

February 2012



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*DaC's Mike Son conducts the London Charity Orchestra... but why are they laughing?*



*Elvis and the Blues Brothers together on the cover of Call Sign? What's going on?*







# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Update on West End shows and approx finish times. No matinee info due to insufficient space...

SHOW	THEATRE	ADDRESS	FINISH TIME
39 STEPS	Criterion	Piccadilly Circus, W1	22:00
ABSENT FRIENDS	Harold Pinter *	Panton St, SW1Y 4DN	
ALL NEW PEOPLE	Duke of York's	St Martin's Lane, WC2	
AMERICAN IDIOT	Hammersmith Apollo	45 Queen Caroline St., W6 9QH	
BACKBEAT	Duke of York's	St Martin's Lane, WC2	22:10
BILLY ELLIOT - THE MUSICAL	Victoria Palace	Victoria Street, SW1E 5EA	22:30
BINGO	Young Vic (Main House)	66 The Cut, SE1 8LZ	
BLOOD BROTHERS	Phoenix	Charing Cross Rd, WC2H 0JP	22:30
CHANGELING	Young Vic (Maria Studio)	66 The Cut, SE1 8LZ	
CHICAGO	Garrick	Charing Cross Rd, WC2	22:15 Fri 22:45
CHILDREN OF EDEN	Prince Of Wales	Coventry Street, W1	
COLLABORATORS	Cottesloe, National	Royal National Theatre, SE1 9PX	
COMEDY OF ERRORS	Olivier, National	Royal National Theatre, SE1 9PX	
CONSTELLATIONS	Royal Court Upstairs	Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS	
CRAZY FOR YOU	Novello	Aldwych, WC2	22:05
DEVIL AND MISTER PUNCH	Barbican Pit	Barbican Cntr., Silk St., EC2Y 8DS	21:10
DREAMBOATS & PETTICOATS	Playhouse	Northumberland Avenue, WC2	21:50 Sat 22:20
EZRA AXELROD	Leicester Square (Lounge)	Leicester Place, WC2H 7BP	W-Sat 20:20
GHOST THE MUSICAL	Piccadilly	Denman Street, W1	22:00
GOODBYE TO ALL THAT	Royal Court Upstairs	Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS	
HAY FEVER	Noel Coward *	St Martin's Lane, WC2N 4AH	
HORRIBLE HISTORIES	Garrick	Charing Cross Rd, WC2	W-F 14:00
HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA	Almeida	Almeida Street, N1 1TA	
IN BASILDON	Royal Court Downstairs	Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS	
ISLAND	Cottesloe	Royal National Theatre, SE1 9PX	
JACKIE MASON - FEARLESS	Wyndham's	Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0DA	22:15
JERSEY BOYS	Prince Edward	Old Compton Street, W1V 6HS	22:05
JERUSALEM	Apollo	Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7ES	22:45
JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK	Lyttelton	Royal National Theatre, SE1 9PX	
LADYKILLERS, THE	Gielgud	Shaftesbury Ave, W1D 6AR	22:00
LEGALLY BLONDE	Savoy	The Strand, WC2	22:00
LES MISERABLES	Queen's	Shaftesbury Ave, W1V 8BA	22:30
LION KING	Lyceum	Wellington St, WC2E 7DA	22:15
MADNESS OF GEORGE III	Apollo	Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7ES	
MAMMA MIA	Prince Of Wales	Coventry Street, W1	22:00
MASTER CLASS	Vaudeville	The Strand, WC2R 0NH	21:50
MATILDA	Cambridge	Earlham Street, WC2	Tu 21:40 W-Sat 22:10
MIDNIGHT TANGO	Aldwych	Aldwych, WC2B 4DF	
MOUSETRAP	St Martin's	West St, WC2H 9NH	21:45
NOISES OFF	Old Vic	The Cut, London SE1 8NB	21:55
ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS **	Adelphi	Strand, WC2E 7NA	22:00
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA	Her Majesty's	Haymarket, SW1Y 4QL	22:00
PITMEN PAINTERS	Duchess	Catherine St, WC2B 5LA	22:05
RECRUITING OFFICER	Donmar Warehouse	Earlham Street, WC2H 9LD	
RICHARD II	Donmar Warehouse	Earlham Street, WC2H 9LD	22:10
ROCK OF AGES	Shaftesbury	210 Shaftesbury Ave, WC2H 8DP	22:00
SEX WITH A STRANGER	Trafalgar Studios 2	Whitehall, SW1	
SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER	Olivier	Royal National Theatre, SE1 9PX	
SHREK	Drury Lane, Royal	Catherine St, WC2B 5JF	22:00
SINGIN' IN THE RAIN	Palace	Shaftesbury Ave, W1V 8AY	
STOMP	Ambassadors	West Street, WC2H 9N	21:45
LEISURE SOCIETY	Trafalgar Studios 2	Whitehall, SW1	
THREE DAYS IN MAY	Trafalgar Studios 1	Whitehall, SW1	21:45
THRILLER LIVE	Lyric	Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7 ES	22:00 Sat 22:30
TRAVELLING LIGHT	Lyttelton	Royal National Theatre, SE1 9PX	
WAR HORSE	New London	Drury Lane, WC2B 5PW	22:10 Tue 21:40
WE WILL ROCK YOU	Dominion	Tottenham Court Road, W1P OAG	22:10
WICKED	Apollo Victoria	Wilton Rd, SW1	22:20
WIZARD OF OZ	London Palladium	Argyll Street, W1A 3AB	22:15 Tue 21:45
WOMAN IN BLACK	Fortune	Russell St, WC2B 5HH	22:00

\* Harold Pinter formerly Comedy & Noel Coward formerly Albery - \*\* One Man, Two Guvnors moves to Haymarket Theatre Royal 2/3/12

Don't forget [www.nashnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashnumbers.co.uk) for all back issues and [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) for 70 page UID and 'What's On' in February. Just register at [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) with unlock code of taxi. MyFav is a great home page and you can win £100 just by recommending it (T&C's apply)...

# from the editor's desk

## The moaners of One Hyde Park???

As we get older, allegedly we begin moaning about far more things than perhaps we wouldn't have even thought about in our younger days. And yes, I plead guilty! I have become a moaner and events that wouldn't have received a passing nod, now draw huge amounts of condemnation from we on the senior side of life.

If you've been driving a taxi in London for more than a few years, you'll remember the huge amounts of hassle caused by the building of One Hyde Park. It began around six years ago when Nick and Christian Candy began building the world's most expensive and exclusive block of flats - sorry, apartments! The project survived the global economic crisis and even though the apartments have now been open for two years, the traffic heading past the building's McLaren racing car and Rolex showrooms, not to mention the Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank still crawls along at a snail's pace.

But hey, people have to live somewhere so how could we begrudge residents such as Ukrainian Rinat Akhmetov his homely £136million pad overlooking the Serpentine? I haven't yet been invited for a look around, but I have it from a good source that it's not too bad in there! Mind you, not all the residents are that well-off. Spare a thought for Mohammed Saud Sultan al-Qasimi, head of finance for Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. He spent just a paltry £11.5million on his apartment!

Around 65 of the 80 apartments have been sold, with one third of the deals having been sealed via the British Virgin Islands tax haven. One nearby parking space even fetched £250,000. Some have pointed out that around £750million each year is lost to the UK tax reserves thanks to those said to have purchased apartments from current owners and who can then avoid stamp duty by actually buying the offshore companies used to buy them!

Westminster City Council has attempted to investigate who the current owners actually are as not all are as open as Mr Akhmetov and discovered that only nine apartments had registered for council tax, five of them being second homes. Council officials wrote to developers asking for owners' names, but do not seem to have received any response. They may have to send their chief finance inspector round there on his bike to claim the annual tax for each apartment of £755.60 plus the GLA's £619.64.

Certainly the Candy brothers can't be held responsible for whoever buys an apartment in the block and they have confirmed that all buyers paid stamp duty at the time of purchase. But registering for council tax isn't their responsibility.

But the above isn't to have a pop at wealthy people, after all they use taxis and we are grateful for that. Perhaps it comes down to my self-admitted moaning, but now local residents - and there aren't that many living too local to Hyde Park - have complained about the noise from the summer's open air concerts held at the park. Current rumour suggests only 3 apartments are actually lived in, which begs the point - is it just these three who moan about the noise?

Besides being part of London's summer scene, the rich bring a lot of money into town whether it's for patron's use of taxis from the station to Hyde Park or their early arrival to hit the shops. And now, instead of Westminster telling these "local residents" that the concerts were already



there before they lashed out their multi-millions and that if they don't like the occasional late night - some, gosh, going on till 10.30 - then they shouldn't have bought a pad in the park, the council are set to cut the number of open-air concerts. And if that means I'm moaning, then tough. There are lots of flats available in Pimlico where there are no concerts...

## LTPH News

The 14 page **London Taxi & Private Hire News** that goes out to drivers via email every three months is a useful tool for LTPH to let readers know what the licensing authority are thinking. It even comments on rumours! If you are not on the list then just send your email address to [www.tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:www.tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk) putting London Taxi & Private Hire News in the subject box.

While on the subject of their newsheet, can I offer a brief comment on their piece regarding cyclists. Many regular readers will know that I am not the two-wheeler's biggest fan and that thanks to the pure selfish attitude of so many of them, I usually expect them all to be a menace on the road - and I am rarely disappointed...

The LTPH article writes of cycle space and how we can help them stay safe - although thankfully the number of cyclists involved in fatal accidents has fallen. It then gives readers sensible guidance on how we can help. Among the suggestions are to give space to cyclists when overtaking and at junctions. Make sure there is room and time to safely overtake - giving as much space as you would when overtaking a car. Also to make sure we indicate when planning to turn left or right so any following cyclists are aware of what we're planning to do. Then there is the passenger who opens the door on the offside without looking, forcing cyclists to swerve to avoid it - stupidity of the highest order.

All that is good advice, but I feel that similar advice should be given to cyclists as well. For example; when traffic lights are red, it means stop. When traffic stops at a pedestrian crossing to allow people to cross the road, that includes anything on two wheels stopping as well. If you are following a taxi with its left indicator flashing, that probably means he is turning left or possibly stopping. It isn't an invitation for cyclists to overtake on the inside.

Also, it is an offence for taxis to travel in the new cycling highways, so shouldn't it also be an offence for cyclists to travel outside them? Why should a cyclist overtake another cyclist who in turn is overtaking? The third cyclist will have to

ride outside the lane to complete the manoeuvre and usually at a high speed - and with no attempt at looking to see what's behind.

So I've thought of a great slogan for cyclists... Think Car! How do I do it...!!!

## Diane Abbott, black people and black cabs?

I'm not too sure whether the heading to this piece will be classified by some as being racist, politically incorrect, insulting or just a silly joke? I suppose the question is whether I'm referring to black cabs or black people! Or I could be referring to the Labour MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington and Shadow Health Minister, **Diane Abbott**. According to one of her tweets, she is dubious of black people claiming they've never experienced racism and asks whether they had ever tried hailing a taxi?

Actually I quite like Diane Abbott. She is down to earth, fights for her constituents and is controversial to the point where you may listen to her just to see who she is going to insult next! Sadly, this time it's we taxi drivers who according to many scribes, dislike being referred to as black cab drivers. Those of you who read this column regularly will know that I am not one of those and in fact I describe myself as a black cab driver because everyone knows that means I don't drive a minicab and am part of the best taxi service in the world.

By the same token, there are black drivers on Dial-a-Cab who I assume would dislike being referred to as coloured because as they would undoubtedly point out, we are all coloured and their colour is black. What colour do our Asian drivers refer themselves as being? Brown? I'm not sure and I'm not particularly bothered because I just call them by their name if they agree not to call me pink. And, so far as I can see, we all get on regardless of colour.

I have no doubt that some drivers will drive past black people - the operative word being 'some' and from a total of 25,000 that word probably represents a small fraction. I've made this point before and I'm not ashamed of it: I would think twice about stopping for a group of young black kids wearing hoodies. Is that racist? Maybe, but I would also think twice about stopping for a group of white kids wearing hoodies. Is that racist? I have no problem picking up a group of black people who look - shall we say - normal. Now if I were black, I'd find that statement to be offensive. But most of our white passengers also look normal - racism at its worst!

This isn't a problem caused by taxi drivers; it's one that has been regurgitated by Diane Abbott. The number of black people taking taxis has gone up over the years and the number of complaints with regards to refusals going down. Ms Abbott has now taken the debate back several years and damaged the previously improving relations, because there was a time when this really was a problem. You can read DaC driver's views inside this issue.

I disagree with those suggesting Ms Abbott should be sacked from her position as Shadow Health Minister. I just wish she would get a life and go back to what she does best - helping constituents and insulting people! Errr, hang on...

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



# reflections of the chairman

## Platforms and takeovers...

Most of you will be aware that on 17 November there was an announcement that Addison Lee had bought private hire company Lewis Day. They have taken the minicab part of the business with the courier section going to City Sprint. This latest acquisition has thrown up some very interesting scenarios, some of which I would like to explain further...

I have been writing about independent platforms in *Call Sign* for several years. What it actually means is that a software house builds a *Job Distribution Engine* (JDE) and endeavours to despatch both taxis and minicabs on behalf of a client without needing to actually own a single taxi or car. In other words, they endeavour to control the taxi and minicab industry without owning one single vehicle.

They then sell use of the JDE to the client by stating they are totally independent and do not have any allegiance with either a taxi or minicab company, but will offer the client the cheapest means of transport to their destination at any given time of the day. What they then do is to offer the trip to the minicab company that is offering the cheapest rate for that particular trip. If they do not have a car available, it then gets offered to the next least expensive car company and so it goes on until a wet Wednesday night arrives and Arsenal are playing Tottenham. Suddenly there are not any cars available, so they offer the trip to one of the three taxi radio circuits. However, they do have one problem - none of the three taxi radio circuits will subscribe to their platform!

But although they do not have any taxis on their platform, they still sell it to customers by stating they are totally independent "unlike the taxi radio circuits" and they do have a handful of customers that subscribe to their JDE system.

They also have another problem in that they do not have a Contact Centre; consequently one of the minicab vendors supplying the client with cars also has to be the lead vendor by utilising its own Contact Centre. You can imagine the problems this brings to the operation as minicab vendors accuse the lead vendor of 'creaming off' the best trips for itself or indeed, even tampering with the distribution of trips.

As I said earlier, their key selling point is an alleged impartiality; so you can imagine my reaction when I learned their JDE had been purchased by Addison Lee, consequently they can no longer claim they do not have a vested interest in which company receives the despatched trips.

But I also believe that this could prove to be a positive step for the radio taxi circuits as in future, the client will have a choice of one of the three radio circuits and car vendors of the client's choice that receive work from that particular taxi JDE, or they will have Addison Lee.

I believe that AL will not just want to do the minicab work, but also the trips that currently go into taxis. So the next few months could prove to be particularly interesting as we see how things develop.

## 2012 hopes...

This year has begun as always, very, very quietly but hopefully as the year progresses, business will improve - especially as we head towards the end of July and the Olympics commence. I am hopeful that the impending Games will generate more business for us even before they actually begin, because once they do start navigating around London it could prove to be very difficult, even though no-one really knows for certain.

I know it seems very unfair that we will not be allowed into the Olympic Route Network (ORN), as it will be reserved for Games officials and athletes and some routes could be out of bounds to all road users for up to eighteen hours a day. I have been advised - although I cannot state it as fact - that if you are a sponsor of the Games you will also be allowed into the ORN.

I have also heard various rumours that there will be protests and demonstrations regarding our exclusion from the ORN, but if true these demonstrations will probably prove to be totally fruitless and just encourage annoyance to other road users, as they will not have an end result.



Anyone who is contemplating organising a protest or demonstration should check the terms of our actual winning of the Games. I believe they will find that part of our successful bid involved a guarantee that officials, delegates and athletes would be able to travel to the Olympic site within a certain timeframe from central London, so no amount of disruption on our part will have any bearing on the decision to use the ORN. I believe that guarantee would mean officials being able to travel by car from Hyde Park Corner and reach the Olympic site within 21 minutes. As the professionals at driving in London, you will all know that completing the journey in that time means the road would have to be totally clear.

## AGM time again...

It's that time of year again when the AGM comes around. You should all have received your paperwork by now and will see that we do not have any rule changes or propositions to discuss and neither is it an electable AGM regarding selecting your BoM.

**However, as you are aware you still have to vote on three topics, consequently you will have to either vote by post or if you choose not to do so, then you must attend the AGM. Failure to vote by post OR attend the AGM will result in a £50 fine being levied against you. The AGM will be held on 5 February at the HAC in City Road, commencing at 11am.**

I look forward to seeing some of you there...

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

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# Mayor asks: Please turn your engine off!

Taxi drivers and other motorists are being urged to switch off their engines when stationary for more than a minute, after Mayor of London Boris Johnson launched a major new anti-idling campaign designed to tackle air pollution.

The campaign had been expected for some time as part of the government efforts to ensure London meets legal PM10 pollution limits.

**Transport for London** is funding radio and poster adverts asking taxi drivers as well as drivers of cars, buses, coaches and delivery vans to switch off their engines when parked or dropping off people or goods that is expected to take longer than one minute.



You can almost smell the exhaust!

Or even if you are in a huge traffic jam!

Taxis are said to account for around a quarter of PM10 emissions in central London, up to 15 per cent of which is caused by idling. Whether that figure is accurate or not, what is certain is that London will face a huge fine if the capital's air quality does not improve and even though London does meet EU PM10 limits in many areas, some central hotspots do still exceed limits and could result in multimillion pound EU fines.

TfL say that the anti-idling campaign could

reduce annual PM10 emissions by the equivalent of a medium sized diesel car travelling 2.5 million kilometres - assuming all vehicles in the capital complied.

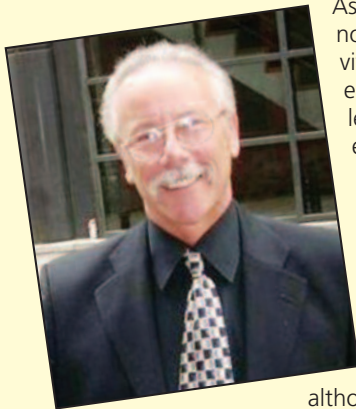
The Mayor told **Call Sign**: "Turning off engines when stationary for more than a minute creates a host of positive benefits by reducing pollution and using less fuel to save people money. This small individual step can collectively make a huge difference in improving our great city."

But doesn't continually switching your engine off and on cause damage?

According to TfL: "Ignitions in modern cars have eliminated this problem and research shows that turning off an engine and restarting it after a minute uses less fuel and causes less pollution and causes no damage to the vehicle."

**DaC's David Lessman is the Hon Treasurer for the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children. Here he gives his end of year report...**

## Treasurer's Report 2010/2011



As predicted, the past twelve months have proved to be no easy time for all charities, but the LTFUC has survived and will continue to survive, thanks to the generosity of its many benefactors. Generated income was less than 50% of the previous year and although total expenditure was also considerably less, reserves have been held to a reasonable level.

Grants were made to several deserving causes, including computers and equipment exceeding £9000 to the Joseph Clarke School for blind children and Christmas vouchers to the value of £1800 to the dependants of taxi drivers no longer able to provide for their family. The third Fun day at Covent Garden raised some much needed funds,

although kinder weather would have helped and although the concert held in December 2010 at St John's Smith Square did not raise as much as was hoped, those who attended enjoyed an extremely entertaining evening.

Thanks to a very generous taxi rider, who kindly donated many of the toys and gifts for the party at Grosvenor House, costs were significantly lower than the previous year.

There was no Spring outing this year, so we were able to save what was spent on the Woburn event of last year, but the major saving in this year's accounts can be found in the trip to Southend. By revising the way the outing was catered, we were able to make a substantial saving on 2010 costs and it also enabled us to negotiate with Southend Council to reduce their charges. Furthermore, an extremely productive sponsorship campaign increased our income over the previous year.

Though total income for the year was under £20,000 with total expenditure for the year just over £32,000, our reserves have carried us through the year. However, with only £173 spent on general administration, we can be justifiably proud that this figure of less than 1% of generated income reflects the unstinting commitment of the trustees of the charity...

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

## AGM REMINDER



All members should have received the *Notice of Annual General Meeting 2011* advising that the meeting will again be held at The HAC, Armoury House, City Road on Sunday 5 February 2012 at 11am.

**The meeting this year will consider an agenda excluding the election of officers, but including as usual, proposed Rule Changes and Propositions.**

Any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions must have been received at Dial-a-Cab House by 2nd December 2011 as per the Notice of Annual General Meeting 2011 letter and can now no longer be considered.

Please remember that if you do not vote by post then you should attend. If you do not attend or vote by post, you will be liable for a £50 fine.

**Howard Pears**  
Company Secretary



# Jery's World



Sorry old boy, but I don't know what this Euro V is. I wonder if your Euro 0.5 certificate will be ok because 1959 was a good year for taxis...

## CRB ENHANCED CHECKS BACK

In May the Criminal Records Bureau contacted TfL and stated that they should no longer submit enhanced CRB checks for taxi and private hire drivers. The CRB insisted that enhanced checks should only be made on people who work with vulnerable adults and children (as defined by legislation ie teachers, social workers, etc).

Since 2002, TfL have required applicants for a taxi or PH licence to undergo an enhanced CRB check. TfL and the Mayor of London, along with the taxi trade and others, lobbied the Government to amend existing legislation to allow licensing authorities across the UK to have access to information disclosed in enhanced CRB checks.

**Now Home Office Minister Lynne Featherstone has announced the continuation of enhanced checks for taxi drivers and private hire vehicles. In a statement, she said:**

"Having carefully considered representations and consulted representatives of the sector, we have decided that all taxi and private hire drivers should be entitled to enhanced criminal records checks and that licensing authorities will additionally be entitled to check whether any applicant is barred from work with children or vulnerable adults under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Taking account of the fact that many drivers are self-employed, criminal records applications may be made through the appropriate licensing authority. The decision on whether to grant a licence will remain a matter for the licensing authority. This change clarifies the law and regularises practice which has grown up over many years in the taxi sector. Changes will be made by secondary legislation as soon as practicable."

The result for the cab trade is that the possibility of PH drivers creeping in with just a standard CRB check has been removed and an enhanced check will now be required...



Lynne Featherstone

## Addy Lee driver guilty of manslaughter

Addison Lee driver Imran Raja's four passengers screamed at the driver that he had just run over a pedestrian having also felt the bump as the minicab drove over 58-year old homeless man, Robin Scott.

Scott had splashed some drink over the car before also banging on the windscreen. Raja was said to have knocked Mr Scott over and driven over the body, the Old Bailey heard, although the driver had insisted he was unaware of hitting anyone and that he wouldn't have known had his passengers not screamed.

The passengers got out of the car and saw the man lying in the road with severe head injuries that he later died from.

Raja, from Ilford, was found guilty of manslaughter and jailed for three years and nine months. The court accepted that he did not intend to cause serious harm.

In 2006, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Dick Francis (T15)** made the pages of **Call Sign** when in order to raise funds to help pay for new equipment for **Great Ormond Street** children's hospital, he cycled the 350 miles from Paris to London in five days. Together with other volunteers on the ride, Dick helped to raise a magnificent total of £76,000 to help purchase some invaluable resuscitation equipment!

But now, with his bottom having recovered from saddle sores, 60-year old Dick has decided to have another go at a charity ride and is doing the 500 mile punishing "Battlefield Tour in aid of the **Help for Heroes** fund."

Coincidentally, at a time when **London Vintage Taxi Association** Dutch PR man **Hans Dooren** has kindly offered via **Call Sign** to trace the war grave of any relative of Dial-a-Cab drivers at any of Holland's war graves, Dick intends cycling round all the World War One battlefields from **Thiepval** to the **Somme** and **Ypres**, before returning to Dover and cycling back to Brentford.

Thiepval was chosen at the end of WW1 hostilities for a Memorial to the many brave soldiers who were killed at the Somme but classified as missing due to their bodies never being identified and having no known grave. This *Memorial to the Missing* is said to be a most moving and sobering experience.

The memorial at Ypres is just as moving. This was just a small Belgian market town situated just over the border from France - a town virtually unknown until WW1 hostilities broke out in 1914. It soon became the

# Dick to Cycle Round Euro War Graves!



**Dick Francis aims to cycle around Europe's war graves to raise money for help for heroes**

scene of much of the worst fighting of the war along with appalling horrors at the

Somme and what became known as the hell of **Verdun**. In an area of just 25 square kilometres, around half a million soldiers died.

**This magazine's** Editor **Alan Fisher (F07)** has visited Ypres and told **Call Sign**: "While the area is now more akin to a museum with many schoolchildren visiting, both Linda and I were incredibly moved by just being in the place where so many died while fighting to keep freedom in the world."












Dick told **Call Sign**: "I expect it to be a very moving experience, yet one I am looking forward to doing. Naturally I hope to raise as much money as possible and my thanks to both **Call Sign** and **Dial-a-Cab** for their promised sponsorship. I am hoping to complete the ride wearing some DaC cycling shirts and hoping to chase some more sponsorship from both in and out the trade."

**Call Sign** will report on Dick's cycle ride when he leaves on May 20...

**Dennis Latchett**  
**Call Sign Online**

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There have been controversial Tweets from black Labour MP Diane Abbott on feeling dubious of black people who claimed they had never experienced racism: *Ever tried hailing a taxi*, she asked? So *Call Sign* conducted a survey and spoke to several Dial-a-Cab drivers to see what they thought of the MP's comments...

**Tony Bishop (J91):** "It doesn't bother me what colour a person is, but it is a fact that most borks occur in certain areas and that's why I may not stop - not because the person is a particular colour. They could be Chinese, orthodox Jews or whatever, the colour of their skin does not bother me at all."



**John Rothery (F65):** "I have never been that selective of passengers. I remember stopping near Buckingham Palace once for a lady and four youngsters, two of whom were black. I was somewhat surprised when one of the black children asked me if it was true that taxis didn't stop for black people. But before I could take a breath to respond, the adult escort told him to be quiet, pointing out that I had in fact stopped for them!"



**Louis Loizou (T58):** "I stop for anyone because it's true that you can't judge a book by its cover. I recently stopped for a guy who had been passed by several cabs travelling along the road ahead of me. He was covered in tattoos, even his face, let alone his arms and no doubt the rest of his body too! He turned out to be a really nice bloke to talk to as we chatted on the way to Muswell Hill. He was a tattoo designer, so he was displaying his trade for all to see! It all depends on the passengers demeanour because even 'suits' can be rude. So I judge people on spec, although I accept that it might be a bit different working nights. You have to make that split-second judgement as you approach people!"



**Ray Cahalan (Y75):** "I worked nights for 30 years so I'm aware of particular areas to be cautious of, but I don't care who the people are, just so long as the meter is running! Mind you, When I say 'anybody', I don't include hoodies in that!"



**Lawrence Short (E68):** "Diane Abbott is bang out of order. We are a diverse community and trade. There are Muslim drivers, black drivers, both men and women and also of course white men and women, so I feel



her comments are totally unfounded. I will happily pick up anybody if they look presentable, but of course, I have to look after me especially when working during the hours of darkness. So, like many drivers no doubt, I will not stop for drunks or others that look like potential trouble. But you have to make a snap decision whether to stop or not."

**Jackie Kott (Y88):** "I work late into the night and have never seen a drunken black person, and in my 20 year taxi driving career I have had no problems with black passengers. I usually find them to be a charming and respectable sector of the community. In fact the only grief I've had has been from white and not black people! I'll stop for the first hand I see to go up to hail me and will take them wherever they wish to go. Yes, even south of the river - although I am wary in areas such as Brixton or Harlesden, simply because I prefer to work in town."



**John Dixon (B67):** "I use my sixth sense before I stop for anyone - regardless of who or what colour that person is - and if I feel doubtful about the pick-up, then it doesn't happen! Thinking back over the years, the only dodgy experiences I've had has been from whites, not blacks. And I doubt whether I would recognise Diane Abbott if I saw her on the street!"



*Call Sign* also spoke to two of DaC's black drivers to see whether their perspective was different. **Tony Sam-Yorke (W95)** and **Trevor Smith (V78)** had stories of discrimination, both inside the cab and out and perhaps give some credence to Diane Abbott's comments.

**Tony Sam-Yorke (W95):** "When I'm out and about, I routinely display my Green Badge in my hand if I'm looking to hail a taxi, otherwise it might be pot-luck. I can tell you of instances during my working day or when out socialising with relatives and friends where racism does become apparent."



"On one occasion I was the first cab on the rank and an Arab woman walked directly up to the second cab, completely ignoring me. The second driver directed her toward me and I saw the woman rub her forefinger against the back of her other hand, obviously indicating the colour of my skin. To his credit, I overheard the second driver tell the woman that if she did not wish to get into my taxi, she was not going to get into his or any of the other taxis on the rank. So she grudgingly walked

off down the street away from the rank, obviously realising she had hit a blank wall."

"On another occasion I arrived at the credit client's address where the passenger began having a go at me, phoning the call centre to vent his displeasure. I eventually got him to his destination, with lots of grief along the way. As he got out of the cab he called me a piece of s\*\*t, slamming the cab door in the process."

"Another time I had a drunken lady in the cab that had fallen fast asleep by the time we reached her destination. To cut a long story short, even the male police officer decided to call a female police officer to wake her up. Can you imagine what *might* have happened if I had approached her on my own? But I accept every driver needs to be ultra-cautious under those circumstances."

"However, Diane Abbott should think carefully about what effect her missives have on other people in the wider community before she opens her mouth. We must not be judgemental but treat everybody as individuals. I treat people as I see them, you simply cannot generalise."

**Trevor Smith (V78):** "I think that Diane Abbott was right, racism is a fact. I was at the Croydon taxi rank and a cab driver refused to stop to pick me up despite me being loaded down with shopping bags. Another time I was third cab on the Waterloo rank. The first cab pulled off the rank as black people approached, only to make a 'U' turn and re-join the rank at the back of the queue simply to avoid picking them up. I tried remonstrating with the driver concerned who told me there were two types of people he did not stop for; Blacks and Irish. He did qualify the statement with the enlightening comment that he could not have told they were Irish until they opened their mouth to speak!"



"I am cautious when accepting longer rides, politely requesting some form of payment in advance, but that is a business decision and nothing to do with selectivity. Yes, I've had trouble with passengers, some using the 'N' word and I've had hotels abroad tell me they were full up but miraculously find accommodation for the white folk behind me."

"A big part of my life is and always has been football\* and when I was 18 I was invited to play for Dulwich Hamlet football team, then managed by Alan Smith. A taxi driver refused to take me to meet the transport coach, which meant I missed the coach taking the team to the game. As a football coach myself nowadays, I understand the importance of player reliability so missing that game was important because in Alan Smith's eyes, it meant he could not rely on me. Alan went on to manage Crystal Palace and I sometimes wonder if that incident may have had a bearing on my later football career. Anyway, some good has come of it because I regularly stress to my children and the youngsters I coach that dignity, honesty and reliability are very important attributes in a person."

\*Trevor was the DaC football team's record scorer, twice scoring 6 goals in a single match and knocking in countless hat-tricks...Ed



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**Martin Hizer (M47)** was in sombre mood when *Call Sign* spoke to him in response to his fleet message warning drivers regarding a spate of catalytic converter thefts from taxis.

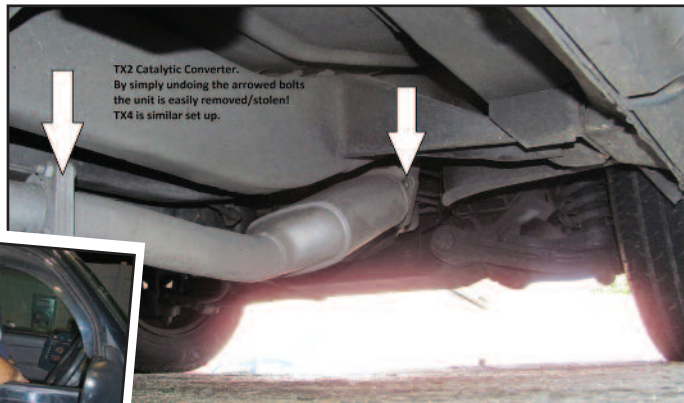
"It was quite a shock to my ears as I started up the cab – it was totally deafening," Martin exclaimed. "I thought the exhaust system had dropped off completely, the noise was so bad. It was a bit like you'd imagine a Centurion tank would sound like!"

Continuing his story, Martin told *Call Sign* how he managed to crawl from his home in the east to S&H Cabs in Edmonton, whilst along the way having every motorist staring at him and his cab wondering just how on earth a London taxi could sound so noisy!

At the garage, Sirdar - the boss at S&H - put Martin's cab on a ramp to take a look underneath it, while the **Dial-a-Cab** driver grabbed a coffee expecting to hear at any minute that his exhaust system must have fallen off somewhere.

"Within minutes a mechanic came running over to me confirming that a complete section of the taxi exhaust system was missing," said Martin. "However, they suspected that it hadn't fallen off but had been stolen and said I should phone home to see if any securing bolts had been left on my driveway. Sure enough, my wife confirmed there were several bolts littering the drive. Almost as astonishing was the fact that we live in a cul-de-sac, yet no one heard a thing!"

Sirdar explained to Martin that since 1 January 2012 when the tighter emissions controls came into force with hefty fines for those who breach the regulations, a market for catalytic converters to fit onto vehicles that would otherwise fail the Lower Emission Zone had sprung up. Martin's TX2 Ford engine and exhaust system was similar to the Transit range



of vans. It does seem that with its compatibility to other Ford products and no-one asking too many questions where items came from, nor for receipts, these thefts are likely to continue with the expression 'mix and match' taking on a completely new meaning.

Sirdar was able to patch Martin up so that he could go to work until a new unit was fitted. He was also told that M&O had 4 Catalytic items on order. "There must obviously be a demand for nicked catalytic converters," Martin said while even managing a smile.

"These converters don't come cheap," he added. "My TX2 bill showed £350 plus VAT plus fitting. The TX4 unit is £450 plus VAT and fitting, so you can see why stealing them simply by unbolting them is big business," Martin suggested.

"However, it wasn't Sirdar's fault that it got

## MARTIN'S CATALYTIC CONVERTER STOLEN OFF CAB!

The arrows show where the TX2 bolts are.

Inset: Martin's catalytic converter was stolen off his cab

nicked, so I would like to thank him and his team at S&H Cabs for getting me back on the road, and as usual they did it well!"

Catalytic converters are an important part of the exhaust system. They filter out harmful pollutants that affect the quality of the air we breathe. They can contain ceramic and even platinum materials that raise the temperature of the engines' exhaust fumes, thereby burning off most of the nasty stuff that emits from the back end of the cab. To make life as difficult as possible for would-be thieves, some garages will suggest welding the securing bolts together, while others will no doubt have their own deterrent ideas. Either way, it's an expensive process.

*There is a fire risk due to the high temperatures involved in the exhaust system generally, so it is essential to speak with your service agent before any work is undertaken.*

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# Free Eco Driving Lessons

## Just a few still left...

There was a large response to last month's offer of free ECO driving lessons for **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, sponsored by *TfL* and the *Department for Transport*. There were 200 places on offer and as of press time, there were still a few left. But they are now open to the whole trade.

If you missed the article, it referred to an invite for *Call Sign* to take part in an *Energy Saving Trust* ECO driving lesson last year. This is something that will become compulsory for new drivers to take in the future and which they will have to pay for.

The training is designed to help bring a greater awareness of how to drive more economically, together with the benefits such advanced skills bring in terms of reduced fuel bills, less wear on your taxi, improved passenger comfort and of course to help bring about a better environment. *Energy Saving Trust* has already trained well over 20,000 drivers from over 500 organisations.

The course lasts for 90 minutes and all lessons will take place before 26 March, beginning at the *London Taxi Company's* (former M&O) London dealership at Brewery Road. It will take place in a TX4 specially fitted with the computers needed to measure the before and after fuel usage readings. And if you apply in time, they will be totally free but once the total exceeds 200 drivers, then the sponsorship will end. There are no strings attached. Free means free.

**London Taxi Company** General Manager **Mark Brown** told *Call Sign* that the lessons sounded like a really useful idea and in the spirit of the occasion, they would be happy to provide you with hot drinks while you waited and even give your own cab a quick wash while you are out in the adapted TX4!

**When *Call Sign's* reporter went on the test last year, he averaged 21.2mpg on his first run and after being shown how he had "wasted" fuel, he went out on the same run and his average fuel consumption went down to 28.2mpg! The saving was close to 30 percent!**

If you would like to apply, go to [www.smarterdriving.net](http://www.smarterdriving.net) where you can log on with your own email address, using the password **savings**. You will be directed to the website and be able to see which dates and time slots are still available.

If you have any problems, email Bob Saynor at [smarterdriving@est.org.uk](mailto:smarterdriving@est.org.uk) and he will come back with a list of dates. But of course, once the free training lessons are gone, then they're gone! So get in quickly...





Westminster Council certainly know how to make enemies whilst cocking a snook in sheer derision at not just every road user whose only aim is to park in central London, but also the law. Among those affected would have been **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, casino workers, theatre and restaurant staff or just members of the public who after a day's work, had planned to visit a theatre or restaurant during a long-awaited evening out.

#### The good...

Those on DaC who cover the Westminster TaxiCard account know how good that council are in subsidising their disabled residents, giving them the opportunity to get out when many would otherwise remain housebound. Whilst the occasional resident may moan that they need more trips allocated to them, the majority really appreciate the work that Westminster and Dial-a-Cab do on their behalf.

#### The bad...

Before Christmas, the same council announced that they would be lengthening the times that their parking meters would remain in use. Meters that reverted to free parking after 6.30 were to continue until later in the evening and to also include all day on Sundays – a scheme said by many to be nothing more than a revenue raiser for the Westminster coffers. It would have undoubtedly had an effect on all West End based businesses that rely on people coming into town at the end of the current parking restrictions. Any reduction on the numbers coming into town would also affect DaC drivers.

A legal challenge was put into action against Westminster Council's plans, even though council leader **Colin Barrow** remained defiant in face of it and the almost universal condemnation – including from London Mayor **Boris Johnson**, who told *Call Sign Online* that it was important that West End businesses should feel confident and not carry any extra burdens. Even former Conservative Transport Minister **Steve Norris** described the council's move as a "display of arrogance." Pending a judicial

# Westminster Council

## The Good, the bad and the ugly?



**Westminster Council leader Colin Barrow finally admitted they were wrong!**

review, Westminster had to postpone implementation of the scheme. However, Mr Barrow commented before announcing he was resigning from his post that they were confident of success at a hearing on the "strengths of our arguments." The council has since accepted they were wrong and have apologised. The idea has been dropped.

#### The ugly...

In a move criticised as being out of pure spite, Westminster Council – having accepted that they could lose any legal challenge from businesses in the area – then changed tack and instead of using extra time meters to increase revenue, have now removed large sections of single yellow lines – ok for parking after 6.30 – and replaced them with double yellow lines where there is no stopping at any time and which will bring in a huge amount in *Penalty Charge Notices* from those desperate to park to get into the theatre or restaurant on time.

According to a document that *Call Sign Online* has seen, Westminster Council say that converting single yellow lines to double yellow

lines would help pedestrians crossing at road junctions; improve loading provision – although as stopping will be more difficult, it's hard to understand that logic; it will help drivers to pick up and set down – although where those passengers are now going to come from is unexplained; assist emergency vehicles by keeping routes clear; ensure delivery vehicles are not obstructed by inconsiderate parking; prevent obstruction by parked vehicles at traffic lights etc; prevent the obstruction of sight lines for all road users; ease traffic congestion on approaches to junctions and traffic lights. Everything except helping those who pump up their coffers!

Although one campaign group said it was good news for users of wheelchairs and buggies, others claimed the scheme would mean far fewer parking spaces in the West End on evenings and weekends and would destroy many businesses that rely on people coming into town.

**Councillor Lee Rowley**, the Westminster cabinet member for parking and transport commented that the scheme would make Westminster a safer place for pedestrians and help drivers avoid parking where it may be unsafe or inconsiderate to others. However, many others are saying that Westminster Council are just cocking a snook at the law after their extended parking charges were stopped via the legal challenge, so they just went around the back to bring in a similar money-making scheme.

*Call Sign Online's* question is how a council that can be so good in its disabled TaxiCard sponsorship, then turn so bad towards parkers and ugly towards the law? And will anyone miss Colin Barrow???

**Dennis Latchett**  
**Call Sign Online**

## Will the Olympics bring us more visitors???

### No says VisitBritain...



Tourist authority *VisitBritain* has claimed that the London 2012 Olympics does not expect to boost this year's UK visitor numbers. Neither will celebrations for the *Queen's Diamond Jubilee* on 5 June – the first celebration of that nature since Queen Victoria's on 20 June 1897! But *VisitBritain* expects visitor numbers to remain the same as they were in 2011 – their forecast numbering arrivals at just over 30 million.

*VisitBritain* chief executive **Sandie Dawe** said: "While these figures are in line with 2011, maintaining visitor levels would be a good outcome in a year that will prove difficult to predict due to the current global economic climate and the impact this may have in many key markets."

Ms Dawe did point out that the UK should see a record number of holiday visits this year, although the business travel market is down and something she said could fall even further if the economy worsened. But she still called the Olympics a bonus for UK tourism.

"2012 gives us an unprecedented opportunity to showcase Britain in a way that we have never had before, allowing us to revitalise our appeal in mature markets and help us get Britain on the destination wish list of first time visitors from growth markets such as Brazil, China, India and Russia."

She ended by saying that *VisitBritain* was working hard to ensure that the Games and Diamond Jubilee celebrations would generate positive PR for Britain, taking advantage of the global interest to increase tourism numbers in the years ahead and creating a lasting tourism legacy for the future.

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"I laugh now, but it was highly embarrassing at the time," Dial-a-Cab driver Ray Cahalan (Y75) quietly admitted to *Call Sign*, "and it proved that you should never judge people too quickly!"

Going into more detail, Ray told us how he had stopped in Oxford Street for a young Arab lady. She was wearing a hijab and accompanied by two youngsters.

"She asked me for the Hilton Metropole hotel on Edgware Road. On arrival at the hotel she handed me a £50 note for the £6 fare and while I was initially suspicious of such a high value note for such a short journey, I recalled that many visitors from the Middle East walk about with that kind of money just as we use £10 notes. So I took the note, which felt ok to the touch. I gave her the change and she disappeared rather smartly into the hotel lobby. I routinely check all high value currency given to me and keep a 'counterfeit pen' close to hand for that purpose and so just to satisfy myself all was well, I decided to reach down into the central console for my magic pen to make absolutely sure the £50 note really was a good one.

"To my horror, the pen left a thick black line across the Queen's head as I scrolled over the note's surface. My heart suddenly missed a beat," said Ray.

"Only seconds had gone from when the lady had left my cab, I shot out of the taxi, pen and 'dodgy' £50 note in hand, shouted to the doorman what had happened and rushed into the lobby to confront the errant fare, but she was nowhere to be seen as I glanced around the foyer."

As Ray recounted the story, his voice began to quiver as the memory returned of his feelings at that moment after having given the woman £44 of legal tender in exchange for what seemed to be a forged note. Ray continued his tale.

"Finally, I spotted her and the two children standing in the elevator with the doors about to close. I rushed toward the doors, jamming my foot in the gap to prevent them coming together and my fare disappearing forever. I explained to the startled lady that the £50 note she had given me in good faith was a dud and that she still owed me £6.

"The woman delved into her bag and handed me another £50 note and as I carefully ran my counterfeit pen along its length, another black line appeared across it! Another note came out of the lady's bag and yet another big black line showed up on that one too!" Ray exclaimed.

"I went through several more £50

# The bag of 'dodgy' £50 Notes!



Ray Cahalan

notes from her bag and by the time the tenth one came and went I was beginning to wonder if she was a serial forger and my £6 quid was well and truly out of the window!"

"Then the lady - looking even more shocked than me - asked me what she should do and I advised her to take the entire bag of currency back to where she had got it, because according to my

reliable, fail-safe, anti-forgery magic pen, she had been given a load of worthless paper!" Then, giving a clue as to how he must have felt in the lift, Ray told *Call Sign* with almost a look of embarrassment: "I looked very carefully at the 'magic pen' nestling in my hand, and into which I had placed so much faith, casting doubt upon this lady's integrity and realised that in my haste to leave the cab, I had picked up my *Dial-a-Cab* marker pen, the sort we use to fill out client's names on the name board!!

"We both laughed as I discovered what had happened, but I beat a rather hasty retreat from the hotel before someone thought to call for the security guard and have me explain why I had put a thick black line through Her Majesty's royal features," Ray said laughing. "I didn't fancy being locked up in the Tower of London for treason," Ray said with a smile, "or explain to the woman that her £50 notes with my black line through them now did look decidedly dodgy!"

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The London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children Gala Festival of Music – the second annual event of its kind – took place in mid-December at St John's, Smith Square in front of 400 patrons - including **Brian Rice** and **Allan Evans** - all of whom enjoyed an excellent selection of music and Christmas carols. Much of the Gala was organised by **Dial-a-Cab** Board member and LTFUC Committee member, **Mike Son**, with DaC also being a major sponsor.

The Gala was opened by Fund Hon Chair **Susan Angel**. She welcomed the audience and gave a short introduction about the activities of the charity. **William Carslake** then conducted the London Charity Orchestra with **Simon Kodurand** as leader and soloist. Joining the LCO on the tuba was taxi driver **Keith Cherry**. Keith had spent 22 years playing with the *Grenadiers*.

Following Berlioz' *Roman Carnival* came a piece that may never have come to light in the UK had it not been for a coincidental link with **Call Sign**! *The Lantern in the Crypt* was written by San Francisco taxi driver, **Christopher Fulkerson PhD**. Christopher has been a medallion holder in the *City by the Bay* for over 20 years and wrote to **Call Sign** having read in our online issue that San Francisco company *Uber* were thinking of starting their stretch limo service in London. Christopher's email came in the form of a warning against allowing *Uber* in. A later contact revealed that he'd written a piece of music and concert organiser **Mike Son** contacted him to see if he would like to send it over here to receive its debut at the LTFUC Gala. **William Carslake** thought it was a fine composition and agreed to the performance. The audience reception at the end of *Lantern in the Crypt* showed it had indeed been a success. The only shame was that Christopher couldn't be at St John's in person to hear the applause.

An enchanting performance from the *New London Children's Choir* under Conductor **Amanda Deane** with Conductor and founder

# LTFUC MUSIC FESTIVAL A SUCCESS!

As DaC's Mike Son picks up the baton...!



Now you know what members of the London Charity Orchestra were laughing at on the cover!

Inset pic: Christopher Fulkerson had his music premiered



**Ronald Corp** saw them sing pieces from Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Arthur Somervell's *Grasmere*

*Carol* and together with the LCO the children gave excellent renditions of *The angel Gabriel* and *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day*.

A surprise addition to the programme saw **Mike Son** fulfil a lifetime ambition to conduct an orchestra. The piece was John Philip Sousa's *Liberty Bell* - better known to millions as the **Monty Python** theme. Mike was asked by **William Carslake** if he would like to take the baton "just for a bit of fun!" After thinking about it for almost 10 seconds, he agreed. Afterwards he told **Call Sign** that he enjoyed the thrill but that it wasn't quite as easy as it looked. However, it had been a

real thrill for him.

At the end of the concert, both Sue Angel and Mike Son presented **William Carslake** and **Ronald Corp** with models of the iconic London taxi. They went on to thank everyone for their support and commitment in making the Gala Festival of Music such a great success.

A great night for the 400 present and one the LTFUC - and Christopher Fulkerson - can truly be proud of...

**Ron Yarborough**  
Call Sign Online

## TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR

40th anniversary: 1972 to 2012

Dear Friends,

Forty years ago, the **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund** held its first event at the Embankment. Over the years our trade show grew, taking place on several different sites with financial backing from Dunlop. Then the sponsorship stopped, but the dinner-dances continue.

It would be great to again see the companies that used to participate each year and of course the drivers that used to enter the competition. So to bring old and new faces together, there will be only one place to be and that is the **Holiday Inn Forum Kensington on 1 December 2012**.

You will have a reception drink, a 4 course meal, half a bottle of wine each, tea / coffee, dancing to a live band and all that for just £62.50 a head. And of course there is also one big thing to remember; all money raised is donated to the charities we support - the Albany fund for children with special needs, the LTFUC, Southend Fund for Underprivileged Children, London Benevolent Association for War Disabled and the East London Cabbies Outing.

No doubt you are now asking why I'm telling you all this? After all, it's only February and we're talking about next December! Well, if you put money away each week you'll find it adds up and in that way you can have a great night out whilst helping those less fortunate than ourselves. You might even want to get together with friends and take a whole table. Perhaps make a weekend out of it and claim the discount we've arranged with the hotel should you wish to stay overnight. So please put the date in your diary.

I wish you all a very happy and safe 2012...

**Russell Poluck MBE (T55): TDoy Hon Chairman**

*Remembering those less fortunate than ourselves*

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Area Covered - Homechurch and 8 miles out - others by appointment



We know that you shouldn't do it and **Call Sign** has published many stories of drivers getting caught picking-up or setting down on zigzag lines. On a few occasions, the drivers have got away with it.

**Sid Nathan (K88)** was stuck in traffic at St Pauls when suddenly his passengers opened the door and got out of the taxi leaving the **Dial-a-Cab** driver stuck on zigzags because just as they got out, the traffic in front moved leaving Sid stranded. Sid asked **Barrie Segal** for advice, which he followed to the letter and the PCN that arrived within days was cancelled.

Editor **Alan Fisher** also received a PCN for stopping on zigzags when picking up a passenger in Waterloo Road just outside the station. He appealed by asking exactly where Lambeth Council suggested he stop as much of the road was either zigzags or bus stops? He asked whether he should have told his lady passenger to drag her case 100 metres down the road where he would wait for her, but instead he stopped - according to Lambeth's CCTV footage - for 9 seconds. Like Sid, he too had the PCN cancelled.

**Dial-a-Cab** will pay for PCNs brought about through waiting for an account customer, but even they will not pay a fine for stopping on zigzags because the chances of winning are tiny and we know we're not supposed to do it.

But even **Call Sign** was shocked at the outcome when this magazine's lay-out man **Danny Fresco** was caught stopping on zigzag lines in Sloane Street to pick up a frail 90-year old passenger. When the policeman approached him, he knew he was going to get a ticket, but the last thing Danny expected - bearing in mind

*Call Signs Danny Fresco charged by police...*

## FOR PICKING UP ON A ZIGZAG!



**£60 and 3 points for picking up a 90 year old frail passenger on zig zag lines**

Astonishingly and considering he was under caution, the police told him not to bother as it would cost him a day in court with any associated costs and an even higher fine! They even hinted that he wouldn't want the PCO involved - these police obviously being unaware that the PCO no longer licence taxis.

In **Call Sign's** view, the police comments would have given Danny a good chance of having the charge overturned but Danny went to his local station, paid the fine and sent off his licence to have the three points added on.

Danny said to us afterwards that regardless of humanitarian reasons for stopping where he did, he realised that he **was** breaking the law and as such couldn't argue too much. However, that same law means that had he been caught via CCTV, then it would have been just a fine so why does the law give you 3 points if caught by a policeman - even if he thinks he IS the law!

the frailty of the passenger - was that he would be charged with the offence and then read his rights!

The policeman (and partner) called Danny over, told him he would be charged with the offence of stopping on a zigzag line and then to Danny's ultimate embarrassment, took his photo standing by the taxi. Yet even though Danny tried to explain about his passenger - who sat in the taxi for the whole time - the policeman didn't go over to check out the story.

Danny tried to point out that the passenger was very old and had trouble just getting into the cab, let alone walking to the end of the lines but the police were uninterested. They just asked him which police station he'd like to go to pay the fine. Danny said he wanted to appeal against the £60 fine and 3 points on his licence.

**Baghwat Singh**  
**Call Sign Online**

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

**NEW TX4'S - ALL AIR-CONDITIONED  
FULL AA BACKUP**

**ALL SERVICING AND MAINTENANCE  
CARRIED OUT IN HOUSE**

**NON-FAULT ACCIDENT SPECIALISTS**

We are delighted to announce the arrival of our  
**NEW VIKING TAXI-METER & PRINTER PACKAGE**



Pay for two years get the 3rd YEAR FREE



**THE BEST  
AND MOST  
REPUTABLE  
GARAGE IN  
LONDON FOR  
TAXI-HIRE  
TAXI-REPAIRS,  
AND TAXI-METERS**

**DIAL-A-CAB LOAN CABS AVAILABLE (TX4'S ALL GOLD SPEC.)**  
**CRICKLEWOOD CARRIERS 020 8452 5461**  
COMPLETE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

**GOD SAVE THE KING**

Drivers looking to upgrade to a greener, cleaner vehicle can now put their orders in for the new Euro 5 TX4, on the road from just £31,995 and now available from all London Taxi Company retail outlets from London to Edinburgh.

The Euro 5 variant, available in a new range of colours, is effectively the same vehicle as the Euro IV model but with a few important distinctions.

**Annual Road Tax:** *The Automatic variant has reduced road tax costs of £185 per year – and not £150 as reported elsewhere.*

**Improved Warranty:** *All TX4 (Euro 5) models have a new unlimited mileage core engine warranty, which runs alongside the existing comprehensive 3-year/100,000 miles manufacturer's warranty.*

**Colour range:** *Customers can choose from new fresh colours including Ocean Blue and Spice Bronze.*

Drivers will still receive 12 months RAC membership as well as access to the London Taxi Company dedicated approved service dealer network of more than 60 operators across the UK.

Sales Director **Rob Laidler** told **Call Sign**: "The benefits of our work to reduce particulates and emissions for drivers is that road tax drops a band and now costs less than the Euro IV TX4.

"The new core engine warranty has

# TX4 Euro 5 Arrives!



## Spice Bronze is one of the new Euro 5 TX4 colours

been developed as part of our work to reassure the trade of the integrity and durability of our vehicle when maintained properly and also to reiterate to the industry that our vehicle remains the cleanest and most efficient London Taxi to date."

**Rob Laidler** also told **Call Sign** that their used cab *Winter Sale* still had some second hand cabs - mainly TX4s - left with some excellent finance deposit allowances through *Black Horse Taxi Finance* for business users. As an example, you could buy a used 07/07 TX4 Bronze

Automatic from just £278 per month over 5 years.

"We're also still committed to making the process as easy as possible for customers, so we will be happy to transport purchased vehicles free of charge to whichever London Taxi Company retail outlet is closest to the customer."

For more information on the new Euro 5 TX4, either contact your nearest local dealer or alternatively visit [www.london-taxis.co.uk](http://www.london-taxis.co.uk).

This DfT statistical release presents information on taxis and private hire vehicles in England and Wales as at 31 March 2011 and includes information relating to the number of licensed vehicles, drivers and PHV operators. The figures are updated every two years and collected through a survey of licensing officers for each lower tier local authority in England and Wales.

### The key findings from Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Statistics 2011 include...

There were 78,000 licensed taxis in England and Wales as of March 31. Of these, 73,000 were in England - an increase of 3% from 2009.

In England, 44,300 licensed taxis were wheelchair accessible – 61% of the total. Outside of London, the proportion varies from 72% in the West Midlands to 26% in the South East.

There were 155,100 licensed Private Hire Vehicles in England and Wales. 150,900 of these were in England, an increase of 3% since 2009. Of that total, 50,700 were licensed in London. An estimated 3,600 PHVs in England were wheelchair accessible. There were a total of 16,700 licensed PHV operators in England and Wales at the end of March 2011 with 15,900 of these being in England (compared with 16,500 in 2009).

Overall, there were 299,200 licensed taxi or PHV drivers in England and Wales, with 287,300 of these in England.

Licensed taxis in London at 31 March 2011 numbered 22,600, representing 31% of the total in England. The South East and North West are the regions outside London with most taxis having 9,700 and 8,100 respectively in 2011.

# Taxi & PH Stats

## Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

Ever needed money quickly but were anxious about variable bank interest rates?

*Well wonder no more! If you are a subscriber, journeyman or member of staff at Dial-a-Cab, then you qualify to join the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union. Any member of your family residing at your address also qualifies for membership!*

Then if you are over 18, have been a member of the Credit Union for over 3 months and have established regular savings, you can borrow up to 3 times your total savings...

### The cost?

*Just 1% per month on the outstanding balance (or APR of 12.68%). Loans can be paid back early AND there is usually an annual dividend on your savings.*

The question is: Can you afford NOT to be in it...?

Call us on 020 7729 8171 or 020 7749 0585



# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

**In this year's DaC Annual Report, it's interesting that the Chairman uses an analogy with chess and business.**

Having been a keen chess player myself, particularly during the period when I had my own business I can identify with that analogy, especially the business that I was in, namely the fashion trade where copying a competitor's designs and selling them cheaper was not only rife but equally annoying, it wasn't illegal. Very much like the situation the cab trade has suffered since the licensing of minicabs.

I also designed and manufactured fashion accessories such as buckles and belts. I used to spend hours late into the night creating ideas. One notable success was in creating multi-coloured belts to be worn by men and women with jeans. I manufactured tens of thousands and then it came to a sudden end when the new immigrants in Brick Lane and the East End with cheap labour started to produce an inferior copy for half the price. So I had a choice of selling cheap myself or to follow the advice I was given when as a lad starting my first job at an upholsterer's in Albany Street.

It was not long after the last war ended and the effects of that war were evident in the manner in which I was dressed. At the end of my first day, which involved sitting on the floor of a freezing cellar picking the knots out of horse hair and filling cushions with feathers, the elderly boss on seeing the state I was dressed said: **"Young man it costs nothing to brush your hair, put a crease in your trousers and polish your boots."** Later he gave me another piece of advice, which was that *'quality survives all changes'*.

At the time I couldn't believe what he was saying considering the grubby job I had been given, but as I grew older those words made sense and have had affected my outlook to this day. It really does cost nothing to look presentable no matter what job you do. If you look good you feel good, this boosts self-esteem, which in turn releases stress - a major factor when driving a cab. As for *quality surviving all changes*, this is also true hence the reason why when I bought something such as clothes, I waited until I could afford to pay that little bit extra so that it lasted. It was also the reason why I refused when in business to compete by selling cheap.

## Lewis Day, apps and cut-price work...

The **Addison Lee** takeover of **Lewis Day** appears to be causing a number of grown men to act hysterically and forming apps offering cut price work with the mistaken notion that it will take work back from PH. Is this the best solution they could come up with? I don't know whether it was related, but the Chairman made a valid point in his Annual Report when he said: *'You do not succeed in business by sticking to convention'* meaning companies who sell the same product competing against each other solely on price, create price wars and suffer the inevitable consequences.

Obviously we have to be competitive and we are when it's usage related, but run-ins and gratuities need to be protected otherwise if we drop them for one client, word spreads and then every client will demand it. There are exceptions of



course and one charge that could be abolished without too much hardship is the station and theatre charge. As for the other charges, your Board already have considerable experience of the effects of selling cheap from past recessions. Our gratuity was once 12.5% until our biggest client at that time threatened that unless we reduced it to 10% we would lose the account. So we reduced it. ComCab and RTL followed suit and it's been a maximum of 10% ever since. The important thing to remember about selling anything cheap is that it infers poor quality, be it a tangible product or a service.

That is something those self-styled entrepreneurs within our industry should understand when cutting charges to shreds. Having had a Bill for over 45 years, I'm amazed to think there are green badge drivers out there prepared to have 10% nicked off a fare that has already been diminished by no run-in, no gratuity and limited waiting time. Why not go the whole hog and say to the punter: "No charge mate, just throw your loose change in the hat."

Don't these guys realise that recessions do not last forever? And when they end and work picks up, it won't be competing on prices that will cause work being lost to PH, it will be the drivers giving poor service because street work will be more attractive.

I hear there is no limit on how many of these apps you can join, this being so which one will get preference? And once a job has been accepted, what guarantee is there that the drivers won't change their mind on route to the pick-up when they see a linkman flapping his arms indicating a trip to the flyers and in doing so leave the client stranded? Not that the client will get much sympathy, because the chances are the only people likely to use these apps are the *booray Henry's* wanting to be picked up from wine bars, the very work that most of you don't want anyway. My fear is that not only will these various apps be discredited because of poor service, but worse, so will the licensed cab trade.

The Chairman also mentions in the Annual Report *the willingness to do the unthinkable and ensuring our quality is maintained*. He didn't say it as such, but as I read it he was in fact giving an alternative to selling cheap. It's called 'branding'. People will pay for a quality brand, if they didn't Harrods, Bond Street, Savile Row, first class hotels and travel - to name but a few examples - wouldn't exist. But they do exist and in 2011 this sector alone generated £9.4 billion in the UK.

**Dial-a-Cab** is a brand. Unfortunately like most tangible brands, we don't have a product that you can see, touch and test before deciding to purchase. As a service, our face to the public and what carries our brand most is you the members; it's the image that you the drivers project. It always has been that way, right back to the days of cloth cap and muffler and nothing has changed, in fact nothing has changed on the part of the driver for over 350 years!

One would think by now that it would dawn on every cab driver and particularly the militants and those pushing the apps that after 350 years there is a need for a change. That it needs a facelift. Starting with drivers taking a good look in the mirror before starting work and asking themselves if their appearance gives the right image?

## If...

In my opinion, if Dial-a-Cab was a private company and not a Friendly Society shackled by certain members who think only of lining their pockets without giving anything in return, we could create a brand that PH would find very hard to match. For example and going to extremes, if every Dial-a-Cab vehicle was below a certain age with every driver being recognisable by a dress code or even a practical uniform displaying our company legend, then this together with the green badge, good manners, being courteous such as opening doors etc, then our charges would never be an issue. It's never likely to happen of course, but can you imagine the brand that we could market if it did?

Brand is about creating and meeting expectations - it's called 'brand values' but it has to be consistent. It's useless if a smart polite driver arrives to collect a client and the very next driver arrives in a rust bucket dressed like a slob, being obnoxious and uncooperative should the passenger decide on a sudden change of destination.

Recently I hailed a cab from the UCHL Hospital back to East Road and to assist the driver, I said that if you go via Shepherdess Walk and take the first right into... Before I could even finish, he just told me to 'eff off and drove away! I would like to think this was an isolated incident; unfortunately *'being tarred with the same brush'* comes usually from isolated incidents. This has to stop. Every driver, particularly on Dial-a-Cab, has to be self-disciplined and proud of the badge they are wearing and the Dial-a-Cab logo they are displaying, which is our 'brand identity'. When that happens and we all make a concerted effort to be proper service providers by openly showing our gratitude to the customer, by being of smart appearance and with a smile saying thank you, have a nice day and giving one of our give-away cards at the end of every journey, which is 'brand awareness' then the people that matter will see Dial-a-Cab as a brand that's worth paying for. This is not a short-term solution of course, but considering nothing's been done since **Samuel Pepys** used hansom cabs in the 1660s, it would be a positive start...

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

# LTFUC Mad H THE BEST



Diversity



The Cheeky Girls



Elvis, Blues Brothers &amp; Songtimers rock the joint!



Stavros Flatley and Lagi

Year after year *Call Sign* is invited to watch over 600 disabled children and adults at the Mad Hatters Ball at London's JW Marriott Grosvenor House hotel – an absolute privilege to be there. But the recent Mad Hatters Ball held at the Grosvenor was the best one ever!

Although *Call Sign* sponsored the guest's food on behalf of Dial-a-Driver, the professionalism of the London Taxi Drivers Fund for Underprivileged Children, the man Raymond Levy and his wife Maureen somehow get hold of acts to perform in the case of Diversity, charge a deserved huge fee! The rest of the evening went till 6pm to make sure everything went well. As David Lessman (D19) shared by the rest of the DaC drivers – Gerry Dunn MBE (S84), Board Chairman (C06).

Without meaning to sound sexist, the committee members were called the Angel.

Before talking about the entertainment, huge thanks must be given to the staff who for the 20th year once again gave the hotel's prestigious Great Hall to the LTFUC. MBE asked *Call Sign* to thank them for allowing such a large influx of disabled children – they would be children! Clearing up afterwards must be a nightmare.

Although the 4 hours are conducted in a party atmosphere with families and carers – who tried to convince *Call Sign* that they were there just to see the stars on the stage who keep everyone really entertained. Introduced by the LTFUC. Appearing as a great warm up was Amanda's Action Club followed by the Carnival Band. After the band had got almost every kid there in the room, the Songtimers came on. They were finalists in Channel 5's Don't Stop Believin' when they returned as a backing group to the Blues Brothers! Formerly the Blues Brothers, much to the delight of some young ladies whose screams pierced the air.

Then came the incredible Britain's Got Talent successes of 2009, the versions of Michael Flatley but with a Greek element! And as much as it blew the roof off as they transformed themselves into the Blues Brothers, Shmelvis and the returning Songtimers and between them they really kept the children watching the children – getting up and jiving! We think at times that the children were the stars.

Hot-foot from the All-Ireland dance championships in Killarney, Ireland, the LTFUC set from the amazing Cheeky Girls. They sang both old and new songs, and the girl's outfits – which gave a new meaning to the word tiny! Tina Turner and Monica are every bit as popular as ever.

A short break – are you kidding??? Dave Davis gave the acts a break and the children were more there this year than ever. There wasn't a space left on the floor at the Grosvenor.

Then it was back to the stage with an absolutely astonishing act. The Cheeky Girls and we cannot possibly do them the justice they deserve in a few words. It really is that incredible. Somewhat more usual because of the popularity of the Dance Club, Lauren and Robson. Their Latin jive drew huge applause. The release and gained more than a few screams from some very young ladies. The Basingstoke-based group told *Call Sign* that at one recent gig they had been surrounded by the children! They thought they'd be safe at the Grosvenor House.

Then came the final brilliant act – no, not *Call Sign's* editor almost as the appearance had been kept secret with just the promise of "something special" but by even louder screams from the watching children – was sensationally the Cheeky Girls before winning Britain's Got Talent, sensationally beating Susan Boyle. Around the world, they still came back to the MH. It's not difficult to see why. The Models at the Spirit of London Awards. They posed for photos after the group are appearing all over the UK in 2012, including London's Spirit of London Awards.

Interspersed with the entertainment were Dave Davis' interviews with the stars. Knightley in the first two Pirates of the Caribbean movies, Only When the Bells Ring, Mick Campbell in Nickelodeons' House of Anubis. There was also a kiosk at the restaurant – a popular haunt with many taxi drivers.

Last but most certainly not least, was the presentation to the President of the LTFUC, Houssart MBE, of a lifetime Hon membership of the LTFUC. He had been extremely proud to have been given this honour.

And then it was time for home! An absolutely wonderful day with many children smiling. Just brilliant...



# Hatters 2012...

# ONE YET!

abled or underprivileged children together with their carers having a  
d of course we always go. It is never less than enjoyable and always a  
d on January 15 was more than just that – it was undoubtedly the

-Cab, it was the entertainment value together with the sheer profes-  
-**children** committee that made this a day to remember. The Fund's PR  
s to appear for nothing who would normally command large fees and  
committee, several of whom are DaC drivers, ran around from 8am  
so eloquently put it: "We're all knackered!" That was a sentiment  
d member **Mike Son (V52)** and the Fund's Hon President, **Bill Tyzack**

controlled to perfection in her second Mad Hatters by Chair **Sue**

n to the management and staff of the **JW Marriott Grosvenor House**  
**Room** over to the Fund. Of behalf of the committee, **Alan Cohen**  
of people into the hotel at one time – knowing that over 600 of  
re and the hotel's efforts are truly appreciated.

far more food laid out than they could even think of eating, the kids  
ust to watch the children rather than the entertainment – it's the  
d as usual by **Dave Davis**, the acts flowed one after the other.  
by the act that the kids always love each year, the **Bournemouth**  
mood to cheer anything that moved, an excellent singing act called  
**Top Believing** and you could see why – especially later in the show  
er **X-Factor** finalist from 2009, **John Adeleye** sang two tracks from his  
erced this writer's ears!

**Stravros Flatley** and his son **Lagi**. They describe themselves as two fat  
as they made the audience laugh, it was their singing that almost  
**thers** – Jake and Elwood – only to be joined on stage by **Elvis**  
ly rocked the joint with several carers – who were supposed to be  
it was the children who watched the carers!

ish dance troupe **Scoil Rince Ryan Lavelle** calmed the atmosphere  
of both kids and adults to go through the roof again with a five-song  
gs and several male carers were seen to suddenly break into a sweat  
his was their ninth successive year at the show and both Gabriella

with a disco in which all the characters joined in and there were  
as the kids bopped to music the adults had never heard before!  
**Crazeehorse** made their name in the 2007 *Britain's Got Talent* finals  
ords, so can we suggest that you take a look at their act on *YouTube*.  
ularity of *Strictly Come Dancing* were two youngsters from the **Star**  
e. Boy Band, **Concept**, then sang two tracks from their new iTunes  
ladies who seemed to get closer and closer to the five lads. The  
had to be escorted out of the building by security after girl fans sur-  
!

st being run over by a unicyclist – it was no less than **Diversity**! Their  
ng special." And boy were they special! Their dancing – accompanied  
al. Even nicer was the fact that they had appeared at the Mad Hatters  
yle into second place, but even though they are now in huge demand  
o see why **Diversity** also won the *Families United Positive Role*  
and signed all the kids' autograph books. If you like street dance then  
s 16,000-seater O2 on 4 April.

with **Winston Ellis**, who starred alongside *Johnny Depp* and *Kiera*  
*ty is Essex* star **Lauren 'Popey' Pope** and **Bobby Lockwood** who plays  
kind donation presented to the Fund by the Goodge Street **Nandos**

ident of the *Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children*, **Brian**  
n't known it was coming and told **Call Sign** later that he was

so many people giving of themselves for no return other than see-

Fun with  
the  
Characters



The Two  
presidents:  
Bill Tyzack  
and Brian  
Houssart



Crazeehorse



Towie's  
Lauren  
Pope with  
Dave  
Davis





Not Call Sign's usual restaurant reviewer, but in a guest spot Board member Tom Whitbread goes to Nando's restaurant in the new Westfield at Stratford...

## Eating out with Call Sign

On Wednesday 11 January, my wife and I decided to go and view the new **Westfield Shopping Centre** at *Stratford* now that the crowds of excited shoppers looking for sales bargains had diminished. So it was off to Dalston Kingsland Station for the 12 minute overland train journey on our *wrinklies* pass to Stratford. I was impressed at not having to go out into the open cold weather to get to the shopping precinct with its 4 or 5 floors of shops and restaurants.

As you'd expect having not long opened, you still have the cleanliness, brightness and exciting colourful frontages to the shops although it was disappointing to see undisciplined teenagers lounging around with their dirty shoes that had been walking in dirt, rubbish and dog faeces, resting on the new leather armchairs where others would be sitting in their clean clothes.

After spending the afternoon walking round the shops, we started to get a little hungry. On the third and fourth floors are a good range of restaurants selling food from many countries ranging from sushi to burgers - which one was the question? Looking across the abyss that is in the centre of the escalators, we saw a **Nando's** restaurant that seemed to have quite a crowd inside. As neither of us had experienced a meal in a Nando's we decided to try it out and with it looking fairly full, we assumed that many people couldn't be wrong. But it only looked busy because the servers guide you to the small tables near the windows, leaving the centre with its more spacious tables empty, giving passing shoppers the impression that it's busy!

I took off my coat only to find that there was

nowhere to place it, in the end I put it on the back of the chair only to find the seating was so closely placed, it ended on the floor as people passed by because after selecting your meal, you have to go and queue at the counter to place an order! That must be a nightmare for a father with 3 or 4 children trying to remember all the different selections of his family!

I collected my cutlery and condiments and returned to our table; it was at this time I began to hear grumbles and moans from other diners. I thought these were most probably unfounded as none of these people were contacting a server. I call the workers servers as they do not take your order, so cannot be called waiters or waitresses. I know the trade as for my sins I am also a qualified silver service waiter.

After a long period of time and watching others who ordered after us eating their meals, we eventually received our food. I had ordered a chicken burger with French fries and corn on the cob. Having waited so long, I picked up one of my own chips to kill my hunger, only to find it less than lukewarm, so I looked around for a server and called him over to report my disgust. He asked me to wait while he went and got a plate, he then asked me to shovel the chips onto it and he returned it to the cooking area.

Some minutes later he returned and gave me the French fries, yes they were hot but it got me wondering if they were fresh or my original ones warmed up in a microwave? It was then I tasted the burger and found the only thing about it to be hot was the sauce! I was about to call the server back, but my wife said I shouldn't bother. It was a good point because if they

had reheated my chicken, it could be the best way of getting a dodgy stomach. But English people have become used to such bad service and do very little to get it rectified.

As we finished our meal, a young lady who originated from Southern Ireland by the name of Tracy, enquired if our meal had been to the standard I had expected. I related my disgust at the standard of the food and said it gave me the impression it had been left standing after being cooked before being delivered to our table. Tracy looked quite surprised and asked if we would like a free tea or coffee. Tea was £1.75 and coffee £1.95, but I thought that insufficient as an apology for a sub-standard meal, so we just left.

This was my first visit to Nando's and will probably be my last unless someone convinces me that their other locations serve a much more acceptable meal. So I would suggest that if you want to waste what may seem a small amount at £22.50 on a quick meal, try Nando's - although I would strongly suggest you look at the other options in this wonderful shopping Mall.

You will have read many reviews of great restaurants in *Call Sign*, now you have one that you may want to warn your passengers about! It could be that you've had a good experience in a Nando's that you could relate that might make me change my mind and risk another meal.

**Tom Whitbread**  
DaC Board member  
(and honorary food reviewer)!



Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

## POTTER'S WHEEL

### A marriage of convenience?

With the 15 year rule for taxi age limit now in place, it's leaving many drivers wondering what to do with their cabs. There are a number of options available depending on your circumstances.

However, deciding whether to replace your taxi or keep it if you have recently brought new, rent or buy has never been more difficult.

One thing that has become obvious is how spoilt we were with the *Nissan Fairway* engine. Indeed it will be a sad day for the trade when the last Fairway taxi disappears off the streets at the end of the year. Maybe it's a matter of contrast, but the previous FXs were a very poor taxi mechanically and when the Fairway came along, the engine even outlasted the body and just when we thought our engine problems were over for good, out came the TX2 Ford *Duratorq* and things looked like they were going full circle.

But do we have a too high expectation about the taxis we drive and are we too critical? Well looking back over history, there was once a time when every motor manufacturer wanted to be part of the London Taxi trade. It must be one of highest accolades for any engine manufacturer to have their engines in our taxis. But it's a limited market and with the Conditions of Fitness it means that the vehicle has to be purpose built. This in itself means a vehicle which is more expensive to produce with a limited number of sales.

Bearing this in mind, taxi manufacturers have had to use leftover parts of production lines or job lots. If Rolls Royce made a purpose built taxi, it would last more than 15 years but be too expensive for us to buy. Thus they wouldn't sell any. If Mercedes made a taxi for London, the same would happen, but converting a van is much cheaper to produce and has done the

trick. The same can be said for LTI with their VM engine. VM make industrial engines for boats and I believe LTI brought them on a job lot as they were surplus to requirements.

So imagine trying to make a purpose built taxi under Mcflurry rules (aren't they made up of bits of surplus chocolate from the factory), which has to deal with the hardest stop-start driving conditions in the world. Some challenge! I am not trying to make excuses for the taxi trade manufacturers because in some areas they are still severely lacking, however what would happen to our trade should the Conditions of Fitness be lifted and thus allow any vehicle manufacturer to enter the market?

Mercedes didn't come directly into our trade but are beginning to realise that money can be made from after sales servicing etc as more Mercedes dealers welcome taxi drivers through their doors. Indeed the lack of after sales on parts and engine rebuilds from the Nissan must have cost LTI dearly whilst benefiting we drivers.

I'm sure the authorities are watching carefully and if LTI went into administration and we were left with one or no sole supplier of vehicles, it would have a detrimental effect on our standards and the ability of disabled users to get around London. If you look at my local rank, there is a mismatch of all different types of makers. We'd lose our iconic status and look like PH!

But all this does come at a cost, which the public have to pay via our fares. Our taxis are expensive, but we are in some ways keeping these companies in business for our own benefit and therefore the benefit of the public. You don't necessarily pay your TV licence to get top football coverage, but you pay it to keep the adverts off. It's all a marriage of convenience...

**Richard Potter (T51)**



# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



*Hello ladies & gents,*

We are at the early stages of another testing year and fast approaching another AGM. There will be many challenges ahead for us all and I'm sure most would agree that I really should have no need to remind you how truly professional we must be in the way we conduct our business and to make sure that our service levels are up to the highest possible standards. **There is a lot of competition out there!**

The Contact Centre is keeping a close eye on run-ins, arrivals and PoBs, particularly at locations where both the arrival and PoBs are sent. Can I also remind you that all zones are constantly monitored and booking-in procedures must be correctly followed at all times, especially as regards the EC5 and E14 zones.

Time and time again I write in *Call Sign* that constant offenders will be dealt with appropriately but it seems a very small minority of members choose to ignore the warnings.

## Spare DaC taxis...

As you know, there are currently two London-based garages - in addition to KPM - who now have a **Dial-a-Cab** terminal fitted to at least one of their courtesy taxis exclusively for our members use whilst in overhaul or repair. So if you need one such vehicle, it is worth phoning one of the following garages for availability:

**Cricklewood Carriers:** ----0208 452 5461  
**Justcabs (formerly L&P):** -0207 739 0210

*There are also two companies that provide a Dial-a-Cab taxi for any non-fault accidents:*

**Chief Taxis:** -----0800 055 6221

**Cab Aid:** -----0800 028 3253

## Logos

As a final note, I must once again remind you that failing to display the company logo at all times is a procedure rule (No.18). It is intended to not only advertise and enhance the image of our Society, but it gets our name even more widely recognised and equally as important, helps the client locate their taxi. It is a no-brainer and has been in place since January 1996. Failure to comply is a rule violation and may lead to a complaint.

*Drive safely and be very lucky...*

**Allan Evans**  
**DaC Compliance Officer**

## Motorbikes to use bus lanes again

**Transport for London has announced that motorbikes will be able to use bus lanes on the majority of London's Red Routes again at the current trial end in January.**

Two 18-month trials are said to have showed that allowing motorcycles into bus lanes is good for emissions and congestion, as well as helping riders get to work quicker. The Motor Cycle Industry welcomed the announcement and are said to have developed a specific code of practice for motorcyclists using bus lanes in conjunction with TfL.

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**TX11:** MINOR £79.16  
MAJOR £112.50

**TX4:** 10K £95.00  
40K £230.00  
70K £415.00

20K £110.00  
50K £95.00  
80K £230.00

30K £105.00  
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Prices are exclusive of VAT

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To book: Ring Chris on 0207 474 6592

*E3 Taxis*

*Unit 3D Standard Industrial Estate, Henley Road, E16 2ES  
Open Monday-Friday 8.30am-5.30pm, Saturday 9am-1pm*



"It disappeared... just like that," Bob Jones (H74) told *Call Sign*, gesturing with both hands in the style of the late comedian/magician Tommy Cooper.

"My beautiful, immaculate TX4 was stolen from outside my apartment block just yards from my window and neither I nor anyone else saw or heard a thing," he added dejectedly.

"It was a few days before Christmas and I parked the cab close to my block after work, before going out with friends and arriving back home around 8.30pm. I stayed indoors the rest of the evening and got up 4am the following morning. When I came down to the cab, it was gone!"

Bob continued with his tale of woe. "Initially I was confused, and my first thought was that I had parked somewhere else or had one drink too many, but I soon realised what had happened and checked that I still had both sets of cab keys before calling the police. I simply could not believe it had gone! I really do look after that cab and have it serviced regularly. Then with just one final payment to make, I was looking forward to lifting my foot off the pedal a bit and being able to take life a little easier. Suddenly all my hopes just fell apart!"

Bob took the DLR to Limehouse police station later that morning and the helpful desk sergeant immediately put out an all-points bulletin citing terrorist/public safety implications in the run-up to Xmas. He checked with his garage but they hadn't heard of any thefts, but

*The sad story of Bob's TX4...*

## THERE IT WAS... GONE!



**"Anyone seen my taxi? It looked just like this!"**

did seem to think that the immobiliser system on the '56-57' plate cabs like Bob's, were fairly easy to overcome.

Bob went on to say that he had since heard on the grapevine of other cabs going missing - either stolen for various dubious uses or simply to be broken up for their constituent parts,

although he did add that was only hearsay.

"It really wasn't a good Christmas so far as I was concerned," Bob confided to our reporter. "I really depend on radio work and have finally found a *Dial-a-Cab* taxi to work with until the insurance settlement comes through. But I am wary of buying a second-hand cab with an unknown history and I might wait until the Euro 5 TX4 cab becomes available. I really do not know what to do, so for the time being I am going to plod on. But this whole ugly scenario has thrown my plans out of the window."

Bob received a letter from the police saying that after investigating the theft, they are winding down their enquiries as there was absolutely no trace of the cab on the road via CCTV or traffic cameras, and it is generally assumed that his 'baby' is hidden away in a lock-up somewhere, or even stripped down for spare parts.

"If it is out on the road, it will be on false number plates, that's for sure," Bob said, adding "I'll bet that is how it was taken from my home and not recognised by any CCTV in whichever direction it was driven."

"One thing is for sure" Bob concluded, "my next cab will have an alarm fitted!"

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# MANGANESE ISSUES PROFIT WARNING

**Manganese Bronze, the parent company of LTI and the London Taxi Company, has said it made no profit in 2011 and could fall short of expectations for the current year.**

MBH blamed the weak UK economy, uncertainty over the global economic outlook and its potential impact on banks, which undermined confidence within the global banking community making it more difficult to secure finance for international trade.

There was also an unexpected delay in filling their 1,000 TX4 taxis order from Azerbaijan. That £18million order was received last March, but a second half dispatch delay until this January meant the company could not record a 2011 profit for the year ending 31 December 2011. It had previously said it expected to return to profit last year.

The company's total UK sales for last year came to 1,502, a 9% reduction on last year's total of 1,653. But also as last year, the company said that overseas sales had been much stronger, with sales of

705 taxis compared with 226 in 2010.

In an accompanying statement, Manganese Bronze said:

**"Whilst a proportion of this short-fall should be recovered when the delayed Azerbaijan sales are recorded**

**in 2012, any continued softening of global economic conditions would mean the group is likely to fall short of meeting expectations for the current year."**

## MOON BEEVER SOLICITORS

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Or email [acoakes@moonbeever.com](mailto:acoakes@moonbeever.com) or [jhay@moonbeever.com](mailto:jhay@moonbeever.com)

To discuss Wills, Inheritance Tax planning or any of the above range of legal issues.

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# LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

## Calculating the cost?

It seems that whenever there is industrial action, be it Tube workers, Health service, Public services - it does not matter - what can be guaranteed is that there will be politicians or any number of other economic "experts" representing groups and quoting telephone number figures of how much the action has cost the shops and general trading in London. Amazingly, the majority of these same condemning experts and politicians seem to distance themselves and suddenly become unaccountable when their actions cost Londoners and shops colossal amounts in lost revenue. Not surprisingly, when it comes to costing their own inadequacies, no figures on how much revenue their actions cost us are ever forthcoming.

For example, who was behind the decision to have the annual weekend Xmas closure of Regent and Oxford Streets for pedestrians, coincide with the weekend closure of Blackfriars underpass along with roadwork closures and lane narrowing of Westminster, Blackfriars and Tower Bridges, which made it virtually impossible for anyone wanting to travel up from the southeast of London to do any shopping in town? That, in turn, added pressure on Waterloo Bridge south and northbound, which backed up all the way to Euston Road as buses blocked the interchanges at St Giles and Princes Circus, causing further tailbacks to the King Cross and St Pancras areas.

On the last Friday evening before Xmas (known as Black Friday, although I think it should be called Sick or Blood Friday), whose

idiotic idea was it to have roadworks close off all traffic turning into Victoria Embankment from Bridge Street and Westminster Bridge, causing chaos right through the whole of the Strand and lower Whitehall areas, isolating partygoers looking for cabs and making it impossible to drop off or pick up at Charing Cross? Not only was the Taxi trade affected, but anyone who thought they could pick relatives up from parties were stuck in traffic jams at midnight! I wonder how many of the hierarchy were complaining as they came out of clubs in Pall Mall and the St James Street area that there are not enough taxis, blaming us and not the hidden culprits.

London has been at the forefront of world media reporting on the riots, the tragic waste of young lives to shootings and stabbings in so-called gang warfare. This has portrayed London as an unsafe place to live and visit and has undoubtedly had an economic effect on tourism and businesses, which is felt by us all. It is surely down to the politicians and others to ensure that we live in as safe a city as possible.

Instead of criticising our workers and blaming them for shortfalls in the economy, they should look inwards and own up to their own failures in ensuring we all achieve maximum income.

## Euro disappearing

The economies of Europe are under pressure with some countries in a dilemma about staying with the Euro currency. Whilst some are patting themselves on the back for us not joining yet, despite all the problems it seems to be only a few shekles from one-to-one with the pound.

In some instances, I will accept the Euro or

Dollar, but my rates are 1.5 and 2 respectively.

I sometimes wonder if there is a back door visual acceptance being manipulated with the design of all newly printed notes; the new £50 and the Scottish £20 notes being virtually identical to the Euro equivalent and with the rate the way it is and all the major department store price tags showing both prices, I also wonder how long it will be before the acceptance as equals will slowly move in.

## A tissue, a tissue, we all fall down!

Over the Xmas period, my 81-year mother was feeling a bit under the weather. So as a good son I phoned her to see if she needed any provisions. Armed with a list of the usual milk, tea and other stuff - not actually needed but why not take advantage - off I went to the shops. An easy enough task until a decision had to be made on toilet rolls. Which one?

I was faced with an array of packed shelving of such a basic item; there are jumbo sizes, soft, supersoft, with Aloe Vera, without Aloe Vera, the store's own brand, designer name rolls, patterned or coloured rolls! My brain was doing overtime trying to remember what colour my mum's bathroom was, with the wicked side of me wondering whatever happened to Izal - the paper that should have come with a health warning about paper cuts or even those days of tearing up old newspapers into squares! Well I settled on good old plain white *Andrex*. You can't go wrong with that... mind you, I did!

Tom Quigley (Y33)

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

## CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE

I recently read with interest that **Crossrail** has launched a competition seeking names for six of the giant tunnel boring machines (TBMs) that will construct the major new rail tunnels under the capital, with Londoners and people living along the Crossrail route being asked to propose pairs of names for the machines. The winning entries will be painted onto the tunnel boring machines.

This spring, the first two 140 metre long TBMs weighing 1,000 tonnes will travel 4 miles east from Royal Oak via Paddington, Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road before reaching Farringdon in summer 2013. Later this year, the second pair of machines will launch from Docklands, driving 5.2 miles west towards Farringdon via Whitechapel and Liverpool Street. In the winter, two TBMs will be launched from Plumstead travelling 1.6 miles and under the River Thames to North Woolwich.

A Crossrail panel will select a shortlist before the public is invited to vote online for their favourite pairs of names in February, with prizes awarded to the three entrants who receive the most votes. Those winning entrants will have the option of a prize of either **Eurostar** vouchers or an annual family pass to **Merlin Theme Parks**, which have been donated by



Now that's a bore!

Crossrail's tunnelling and delivery contractors. Winners will also be invited to attend the tunnelling launch event at Royal Oak. To submit your names, visit [www.crossrail.co.uk/tunnel-comp](http://www.crossrail.co.uk/tunnel-comp) by 6 February 2012.

Things have come a very long way since **Marc Isambard Brunel** invented his unique wooden tunnelling shield to good effect in 1825 to tunnel under the Thames from Rotherhithe to Wapping! His son **Isambard Kingdom Brunel** joined his father as joint resident engineer in 1835 to help finish the project. So those two gentlemen would get my vote for favourite pairs of names, although I'm fairly sure that Boris and Ken will be nominated and selected ahead of those renowned civic engineers.

Talking of Ken, he really is looking a tad tired these days - is he really going to run for Mayor again? I will never forget when he told the *Evening Standard* in 2001 "...only some sort of ghastly demented moron would get rid of the Routemasters." You said it, mate!

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

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

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD

### Right M'lud!

The warder slammed the prison van doors shut and three fraudsters went on their way to begin a total of 6 years in prison at Her Majesty's pleasure – at least that's before Ken Clarke halves their sentence for what he deems is good behaviour!

If you read the December issue of *Call Sign*, you will remember that I had been forced to serve on a jury for a seven week trial at Wood Green Crown Court. I was treated during this time to the most boring weeks of my life, fighting to keep my eyes open while three packed arch-lever files were read over and over again. The other nine courts saw cases of rioting thieves from the summer's unrest in Tottenham and Hackney, a stabbing and a murder. I on the other hand had a fraud case that involved some £3.5million involving a used car-selling internet website.

The case needed a Judge, CPS lawyers, defence lawyers and 12 jurors; this was also aided by a court usher and another court official. Witnesses were transported from Essex, Coventry, Leicester, Cornwall and various parts of Wales and London. In my estimation, the case must have involved over a £1million in costs during those seven weeks.

Although the trial finished in November 2011, the defendants were allowed home over Christmas and not sentenced until 6 January at 4pm. I think the Judge, who over those seven weeks I came to admire for the speed at which he accessed questions and answers, was remarkable. He was of Polish origin which made me proud as some of my grandparents also originated from there.

In sentencing I think he got it correct; the first young man for defrauding customers and transferring criminal property (money), plus using misleading actions as a director got 30 months in jail and was disqualified from being a director for 8 years. The second defendant, a middle aged man on the same charges, received 2 years and was disqualified from being a direc-



tor for 8 years. The third defendant, about 30 years old, received 18 months jail and was disqualified for 2 years. The fourth defendant, a young man in his 20s, got 4 months jail suspended for 2 years and a two year directorship disqualification, but with interference from that buffoon, the Secretary of State for Justice Kenneth Clarke, these people will most probably be back on the street in half that time. I think Mr Clarke has a serious personal problem and should have been replaced many months ago for the betterment of the British taxpayer, but our amoeba Members of Parliament with no backbone think that by getting rid of him, they will lose face.

It's due to this attitude by our elected MPs that caused such an increase in murders, shootings, stabbings and rapes since 1 January 2012. It also goes to show that the PC and human rights campaigners that everyone used to say we had to listen to, got it so wrong. They were the main reason for losing the title of Great Britain and are now known as United Kingdom.

### A Christmas to remember?

Due to the recession, a lot of families did not venture far from home over the Christmas period and instead relied on television for entertainment. Like my family, they would have been badly let down by the programme suppliers. The number of repeats made me think I was watching a continual loop of *All Our Yesterdays*; why did I have a colour TV when so many programmes were in black and white! We were subjected to real sub-standard programmes put out by both the BBC and ITV.

If I were to select the most embarrassing programme, it would be *The Royal Bodyguard* with David Jason. How could one of our most respected actors lower his standards to appear in what I would say was no better than a children's episode of the *Chuckle Brothers*! To see Sir David trying to portray a bodyguard when he is shorter and older than me was cringe-worthy. His running was on a par to entering our milkman's horse in the Grand National and the script was as childish as TV's *Rainbow* with Geoffrey, Bungle, Zippy and George!

I only hope the BBC does not produce such rubbish again at the expense of the TV licence payer. Even though it was shown at a time when many people were at home, it achieved less than 3 million viewers. But then if it is not the TV company's personal money, why would they care? It may be a time to think of doing away with the television licence and let the BBC compete against ITV and Sky for advertising revenue.

*May I belatedly take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and profitable coming year...*

**Tom Whitbread**  
DaC Board member

### The Magicians? Not so magical...

We've had complaints from several **Dial-a-Cab** drivers about the same thing and asked to warn others. They all involve the brilliant Saturday evening BBC1



program, **The Magicians**, which involves magicians completing some amazing tricks and illusions and goes out live. Complaints involve the ticketing system. You get tickets from **Applausestore.com** and naturally assume that you will get in. As Shepperton Studios can involve a long journey for many, a wasted trip can cause some upset – especially to any children.

So the warning is that if you get tickets for the show for 6.30, you need to get there at around midday as tickets do **not** guarantee you will get in! So be warned...

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Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 9am till 8pm and Saturday 9am till 2pm  
[www.bptconline.co.uk](http://www.bptconline.co.uk)



**Paul Hammett (V42)** was not a happy bunny when *Call Sign* met him recently. Paul takes up the story...

"I live close to Stansted Airport and use the M11 to come into work. It was about 03.15 one morning as I joined the motorway and was cruising along thinking about the day ahead, when a police car overtook me with its blue lights flashing. The driver then pulled onto the hard shoulder ahead of me and I thought no more of it and just drove past him. With that, the police car re-joined the carriageway, flew past me for the second time still with his blues going but this time I was waved at to pull over. I couldn't think that I'd done anything wrong, but came to a stop. A policeman got out, came over to me and said that I didn't look after my cab very well. I asked what he meant as I knew there was no smoke coming out and it was clean.

"You have a headlight not working, which means you are using your taxi illegally and the bulb needs to be replaced before you can go to work," the PC said with no little attitude.

"I could not believe that he was serious and explained that a light bulb, any bulb, can fail at any time and without warning and certainly without my knowledge when sitting in the cab. Of course I then said that I would get it done as soon as practicable. I was still not too far from home and could have gone back to my house to change it."

However, the policeman was totally intransigent and uninterested in Paul's reasoning. Instead he made himself busy checking Paul's details on his computer before handing him a slip of paper explaining that it was a 'fixed penalty' £30 fine. But the man in blue went on to give Paul the 'good' news - his infringement did not carry any penalty points on his driving licence!

## FINED FOR HEADLIGHT NOT WORKING!

*Paul upset at police intransigence...*



**Paul is smiling now but wasn't so happy at police intransigence**

Paul didn't find the tone particularly amusing, although he had the feeling that if it was up to Mr Plod then he'd have got the points as well.

Paul asked *Call Sign* if he could comment on the cost of buying and operating a new cab.

"It's been a bug of mine for some time and the high cost means we can't really be competitive pricewise in the marketplace. There, I've got it off my chest so I feel better now," he said!

After hearing of Paul's plight, *Call Sign's* young researcher/tea maker delved into the gospel of all motorists and road users, *The*

*Highway Code* and sure enough, there are a wealth of laws relating to *Lighting Requirements* and advice on when and where to use them. Technically and blindly following the letter of the law, an infringement had occurred. However, it is possible that if you actually carry a selection of spare bulbs on the cab (as many drivers do), there is the chance that being seen to be a responsible motorist, you could be given the opportunity to replace the expired lamp when it is safe and practicable to do so without incurring the £30 fine! But of course, there is no guarantee!

In an effort to impress the Editor, our young eager-beaver reporter pointed out that every taxi *Owner's Handbook* includes a comprehensive list of the lamps used for that particular model. Light bulbs can be bought individually or as travel kits, but whatever happens you'd have them on board for convenience. Many of the usual taxi retail outlets will supply all the necessary lamps for your taxi, so be wise, be legal, keep them readily to hand and save yourself 30 quid if you just happen to come across the same mean 'ol Bill' that Paul ran into.

Of course, being brave little soldiers, you could inform any police in a car with one light not working to avoid the M11 as there is a rather unpleasant soul patrolling it...!!!

© *Call Sign Magazine MMX11*

## Lee's merry-go-round!

Well, we thought that the footballing side of **Dial-a-Cab's** goalkeeper / driver **Lee Pearce (J71)** had finally settled down following the *December Call Sign* when after years of being relatively settled with Wembley, he began getting shunted around from team to team.

The main reason followed a bad cruciate injury at the end of the 2010 season, which kept him out for several months. As his recovery was almost complete, former **Chelsea / Southampton** star **Neil Shipperley** took him to Walton Casuals where Neil was manager.

But after some poor results, Shipperley resigned and **Mick Sullivan** took over, telling Lee how well **he** had played - and then dropped him from the team! Lee went to fellow Ryman league side, **Godalming Town** and did well for the first team - only to be dropped again! So off went Lee again in search of first team football.

All non-league managers know of Lee and how reliable he is between the sticks, but as he pointed out to *Call Sign*, he is now 34 and whilst in goalkeeping terms that isn't too old, he knows he needs regular football. One of those managers was Hendon FC manager **Gary McCann** who immediately asked Lee if he would go there as a player and also to help coach some of the younger players. Although Gary couldn't promise Lee first team action, he said he wanted him for second team and cup games. Then Wembley FC player / manager Ian Bates - who has amazingly clocked up over 800 games for *The Lions* - asked Lee if he was available to go back there! Lee didn't wait to be asked twice and was sent there on loan with the possibility of making the move permanent. He went straight into the first team and told us it felt like going home!



**When Lee isn't goal keeping duties, he earns his living in a DaC taxi**

### Call Sign February 2012

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Printers: Premier Print Group

25 - 31 Violet Rd, London E3

Design: Aldan Publications

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

# Kupkake's Korner



## My Identifier...

In a plastic clear container  
Above the no smoking sign,  
Is my new identifier  
With a number that is MINE...

In Green it shows I'm legal  
That for sure I'm qualified,  
To ply the streets of London  
Within the M25...

I can plot up on all stations  
I can cruise the City streets,  
But there is no celebration  
If I'm 'thinking with my feet'

Whose plan was this I wonder  
What fool dreamt up the idea,  
To make each Taxi a target  
There's trouble ahead I fear...

Yet PH has that round thing  
You can view it if you're close,  
Behind their tinted windows  
We should have some like those...

It's *them* that need enforcing  
As they tout and steal our work,  
When they think they're just like Taxis  
Yet driven by real jerks!

Now everyone can spot me  
They can see who drives my cab,  
It's so easy to report me  
Oh what fun they'll have!

Mad cyclists and irate bikers  
Drunk punters one and all,  
Can quote the cabby's number  
When they make that spiteful call.

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As unemployment rises, are taxi drivers going to be subject to more...

# Cab attacks?

Over the years, *Call Sign* has reported on the occasional Dial-a-Cab taxi driver who has been attacked and robbed.

Happily, whilst the occasional taxi has been broken into when the driver was away, attacks while the driver is in the cab have been something of a rarity.

But over the past few months, the number of drivers being attacked has increased with current economic hardships being one of the reasons put forward.

**Divyesh Ruparelia (V59) has been on Dial-a-Cab since September 2004 - a time when finding passengers was somewhat easier than it is now. He told *Call Sign* of an incident that happened to him recently and which he believes has also happened to other drivers. Divyesh takes up the story...**

"I was driving down Grange Road in South Norwood at 3am on 10 January on my way home to South Croydon. As I approached the junction of Ross Road, I saw a couple of small bins in the middle of the road. I would normally stop, get out and move them over to the side of the road, but I was just feeling so tired that I drove around them and carried on.

As I passed Ross Road heading towards Thornton Heath High Street, I saw two lads. One was on the left by the pavement, while the other was standing in the middle of the road. So I slowed down to drive around him and just as I did so, he gestured as if to throw a punch at me. I ducked instinctively - even though I was in the cab and it obviously wasn't going to land on me.

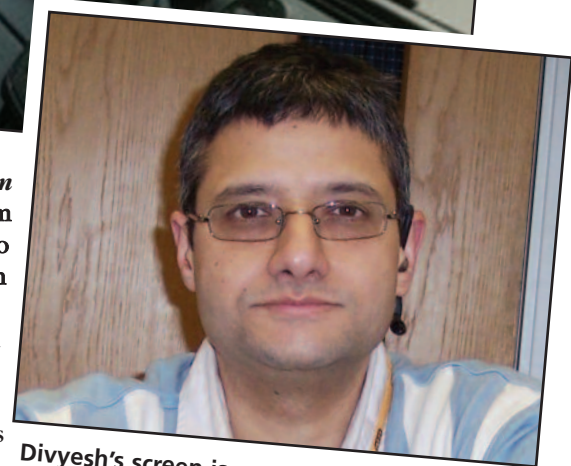
The next second I heard an almighty bang as something had landed on my windscreen and bounced off. I carried on driving in total shock, luckily for me the object landed and cracked the nearside of the windscreen so that I could still see where I was going.

I carried on driving home, whilst at the same time calling the police to report the incident. Fortunately for me, apart from the shock and £60 excess insurance payment, there was no other harm done to me. I hate to think what would have happened had I stopped."

The police told Divyesh that his had not been the first report of an attack on a taxi driver in the area, yet according to the DaC driver there was not one sign of any police presence during the whole trip home.

Divyesh ended by saying that he feels very relieved that his tiredness stopped him getting out of his cab to pick up the bins.

"Never ever get out of the cab is the moral, I guess...!"



Divyesh's screen is smashed on the near side





When selling our business at **Dial-a-Cab**, there are several points that a prospective client will ask about, but there are always two main questions: **Service and cost**.

I know that you would all like to hear about the 'new big account' that we have been awarded, or how many new accounts DaC have opened recently in addition to the many other questions I'm often asked by drivers - especially when I am travelling in one of our taxis.

Many accounts are opened throughout the

## *DaC Sales Exec Natalie Ezekiel with a Call Sign update...* **IF YOU DON'T DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS... YOUR BUSINESS WILL DRIVE YOU OUT!**

year, although not as many as we would like, but we *are* still obtaining new business - albeit on a lower level and as this is at a time when companies are counting the pennies, we must be grateful for any new business.

Since August last year, I have expressed interest with several large companies who were looking to change their current supplier and going out to Tender. I must add that Tenders do not just apply to new businesses, but to existing accounts as well. One of the Tenders submitted was to an existing client and I am happy to announce that we have retained the business. The Tender process is quite a lengthy one and can take up to six months from submitting the questionnaire to being awarded the account.

While on the subject of new business, I am also happy to confirm that after many phone calls, emails and letter writing, we recovered an account in EC1 that we had lost several years

ago and all is going well there. I have not yet heard from the other companies to-date, however, I am optimistic that there will be news in the near future as after completing the first and second stage questionnaires, two of the companies had invited us back to give a final presentation. Attending the presentations with me was **Brian Rice** and IT Manager, **John Bankes**.

Although last year was a difficult one and this year could even be harder, we must always remember that **Service** is the key to our business at a **Cost** to our clients. It can take months - even a years - to win business, but it only takes one mistake to lose an account.

**Driving is your business; don't drive business out!**

*I would like to end by wishing you all a belated happy and healthy New Year.*

**Natalie Ezekiel**  
**DaC Sales**

# Crackdown on dangerous pedicabs



**Does this count as riding on the footway or obstructing it?**

warning. Nineteen riders were issued with a fixed penalty notice for various offences.

Mayor Johnson said: "Unregulated rickshaw riders who block the streets and ride recklessly through the West End in unroadworthy vehicles pose a real danger both to passengers and to other road users. We are sending out a clear message that this will not be tolerated and we are taking firm action to ensure we keep Londoners and visitors safe."

Sgt Christian Ardrin, leading the operation on behalf of West End and Chinatown Safer Neighbourhoods Team added: "We work with many pedicab operators who operate safely within the West End; this operation is all about tackling those riders who are flouting the rules and as a result are a danger to themselves, their passengers and other road users."

According to Boris Johnson's office, the Mayor has designated a new get-tough approach to pedicabs in central London, which is said to include a public awareness campaign informing the public of the potential risks of travelling in pedicabs, together with a programme of increased police enforcement designed to tackle dangerous pedicab riders who obstruct highways and ride recklessly.

The announcement follows a new and highly successful enforcement initiative during the autumn, which formed part of a joint safety crackdown organised by TfL, the Metropolitan Police and Westminster Council. The night-time operations ran in the West End through October, November and December and involved police officers taking actions against pedicab riders who were endangering themselves or others with their behaviour. That included obstruction of the footway, riding in an inconsiderate or reckless manner, cycling on the footway, causing congestion or riding pedicabs which were unsafe, dangerous or unroadworthy.

As well as 35 arrests, 35 pedicabs have been impounded while a further 198 pedicab riders were issued with a formal



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This month I thought I'd take a break from raving on about one of my favourite hobbies, gaming, and look instead at another of my hobbies - which is also part of my job at **Dial-a-Cab** - coding. Coding (or computer programming) is the art of creating software or games using any one of a variety of computer languages. Unfortunately, for a long time, coding has been shrouded in mystery for the majority of people and is considered the realm of the elite few.

In recent months, coding has been brought to the limelight by several different sources, including members of the government. Computer Science is barely taught in schools in this country; instead, schools have been duped into thinking that teaching children how to use proprietary office software (Microsoft Office) provides enough computer skills for the next generation. This is scandalous, because whilst our economy will always need administrators and clerical workers, we also need software developers, computer engineers and video game designers.

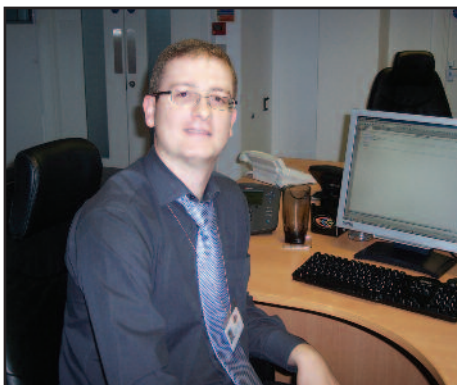
Thankfully, the government, private sector and community in general are finally getting this message across to the population: the future of Britain in the global digital age is reliant on the next generation being tech-savvy.

**If this article interests you, I hope to be able to help you unravel the mysteries of coding and give yourself, your children and grand-children a head-start in not just understanding how computers work, but how to make them do what you want them to do. There are a number of free, user-friendly resources, courses and tools now available to allow anyone from 6 to 60 become an accomplished programmer - with little or no former experience!**

Before I list these, let me clarify something about coding. *Learning to program is not hard.* There, I said it! It really isn't hard to learn. *What is difficult is mastering it.* Just like almost everything else in life, learning to program is easy to learn. Admittedly, *mastering* a programming language takes a lot of hard work as well as much trial and error. But there is a lot of free support out there on the Internet and the benefits are rewarding. If you think computers are too clever for you to ever be able to program them, you're wrong. *Computers are stupid!* Think about it. If you'd never made a peanut butter sandwich and I asked you to make me one, I'd give you instructions like get two slices

**DaC's Network Administrator, Jon Winterburn, puts his computer games away for this month and takes a look at computer programming - otherwise known as coding. 290,697 people have already decided to learn to code in 2012. So why not you??**

## CODING: THE NEW LATIN...



**You and your children can learn to code**

of bread from the bag, use a knife to spread the peanut butter evenly, push the two bits of bread together and put it on a plate. Simple!

Now imagine telling a computer how to do this using any programming language. You'd have to give instructions like so: "Bread is available in the bread bin, which is in the kitchen on the worktop. Take out two slices - a slice is approximately 150mm x 150mm. Lay both slices flat on the worktop and obtain a bread knife from the drawer. This will be in the left hand compartment. You will need to hold the knife by the handle. Now obtain the peanut butter jar from the cupboard..." and so on! As you can see, this is a far more lengthy process because the computer really has no intelligence. However, you do have intelligence and you can utilise your vastly superior intelligence to instruct the computer to do what you want it to do. Remember, the computer is the slave and you are its master - not the other way round!

So, on to the resources. The first resource is one I've been working through with my son. The website [www.codecademy.com](http://www.codecademy.com) has been set up in conjunction with the *Code Year* program ([www.codeyear.com](http://www.codeyear.com)) started on 1st January this year with the intention of helping you become a programming ninja within the

year. Sporting a clean, easy to use interface, you work through interactive, bite-sized exercises which teach you the basics of 3 of the easiest languages: JavaScript, Python and Ruby. You gain points, awards and badges as you work your way through the exercises, which is a great encouragement.

The next resource is designed primarily for children but of course is suitable for anyone wanting to learn to program. The language of choice is Ruby (an object-orientated open-source language developed in Japan by someone who wanted to provide people with an easier, more human-understandable language). The colourful and fun website [www.kidsruby.com](http://www.kidsruby.com) provides kids and parents with free software that'll have your little ones building computer games in Ruby in no time at all. Building computer games is a great and exciting way for children to put to use the maths and science they learn in school and they learn to program without realising it!

The next resource is [www.hackety.com](http://www.hackety.com) - another colourful and fun website which helps absolute beginners and kids learn to program quickly, also in Ruby. You can quickly develop graphical interfaces and several lessons and example programs are provided, showing you how to make all kinds of fun things!

One more similar resource is the website <http://scratch.mit.edu> - a kid-friendly website which provides free software and starter kits that'll get your kids developing in a simple programming language called *Scratch* (designed by MIT).

Of course there are far more resources and programming languages out there which you can easily find through *Google*. However, if you're an absolute beginner or want to get your kids interested in coding, then the above websites are a great starting point.

Happy coding!

**Jon Winterburn**  
DaC Network Administrator

## DRIVERS E-STATEMENTS



As part of the on-going development of **Dial-a-Cab's** infrastructure, our IT department have developed a procedure whereby we will no longer require the services of *Swiss Post* for implementing drivers E-Statements.

As a result, from 1 March 2012 drivers will no longer need to login to Swiss Post via the Dial-a-Cab website, instead you will receive a PDF file directly to your inbox from Dial-a-Cab. In order for this new procedure to run smoothly, we will require you to confirm your email address as previously this information was held by Swiss Post and may possibly have changed since you first enrolled into the service. However, you will still be able to access past statements from Swiss Post in the normal way for the foreseeable future.

I would be grateful if you could send an email to [driverservices@dialogcab.co.uk](mailto:driverservices@dialogcab.co.uk) inserting your **Badge Number** and **Call Sign** in the subject field. This should only take a few minutes of your time, but the

information is vital to ensure you receive your E-Statement on time.

*Our thanks for your cooperation in this matter...*

**Warren Smith**  
DaC Financial Controller



Every February - as in this issue of *Call Sign* - you will read of the LTFUC Mad Hatters Ball. Many of the 600 children at London's swish Grosvenor House hotel are either disabled or literally underprivileged in some way. But on this one day, they will be having the time of their lives. But not every child there on 15 January came under the above two categories. DaC Board member and LTFUC committee man **Mike Son** has told us about **William**, one of the 600 children enjoying the ball in the hall.

"We can all be proud of our kids and their achievements and the responsibilities they take on as they go through life. But some children have to go beyond just being children. At just 9-years of age, William has the ultimate in stressful and lifesaving responsibilities thrust upon him.

He is the son of Michael and Natasha. His mother suffers from atypical epilepsy (AE), which can occur at any time with little warning and be very intermittent. During good periods, weeks can go by with no attacks, but during the bad periods attacks can occur every day. On average Natasha has an attack a few times a month, but during the bad periods she often falls asleep and becomes unresponsive.

In trying to lead a normal life, many safeguards are created and family support provided. William has learned to call his dad on an emergency line as well as his grandparents who are quick to the rescue. The attacks can manifest themselves in many ways from the funny to the downright scary.

Natasha usually, but not always, has a one minute warning and can place herself out of harm's way by sitting or lying down wherever she is. She becomes unconscious for a minute and is then disorientated for around an hour. That disorientation can take many forms from her acting as an innocent young child, to having alarming hallucinations. Three years ago and alone at home with William, Natasha had a fit and just fell to the floor - this time there had been no warning. She broke her arm. William was just 6 but even then knew what to do. He covered her up and put a cushion under her head and called for help. William knows that if he is out in public and something happens to his mum, he has to raise the alarm with the nearest person and show them Natasha's Medical Alert Card, which provides information and explains the initial support she needs.

# Dissecting the six hundred...



Call Sign caught up with William and his mum and dad at the Mad Hatters Party

William has been brought up with this situation and whilst a very caring child with reasoning well beyond his age, his verbal abilities have been brought into play at a very tender age because of the circumstances he finds himself in. He is also a happy child, but days like the one at the Mad Hatters don't come around too often.

These early life lessons and experiences may one day help him to achieve great things in his life, just like his personal hero **Winston Churchill**. Great things may be in store for William but we must recognise that whilst occasionally thrust into the role of carer, he is still very young and should not feel too great a sense of responsibility. This has led from time to time to depression and anxiety, which his contemporaries and teachers have had difficulty in coming to terms with. So his current school must be praised for being very sympathetic to the issues.

The Barnet Young Carers Association (BYCAS) recognised William's situation and has

provided support and advice. Through BYCAS, the local Mayor's office heard of the great work William had been doing and decided to help raise his spirits during a particularly difficult period for him. The Mayor visited William at his parents' house and over tea made it clear what a special and gifted child he really was, a hero in his own way just like Winston Churchill.

Indeed William and Winston don't just share the same first letter of their names, they also share many personal traits such as a gifted verbal reasoning and a personality that can raise the spirits of those around them. These traits are best known by his mum, who thinks of him as her little miracle - not just because medically he should never have been created, but simply because of him, the person, her 9 year old son William. A carer, not just in the making, but here now..."

**Mike Son**  
DaC and LTFUC

## BOB ODDY STANDS DOWN AS LTDA GENERAL SECRETARY And Stevie Mac goes up!



**Bob Oddy**, the long-time General Secretary of the LTDA, announced at a recent Council of Management meeting that he was standing down from the position.

The main reason he gave was that at seventy, he felt it better to stand down now when he was still feeling well rather than wait for the next election when he would be 73.

Bob, who has been in the taxi trade since 1966, nominated **Steve McNamara** as replacement and the LTDA CoM unanimously accepted that nomination.

**Steve McNamara** told *Call Sign*: "I am proud to have been nominated and happy to accept. Bob is a hard act to follow and I am delighted that he is going to stay on at LTDA House. His knowledge and experience of trade matters is invaluable. I am looking forward to the job."

**Dial-a-Cab** Chairman **Brian Rice** told this magazine: "I have known Bob for many years and worked with him on several committees. I'm glad he is not leaving the trade completely but staying in the background at Woodfield Road for his experience and advice. Although Bob is standing down as General Secretary, he will still be involved in the taxi industry and I look forward to working with him in the future."

**Gordon Bennett (Y91)** has been with **Dial-a-Cab** since 1994, but waited until the July 2005 issue before making his **Call Sign** debut when he asked all drivers on the circuit to look out for dodgy minicabs with what appeared to be fake licenses. And his interest in the 'little people' seems not to have waned too much since then! In 2010 he forwarded onto this mag details of some rather insalubrious minicab goings-on in Kent as described by his local newspaper. It had looked at several car companies whose work practices all looked decidedly dubious!

This time, Gordon has come across his own problem when trying to put onto the **Tate Modern** rank.

It was few weeks before Christmas at around 10am and the rank was full – but with **Addison Lee** cars rather than taxis. Gordon has been around long enough to know that the Hampstead Road minicab company hadn't suddenly been given special plying for hire rights, so he pulled to the offside of the rank and walked across to see the AL Marshal in his green jerkin and pointed out that this was marked out as a taxi rank because that's what it was – a rank for taxis.

The Marshal's astonished response was that they were there to pick up VIP passengers



Gordon took this pic through his windscreen showing the rank full of AL cars

who "did not want to walk too far!"

Gordon told **Call Sign** that there were only a few taxis there and being so outnumbered, they swallowed it and looked for work elsewhere adding that it wouldn't have been that difficult for the AL cars to stop on the offside of the rank and then everyone would have been able to continue working normally. But the

Marshal wasn't interested.

**Call Sign** asked Addison Lee for a comment but they declined. Gordon ended with a rather telling question: "Will this be the look of the future???"

**Jamie Corum**  
**Call Sign Online**

## Taxi drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd

[www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk](http://www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk)

### About us...



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

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

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**Dave Cohen (E94)**

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

# DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

*This month's Flashback returns to October 1998 and a regular column of the time written by drivers about their butterboy collections. This one is from the late Bernie Pressman...*

From Call Sign, October 1998

## A BUTTERBOY'S RECOLLECTIONS

*Several issues back, Mike Son (V52) told of his memories of the first passenger he had ever picked up. Now Bernie Pressman (M31J) casts his mind back to that fateful day when you first utter the magic phrase: "Where to Guv?" If you would like to share the memory of your first trip or day as a cab driver with Call Sign readers, please send your story to the Editor...*

I don't think it matters whether you have been driving for many years or just months, one thing everybody remembers is their first fare. Mine came just about thirty three years ago in 1965...

I was driving for Sam Leighton who had a garage in Andre Street, Hackney. The practice in those days was that if they gave you a cab for your *wangle*, you agreed to work nights for

them for a year. I wasn't exactly a night man, more of a late afternoon driver but I arranged to start at four pm and end about midnight.

On the first evening after I got my Bill, I turned up full of hope and apprehension. I'll never forget it; the skies were dull, grey and threatening. The cab was fully fuelled, the oil and water checked and I got in to start the great adventure. Almost immediately there was a giant clap of thunder and the heavens opened up. Sam grinned at me and said: "You won't have much trouble getting off in this!" I grinned weakly and pulled away.

Within minutes I was heading down Kingsland Road, excited yet terrified that someone would put up their hand! As I got to the lights at Old Street, they changed to red and I was trapped. A thin, middle-aged man came running across and flung himself into the cab before I could do anything about it. He had a shocking cold and through his coughs and sneezes I heard him mutter Clifton Court, Maida Vale. I panicked! My mind went a complete blank. Where was Clifton Court? Where was Maida Vale? All those days and nights pouring over maps and runs, those long days in the sun and rain on my moped,

they all vanished in an instant.

Somehow I muttered OK and we set off. In those days the Marylebone Road wasn't like it is today and getting there was also a problem, but we moved slowly towards our destination. I kept trying to think desperately where the hell Clifton Court was. After about thirty minutes, we got to St Johns Wood Road and at last to the corner of Maida Vale. As we did so, I gave a large sigh of relief as I saw the name of the court on the corner.

There was twelve shillings and sixpence on the clock and I had been told that you could ask for double for over six miles, but I was thankful to arrive at all! As he paid the fare (my first legal) I turned to him and said: "I'm a new driver and you're my first fare." He sniffed and said "I could see that by the bleedin' way you bought me!"

Ah happy days I thought, welcome to the cab trade. That passenger won't recollect that night, but I'll never forget it...

Bernie Pressman (M31J)



## RMI Petrol Chairman tells the Chancellor...

# "REFORM FUEL TAX OR FACE CONSEQUENCES!"

In January, Chairman of Retail Motor Industry Petrol **Brian Madderson** wrote to Chancellor **George Osborne** with a *Briefing Paper* urging reform of fuel tax ahead of the deferred duty increase on 1 August. Mr Osborne detailed in his last November *Autumn Statement* that this would add 3.02p per litre plus 20% VAT, making a total increase of 4p per litre at the pumps. Taxi diesel is already priced at around 140ppl. Mr Madderson said in the 12-page *Briefing Paper* that whilst accepting Government has little control over global demand and pricing of crude oil, or even the vital exchange rate between Esterling and US\$ - the international petro-currency - it has absolute control over UK taxation.

The *Paper* continued that whilst all taxes were unpopular, fuel tax now topped the list because as the Chancellor had said in November, fuel was not a luxury for most people but a necessity. So by recognising this fact, Government should also recognise that it is a deeply flawed tax as being not directly related to income or wealth, it becomes a consumption tax that unfairly penalises working families, low income earners, rural communities and businesses and many other poorer sectors of society.

The RMI Petrol *Briefing Paper* went on to add that fuel crime was escalating, retailers were shutting up shop, commercial businesses were closing, unemployment increasing and economy stalling. Mr Madderson said that fuel volumes had collapsed in 2011 and that with the already tight margins for independent forecourt operators, it would lead to further site closures. Quoting the *Palmer & Harvey* last quarter *Forecourt Report 2011*, he said the UK was fast becoming a nation of fuel deserts, not just in rural areas but in urban ones too. Thus motorists would have to drive further and pay more just to fill their vehicles.

Mr Madderson ended by telling **Call Sign**: "It must be time for change and new thinking on fuel tax to provide a much needed boost to our society and to the economy. The consequences of continuing to hit the motorist and consumer with this unfair tax are now clear to all, as was so passionately debated by MP's in the House of Commons on 15 November, led by Harlow Tory MP **Robert Halfon**."

Diesel is also expected to increase in price with growing tension between Iran and the western world over their nuclear intentions with the EU trying to force an embargo on crude oil supplies. Iran has responded by threatening to blockade the Straits of Hormuz through which 30 to 40% of the world's oil supply is shipped. Another cause concerns worries over EU refinery activity and specifically diesel capacity after **Petroplus Holdings** were forced to shut down 3 out of 5 plants due to banks freezing US\$1billion of the company's loans, cutting crude oil supplies.

In addition, Repsol, Spain's largest oil company halted production at its Bilbao facility due to weakening profit margins.



RMI Petrol Chairman Brian Madderson

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# Mailshot

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callsignmag@aol.com**

## Demutualisation

*Hi Al*

Just to say congratulations for an excellent editorial in the *January Call Sign*, especially your comments on demutualisation. Perhaps we should be looking into this once again as a way forward, even though as in any business in any sphere there are risks involved.

I was recently criticised in *Call Sign* for daring to suggest that a possible merger amongst all the radio circuits may be the way forward. That unmeritorious criticism was not worthy of a response; however one thing is certain, we as an organisation and licensed drivers as a whole must unite and fight back otherwise we might just end up fighting amongst ourselves for the scraps left by the larger private hire car companies.

I am sure you remember the days when DaC was the main supplier of taxis to the TV company on the Southbank. I drove past there one evening during Christmas week and counted 32 silver cars outside, no doubt waiting to pick up passengers. How can we compete? Even more importantly, how do we as DaC become their main suppliers of transport once again?

**Louie Christian (A48)**

I don't have the real answer Louie, but even though through the years I've heard various answers to the question - price, gratuity, waiting time, dress code etc - I have gradually come to a conclusion that it's just the way the two trades are. The legitimate side of Private Hire, and like it or not that is the vast majority, rely on phone-type bookings. They don't have the thought of will they pass a street job if they accept a radio trip? When it's quiet as it has been, I'll take anything - radio or street jobs - but when it's busy, I'm happy to do just account work. I'm not alone in that but a large number of drivers would rather take a street hail because they see it as quick money. No one can criticise them for looking after their own interests, but when it is busy and the bid zone fills up, we're not the ones who have to explain why there is no cab in the area. Passengers are very knowledgeable nowadays; they know what the situation is and whether it is genuinely busy. They will often put up with genuine busy period delays, but not when they perceive they are being put as second to street work. So Louie, could it be that the company you are referring to - whom I have also picked up at in the past when they used to phone us - suddenly wondered why the trip to Peckham was

rarely covered as quickly as the rest were? As I said at the beginning, we are and always will be independent, whereas PH work for a 'master'. The only question is whether that independence is too independent? If anyone disagrees with me, please feel free to write in. I'm not a Board member, just someone who creates debate.

Incidentally Louie, in total I had 23 phone calls re my Editorial and thoughts on demutualisation. Yours was the only letter with the writer's name (there were three others who failed to sign but who were 'against' and pretty offensive so far as publication goes). Of the 23 calls, 17 were either in favour or thought that the suggestion was worth thinking about, while 6 were against. Even one trade writer from another paper called to say that it was the right way to go. However, as I also pointed out, it was just a thought I had when drivers kept asking how we could compete against a company such as Addison Lee who seem to be constantly expanding. Under our rules, if we wanted to buy another taxi company, we couldn't even though they could buy us! My thanks to everyone who responded but as I also pointed out, it was nothing to do with the BoM - whereas one internet chat site seemed to assume that the BoM had put me up to it! Totally incorrect! I never take for granted this freedom I have in putting Call Sign together, but it seems to upset some out there who would always rather believe in a conspiracy theory ...Ed

## Message on Vitos and Albert Bridge

*Hi Al*

Re the article in *January's Call Sign*, *The Vito and Albert Bridge*, I was the driver who put out the message regarding Vitos not being able to use the then recently reopened Albert Bridge. Although my message turned out later to be incorrect, at the time it was right because the sign still read no vehicles over 2.2tonnes and whilst that meant LTI cabs were ok, the Vito's 2.7tonnes was well over that. What I didn't want to see happen was for Vito drivers to start getting PCNs for using a bridge that the signs clearly said they couldn't use. It was some time later that the signs were changed to 3tonnes and as a result, Vitos are now able to use Albert Bridge - although if I had a Vito I'm not sure I'd be

happy going through those narrow north-bound width restrictions. However, this is just to explain that my message was correct when it went out.

**Terry Meares (M63)**

Thanks for taking the time to explain Terry. His terminal message - soon after the bridge reopened - reached many outside of DaC via word of mouth, ending up at LTPH Director John Mason's desk! He then contacted Call Sign to ask whether the message originated from TfL as he hadn't been informed. As Terry says, his message was correct when it went out, but within a short period Albert Bridge's weight limit was raised to 3tonnes and the problem no longer existed. What the article tried to point out was that when putting out information over the terminal, please try to make sure it is factually correct at the time and not just hearsay or a rumour, because if incorrect it could affect other drivers ...Ed

## Tom, Tom the theatre man!

*Hi Al*

Just a note to say thanks for the opportunity to see *Round Heeled Woman* starring *Sharon Gless*. I've been going to the theatre for over 50 years and I can safely say that this production would make my all-time top ten! It was clever, thought provoking and fun! I can't stop recommending it to my passengers, so my thanks to Tom the theatre man for getting us these outstanding tickets!

**Jon Trevor (W94)**

DaC Board member Tom Whitbread is the first in the taxi trade to be contacted whenever theatre tickets are up for grabs. If you do enjoy any production you get tickets for, it really would be nice if you do what Jon has done and tell your passengers how good a production it is ...Ed

## Call Sign and the London Vintage Taxi Association

*Dear Alan*

I have in the past received many such letters as the one below and it shows we do the right thing towards LVTA members and other interested parties who obviously have an interest in taxis but who live





# Mailshot

Continued from page 32

world-wide, by sending out Call Sign to them. Our thanks to you for allowing this.

**Hans Dooren,**  
LVTA PR, Holland

*Hi Hans*

*I do not know how many other members thank you, but I would personally wish to say thanks for sending out taxi related magazines via the internet and in particular the **Call Sign**, which I feel is really the best of all of them as it contains so many items of real interest and so much information. Sincere thanks to you and to the **Call Sign** editor for producing such a good read.*

**Barry Elson**  
LVTA 1077

This world is a very 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' one. We are happy for Hans to send out Call Sign around the world, whilst in return he has kindly offered to assist any Dial-a-Cab driver to find the war graves of any family member anywhere in Holland. Then if at all possible, Hans will visit the grave site and even take a photo to send back to the DaC driver. When it comes to it, Hans' offer makes our permission for him to send out Call Sign seem tiny. Again our sincere thanks for his astonishingly kind offer ...Ed

## Moving Traffic Contravention

*Hi Alan*

Got a PCN for a Moving Traffic Contravention for entering Old Broad Street and I would like to thank Nuala in Driver Services for helping me to appeal it even though it was not a DaC ticket. As a result it was cancelled before it went to the adjudicator. My case number is 2110685270 if it helps anyone in the future.

Thanks again...

**Pat Keefe (G01)**

Nuala has helped lots of drivers get off the Old Broad Street MTC (PCN) thanks to advice from Barrie Segal. She and Barrie work closely together and the number of successful appeals DaC now have probably runs into four figures compared to the occasional one before Barrie arrived on the DaC scene. So far as Old Broad Street is concerned, the general advice if you have an MTC is to appeal by ticking the box on page 2 that says *the alleged contravention did not occur*. Then on the reverse where it asks for additional details

of your representation, give any mitigating circumstances and for *further information*, add that you would like to dispute the PCN on the following facts: 1/ The cameras are not valid and 2/ The signs are not valid. Also request a copy of the Traffic Management Order. Of course the easiest method is not to go past the signs - be they valid or not! ...Ed

## Green / Yellow badge identifiers

*Hi Alan*

I have just received my green badge identifiers in the post. A great idea, however this was announced April 2010, some 21 months ago and all they can supply is a cheap stick-on sleeve. Having just paid £250 for the TfL part of a licence renewal, which probably took about ten minutes work by someone and about a quid's work of material, you have to assume that the money hasn't been spent on the identifier. I would expect the new identifier holder to be *Fit for Purpose* (a good old PCO terminology). The identifier has to be removed every time the cab is unattended, in my case every night after I finish work. Having just stuck this holder on, my first attempt at removing the card saw me begin to pull off the sticky bit from the windscreen. It also goes in the place where the *No Smoking* sign goes. The photograph on the instructions does not have a *No Smoking* sign. Do we now not need a front windscreen *No Smoking* sign? Did TfL/LTPH try out the removal of the identifier a number of times?

TfL/LTPH, please get as professional as the drivers you are attending to...

**Alan Nash (A95)**

**Director of Taxis and Private Hire at LTPH**  
**John Mason responds:** Alan has made a number of comments. Firstly, with regards to the quality of the identifier; we are satisfied that the quality is sufficient for the purpose of the scheme which is to primarily act as a self-deterrent and also to assist the Police and our Compliance Officers with enforcement. We did look at a number of different materials for the identifiers and this solution struck the right balance between quality and cost.

Display of the no smoking sign was covered in the guidance that was issued to drivers. In the driver's compartment, the no smoking sign should be attached to the rear of the plastic wallet containing the identifier (i.e. facing inwards).

With regards to Alan's comments regarding the time taken to process a renewal. Ten minutes? If only this were true! I can assure you that Alan's licence fee would be a lot cheaper than it is now. I've made no secret of the fact that the "systems" we have are old, antiquated, out of date systems and processes, many of which are held together by sellotape and string. This means a huge reliance on paper-based processes and that the processing of applications and renewals is very manual and heavily resource intensive. However, I have made it a priority to address this problem and we have a very clear programme of work to modernise the IT and revolutionise the way we work, which we are hoping to implement next year.

## Identifiers: 19th century tactics?

*Dear Al*

In the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had such an efficient system of snooping and spying on its citizens that one mother was moved to say "my daughter has only to sneeze and Prince Metternich (the Prime Minister) will know of it."

I feel that TfL seem to be adopting similar tactics regarding the Taxi trade. We have to wear a badge, display a licence plate and now stick on the new identifiers. The chance of getting away with anything will be remote!

Contrast that with our competitors in the Private Hire industry. The only identification on the vehicles are those tiny roundels, which often curl up or fall off or are hidden behind smoked glass. The playing field is about as level as the old Yeovil football pitch.

**Geoff Levene (W32)**

Drivers have been complaining regularly in Call Sign since October 2008, when a driver's wife blew the whistle on yellow badges who worked in town. Many letters and articles have appeared in this magazine since then. We now have the identifier that drivers asked for and we're still not happy! But the unhappiest driver I've spoken to so far was a yellow badge in Richmond. He helped me find the building I was looking for - which I was outside without realising! I introduced myself and we spoke about the identifiers and he commented that the new system would affect his takings. Was that because he used to *work* in town? Nope, it was because those that did had now been rumbled and would have to return to their own



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rank and thereby make it even longer!

I will only worry if silly complaints against drivers suddenly go through the roof, but badge numbers face outwards and are not on show to the passenger, so I don't expect that to happen as your taxi licence number has been on display since the year dot anyway. My only concern is the hassle of having to remember to take them out of the cab each night, but if it helps to do the job it was intended for – and bearing in mind that the Olympics and a possible upsurge in usage is almost here – then I don't think we should complain too loudly. And Geoff, the slope at Yeovil FC? Boy, are you giving your age away! ...Ed

## To carry luggage or not to carry luggage – that is the question!

Hi Alan,

I recently had a chat with John Mason and asked him what TfL's viewpoint was in regards to a drivers obligation to carrying luggage in the front compartment? I received something of a Penton Street answer – didn't I want to pick up people with luggage? I pointed out that it was a safety matter. As cabs no longer have a restraining strap, the luggage has to be held when going round corners. John Mason said he would look into it and get back to me, but I haven't heard from him yet.

So to the reason for this letter; on the rank at Eurostar over Xmas I was in third position with the two cabs in front of me having a debate as to why the point cab wasn't picking up a group of passengers. It seems he didn't have enough room in the front of his Fairway due to carrying personal possessions in there. The group leader was taking pictures of both cabs with a view to reporting them. So if we are not obliged, then the first cab was within his rights to carry personal stuff. On the other hand, if we are obliged then the second driver was right to say he should have the space to carry out his commitment. So can John please answer a formerly hypothetical question that has now become a reality...

John Dixon (B67)

**John Mason responds:** When it comes to luggage, the starting point for all drivers is that they have a legal obligation to 'carry a reasonable quantity of luggage for each person' – although I would accept what is 'reasonable' is open to interpretation.

The London Taxi Conditions of Fitness

stipulate that 'Suitable dedicated provision for the secure carriage of luggage must be made, separated from the passenger compartment and proportionate in size to the number of passengers carried'. Therefore, if the vehicle is licensed then it stands to reason that the luggage area can provide secure carriage. The restraining strap hasn't been a requirement for as long as my team can remember and it is the driver's responsibility to make sure that any luggage is carried safely – if he's having to hang on to it as he goes round a corner then it looks like he hasn't loaded it safely. This doesn't stop luggage being carried in the passenger compartment either.

Finally, the luggage compartment is for carrying luggage and should be kept clear at all times – we've had to tell drivers off for carrying all sorts, including pet dogs, in this area!

## No more bendies!

What wonderful news that there are now no more bendy buses operating in London (*January Call Sign*). I hadn't heard that they were ending their lives on our congested streets and no other trade paper mentioned it. It is great news and you can see the difference already.

Sid Nathan (K88)

## Questions, questions and (more) questions!

Sorry you guys and girls, but felt I had to write another letter to *Call Sign*. I have so many questions that I hope the Board can answer. Perhaps some of our members might respond to my questions and attempt answers.

*First question:* Why is there talk in *Call Sign* of DaC going PLC again, saying this will help us expand? Why do we have to go PLC to expand? Unless I'm going to see the best part of twenty grand, then forget it. If I remember rightly, when the recession first began Brian stated that we had a war chest of over £5million, so why can't we spend that? I'm guessing the money raised from going PLC would be spent on purchasing a PH company, how much would that cost and what other benefits would going PLC give us?

*Second question:* Why in the second week of December was I suddenly being told to cover this trip and that trip when the *Bid* zone was empty? Was a big account lost in December and was that customer Lewis Day? If it's taking a long

time for us to cover work in certain busy zones, why aren't we using more ranks such as EC11? With 30 or more cabs in some zones, it must take a long time for a trip to pass through before a taxi within a short distance of the job address is found. With more *ranks within ranks* the time taken for a trip to be offered to a close cab must be quicker. Before the bad times arrived, EC5 could be disbanded allowing drivers to book into their closest zone. The flip side to that, EC work is no longer offered to back-up zones outside of the city. Surely there is no need for that anymore, it might help with coverage to offer work to zones outside of the city. Talking of dispatching, why is it ok for a message to say 'Trip to LAP fires out in SW19 in 3 minutes when there is a cab booked in to SW18? We are inviting drivers to book in when not there, yet you can't book into EC5 when not quite there?

Recently after the New Year, I worked for 2 days and don't think I was offered 5 trips, yet I need to cover 5 trips to have any chance of a trip home? Surely this needs to change? Today I got lucky with a long trip, the booking fee and handling charge came to over £21! But still I can't have a chance of a fare home because I haven't accepted or been offered 5 trips.

*Third question:* When will the Board enforce a simple dress code, surely no sleeveless or collarless tops? It won't be long before shorts and beachwear are back?

*Fourth question:* Some drivers have written into *Call Sign* asking if we should give up our gratuities. I say no. After all 80p on a minimum isn't going to make us much cheaper. How about we give up everything on certain trips? Trips to and from outer London postcodes ie E50S or S50C and all airports to have no run-ins, no gratuities, no waiting time premium, no handling fee and no booking charges – which also means no VAT for customers to pay either. That's a real saving. But this is the type of trip we are losing to private hire; we need to win it back or it's a lifetime of locals. Can someone on the BoM estimate how much this would cost DaC?

*Fifth question* (not many more to go now): Some drivers have expressed concern over the £2 booking fee for cash rides. As the Chairman explained recently, this would be difficult to give up because of our commitment to the Mayor's 'one number' scheme. So can we not start a cash club? Customers join our Club paying a registration fee of £25 or £50 for a year and giving theirs and maybe a partner's contact details and their credit card will





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then be registered. Even companies could join paying a bigger fee if they have lots of staff and maybe we could offer fixed prices on longer journeys. No more scrubs because the wrong contact number was put on the booking form. We give them an ex-directory phone number and no booking fee. Drivers could have a small scrub of perhaps £4 taken from the registration fee and a number 1 queue position if cancelled - some incentive to cover cash trips. Of course 'one number' and occasional riders could still be charged the booking fee.

*Sixth question:* I would like to see a rule change saying that new members must attend their first AGM. This may help newer members see how some of us care, even help them feel they belong and aspire them to fetch their own ideas forward. If you want to help me with this Rule change, please let me know.

*Seventh and last one:* What would the BoM and you drivers want as a long-term business plan for DaC? Putting our heads in the sand and waiting for this recession to end is not a plan. I hope I've got you thinking. All I want is to be offered more radio trips please...

Jon Robinson (E88)

Jon, as the original Editorial made clear, the subject was put in as a discussion item and was nothing to do with the BoM or any upcoming policy change. It also spoke of buying another taxi company to double our numbers before mentioning anything about a PH company purchase. Under our system we can't do that, we can only be taken over ...Ed

*Keith Cain responds to the rest of Jon's letter...*

Jon talks a lot about changing the way we dispatch work to improve coverage. I am sorry to say the only reason why we have coverage problems in any zone is because drivers reject trips. Putting in more ranks will not encourage drivers to accept trips they just don't want. Neither would adding additional zones to the EC areas. Why would a driver in a back-up zone to the city accept a trip that does not go very far, because these are the only trips that would reach these zones? All the rest, the longer trips, will be snapped up.

It also does not matter if trips are with a destination or as directed, drivers will not accept them if they don't want them.

Those type of messages which inform drivers when trips will fire out, are not sent to encourage drivers to book in incorrectly, they are sent to encourage drivers who are physically in that zone but are booked into other zones where they are nowhere near, to book in correctly.

I have written about admin charges before and I said then, if we did not charge any admin we could increase work. But, the loss of charges would have to be made up from somewhere else. Subscription charges is the only other income we have and it would be the subs that would have to increase to meet the running costs of the Society. They could increase to double what they are now. Even if we did not charge an admin on the longer trips, which give us a high return, we would still have to look at the driver to pick up the shortfall or recover the difference by undertaking more minimum price trips.

As for Jon's suggestion of a cash club, it would be interesting for Jon to survey his passengers to see if they would sign up to something like this. He states that bigger companies could join paying a bigger fee if they have lots of staff. Sorry Jon, but I thought the exercise here was to reduce the customers costs. Or, have I missed something.

Jon mentions that he would like to see some rule changes made. As a member he has every right to put those rule changes. Just follow the requirement stated in the rule book and good luck with them...

## ECO training

My thanks to *Call Sign* for organising the free ECO training lessons. It was a very well spent 90 minutes and something I have already found to be useful.

Jon Trevor (W94)

Pleased you liked it Jon. I believe there are still a few freebies left but once they have gone then the training course will have to be paid for, so get in quick. Details inside this issue ...Ed

## Found him!

Hi Alan

I wonder if you could help me, I am looking for a John Addis who I used to work with in the 1960s-70s at John Swains printers of Shoe Lane London. I noticed that there are two John Addis, one call sign N26, the other K97 that have written replies about various articles in your magazine. If either one is the one I am looking for, would it be possible for you to contact him with my email address? I would really appreciate it if you could. It would be good to know how life has been for him after all these years.

Thank you...

David Warren

First time lucky; it was N26 and his email has been passed across. Nice to be able to help ...Ed



## Competition winner

Hi Alan

I would just like to say how thrilled I was to have won the Christmas competition in *Call Sign*. The £500 came in very handy so close to Christmas.

Jackie Franklin

DaC Contact Centre

## Taxi stories?

Dear Sir

I am contacting you to ask if your drivers would be interested in assisting a project to create a book about London cab drivers' experiences of London. **Stacey Publishing** are looking for anecdotes from drivers either about bizarre or amusing journeys they may have had, people they have met, or an impression or insight into London from a cab driver's perspective. The nature of the book would be a compilation of short tales or scenes, produced in collaboration with an illustrator to amuse readers with an insight into the role of a London cab driver. The black cab is an iconic feature on the London landscape and it would be lovely to produce a book from the drivers' viewpoint of London.

Is there a way that Dial-a-Cab drivers could be told about this project so that they could send their stories in? It would be wonderful to have their support in this project! They can contact me on [cottia.staceyinternational@gmail.com](mailto:cottia.staceyinternational@gmail.com).

Many thanks...

Cottia Thorowgood, London W8

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