with now. Tessa Jowell specifically names hotels whose charges in December 2011 were £124 for a double room, but on the night of August 3 when the games have begun will increase to £584. Another example is a room normally £150 increasing even further to £830. Exactly why Ms Jowell is wasting time researching the obvious I don't know, because as one Hotelier who admits to charging £1,100 for a room that normally goes £250, said when criticised about the increase: 'Don't be so naïve, London is being no different to other Olympic cities' And to support that view, Thomas Cook, a long established reputable company, is apparently using the Olympic occasion to offer a three night package for two people to the

Waldorf Hilton for £12,998 that will include entry to four Olympic events to which Thomas Cook say that they have been 'inundated' with bookings since launching the package. Proof it seems that nobody is forcing people to pay these prices.

Why then I wonder are there so many in the cab trade against increasing taxi fares. The Olympics is a once in a lifetime event and for many, especially the self-employed, it's a golden opportunity to recoup some of the income lost in the aftermath of the greatest recession of the last 75 years. As a point of interest I know of people who go to Newcastle each year for the Great North Run and they always expect to pay considerably more for their hotel than normal and they do so willingly. Last year I took my grandson to watch an Arsenal game at the Emirates. It's a terrific stadium and the tickets cost a fortune. But as it was a 'one off' special occasion I was happy to pay the price, including £7 for a Hot Dog and Coke. I shouldn't think for one moment there will be many visitors coming to London for the 2012 Olympics on a low budget. To do so really would be naïve. I envisage many tourists on their first visit to London are going to be looking forward to riding on a London bus and especially riding in a London taxi, whatever the cost. Many of you would have seen in the press the news that DLR staff are to receive a £2500 bonus just for turning up to work as normal during the Olympics. In fact this isn't far different to the taxi surcharge for working Christmas and New Year, a period when many of you work anyway. Is that morally wrong? If not, then why not a surcharge during the Olympics, which if it did apply then those drivers that adamantly oppose it would have the opportunity to waive the surcharge if their professional ethics weighed too heavily on their conscience.

Satnavs and memory loss

In the past I have mentioned my having used a dozen or so taxis off the street to the UCH and ENT Hospital in Grays Inn Road and back to the office of which the vast majority of those taxis had satnavs on display, which gives a fair indication of how popular satnavs are amongst green badge drivers who were once proud of being the most knowledgeable (geographically) cab drivers in the world. When asked why they had a need to use a satnav particularly for a local destination such as East Road, the answer was: **Why not? It makes life easy. Why stretch your brain when a satnav will do it for you.** Well a recent survey has just been published that claims too much use of satnavs can result in memory loss. This is supported by facts already established that people who don't use their brain regularly, for example to do crosswords, Sudoku, read or play chess etc are more likely to suffer dementia than those that do. So my advice, for what it's worth is this: If you have a satnav, resist using it unless it's absolutely necessary. You did the Knowledge so it's all in your head somewhere. So force yourself to use it or lose it, together with everything else in your brain...

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing

This issue of *Call Sign* contains an extremely informative article from Dial-a-Cab IT Director John Banks about the new terminals that will be fitted into DaC taxis within a few months. But the article doesn't talk too much about the fully integrated Knowledge Master Cabbie's Mate system that will come with the new terminal. So *Call Sign* asked Knowledge Master's Sales and Marketing Manager Lindsay Todd for a rundown on what DaC drivers can expect – in addition to a hopeful large amount of work. But what there is not, is a large TV set in the back!

Lindsay told us: "Firstly, let me say that Knowledge Master UK Ltd are proud and delighted to have been chosen by Dial-a-Cab to provide Cabbie's Mate' A-Z Maps and Navigation Software for inclusion in the new terminals soon to be fitted to your fleet.

DaC drivers will benefit from the following features:-

A-Z+ Cabbie's Mate Mapping GPS enabled, which includes:

Central London Super Scale Map

Greater London Map at Street Level

Extended Arterial Road Greater London Map

Great Britain Road Atlas

London maps contain 24,000+ specially selected points of interest.

All maps can be 'toggled' at press of button.

All maps can be zoomed in and out four levels at touch of a button.

All maps can be scrolled.

Speed and Traffic Light Camera warnings.

'Cotton line' drawn between location and selected destination.

Trace facility on route being driven.

Welcome to Cabbies Mate – built specially for taxi drivers!

WHAT DAC DRIVERS HAVE ON THEIR NEW TERMINALS



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The Knowledge Master UK Ltd team are confident that DaC drivers will enjoy using and receive a great benefit from the installation of our software in your terminals."

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Online magazine *London Loves Business* recently conducted a fascinating interview with Addison Lee boss John Griffin.

He turns out to be anti-Olympics, explaining that he doesn't consider the Games as a serious business opportunity and is determined to remain faithful to his regular customers. He says it would be foolish to sacrifice the goodwill he has built up for over 30 years with his customers for "two petty weeks." Mr Griffin also said that suggestions he has a contract allowing AL cars into the Games ORN lanes are rubbish and that they declined an invitation to tender.

He also confirmed a £50,000 donation to the Conservative party in 2009/10 but failed to mention a £25,000 donation said to have been given towards the election funds of Boris Johnson during the last Mayoral elections. He describes Ken Livingstone as being left of left of left, calling him dangerous, too radical and not good for London. But his love affair with Boris isn't as red-hot as it was last time, with Griffin's claim that the Mayor is quite visible by his absence around him! Perhaps he doesn't need the money this time round, although someone does as AL have just taken a £12M Barclays loan.

He is also against the suggestion that electric cars are the way forward, describing them to *London Loves Business* as the biggest nonsense ever! He queried where the power was, adding that the UK was buying electricity from France, had no fossil fuels and the analogy that we could rely on windmills "was a complete farce."

But of course he couldn't resist having a dig at the industry he obviously admires far more than his own business – licensed taxis. His decision to make all his vehicles black says it all.

Once again he compared his prices to those of the taxi industry and stuck to his assertion that AL were 30% cheaper. He says we complained to the Office of Fair Trading about Addison Lee's claim, but lost the case and according to him, shot ourselves in the foot. He claims that taxi clocks "almost double as soon as you go more than six miles and they can't match up to our impeccably dressed driver wearing a collar and tie and opening the door for you." Of course we all know – as do many clients – that although they are obviously cheaper on some longer trips, the reverse is the case on shorter ones and that added together, his 30% suggestion is obviously incorrect. And of course, his drivers undoubtedly dress smarter than ours... if only they knew the way and all spoke English, they'd be reasonable!

But he saves his biggest anti-taxi remark to the end. He says: **"No Addison Lee driver has been found guilty of any offence with any passenger ever. Can the black taxis declare the same?"**

Well, we cannot deny history and the indisputable fact that in 2009, John Warboys was found guilty of assaulting 12 women, drugging 19 and raping one during an 18-month reign of terror. In fact, if you went back another 20+ years then another licensed taxi driver, Frank Welton, was found guilty of raping his passenger. That occasion was said to have taken place in Earls Court with a Spanish female student who claimed the driver kept his foot on the brake so that she couldn't leave the cab. Yet

AL boss slags off real taxis!



John Griffin claims no Addison Lee driver has ever been charged with any offence

according to her, he raped her in the back of the taxi. How could he possibly have kept his foot on the brake while getting out? The driver always swore that there was no rape and that it was consensual. According to taxi editor of the time, **Al Fresco**, who studied the case, the girl's evidence just didn't add up. However, Mr Welton was still found guilty. When almost at the end of his prison sentence, Frank Welton hung himself.

So yes, in 350 years we have had a handful of offences committed by taxi drivers, but to claim that Addison Lee drivers have never been found guilty of any offence with any passenger? *Call Sign* calls that claim bunkum! We do not keep records of any offences committed by their drivers because nothing they do particularly surprises us. With a tiny ad in a national newspaper we could probably find at least 1000 passengers who would complain that their AL driver got lost because he couldn't understand English well enough. I don't think you'd ever find that with a licensed taxi driver. But AL could rightly claim that getting lost hardly compares with rape and they would, of course, be right in that. So *Call Sign* went back to see if we could find anything that would contradict John Griffin's submission of his driver's 100% innocence.

We could write about our February 2010 issue when one of their drivers tried to run over DaC driver Marc Turner (R97) at the Holiday Inn Forum Hotel in South Kensington after Marc got out of his taxi and asked the AL driver to pull off the rank. His response was to try to run Marc over.

Could there be some form of pattern Mr Griffin, because we only have to go back two months to our February 2012 issue. The headline shouted out: *Addy Lee driver guilty of manslaughter* followed by the story of AL dri-

ver Imran Raja who apparently wouldn't even have stopped had not his four passengers screamed at him that he had just run over a pedestrian – even though they all felt the bump as Raja drove over 58-year old homeless man, Robin Scott – who had splashed some drink over the minicab before also banging on the windscreen. Raja was then said to have knocked Mr Scott over and driven over his body. He told the court at the Old Bailey that he had been unaware of hitting anyone and that he wouldn't have known had his passengers not screamed. Raja was found guilty of manslaughter and jailed for three years and nine months. The court accepted that he did not intend to cause serious harm and perhaps AL would claim that the person Raja ran over didn't count as a passenger?

His driver turnover is astronomical, so it is doubtful that we would ever know the truth about his statement of 100% driver innocence. But rumours of flying pigs still abound.

Having said all that, it's hard not to show some admiration for a minicab driver who started with just the one car in 1975 and who now claims to have a fleet of 4,000 who give him a 2011 turnover of approx £200million. That has all come with no educational qualifications and without having taken a single exam in his life. We don't have to like him, but we cannot deny his business acumen even if he doesn't seem to know what 100% actually means!

Alan Fisher

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Up until September 2006, *Call Sign* had been sponsoring the Dial-a-Cab Call Centre's blonde Bombshell, Donna Merry and her *Mirkou MK30* shotgun as she battled into the European and World skeet shooting championships. When she left, we transferred our sponsorship over to DaC driver and Wembley FC goalkeeper, Lee Pearce (J71). In return, Wembley became DaC Wembley with the Society's name emblazoned on the team's shirts as well as being on banners around the ground. Chairman Brian Rice provided the team with our fleece tops so that even in training, the DaC name was on show!

Our sponsorship paid up in trumps the following season when DaC Wembley were selected by the BBC's *Football Focus* and *Match of the Day* to be the team they would follow in the FA Cup of that season - the idea being that once Wembley were knocked out, they would continue to follow the team that beat them until eventually they reached the Final. Former Spurs legend Garth Crooks and a BBC team turned up at Wembley and *Football Focus* did a piece on the team, including posing with the cup itself. The DaC banners made several appearances as they showed the team training. Then came the match against Thame United, who were in the league above Wembley and clear favourites to move onto the next round. But DaC Wembley was buzzing and as the cameras rolled, Jumo Mitchell, Steve Augustine and Paul Shelton each scored a goal to take the team through. In the next round, the Beeb were joined by Sky TV - again with DaC banners on show. They failed to beat Redbridge and the adventure ended, but not before

A BUD FOR LEE AND WEMBLEY



2006: Lee holds the FA Cup as Call Sign sponsors Wembley. Now it's Budweiser



Wembley had made some much-needed funds while DaC got tons of publicity.

Call Sign still follows Lee Pearce and after moving around to several different clubs, the goalkeeper is once again back between the sticks at Wembley.

And now a new sponsor for the team has been announced - no less than FA Cup lead sponsor, Budweiser. The iconic global beer brand will now sponsor Wembley FC. The deal forms part of Budweiser's long-term FA Cup

commitment to grassroots football, championing clubs at all levels and bringing the romance and heritage of the tournament closer to the fans.

Budweiser say they will be working closely with Wembley FC to bring forward infrastructure improvements to enhance the club and player facilities. They will include the implementation of a new responsible drinking programme as well as promotion of the club in the wider Wembley community.

Jason Warner, Global VP Budweiser, told *Call Sign*: "We believe that the best way to champion the FA Cup is to celebrate its uniqueness from the grassroots up. Wembley FC has an incredible heritage and story to tell. We look forward to helping fulfil their dreams."

Budweiser's continued support of local teams in the FA Cup follows on from last year's success with the first-ever live streaming of a sporting event on *Facebook*, which saw over 30,000 people worldwide view the extra-preliminary round match between Wembley FC and Ascot United.

Lee Pearce added: "This news is brilliant for a small team like Wembley. It gives us the encouragement to want to succeed - and I really think we will!"

For more information on the FA Cup with Budweiser visit www.Facebook.com/BudweiserUK.

Areti triumph in first pro bout!

Last month's *Call Sign* told of Dial-a-Cab driver Alex Wilkey (W83), who in addition to driving a taxi, is also a licensed boxing trainer. The story wrote of Alex' latest acquisition, female boxer Areti Mastrodouka who left her native Greece to come to London where female boxers are licensed.

Alex has now led Areti to victory in her professional debut fight against experienced opponent Kristine Shergold at Bethnal Green's York Hall on 4 March.

The knowledgeable York Hall crowd took to their seats for the super-featherweight female match-up, which was to be the first fight of the afternoon. Areti - who recently joined the TKO Gym in Canning Town to team up with trainer Alex Wilkey and manager Johnny Eames looked calm and confident before the bout and walking to the ring showed no evident signs of nerves before her first appearance in the professional ranks. But Areti, nicknamed *The Master*, looked like an established pro throughout the fight as she outscored Shergold over the scheduled 6 rounds on an afternoon featuring eight bouts.

But it was still a tough test for Mastrodouka against the 31-year-old Shergold, an opponent with 9 pro fights behind her. Residing from Exeter, Shergold came in with a 4 wins and 5 losses record to her name, having turned pro back in April 2008.

Shergold showed straightaway that she wasn't there just to make up the numbers and was not going to give Areti an easy debut. She put immediate pressure on Areti throwing some big shots in the first round. But once southpaw Areti settled into her rhythm, she began landing her own left hands.

The Greek contingent were making themselves heard from the upper level as Areti produced some smart boxing in the 2nd and 3rd rounds, working off the jab and producing some eye catching combinations. Areti was displaying the sharper footwork of the pair and landed some good body shots in the 4th round, yet Shergold was still a threat and had success in spells. But it was clear to see that Areti's experience in the amateur ranks in both boxing and kickboxing was prevailing as she proved she had the capability to produce a good performance in the professional game.

In the 5th round, *The Master* landed some effective straight lefts and it was becoming evident that Shergold was tiring and becoming frustrated as she tried to hold and smother the work of her opponent. But the 6th and final round was to be the most entertaining with both fighters trading heavy blows, but with Shergold - obviously aware she was behind on points - beginning to take risks. But Mastrodouka continued to dominate the exchanges.

It was no surprise when referee Jeff Hinds raised Areti's hand after the bout with a score of 60 - 55. Areti told *Call Sign* after the fight: "I'm really pleased with the way the fight went with everything going to plan. Alex gave me good instructions and I listened to them. I fought a good fight against a good opponent. I'd also like to thank Ken at *Boxfit* for his great support."

Trainer Alex Wilkey added: "I'm very happy with the way Areti boxed, she took everything on board and executed our fight plan well."

Also winning on the bill was fellow TKO Gym fighter Eddie Corcoran, who beat experienced Duncan Cottier convincingly in a one sided bout, winning all 4 of the 3 minute rounds.



Areti with DaC's Alex Wilkey after her York Hall victory

Trainer Alex Wilkey is available for private training sessions. If you are interested, you can contact him on 07944 791 360.

Nash's Numbers has long been one of *Call Sign's* most popular pages, but over the past year or so our page two author Alan Nash (A95) has been writing about the MyFav website - one that has been actually designed by Alan - so we asked him what it was all about. Alan told us...

"I made a rather silly comment in 1997 when Alan Fisher took on the role of *Call Sign* editor:

"I've got a fare table; do you want to publish it?" Not only did he say yes, but he also asked if I could do something every month as well! Well, 165 issues later and Nash's Numbers is still going strong and I hope that the articles have been of some use to you. They don't cost anyone on Dial-a-Cab a bean.

In December 2003, I set up the Nash's Numbers website containing all the back issues so that you could print them off rather than tear the magazine to bits. Many are now out of date - after all, a 2006 fare chart is of little use in 2012!

Over the years I've come across drivers with files of just page twos, whilst in turn I carried a folder of useful info and bits of snippets with me in the cab that I had picked up over a period of time. So I thought it a good idea to put this together with old *Call Sign* issues into a document that all DaC drivers could share. It took me ages to think up the name of the *Useful Information Document* - or the UID as I call it. I didn't really want it to be too easily available to private hire, so to keep it at least semi-secure from PH eyes, you needed to register to go onto the mailing list.

Necessity is the mother of invention (Plato 427 BC - 347 BC) and in an internet cafe whilst on holiday I accessed a number of different websites and thought how useful it would be if I could just call up a single site with all the sites I needed. Hence in 2007 I registered www.myfav.co.uk to be my launch pad to the rest of the internet. Initially it was just for my personal use, but hey, wouldn't it be a great launch pad for everyone, thought I? My initial list of requirements were for a search bar, icons of the most used general sites and files of my personal favourites (bookmarks). MyFav was picked as a short name (shorter than *Google*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* etc). Obviously it was an abbreviation for *My Favourite* bookmarks, homepage, iconic most generally used sites etc. And now it's available with the even shorter

Nash's Numbers and the MyFav website

...and how you can also win £100 each month!



www.myfav.co.uk (a global TLD comparable to .com).

So what's it all about? Well, I put the UID and other useful taxi related websites as icons on a *Locked MyFav* page. Again, to keep prying PH eyes from the UID is the reason that you need to register and enter an unlock code. This website has been designed to be used as a launch pad to the rest of the internet by everyone and not just for the taxi trade. All new pages are launched from MyFav and the MyFav page is always there for launching a new site. Some browsers launch new full size pages, others create new tabs. The basic MyFav page is useful, but to get the most from it you need to register. It's free, secure, your details are not passed to any third parties and you will only get an occasional email from me with information on MyFav updates. Once registered, you can create your own personal favourite bookmarks, create notes, set the gad-

gets, search engine, retailer search bar, clock face, set the start up your favourite icon grid- and this is very important - because your preferences are stored online, every time you log on from any internet connected computer in the world, your personalised MyFav page will appear.

A few of you have also realised that you can win a £100 monthly prize just for recommending the site. This is in order to expand the number of users, but sadly no recommendees have yet registered and therefore the monthly prize has yet to be won. All you need do is just register using the word *taxi* as the unlock code. You will be emailed a temporary password, log in, personalise, recommend and not only will you have an extensive and powerful launch area to quickly launch any website, but you could be richer by £100 - and on a monthly basis! And that's not too bad value for nothing!"



LONDON TAXI COMPANY GENUINE PARTS

The professional driver's choice...



The Euro 5 version of the TX4 is now available for purchase across the UK and *The London Taxi Company* is taking the opportunity to reiterate the importance to the taxi trade of using quality parts when it comes to maintaining your vehicle and to reinforce the potential dangers of using low grade or non-specification parts.

The London Taxi Company supplies genuine parts for all TX models to its UK network of more than 60 Approved Service Dealers, as well as direct to the group's six main retail outlets in London, Coventry, Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Parts Sales & Marketing Manager, **Jamie MacMasters-Green**, told *Call Sign*:

"We're passionate about the importance of using the right specification parts for a reason. Lower spec parts produced by alternative suppliers are unlikely to have been through the rigorous checking

and testing that correct spec or 'genuine' branded parts have been through. This could result in incorrect tolerances, poor fitment, corrosion implications and even safety concerns. Braking components are a specific example where stopping distances / collision avoidance could be adversely affected by the use of non-specification parts. Use of non-compliant parts also affects warranty claims.

"We strongly recommend drivers ensure their chosen garage uses only the correct quality of oil, parts and diagnostic equipment on their vehicle. It's an investment not just in the product, but also in the longevity and durability of their business."

To find your nearest London Taxi Company Approved Service Dealer and guarantee access to genuine parts, oils and lubricants, visit www.london-taxis.co.uk and click on the **Servicing** tab for more information.

London Taxi and Private Hire has confirmed that from next year a number of substantial improvements will be made to the licensing process for taxi and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators. All records will be computerised and a simple online account system will be set up so users can keep track of their applications or book vehicle inspections.

A contract to run the new system has been awarded to NSL. As well as providing the taxi and private hire vehicle licensing and inspection service, NSL will also be responsible for the provision of an end to end IT system, which will be used by TfL staff for all other licensing and compliance activities.

Some of the improvements include the computerisation of all driver and vehicle records, new and existing drivers and operators being able to apply and renew online through a simple and easy to use account system that will also enable them to track progress of their application at any time and a simple on-line booking for vehicle inspections.

Helen Chapman, Deputy Director of LTPH

LTPH records computerised



Helen Chapman

said: "We have made no secret of how the lack of good quality IT systems have hindered our

ability and desire to provide our customers with the quality of service they deserve. Following a very thorough and comprehensive procurement exercise, I am delighted to announce the great many improvements that will be delivered to our customers through this new contract. The delivery of the end to end IT system through this contract will enable us to significantly improve the quality of service we provide. Throughout this process, we have actively engaged with the taxi and private hire trades and the unions. We will continue to engage with them, particularly with regards to the location of new inspection centres."

It is anticipated that the new vehicle licensing and inspections service, as well as the new system, will be up and running by early 2013. TfL will continue to hold decision making powers on all licensing applications as well as be the key contact for all trade engagement and issue resolution.

Call Sign Comment

Are NSL safe to run LTPH IT system?

London Taxi and Private Hire have announced that a contract to run their new IT system has been awarded to NSL. This includes providing a taxi and private hire vehicle licensing and inspection service in addition to the computerisation of all driver and vehicle records. Undoubtedly this is something that has long needed doing and **Call Sign** is delighted that LTPH has finally arrived in the 21st century.

However, NSL were the company revealed in last month's **Call Sign** as also running the Parking Enforcement wardens service for Westminster Council and who recently lost in London's High Court when Judge Burns found in favour of former Parking Attendant Hakim Berkani. Mr Berkani claimed he was sacked from his job as a warden for not issuing at least 10 PCNs a day - which he claimed was NSL policy.

The company denied the claim but had to pay Mr Berkani the sum of £20,000 after Judge Burns believed the former warden rather than NSL.

This case doesn't bode well so far as trust is concerned, because any traffic enforcement organisation that is found guilty of insisting wardens issue a minimum number of tickets regardless of whether they see any infringements or not, does not endear itself to this magazine.

No doubt the trade will now be watching NSL very closely, because trust is something earned and NSL are starting with a minus score. If it were up to us, NSL would not be a company we would feel happy with having access to taxi driver's records...

Alan Fisher

Visiting Gordon Poluck...

Several drivers enquired about former **Dial-a-Cab** driver and Board member **Gordon Poluck (ex-R 34)** following mention in last month's **Call Sign**. Many also remember Gordon from having attended a social function where he was the red-jacketed Master of Ceremonies, a role for which he was well known and respected. He also served for many years as a councillor for the borough of Croydon.

Gordon is now in a **Jewish Care** residential home and when we recently spoke to his wife Shirley, she told us that he would be delighted to see any of his **Dial-a-Cab** friends.

Gordon is at **Rubens House, 184 Ballards Lane, Finchley N3 2NB Tel: 0208 349 9879...**



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I have to disagree with Alan Nash (A95) in his February *Call Sign* letter regarding the ID stickers. What's so great about the green stickers we are now forced to display?

I noticed how many misguided drivers jumped the gun and displayed what they obviously believed to be a *Medal of Honour* on their taxis way ahead of the 1 March start date. Do cab drivers really believe that a few suburban drivers slipping into town were the big threat to this trade? I'm not suggesting that it's right, but it could have been stopped by those being caught incurring stringent penalties such as a long suspension of their licenses.

This ID scheme has been a Godsend to the control freaks that now run our country. We now have CCTV photographing every individual that goes out to work - probably at least 300 times a day - and there is no evidence to support that more police on the beat wouldn't do a better job. In fact *Big Brother Watch* has costed the CCTV implementation as equivalent to having 4,000 more police officers on the beat. But that would mean more jobs and a stronger economy - the last thing our real masters, the EU, want for us.

We also have the three yearly ridiculous Criminal Records Bureau check for taxi drivers, which should have no place in this trade. I'll come to that later. But back to the stickers...

If you want to know the real threat to this trade, then it's two-fold - private hire and TfL itself. Why do you think we have been herded in with PH in a transport unit referred to as London Taxi and Private Hire? We are closer together already and as time goes by we will be lost as it moulds into one. Yes, suburban drivers have been a nuisance, but never a real threat.

I hear RMT leader Bob Crowe may be challenging the legality of these stickers and he should be commended for that. Reading John Mason's reply to Alan Nash in *Call Sign*, he states: "The stickers will assist the police and our compliance officers with enforcement." I'd rather he tackled the touts and the illegal touting by PH drivers with more alacrity. He then goes on to use *TfL speak* to defend the licence cost that used to be done by the old Met police for nothing. John Mason, no doubt, is sincere in believing that he is doing a good job with the limited resources he has, but it's the old Russian doll scenario. As you take the outside cover off, there's another underneath and those on the outside are never aware of what the next layer knows. As you get to the centre of the doll, I have no doubt the real power knows that TfL plans for this trade are to be reduced to the lowest common denominator, just as the aim of the European Union is to bring all

DaC driver Mike Pollington says yellow badges aren't the problem...

WHY ARE WE WASTING TIME WITH ID STICKERS?

countries down to the lowest common denominator and then slowly strip away level by level until a mass of struggling workers sweat for a small group of unelected elites.

Whenever trades and organisations are grouped under the same heading, that is always the intention. Try getting anything done by your MEP. I have over the emissions; he wasn't interested and palmed me off. When I threatened a complaint, a more senior official sent me a letter saying how hard he had worked for me. No he hadn't. When I emailed twice more he just ignored me. Think about your future and remember the old saying: "Be careful what you wish for, you might just get it!" Small organisations and local councils are accountable, that's why everything is now big.

I also noticed that a website appeared whereby a member of the public could tap in your badge number and reveal your name, which could then easily reveal your address via other means. Mayor Boris promised to close it down, but for how long? Once one of these websites has been set up, they usually reappear in a similar format. Even if it didn't, hackers have got into the Pentagon's website, so don't think for a second that they can't get into TfL's website revealing who you are and where you live. Even John Mason admitted it was antiquated.

Have you ever had an argument with someone you know could be trouble? Would you want them knocking on your door one day or night when you're not at home - but your wife is? It could also be ideal for burglars; they can take note of your badge number while you're out working, knowing you were not at home so that they could "pop round" to see if anyone's in! They already know you aren't! It is a dangerous violation of our lives and because of this unnecessary new legislation, TfL cannot now guarantee your protection or the protection of your family. Boris needs to answer why such a website was up and running in the first place?

It also means that a programme was written to get it up and running. Why? What happens if there is a leak or a loss of a file containing all our names and addresses linked to the badge numbers now staring up to seven million people in the face. The only person allowed to see your badge number should be the passenger in the back of your cab.

Having done the Knowledge, what do we have to prove to anyone? Does the passenger show you an ID card before they get in to prove they're ok? No, nor would you want to go down that route. Look around you; 99 percent of people you meet are decent people, do we need all this continual harassment and security checks to prove our worthiness to be alive? *Divide and Rule*, the tried and tested formula to turn people's heads at others has a new partner - group together those that don't match. Anything to make you take your eye off the ball and not see the bigger picture - which is to make people happy to have more legislation that will slowly remove more of our civil liberties.

So how easy has this nonsense been to impose on the trade when drivers themselves have asked

for it? Wake up! In recent years politicians, Lords of the realm, journalists and police officers have been sent to prison and you want more legislation for cab drivers.

So back to the CRB checks. It was announced that the organisation carrying out the CRB checks thought it no longer necessary to include taxi and private hire drivers (see, they put us together again) in their checks. However, the article also stated that Boris lobbied Minister Lynne Featherstone to ensure that we continued to be caught in the net. Maybe he would like to explain why? Private hire, yes. When a person can turn up at our borders and show a piece of paper that says *I'm a good person and can drive*, that doesn't give them the right to masquerade as a taxi driver. We are different. We have been vetted and processed back to our birth and should be treated as such. Amongst other lobbyists to ask for our inclusion was the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. I understand that, but organisations must learn to distinguish between who may be and those who won't be threats, you cannot go through life thinking everyone is a threat - that diminishes all our lives. But the surprising admission was that the taxi trade also lobbied for it to be kept. Who on earth could that be I wondered, so I rang the LTDA to see if they could shed some light on it. Not being a member, I was reluctantly put through to Chairman John Thomas. I'm sure he has many friends, but his aggressive manner to me made it clear I wasn't one of them. I asked the question of which trade organisation would have wanted to keep the CRB check and the only words I got from him were that he didn't have to speak to me and that he only had to speak to his members. I asked again and received the same reply, to which I told him I thought he had a belligerent attitude. He just said he didn't have to speak to me, he represent his members. Just in case I hadn't understood that he didn't want to speak to me, the phone was put down. I now see in his latest statement that he speaks to people who don't give their name, that must be where I went wrong. I gave mine!

So what was the organisation representing you and I that lobbied for the CRB check to be kept, or did Boris add it for more effect because he was given a nod and a wink from someone in the trade that it was the feeling of the drivers. Hands up please. Please don't anyone reply that if you've got nothing to hide then you have nothing to fear. I'll be looking for a rope and a nearby tree! If those that carry out the CRB checks think it unnecessary to include the taxi trade and it has never been thought necessary before in our 400 year history, why the hell are we and what right does any trade organisation have to make decisions - if one did and without consulting or informing all drivers of their intentions?

I emailed Minister Lynne Featherstone to ask which trade organisation lobbied her without asking the trade and as yet have received no reply. If I get one I will let *Call Sign* know.

Michael Pollington (K17)

One of the less tasteful aspects of the recently introduced Green or Yellow Badge Identifiers has been that they seem to have become a target for those folk of a somewhat less than honest nature!

There have been reports both in the trade press in addition to Dial-a-Cab fleet messages flashed up on terminals with increasing regularity, of ID thefts from cabs displaying *Green Badge* identifiers. Strangely, no one seems to be going for the yellow ones!

Here in the *Call Sign* office, we can only speculate as to the reason for these thefts. After all, they are only made from card, so it's not like the actual cab licence plate. But one thing is for sure; it leaves a mess of broken glass after the event, the grief of getting the front or rear windshield replaced and of course the loss of time and money involved. That far outweighs the simple act of removing the IDs whenever the cab is left unattended - even for just a few

My green badge identifier AND THERE IT WAS ...GONE!



minutes - unless you're in a secure area.

True, it's easy to forget about them when other things are on your mind, so perhaps as

someone suggested to *Call Sign*, a 'post-it note sticker attached to the cab dash as a reminder should jog the memory and help assure the extended life cycle of an otherwise thin piece of card! You can always encapsulate each identifier in plastic for added protection from scratches and scrapes as they are inserted or removed from their outer sleeve on a regular basis!

That could help you as you explain to LTPH: "And there it was...gone!"

Dennis Latchett

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Calling DaC dads with single daughters!



Once again Dial-a-Cab has been asked to help turn our drivers into TV stars - but this time their daughters will become "stars" too!

A brand new TV show for **E4** is in the early stages of casting and **IWC Media** are looking for fun, outgoing and interesting characters to star in it. At present they are looking for fathers with single daughters (who must be over the age of 18).

This will be a fun and exciting new dating show where Dad helps his daughter to find love. The producers are looking for a range of characters to appear on the show and after seeing *Call Sign*, they believe that there must be some great DaC taxi drivers out there that would be perfect for the show!

To find out more, email to: takepart@IWCmedia.co.uk or call 020 7013 4325. Send them your name, age, email address, contact numbers and location.

If BARRIE SEGAL HAS HELPED YOU...

Many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers have been helped by our PCN expert **Barrie Segal**. Although he is DaC's expert and is really employed to assist only PCNs gained through DaC trips, many *Call Sign* readers have been helped after writing in with PCN problems and although he can't always be of assistance, he is always happy to try to help and has often given the advice that gets a PCN cancelled. As a result, drivers often ask if they can offer Barrie anything as a thank you.

The answer is always no, but if anyone wants to help Barrie try to raise money for his favourite charity, the **Nightingale Home**, there is a link at www.nightingale.org.uk/support-us/donate.php. If you would like to help Barrie raise funds for The Nightingale and decide to make a donation - no matter how small - please put the words *Parking Ticket Appeal* in the message box and tick the *Gift Aid Declaration* box beneath that. This increases the value of your donation as the charity can then claim a refund of tax at no cost to standard rate taxpayers.

On behalf of Barrie, thanks...

You may not need us now, but cut us out for when you do!

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In the August 2010 issue of *Call Sign*, Dial-a-Cab driver Terry Catherall (Y90) told how he cycled to Brighton to raise money for the *British Heart Foundation*. Well in his words, he is on the 'earhole' again when on 30 August he takes a slightly longer ride - this time cycling to Paris, while raising money for a charity that has a long tie-up to the taxi trade - The Royal British Legion. After WW2, the Legion helped many of those who had fought for their country but who then had no jobs to return to. That help involved financial support as well as assisting them in going onto the Knowledge.

Terry's red and black bike - nicknamed Poppy - was made especially for the event by Russell Coe of *Vandome Cycles*.

"It will be quite an adventure for me," Terry told *Call Sign*, "and a chance to pay respect to fallen heroes with a service of remembrance at the Calais war memorial and another at the war memorial in Beauvais. The ride finishes on day four at The Arc de Triomphe with a poignant wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier."

Terry has been in training since February in preparation for the event and if anyone in DaC-land would like to help him in his fund-raising enterprise, then even the smallest donation would help the Legion continue its good work.

Through Virgin Money Giving, you can sponsor Terry and his aim to reach £1000. Donations are

TERRY CYCLING TO PARIS FOR BRITISH LEGION



Terry has been training for almost 4 months. Can you help him raise funds for the legion?

quickly processed and passed onto the charity. Virgin Money Giving is a not-for-profit organisation and will claim gift aid on a charity's behalf where the donor is eligible for it.

"I would really appreciate any support with donations," said Terry as Poppy cycled away...

You can donate at:

www.virginmoneygiving.com/terrycatherall

Taxi drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd

www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk

About us...



Taxi drivers Legal Protection Ltd was formed in 2009 by former LCDC Chairman **Alan Fleming** and DaC driver **Dave Cohen**. We now operate in London and throughout the UK.

Taxi drivers Legal Protection is not a political organisation but provides vital legal representation for members. We offer cover for all Hackney Carriage, motoring offences and representation for revocations and suspensions of your cab driver's licence. They could arise from health issues, malicious, spurious or unfounded complaints. We retain a team of Legal Appointees who specialise in motoring and Hackney Carriage law.

Subscription Rate

Our subscriptions now start at just £8 a month, which are payable by Standing Order. Alternatively, subscriptions can be paid quarterly at £24 or a one off annual payment of £96. You can also submit one cheque for £32 and two post-dated cheques dated one month apart for the same amounts.

Joining Taxi drivers Legal Protection Ltd could not be simpler. Complete the application form on this page and send it to; TOPS, PO Box 439, Stanmore, HA7 9EY. Alternatively, take a look at our website, www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk where you will find a printable application form and further information regarding benefits.

If you have any questions, you can contact us via our electronic online Mailing Form, which can also be located on our website. You can also follow us on Twitter **#tdaoprotection**.

Dave Cohen (E94)

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First name..... Surname.....

Address.....

Post Code.....

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Signed..... Date.....

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

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD

Taxis v private hire

After all the years that Allen Togwell and I have remonstrated with drivers over the standard of their attire during working hours, it still seems that it has fallen on deaf ears. Surely now our drivers will have realised the amount of work lost to Addison Lee and other private hire companies who insist that their drivers present themselves in a manner to which the client expects for the money they are paying for a journey. I'm not saying all drivers dress in a way that you'd expect to see them whilst lounging around the house before having a wash or shave. I am, of course, not including our women drivers in that sentence!

It only takes a few minutes more to put on a clean shirt and trousers, as opposed to a stain ridden pair of track suit trousers and smelly trainers. That's not to mention T-shirts I have seen with a menu of the last eating establishment they visited down the front. Do these drivers not yet realise that when a client comes out of their office and views a clean shiny vehicle and smart driver wearing a clean shirt and tie, they will be pleased. On entering a vehicle that has been cleaned and smells accordingly, the first thing to go through the person's mind is that they will use that company again. They also remember that on most journeys a licensed taxi is more expensive due to the meter still clocking up a fare whilst standing in traffic. This being the case, the vehicle and driver should be of a better standard.

What taxi drivers often say is that private hire drivers do not know their way about. But with the aid of satellite navigation and quite often with directions offered, it eradicates the difference between a licensed taxi driver with the Knowledge and the private hire driver. If you have not seen private hire fleets expanding on the roads of London and more of our passengers getting into them, then you really do need to go to *Specsavers*!

If you fall into the category of one of the better dressed drivers on our fleet, then you should encourage the scruffs not to destroy your work. I know it's hard but you should try and find a way to get these drivers to smarten themselves up and then perhaps you will see a slowing down of our disappearing passengers.

As we approach summer and warmer weather (we hope), it is more cooling to wear a short sleeve cotton shirt than a tight clinging T-shirt or polo shirt. In many newspapers you will find lightweight, hard wearing summer trousers advertised, which are cheaper than track suit trousers. Wearing trainers in warm weather, which make your feet sweat, will cause you more problems as time progresses.

Maybe the other two radio circuits were on the right lines when they had two tiers of taxis - ones that were kept in an immaculate condition and ones that only got a wash when it rained! If we were to start this idea, I am sure clients would continually ask for the clean taxis which they were acquiring for the same fare. We'd then get scruffy drivers screaming that they pay the same subscriptions and are entitled to compete for all of the work, even though they are the ones that are losing you your clients - they are the greedy



ones. They want others to make the effort to draw in more clients, but do not realise that when the client gets in their taxi, it only increases the reason they want to transfer their account to a company that supplies a clean driver and vehicle every time.

After spending over 30 years as the Complaints / Compliance officer, I must have heard every reason for clients to complain about the service we give them. If we do not address this situation now and continue to sweep it under the carpet, in a few years you will have allowed PH to walk all over you while you will be going about like chickens in the yard searching for scraps.

Over all of the years I have been on the DaC Board, I have never been one to hold back on my comments if I deem them justified. During this time I have been ridiculed over some of them, but with the passing of time I have been proved right in making them. I hope that the majority of intelligent drivers on the circuit can now see exactly what I am saying and start addressing the problem before it is too late.

Sick in the UK?

Moving to a different subject; after reading past issues of *Call Sign* I must congratulate the drivers who have pushed themselves to the limit to raise money for the different well-deserving charities. It is a shame that the Government sees fit to send so much money abroad when there is so much that the money could do to prolong the lives of many suffering people in the UK. I can only think that the BBC (Blair, Brown and Cameron) are to blame for their spineless way of addressing problems. They never seemed to want to upset anybody in case they don't vote for them again. So now we give money to countries that want to fight us (Argentina) and because of our lack of keeping its citizens as law-abiding people, we encourage immigrant criminals from far-flung countries.

These criminals include murderers, rapists, paedophiles, fraudsters, pickpockets and any other general wasters. They come through our borders, which are quite often unmanned, knowing full well that if they get caught committing a crime there is only a slim chance that they may be incarcerated. With the amount of lawlessness in this country now, I cannot see the reason for any persons with savings staying in the UK. Even

with substantial amounts of money, if you become ill and are hospitalised, you could die because of lack of the correct care and attention - which is criminal. The bureaucrats in charge of these hospitals just have to say they are sorry and will investigate and they never seem to face criminal charges. These people should be charged with corporate manslaughter, but we know that will never happen because we also know that governments run scared of PC correctness, health and safety regulations and any other member of the bobble hatted, bearded, woolly socked brigade.

We are now told that police forces in Britain want to hand over more work to private industries, this will once again allow for more corruption as we have seen over the past years within councils and government. The people who commit these fraudulent claims or go in for corruption, very rarely get taken to task as we have seen with people like Baroness Uddin who was caught fraudulently abusing her Parliamentary second home allowance to the tune of £125,000, but never appeared in court. If those in charge of the country are never made to pay for their crimes, why should normal working people bother? This is when you find our society falling apart with more and more people trying to cheat the system, ie benefit fraudsters.

As I rapidly approach the twilight years of my life, I feel sorry for my children and grandchildren for the country and life I am leaving them as a legacy. It seems that we do not have one politician or prospective politician who has the courage to stand up and bring in radical changes to bring this country back to a law-abiding society.

Olympics heliport?

On yet another different subject; for the money that this country is going to lose due to the Olympics mainly due to road closures during the Olympics and Paralympics, why did they not build a heliport in the Olympic site? Then they could house officials outside of London near another heliport and fly them in every morning and out in the evening with no congestion being caused to Londoners going about their daily duties. The athletes are being housed within the Olympic site, so the only reason I can see that the officials are being put up in the centre of London is so they can go on one big freebie drink-up with their pals at our expense.

By keeping the roads free of congestion, if God forbid a terrorist did cause a bomb explosion, then the emergency services would be able to move between the site and hospitals much more easily. But then maybe I am silly just looking for a simple solution; also I am sure Lord Sebastian Coe will feel like he is royalty going along empty lanes in the heavily burdened roads of London. I wonder if he will wave like royalty as he speeds down the lanes to his luxury free seat to view the Olympics.

I hope that during the weeks of these Olympics you can still earn a living to support your family, without them falling into hardship.

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board member



Five trips and you get to meet Mari

Call Sign has been contacted by the Sunset Strip club at 30 Dean Street where they are offering a special deal for Dial a Cab taxi drivers. Older drivers will remember the original club from St Anne's Court in the late 1950s, but

Not a Flashback column because for whatever reason - although no prizes for guessing - it was never published! Nevertheless, we know our readers like the occasional smile, so we've dug out for 2012 readers the text and photo that those in October 1993 never got to see! And yes, we feel certain that the offer no longer applies and that the club is ultra-respectable now...

DaC and the strip club!

ever since the mid-1960s the club has re-launched in a far more respectable mode - although of course the girls still end up fully naked after performing their high class striptease.

As many of you know, the club are happy to reward drivers who take their passengers to Sunset Strip, but now they have extended that

offer! Drivers taking clients to the club will be given a card that will be stamped each time they drop someone off.

Then, when you have five stamps, you will be given free access to the club on any weekday evening when not only will you be able to watch the entertainment, but Mari will do her best to make you a part of it!

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

CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE



I was wondering what to do with all the vinyl records that I found up in the attic recently, when I suddenly received an invitation to attend a gig where former *Sex Pistol* **John Lydon** was to launch 2012's **Record Store Day** with a secret basement gig in Richmond

Independent record shops across London will be selling exclusive vinyl releases by many artists going back over 40 years. London stores taking part include *Rough Trade East* in Brick Lane - a place where I saw **Wilko Johnson** play a gig last summer.

The launch party saw Lydon's **Public Image Limited** band play an eight-song set including *This is not a love song*, *Rise* and the new single *One drop*. Despite claiming to have the flu, Lydon managed to amaze the 250 or so gathered - including music media hacks - with his almost operatic voice.

After the set, Lydon spoke about his love of vinyl and the need to prevent internet piracy and support struggling artists through *Record Store Day*.

He told **Call Sign** in the green room afterwards: "It was a good job many of the record labels folded, they were nothing but corrupt and no good for up and coming bands."

He added: "It's a very difficult position to be in now because if you have an original idea, someone on the internet will steal it off you in a second. Somebody has to go to the effort of putting it all together. If you want free pies from the pie and mash shop round the corner, guess what? The standard's gonna drop! And that's what's happening with music."

I've decided to keep my vinyl - for a little longer anyway!

A bientot...

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)

Saint Genies de Fontedit, Languedoc, France

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FREE QUOTATIONS

Spare DaC taxis

Drivers often ask about taxi garages where Dial-a-Cab taxis are available for use while your cab is off the road, so if you need a DaC-fitted terminal try phoning one of the following garages for availability...

For any non-fault accidents try either:

Chief Taxis: -----0800 055 6221

Cab Aid: -----0800 028 3253

Overhauls or accident repairs:

Cricklewood Carriers: ----- 0208 452 5461

KPM: ----- 0207 375 1179

Justcabs (formerly L&P):-- 0207 739 0210

Howard Kott of Justcabs is also happy to rent out a DaC taxi if not being used as a loan cab

We at *Call Sign* haven't quite worked out the magic bond yet, but there seems to be a connection between centenarians and the *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children*. Millie, the mother of LTFUC committee member and DaC driver Gerry Dunn MBE (S84), recently celebrated her 100th birthday and now we've heard of another link.

Former LTFUC Chairman, current Treasurer and Dial-a-Cab driver since 1995, David Lessman (D19), told this magazine about his sister, Naomi's, amazing mother-in-law.

Diana Gould will be 100 on May 23 and like Millie Dunn, receive that very special birthday card from The Queen. But before Her Maj nips out to catch the postman, she may even spot Diana as she heads towards the Games stadium in Stratford - carrying the Olympic torch! Yes, Diana has been nominated by LloydsTSB to be one of - and not surprisingly the oldest - of 8000 Olympic Torch Bearers on the nationwide relay of the torch around the country as it heads south on its final stretch towards the Olympic flame lighting ceremony. On July 25, somewhere between Harrow and Haringey and for 300 meters, Diana will carry the flame that left Beijing in 2008. It shouldn't be too much of a problem for Diana as she takes 'senior folk' for keep-fit sessions! However, just to be on the safe side, she's using the services of a personal trainer to strengthen her arms so she doesn't drop the flame!

"I don't want to get a burn mark my new track suit," the amazing Diana told us!

Back to David who told *Call Sign*: "The whole family will be cheering Diana on. This is such a great honour that there is no way we could possibly miss it!"

David then went on to tell us about Diana's late



Diana to carry the Olympic torch and complete a 60-year old amazing coincidence..

AT THE AGE OF 100!



Amazing coincidence! Ted was with York Way Radiocabs in 1952 (above) and 60 years later wife Diana (inset) will carry the Olympic torch!

husband Edward (Ted) Gould. He had been a licensed London taxi driver after the war and in the early 1950s was a member of the first real radio circuit, being Able 54 with York Way Radio Cabs, which was run from York Way by Lou Levy. Ted had been driving a passenger past Buckingham Palace on 6 February 1952 and noticed that the flag atop the building was flying at half-mast. He sent a radio message to York Way that something must have happened at Buck House and did they know what it was? But no one did as the news hadn't yet been released.

Then within minutes, a notice went up on the gates to say that His Majesty, King George VI, had died peacefully in his sleep at Sandringham House.

The world now knows that this is Queen

Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee year after 60 years on the throne, but on that date in 1952 the then Princess Elizabeth was at the Royal hunting lodge in Kenya when news came through of her father's death. She returned as Queen at the age of 25.

The newspapers of the day were filled with stories of the King's death, but the first report that the King had died came from Ted Gould, Able 54 on York way Radio Cabs! And on her 60th anniversary, Ted's wife is to carry the Olympic torch to a ceremony where no less but The Queen will be the guest of honour!

So it is only fitting that a taxi magazine - *Call Sign* - and its online version should reveal to the world the amazing connection between Ted and Diana Gould, even though the events are 60 years apart!

Black Cab Collection

The *Black Cab Collection* is the only range of promotional merchandise sold by **The London Taxi Company** and is available to anyone, anywhere in the world. To see their collection of gifts, which include model taxis to keyrings, baseball caps to travel mugs and umbrellas to various items of clothing, just go to www.blackcabgifts.co.uk.



Black Cab Collection is available around the world

Each item is printed or embroidered with a unique *Black Cab Collection* logo which depicts the front of the iconic Black Cab, the only London Taxi recognised globally. You can buy part of the Black Cab Collection for as little as £1.49 and ordering couldn't be simpler, so check out their website today. For *Call Sign Online* readers who would like to offer their customers or visitors the *Black Cab Collection* range, then just contact **Maria Holmes** on +44 24 7657 2246 and she will be happy to discuss a business account with you.

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COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



Hello ladies & gents,

With competition in the market place as fierce as at any time I can remember, it shouldn't need me to remind you that high levels of customer care and levels of service should be second to none. Neither is there a need to tell me how tough conditions are across the board, I do know and understand that. But as I have mentioned so many times previously, that's why it is so important to go that extra mile when clients are in the back of your taxi.

Raising your voice to a passenger can easily be misunderstood and may come across as rudeness or even aggressiveness. If a passenger

asks you to travel a certain way, please try your best to follow their instructions. If you choose a route that may not be known to the client, it is well worth explaining why at the start of the journey. Traffic conditions and road works are diabolical and avoiding any type of congestion will not only help to speed the journey up, but can also have a positive impact on the final fare. But please make the clients aware.

As you know, the TfL fare chart clearly states: *The driver can charge the hirer a soiling charge of up to £40 for soiling that requires the taxi to be taken out of service for cleaning.* This sometimes causes an issue with account clients, especially if there is no mention of the problem during or at the end of the journey. It is very important to notify the Call Centre of these types of issues so that they can make a note on the trip logger. It is a lot easier to deal successfully with the client or account if we have the relevant information - taking a photo on your mobile and issuing a receipt makes it even easier - I am sure you know where I am coming from.

Procedure changes

Over the past few weeks, I am sure you have seen the terminal messages from Keith Cain detailing a number of procedure changes that

are being implemented to help you, and to aid coverage throughout the day. The number of trip rejects from a primary zone has now been reduced from five (5) to three (3), which the BoM hope will speed coverage up and cut down on the number of late arrivals and delays that we are still experiencing.

We have also decided to unmask as many *As Directed* accounts as possible, so you will now see the actual destinations on the trip offer - the main two account addresses being London Wall and Canary Wharf. But the onus will still be on you, the member, to cover all work that is generated from these accounts. As I stated earlier, it is imperative we maintain the highest levels of service.

However all *airports, locals, genuine ADs and wait and return* trips will be offered in the normal manner just as they have been for many years ie *As Directed*.

The above mentioned procedure changes will be closely monitored for a trial period, so please help us to help you.

Drive safely and be very lucky...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

PANCAKES AND CALL SIGN AT THE GUILDHALL...

But who is the mysterious le Masque Bleu???



L-R: Sandra Cox, Clive Kilmartin, a silly man trying to humiliate Call Sign and Master Eddie Crossley! Ok we're joking about the silly bit!

On a lovely sunny day, the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** were once again entered into the pancake race at the Guildhall. Each team consisted of a Master, Freeman, Liveryman and a Lady from the Company. This year saw WCHCD Master **Eddie Crossley** along with Liverymen **Clive Kilmartin** and female representative **Sandra Cox** make up the race team, whilst the Freeman whose task it was to run in the novelty race was no less than **Call Sign's homme de la France, Bob Woodford (ex-P49) - aka Le Masque Bleu!**

The rules meant that a time penalty would be imposed on any team member who had not stopped and tossed their pancakes at the given point, with a further penalty being imposed on anyone not ending the race wearing their chef's hat - having begun the race wearing a Livery gown, apron, hat and gloves. And no, the WCHCD didn't win the coveted engraved frying pan but were shown to be true tossers in the correct sense of the vernacular, helping to raise funds for the Mayor's chosen charity.

In the Novelty race, gowns were not worn but the novelty outfit had to be in keeping with the Mayor's chosen charity for the year and entrants were all judged for their costumes before their race began.

Races began at noon with a loud bang from the *Gunmakers Company*, with the *Clockmakers* being responsible for timing, *Glovers* for the white gloves, *Fruiterers* for providing lemons, *Cutlers* for the cutlery aka plastic forks and of course the *Poulterers Company* for the eggs.

The *Cooks* and *Butlers* Companies shared the catering for the charity, which this year was St

Barts Hospital and the Trauma Unit at The Royal London Hospital.

A very worthwhile day - although which of the two charities Bob Woodford and his blue mask represented, we will never know unless he chooses to impart the info in his next column. For our part, we've never seen him look so good!!!

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With all the media hype over the recent iPad HD release, you may have missed the news about a less conspicuous but far more exciting gadget. During the first week of March, the Raspberry Pi foundation - a charity based in the University of Cambridge - announced that the Raspberry Pi was being manufactured and that pre-orders were available from two UK electronics suppliers (RS Components and Farnell UK).

If you haven't already read about the Raspberry Pi, you might think I'm talking gibberish about a dessert! Alas, as tasty as raspberry pie is, the Raspberry Pi is anything but a dessert. The Raspberry Pi is in fact a credit card sized computer board; a fully-functional computer that fits in your pocket. Whilst this may not sound ground-breaking (after all, anyone with a smartphone already has a computer in their pocket), it really is amazing, for two major reasons:

1. It will cost you about £20.
2. You can connect a keyboard, mouse and monitor or TV to it and connect it to the Internet via Wi-Fi or LAN and run a complete operating system straight off an SD card (the same kind of card your digital camera uses for storing photos).

Now don't misunderstand me, this little gadget is not designed to replace your desktop/laptop/tablet computer. Nor is it designed as a user-friendly consumer item which just works out of the box. The Raspberry Pi has been developed for one main reason: to encourage children (and adults too, if they're interested!) to delve into the exciting world of computer programming.

The Raspberry Pi community is huge and is all about helping people to learn how to go from being a computer *user* to becoming a computer *programmer*. This is all in line with the government's recent drive to replace ICT (teaching children how to word process) with Computer Science (teaching children how to design programs and understand how computers actually work rather than being totally at a loss when it "crashes").

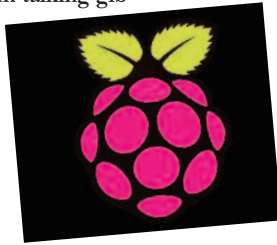
So no, it won't run Windows. It will run Raspberry Pi Fedora Remix (amongst other similar Linux distributions), a version of the popular Fedora Linux operating system that is designed for the Raspberry Pi. There are several pre-configured disk images specifically designed for the Raspberry Pi on their website available for free download, including Arch Linux ARM (if you want the smallest, cleanest operating system).

So what can you or your children do with this thing, if you bought it? Here are a few possibilities:

1. Learn to program. Python is a mature programming language that is easy to learn but powerful enough to build applications to suit hobbyists right up to enterprises, and this language is installed by default within Linux.
2. Learn how computers actually work, what makes them tick and what causes them to "crash". For too long, computers have been

Has DaC's Jon Winterburn played one game too many? Maybe, because this is...

Jon and some Raspberry Pi...



seen as wonderful devices which, when they go wrong, become a mystery box which only masters of the dark arts can fix. This is simply not true! Anyone can program a computer, and if you give it a chance, you will find that it's not as difficult as your local PC repair store would have you believe to fix your computer and keep it in good health.

3. Connect it to your TV and stream HD video (and just about any content) through your TV.

4. Install a Window manager (there are many Linux variants which do the same thing as Microsoft Windows) and run applications for word processing, spreadsheets and play games - just like a regular computer.

5. Build robots. This might sound far-fetched, but it's true! Once you master the programming language, the Raspberry Pi can become the "brain" of any robotic device you wish to create. People in the community are already doing this!

Believe it or not, the Raspberry Pi is

hugely popular and this is only going to increase. Pre-orders were selling on the launch day at 700 units per second! There is a massive waiting list to get one and as of writing this, I'm still waiting for mine. All the software for it is Linux-based which means it's free. All the information you could ever need on the device and how to program for it is readily (and freely) available on the Internet.

More information, including tech specs and where to buy is available at: www.raspberrypi.org or on Twitter at @Raspberrypi

Jon Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster
Master of Ceremonies

Tele: 01279 465 938
Mobile: 07774 860 374
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Former Dial-a-Cab driver Andy Cannell (ex-S61) put – or should that be threw – the cat among the pigeons recently when writing what he termed as an open letter to the trade in *Taxi Globe*. Courtesy of Editor Sandie Goodwin, we reproduce it here. Andy wrote:

"Hooray at last – a system for customers to book taxis without getting charged over the odds. The recent mobile phone APPs that have been introduced to our trade are innovative, refreshing and easy to use. For too many years our leading radio circuits have been jogging along servicing the big fish corporate client, as the fewer and fewer firms jump from one circuit to another depending on who will trim their cost the most. Meanwhile the cash customer or personal user that wants a taxi to collect them from their door is consigned to the scrap heap. All the time this is going on, Addison Lee etc have been casting into our pond and not only clearing up all the tiddlers but hooking some very juicy accounts, the media industry for example. Their APP is slick and the marketing has been excellent (just ask some of your punters). But maybe their time is up because I and many other cab drivers realise if we have no run-ins, slash the administration charges and absorb the credit card fee instead of asking 10-12% above the meter then the customer will come back. It's a tough world out there and we can't rely on the old saying that our product is the best – it's not enough anymore!"

I have made my choice of APP and am watching it grow by up to 30% week on week. I believe it will shape the future of ordering taxis in London. So I urge all drivers to make your choice and join one of the growing taxi APPs on the market and let's make a difference. When these APPs become successful, you will find less people standing on the street waiting to hail a cab.

The APPs debate...

Should we just become minicabs?



Is this the way APPs are taking us?

As for the radio circuits, this modem approach has got to be embraced or it is only a matter of time before your excellent sales teams will be fishing for business only to find everyone swimming in the other direction to find better, more attractive bait!"

I remember Andy as a nice guy who contributed several interesting and always constructive letters to **Call Sign**. He is, of course, free to say what he likes and Andy was never afraid of being controversial in his ideas, but his views in the "open letter" do concern me.

In 2002, Andy wrote in *Mailshot* as part of a much longer letter: "I believe that DaC should be operating a complete transport system to offer our clients: Knowledge Boys on bikes, employed drivers in OUR vans, trucks and dare I say it, Limos..."

That was a legitimate suggestion and who

knows, perhaps we'd have been a totally different company had we gone in that direction. But it's his open letter that takes Andy's

ideas to a whole new level. He tells of no run-ins and swallowing credit card charges and adds that after the Apps take over there will be fewer people waiting on the streets. In other words there will be no difference between us and the minicab fraternity.

So that begs the question: Why bother doing the Knowledge if you are doing the same as a minicab. And that would signal the beginning of the end of the world famous London taxi driver. And THAT would be nothing short of a national disaster.

As I said earlier, Andy is entitled to his view, all I can say is that he should think very carefully what he wishes for because if it comes about, it's drivers such as Andy who will cop out!

Alan Fisher

NVQ for DaC drivers?

Throughout 2012, **Knowledge Point School** – the training arm of **Taxi Trade Promotions** – will be delivering courses in 'Level 2 NVQ in Road Passenger Vehicle Driving'.

The NVQ is a nationally recognised, government-funded qualification provided through the City of London, thus enabling KPS to offer the course to drivers free of charge. The NVQs are delivered by training staff that are all vocationally competent working taxi drivers qualified to teach in the **Life-long Learning Sector (PTLLS Grade 3/4)**. The course requires you to attend Knowledge Point School and is delivered via interactive group sessions and workshops. You will be required to dedicate approximately 16 hours to the workshops over a period of several weeks with additional self-study to be completed in your own time.

Topics covered by the NVQ Qualification include:

- * Drive a taxi in a professional manner
- * Ensure health & safety of the taxi driver and passengers
- * Provide professional customer service in the taxi industry
- * Provide a safe and legal vehicle for transporting passengers
- * Provide a taxi service for customers who require assistance
- * Transport children and young persons by taxi
- * Plan routes in the taxi industry

Since they started delivering NVQ courses in 2009, KPS have had over 200 people going on to achieve their Level 2 NVQ Certification. If you should be interested in taking part in these upcoming courses, email peter@taxitradepromotions.co.uk for further details.

DaC's Training Manager, **Daren Morley**, told **Call Sign**:

"In an ever increasingly competitive market, anything that provides us with an edge against other taxi/private hire companies has got to be a positive way forward. As some may be aware, we established NVQs in our Contact Centre over five years ago and recently our NVQ training schedule has spread to IT and Account Managers. NVQ's are a great way of benchmarking performance against the industry standards. The qualification both enables staff to be assessed on their existing skills and hone those skills farther. It also provides **Dial-a-Cab** with performance standards and a clear structure to support on-going process improvements within the Contact Centre and the rest of the business. It would be fantastic to have a number of drivers achieve the qualification."

Mad Hatters party video

Sunday 15 January 2012, the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** held their 40th **Mad Hatter's Tea Party** in the Great Room of the **JW Marriott Hotel Grosvenor House** hotel in Park Lane where the Fund were hosts to 650 special needs and underprivileged children.

The party was nothing less than brilliant with four hours of non-stop entertainment. The chances are that you have never seen this super event, but now, thanks to a brilliant video by **Maurice Gilliam**, the LTFUC have put a 90 minute version on their website at www.ltfuc.org.uk.

If you would like to watch a brilliant day unfold while seeing performances from stars such as The Cheeky Girls, Stravros Flatley in a sensational Blues Brothers duo with Elvis (Schmelvis), the brilliant Diversity and much more, then on an afternoon when you're struggling to find anything to watch on TV that doesn't involve tat in your attic or moving to Australia, just click on www.ltfuc.org.uk, go to videos and click on the Grosvenor House tag. This is a real feel-good 90 minutes...

DaC Board member Allan Evans recently celebrated his 60th birthday when he and wife Gill hosted a magnificent party for 110 friends and relatives at the Kelvedon Suite of the Birchwood Park Golf Centre.

This gave Allan the opportunity to cash in the prize he won in last year's **Call Sign** competition: *Win a toastmaster for your function!* The toastmaster concerned was Dial-a-Cab driver Keith Reading (W76), whose other job involves donning the red tunic. And of the small number of entrants – after all, the prize was of little use if you had no function planned – Allan's name was first out the hat!

At the time of winning, Allan had said that although his party date and venue was set, he couldn't imagine that he would need a toastmaster, after all, weren't they really just for show? After the party had ended, Allan had changed his mind.

"Keith was a brilliant help doing the things that Gill or I would have had to do," Allan said, "this way we had nothing to worry about, knowing that everything was under control from organising toasts, to getting everyone to sit down for dinner at the same time. They may

As he turns 60...

ALLAN EVANS COLLECTS HIS PRIZE!



Allan with toastmaster Keith

having a toastmaster is a real boon when you have a sizeable bash. It turned out to be a great prize and both Gill and I would like to thank Keith for doing such a good job in such a calm fashion. The only thing he couldn't do was to make me 50 again!"

Keith Reading advertises in every issue of Call Sign and if you need a toastmaster, he is well worth a phone

sound like little things, but if it means you can just concentrate on enjoying the night, then *call...*

TAXI-SPECIFIC OIL!

Morris Lubricants launch first taxi-specific oil to trade

Morris Lubricants, one of the Europe's largest privately-owned lubricants companies, has joined forces with the **London Taxi Company** to develop a fully synthetic diesel oil formulated to ensure full compatibility with *Diesel Particulate Filters* (DPFs).

Commenting on the venture to **Call Sign**, LTC sales director **Rob Laidler** told us:

"The utilisation of the right oils and parts is critical to ensuring the longevity and optimum performance of our vehicles, so we were keen to ensure we sought expert technical guidance when it came to developing our own oil. We're pleased to be able to offer the trade a DPF specific oil to support the TX4 (Euro 5) vehicle at a fantastic price."

Adrian Hill, Morris Lubricants' product and marketing manager added:

"We're delighted to be working with the London Taxi Company on this product. Our joint expertise has allowed us to create an oil that protects the advanced technology of the latest Euro 5 VM Motori Engine fitted in the latest TX4 model, as well as being robust enough to support the vehicle's gruelling duty cycle."

The dual-branded lubricant, **Ultra 10W/40**, is formulated to ensure maximum DPF efficiency and life time. It is available from all London Taxi Company retail outlets and approved service dealers at a recommended retail price of just £5.95 per litre.

Morris Lubricants is a UK family business established 143 years ago in Shrewsbury. It serves the home market as well as exporting to more than 65 countries worldwide. Today the company is run by descendants of the founder, **James Kent Morris** and headed up by Managing Director, **Andrew Goddard**, a fifth generation family member.

Morris is a company with a sense of history and tradition, manufacturing high performance quality products, whilst at the same time providing uncompromising customer service. The company actively pursues technical excellence through innovation, close liaison with original equipment manufacturers and individual customer needs.

To ensure that products are consistent in quality and performance, a state of the art laboratory forms the quality control heart of the operation. Extensive physical and chemical testing ensures that every batch manufactured complies, without exception, with strict production tolerances and ultimately to international specifications.

HELP FOR KNOWLEDGE BOYS!



Call Sign recently met up with the Commercial Director of the OKP group, who are instrumental in the launch of a new magazine for those on the Knowledge. **Colin Snoop** was given a tour of **Dial-a-Cab House** by Compliance Officer **Allan Evans**.

Whilst here, Colin showed both Allan and **Alan Fisher** copies of the new magazine **CallOver**. Unlike previous attempts at magazines aimed at student taxi drivers, this one wasn't just a copy of the usual taxi papers but was genuinely aimed at Knowledge students, giving runs and points etc plus articles from those currently undertaking the KoL.

We asked Colin if Editor **Frankie Peel** or Sub Editor **Kat Tucker** would mind putting DaC House onto the list of places where the monthly mag is left. If you have a son, daughter or even a neighbour who is doing the KoL then keep a look out for CallOver in Driver Reception and pass a copy along to them. Believe **Call Sign** when we say it will be a very welcome addition to all the stuff Knowledge students accumulate.

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online



LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

TV switchover...

So this month is the TV digital switchover. But I wonder who the switchover is really aimed at and whether it's just a waste of money while putting a strain on our landfill sites?

Firstly, there can't be many households with children under the age of 25 that do not have access to one of the broadband, Sky or Virgin cable packages; the same could be said for the next generation of couples or singles who in their first homes will probably have total access. So they won't be required to do anything.

Also there is the joint BBC and ITV *Freesat* project that has given many households HD digital TV for the single price of a box and direct plug-in to a satellite dish. But there is probably one generation that still have the old CRT type TVs (big fat ones) and not the sleek flat screen HD types - they being the over 60s.

With the government once more searching to prise money out of their disposable income, we know that our parents won't want a little add-on box, but a new modern telly "just like Rene next door or that Auntie Sylvie's got!" So it's lucky that the price of TVs have gone down. But it does put a strain on our landfills as it's been a long time since charity shops took in

the old types of telly, so off to the dumps they go!

Can it really be a true switchover with many cars still to receive digital audio channels or is this the beginning of the crunching of cars for another reason... and more landfill?

Englebert for Europe

So *Englebert Humperdinck* is the choice for the next raid on the prize of the *Eurovision Song Contest*.

Well I like Englebert, though really he is a decade before my time. He is a total true-life 5star Las Vegas act, a great singer and entertainer. With his worldwide fame and superstar status he should do well and can hopefully bring back the prize, as for too long we've fared appallingly in the marks and ratings. For one night each year our name has become *United Kingdom nil point!*

But I suspect that the real winners will be the BBC who will hope to go better than last year, when the boy/men band *Blue*, finished outside the top ten but generated enough interest to help the BBC record viewing figures peaking at over 13million, the highest for over a decade. It was last matched by *Scooby* (remember them, last seen as a couple on *Coach Trip*) who in 2007 peaked at 10.9 million when finishing 22nd.

Englebert, with his massive fan club reputed to be one of the largest in the world - has some impressive stats; he has sold over 130 million records, including 23 platinum and 64 gold releases in addition to being a *Golden Globe Entertainer of the Year*.

The BBC can expect bumper sales and viewing figures during the run-up with its promotional work and record releases. Englebert will also hopefully re-release his classics in modern digital sound and further boost his career. That is usually reserved for a star after their death - never mind *The Last Waltz!*

The competition has for many years been accused of biased voting where for political and other reasons, countries favour each other and the UK, rightly or wrongly, have felt the brunt of it. We have been accused of not sending our star acts or just being voted against because some just don't like us. Whilst there may be truth in some of that, it seems strange that we have not had a United Kingdom presenter on the show for many years, because technically *Sir Terry Wogan* and *Graham Norton* are from Ireland. But loving their humour and wit, which certainly boosts the entertainment value, surely they can't be also blamed for our results???

Tom Quigley (Y33)

My Karate Kid Champ

"Yes, I'm immensely proud," **Stuart Reason (B26)** told *Call Sign* referring to his 13 year old son Danny's successes in the martial art sport of Karate. "He started at around 5 years old and took to it immediately. Since then he has been practising and achieved junior grade Black Belt 1st Dan."

Danny recently won yet another prestigious award, the *Rochford District Council* sponsored *Young Sports Personality of the Year*. He was presented with a glass trophy, a large shield with his name engraved, a framed certificate and a cheque for £100 towards his training expenses. The presentation was made by *Councillor Simon Smith*, Chairman of Rochford District Council in recognition of Danny's achievements in Karate.

"I hold a Karate Black Belt grade, though obviously Adult," Stuart added. "I also teach and run a karate club in Dagenham - Elite - which follows the Tangsoo do Korean discipline. I've been running it since 2003 and we've built up quite a strong membership. Then at the end of May, I will be taking a group to Hagen near Dortmund in Germany for the European Championships. It's a week-end event with many European nationals taking part. I hope to come back with at least some medals - hopefully gold - although with 15 or 20 countries participating, the challenges will be tough!"

If any *Dial-a-Cab* driver out there would like more information about the club or if they would like to offer some sponsorship for the trip to Germany - even if it's only to cover the cost of the fuel - Stuart would be very grateful. Just contact him at stureason@hotmail.co.uk. Use the same address for further info on Stuart's Elite Karate Club.

Good luck in Germany, Stuart...

Jamie Corum

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Stuart on his way to Europe and pic above with son Danny

Hungry? Nellie's waiting!

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Great pastas, chicken, steaks, fish and roasts!

Nellie's Restaurant
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Show your badge and it's 20% off!

Open 9.30 am to 12 pm
Free parking from 6.30 pm

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

Kupkake's Korner



Rickshaw Rumpus!

Well I almost crushed a bandit
on a Rickshaw in Soho.
To be honest, I couldn't stand it,
he was peddling just so slow.

He refused to let me pass him,
there were cars parked either side.
He ignored the hooters blasting
as he continued with his ride!

His passengers were enjoying
the frustration we endured,
and the scum they were employing
of course was not insured.

Up Wardour Street he sauntered,
that's when I overtook,
he pulled sharp right, I braked hard,
he snarled a spiteful look.

The police, it seems, lack power
to stop this evil plague,
I'd send them to the Tower,
if I could have my way!

When questioned on the issue
We get the curt reply:
"There's nothing we cops can do
in fact our hands are tied..."

"We have no rules or regulations
for these stage coach sons of whores,
we've asked for registration...
But we've yet to draught new laws!"

We'll have tourists from all over
this year 'cos of the Games.
In town they'll soon discover
these riders without brains!

So why the hesitation?
Why such long delay?
Start some legislation...
There are more of them each day!

Kopyright Kupkake 2012

100 YEAR YOUNG MILLIE SAYS THANKS!



Millie with her DaC bouquet and her Birthday card from the Queen

Millie Dunn is the mother of Dial-a-Cab driver Gerry Dunn MBE (S84) and if you read the *January Call Sign*, you will know that she reached the milestone age of 100 on January 27.

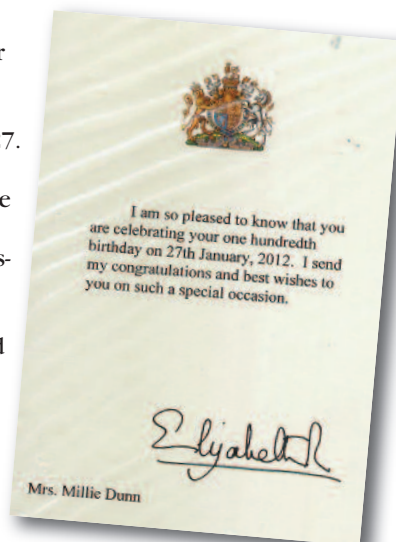
Millie will always be intrinsically involved with the London taxi business, not just because Gerry is a DaC driver and Committee member of the LTFUC, but because in 1952 her late husband Lou together with several other drivers formed the Radio Owner Drivers Association. This was the circuit that Bonnie Martyn joined and left soon after in order to form the Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service -later to become Dial-a-Cab.

In May 2003, Lou and Millie were guests at DaC's fiftieth anniversary celebrations. Lou was 93 and told *Call Sign* at the time that they'd had such a wonderful time. Just three weeks later, Lou passed away with Gerry proclaiming that there should be no mourning but a celebration of his life. Millie was still a young 91 and those who thought she would not have been able to cope were so very wrong!

Now she is 100 and this circuit was in good company when it sent her a bouquet to help Millie celebrate this special event, because she also received a birthday greeting from Her Majesty the Queen! This has been a very special celebration for a very special lady with Millie's family coming from around the world - including Australia and Canada - to help her celebrate.

Gerry told *Call Sign*:

"On behalf of my mother, I really would like to thank DaC so much for the beautiful bouquet of flowers that they sent to Mum on her 100th birthday. She was thrilled to receive them and asked me to thank everyone via *Call Sign*. As HM probably reads it too, thanks for the card your majesty!"
And to Millie, we all look forward to your 101st...



Bill Tyzack (C06) is the longest serving driver on Dial-a-Cab having joined the circuit in September 1962 – a year that also plays a significant part in this story. Bill takes up the story:

"I think this circuit is so lucky to have such an excellent magazine as *Call Sign* delivered to drivers free every month. Yes, it supports the circuit, but it also supports drivers and I've read so many stories over the years where they get the opportunity to explain their problems and should that problem involve DaC, it still seems to go in – unlike other magazines where the host's integrity is paramount and no one must dare criticise it. In *Call Sign*, even the Chairman will answer a driver's letter! I have not seen that anywhere else. But, however good our magazine is, it isn't perfect and it made an error in the February issue!

It was in early 1962 when I heard of a new upmarket café opening in Park Lane that was offering taxi drivers free tea and cake when passing, just to help spread the word. The café was part of the Grosvenor House Hotel – nowdays rebranded as the JW Marriot Grosvenor House – and the place where the LTFUC hold their yearly Children's Mad Hatters party. Back in 1962, I was the Secretary of the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children and as I was in the area, I popped along to the café for my free tea.

Whilst in there, a suited and booted gentleman who was obviously representing the hotel went round and began chatting to drivers. When he reached me, he asked the usual questions such as was it busy out etc so I took the opportunity of mentioning the Fund, which

Bill Tyzack says *Call Sign* is an excellent magazine...

BUT IT ISN'T PERFECT!



Bill showing that being an Hon prez isn't just hard work!

even back then was already over 40 years old. I gave him a brief résumé of our history. It was something I had repeated so many times to so many people over the years. I told him about taxi driver and former Norwood orphanage boy Mick Cohen, who in 1928 fulfilled his ambition of one day returning to the Norwood home to take some of the children on an outing in his cab. Mick's idea was to find 2 or 3 other cabbies to join him and take a few kids on an outing to the zoo. He had mentioned the idea to a few other drivers and 12 turned up to

take fifty children on the outing! This was the same year that UK women had their voting age reduced from 30 to 21, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, Herbert Hoover was elected US President and the LTFUC itself was founded at the Leicester Square taxi shelter. Three years later, the Fund made their first Southend outing and 34 years on down the line I was in the Grosvenor House Hotel's new café speaking to this guy whose next question was whether there was anything the hotel could do to help the charity?

I told him about our outings and mentioned that we'd love to be able to throw a Christmas party for underprivileged children. The next thing we knew was that the hotel's ballroom was handed over to the Fund for a day! That became a yearly event, the only difference being that a few years later we moved to the hotel's magnificent Great Room and we have been there every year since – courtesy of this hotel's wonderful gesture.

So *Call Sign*, as you can now see, your report in the February issue was incorrect in referring to our 2012 party as the twentieth – it was the fortieth! We'll have to keep an eye on you!"

Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)
LTFUC Hon President

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month we go back to 1977 and a report on that year's AGM...

From ODRTS News and Views, December 1977

The 1977 ODRTS AGM

I'll get right to the point. I thought the meeting was spoiled by those few 'heavies' in the gallery who seemed bent on destroying what should have been a good meeting. There was so much to discuss of real importance but which had to be left out because of the attitude of some members – several of whom seemed to have come straight from the pub and bought their filled glasses with them. One subscriber has written in to say he felt ashamed to think that these people represented ODRTS. If this type of thing happens again, real Society men will just lose interest completely.

A vote was taken on a proposition to have three subscribers called in at ran-

dom to hear a complaints appeal. In my opinion (and I'm not alone) the count was against the proposition. But again those in the gallery (are they afraid to come downstairs to the main auditorium) began barracking and swearing so much so that eventually another vote was called for. This time it looked about 50 – 50 so yet a third vote was requested and granted. This time the 'yes' voters were asked to stand against one wall, with the 'no' voters perched against the other. The count ended up as being in favour of the proposition.

Believe me, I am not complaining about the result, it was the way in which it was conducted that upset me. If you believe in democracy, then be democratic. The bullies are getting away with it too much. We must not let them ruin our Society.

The rest of the meeting continued with an agreement from members to implement a 20 pence booking fee. The suggestion that doubled cabs should pay more was rejected. Chairman Peter Fennymore gave everyone time to speak – in fact he even asked one extremely

rude subscriber if he required an answer to his question.

The balance sheet brought out just mild interest, but then again it was a good one and even the barrackers couldn't find much to shout out about – although that didn't stop one almost paralytic driver shouting out that the figures had been fixed. So upset was he that he almost spilled his beer over the driver sitting next to him amidst much laughter! However, many didn't think it was funny and suggested that no one be allowed to bring in alcohol for future meetings.

The Board were returned comfortably with Kenny Burns getting a popular 259 votes but failing to get elected. The votes were: J.Saunders 431, J.Taylor 411, M.Gellman 407, F.Gee 391, P.Messias 358 and P.Emden 340.

Phil Emden (C84)
N&V Editor



Mailshot

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

Survey?

Dear Alan

My thanks to you and for attempting to answer my questions in the *February* issue of *Call Sign* and your answer about PLC. You say that under our system we can't purchase another company; is that because of our rules or legislation because of our mutual status?

My thanks also to Keith Cain for attempting to answer some of my questions in the same reply. In answer to one question that drivers won't accept trips because they are not going very far, so do you know why drivers won't accept these trips? You will probably say they perceive no profit in these trips or perhaps they are greedy? Soon to clear (STC) in EC2 mid-morning or afternoon gets you a QP of around 40, clear the trip at around QP 30, sit around or rank up for around 25 / 35 minutes, get offer of a credit ride going local in 10 / 12 minutes, clear trip for £8 and wait around again for another 30 minutes.

Keith says about admin charges not being added to longer journeys may increase work, but will also lead to an increase in subs. Well subs will increase anyway with longer journeys decreasing after being lost to the PH trade and our fleet getting smaller. And with inflation, subs increase. So why a monthly increase? Why not surcharge each long trip to the driver, maybe £1 per trip if accepted? No work done, no surcharge. With the PH trade offering a service at around our metered fare on some of our typical journeys without the DaC add-ons, why would you use DaC? Keith dismissed my suggestion of a Cash Club. When I was a journeyman on DataCab they had a cash club with a yearly admin fee and a booking fee that got their customers nothing extra in return. Drivers got a small scrub and the trips got covered. Keith, you say I may like to survey passengers about my ideas, but in 25 years of driving a taxi - 18 of them with DaC - I have spoken to a lot of punters but stopped short of giving them a questionnaire and prepaid envelope! It's just like our own Natalie Ezekiel says - service and cost. So if you can get that service at around the cost of our metered fare, why would you use DaC? Maybe there is a market for some of my ideas?

Keith could always polish up his badge and hire a DaC cab for a few weeks just to remind himself what it's like to have overheads of several hundred pounds a week, spend hours hanging around waiting for trips that clear for the minimum fare, and after a long day drive home from the other side of town after accepting an 'as directed' trip. I'm sure Easter time would give you plenty of time to survey our members on very long taxi ranks. With private hire, other radio taxi companies and now the app brigade after our customers, I think we may have to think again about how

our radio company earns its money.

Jon Robinson (E88)

Jon, there is no rule forbidding an acquisition, just as there is no rule saying you can. It would come down to a legal challenge. The mutual status has no bearing on the subject. In the meantime, the next letter has a different slant on the topic ...Ed

DaC: Who is it for?

Hello Alan

An account customer made an interesting comment to me recently. He said he thinks that Dial-a-Cab is a service for the drivers and not its customers. He felt aggrieved that drivers could pick and choose the jobs rather than put customer's needs first. He said he had been let down too many times. With this in mind, is there no other way to go than all trips A/D (asap account work only)? We need to make service a priority or else the writing will be on the wall. Cost is not always the primary issue if a cab is outside the customer's premises within minutes and the driver is trained to get the passenger to their destination in the best way possible (without the use of a satnav). Let's play to our strengths and come out of our comfort zone or we will regret it.

James Whiting (E83)

Any comments on James letter? Also see Allan Evans' article in this issue on the subject of As Directed ...Ed

Westminster account

Hi Al

If it is true that we have lost the Westminster account, then it is a shame. I didn't do massive amounts, but there had been some good work in the account. I think it lost its appeal to many drivers when Westminster changed the card payment ceiling to £8.30 from £9.30 as each ride then became less significant to driver's weekly account totals.

Eddie Lambert (V37)

I think that one letter in last month's mag said it all, Eddie. It came from Mrs H.P.Raines who lives in the SW1 area. She wrote in to tell *Call Sign* that: **"Due to their financial cutbacks, Westminster's Transport Department will not be renewing my TaxiCard despite my being 88 years old and completely blind. So I am writing to thank Dial-a-Cab for all the wonderful service I have had from you over the years. My regular weekly return journey from Waitrose in Kings Road to my flat in the Westminster Almshouses has been full of interesting conversation with your drivers and I shall miss them very much. Please convey my gratitude and best wishes to your staff and all your taxi drivers."**

Although the account has moved to a competitor, at least it is a taxi competitor - however, its value is obviously dropping significantly. Sadly, nothing lasts forever. There is a more detailed explanation in Brian Rice's Chairman's Report on page 4 of this issue ...Ed



Sad day

Hi Alan

Losing the Westminster TaxiCard is a sad day for this Society - not just because it represents a lost account but because it provided work for those drivers who did most of the coverage. But more relevant for the rest of us is the apparent way private hire is eating into our account (and cash) work. They obviously don't do it by service because we are very good at what we do, they achieve it by undercutting us. I am unashamedly a long-standing admirer of everything Dial-a-Cab, but situations change and I sincerely believe that it's time we considered changing the way we operate. Some of those ways would include lower run-ins, no gratuities unless the passenger offers it and cutting our administration charges. How many out there agree with me? Antony Hizer (E63)

According to Brian Rice's article, the Westminster TaxiCard account will no longer have any run-in when it transfers to the All London scheme with ComCab, so it will be interesting to see what the coverage is like ...Ed

Covering work in EC2

Dear Alan

Can you explain why I sometimes see messages to cover a trip in EC2 when there is no job for that zone in the bids? Just yesterday a message went for someone to please cover an EC2 trip with a premium added, yet when I went to the bids, there was no sign of it.

Can you also do something about the no right turns all the way from Old Street roundabout to Gresham Street when travelling southbound along Moorgate. I have faith in your ability to get things done!

I also have another two points to make. Firstly, why do European tourists insist on telling you where they are going only after they get in? Often you can't understand their accent from the back and once in, even if they didn't need a cab it becomes a hassle for them to get out. An example happened to me at Paddington Station recently on a particularly quiet afternoon. It had taken around 25 minutes to reach the point and obviously you hope to get a reasonable job - but even if it isn't, I will still always be as pleasant as it is possible for an irritated Israeli to be!

My passenger jumped in and said where she was going but I couldn't understand, so she looked for a piece of screwed up paper apparently buried deep within her handbag only to find that it said Sheldon Square - around 100 metres away! Had she said where she was going through the luggage door as everyone else does, I would have given her the option of saving money - her 'legal' showed that she had no intention of giving it away.

Mailshot

Continued from page 33

Secondly, last year I asked Allan Evans if he could get permission from the Carriage Office to allow us to put a notice on the partition that reads: *If you would like to go a particular way, please inform the driver at the beginning of the trip.* Any news on that? And by the way, I loved the March cover photo of the AGM in the snow...

Sid Nathan (K88)

So far as the EC2 job is concerned, dispatchers are asking drivers to accept trips in the system as they make their way through the zones before reaching the bids if possible.

I spoke to John Mason at LTPH about your sign and while there is no such official sign available, they have no objection to you putting one up – preferably in English though! Hopefully you will now be in possession of a sign I made earlier! As for Moorgate, I'll say a prayer. Let me know if that works! ...Ed

Thanks to a fellow driver

Hi Alan

I would like to thank Tony Fairey (C44) for his assistance recently to change the rear wheel on my cab which had suffered a puncture that left me immobile - even though I was stopped in DaC's car park! His timely intervention was most appreciated and helped stop a weak back from giving me further grief as he nimbly swapped over the duff tyre for the spare wheel, saving me the task of struggling alone. Who said DaC camaraderie was extinct? Don't believe a word of it. It's alive and well! Again, many thanks...

Alan Green (E52)

I'm surprised you didn't take a photo of him sweating whilst you finished your coffee! ...Ed

And thanks for Call Sign to the LVTA!

Hello Hans

Thank you for sending the latest edition of *Call Sign Online* my way. Amongst others, the article on page 16 about our Presidential hopeful, Mitt Romney, was well written by Josie Allison and well received by this writer. Only time will tell if he goes from hopeful to winner.

Lloyd Powell

Palm Beach, Florida

Based in Holland, Hans Dooren is the PR man of the London Vintage Taxi Association and forwards a copy of *Call Sign Online* to all LVTA members. Hans has an ongoing offer to all Dial-a-Cab drivers to visit the war grave of any driver's relative who is buried at any of the Netherlands war grave sites. There is no

charge, just send us as much info as possible on the person you would like Hans to visit on your behalf ...Ed

My EGR was blocked!

Hi Al

I read the interesting article *All Blocked Up* in the March *Call Sign* regarding EGR valves getting blocked up. It certainly sounded like my cab! However, I went to my local car accessories shop and bought a fluid manufactured by Wynn's that is said to specifically clean injectors and EGR valves. I had never used it before but thought I'd try it. So far it has been like an 'effing miracle! All traces of black smoke have gone, been deceased, are no more! Yep, an 'effing miracle!

Mickey Lappin (E46)

Are you trying to say something Mick!!! ...Ed

Buses caught in yellow boxes?

Alan

Having just read Stephen Hassan's (P95) letter in the March *Call Sign* regarding PCNs and yellow box junction fines, he asks how many buses receive PCNs for stopping in box junctions? Well I can answer this for him because after receiving a box junction PCN where my rear tyres were in the last two feet of a box for five seconds and then seeming to have every junction blocked by a bus for the next few days, I decided to ask Westminster Council how many buses had received a PCN for box junction offences in the last year? This was done under a *Freedom of Information* request. I attach their response, which shows just one PCN in the previous year was issued to a bus company! So the next time that you are sitting at a junction and find your path blocked by that inconsiderate bus driver, just remember that it's one rule for them and another for us!

Dean Mussett (M40)

This is the answer Dean received. We have to say he was extremely fortunate because many drivers over the years have attempted to get this information with the standard response being that councils do not keep records about individual types of vehicle. Apparently they were lying, so very well done Dean ...Ed

Dear Mr Mussett,

Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000:
Request for information:

Thank you for your request for information. You have requested the following information:

How many CCTV PCNs have been issued to buses for yellow box junction offences from 2 December 2010 until 2 December 2011? In response to your request I can advise you of the following: One vehicle has been issued with a PCN under the above criteria.

If you are not satisfied with this response,

please set out your reasons in writing and send to:

Customer Relations, PO Box 396, Warrington, WA55 1EL. Phone 0207 641 1743 or Fax 0207 641 1744.

Email: parkingservices@westminster.gov.uk.

And speaking of PCNs...

Hi Alan

I read with interest page 7 of the March *Call Sign*, re NSL (*Wardens operate PCN quota system*). In Sept 2011 I received a parking ticket from NSL/Royal Parks for returning 5 minutes late to my cab at the Inner Circle, Regents Park. I wrote a letter to NSL to appeal without success and duly paid £40. One reason I gave for appealing was that the web address quoted on my *Excess Charge Notice* for checking parking terms and conditions on the Royal Parks website was wrong. I left the matter a while before deciding last month to write a FOI request to the Royal Parks, asking how many ECNs have been issued with the incorrect web address? Thinking it might be a handful, I was surprised this morning when I received a reply stating that over the last 3 years approx 18,500 ECNs have been issued with the incorrect website address!

No wonder they also add that it isn't a statutory obligation to publish the web address on the ECN...

Steve Thomas (N10)

Read Philip Benjamin's article on the subject of PCNs and websites inside this issue...Ed

Identifiers and the difference...

Hi Alan

It was surprising to find on 1 March when ID stickers became compulsory, just how many taxis risked a hefty fine by not having them on display. Even today (14 March) there are still a sprinkling of taxis without them. What these IDs show is the startling difference between us being identified and minicabs.

The ID numbers on taxis are clearly displayed in large figures on both front and rear of the taxi behind clear glass on a green or yellow background for all and sundry to see - which brings me to the IDs displayed on minicabs. Minicab ID or licence stickers are displayed on the front and rear of their vehicles with absolutely no chance of reading the details unless you are within six inches from where the sticker is displayed. In addition, the rear windows on many of these vehicles are at such an angle that a low flying aircraft has more chance of reading the licence stick-



Mailshot

Continued from page 34

er than a pedestrian. And if it is behind tinted glass, then there is no chance.

The 'pre-booked only private hire' sign seems to be displayed only on a very arbitrary basis, so I shall be writing to TfL asking for the following changes to minicabs:-

1. Tinted glass should be banned on minicabs.
2. Size of identity to be the same as licensed taxis.
3. When the rear glass is severely angled to the sky, further licence stickers to be displayed on side window.
4. Green background/surround, which is a remarkably similar shade of green to taxi IDs, to be changed to another coloured background other than yellow.

Changing tack, can I also say well done to Stephen Hassan (P95) for getting Westminster Council to withdraw their PCN against him for parking on the yellow lines by the RAF church. Unfortunately, the smart car that caught me was parked on a yellow line, which they are allowed to do, and not behind road work barriers. My thanks for his offer of help anyway. I also admitted stopping to use the loo and I don't think going for a pee is classed as a commercial delivery - although some smart lawyer may argue the case.

Michael Lyons (Y52)

We have had quite a number of emails com-

plaining about drivers still not displaying ID stickers. I don't think they are too concerned if it's just a case of forgetting to display them when they come out, but there is some concern that these may be yellow badge drivers and anyone who says that we're all taxi drivers so why worry, is in a tiny minority.

Anyway Mike, let *Call Sign* know if you get a response from TfL re the stickers, but if that response says they will change the little people's identifiers, then there won't be a May issue of *Call Sign* because I'll eat it - as I don't own a hat! ...Ed

Cabs or cabs?

Hi Alan

On page 8 of *TAXI Newspaper* dated 6 March, there was an article headlined as *Tout jailed for sexual assaults*. Several times in the article it describes the perpetrator, Amir Bhatti, as being a cab driver although it begins by describing him as unlicensed. It also says that just a few days before the offence of sexually assaulting his female passenger, he had groped another female passenger. Both women also had money taken via their cash cards on the same night they were assaulted. A detective was quoted as saying that the case should serve as a reminder to women to take sensible precautions when planning a night out and to ensure they had a safe way of getting home. And yet throughout the *TAXI* article, this

man was described as a cab driver. Surely this newspaper should know that the expression 'cab driver' doesn't apply to people such as Bhatti. Even AL would be totally ashamed of that man and would not want to be described in the same category as him.

John Dixon (B67)

I understand what you are saying John, but the *TAXI* article was a police press release - although one that *Call Sign* declined to publish as it had already appeared in several taxi magazines with the same wording. So it wasn't just *TAXI* that suddenly decided to describe this person as a cabby ...Ed

118 118 not for me anymore!

Hello Alan

I recently used directory service 118 118 to get the number of LTPH. After they give it to you, they also send a text with the number on - except that it also came with an ad for "taxi company" Addison Lee! There are many of these directory services and in future I shall be using one of the others who know the difference between Taxis and PH...

Russell Walsh (P06)

Perhaps the moustaches are getting in their eyes! ...Ed

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