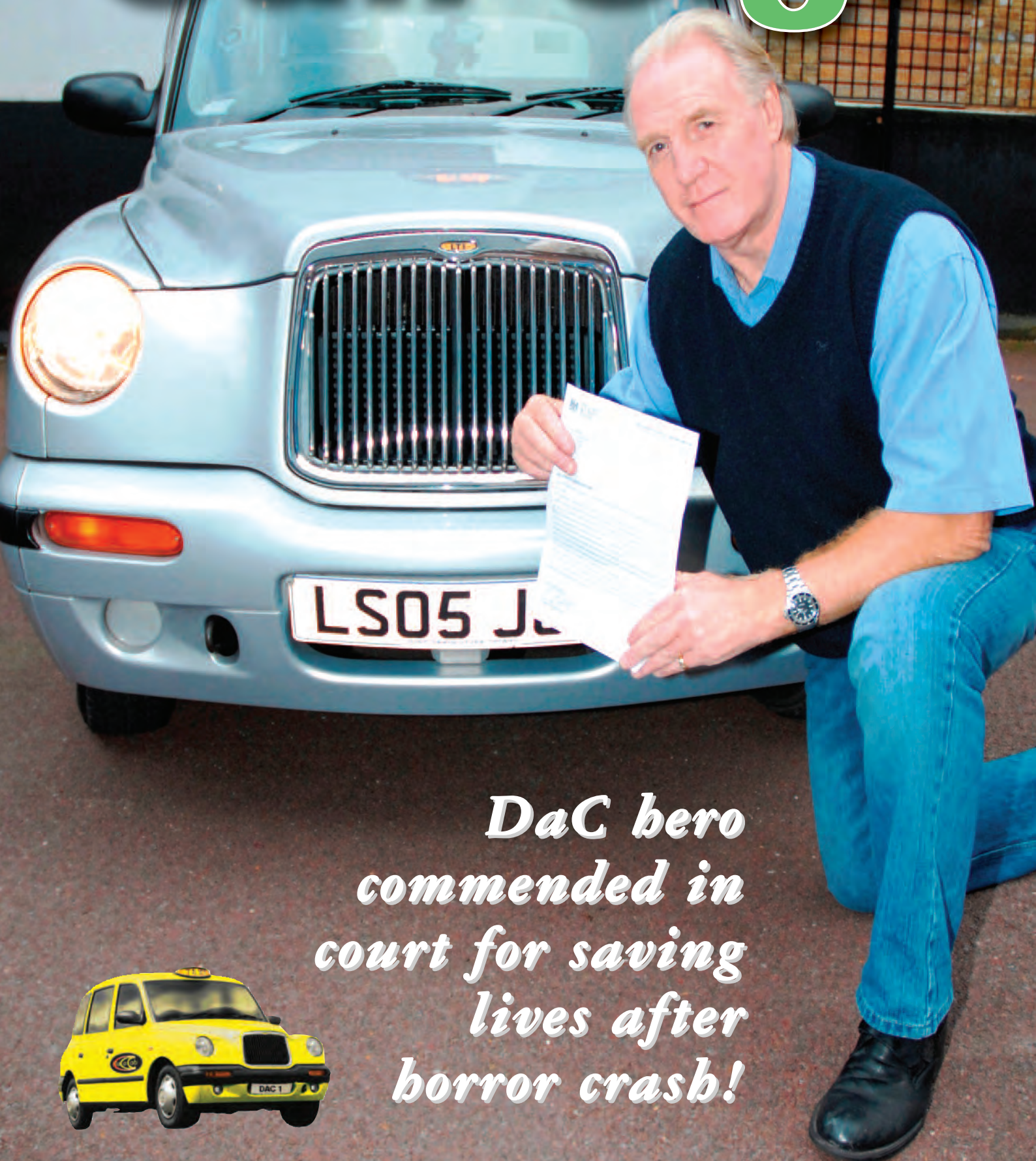


December 2012

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

# Call Sign



*DaC hero  
commended in  
court for saving  
lives after  
horror crash!*







# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

The festive season is here again and more than usual, partygoers want West End clubs. So I have listed some of the clubs and speciality bars / restaurants you may be asked for.

Venue	Address
100 Club	100 Oxford Street , W1D 1LL
15 Centro Club	West Central St, WC1A 1JJ
229 venue	229 Great Portland Street, W1W 5PN
Alto	15-21 Ganton street, W1F 9BN
Anaya	9 Swallow Street, W1B 4DE
Annabel's	44 Berkeley Square, W1J 5QB
Attica Restaurant & Club	24 Kingly Street, W1B 5QP
Aura	48-49 St James's Street SW1A 1JT
Automat Club	33 Dover Street, W1S 4NF
Bar Rumba	36 Shaftsbury Avenue, W1D 7EP
Black Gardenia	93 Dean Street, W1D 1SZ
Blow Up Metro	19-23 Oxford Street , W1
Bond @ 24	24 Kingly Street W1B 5QP
Borderline	Manette Street, W1D 4JB
Box	11 -12 Walker's Court, W1F 0ED
British Luxury Club	70 New Bond Street, W1S 1DE
Bureau Night Club	13 Kingly Court, W1B 5PW
Cafe De Paris	3-4 Coventry Street , W1D 6BL
Cameo Nightclub	48 Margaret Street , W1W 8SE
CC Club	13 Coventry Street, W1D 7DH
Century	61 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 6LD
Cheers	72 Regent Street, W1B 5RJ
Chinawhite	4 Winsley Street , W1W 8HF
Circus	27-29 Endell Street, WC2H 9BA
Cirque Club	10-14 Cranbourne Street, WC2H 7AG
Cirque du Soir Club	12 New Burlington Street, W1S 3BF
Club 49	49 Greek Street, W1D 4EG
Club Bond	24 Kingly Street W1B 5QB
Club Penthouse	1, Leicester Square, WC2H 7NA
Corks Wine Bar	28 Binney Street, W1K 5BW
Crobar	17 Manette Street ,W1D 4AS
Cuckoo Club	Swallow Street W1B 4EZ
Diu	12-13 Greek Street, W1D 4DJ
Dstrkt	9 Rupert Street, London, W1D
Elysium Lounge	9 Glasshouse Street, W1B 5EL
Eve Club	3 New Burlington Street, W1S 2JF
Friendly Society	79 Wardour St. (Basement) , W1D 6QB
Funky Buddah	15 Berkeley Street W1J 8DY
G-A-Y Late	5 Goslett Yard, WC2H 0E
Gossips	69 Dean Street, W1D 3SD
Grace	42-44 Great Windmill Street, W1D 7NB
Green Carnation	4-5 Greek Street , W1D 4DD
Groucho Club	45 Dean Street W1D 4QB
Hideout aka Trisha's	57 Greek Street, W1D 3DX
Hombre De Bahia	78 Wells Street, W1T 3QL
Hospital Club	24 Endell Street , WC2H 9H
Jalouse	17 Hanover Square , W1
Kabaret Club	16-18 Beak Street, W1F 9RD
Kingly Club	4 Kingly Court, W1B 5BW
Kings	107 Kings Road, SW3 4PA
Ku Bar	30 Lisle Street , WC2H 7BA
La Capannina	21 Bateman Street, W1D 3AL
Langley	5 Langley Street WC2H 9JA
Lo Profile	84-86 Wardour Street, W1F 0TQ

Venue	Address
London Hippodrome	1 Cranbourn Street, WC2H 7AJ
Loop	19 Dering Street W1S 1AH
Los Locos	24-26 Russell Street, WC2B 5HF
Luxx	3 New Burlington Street, W1S 2JF
Madame JoJo's	8 Brewer Street , W1F 0SG
Maddox Club	2 Mill Street W1S 2AT
Mahiki Bar & Restaurant	1 Dover Street, W1S 4LA
Maya	1a Dean St. , W1D 3RB
Merah	78 Wells Street, W1T 3QL
Metra Bar & Club	14 Leicester Square, WC2H 7NG
Molton House	43 South Molton Street, W1K 5RS
Moonlighting Nightclub	16-17 Greek Street W1D 4DU
Movida	8 Argyll Street , W1F 7TF
No 1 Leicester Square	1 Leicester Square,
On Anon	London Pavillion Piccadilly , W1J 0DA
One Alfred Place	1 Alfred Place, WC1E 7EB
Opium	1a Dean Street, W1D 3RD
Oxygen	18 Irving Street, WC2H 7AZ
Pacha London	191 Victoria Street SW1E 5NE
Pangea	85 Picadilly, Clarges Street, W1J 7NB
Paper	68 Regent Street, W1B 5EL
Pop	14 Soho St, W1D 3AN
Punk	14 Soho Street ,W1D 3DN
Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club	47 Frith Street , W1D 4SQ
Rose	23 Orchard Street, W1H 6H
Roxy	3 Rathbone Place , W1T 1HH
Ruby Blue	Queens Hse, Leicester Pl, WC2H 7BP
Runway	55 New Oxford Street, WC1A 1BS
Salsa!	96 Charing Cross Road , WC2H 0JG
Silver	17 Hanover Square, W1S 1HU
SIN	144 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0LB
Soho House	21 Old Compton Street
Sound	1 Leicester Square, WC2H 7NA
Sports Cafe	New Zealand Hse Haymarket, SW1Y 4TE
Storm Nightclub	28a Leicester Square, WC2H 7LE
Strawberry Moons Bar	15 Heddon Street, W1B 4BF
Studio Valbonne	62 Kingly Street W1B 5QN
Sway	61 Great Queen Street WC2B 5DA
Taman Gang	141 Park Lane W1K 7AA
Tantra	62 Kingly Street, W1B 5QN
Teatro	Wingate House Shaftesbury Ave, W1D 5BT
Thai Square Nightclub	21-24 Cockspur Street, SW1Y 5BN
Thirteen	13 Gerrard Street, W1D 5PS
Tiger Tiger	29 Haymarket ,SW1Y 4SP
Traffic	1 Vernon Place, WC1A 2EP
Trash Palace	1 Wardour Street W1
Tutu's	Macadam Bldg, Surrey St. WC2R 2NS
Umbaba	15-21 Ganton Street, W1F 9BN
Vendome Mayfair	85 Piccadilly , Mayfair W1J 7NB
Volstead	9 Swallow Street, W1B 4DF
Wig Out	15 Centro Club, W. Central St, WC1A 1JJ
Willa's	9 Swallow Street, W1B 4DN
Windmill Nightclub	17-19 Great Windmill Street, W1D 7JZ
Zoo Venom Bar	13-17 Bear Street, WC2H 7AS

Nash's Numbers would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Don't forget to visit [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) which not only has all the back issues but direct access to the MyFav website designed as your ideal "Home Page", combine this with the unlock code of taxi and this will be your best launch pad to everything you will ever need on the internet. Personalise with your favourite search engine, retailer, gadgets, your own bookmarks and 100's of icons to launch all the most popular websites.



# from the editor's desk

## So who are the mugs?

There is no doubt that Hailo's expansion has been astonishing. It was launched in 2011 in London and now operates in Toronto, Boston and as of a few weeks ago, in the city of Chicago. **Hailo** CEO and founder, **Jay Bregman**, said at the latest launch:

"Hailo joins the long list of Chicago innovations including automatic Stop/Go signs, the Pullman Sleeping Car and the famous Checker Taxi Cab."

He could have added the wind, but those nice Americans might have got the wrong end of Mr Bregman's stick! But he did also give the familiar spiel about how easy it is to call a Hailo cab using just your smartphone.

What he didn't say, no doubt for obvious reasons, was that Chicago users will pay an extra \$1.50 to Hailo when it's quiet and \$2.75 during peak times, so that unlike the world's best taxi drivers here in London who are being made to sell themselves cheap, Chicago passengers pay for the service as against over here where the poor driver coughs up so that the passenger pays less.

Yes, so as the headline above says, who are the mugs?

## Dated trade?

The licensed taxi trade is currently under more pressure than since the time that **Oliver Cromwell** got into a strop when his Hackney (nee Hacknye) refused to take him to Peckham for his urgent meeting with Dolly Trotter!

Not only could we be short of taxis heading into what could well be a busy Christmas, but private hire have organised themselves into a (fairly) well-oiled machine and as much as we have a pop at **Addison Lee**, you can't help but have a sneaking admiration at how a company has walked in and cashed in on what we stupidly gave away – the colour black. How many times has this magazine been castigated by drivers for using the expression "black cabs" rather than licensed taxis? But hey, it's nice to see that the LCDC are now coming on board via their Chairman **Grant Davis** and columnist **Mickey Walker**, who are now both talking about cabs being black. Sadly it's now a bit late, I think.

All we really have left is our good name because passengers often tell drivers that we are falling behind the times in our choice of clothing and vehicle. But whether that has any basis or not, we have one thing that Addy Lee and co can never take from us without doing the *Knowledge* – our professionalism. Whether that shows itself in an old Metrocab or a brand new Vito with a driver who looks like he has just come from the family chimney sweeping business, what the passenger knows is that whoever is driving, that licensed taxi will get them to their destination in the quickest if possible, but always in the best available way.

But that professionalism is laughed at thousands of times each day because of the laziness of our trade organisations. Look around as you exit Euston or Waterloo Stations. Everything you see, passengers can see as well. What am I talking about? Well how about large posters put up by trade organisations advertising demonstrations against causes that have long since passed?

While it's true that we become *blasé* towards anything we see on a regular basis, when a passenger asked me why we were still calling for demonstrations against not being allowed into



the **Olympic Route Network** lanes, I made a joke about it but in reality felt rather embarrassed because it goes against the professionalism of our trade that I for one am proud of.

I make no bones about being a member of the **LTDA** and my belief that they are way out in front of any other unit representing cab drivers. But they are among the biggest culprits. So come on Steve, there is no point in being the boss if you can't do what you want, and surely out-of-date posters can't be that difficult to pull down! And if you do it (not personally of course), the others organisations will follow – as they do in everything else...

## Manganese administration

Many years ago, I organised a course for Dial-a-Cab taxi drivers who wanted to service and repair their own cabs. After several meetings, I finally got Barking Technical College – as it was then called – to agree to a course, providing I managed to get 10 drivers. I advertised it and within two days, forty DaC drivers asked to go on it and four classes were eventually organised with a *City and Guilds* accreditation available at the end of the course for successful drivers.

Strangely, the first person to pass was a woman, **Mary Leaming** (ex-C44), who was not only the first woman to go on the course, but was also the first person to gain that *City and Guilds* accreditation. I personally gave up the course as I soon realised that I didn't like getting oily hands! But the course continued for years afterwards. Eventually, **ComCab** drivers complained that they wanted to also go on the course and I had to open it up to the trade. But enough of the history lesson...

Back to the present; mechanics still working for **Manganese Bronze** under the administration of PWC are surely of a higher standard than we amateurs that attended Barking Tech, so why did it take so long to finally sort out the TX4 steering box fault? At the time of writing this, Toyota had just announced a recall for 2.8million of their cars – also because of a steering fault. MB say all their 400+ taxis will be fitted with the new part by mid-December. Who'd like to bet that Toyota get their 2.8million fixed and back on the road before that?

Whilst the TX4 will soon be on sale again, what we don't know is who it will be that owns the company! But contrary to those plunging the knife in because there is no **London Taxi Company** advertising to worry about, I still think that it is the best taxi we have ever had, even though our real sympathies lay with the drivers

who bought new cabs and then couldn't drive them.

But if we do what the LCDC suggests and have open entry into the London cab trade with the 25foot turning circle done away with – the **Peugeot E7** is about to test the Conditions of Fitness – I think I can safely say that within ten years there will be no such thing as a black taxi and we'll all be driving cars and become one trade.

I used to think that if you wanted to join a club, then you needed to be able to meet the requirements of that club; now some are saying that we should let anyone into our club and we should be the ones to drop those requirements – that being the turning circle. However, for the present, there will be 500 new TX4s up for sale early in the new year and I have a feeling that the prices will be very competitive. Beyond that, who knows and that is very sad...

## DaC hero!

**John Ward** (R88) has been on DaC for eight years and so far as *Call Sign* can ascertain, has never appeared in any of our pages before. But he certainly is now, having put himself at great risk in order to prevent any further loss of life in addition to the innocent man who was killed while driving home to his pregnant wife and three young children. His car was hit by a young man showing off to his girlfriend when travelling along the A13 at an horrendous 155mph following an argument between the two. The accident caused carnage.

John's story is told inside this issue; we also detail a letter to the DaC driver from the court where the judge praised his actions that may well have saved more lives.

On occasions, the **WCHCD** present an award for bravery. Whilst John would never dream of putting himself forward, in our humble opinion the trade charity and Livery Company behind the wonderful Disneyland Paris annual weekends for sick children, need look no further than John Ward.

## Writing for Call Sign

*Call Sign's* **Richard Potter** (T51) has decided that he needs a rest from writing, so we are asking if anyone out there fancies taking over his monthly space?

All you need is the ability to put your thoughts into words. You will have the freedom to say what you want (within reason), but what I'd like is someone who regardless of whether they belong to a trade organisation, is happy to give their own views on any subjects – preferably connected to taxi driving.

It isn't quite as easy as some might think because I will always be nagging for your next column, so just because you have one thing you want to say, you will need far, FAR more than that.

It would be nice if you could make it different to the trade's regular columnists, but you don't have to worry about spelling because I'll make sure that it comes out ok. So long as your article makes good reading and entertains *Call Sign's* readership, then it will be published. Only one definite thing – you must be able to send the article via email.

If interested, write to me at [callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com).

**Alan Fisher**  
[callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com)

# reflections of the chairman

## AGM time...

The deadline has now passed for nominations to the BoM and rule changes and propositions should have been received at this office by the closing date of 12 November. However, the Company Secretary has not received any rule changes or propositions and I'm rather sad to see that there was just one member prepared to put himself up as a candidate wishing to stand for election to the Board. The current five elected Board Members are all seeking re-election and it would appear that I am unopposed for the position of Chairman.

I am sure you are all aware of the date but just in case, the next AGM is on 3rd February 2012 and will be held at the HAC Barracks in City Road, commencing at 11am. You will receive all the necessary paperwork after Christmas and I would like to remind you that if you do not vote by post, then you should attend the AGM in person. If you do not do either one or the other, you will then incur a £50 fine.

## Torrid year for the trade

The past year has certainly been one to remember - but for all the wrong reasons. It goes without saying that this whole year has been very tough workwise and when the Olympics hit us in July/August and the Paralympics in September, work levels just went through the floor.

The spectacle itself was excellent and appeared to be organised extremely well - so well in fact that people working and intending to visit London heeded the authority's pleas and gave London a wide berth! The work was so abysmal that the figures for **Dial-a-Cab** were the worst I have ever encountered and I have been told that the other two radio taxi circuits experienced exactly the same scenario.

We then had the news regarding 400+ TX4s and faulty steering boxes, with all of them having to be recalled. However, it took over a month to find a solution to the problem and during that entire period, the vehicles were off the road. It affected over three hundred vehicles in London, with the remainder distributed throughout the country.

As I have said, the affected vehicles were not allowed onto the roads, so the owners could not work or had to hire alternative vehicles in an attempt to have some kind of income. However, there was also a shortage of cabs available for rent. Now that the solution has been found, the **London Taxi Company** are slowly working their way through the affected vehicles and hopefully rectifying the fault.

As a consequence, London's fleet was reduced by over three hundred vehicles due to the steering fault, while at the same time another two hundred and ninety vehicles were taken off the road in November and another three hundred and fifty three taxis are



due to go in December; this being due to the fifteen year rule being applied. There will then be an average of thirty to fifty cabs coming off the road every month due to the Mayor's new age limit restrictions.

Then to cap it all, LTC contacted **Geely** (China), who own 20% of the company, for a £15million loan. This was refused by Geely, so LTC did not have any alternative other than to call in Administrators to run the business until a suitable buyer, or otherwise, can be found. I'm led to believe there are several parties interested, but at the time of writing nothing has yet been announced.

## LTPH investigation

Just when you thought the situation this year could not get any worse, I was informed there was going to be an inquiry into **London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH)** by **Deloitte** on behalf of the London Mayor.

This investigation has come about because **John Griffin**, the owner of **Addison Lee**, has complained to the Mayor that he believes taxis get preferential treatment to minicabs and he wants LTPH to be split in two, one part for minicabs and the other for taxis. He believes that if this should come about, then the minicab side could lobby on his behalf to gain access to bus lanes etc.

It must be soul destroying for the Director of LTPH, **John Mason** and his assistant **Helen**

**Chapman** to have this scenario foisted upon them just because John Griffin complained to **Boris Johnson**. I wonder what the reaction would have been had one of our trade organisations complained to the Mayor? Then again the taxi industry does not contribute to Tory Party funds, as does John Griffin.

The investigation implies that LTPH are not doing their job correctly, otherwise there would not be an investigation. So the next time you complain about LTPH, just remember the minicabs think there is a bias towards us from the authority - which there quite clearly isn't!

Probably the real point is that Mr Griffin is used to getting his own way and when he was refused the use of bus lanes, he thought he would 'call in' his contribution to the Tory Party by complaining to the Mayor. As stated earlier, Deloitte are carrying out the investigation into LTPH; ironically, they used to be an account client of RTG until they lost it to - you've guessed it - Addison Lee!

## Building work...

As a matter of interest, there is a lot of building development being carried out in the area of Dial-a-Cab House and we have now been informed that there will be even more. The two buildings between Dial-a-Cab House and Old Street are to be demolished; in their place there will be a 10 storey office block together with a 39 storey residential building with retail and restaurants. In total, the 39 storeys will house 302 residential units.

Building is due to commence in 2014, with the office block completed in 2015 and the residential site in 2016. Looks like we moved premises at the right time!

*Finally, I would like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy New Year. Let's look forward to 2013 because it certainly can't be worse than 2012 - can it?*

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



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





# TfL lose in touting appeal

In a shock decision, **Transport for London** has lost an appeal by **Diamond Chauffeurs** against the authority stripping the minicab firm of its licence at Cornhill nightspot, **Abacus**.

A previous home movie shot by the LTDA showed touting taking place outside of the venue, but Diamond's claim was that their "work" did not take place on the pavement but that they had an "official" booking desk situated in a recess and while the minicab firm agreed they were not inside the building, they argued that it counted as part of the premises.

The court accepted that some touting had taken place, but that this was a small problem and that the car company were there at the

request of Abacus with the majority of its work being carried out legitimately thanks to individuals the trade refers to as Clipboard Johnnies.

In his judgement **District Judge Michael Fanning** spent some considerable time discussing whether the recess was in or outside the entrance, even comparing it to being on or off a boat when on the gangplank!

However, Judge Fanning went on to say: "As to the "touting" issues. Technically, I can see that the offence is made out if the operator makes an approach to a customer rather than the other way round. The Appellant (Diamond) concedes that to be so on the evidence. However, the Appellant has operators on the Premises at the request of its management. They are clearly identifiable as operators for the

Appellant's firm. They stand at a designated location.

"They operate in tandem (now in triplicate) one to accept bookings, another to convey customers to a particular car – thereby protecting the paying public from un-licensed and unregulated operators whom I am told are a regular danger in the immediate vicinity of the Premises. Given the mischief at which the regulation of taxi firms is directed, the breach observed on 17 February 2012 was a minor one, and not one that was inimical to public safety."

It would appear to *Call Sign* that according to District Judge Fanning, Diamond Chauffeurs are actually protecting us all from the scourge of touting! That's ok then...!

## E7 looks for London licence

Scottish taxi manufacturers **Allied Vehicles**, who produce the **Peugeot E7** taxi, have sent one of their cabs to London in the hope that the *Conditions of Fitness* – ie the 25foot turning circle – can be relaxed following the well documented problems at **Manganese Bronze** and its retail outlets. But according to the Glasgow-based company, the CoF is not a safety issue but a *nicety*.

**Paul Nelson** is MD at Allied and from a practical point of view says that a relaxation of London's CoF would create 100 jobs and help the company build an extra 500 E7s each year. He said that Allied, who also manufacture an electric version of the cab, have made an offer to **Mayor Johnson** and TfL to loan vehicles and build new revamped cabs if they relax the conditions of fitness. The company have already supplied around twenty loan taxis to Scottish drivers whose TX4s were recalled.

**TfL** have confirmed that Allied Vehicles have formally applied to licence one of its vehicles as a London taxi. At the time of going to press, TfL were processing the application to pass an E7 and will then make what they called "a rigorous inspection to ensure the vehicle meets all the licensing requirements of a London taxi." However, that statement suggests that they will fail the cab because of its lack of the prescribed turning circle.

Allied Vehicles was founded in 1993 by Gerry Facenna and his brother Michael.



Will the E7 get a London licence

### *The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled*

## LTBAWD provide transport after remembrance service

In 1907, the first aid **Nursing Yeomanry** was formed and became involved during **WW1** in driving ambulances and assisting in field hospitals under dangerous conditions. At the end of the war, the Nursing Yeomanry had received one *Legion d'Honneur*, 27 *Croix de Guerre* and 17 *Military Medals*.

When the Second World War began, they were to become the **Motor Driving Companies** which were part of the woman's **Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS)**. Many of them went into top secret work in coding and supplying administration and support at special training schools and also joining the **Special Operations Executive** where they served in various parts of the world.

A large number were sent into occupied France, were captured and died in concentration camps. Three of them, **Noor Inayat Khan**, **Violette Szabo** and **Odette Hallowes** all received the George Cross - the first two posthumously. A film was later made based on Violette Szabo's life with **Virginia McKenna** playing Szabo. The film, **Carve Her Name With Pride**, won awards around the world.

On the wall of St Pauls Church in Knightsbridge is a memorial which lists the names of fifty four of these brave women. On the 27th October 2012, members of the Yeomanry, which is now known as **The Princess Royal's Volunteers Corps**, attended their annual remembrance service at the church.

The **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** had been asked to supply transport for some of the veterans to convey them to a lunch at **The United Services Club in Seymour St**. Thanks to **David Webb**, one of drivers who assisted the LTBAWD in taking these ladies to lunch on their special day.



Taking the salute at the remembrance service



# Jery's World



Ok, ok, ok Rudolph! If you agree to end your strike, then I'll ask Allen Togwell if he can fit you up with a polo shirt and trousers whilst you pull the DaC Christmas sledge...!

## Alpha Pill supports Fair Fuel UK

If there is one question we get asked more than any other, it's whatever happened to the amazing **Alpha Power Pills**. These pills were among the most amazing things this magazine had ever tested, with numerous readers having used them and telling **Call Sign** how happy they were with them.

We began testing in 2005 and by 2007 it seemed that half the fleet were using them. The pills worked then just as they work now. The biggest problem was getting hold of them!

However, **Call Sign** has found **Steve Vale** and he has now supplied a number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers in addition to Chairman **Brian Rice**. Steve also told **Call Sign** that he also supports **Fair Fuel UK** in their battle to get HMG to cancel the proposed duty increase in the January budget.

They go further, wanting to fight to cut fuel duty and help stimulate economic growth and to help bring UK petrol and diesel to European Parity in terms of fuel pricing and taxation. You can find out more at [www.fairfueluk.com](http://www.fairfueluk.com).

As for the Alpha Power Pills, they help clear carbon build up in the engine, resulting in better mpg. But far more importantly, they help cut emissions and users of the pill can see the results in their wing mirror as the smoke from the exhaust begins to clear.

If you would like to order the amazing Alpha Pill, just go to [OnlyCabs.co.uk](http://OnlyCabs.co.uk) and click on the 'Order Page'. Or you can phone your order to Stephen Vale at Only Cabs on 020 3239 6101.



If you have a smartphone, you can go to the Alpha Pill ad inside this issue and you will see a QR code where you can scan directly to the website by putting the phone next to the code.



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Like many before him, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Tony Guerrier (L28)** has had his odd run-in with the authorities regarding PCNs, most recently regarding the no right turn from Moorgate into London Wall and the Old Broad Street camera saga. After valuable advice from DaC's parking guru **Barrie Segal**, the matter was finally resolved. It did, however, need Tony to visit the Parking Adjudicator to achieve a satisfactory solution in his favour.

Tony explained to **Call Sign**: "The London Wall right-turn allegation was also cancelled due – according to the letter they sent me – *technical reasons*. So that was two results in short succession!"

Now on a roll, Tony continued with his latest David v Goliath tale – an almost unbelievable tale of incompetence from Westminster Parking Services.

"The real *tour-de-force* came from our so-called friends at the **City of Westminster Parking Services**, because if I didn't actually have the correspondence to prove the monumental mess, I doubt that I'd have believed it myself because you couldn't make it up - even with a wild imagination!"

With that, Tony went back to the beginning in January 2009...

"I had picked up at Marylebone Station and the passenger requested that I make my way to the Cumberland Hotel to collect another passenger before going onto a second destination. At the hotel, my passenger phoned his friend to come out to meet us, but it transpired that he was actually at the Marriott on Park Lane. So off we went there.

## Three years too late...



Tony with some of the paperwork sent thanks to Westminster's incompetence!

"I later received a PCN saying that video evidence at the Cumberland showed I had 'stopped without any sign of activity for two minutes in a restricted street during prescribed hours'.

"I appealed almost immediately, explaining the situation, but as we have come to expect from Westminster, my representation was dismissed. But the real insult was the reference to my clearly visible TX taxi as a minicab! You could clearly see the TfL licence plate on the back of the cab for goodness sake!"

Tony stuttered, exasperated at the stupidity of Westminster's mistaken identity.

"In one of my letters, I even took the time to explain the difference between a taxi and

a PHV," Tony explained to **Call Sign** with the merest hint of a smile! His letters went to and fro over an extended period of time between Tony and Westminster Parking Services, neither side being prepared to back down, all the while the PCN charges were steadily escalating.

Tony received threats of Bailiffs coming to his home, in addition to other dire-sounding consequences. Tony eventually lodged an appeal to the Traffic Enforcement Centre; part of Her Majesty's Court Service, but he was unsuccessful there as well.

Finally, after doggedly sticking to his principles of natural justice, which along the way involved researching *Acts of Parliament* regarding road and parking laws, Tony was informed that the original PCN dated 16th January 2009 had actually been cancelled on the 8th April 2009 – just 11 weeks later - but nobody had bothered to tell him until three years later, in September 2012!












"All that time I was writing letters and the authorities were, from time to time replying to me supposedly sticking to their guns, yet the blooming PCN had been scrubbed years earlier!"

Half laughing and half in anger, Tony ended his story with a personal view of City of Westminster Parking Services: "An incompetent bunch of nincompoops! You really couldn't make it up!"

**Alan Green**  
Call Sign Online

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Because of the date of the announcement on 22 October, it was **Call Sign** that had the unenviable job of being the first in the trade press to confirm in our November issue that **Manganese Bronze**, parent company of **London Taxis International** and the **London Taxi Company**, had to call administrators in to assist in deciding whether the company had a future and if so, with whom would that future be?

Reports surfaced on all major television networks as well as in every UK newspaper, in addition to many of the world's most prestigious papers from the *Wall Street Journal* to *The Times of India*. But the real question was whether anyone really cared, because whereas Manganese local Coventry MP, **Geoffrey Robinson**, had gone into print saying that around 80 companies had expressed an interest in taking over MBH and that he hoped that there would be some serious negotiations in December, the administrators, **PricewaterhouseCooper**, with advice / assistance from **Wragge & Co**, **Gateley** and **Wragge's** Birmingham restructuring partner **Julian Pallett**, London corporate partner **Richard Haywood** and Birmingham-based director **Jasvir Jootla**, were saying nothing and answering no questions from a concerned trade. Perhaps we just were not important enough?

There was little doubt that **Manganese Bronze Holdings** were having serious problems, having made losses for the previous four years whilst this year being hit by accounting errors and a recall of over 400 TX4s following a steering box fault.

Through the administrators, the company - which is 20% owned by China's **Geely International** - announced 156 redundancies including many long-term employees at their manufacturing facility in Holyfield Road. Some even tried locking themselves in, following the announcement that Manganese had failed in an attempt to obtain a loan from its Chinese partner in order to keep it going.

Around two weeks after the administrators went in, Coalition Business Secretary **Vince Cable** went onto local **BBC Midlands** TV to say that he hoped someone would step in to buy Manganese, whilst at the same time hoping that Geely would behave honorably - although he didn't say what he meant by that comment. However, in the Editor's November Editorial, **Alan Fisher** said that he hoped Geely's failure to extend a loan to MBH wasn't a back-door way of being able to buy the company on the cheap. Regardless of that, to those taxi drivers who couldn't drive their new TX4s because of the steering box recall, Mr Cable said that he was unable to do anything whilst the administrators were involved. He failed to say what he could do when they leave.

At the same time as Vince Cable said nowt, London Mayor **Boris Johnson** also said everything while actually saying nothing. He said that he was disappointed and concerned that no help had been provid-

**Call Sign asks Mayor Boris Johnson and Business Secretary Vince Cable to..**

*Please make up  
your mind!*



**Boris and Vince: Do they really want to help?**

ed for drivers by the administrators. He failed to mention that no financial help was ever received from the Mayor of London anyway!

This is the same Mayor who was still taking 15 year old taxis off the road at a time when new ones were being held up indefinitely through the steering box problem. The reason is that they are not *green*, yet with £millions in his coffers - enough to build pointless cable car river crossings and to look for third airport sites in the Thames estuary - he couldn't afford to help London's taxi drivers, who apparently are said to be part of his transport system, by subsidising the cost of new taxis.

**Call Sign** has put forward the suggestion on several occasions that as the London Taxi is specially adapted for dis-

abled passengers, that the Mayor, if he couldn't persuade the Chancellor to abandon it, could pay the VAT on each new taxi purchased. That would knock almost £7,000 off the price yet cost the Mayor's office very little compared to some of their other outgoings.

As Business Secretary, Vince Cable could also help by "convincing" Chancellor of the Exchequer **George Osborne** that the London taxi business needs assistance. So to the Mayor and Vince Cable, we ask them to make up their minds. Do they want to help us or not? We suspect we already know the answer...

**Ron Yarborough**  
**Call Sign Online**

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## A story for Christmas



# Colourful Christmas?

An old grey Metrocab stood alone on the temporary rank at Victoria Station. Its proprietor was an elderly man with the worry lines of 40 years of dealing with the public and driving in London etched upon his face. The normal queue for a taxi was absent and the station seemed to have taken a pause in spilling out its passengers.

It was 2 days before Xmas and it looked like it might be a white one, although the recent snowfall had been transformed into a dirty sludge by the movement of traffic and pedestrians.

A TX1 pulled up behind the grey cab and, recognising the number plate, the driver got out and walked up to the front of it.

"About time you donated this to the taxi museum, 'ennit Alf," said the other driver who was young and smiling and who probably looked a bit like Alf had 40 years back. "Was it 15 years or 50!"

"See me out, this one will," responded Alf seriously, but not taking offence.

"Could be any day now for you then, Alf, they reckon too much laughing is bad for you."

"Nothing to laugh about," replied the older man who, if laughing were the only thing you could die of, would definitely achieve immortality.

"D'you know, the last fare I got from here was Belgrave Road. Belgrave Road! And if it's not there, it's Peckham or East Dulwich."

The other cabbie was still smiling. He found it amusing to listen to Alf going on. In fact Alf had turned misery into an art form and if he ever cheered up, he would lose his uniqueness. It seemed he actually enjoyed being miserable...

"You do know it's Xmas, don't you, Alf?"

"So what," said Alf, his tired eyes looking up from beneath the checked cheese-cutter cap.

"I think I'll get you some 'happy pills' – put a bit of festive spirit in you," said the younger man.

"Don't need nothing like that, 'sides Xmas is over-rated," replied Alf with the enthusiasm you'd normally expect from a turkey.

"You should watch that film Scrooge over Xmas," said Mr TX1, "that'll make you think."

"It does," said Alf, "it makes me think why they don't put on something else – it's on every year!"

The two drivers were like a comedy act, with the younger one provoking and teasing and the other entrenched behind walls of misery.

"Okay, but you have to admit that Xmas brings out the best in people. They relax, they're looking forward to a few days off and even the tips are better. Come on, it's the season of goodwill, Alf!"

Looking as miserable as ever, Alf answered back: "Yeah, well you can overdo all that stuff you know. Kindness and generosity can bring a lot of trouble."

The young man looked at Alf astounded.

"Okay, here we go, you're going to tell me some gloomy story about how that is."

"You don't have to listen," said Alf.

The other driver looked towards the empty Hudsons Place rank where the queue should have been and sighed.

"Ok, go on, Alf, let's hear it..."

So Alf related his tale. "My son's a taxi driver and 2 weeks ago he

was driving along Oxford Street and stops for a woman loaded up with shopping and two kids. So he gets out and helps her in with the shopping and pushchair. He's a dad himself, so he carries a bag of sweets in his cab and he gives one each to her kids."

"He's definitely your son, is he Alf?"

Alf ignores the remark and continues... "So he takes them to Fulham, helps her out with the shopping and stuff and just as he's about to turn around, she calls out that she remembers she's left her key indoors."

So he gets out the cab again and sees a first-floor window open. After knocking on a few doors, he borrows a ladder from a neighbour, gets in through the window and lets

her in. She's so grateful and offers him an extra fiver but he won't take it. Then she says she's going to take his number and write to LTPH to tell them how wonderful he's been. He tells her not to bother and as she doesn't write anything down, how's she going to remember anyway?

"But somehow she does remember and writes a letter telling them how he picked her up in Oxford Street and all about her being locked out and that he's the best taxi driver she's ever met. And now he's in plenty of trouble with LTPH..."

Just then a man appeared at the window of his cab carrying several bags and a Xmas tree.

"East Dulwich," he said, interrupting

Alf's story.

"See what I mean," said Alf grimacing, "bloody Dulwich and two hundred pine needles on the floor!" With that he started up the cab.

"Hold on," says the youngster, "how can your son get into trouble because the lady writes a letter telling them how wonderful he was?"

"Yellow badge, ain't he," said Alf, driving his Metrocab off in a puff of smoke...



### Keith Reading

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During the past few years, I have organised several concerts on behalf of the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children**. You may also remember that together with the late **David Todhunter**, we founded an orchestra many years ago that was renamed as the **London Charity Orchestra**.

Now, with music in mind, I am establishing another orchestra: **The London Taxidriver's Symphony Orchestra**.

This new and exciting orchestra can only bring excellent public relation for our industry and give enjoyment to those who perform and listen to music. I am also pleased to say the LTDSO is affiliated to *Making Music*, *The National Federation of Music Societies*.

If you or anyone you know would like to know more please email [m.son@ltdso.co.uk](mailto:m.son@ltdso.co.uk) or login to [www.ltdso.co.uk](http://www.ltdso.co.uk) to complete an online application form.

#### **The Orchestra**

The London Taxi Drivers Symphony Orchestra will be comprised of a mixture of professional musicians, proficient players, students from various music academies working alongside enthusiastic amateurs who hold that deep felt desire to become an integral part of an orchestra, but have harboured reservations regarding their levels of musicianship.

#### **Why play music?**

We believe that making music is not only fun, but can also benefit those people within our society who are less fortunate. Making music brings people together and whilst we may not change the world, we can improve it through music.

# London Taxidriver's Symphony Orchestra

**Love Music, Play Music, Be Inspired**

*The London Taxidriver's Symphony Orchestra*



#### **Summary of the aims of the orchestra**

- To create a 'Buddy System' for those with lesser skills to be mentored and ultimately share in the enjoyment of becoming part of a team of talented members of a new and exciting orchestra.
- To provide an opportunity for musicians to perform in front of a live audience.
- To encourage more live music.
- To provide opportunities for composers to have their compositions premiered.
- To engage with and encourage new audi-

ences to appreciate great music in a welcoming atmosphere.

- To perform concerts in an effort to raise much needed revenue for charities and other worthy causes.

#### **Who can apply for membership?**

London taxi drivers and anyone associated with the taxi scene. We also accept associate members who just want to have fun and enjoy making music.

**Mike Son**  
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In 1957, ODRTS (now **Dial-a-Cab**) Founder-Chairman **Bonnie Martyn** created a huge sensation when following the successful launch of this Society at **Pentonville Road** four years earlier, he was asked to go to the beautiful Caribbean / Atlantic island of **Bermuda** to set up a radio-taxi company similar to the one he had successfully launched here in 1953. Money, Bonnie was told, was no object!

So Bonnie resigned from ODRTS – something for which many never forgave him – and travelled to Bermuda via New York and the **Queen Mary** on 28 December 1957. Sent at the same time on a freight ship were 12 **Austin A55s**, each fitted with **Pye 'reporter'** radios and which were going to be the beginnings of **Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs**.

After the successful launch of BTRC and making sure that it was on a sound footing, Bonnie returned to London and ODRTS as a Board member. However, his sudden departure to Bermuda had caused some friction – some even said jealousy as Bonnie had been very well paid for the job – and it was a short-lived return to Pentonville Road. But time healed the wounds and Bonnie became an honoured guest at many DaC functions over the years as well as a welcome visitor to our Brunswick House base. He died at the age of 93 in August 2002 – still in love with DaC.

But his Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs still operate and still use voice dispatch. Then in 2009, **Call Sign** was told that the company had received a stern warning from the *Bermuda Transport Control Department* demanding that

## It's a let-off for Bonnie's Bermuda BABIES!



**Brian Rice presenting Bonnie with a celebration plaque on his 90th birthday in 1999**

would now be to unify the Island's dispatching companies.

**"The Commission has determined that punitive measures against taxi owners and operators not**

**GPS compliant, would be ill-served at this particular stage of the modernisation process."**

*During several meetings with Dial-a-Cab Chairman Brian Rice and at well past the age of 90, Bonnie often showed himself fully behind modern technology, but we think deep down he would have been pleased to see that his "babies" are still pretty much as he left them!*

**Bonnie's Babies** – as he referred to them – should comply with the *Global Positioning Satellite* (GPS) legislation that had been passed in 2004. They also claimed that Radio Cabs were allegedly defying the law.

**Now Bermuda Taxi Radio Cabs lack of GPS will not be punished, although new initiatives are being prepared to benefit those operators who have the correct equipment and are fully compliant with the GPS regulations.**

In a statement released by the Bermuda Ministry of Transport, they said their focus

**Baghwat Singh  
Call Sign Online**

## LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

### Boundary changes... and Scotland

Am I missing the point, or is a lot of money being wasted by the Government on the proposed boundary changes to reduce the number of MPs in the **House of Commons** from 650 to 600? With a lot of money already having been spent on proposed boundary changes, the first reviews have been criticised and rewritten and still it appears that no one is happy with all three major political parties taking different stances, with further proposals to be scheduled for a vote sometime in 2013 and changes not scheduled to take effect until 2015 – after the next general election. That will mean a further five years of whichever Government we get before the vote and with it, any changes it brings actually having an effect.

Then, whilst all that is going on, there will be a referendum on independence for Scotland scheduled for 2014. Surely, whichever way that vote goes will have an effect on the number of MPs that will be sitting in the House. And if Scotland does vote for independence, then they will have the right to make their own boundary changes anyway.

It seems to be a lot of money being spent – or wasted – at a time when the Government is looking at ways to save money. Does it really make any difference to

### With Tom Quigley (Y33)



the economy to have fifty more or less MPs or actually having all those that were voted in doing jobs they are supposed to be doing and getting the country on its feet?

### Danny Baker off the air

With all the trouble at the BBC, the biggest shake up to me is the loss of **The Danny Baker Show** from its regular afternoon slot on **BBC London 94.9**.

Danny, along with his regular crew of **Amy Lamé** and **Baylen Leonard**, regular guests such as **Peter Kay** among others and with help from listeners including, no doubt many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, delivered a quick fire humorous show full of stories, tales and

asides on all manner of subjects.

With Danny normally throwing in two or three conversation strands, it would not be too long into the show before another unlikely and tenuous link led everyone down a totally different path and with this being radio, as a listener you'd use your own minds-eye and imagination to picture the scene of the tale being told.

One of my favourites was when Danny asked listeners for any tales about forgetting a famous name or getting their name wrong. That led to a caller who while touring Ireland with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and its special guest, legendary violinist **Yehudi Menuhin**, went to a local pub where a traditional Irish band were playing. After a few drinks, some of the crew joined in and with the great violinist playing on the fiddle, a good time was had by all.

At the end of the session, the Irish band leader thanked them and when asking for Yehudi's name, misheard it and in front of the whole pub said thanks to their special guest, **Yehudi McMennaman**!

It was stories and tales such as that one that for over 12 years have led Danny and his team to win many awards and plaudits. No amount of money-saving and figure crunching can replace pure talent. No doubt Danny will be working elsewhere, but for us to have had him on our local radio station has been a real pleasure...



Rarely is a Judge able to praise a witness in court, but that is exactly what Her Honour Judge Patricia Lees did when DaC driver John Ward (R88) appeared at Snaresbrook Crown Court to give evidence of the carnage he witnessed while driving along the A13 in September 2010. John related the events of that fateful night to Call Sign, details of which some might find disturbing.

"I was travelling home after work along the A13 eastbound towards the M25 at around 01.15 in the morning on Thursday 9 September 2010, a date I won't forget for a long time. I was in the middle lane of the three-lane carriageway keeping to a steady 40 mph, aware of the speed cameras along that section of road when a dark coloured BMW 640 coupe with the distinctive registration P1MP R undertook my cab at very high speed, probably twice that of my cab, so about 80 mph. When you've been driving as long as I have - 43 years - you get a sense of judgement about such things.

The cab shook with the speed and closeness of the BMW coming up the inside lane to pass me and then just as erratically, turned left into a BP fuel station just after the A406 junction. It took me a few seconds to recover my composure after such a close call, but I carried on my way towards home. As I passed the car now in the fuel station, I could see two people in it - a woman passenger and a male driver. They appeared to be laughing while I thought such driving was no laughing matter.

As I carried on towards home and by now approaching Rainham Marshes still sitting in the middle lane of the three lane carriageway where there is a speed limit of 70 mph, the BMW that I had seen earlier suddenly came out of nowhere from behind me and overtook me on my right hand side at a very high speed indeed, a speed I can only describe as quite unbelievable. I looked up the road and saw it was clear for about two miles ahead and in the blink of an eye, the BMW had disappeared out of sight. I have never seen any road car being driven at that sort of speed - a speed I likened to a *Formula 1* racing car. I estimated his speed at around 150 mph! As he overtook me, the road ahead was clear but I was still quite shaken by the velocity and closeness to my cab as he sped off into the distance. I was just glad that he was out of my way. I opened all the cab windows and took some deep breaths to regain my composure and travelled steadily on towards the M25 junction where the road sweeps left on a long bend and over the brow of a hill.

As I approached the bottom of the hill, I saw the same BMW very badly damaged, obviously having been in collision with something. It had come to rest between the slow and middle lanes of the carriageway ahead of me. There was steam and a strong smell of petrol coming from the engine and

# DaCMan Hero!



debris all over the road. It resembled a scene from a disaster movie.

I looked around but couldn't see anything else that may have been involved, so I pulled the cab across the lanes at ninety degrees to the hard shoulder and put my hazard lights on. I saw the driver at the passenger door of the BMW helping the young girl out of the car. He showed no sign of injury, but the young lady looked distressed, crying and limping as they passed me walking away from the scene.

**I walked toward the BMW as they passed me along the hard shoulder. As the driver walked by me he asked *what happened* but I didn't answer as I had more important things to do by securing the road for my own and others safety to prevent further accidents, as I was the first person to be on the scene.**

I looked around in the dark, wondering what he had hit as I could see no other vehicle or obstacle in the vicinity, but then I spotted another car; stationary at a 45 degree angle to the road, facing up the banking some distance ahead. I ran over to see if I could help, but the impact must have been so severe that it had been damaged beyond recognition.

I saw a man slumped in the drivers' seat. His lower torso was in the driving position, but his upper body was twisted at ninety degrees to the left, facing towards the passenger seat of the car while his head was completely turned backwards towards the rear of the car, which had been projected several hundred yards up the road following the collision. His head was bleeding profusely and there was blood all over the window. He wasn't moving at all."

*At this point we briefly stopped as the memory was visibly bringing back awful memories for John.*

"I pulled frantically at the driver's door in an attempt to get the man out of the car, which I thought could explode at any moment as fuel was spilling everywhere, but it would not budge. The door had been crushed into the bodywork and would not

give way, despite using all my strength to try to free it. I also tried the rear door, while all the time the seconds were ticking away and I was concerned the car would catch fire. That too didn't open. I found a large piece of concrete to smash the window, but the rock just bounced off the glass. I used my mobile to call 999, requesting all the emergency services. They arrived very quickly.

To my amazement, the BMW driver took no part in this rescue operation, but just continued to walk away with his female passenger. Then I saw another cab weaving its way through this mayhem, there being debris and car parts strewn across the road. I waved him down, asking his assistance by parking his cab next to mine in order to block off the two near-side lanes, which he did. While still on the phone to the emergency services, I motioned to him to try to release the man from the battered car even though I assumed the man must have died because he had not moved since the impact. But I felt it was worth a try if at all possible.

We were stopped just over and around the brow of the hill, making our own position very dangerous indeed as there was traffic still speeding past us at 70 mph limit as the 'fast' lane was still open. One car then skidded as it hit some flotsam on the road and collided with the central reservation barrier, coming to a stop in the middle of the one lane that remained open! As they got out to inspect their vehicle damage, I shouted across to them to put the hazard lights on as a warning to others and to get out of the roadway a bit smartish, which thankfully they did. Then a truck came along and I suggested he parked sideways across the entire three lanes of the carriageway to block the road completely to prevent further accidents or loss of life, which the trucker speedily did.

By this time, other people not directly involved in the incident began to assist at the scene, so as the police had all my details I decided to leave. I had done my best to help reduce any further loss of life or even vehicle/property damage and felt I had done the right thing for the dead man's family. When I got home, I made notes about the incident while they were still fresh in my mind in case I was called as a witness in due course, which turned out to be the case.

**Appallingly, I found out during the trial that the man I tried to save, Sukhpreet Singh Chimber, was a thirty year old father of three children, with his wife expecting their fourth child."**

*The 4.5 litre BMW 6 Series that passed John at speeds of up to 155 mph was in the hands of a driver who was showing off to his girlfriend passenger following an earlier argument. He had a previous motoring conviction and had been jailed in 2008 for wounding with intent.*

At Snaresbrook Crown Court, 25-year old

*continued on page 13*



## Obituary

# Paula Mattis

Many drivers will remember former Dial-a-Cab receptionist, Paula Mattis. Sadly Paula died in November and we asked one of her daughters, Rebecca, if she would like to write a few words about her mum.

"My mother joined DaC in the **Shirland Road** days and became an evening supervisor in what I guess is now known as a call centre, but in those far-off days it was just a basement.

Back then mum smoked along with everyone else - a docket in one hand and a ciggie in the other! On Saturdays, she often held the fort as the back channel operator where drivers would go to get details or query job details until **Lou Gitlin** came in and took over. Drivers may well remember her loudly asking them to 'stand by' if too many came on at the same time! 'Stand by' almost became her nickname!

She eventually became evening receptionist after the move to Brunswick Place until she retired some years ago. She may have still been a redhead when she started there, but was soon a blonde - with a perm in the eighties of course!

Mum was a friend to everyone, a great listener and staunch keeper of secrets. She often threatened to write about the goings on at work (changing the names to protect the innocent of course), but then thought that the tales would not have been believable!

As lovely as she was, she was no pushover either, as you'd soon find out if anyone behaved badly towards her. She also always stood up for her friends and for those she thought had been given a rough ride or were considered to be underdogs.

**Mum was born in London and lived there all her life. She leaves behind a husband, two daughters, five grandchildren, and many, many friends..."**



## PCN request from Barrie Segal



Dial-a-Cab's PCN expert, Barrie Segal has an incredible record of getting Penalty Charge Notices cancelled. However, he is asking for some assistance from DaC drivers and asked if *Call Sign* could put a message out:

"Can I ask that all drivers please write the date of receipt on all Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs), Notices to Owner, Notices of Rejection Charge Certificates, Orders for Recovery and any other correspondence they receive relating to a PCN and then take photocopies before they send it to Jacqui Franklin in Drivers Services. This will help enormously, particularly where councils claim they never received an appeal or where they say they sent out a notice of rejection which they claim was ignored."

Barrie Segal

### DaCMan Hero *continued...*

**Shehzad Munir** was found guilty by jury of dangerous driving and jailed for seven years. He was also banned from driving for eight years.

Judge Patricia Lees told Munir: "The sentence can never reflect the loss of life caused by your arrogant, idiotic and irresponsible behaviour and I have no doubt the victim died because you were showing off to your girlfriend following a previous falling out. Your driving has been described as that of a Formula One driver. The distance travelled at excessive speed was six miles."

The judge went on to commend John Ward for what she described as his "selfless bravery, presence of mind and swift actions, which undoubtedly saved many lives." She awarded him £500 from the Sherriff's Fund as a token of appreciation of the public.

*The High Sheriff of London will also be presenting John with an award at an official ceremony...*

#### The Crown Court at Snaresbrook

##### *Regina v Shehzad Munir*

It is not often that a judge is in a position to be able to publicly acknowledge the actions of a witness in a case. It is therefore a pleasure to be able to do so in this case in respect of John Ward, a man whose selfless bravery, presence of mind and swift action undoubtedly saved many lives.

Mr Ward is a London black taxi driver who was driving home in September 2010 after an evening's work in London. After the defendant drove past him in the manner Mr Ward described as akin to a Formula One driver at a speed in the region of 150mph, Mr Ward followed in his path only to be confronted by the horrific scene this fatal collision must have been.

Despite his own inevitable shock, he parked his cab across the A13 with its hazard lights on and ran to try to help Mr Chimber, desperately trying to free him until he realised there was nothing he could do to save him, at the same time calling 999.

He then turned his attention to averting further disasters on the road and took control of the situation before the arrival of the emergency services; he persuaded the driver of an articulated lorry to block the whole road and alert oncoming traffic to prevent further loss of life or harm.

He is to be commended for his actions and I award him £500 from the Sherriff's Fund as a small token of the appreciation of the public.

*John Daly  
Clerk of the Court*

The court thanked John for undoubtedly saving lives



# Steering problem fixed!

On Thursday 15 November, the first signs of a smile for some time were seen at the Coventry home of **Manganese Bronze Holdings** when it was announced that they had found a solution to the steering problems that had caused over 400 new TX4s to be taken off the road and which, because they had to stop selling cabs, tipped the company into administration under **Pricewaterhouse Coopers**.

Administrator **Matthew Hammond** said they hoped to have completed all the work by mid-December with a "rapid replacement" of the affected parts in the recalled vehicles beginning within 48 hours. The replacement part is UK-sourced.

A total of 156 jobs were lost at the group's head office / manufacturing facility in Coventry and their dealerships in London, Leeds, Coventry, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The administrators say they will continue to work with the Mayor, Transport for London and the LTDA and suggested that 500 new TX4 taxis will be going onto the market with the new part, early in the new year.



Manganese Bronze to begin work again?

## DaC Credit Union

# LAST CHANCE BEFORE CHRISTMAS



Christmas for you!

Have your kids told you that they now need an iPad or laptop in their room for homework! Yes? Well this could be an expensive

There are many reputable shops offering cheap laptops and iPads etc – but only if you pay outright. It's when you want to pay off that it suddenly become expensive. We've seen £800 packages with 48 monthly payments of £24.28 that end up costing £1165 – an extra £365. That's just one example!

Now look at the **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union**. That £800 loan over 12 months at £72 would cost you just £53 extra in interest. Even over 36 months, you would pay nowhere near **PC World's** rate.

If DACCU loaned you £1000 over 36 months, that would cost you just £34 a month and a total of £195 in interest, probably around one third of the total interest the big electrical stores would charge you for not paying the whole amount up front.

The **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union** now has around 1000 members and enough funds to cover most loans. It costs you nothing to join and if you do not want to borrow money, contrary to rumour, you pay no fine and you can just continue saving – and saving is the only compulsory thing about DACCU. You have to save a set amount regularly. How much you save is entirely up to you, but the more you save, the more you can borrow! And of course your savings can be taken back whenever you want

them or if you would like a loan, very often just a quick phone call will do it – no dressing up and begging the bank manager or looking for loans with shark companies where 1000+ per cent interest in normal!

The DACCU is for drivers and staff of **Dial-a-Cab**, but anyone in your family can also become a member in their own right with all the loan benefits that it offers.

## Harp Credit Union

As with DACCU, the above also applies to the **Harp Credit Union**. It has the same terms and conditions, except it is for **non-Dial-a-Cab** members or their families. If you remember from my previous articles, this CU was having problems and the **Financial Services Authority** asked DACCU to take it on because of our experience in making our credit union so successful. And so far so good; it has gone from a minus figure to a £25,000 surplus, so we must be doing something right! So come on down to Hackney Road and join either DACCU or the Harp Credit Unions. You

know it makes sense – and this will be your last chance before Christmas.

You can contact the **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union** on 020 7729 8171 or 020 7749 0585 or go to the office at Unit 14, **Peterley Business Centre**, 472 Hackney Road, E2...

**John Riley (K38)**  
Vice-President **Dial-a-Cab** and  
**Harp Credit Unions**

# SAVINGS!

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You are welcome to visit  
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Chelsfield Lane,  
Orpington, Kent BR6 7RS

**Instant Kitchen and  
Bedroom & Blinds UK**

Call Ian (R50) on **01689 897111...**

## Call Sign

**December 2012**

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## App day here...

With 1st December being the launch date for the new Dial-a-Cab Credit Card app, I would like to point out to all drivers that this facility will only be as good as the service you provide. The Board was inundated with drivers telling us that we were losing out with our technology and being left behind by those new companies using application technology to book taxis.

Well, we have developed our app - in house I hasten to add - and how successful it will be only time will tell. But again, a reminder that all credit card work will be dispatched as A/D in the same way as it is by our competitors. It was felt that for us to compete, we needed to mask the destination. But coverage will be monitored very closely and our Controllers have been instructed *not* to unmask trips to get them covered. They have, however, been advised to send fleet messages to say the trips are worth a look and wherever possible, they will try and help anyone who will be running much further than the trip is going.

Don't forget also that the 12.5 percent handling charge has been reduced to a straight 10 percent and the previous telephone booking fee of £2 has also been dropped. The £4.20 run in applies, but as always it's your decision if you want to arrive with this amount showing on the meter. To rival our competitors, it will be the driver's decision as to when the meter is engaged, but please remember that £4.20 is the maximum amount that can be displayed on the meter.

All scrubs will be charged to the credit card, which will hopefully encourage rather than discourage drivers to do this work. Our full *terms and conditions* are there for online bookers to view before making a booking. They are also on our telephone system for callers to listen to and when downloading the app, users have to tick to say they accept the terms. Our contact centre staff have all been trained and for a very long time now

## CONTACT CENTRE CHAT

With Keith Cain



have been asking all credit card callers if they have listened to the terms and conditions. If a caller says they have not heard them, the CSR will explain to them what the terms are. I believe we are all set to go for the 1st December and as I said at the beginning, this work will only be as good as the service you, the drivers, are prepared to give...

### And booking in...

I am still being questioned daily by all controllers about the problem of drivers booking into zones incorrectly. I'd love to have a £1 for every time I have written about this in the magazine. Well, here goes again...

Will those drivers who book in incorrectly into a zone please refrain from doing so. If you book in believing that by the time you actually get into that zone, you will be far enough up the queue to get a job, well unfortunately your actions are causing so many problems for the controllers to get the work covered and more so, to the service we offer

clients. The information we give them regarding how long their cab will be becomes wrong.

I know I'm repeating myself, but remember that when a client makes a booking our telephonist can see the number of cabs booked into the pick-up zone. If they see at least one cab booked in, they will offer a 10 to 15 minute arrival time. I am talking now about the inner zones. If the cab rejects the trip, it will then go to the backup zones and if those cabs are booked in incorrectly, not only is the original time offered by the CSR totally incorrect, but the controller will have no idea how to deal with the trip to get it covered. The controllers will give every driver one chance and talk to them and explain the fact that he or she is booked in incorrectly. That conversation is logged on the driver's file so that if the driver is spoken to by another controller, they can see what has been said by the first controller. If you are spoken to a third time, you can be guaranteed that it will be by the Compliance Officer.

Believe it or not, drivers are fooling each other as well. You see a number of cabs booked into a zone and think it's not worth going in there as you will have to wait ages for a trip. So you go off and book in a zone that you are nowhere near. Then the spiral continues to the extent that no driver is where they say they are. That's the extreme case scenario, but it could happen. So please book in correctly and help us give the service our clients are paying top dollar for.

Keith Cain

Contact Centre Manager  
Drivers Operation Manager

## When landlords ruled the earth

Millions of years ago, we had dinosaurs ruling the Earth. In today's modern world, it seems we have landlords who rule the Earth, exercising their brutal power and superiority over the rest of Earth's inhabitants.

**In prehistoric times, there were two distinct types of dinosaur: The friendly, approachable, herbivorous, vegetation-eating dinosaur and the fearsome flesh-eating carnivorous dinosaur.**

Today's landlords fall into similar categories: The friendly, approachable landlord and the fearsome unapproachable type who will suck all the blood out of you; ie take all your money and leave you with a leaking roof!

**As London taxi drivers, we sometimes get to hear about these stories. A French passenger who got into my cab in Queensgate was on her way to give the agency that let her the flat, a piece of her mind. She had not had any hot water for three weeks, despite paying over £1,000 per week for her one-bedroom apartment!**

Part of the problem, she said, was that the owner lived in the Middle East and although the agency had sent someone round on a few occasions to inspect the boiler and tank, it was still unsolved! Her friends, who lived round the corner in Stanhope Gardens, also had similar problems; again, their landlord wasn't resident in the UK.

**They'd had a broken freezer and washing machine for eight months, whilst again paying in the region of £1,000 per week! These high rents are what people are willing to pay in these top-drawer areas of London such as South Kensington, where £10,000 per week is not uncommon for an apartment complex.**

It's a very lucrative market for landlords - if they are wealthy enough to invest in it. Unfortunately there are few rules and regulations on landlords and there is a strong case for more regulation to be forced through Parliament to protect people renting in the private sector. More regulation, however, seems unlikely when you consider that many MPs are property barons themselves. That's apart from the growing number with extra jobs outside Westminster. It's usually those held in high esteem that spout on about the long-term strategy required in politics, but are on personal, short-term, get-rich-quick agendas. It beggars belief how some get time to be an MP!

**With the austerity measures in full flow now and people having to pay these extortionate rents, there is less disposable income for other areas; as we now see with car makers in trouble and indeed, our own black cab makers, Manganese Bronze, suffering in administration.**

It's no surprise then, that flat hunters today in London are filled with trepidation as they enter this *Jurassic Park* of the good, the bad and the ugly...

David Heath (Ex-W27)





If you were around in the 1980s, you may well remember a brilliant drama series written by **Alan Bleasdale**. *The Boys from the Black Stuff* looked at the way in which a bad economic climate could affect ordinary British workers and followed the tarmac layers as they looked for work while bringing the phrase of 'Gis a job' into the English language.

Perhaps in the 1980s, London taxi drivers - who of course already had jobs - may have had the 'front' to ask for a gratuity, whereas nowadays a *legal* is just swallowed. But sometimes there are more subtle ways of asking. **Bernie Cochran's** (V92) number plate way perhaps!

"Yes, collecting personalised number plates is indeed a hobby of mine and I am also happy to be recognised on the road," **Bernie** told *Call Sign* while standing by his **TIP OK Dial-a-Cab** taxi "I also have another three cherished number plates on other vehicles within our family, but the one that has given me the most grief is the one affixed to my wife's car - **B1ERN**."

"I have been stopped by the police on several occasions who claimed that the number and letters are too close together, making it look like **BERN** and therefore illegal. On one occasion I was stopped while returning from holiday in south-west England and I had obviously upset the Devon & Cornwall constabulary because the policeman admitted that they would look until they found something after pulling me over!"

"They proceeded to measure the distance between all the figures on the number plate and apparently his on-board *ANPR* confirmed that I had already been stopped for the same



**Bernie and cherished number plate**

reason before and gave me 24 hours to get it changed, claiming that if he saw me again he would definitely find something!

"While we were having this exchange of words, his colleague was checking the car tyres etc and clearly looking for a reason to nick me," **Bernie** added.

"His attitude ruffled *my* feathers, and as we frequently holiday in Devon I decided to ensure all the digits were strictly legit, just in

case it had not been an idle threat!"

**Bernie** went on to explain the procedure to obtain cherished - or personalised - number plates either through the DVLA or agents who regularly advertise in motoring magazines. The DVLA will confirm the sale by issuing a certificate, which can be presented at your chosen store for the number plate to be made up. The plate must also show the company name and other details of who made the plate up in order to satisfy legal requirements.

"That," **Bernie** told *Call Sign* "is why you see all such information clearly displayed at the bottom of the number plate."

**Alan Green**  
Call Sign Online

## The Last Christmas Present...



**All throughout the year I read in *Call Sign* of Dial-a-Cab drivers giving up their precious time and punishing their bodies just to help other less fortunate people.**

Whether it is a cycle ride across different countries, gruelling marathons, punishing press-ups, strenuous swimming or crucifying climbing, these drivers just want to give back something to society, just because they are able to do so. They are not all super-fit athletes; some have suffered bad illnesses and just want to repay their thanks for being given a second chance.

So as you sit at the Christmas dining table looking at the wonderful feast of turkey, roast potatoes, brussels sprouts, stuffing, cranberry sauce and that lovely thick gravy, there are some out there who will be cutting down on their intake as they will need a fit body to undertake a challenging task.

**I personally know how hard it is for charities at this time, when the public is trying to tighten their purse strings as earning money gets harder. I have run a charity which realises terminally ill children's dreams; I have done this for over twenty years assisted by some very good hardworking friends.**

You will have read last month - and I believe again in this issue - about one of our drivers, **Divyesh Ruparelia** (V59). He is once again trying to raise money for four charities including Dial-a-Dream and one for our troops who have had their bodies torn apart in what sometimes seems to be a pointless war. He is going to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in January 2013 and funding all his travel expenses from his own pocket.

**He has asked me to explain once again how you can donate to Dial-a-Dream. You can go to [www.CAFonline.org](http://www.CAFonline.org) and press the *Donate Now* button. When it asks for a charity name or number, enter 1011637 or Dial-a-Dream, then follow the instructions.**

In the twenty years we have been running our charity, no committee member has been given a penny of what you donate. All monies go to the children. By helping Dial-a-Dream, you may possibly be giving the last Christmas present that a terminally ill child will ever receive in their short life.

*Thank you for reading this article and we hope you and your family will have a wonderful Christmas and a very healthy New Year.*

**Tom Whitbread**  
Dial-a-Dream

## London Bridge Station works

Some closures of London Bridge Station will take place on the following dates as part of the ongoing London Bridge Quarter and station works. They are:

**Saturday 1 Dec / Sunday 2 Dec and Sat 15 Dec / Sun 16 Dec 2012**

During these times, a marshalled temporary taxi rank will be in operation in **Tooley Street**. The head of the rank will be in the bay in Tooley Street, outside of the station and to the west of the **London Dungeon**. This bay will be for 3 taxis and the taxi rank opposite **More London** will be extended to 6 spaces. The More London taxi rank and the loading bays between More London and the station will be used as a feeder rank.

**Traffic marshals will be present at the temporary rank and drivers should follow the directions of those marshals.**

By the time you read this, Christmas will be almost upon us, so no doubt you will be running around sorting out last minute plans and getting those presents wrapped! Last month I told you about my recommended stocking fillers for 2012, so this month I thought I'd give you the rundown on a few interesting websites that your kids might like. So if they are stuck with nothing to do – as kids today so often seem to be regardless of the vast amount of entertainment available to them – then perhaps you can fill a post-Christmas afternoon with these websites.

A word of warning to all parents regarding the Internet: please be aware that although the Internet is a wonderful resource of information, illicit and/or illegal content is only a few clicks away. Children are naturally curious. Growing up in the digital age, they are often more savvy than we parents. Consequently it doesn't take much for them to stumble upon unpleasant websites. Please use protection on all your home computers like OpenDNS ([www.opendns.org](http://www.opendns.org)), K9 Web Protection ([www.k9webprotection.com](http://www.k9webprotection.com)). But above all, be sure to monitor your children's Internet activity.

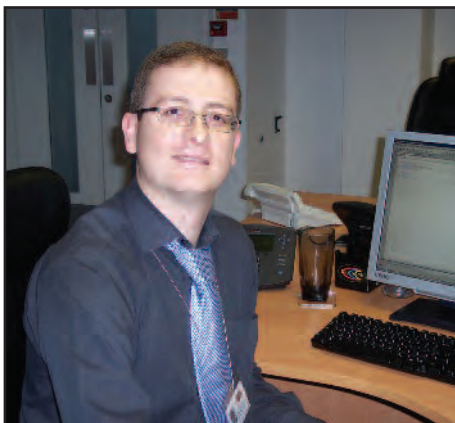
Anyway, onto the websites!

**1. Club Penguin** ([www.clubpenguin.com](http://www.clubpenguin.com)) : This website is hugely popular with kids ages 6-14. Essentially, it's a *massively multiplayer online game* (MMO) based in a virtual winter-world. Players get their own igloo and penguin character which they can name and customise. It's free to play; however, in order to make further customisation and access all areas within the virtual world, members will need to pay a monthly subscription fee (currently from £2.50 per month). This is a great way for kids to socialise with their friends and make new ones. It's a very controlled, safe environment which is ideal for small children.

**2. Pottermore** ([www.pottermore.com](http://www.pottermore.com)): Unless you've been living under a rock for the last decade, then you'll have at least heard about the phenomenon that is **Harry Potter**. If your children are Potter fans who have read all the books, seen all the films and played all the games but still cannot get enough Pottermania, then look no further than the Pottermore website. Run by J.K Rowling herself, Pottermore allows you to explore the Harry Potter story further on this interactive

## A few things to help keep children quiet over the Christmas holidays!

# Interesting websites for kids



website. An absolute must for any Potter fan.

**3. Pixton** ([www.pixton.com/uk](http://www.pixton.com/uk)): This website is an excellent resource for the budding comic book writer. Members can create free digital comics using the user-friendly tools available, allowing them to put their creative skills to a fun use. Members can also share their comics with other members, publish their comics and watch how-to videos to help them.

**4. HowStuffWorks** ([www.howstuffworks.com](http://www.howstuffworks.com)) : If you have inquisitive children who want to know how stuff works and you find yourself lost for an answer, then fear not! HowStuffWorks is an excellent resource (run by the **Discovery Channel**), which provides thousands of explanations and concise videos explaining how things work. This is a really interesting website for all ages, so you're bound to find something of interest here yourself. If you have an iPad, there is also a free iPad app to accompany the website – just search the App store for HowStuffWorks.

**5. Gaming on the iPad/iPad Mini/iPhone/Android.** If you are giving your children an iDevice this Christmas, whether that be an Apple or Android device, then no doubt they will want to buy games and apps for their new

toy. So how do you navigate through the veritable miasma of second-rate rubbish to find the best apps? All you need do is send your kids to the following reputable websites where they can read unbiased reviews on pretty much every game or app that's out there. Get them in the habit of checking reviews, ratings and gameplay footage *before* buying, and they'll save you a small fortune over time! For iOS devices (iPad/iPad Mini/iPhone etc), check out: [www.toucharcade.com](http://www.toucharcade.com) & [www.slidetoplay.com](http://www.slidetoplay.com). For Android devices (Google Nexus 7, Samsung Galaxy S3 etc.), check out: [www.droidgamers.com](http://www.droidgamers.com) & [www.gamespot.com/android](http://www.gamespot.com/android). For both iOS and Android devices you can also check out the excellent [www.pocketgamer.co.uk](http://www.pocketgamer.co.uk).

**6. Common Sense Media** ([www.common-sensemedia.org](http://www.common-sensemedia.org)): Admittedly this isn't strictly a kid's website. However, as a parent, this website is very useful in helping you decide what content is suitable for your children to view. How many times have your kids asked to view a film which has an age rating that is older than they are, but their friends have seen it? Or perhaps you've let them watch a PG which you felt afterward was unsuitable for them. This website helps navigate you through the minefield of movies, TV shows, websites, Apps and video games by providing you with all the facts. Other parents provide ratings and reviews, indicating what age(s) they feel are appropriate for the content as well as what to expect from the film/game/app/website. You need never be in doubt again when looking for suitable content for your children. If you have an iPad, there is also a free iPad app to accompany the website – just search the App store for Common Sense Media.

*Well, that's all for now. I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas. See you next year!*

**Jon Winterburn**



Meeting advising that it will be held at:

**The HAC, Armoury House, City Road, London EC1Y 2BQ on Sunday 3rd February 2013 at 11:00hrs.**

The meeting this year will consider an agenda including the Election of Officers and any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions, all of which should have been received at **Dial-a-Cab House** on or before 09:00hrs on Monday 12th November 2012 and in accordance with Society Rules.

**Howard Pears  
Company Secretary**

## Notice of DaC AGM

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London's taxi trade is world famous. The traditional London Taxi is hailed as an iconic vehicle; yes, there have been problems with these vehicles and there have been occasions when the manufacturer, **London Taxi Company**, has not dealt with the trade in the way their customers would have liked. There has been a certain amount of what might be described by some as arrogance over the years and this has perhaps stemmed from those in the offices at Coventry not having a complete understanding of the way the trade works in London, but nonetheless, it is sad news that MBH is in administration. This in itself has caused some problems for drivers, with some garages refusing to carry out warranty work, the possibility of some spares not being available and the general unrest caused when the administrators made 156 staff redundant both in London at Brewery Road and at the head office in Coventry. Initial signs are that there is a good deal of interest in the company and we can hope that it will continue, the iconic vehicle is still in demand by passengers.

But it is not just the vehicle which is iconic; it is the driver too. Studying the KoL is a serious commitment and once the driver is given his badge, there is a great sense of pride in what he has studied for. At this point, the new butterboy or girl will be looking at the charities and organisations the trade in London has to offer. Some will join an association such as the LTDA or the LCDC and it is hoped that these organisations can lobby the licensing authority and others in government to ensure that the iconic taxi trade continues to service the public in the best way possible at a reasonable cost. Then the butterboy might decide to join one of the trade's charities or offer to help with the worthwhile outings and events that the trade is also famous for. However it takes little to upset the balance of fund raising and good feeling for these charities, sometimes by someone who is ignorant of the way things are done. For example, the recent furore caused by a charitable donation to one of the charities from **Addison Lee** chairman **John Griffin**; in the end the committee for the charity decided that the donation had to be returned but the rumours and comments within the trade caused some upset at the time.

So now on to the subject matter of one of the latest articles in the trade press, concerning both the iconic vehicle and also another charity, this time the **Magical Taxi Tour**. It is now common knowledge that one of the main problems which tipped MBH into administration was a recall for a steering problem on some TX4 taxis. Unfortunately, this problem surfaced just at the time of the preparations for the Disney trip were almost complete.

For the record, both I and the committee for this annual outing would like to thank The London Taxi Company for their help in ensuring the trip suffered as little impact as possible. On the day before the trip left Canary Wharf, as in previous years, those cab drivers taking part in the trip took their vehicles to Station Road, Tufnell Park, to the premises of RTG to have the pre-trip checks and also have sponsorship logos attached. Again as usual, this operation was carried out in a slick, professional manner. Once all the checks were completed and they were ready for the trip, some of the committee and drivers went to stay in hotels near Canary Wharf. Some of the children and their carers stay in a hotel the night before the trip as they have travelled a

Following an article in a trade paper suggesting that new TX4s were taken away on the back of transporter trucks during the recent Disneyland Paris trip after the steering recall, DaC driver and WCHCD Magical Taxi Tour Committee Chairman, **Phil Davis (F10)** responds...

## PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT



long way to join the trip; some of the sponsors also joined the group for an evening meal. It was prior to this meal when **Matthew Cheyne** from The London Taxi Company first got the telephone call to advise him that the steering problem may be affecting some of the cabs on the trip. He had a list of those cabs affected and the committee then gave him the names of the drivers of those vehicles. The quick, efficient way this was dealt with by The London Taxi Company meant the committee were confident that those cabs affected would be replaced the following morning at Canary Wharf. Various options in an emergency meeting at the hotel with both the committee and Matthew Cheyne had been discussed and no-one wanted to have to tell any of the families that they were not able to go on the trip.

On the Friday morning, the cabs affected were swapped at Canary Wharf. One report in a trade paper said that these cabs were put on transporters at the Disneyland resort on the Saturday morning, but this is not the case. In fact the swap was done discreetly early on Friday morning without any of the families knowing why their vehicle was being changed. For the most part, it was only those drivers of the affected cabs who knew that there was a problem, most of the other drivers on the trip were unaware of the changes taking place. The replacement 10 vehicles arrived courtesy of The London Taxi Company, driven by some of the staff from the Brewery Road dealership who then took away the cabs which were affected by the recall. The replacement cabs joined the back of the convoy and the Magical Taxi Tour got underway. At this point in time, the recall had not been announced by VOSA and The London Taxi Company. However, by the time the convoy had reached Dover, the recall had been announced and the following Monday national news bulletins had announced that MBH was applying to appoint administrators and in true cab trade

fashion, the rumours began.

It is worth pointing out that the recall procedure is rigorous with VOSA; just recently many Toyota vehicles, including some of the Prius models favoured by the PH trade in London have become the subject of a recall for a steering problem.

Whether you feel little sympathy for the company, or whether you are one of the cab trade who has contacted the company to offer them moral support at this difficult time, it should be remembered that the taxi trade charities are all grateful for the support that the company has offered over the years. The Magical Taxi Tour has taken place for 19 consecutive years now and for many of these the fuel has been sponsored by LTI or The London Taxi Company as it is now. Staff from the dealership have helped at the Big Breakfast giving the children spending money, some of the sales staff have driven cabs on the trip and their support has been much appreciated. It would be a shame if an article such as the one which has appeared recently and which is inaccurate in so many ways, was responsible for colouring the judgement of future sponsors or if the hospitals whose patients take part lose confidence in the event. After all, it brings smiles to the faces of children whose on-going treatments would make many an adult cry.

**Phil Davis (F10)**

**The Magical Taxi tour Committee**

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*DaC driver Sean Farrell (B39) looks at trade history from a different angle*

# The Brethren of the Whip

## Dining out on a job...

**I**t was 1850 and **William Kirk** had taken two women home and been paid a shilling for the 8d journey upfront. When he set down however, he demanded being paid again and though they tried to convince him he had already been paid, they gave him another shilling and took his badge number (980). At Lambeth police court, he was charged with drunkenness, extortion (in claiming an extra shilling) and insolent behaviour. He was very contrite in front of the magistrates and apologised for his behaviour. He explained that he had a wife and three children and it was so unlike him to get drunk, but it was his previous passenger's fault.

He explained (as dictated by the court reporter): **"I'm werry sorry, yer worship. I'm the man wot drove Mrs Manning... and when I tells gentlemen on it they gives me wine to drink, and on this here day two gents give me a little too much wine, so that was the cause on it, yer worship."**

He didn't have to say any more, everyone knew who he was. The previous year, **Patrick O'Connor** - a clerk at the London Docks - went missing. Police interviewed his colleagues and friends including a **Mr and Mrs Manning**. In fact O'Connor and **Maria Manning** were more than just friends; they were lovers, a tryst that Mr Manning was not only aware of but condoned by him as well. When the police returned to the Manning household in Minver Place, New Weston Street, Bermondsey a few days later, they found the place deserted. The house had been cleared, there was no furniture, no personal effects, but they did find Patrick O'Connor's naked body under a flagstone in the kitchen.

The police believed that O'Connor had been killed in one of the bedrooms, possibly at a time when he was in bed with Mrs Manning. He had been drugged, bludgeoned and shot through the head. It also transpired later that after the murder, Mrs Manning had gone to O'Connor's house and robbed it of all the valuables and money she could carry. A nationwide search was put out for the Mannings. There were rumours that they had escaped to France with the intent of fleeing to the United States. Rewards were posted but still no one came forward, at least not for two weeks, when **William Kirk** suddenly realised he had information.

He later told the police he was called off the **Joiner Street** rank by Mrs Manning, who spoke with an accent as if she was from Essex or Sussex (she was Swiss) and also that she had a whale over her face (a veil). But from what he could make out, she was very attractive (which was agreed by everyone who saw her). He had gone to Minver Place and put several boxes in the cab; one was too heavy and was left behind. They went to London Bridge Station where some of the boxes were deposited for forward travel to France. He then took her to Euston (Square) Station where she took a train to Edinburgh (then possible on the west coast line). Within an hour of Scotland Yard contacting the police in Edinburgh, Mrs Maria Manning was arrested and was later on her way back to London. Kirk was



**Maria Manning**

awarded £5 for his information. Another driver who gave information that led to the arrest of Mr Manning in Jersey also received £5.

**Charles Dickens** witnessed the public execution of the Mannings outside **Horsemonger Lane Gaol** and decried the whole sordid spectacle in a letter to *The Times*.

None of this washed a year later with the magistrate in Lambeth, but fortunately for Kirk the complainant asked for only a small penalty to be imposed because of Kirk's family and his contrition. He was fined £1 or be imprisoned for 20 days in default. He

paid the £1.

Exactly one year later, Kirk was in court again. This time he was charged with overcharging, by 4d and for using insulting language: "You are a pretty fellow and no gentleman."

He was fined £2 for the overcharge and £2 or one month's imprisonment for the insulting language. This time however, the cab driver did not use Maria Manning as an excuse...

**Sean Farrell (B39)**

An Exclusive for Dial-a-Cab drivers!



## Buy one, get one free offer!

Buy an oil and filter service during  
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We are soon to be an MOT testing station for taxis and class 4 vehicles...



**Shock... Horror!!!****DRIVER'S  
WIFE  
CALLS  
MINICAB!**

Despite Dial-a-Cab driver Phil Benjamin's (K20) best efforts to stop his wife (Sue) from sending this confession to Call Sign, her feelings of guilt proved too much as she penned her feelings...

*On not being able to get a licensed taxi, I committed ultimate sin and hired a minicab. What followed might not be surprising:*

**I HATE MINICAB  
DRIVERS!**

Hire cab to West End  
Arrives with SatNav as friend  
Yet drives round each wrong bend  
Will I get there in the end?

Hour late for reservation  
TomTom lost concentration  
Asks to my consternation  
Where exact destination!

Call me naïve, thought his role  
To get me to my drinking hole  
Without my blood on super boil  
But more suited to the dole!

Should have taken him apart  
But really didn't have the heart  
Besides foreigner not too smart  
My English being abstract art

So there is no confusion  
I end with this conclusion  
I'm under no illusion  
Black cabs not worth exclusion!

**From Mrs K20**

# Oxford Scholar!

Simon Rogers (N39) grinned broadly. "Yes, Oxford city," he repeated after *Call Sign* mistakenly thought he had said Oxford Street.

"I had stopped at the traffic lights on Praed Street by Paddington Station," Simon said, "when two middle eastern looking gentlemen came up and handed me a piece of paper with the address of a business park just outside Oxford city centre. They were well dressed and spoke perfect English and understood it was a long way. So off we went, straight up the A40.

"I think there was a problem with the trains and they needed to get to their meeting fairly quickly with the minimum of fuss and I just happened to be in the right place at the right time," he continued.

"It took about an hour and a half to get out there, the traffic flowed quite well for midday so I didn't expect too many delays and the passengers were happy enough. Thankfully, they had precise details of the address, which I was easily able to Google on my mobile phone. If it had been in the city centre it might not have been so much fun though," he said with a smile, "that's pretty much fully pedestrianised and I would almost certainly have got lost!

"This was by far the best job I've had in my 6 years of taxi driving and when I called my wife to tell her, she thought I was kidding."

With that, he walked away still smiling broadly. We're not too sure what Simon would have made of *Call Sign's* 2006 story when former driver Mark Thurbin was driving along Pall Mall and stopped for a passenger who asked to be taken to Marrakesh in Morocco – and he took him. He was the first DaC driver to almost need an accident report between his cab ... and a camel!



Simon looking pleased after getting an Oxford job

## Lloyds Bank support for WCHCD

In a show of support for the taxi trade and especially the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**, the **Lloyds Banking Group Community Fund** has awarded the taxi charity £5000 for their next annual **Disneyland Paris** trip, which according to **Dial-a-Cab's Phil Davis (F10)**, who is also the Chairman of the **Disney organising committee**, will pay for a further four families to go on next year's trip – the twentieth one since the trips began.

It was left to a public vote to determine which of a number of charities should receive the award and the WCHCD was one of the 132 organisations that were awarded funding from the many thousands that applied..

According to Phil, it costs £1250 to take a sick child and his or her family to Paris, which will allow another four families to enjoy the weekend at Disney.

"They couldn't do it on their own," said Phil, "because they would not be able to get the medical support that the WCHCD provide during the weekend. This way the family can relax knowing that their child is in safe hands."



# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



*Hello Ladies & Gents,*

With the festive period now upon us, I hope that you all have a busy and profitable run up to Christmas and the New Year. 2012 has certainly been a tough year and one primarily of consolidation. The European financial markets and general worldwide trading conditions are far from stable and over the past month, regrettably, our trade has not gone unaffected with the administrators called in at **Manganese Bronze**.

At the time of writing, the company is still in administration but fortunately the steering box problems that have affected a number of you is in the process of being resolved, although not having been able to work in what is normally the busiest of periods is far from ideal and unacceptable for such a length of time. We frequently read in the media that the recovery is going to be a slow

one and it is now even more important to show our true professionalism and provide a service that is second to none.

## DaC App

As you know, on 1st December the Dial-a-Cab Credit Card App was available to download and as I mentioned in last month's edition of *Call Sign*, without your full support it will not be a success. The Board are confident that with the reduced fees and mobile accessibility, in addition to the normal website and telephone booking lines, it will help to generate additional income. The trips will appear on your terminals exactly the same way as they do at the moment, the mobile App being purely the booking tool for customers to order both ASAP or pre-booked Credit Card journeys; there is no specific need for you to have either an iPhone or Android to receive these types of trips, the full details of which will appear on the terminal.

**If you haven't already displayed the partition sticker in your taxi, they are available at this office or from Roman Way.**

## Rolling ranks

I have been asked to politely mention that now the two *Rolling Ranks* are fully operational and getting busier, it is important to check your trip details so that you do not go to the wrong rank. Clients are closely monitoring run-ins and waiting time and it is also important that they are not kept waiting and

that the meter amounts are no more than they should be.

I would also like to remind you that in normal daytime working on the Island, if you book in to E14C you must be inside the security barriers and on any of the ranks with your hire light turned on. It appears that Security at Canary Wharf Management (CWM) are now monitoring all taxis on the estate and will, if they feel necessary, restrict entry to taxis that don't follow this criteria.

## Thoughts at Christmas

Christmas, as I'm sure you'll agree, is a time to be with family and friends. However, over the past few months I have had the unenviable task of speaking to a number of our members or their close families, informing me that they have been very poorly with some more serious than others and some that are sadly not with us anymore.

It is without doubt the hardest part of this job and the part I most dislike. I am sure that like me, your thoughts go out to each and every one of them - especially at this time of the year.

*Can I finally wish all of you and your families a very happy festive period and lots of luck for 2013...*

**Allan Evans**

**Allane@Dialacab.co.uk**

## LTFUC: Remembering for life

**The London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children recently received the following email and felt it was worth sharing with all the wonderful drivers who come on our outings to show just how beneficial these days are to the children...**

"It's the first time I have ever looked at your site. I was unfortunate enough to have been brought up in a children's home (St. Joseph's, Enfield) in north London from 1959 - 1976, but very fortunate to have been on several London taxi outings to Southend-on-Sea. How very very lucky my friends and I always felt and the memories of those outings have stayed with us forever!

The taxi outing was so very special; we used to regard it as the best ever outings we ever went on. I remember the hall we gathered in within Stepney and the Square with all the taxis lined up, meeting our Aunt and Uncle for the day, the large paper carrier bags we were given filled with fruit and sweets etc and the decorated cabs, balloons and the convoy of taxis on the road to Southend. I remember being asked to give flowers to the Mayor and Mayoress one year - nerve wracking! There were people dressed up as characters from the Planet of the Apes another year!

We enjoyed a wonderful day at the seaside, an evening back at the hall and our return journey home when we used to throw our sweets to children lining the pavements as we drove through east London. We felt so lucky and wanted to share our joy.

The magic was over, but the memories remain and it's wonderful to think that as an organisation you continue to do this for so many children. I would love to know if it would be possible to see any photos of past trips.

I am still in touch with many people who grew up with me and experienced your outings and we are all so grateful for the difference you made in our lives.

**Jo xxx"**

**The Hon President, Hon Chair and Committee thank Jo most sincerely for taking the time and trouble to send this email to us.**

**Raymond Levy  
(LTFUC Press Officer)**

**You can see more of the Fund's outstanding work at [www.ltfuc.org.uk](http://www.ltfuc.org.uk)**



**Martyn Cohen's iconic photo says it all!**



If you were in Chicago (Illinois) and walking along West Belmont, you'd eventually reach the offices of that city's equivalent to Call Sign, The Chicago Dispatcher. For the past ten years, the paper has been edited by George Lutfallah and has rightly gained a name among Chicago's cab drivers as providing excellent representation on their behalves.

Like this magazine, George is always on the lookout for something different to put in front of his readers and in his October letters page he published a letter from a passenger and asked his readers the same question as Call Sign is asking you: Should this passenger be forgiven, because what he has done is certainly not confined just to Chicago...

## Letters to the Editor: October 2012

*"I want to treat every cab driver with the respect he deserves..."*

*I'm writing this letter to make amends for*

# Should he be forgiven?

**CHICAGO DISPATCHER**  
Serving Chicago's  
Taxicab and Livery  
Industry Since 2002



*harming Chicago cab drivers when I was a teenager. Since that time there have been more assaults on cabbies in Chicago and I need to speak up about what I did.*

*I am an adult now and I know that targeting cab drivers is wrong. I used to throw eggs or snowballs at cabs. Sometimes I'd throw them inside the cab. When you do that, the cabbie has to stop working. I know now that many cab drivers are barely breaking even and I may have caused serious financial harm.*

*I also know that cab drivers are vulnerable and cannot always get help from the police. What I did was threatening to people who were not able to get justice. I never suffered any consequences, even though it affected many peoples' lives. For this I am deeply sorry.*

*It has been more than 10 years since I used to target cab drivers like that. My behaviour as*

*a teenager still disturbs me. I want to fix things. I want to treat every cab driver with the respect he deserves. I want to be more patient with cab drivers in traffic, because I know I am not under as much stress as you are. I want to be the nicest guy you see during your shift.*

*If there is any way I can make things better, please let me know.*

**Michael Baehr**

**San Francisco, California**

Call Sign has published articles over the years where Dial-a-Cab drivers have had their taxis pelted with eggs or had paint stripper poured over them while parked. If the perpetrator came forward several years later and apologised, would you be happy to accept their apology? Reader's views are always welcome...

## TKO takeover as Areti wins title!

ALL three TRAD TKO Gym fighters recorded victories on yet another outstanding 8-fight card at the **York Hall** in Bethnal Green on 18th November, courtesy of **Left Jab Promotion's** 'Matinee Idols' show. An action packed afternoon at the home of British boxing saw female fighter **Areti Mastrodouka** capture the **International Masters Super Featherweight Title**, with **Eren Arif** prevailing in a 4 round bout and debutant **Tommy 'Da Gun' Martin** forcing a third round stoppage over his opponent. The three are trained by **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Alec Wilkey (W83)** and based at the Canning Town gym that was founded by World class boxing coach **Johnny Eames** in 2006.

Unbeaten Greek southpaw Mastrodouka was in fine form once again as she took on Welsh fighter **Lana Cooper** in the first title fight for both boxers over 8 x 2 minute rounds. It was Cooper who started the faster of the two, but as Mastrodouka settled into her rhythm she began landing her straight left hands to back her opponent up. In the second round it was Mastrodouka – known as The Master – who took control of the exchanges and she caught Cooper with a flurry of hooks to the body as she forced her onto the ropes. As the bout progressed, Mastrodouka was dominating each session by using her jab as the range finder and landing the straight left hand and then switching the attack from head to body. It was no surprise when Mastrodouka was crowned International Masters Champion with the judge scoring every round in her favour and score of 80-72. She is surely *en route* to a world title shot with her record now at 4-0.

Rotherhithe Light-Welterweight Eren Arif put on another solid display in his second bout after a winning debut back in September. Arif was matched against **Aleksas Vaseris** in a lively 4 round bout which saw both boxers having success. After a cagey first round, the second saw Arif on the front foot, coming forward and throwing hooks to the body and head. But it was the third round where Arif showed his superior skills with punch variation and some good combinations, even knocking Vaseris' gumshield out! The final round produced some great action as both boxers went toe to toe, but it was Arif who edged it in the eyes of the judge, winning by a score of 39-37 and going to 2-0.

Tommy 'Da Gun' Martin made a sensational debut with a 3rd round TKO win in front of his army of supporters. The 18 year-old Lightweight from St Neots - who only recently joined Johnny Eames and Alec Wilkey at the TKO Gym - took on Lithuanian **Artur Saniuk** over a scheduled 4 rounds in which he dictated the action. Martin looked to establish his jab in an even first round, but it was the second session where he increased the tempo and forced Saniuk to take backward steps, throwing hooks to the body and head and almost stopping his man. But Saniuk's fate was sealed in the third when Martin piled on the pressure and then whipped in a left hook to the body followed by a right hand which knocked Saniuk to the canvas. Saniuk got to his feet but referee Jeff Hinds waved the fight off, signalling Martins first win.



Photo 1 - r: Tommy Martin, Eren Arif, trainers Jimmy Tibbs and Alec Wilkey and Areti Mastrodouka

**David Wilkey**  
Call Sign Online

## Becoming a know-all...

Ask any passenger from anywhere around the world, which group of taxi drivers know their occupation and everything involved in it, the best and 90% of them will give you the same answer. The recent poll from *Hotels.com* gave the same answer that it has for the past five of its yearly surveys. London's finest know more about their job, where they are going and everything about taxi driving than any other group of drivers!

And it's probably a safe bet to add that drivers on Dial-a-Cab know more than most thanks to Alan Nash (A95) and his monthly page 2 column, *Nash's Numbers*, which has given information to our drivers since 1997 on everything from train timetables to the position of cash ATMs to the addresses of London's many night spots / bars and complete 'What's On' guides to entertainment facilities.

But there are also a substantial number of *know-alls* on Dial-a-Cab, thanks to Alan Nash's *My Fav* website. In these days of *iPads* and *iPhones*, you could be missing out by not gaining access to his brilliant *My Fav* page. You do, of course, need to be on the Internet, but other than that, nothing can stop you being a know all!

So what's on it? Well there is far more than we have space to tell you about, but just for starters how about over 70 iconic links to useful taxi related web pages as well as hundreds of other links to sites that you probably search for on a regular basis anyway such as High Street stores and banks etc. Then there are links to live TV and radio sites, daily newspapers and *Google*. Of course some will say that they can get all the sites by just searching, however there is nowhere else you can get them all at one place – even updates on all NASA's space projects

Then there are updated fare tables; mileages, which flights go from where at both Heathrow and Gatwick; a complete list of London pubs, restaurants and hotels; a list of all the police stations that still stay open 24 hours and speak-

## Nash's Numbers

# MORE THAN JUST A BUNCH OF NUMBERS!



ing of the police, there is a list of all London's lap dancing clubs and much more... and all in excellent PDF quality that you can print off if you have the facility.

If you want to be a know all, just go to [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk), click on the *My Fav* logo and follow the instructions. Just bear in mind that the code to unlock taxi info is just that – *taxi*!

There aren't too many genuine free bargains in life where you genuinely get a lot while not required to give anything back. But Alan Nash's *My Fav* is certainly one. If you also register, you will have even more access and become a genuine *Call Sign* know-all! And it's all free!

Just go to [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) and either register or click on 'locked' and just enter the words 'taxi' to unlock a grid of over 65 icons that link you to an assortment of useful info and taxi related websites

## Why Register?

Registering is not only free but you have the chance of winning a £100 monthly prize. That offer has been going for the last 18 months but as yet no one has won. It's very simple; once logged in, simply click the 'Recommend' button and follow the instructions. The proviso is that your recommended friend, colleague or relation etc registers and uses *MyFav*.

You can also personalise your page to have up to 40 of your own bookmarks, up to 6 gadgets, various categories including over 550 world weather forecasts (106 UK towns & cities) and world time zones for every capital city in the world. And of course, everything else that a know-all requires to be, well to be a know-all! And one that costs you absolutely nothing...

Michael Toomey  
Call Sign Online

# PRA condemn two-tier fuel pricing

How often have *Dial-a-Cab* drivers going along the M4 towards Heathrow looked down at their fuel gauges and seen their diesel looking a bit low, but refuse to use a motorway service station perceiving the high diesel cost as being hugely unfair?

That difference in fuel costs has now been picked up by *Petrol Retailers' Association* Chairman, **Brian Madderson**. According to Mr Madderson, motorway service areas owned or supplied by major oil companies are continuing to extort their customers by pricing fuel much higher than at their standard company-owned sites.

Recent data produced by *Experian Catalyst* showed that **Shell's** petrol purchased at a motorway service area was 14p per litre more expensive than Shell brand petrol purchased at one of their standard sites, while diesel was as much as 12p more. The gap between prices for the **Esso** brand fuel was very similar.

Mr Madderson told *Call Sign*: "Two tier pricing was just one of the many areas for concern raised by independent fuel retailers to the **Office of Fair Trading** recently when they indicated that the UK fuels market was not working properly. It is essential that the OFT respond to the many complaints by confirming that they will undertake a new Market Study under the *Enterprise Act 2002* when they present their findings in January 2013.

"It was good to note that our independent retailers have helped to lead fuel prices down recently with several reporting that they had dropped prices below local supermarket competition and this was confirmed by the closeness of UK average fuel prices for independently owned sites being just 2p per litre adrift from the average of supermarkets at the beginning of that week. This has prompted another round of price cutting by the supermarkets. However, the UK wholesale market for road fuels remains volatile, so the trend in falling prices is not guaranteed to continue. Therefore the Government's plans for hiking fuel duty by 3.02p per litre on 1 January 2013 with the prospect of a further 2p on 1 April are potentially crippling to household budgets.

"With 20% VAT added, total fuel tax could rise by as much as 7p per litre in the first few months of 2013. To have any chance of re-igniting the economy, the Chancellor must freeze duty when he presents the Autumn Statement next month."

In the meantime, taxi drivers and many other motorists will still be avoiding motorway service station fuel stops unless there is no choice...



PRA Chairman Brian Madderson



Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

# POTTERS WHEEL

Well, as you flick through the last *Call Sign* of the year, I hope you agree that 2012 wasn't as bad as predicted. Yes, the year was as flat as a pancake, but I found it a little easier than in previous years. Maybe I have simply got used to it being slow, but we survived and the outlook is showing signs of recovery, which will in turn encourage confidence. When the markets run on speculation, confidence is the main driver and perhaps if the Chancellor was to reduce VAT, that would help matters. Make it a figure that is not so easy to work out, that way the public will have a less good idea of what they are paying! Remember, once things start picking up, that's one day closer to us going back into recession - so make the most of it!

## Hmmmm

I got my first taste of driving around London as a delivery driver for a firm in New Covent Garden market. Being just twenty and driving an old Bedford TK 600 without power steering wasn't easy and I had a few near misses. There were a large network of old fashioned corner shops that we used to deliver to around Fulham and Hammersmith, just like *Open all Hours*.

But as time went on, many of these were forced out of business by large supermarkets; so how funny it is to see many of those same supermarkets starting up their own local shops! By using their muscle, they beat the competition with the long-term intention of replacing them altogether. As traders ourselves, one of the most important issues is cashflow. Without it we would simply go bust, because we would have no money to pay our debts, even though we perhaps owed money. It's not unknown in the business world for a bigger



company that is eyeing up a smaller company to squeeze its cashflow so it goes bust with the sole intention of buying that same company from the administrator.

**Does that ring a bell with Geely and the London Taxi Company after it refused to inject more money into Manganese Bronze???**

## Why???

Have you ever wondered why people get PH vehicles instead of taxis? Or buy a can of Redbull for £1.25 when you buy Tesco's own brand for 35p? How about Anadin instead of Asda own paracetamol? Well nothing acts faster than Anadin does it, so it's worth the money? But in reality, all paracetamol acts at the same speed, therefore if nothing acts faster than Anadin, you could add that nothing acts slower either! It's all about perception and remember when you buy a can of Redbull, you are paying Sebastian Vettel's wages!

Having recently picked up a former Minister for Transport who has had an account with

Dial-a-Cab for years, he asked me if the taxi trade was in crisis because the powers at Westminster were hearing alarm bells. Combined with the collapse of Manganese Bronze and the disastrous Olympics, I think politicians are beginning to realise that we are not the moaners that Peter Hendy says we are, but that we have genuine problems. One issue we discussed was the perception of the trade with younger people. Older people and tourists still hold us in high regard, but the younger generation look at us as dinosaurs. I don't like to play the blame game, but I think we often get a negative press and rarely get much help from TfL, who have a bias towards buses. And although LTPH gets a bad rap from us, I do believe their hands are tied from higher up. Let's hope that politicians finally sit up and listen to our problems and help us move forward to secure the taxi trade for the future.

## Goodbye...

Ok, that's it from me after nearly 7 years of writing in *Call Sign*. It's time to find something else to do with my time and I hope another DaC driver will contribute to the trade's best mag by a long chalk. Many thanks to Alan Fisher for encouraging me to have a go and for being a great boss. He has never given me an editorial lean and only changed the articles to correct my grammar and spelling! I have enjoyed my time writing for *Call Sign* and I hope you have enjoyed reading my articles.

So wherever you are in the world and with whomever you spend it, I hope you and your families have a happy peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

**Richard Potter (T51)**

In the new era of MOTs for taxis, LTPH announce...

## Locations for new inspection centres

London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH) has confirmed the locations for six new vehicle inspection centres to be managed by NSL from February 2013. NSL won the contract to provide the vehicle licensing and inspections service for London's taxis and private hire vehicles.

Following discussions with the taxi and private hire trades and NSL, the six new vehicle inspection centres will be at the following locations:

**North Site – Watmill Business Park, Enfield**  
**South Site – Redlands Industrial Estate, Coulsdon**  
**East Site – Acorn Industrial Park, Crayford**  
**West Site – Air Links Industrial Estate, Hounslow**  
**Central East – 1 North Crescent, Canning Town**  
**Central West – Aquarius Business Park, Staples Corner**



NSL will be licensing taxis under the new regime which requires taxi vehicle owners to ensure their vehicles have passed an MOT no more than 14 days prior to inspection and to carry out a further MOT six months from the date the licence is issued.

**Helen Chapman**, Deputy Director for Taxi and Private Hire, said:

"After positive discussions with members from both the taxi and private hire trades, we are pleased to confirm the locations for the new inspection centres. We believe that drivers will find the inspection centres are in convenient locations and will meet their expectations."

**Dale Wood**, Business Processing Director for NSL, added:

"We're excited to be working with TfL in providing taxi and private hire vehicle drivers with greater and more state-of-the-art control and accessibility in booking their inspections, renewing and applying for licenses, as well as offering a great choice of inspection locations."

NSL has been awarded the contract for a period of up to 10 years for the delivery of the vehicle licensing and inspections service, which involves undertaking an annual inspection on all taxi and private hire vehicles

## HOME PC REPAIR

By **Essex PC Fix**

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 Web - [www.essexpcfix.co.uk](http://www.essexpcfix.co.uk)

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Eddie Lambert

**John Griffin**, the multi-millionaire Chairman of private hire company Addison Lee, has hit the headlines several times over the years for being somewhat insensitive to others points of view – look no further than his spat with cyclists and his instruction to his drivers to break the law by driving in bus and taxi lanes. But his email poking fun at non-league **Potters Bar FC** deaf footballer, **Daniel Ailey**, seems to have even surpassed his remarks blaming cyclists for their own accidents.

It was on October 23 and Daniel had been playing against Grays Athletic, whose fans began mocking him for the way he communicates with his team-mates. It ended with police being called when some fans began making grunting sounds aimed at mocking Daniel.

In the meantime, John Griffin thought it amusing to send an email to his local newspaper, *The Welwyn & Hatfield Times* comparing the noises made by Daniel Ailey to those of noisy tennis stars such as **Maria Sharapova**, who has earned

After the boss of Addison Lee was accused of criticising a deaf footballer for grunting like a female tennis player, DaC driver Eddie Lambert tells Call Sign...

## “JOHN GRIFFIN SHOULD FEEL ASHAMED!”

notoriety for grunting during her matches.

Griffin's comments, together with the thuggish actions of the Gray's supporters, drew anger from **Action on Hearing Loss** charity Head of PR, **Rebecca Griffin**, who said how disappointed she was that people showed such little respect to a talented footballer trying to overcome communication barriers during matches.

In his email, Mr Griffin said that the police at the ground should have demanded that the profoundly-deaf player discontinue the way he communicated “...as they could be misinterpreted by members of the crowd.”

Mr Griffin later issued an apology claiming that he hadn't meant to be insulting towards Ailey and that he regretted any offence caused. But Potters Bar manager Adam said that he was extremely concerned by the comments made by the Addison Lee boss and considered that his many deaf or hard of hearing passengers might think twice about who they get their cabs from after the outburst.

Potters Bar Chairman, **Peter Waller**, said: “Mr Griffin is entitled to have his say, but imagine if we all laughed at disabled athletes at the Paralympics. It doesn't matter what noises Daniel makes on the pitch, the only important thing is that he is a good footballer.”

Dial-a-Cab driver, **Eddie Lambert** (V37) wrote to *Call Sign* about Griffin's email and brought in another problematic PH occurrence. He told us:

“I just hope that he is ashamed about making these comments. What's worse in my view is that they were not a spur of the moment comment made without any thought. He sat down at a computer and composed these thoughtless and hurtful comments obviously expecting that his email was then transferred to a newspaper for

thousands of people to read.

Rumours are also around that some at Addy Lee are becoming fed up with John Griffin's constant embarrassing remarks and the financial costs that they have incurred such as after the Bus Lane fiasco, and would like to see him sailing off into the sunset to leave his two sons in charge. They could be right!

I also noticed in comments after the article appeared in the Mail Online that the paper was taken to task about its description of Griffin as “boss of a taxi company.” I believe that the Hackney trade should do this every time the media use the word ‘taxi’ when they should be using Private Hire or minicab. I recently emailed the Metro over the same issue in their *Corrections and Omissions* page over the description of Addison Lee as a taxi company.

It may seem a small issue to many, but I'm sure we have all seen articles headlined as taxi driver convicted of something or other, only to read further into the article that the person responsible was a PH driver. They even use the phrase Private Hire Taxi! I'm sure one day the trade will say enough is enough and blockade a newspaper office in protest at one of these erroneous descriptions.

Several years ago, my local paper - the **Peterborough Evening Telegraph** - carried a rape story with taxi headlines when it was actually private hire. One of the local drivers, a young Asian man who I know (95% of Peterborough's taxi trade are Asian), phoned the paper and threatened to organise a boycott by the local Asian newsagents against the Telegraph. The next issue carried an apology and when the paper covered similar stories in subsequent issues, they always got the description right...!”

### LTFUC Treasurer and DaC driver David Lessman (D19) gives the LTFUC's annual...

#### TREASURER'S REPORT 2011/2012

The past twelve months have continued to be a difficult time, not only for the general economy, but for the taxi trade in particular.

However, the *London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children*, with grateful thanks to the generosity of its many benefactors, has been able to replenish a depleted reserve, maintain a high profile and the trustees look forward next year to celebrating 85 years of assisting the many disadvantaged children of Greater London.

Not only was generated income considerably more than the previous year, but total expenditure was reduced so the Fund remains financially strong. The value of grants made was minimal this year, but did include once again Christmas vouchers for the dependants of taxi drivers no longer able to provide for their family. The expenses incurred by the annual party at the *JW Marriott Grosvenor House* were greater than the previous year, as toys for the 600 children had to be purchased. Through sponsorship, the slightly increased cost of the outing to Southend was covered.

Total income for the year was just under £45,000 and the total expenditure for the year a little over £27,000, of which only £720 was spent on general management and administration. Yet again the trustees have shown that a charity can be run on only 1.6% of generated income, with every penny of the remaining 98.4% being spent on giving hundreds of disadvantaged children a better quality of life.

**David S. Lessman (D19)**  
LTFUC Hon. Treasurer



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Sometime ago I was driving in the West End and was hailed by a fellow who asked to be taken to the Tower Hotel in St Katherine's Way. Easy enough! I dropped him at the hotel, drove through the exit and turned right crossing the red bridge to get to Thomas More Street.

As I crossed the bridge, I noticed a nice looking young lady who was waving to me. Naturally I assumed she wanted a cab so I stopped and asked her where she wanted to go. She said she didn't really want to go anywhere, but just wanted to say hello! She also said she was very upset because she had lost her job.

I said that I was sorry to hear it and was sure she would get other employment quickly, but she began to look even more upset when telling me that she was a stripper and had been employed to go to a corporate company nearby to "entertain the boys" for an event of some kind.

She went on to add that when she arrived at the premises, the organiser told her that due to unforeseen circumstances, she was no longer required. I suddenly began to wonder if she was a bit crazy and really wanted to drive off. But just as I was about to move, she put her hand on the window and asked if I'd wait just a few more minutes. She carried on talking and said she lived in Bromley. I thought that it could be a nice job and asked where in Bromley she wanted to go. Her reply was

Mike Son looks back at some of the taxi trips that were a bit out of the ordinary...

## Stripped to the basics!



that she didn't want a taxi, she was just feeling fed up at having wasted her time coming all the way to the City.

**I hadn't noticed at first that there was a fella leaning up against the wall a few yards away laughing. I couldn't quite work out what he was laughing at.**

The woman continued chatting and said that she was also very upset because she had been paid her fee in advance, but felt that she hadn't earned it. She went on to say that she had also now wasted my time and suddenly asked if she could strip for me? This at around 6.30 in the

evening rush hour!

Before I could say you'll catch a cold, she proceeded to undo her leather raincoat and with the raincoat off her shoulder, stood there stark naked!

After about a minute, she re-buttoned her coat and thanked me! All I could think of saying was "no, thank you!" Then she walked off with the bloke who had been standing by the wall and who had obviously realised what she was about to do, hence his laughter!

Feeling rather shocked and not believing what had just happened, I drove around the corner and stopped the cab. As I sat quietly in the taxi, a passenger came over and asked to go to London Wall. He asked me if I was okay, as I looked a bit strange. When I explained what had happened, he fell about laughing and asked if I would mind going back to see if the girl was still there! He was very disappointed when she had gone.

What a life we cabdrivers have to endure. . .

**Mike Son**  
DaC Special Projects

### SELF DEFENCE CLASSES FOR DAC DRIVERS...

*And they're free if you are on Dial-a-Cab!*

You will have seen an article on self-defence expert **Ricky Manetta (N16)** in last month's *Call Sign*, where he spoke of starting a course for **Dial-a-Cab** drivers teaching **Krav Maga**, the self defence system used by the Israeli special forces.

Now **Dial-a-Cab** has announced that it is sponsoring **Ricky's** self-defence classes for our drivers. Each course will last for 8 weeks and take up to 30 DaC drivers. It will cost drivers nothing, but **Ricky** did say that it is important for interested drivers to go on the complete 8-week course and not just pop in when they fancy. The complete course will cost you nothing!

If more than 30 drivers put their names down, they will be on a first-come, first-served basis and those failing to get on will go to the top of the list for the second course.

They will take place at the **John Orwell Sports Centre, Tench Street, Wapping** each **Wednesday from 2 - 3.30pm**. Parking is available.

The classes are very mixed, taking drivers in their 20s right into their 60s. They come tall, small, fat and thin because it's the techniques that work and not the size of those performing them. Classes consist of warm-up and stretching exercises, then a quick run over previous lessons. That's followed by learning a new technique and some drills, so everything you learn becomes an instinct and not a thought. In a real life situation, by the time you've had the thought, the instinct has already dealt with it.

Two DaC drivers on a previous course told *Call Sign* that they really enjoyed and benefitted from them. **Mickey Tarr (R02)** was 6' 2" and 16 stone, so we asked why he would need to do the classes. He explained that as you get older, you are not as confident as you used to be in defending yourself and that cab driving was so unpredictable. He added that **Ricky** was absolutely brilliant and gave him that confidence back by giving him the knowledge to deal with any situation, not just the physical ones.

**Steve Politz (N57)** told us that the classes were brilliant. "I can't say enough about them, I was just addicted!" He added that for him the main thing was the confidence he gained through the self-defence and aggression avoidance techniques. This taught him how to react in situations and not to panic.

If you are interested, email **Shelagh Adkins** on [shelagha@dialacab.co.uk](mailto:shelagha@dialacab.co.uk) or call on **0207 553 7200**. If you want to speak to **Ricky** about the course, call him on **07950 267 574**. He won't be taking the names but is happy to tell you anything you need to know about the **Dial-a-Cab** courses.



Some drivers in **Ricky's** previous classes. Contact **Shelagh** if you are interested...

### Do you fancy writing for Call Sign?

With **Richard Potter (T51)** having decided to take a rest from writing, *Call Sign* has a vacancy for a regular columnist.

Whether that is a driver or their immediate relative is unimportant, you just need to have the ability of putting your thoughts into words. You will have the freedom to say what you want within reason, but what the mag doesn't want is someone who uses the column in place of writing a letter.

Your column should be about the taxi trade from your point of view and you need to be prepared to have a variety of topics at your fingertips, because writing a regular column is far more difficult than just writing a letter. You should also try to make it different from the usual columns seen in the trade press.

You need to be reliable, because the Editor doesn't like chasing his columnists – believe me, I know! Many have applied in the past, but few actually follow it up.

You do not have to worry about spelling etc because that will all be corrected. So long as your article makes good reading, then it will be published with as few errors as humanly possible. But what you must have is the ability to send the article via email.

If interested, write to the Editor at [call-signmag@aol.com](mailto:call-signmag@aol.com).

**Dennis Latchett**  
Call Sign Online

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

# Kupkake's Korner



## Always on a Sunday!

Pulled into Padders,  
Around 100 bodies waiting,  
Set down at Euston,  
30 people at that station...

Then at MacLiver,  
though the rank was empty,  
tourist cases all lined up,  
Soon there was work a-plenty...

The Raft was also moving,  
although the Vic was slow,  
Kings Cross had work,  
And also the Euro!

So much business,  
Far too much to mention,  
Not enough to retire,  
And go to draw my pension...

But give me Sundays,  
All the time,  
You can work Mondays...  
'Cos Sunday's all mine!

*Kopyrlght Kupkake 2012*

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With the trade in a state of uncertainty, Call Sign looks at the...

# Now and then...



The FX3 with its open luggage compartment

The 'now' isn't too promising with **Manganese Bronze** in administration and any taxi over 15 years being old pulled off the road in what many describe as a heartless act from TfL considering the current circumstances. Rented cabs are few and far between with some garages even putting up prices.

The only other option at the moment is to spend £42,000 on a **Mercedes Vito** and do what many of those owners do – disconnect the converted van's 25foot turning circle, because it then becomes easier to do a 3-point turn! Otherwise it's wait to see who buys MB or hang on for **Nissan's NV 200**.

So what about the 'then' because many newspapers and radio stations are wondering how long the 'now' will last before private hire eventually takes over?

It was way back in 1679 when concern for passenger safety led Charles II new British Government to bring in the *Conditions of Fitness*. It was at the same time that they passed the *English Habeas Corpus Act* in response to a public outcry about people being incarcerated unlawfully for long periods of time before trial. Some believed the taxi trade had connections with the act re incarceration in a vehicle!

The first London taxi that didn't need a horse to pull it was the 1897 **Bersey** - better known as the Hummingbird due to the sound that came from it while in motion. It was electrically powered but with a limited range, which eventually led to the introduction of petrol taxis in 1903.

Although manufacturers such as Renault tried to jump on the bandwagon, most London taxis have been British-built by manufacturers including the **Beardmore** Mk 1 in 1919 and Mk II 5 years later.

One year after the **Nuffield Oxford** in 1947, the **FX3** arrived with 3 doors - the luggage compartment being open and any bags being held on by straps. While old fashioned compared to the **TX4**, it came equipped with a built-in hydraulic jacking system that could raise the front or rear of the taxi for tyre changing etc. In 1954, it was powered up to a 2.2 litre petrol engine and a diesel version was also added because diesel was so cheap, being half the price of petrol. During the 10 year life of the **FX3**, over 7000 were produced.

The **FX3** was followed by the **FX4** in 1958. The design was changed and began to look like the vehicle tourists perceive as a London Taxi. This vehicle, with its fourth door, remained as the cab to buy and although it had the occasional modification, it stayed unchanged for decades even though the hydraulic jacking system was dropped. It became easily identifiable by its indicators, which became known as "bunny ears."

**Austin** was joined by a coach building company called **Carbodies of Coventry** and in 1984 the duo became **London Taxis International** and it wasn't long before the next incarnation came along – this was the **FX4R** – the R standing for Rover. The cab was quiet and smooth and capable of reaching over 80mph – so long as you weren't going uphill because then it was the realised that it had an alarming lack of climbing power.

The trade became desperate for something else as second hand values plummeted. Prayers were answered when the **FX4** was re-hashed into **The Fairway** and fitted with the engine that many still claim to have been the best one the trade has ever had - the **Nissan**.

Three years later in 1987, Birmingham bus builders **Metro Cammell Weymann** moved into the taxi business as a hoped-for competitor to the Fairway. Known as the **Metrocab**, it featured a fiber-glass body, large glass area, power steering, disc brakes and wheelchair access. It used the Ford Transit van diesel engine. In 1995, a series II model came out with a series III a few years later. However, **Metrocab's** survival record was poor and the **Metrocab** company kept folding and then reappearing as a new outfit. Sadly, on Friday 3 March 2006, the curtain came down finally on any chance that the **Metrocab** had of returning to mainstream manufacturing when the **Runcorn Bailiff** company of Crellins walked into what had been **Metrocab's** premises at Darwell Park in Tamworth and took back anything of value on behalf of the landlord. The last **Series III TTT** model was a 55 reg and owned by a **Dial-a-Cab** driver.

**Keith White (A16)** told *Call Sign* at the time that he felt very disappointed to hear the news because in his view, the **TTT** was undoubtedly the best taxi ever produced for the London market.

Of course, we should never forget the 1994 **Asquith**, of which around eight were sold and used mainly as wedding cars due to passengers not realising that these were real licensed taxis!

Meanwhile back at LTI, 1997 saw the Fairway give way to the **TX1** – the shape of which caused drivers to rename it as Noddy's car as that is what it resembled. But Big Ears seemed to like it!

The **TXII** followed in 2002, but seemed to be beset with problems until the **TX4** arrived in 2007. Until the recent steering recall, the vehicle had been popular, although in 2009 the arrival of the **Mercedes Vito** made a dent in LTI's accounts that could well have been the reason for the collapse.



January 2 is approaching fast and while the biggest problem most of us will face as the New Year arrives is how to shed those extra pounds we will put on through over-indulgence at holiday time, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)** will have rather more problems to worry about.

He won't even have time to concern himself over whether it's busy, quiet or indifferent out there as he gets ready for the 8-day climb via the *Lemosho* route to the top of Africa's highest peak, **Mount Kilimanjaro**. While Divyesh admitted to *Call Sign* that the climb was part of his own celebrations at reaching the age of fifty, he is also doing it in aid of various charities, including two in the taxi trade!

There are no expenses because Divyesh has paid for it all, so any monies donated will go to the charities. They are **Great Ormond Street Hospital**, **Help for Heroes**, the WCHCD's **Magical Taxi Tour** and **Dial-a-Dream** - the charity run by **Tom Whitbread** and **Bob Heath**.

Divyesh told *Call Sign*: "I don't have the choice of dividing the money amongst the charities, so those donating will have to decide which charity their money goes to. Number 1 is GOSH, 2 is Help For Heroes and 3 is the Magical Taxi Tour. Those wanting to donate to **Dial-a-Dream** should do so direct to the charity by paying into **Barclays 20-52-74 40322202**. That is because as a small charity, they cannot

## Divyesh ready for Kilimanjaro!



Divyesh was clothed as a Liveryman and is now about to climb Kilimanjaro!

afford the monthly charge they would have to pay to *JustGiving*. Anyone wishing to donate to the other three can do so via the *JustGiving* website at: [Justgiving.com/teams/divyesh-midlifecrisistrekupthekilimanjaro](http://Justgiving.com/teams/divyesh-midlifecrisistrekupthekilimanjaro) Divyesh, who was clothed as a Liveryman in the WCHCD recently, will be keeping in touch with

*Call Sign* and sending us a photo of him on the peak. Will he take a birthday cake with him and tuck in while planting a Dial-a-Cab flag there? Perhaps not, but what he hopefully will do is to raise some much-needed funds for the four charities

Good luck Divyesh...

# London taxis win again!



Winners for the fifth year in a row

**London taxis have been voted the world's best for the fifth consecutive year in an annual global taxi survey by Hotels.com.**

The survey took in 1671 people from 28 countries and cities and concluded that London's iconic black cabs were considered the best for friendliness, knowledge of the area, cleanliness, safety and quality of driving. On the downside, however, our taxi fares were also voted the most expensive. Ironically, it came within days of Manganese Bronze going into administration.

London claimed 11 per cent of the votes to win first place. New York came in second place on 6.4 per cent, followed by Tokyo with 5.6 per

cent. The survey also found that Australians spend the most on taxis, while Italians were on the other end of the spectrum.

Over half or 56 per cent of those surveyed also admitted to falling asleep in a taxi, while 19 per cent said they have touched up their hair and makeup in a taxi.

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Some months ago there was a furore in the media about a bus driver who refused to allow a female onto his bus because she was 20p short of the full fare. She had to get off and was raped as she walked home. So we put this brief synopsis to Dial-a-Cab drivers...

It's late in the evening, it's dark and suddenly you see a hand go out. The respectable looking lady tells you her destination but adds that she has no money in her purse but has more than enough at the destination to pay the fare. You aren't 100% certain of that, but she is a woman on her own. Would you take the chance of not being paid or leave her because you are a business and not a charity?

**Michael Wigmore (C16):** "It is probably a bit different working days, but generally speaking I would take them and truth to tell I have done it many times with no problem. Also, if the fare goes say £12 for example and the passenger only has £10, I've accepted that with good grace as well. And I make sure they are safely indoors before I pull away. After driving a cab for a few years, I use my sixth sense to sum people up. You help people where you can and promote a professional image. Of course, at the end of the day we all come to work to make a living."



**Neil Baker (D55):** "I judge people as they are and make a decision from there. I've been turned over by 'suits' and been well treated by oth-



## WRITING FOR CALL SIGN?

If you fancy yourself as a writer for a trade magazine and you are on DaC or even the wife of a DaC driver perhaps, then take a look at the piece on page 23...

## Call Sign Survey

*A lone female tells you she has no money on her but has money at home...*

# WOULD YOU TAKE HER???

ers who do not look like they have 2p to their name. Some time ago I took a lady from SE1 up to NW3. We stopped at two cash points along the way, unsuccessfully as it turned out, so we exchanged details at her destination and she sent me a personal cheque a few days later."

**John Davis (V41):** "Yes, I would take passengers to their destination upon the deposit of something of value such as a cell phone, wristwatch or the like."



**John Morgan (H50):** "You need to use your common sense and act on your instincts. If there's a group standing around wearing football scarves for example, the answer is a big no, but I usually ask where they are going and if the area is ok and they are going to a house or specific residence, then yes, fine. After cab driving for 27 years, you build up a sixth sense and go with your gut feelings. There have been several occasions where the passenger has had maybe £8 out of the £10 fare. I then suggest they put the odd couple of quid balance towards a charity of their choice and say that I trust them to do the right thing."

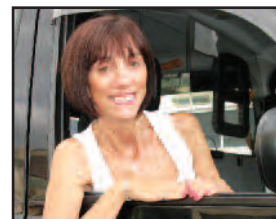


**Bobby Edmondson (G85):** "Yes, I would take them, no sweat at all. In fact, I recently took a lady from Kings



Road to Archway at 03.00 in the morning. The meter read £22 but she only had £15. No big deal. But where I do get the hump is when people let me get them to the other end and then say they haven't got any money, or they'll get some money indoors etc. I expect folk to be honest and upfront with me. If they are level with me, it's a different ball game. Like many of us who have children, I would like to think that a fellow driver would act professionally and responsibly, bringing my children home safely. So I adopt a similar approach."

**Jackie Kott (Y88):** "I usually work late into the night and generally will take people where they want to go, but



of course it would depend on the destination area and if the potential passenger was standing upright. When possible I usually work the radio, but if a situation arose then I would make a judgement on the merits of the case. Anyway, when my children were younger I liked to think they could get home safely in a taxi and then woke me up to pay the driver..."

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In my capacity as a *City of London* and a *City of Westminster Guide*, I occasionally get asked to cover *Walks* - either for the aforementioned respective Guiding Associations, or via a private client who might contact me independently.

My client brief on the Walk I led on Saturday 17th November was simple enough: Could I provide a *Guided Walk* in Mayfair using the River Tyburn as its main theme? This, of course, would be no problem - firstly on account that the Lions of Millwall were due to play on Sunday that weekend and secondly, the history - both past and present - of the ancient Tyburn was one of my chosen subjects!

The client was an *E-zine* called *LeCool* with an online subscription boasting 50,000 readers - if only I had been told that during the few email exchanges I'd had before the target day arrived. The Guide fee was to be met by the Walk sponsor *Fuji Water*, who had already stumped up for the Walk leaflets that were to be placed along the route in coffee bars and art galleries.

I was told there would be a budget of £100 for my 90 minute cameo and politely asked if that would be alright. Now, bearing in mind that I would normally get paid £8 per punter if I was leading an Association Walk, I asked how many punters would be expected - to which the reply was along the lines of that they hoped to get more than the 8 who showed up for the Walk they laid on in Borough Market. That's all I needed to hear, so ok says I - let's do it!

On the morning in question, I parked my cab up on the 3-cab rank in Brook Street, sauntered up Avery Row and South Molten

DaC columnist, taxi driver and London Guide, Bob Woodford, on how to lose money while enjoying yourself!

# The (not so) Happy Wanderer!



Bob on a walk

Lane (and therefore along the reverse route of my subterranean river), turned the corner at the top of Davies Street to the meeting point outside *Gray's Antiques* - and there they

were... all 94 of them! Not eight but *ninety bloody four*!

If you were one of the cabbies frustrated because Brook Street was down to one lane as I tried to assemble nearly 100 members of the public opposite the blue plaques to Handel and Hendrix - or found that Charles Street was temporarily closed while I was explaining to all these people the running footmen could only land the job if they were over 6 foot, handsome and looked resplendent in white shirt and stockings - then I can only apologise!

At least I would not have hampered your progress while I had my crowd in Shepherd Market - and they really loved the story about 'two grand' now being affectionately known as 'an Archer'!

I had a hoot moving 94 people around Mayfair - but as I was walking back through Bourdon Street to retrieve my cab I could not help thinking that if only I had charged my usual £8 per head, I would have trousered £752!

Ninety four of them... that's more than they get over at Leyton Orient...!

**Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)**

*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 issue harks back to the beginning of ODRTS with a 2001 news item in Call Sign that our first-ever full time telephonist at Pentonville Road had passed away...*

From Call Sign, October 2001...

### PENTONVILLE ROAD'S FLORRIE CULVERWELL DIES

At the same time that *Call Sign* was publishing an article by **Sam Harris (D95J)** on his early ODRTS memories in last month's issue - including an early 1955 picture of **Florrie Culverwell** - everyone at **Dial-a-Cab** was saddened to hear that Flo had passed away at the age of 80 in London's St Pancras Hospital. She had been suffering with Motor Neurone disease for some time.

Florrie's son **Michael (G82)** has been on DaC for the past 15 years and told *Call Sign* that it wasn't that long ago that his mother had been recounting the old days and spoken of people such as former dispatcher **Johnny Thwaites** and ex-



Florrie at Pentonville Road

Chairman **Martin Gellman (C47J)** with great fondness.

"In fact," said Michael, "she often spoke of the fact that the BBC were the first major ODRTS account and that in addition to her answering the phones, helping out with the occasional dispatching and making the tea, it was my mother's job to look after the BBC."

*Call Sign* also spoke to ODRTS Founder-Chairman **Bonnie Martyn** on his memo-

ries of Florrie Culverwell...

"I remember Flo so well,"

said Bonnie. "In those very early days we all used to turn our hand to anything that needed doing at our Pentonville Road office and Flo would always be the first to volunteer for any job, regardless of how difficult. There was very little that Flo couldn't turn her hand to."

Bonnie continued: "I remember her as such a lovely, friendly lady. Everybody liked her and I remember that our early secretaries Doug Naismith and John Robinson relied heavily upon her knowledge."

Bonnie ended by telling us what a wonderful servant Florrie Culverwell had been to ODRTS. She continued to work for the Society after the move to Shirland Road and right through the 1960s.

*The name of Florrie Culverwell is enshrined within the history of ODRTS and Dial-a-Cab and she will always be remembered...*



"Yes, it's been a good cab to me, and indeed my wider family too," John Lovegrove (F02) told

*Call Sign* when we met recently and referring to his 'N' registered Fairway Driver taxi.

"I've had it from new, completing around 220,000 miles to date. So apart from the consumables like regular servicing, replacement brakes and tyres, I have not needed any major work done to it. I've had a new coolant radiator and water pump and an alternator, but that's about all if memory serves me right. Certainly all the big bits - engine, gearbox and other major components - are original!"

Then thinking about his statement, caused by the Mayor's *Clean Air* policy, John added:

"When I said my 'wider family' I was recalling the time when there were three of us working this cab! My dad used to potter about on it at weekends, even into his 86th year; my son *passed out* on it and I of course worked it when the other two would let me!

"Cabbing is definitely in our family blood. My grandfather used to drive a *Hansom cab* all those years ago, so I can proudly boast that four generations of the Lovegrove family have been, and continue to be, involved in the London Hackney Carriage trade. So yes, this cab has served us well, but the time has come for me to

# Life after London?



John and the Fairway he has owned from new

ease up a bit, pursuing my hobbies of golfing and fishing, depending on the weather, which is why I'm selling this cab because I reckon it still has a good deal of life left in it yet. It can't be London, so possibly to somewhere in the provinces or perhaps even abroad. Maybe the USA,

where they love anything English, especially the iconic London taxi. So while its work is finished here in the Capital, there is still a life after London...!"

Alan Green  
Call Sign Online



*Call Sign* recently received a letter from former Dial-a-Cab driver Roy the boy Manix (ex-K98) who asked about an Evening Standard article regarding the minicab App, Kabbee. Roy said that he hadn't previously heard of it.

The article claimed that Kabbee had raised £2million to expand its instant price comparison site and minicab booking service, that they claim links fifty minicab firms to an estimated 150,000 customers.

Kabbee CEO, Justin Peters, said that the extra funding would help achieve their aim of reaching one million App downloads in the next 12 months.

What Roy wouldn't know, because it wasn't mentioned in the ES, was that Kabbee also said that they are close to adding licensed black taxis to their system. So as the headline says: Who will be first? After all, there do seem to be some drivers in the trade who will do anything legal to increase their earnings. Is this one step too far? Let *Call Sign* know...

Baghwat Singh  
Call Sign Online

## So who will be the first???

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# Mailshot

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

## Manganese administration

Dear Alan

Regarding Manganese Bronze going into administration, I think that was a very sad day. Whilst I know and appreciate that there are more important life changing matters, for me it spelt despair.

**Tony Arnold (F03)**

Very sad Tony, even more so for those who had to wait so long before an answer to the steering problem was eventually found ...Ed

## House of Commons

Hi Al

A driver told me we have the House of Commons back. Is that true? I usually work the House but won't while we're making miniscabs look good. It's bad enough sitting next to them on E14 or EC5 and I have heard all the arguments about helping them, but it's not for me and most of the guys I know.

**John Addis (K97)**

**Brian Rice replies:** Not sure what you mean about making minicabs look good, John. The HoC informed us we had lost their account to a minicab company, however, at the moment it appears the minicab company cannot service the House to the standard they require. Currently the House are still ordering cabs directly from us due to the bad service they receive from the minicab company. What will happen in the future I don't know, but making a minicab company look good? I would have thought it was the reverse, as we make them look bad if they can't supply a service and we can! It is quite demoralising for everyone here when members very often seem to employ a negative attitude towards any situation before they know the facts, always looking for a 'downside' before they know what the situation consists of. At the moment it is very simple. The House are not happy with the service they are receiving from the minicab company, so they are still ordering taxis directly from us. However, I have no idea how long that situation will remain – let's hope it is for a long time. Always look on the bright side...

## Built on a Foundation?

Hi Alan

Re the story in the *November Call Sign* about me on the *Knowledge* with a member of sixties pop group, **The Foundations**; it isn't surprising that **Ken Hardy (G36)** – who was with the group – doesn't remember me because there must have been two members of The Foundations who became cab drivers! How do I know it wasn't Ken that I did the KoL with? Because the guy I was with at Cook's Garage over forty years ago was black and he played the trumpet! Ken's photo seems to show that we weren't the two that did our KoL together!

Whilst on the subject of those who had fame in another life before becoming taxi drivers, am I imagining it or do you have a claim to fame in that you are related to a famous shirt maker?

**Terry Farmer (ex-T55)**

Retired member **Terry Farmer** wrote in the October issue that we must have on Dial-a-Cab former celebrities from their previous lives before going on the *Knowledge* and mentioned being on the KoL with a former member of sixties band The Foundations (Build me up buttercup, Baby now that I've found you etc). Ironically perhaps, The Foundations were one of the first UK multiracial bands and included members from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the West Indies, so it looks as though one of those is the man Terry is looking for which suggests either **Pat Burke** or **Mike Elliott**, who both played tenor sax and trumpet. If anyone knows either, Terry would like to hear from them.

As for my "claim to fame," sadly for me that is a rather tenuous link that applies far more to my wife Linda and definitely to my sister-in-law Daphne, who in real life was the wife of **Ben Sherman**! Daphne has written a book about her life with Ben that if published, will tell a story that goes far beyond the story of button down shirt collars! ...Ed

## Taxi driver celebs...

Dear Alan

Re the recent article in *Call Sign* regarding celebrities becoming taxi drivers after their 'fame' years had ended,

it was quite a while ago but I met someone I thought I recognised when **M&O** were based in Wandsworth Bridge Road.

I was in the waiting room waiting for a bit of warranty work to be completed and began talking to another driver sitting opposite. As we were chatting, I began thinking I knew him from somewhere, until during the conversation he let it slip that he used to play football for Fulham. I suddenly realised that it was **Fred Callaghan** who used to play for the Cottagers in the mid-sixties. I told him with a smile that I had his autograph from some years previously!

"You can have it again if you want," he said bursting into smiles! What a small world.

Keep up the good work *Call Sign*...

**Brian Marcantonio (R73)**

Thanks for that **Brian**. The last I heard, **Fred** was back at Fulham and involved in the hospitality side of match days. Anyone else got any names from the past who now push cabs? ...Ed

## Wrong page for Nuala!

Alan

Thanks for the latest edition of *Call Sign Online* magazine, again a most interesting and readable issue. One question though; why was the article about Nuala related to Page 17 when it should have been, in my opinion, on Page 3? I assume you're not a shy cabbie standing next to a most well-endowed employee like Nuala! It was also a nice article written by **Sandie Goodwin** on the recent WCHCD Paris Disneyland trip for disabled children.

**Lloyd Powell**

**Palm Beach, Florida**

And here's me thinking how shy our American cousins were! Ed...

## Jimmy Savile

Dear Alan

Regarding your article in the *November Call Sign*, which mentioned the times when **Jimmy Savile** turned up at Beaumont Square to assist the **London Taxidriver's Fund** for **Underprivileged Children's** annual outing to Southend, I should point out – as you indeed inferred in the article –



# Mailshot

Continued from page 32

that our outings always have the children accompanied by carers. Therefore there was never any possibility of Savile being alone with any of them; but what a sad indictment of a man that so many once looked up to.

**Bill Tyzack (C06)**

**True words, Bill. I used to occasionally think that the Fund's outings could have had more children and fewer carers, but now we know that the LTFUC were right to always err on the side of caution ...Ed**

## Caring

*Hi Alan*

I hope you and all the lovely London cabbies at **Dial-a-Cab** are well and that business is booming.

Wow, I can't thank you enough for the two fabulous articles you have in the November *Call Sign*; to say I appreciate it is a huge understatement. My goodness, you really have raised awareness for carers and for that I want to say the biggest thank you. Gosh, we couldn't buy publicity on this scale! I do hope that if any of the drivers, office-based staff and/or their families have caring responsibilities, then the articles are of some help to them. I will send *Call Sign* details of where support, advice, information and practical help is available in London should anyone need the information.

I've read *Call Sign* from cover to cover and I'm just gobsmacked and inspired at the amount of support, commitment and enthusiasm that you provide to so many people and causes. I think it typifies the ethos of **Dial-a-Cab** and its big-hearted cabbies that are always such a pleasure to be involved with. **DaC** have been outstanding in supporting **Carers Trust** and it has been an absolute joy to welcome your team to the **Butlins** annual golf day. No amount of thanks can convey my appreciation for this support, which is reflected in the lives you have helped to change.

Please pass on my sincere thanks to everyone at **Dial-a-Cab**....we all think you ROCK!

**Trish Brown, Carers Trust Fundraising Manager**

**West Regent Street, Glasgow**

**Thanks to Call Sign's golf team of Keith Cain, Terry Felvus, Simon Wallis and Ray Scott who represented DaC so well at the Butlins Golf**

**Day in aid of the Carers Trust. If anyone wants the details that Trish is sending, please email me at the usual address ...Ed**

## Strictly scruffy!

*Hi Alan*

Whilst watching **Strictly Come Dancing** every night, I noticed that not one contestant arrives by licensed taxi. It seems that the days are gone when taxis ruled the roost and we now seem to be nothing but subbing contractors to the private hire league! It's all about image - or perceived image - and **Allen Togwell** is right in that too many drivers dress up like real scruffs. How right he has always been. Surely **Dial-a-Cab** could introduce a dress code? Although I disagreed with the dictatorial attitude regarding adverts, there must be some common ground to present our trade with a viable image. This could be brought up at the AGM meetings with drivers. I'm saying this with outside knowledge, having rescinded my licence due to ill health, but surely it must be worth pursuing?

I try to keep up with the trends in the cab trade and I hope I'm not being too controversial with this.

**Roy 'the boy' Manix (Ex-K98)**

**Hi Roy, nice to hear from you and I hope your health is improving. As for a dress code, I'm not sure how many letters I have published over the years about it, but here we are still as we have always been! ...Ed**

## Paula Mattis

We say farewell to a great colleague, **Paula Mattis** (*nee* Charles), who recently passed away. She began working for **Dial-a-Cab** as a telephonist when they were at **Shirland Road**, then went on to become a back channel operator. I first met her at the then new **Brunswick House** in 1985. Some years later she left the control room and took on a new role as the evening receptionist before retiring a few years later. Paula was a lovely person to work with and she will be dearly missed by all those who knew her.

**Curlette Villiers**

**DaC Senior Night Shift Controller**

**Thanks Curls and you're right, Paula was a lovely lady and there is a piece about her inside this issue...Ed**

## The future?

*Dear Members*

I write this letter with concern about the future of our company, **Dial-a-Cab**. I feel that we are not at a crossroads, but have turned into a *cul-de-sac* and are about to hit the brick wall at the end. Our membership, and therefore our fleet, is shrinking fast and our account work even faster! I find myself doing less and less account work. Our current Board needs shaking up with some new members and some new ideas. I believe that since 2008 our membership has shrunk by around 700 to around 1500. With subs at £1872 a year and multiplied by 700, that's a revenue loss of around £1.3million a year! So subs will increase soon after our AGM. Will this mean more drivers leaving? I read in the October *Call Sign* that another major account has been lost to a minicab company; part of this account may return, but the question is for how long? How many account customers are using others and not us? Just look around next time you are working and as you pass down the road, say to yourself that we used to pick up there! How many of you have been asked if you are on **Hailo** or been told by some media type that **DaC** are too expensive and that it isn't the meter but the extras added on the bill. Many would say the biggest threat to our company comes from minicabs while others might say it's from the new app companies, but I think the biggest threat is from ourselves and our lack of change - not only in the way we charge for our service, but in the way we offer and present our service and ourselves. Change is needed now. To carry on and wait for this recession to end is not the answer because our work will not suddenly come rushing back. You may ask why I think we need some change on the Board. It's because I think the Board are afraid of any change because they fear for their positions and jobs. This is evident because we have two Board members who speak about a dress code, yet neither will introduce one because they fear it may cost them votes at the next election. Remember when the Board successfully got members to accept postal voting and the right not to have outdoor advertising. They also introduced changes to Code 3 and how many trips can be rejected. All con-





# Mailshot

Continued from page 33

tentious issues, so why haven't they introduced a simple dress code? They never asked us to vote when we changed from 12 payments a year to 26 payments a year for our subs.

So why do I think we need change? I think DaC is an old fashioned luxury and at times expensive. Our service is not as good as we think. With 700 members less how can it be? When it's busy, trips still rattle around EC2 waiting to be matched with a cab. Some members have suggested GPS, I have suggested in *Call Sign* more use of *ranks in zones*, trips would go straight to the nearest cab. It was dismissed. Mike Son wrote about fixed prices some time back and how this might help drivers home. Does that mean he's fed up going home empty? I know I am. I suggested trips to outer London post codes ie E50S be offered without run ins, gratuities, booking fees and handling fees (thus saving VAT). Dismissed! DaC needs money from the booking fees, so the driver could pay an extra £1 or £2 taken from the meter fare at the end of the journey and that meant you got paid the metered fare. Dismissed! I'm not saying we should have a fire sale, just some small changes. I don't want a wholesale change of our Board, just someone who can bring fresh ideas and some more work for the metered fare would be nice. Otherwise, how are we ever going to attract new members?

Another idea; how about when you set Code 3 on your terminal; if there is a job in the zone you're in going to your home zone booked within the next 45 minutes, that you are offered the trip? I think it might be better than sitting around waiting until you get booked off! With the lack of work this probably won't work, but with account holders paying just the metered fare, who knows.

Reading an issue of *Call Sign*, I see we are about to launch a credit card app, some change at last but more is needed. In the meantime, I hope we get some new candidates standing for election.

**Jon Robinson (E88)**

You are entitled to your view Jon, but suggesting metered fares with nothing going to DaC sounds like a sure way to kill this Society! And let's face it, the only reason apps are getting work is because some drivers are working cheaply. Because of the election, I haven't asked for a response from the BoM, but I

remember when polo shirts with the DaC logo came out and were available for everyone. Some wore them, some didn't whilst some made clear to Call Sign that they would never wear a uniform. You can't force taxi drivers to do anything and perhaps had you successfully stood for election to the BoM, you'd have found that out for yourself. In any case, it would be pointless proposing anything that was obviously going to lose! But Jon, you are obviously genuinely interested in DaC, so you should take up Keith Cain's ongoing offer of a tour of DaC House to see what changes have been implemented over the past few years ...Ed

## EC5 changes

With regard to the changes proposed on EC5 to split it up into the individual zones, perhaps it's me but I can't see what advantage this will give. Perhaps someone can explain please? As a regular user of EC5, the inherent principle as I have always understood it was that first job goes to the first cab. Now we have a possible scenario where a cab may book into say EC1 at 2130 and wait for 15 minutes for a job, while another cab can book into say EC2 at 2130 and get off straightaway. This also could mean that if jobs are not covered in a particular zone, the client may wait longer than necessary because we don't have a first come-first served system.

EC5 has been tinkered with over the years a number of times, but has always reverted to what we have now, with any overload then being diverted into separate zones (not likely these days however). Also, I'm not sure it's a good idea to tinker with it as we approach what should be our busiest period.

**Alan Sullivan (F20)**

**Allan Evans responds:** Hi Alan, apart from explaining the procedures again, I am not sure what else to say. It was changed after quite a number of drivers requested that the BoM consider splitting the City zones at night. It is for a trial period in the hope that drivers will not have to run from one side of the City to the other as they do at the moment (roadwork's and traffic diversions etc), which should speed up arrival times. All trips in the primary zones will be offered *NREJ As Directed* in the normal way and unmatched

trips will also be offered from back up zones. It allows drivers to (correctly) book into zones and STC into those zones, something they cannot do at the moment. They can also bid for trips from secondary zones, any cash trips and FP trips can be rejected at no penalty.

So far the only calls I have had are positive ones, but it will be closely monitored and if it doesn't work fairly then it can soon be changed back or modified. I believe that as a Board you have to listen to drivers requests and in this case we all agreed that this change was not unreasonable and if correctly monitored, was worthy of a trial period.

## Hailo, Hailo, Hailo!

*Hi Alan*

For those who think we ex-pats should not receive the Winter Fuel Allowance I can assure them that it does get cold here at night in Spain. I am not sitting in the sun drinking wine and reading British newspapers but catching up on *Call Sign* online by my log fire. I've caught up on the back issues of the magazine and am extremely pleased to know that DaC is about to launch its own iPhone and Android App and sincerely wish it every success. There was a time that we were able to boast that we were the market leaders in technology, being the first circuit to introduce a full data despatch system into London. It appears to me that we are now playing catch up - not only with taxi Apps, but also with PH Apps. These Apps are obviously successful, otherwise we wouldn't be following suit and being forced to compete.

I have read a few of your articles where you are particularly critical of the way Hailo operates - you feel it is not good value for the driver. You consider that the 10% per job charge is too high and that drivers would not be prepared to run to a pick up point and wait 5 minutes before engaging the meter. I do not wish to use *Call Sign* to advocate that drivers use or try the App, but I believe Hailo has attracted many drivers and its ranks are swelling on a daily basis. Consider these incentives: It costs nothing to join; no equipment to buy; you can trial the system and if you are not happy you can uninstall the App at any time without cost; no money retained for a roller bond.

Yes, 10% per job is charged *but* - this charge applies only when the driver



# Mailshot

Continued from page 34

accepts a job. If the driver decides not to use the system – then there is no charge. If the driver is sick, in overhaul, off the road following an accident, on holiday or has a weekend off – he pays absolutely nothing. He pays as he goes, on a job to job basis. The driver does not pay a monthly subscription. On any radio circuit a member pays for the equipment irrespective of use.

Having spent many years in the City doing virtually nothing but account work I (and many like myself) am quite accustomed to waiting long periods for a job offer with the meter off. We are also accustomed to arriving outside an account customer's address and due to the circuit's "lead time" on the job, unable to start the meter because it is not booked for another 10 minutes. In fact, over the years the amount of time that I have spent waiting for a job offer must equate into many days. This was my choice. Is it possible that DaC are charging more than 10% for work if not a similar figure?

Subscriptions are now £144 per month. If a driver did in excess of £1440 per month of cash and account work then and only then would they offset a 10% charge. How many drivers achieve these sorts of figures? I am not saying this target cannot be achieved by *leather arses*, but what would you say DaC charges in percentage terms, on a subscription x monies taken ratio?

Finally, why would the public want to use an App that charges 10% extra on a credit card ride over an App that charges no extra and is subsidised by the driver who often gets a tip to offset this subsidy?

Personally, I am delighted that this technology is putting money into taxi drivers' pockets and hopefully, will not be too detrimental to our Society. We must accept change. As technology advances, our potential to increase our service to the public goes with it and we have to keep pace and compete with those who seek to get a share of the market. We should not let the technology overtake us but use it to our own advantage and be market leaders again. It is better that any additional work the Apps generate goes into a licensed taxi rather than into a LPH vehicle. An App can be part of an exciting future for DaC and its drivers in an ever-changing world. If drivers do not like the Hailo system for being less lucrative, they will not stay with it for too long if the circumstances you describe are a disincentive to join it.

Steve Shaller (F34J)

Thanks for your always interesting input Steve. And reading Call Sign instead of sitting by your Spanish pool drinking Cuba Libre – I feel flattered! However, I have to say that I've heard it all before – that's about Hailo and not the drink! There are quite a number of DaC drivers on Hailo and I have never criticised anyone who feels they need to be earning more in these tough economic times – it's probably even worse in Spain. But your comparisons don't work in the same way as mine. You do what many do and assume that all DaC jobs are pre-booked and that the driver is 50metres away at the time. But you know as well as I that isn't the case and that most jobs aren't pre-booked anyway. But forget that Steve; your case seems to be that it's the 10% charge against DaC's subscription and that the two are comparable. Or that because the Hailo driver pays the credit card charges, then that shows up the fact that on DaC the customer will pay – something I have no doubt they will be happy to do if they believe the service is reliable. That part is out of my hands, but the abolition of the £2 booking fee will undoubtedly help.

So why do I think your figures are misleading? Well

every ride that is dispatched on DaC has a maximum £4.20 run-in. Of course that isn't compulsory, so let's call it an average of £3.60 when the driver arrives. You wait five minutes and the DaC driver has £6 on the meter whereas the Hailo driver has £2.40. So in my book, that makes 10% less of the fare on top of a discount of £3.60 on most of the trips you take from the App – and let's not forget that most trips are run-of-the-mill and you would have a job getting a tenner out of it. If you work on the assumption that it's better than nothing, then that's fine, but I refuse to work that cheaply. Perhaps if I was as young as you Steve and we needed money to pay for the cab HP and mortgage etc, then yes, perhaps it would be different. But the only people laughing are the three Americans behind it because they have got taxi drivers working at discount rates while they will shortly make a killing.

As I said on page 3 of this issue, Hailo have now opened in Chicago, but the passengers over there pay a premium for the service. Over here, the driver is paying the passenger to use his or her cab! But as you correctly say, it costs nothing to join so it could be useful when quiet. But can you wonder why their coverage is poor during busy times – especially at weekends. And just for the record, I love the roller bond because the majority of it comes from gratuities, so you don't really miss it and then you suddenly find you have £1000. Always nice to hear from you Steve and your dulcet tones are missed at AGMs ...Ed



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