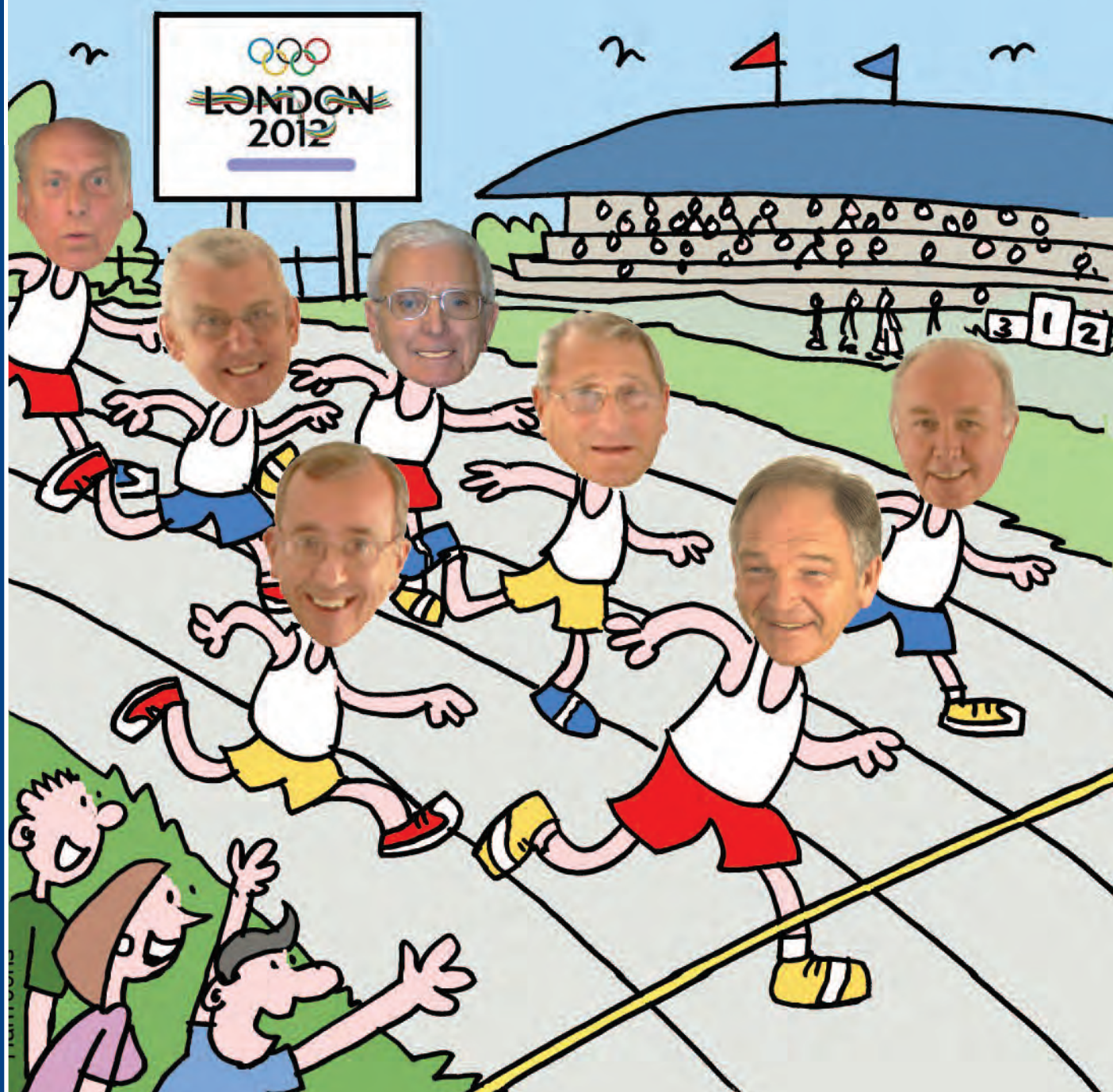


Janaury 2012

Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

*It's London, it's 2012 and
DaC is ready for the Olympics!*





NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Happy New Year! The new Eurostar timetable came into force in December with the table (below) valid until 7th July 2012. St Pancras will then be ultra-busy from 27th July when the Olympics begin and the Javelin bullet train runs to Stratford in 7 minutes!

Arrival	From	Train#	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Notes
07:57	Brussels	9109	✓	✓	✓					
08:00	Paris	9005	✓							
08:30	Paris	9007	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
08:57	Brussels	9113	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
09:00	Paris	9009	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
09:39	Paris	9011						✓	✓	
09:57	Brussels	9117	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10:00	Paris	9013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
10:36	Paris	9013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11:30	Paris	9019						✓		
11:30	Paris	9019							✓	1
11:39	Paris	9019	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
11:57	Brussels	9125	✓	✓						4
11:57	Brussels	9125			✓	✓	✓			5
11:57	Brussels	9125						✓		
12:30	Paris	9023	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13:30	Paris	9027	✓				✓		✓	
13:30	Paris	9027		✓	✓	✓				1
14:03	Brussels	9133	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
14:36	Paris	9031	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15:30	Paris	9035						✓	✓	
16:00	Paris	9037					✓			
16:03	Brussels	9141	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16:39	Paris	9039	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16:57	Brussels	9145							✓	
17:03	Brussels	9145				✓	✓			
17:36	Paris	9043	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18:00	Paris	9045							✓	
18:12	Brussels	9149	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18:30	Paris	9047	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
18:36	Paris	9047							✓	
19:00	Paris	9049					✓			
19:00	Paris	9049		✓	✓	✓				1
19:05	Brussels	9153	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
19:30	Paris	9051							✓	
19:36	Paris	9051	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
19:57	Brussels	9157	✓	✓						5
19:57	Brussels	9157			✓	✓	✓			4
19:57	Brussels	9157							✓	
20:00	Paris	9053							✓	
20:36	Paris	9055	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2
20:41	Paris	9055	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3
21:03	Brussels	9161	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
21:39	Paris	9059	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
22:00	Paris	9061							✓	
22:30	Paris	9063							✓	
22:36	Paris	9063	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

Note 1 does NOT run between 3/1/12 to 5/2/12. Note 2 runs until 5/2/12. Note 3 runs from 6/2/12.

Note 4 does NOT run between 3/1/12 to 15/2/12. Note 5 does NOT run between 3/1/12 and 31/3/12

Don't forget www.nasbsnumbers.co.uk for all back issues and www.myfav.co.uk for the 70 page UID and January's 'What's On'. Just register at www.myfav.co.uk using the unlock code of 'taxi'. MyFav is a great home page and you can win £100 just by recommending it, very handy in the kipper season!

from the editor's desk

Welcome to 2012

Ok, if everything goes to plan – and knowing the post office at holiday time when even the best laid ones often go astray – then it's not quite 2012 yet and you are just getting over Christmas! In fact, for some it may only be Christmas Eve. However, at worst you will be just days away from the year that sees London host the Olympic Games and that hopefully means the millions (and millions!) of people who will be thinking of travelling to our city to watch it – and hopefully use our taxis!

Call Sign has been writing about the London Olympics since 2005 when then-Mayor Ken Livingstone organised a *Back the Bid* parade to try to win the Games. The Beijing Games were still over two years into the future, but the London parade saw thousands of spectators turning out to congratulate our medallists from the Athens Games, many of them riding in London taxis. The parade gave the capital an opportunity to show that London really wanted the 2012 Games. One year later, it became reality and now we're just months away from the biggest sporting spectacle in the world and whether you wanted it or not is now irrelevant.

The chances of us getting use of the *Olympic Route Network* is somewhere between 0 and 0.0005% but whatever happens, the London taxi trade owes our great city the respect it deserves and that means showing why we are the best in the world.

If a demo against the *International Olympic Committee* between now and July helps our ORN cause in any way, then ok – but we must not threaten to disrupt the Games themselves because the world will be watching and we will be in the shop window. Ok, it won't do any harm for us to keep our fingers crossed that traffic conditions don't get any worse than horrendous, because we've shown many times that we can cope with a small problem like that. Oh... and good luck!

Addy Lee and demutualisation?

As we said in the last issue, **Addison Lee's** acquisition of the Lewis Day minicab department left a few shock waves out there and sent *Call Sign's* phone into meltdown mode. I was somewhat taken back by the nature of some of the calls – the most popular suggestion being that we should start our own minicab section. That isn't a road I have ever wanted to go down and I'm not sure that I do now. But I do sometimes wonder what would have happened had we taken the advice that Brian Rice put forward on behalf of the Board in 1997 – that was for this Society to demutualise.

I was very much on the fence in those days, seeing both advantages and what I perceived as being disadvantages – drivers losing control being the main one. It was a number of years later when it hit me that Dial-a-Cab drivers have as much control over this Society as I have over Spurs with my one share. And that amounts to zilch.

We make no decisions, we put no money in, we do nothing to run the circuit and on the one day when we have a chance to have our say – the AGM – we're lucky if 80 people turn up! So would it have made a difference had the demutualisation vote in 1997 gone through? Well we'll never know because it didn't, but I have to assume that had it done so, we would have been very different to what we are now and almost certainly much bigger.

I was surprised when mentioning those views in conversation to the drivers phoning me, that only two were vehemently against even talking about it.



Both, it turned out, had been on Radio Taxis when they demutualised and had owned the shares that they were told would provide them with a "nest egg." As one of the drivers so eloquently added: "The money the shares were worth wouldn't have paid enough to line that nest with some old leaves!"

Well, that was one way of looking at it! Several drivers also pointed to the disastrous Northern Rock fiasco following their demutualisation, but the majority inferred that although it wasn't something they would have chosen, our options without it were nil. We could never compete against companies such as Addy Lee because we couldn't really grow in the sense of possibly taking over or even merging with another successful company.

However, unless there has been a dramatic change of mind, then following the failure of the 1997 vote – which gained a 53 – 47% majority but needed 75% – the Chairman announced that the Board would not propose it again in its lifetime, although he did add that he would always inform the membership if a bidder came in for DaC, such as happened several years later. If such a suggestion did come about, I believe it would have to come from the floor.

My view? Well demutualisation isn't a mark of guaranteed success but it would give this Society a chance to expand and a circuit boasting some 4500 taxis would certainly make itself more attractive to clients. That, of course, would do nothing so far as private hire's two biggest advantages are concerned – they are cheaper and have drivers who do what they are told. We will never be cheaper and most certainly not do what we are told unless it suits us!

That brings me onto something that happened soon after the last issue came out. I don't know who the driver was but I hope that he had a reason for the way he behaved.

DaC recently opened an account with a large company in Bunhill Row. I don't get told how these things work but I happen to know that Brian Rice personally went there twice to sell our services, taking with him John Banks from our IT department to show how technologically advanced we are. Soon after the account opened, I was speaking to the guy who orders the taxis and he told me they already had two complaints. One driver was rude to the staff when they asked him for an extension number whilst a second driver refused to take a job to EC2 because the passenger had to change it from the original W1 destination. Yep, I'd have felt a bit miffed at 6pm when business is hardly boom-

ing and I had already waited 15 minutes for this passenger to come out. But would I have said anything? Of course not! I'd have smiled and said thank you as he got out – probably I'm sure, like most of our drivers. Would demutualisation stop that? Probably not, but it may be the way we have to go although I should add that I'm not afraid of Addison Lee's march. As one driver points out in Mailshot, if they took over every minicab company it would mean there were just four circuits and numerically, it would put taxi radio circuits back in front! Could I also add that this view is purely mine and no one has put me up to it – including members of the DaC Board.

I am also republishing an article in this issue from 1997, where the late **Cecil Selwyn** gave some clues as to what demutualisation meant then. Fifteen years on and his words are still pertinent. Cecil went on to become a Board member and sadly died in 2003. ...

Blackfriars and the City Corp?

A Dial-a-Cab driver contacted me in October to ask if I knew when the new Blackfriars Station would open and whether the no left turn into Queen Victoria Street from New Bridge Street would be lifted? Well I didn't know but I thought I'd ask someone. It shouldn't really be a problem. Big mistake! I began with *Transport for London* who in all fairness came back in under a week, thanked me for my interest and informed me that the situation was being operated by *Network Rail*. So I contacted NR. They emailed me immediately thanking me for my interest and said they'd get an answer "within 10 days". A fortnight went by and after numerous emails and phone calls – where if you hung on for less than fifteen minutes then you'd had a result – they finally came back and said that my query came under the remit of the *City of London*!

But then a Network Rail spokesperson came back to me to say he had good news! Well I was ripe for that as I was already beginning to regret saying I'd get the answer to the driver's query!

"The City of London is responsible for the taxis in this area," he said, "and so this is a question that they should answer. However, I have a meeting with them today and will ask them about your query!"

That represented some progress – until an email from Network Rail arrived saying that the meeting did not go ahead and I would have to contact them myself! Easy come, easy go...

So I contacted Tony Halmos at the City of London. After an email promising me an answer "within 10 days" and following some three weeks of waiting, I just gave up. So no, Bernie, I don't know what's happening and if you so much as mention it again, I may well scream!

But I wish you all a really happy and healthy 2012 – excluding TfL, NR and CoL...!

Get well Edna...

In this issue, Mike Son writes of the sad closing of the Jack Taylor School in NW8. Jack was a former DaC and LTFUC Chairman and someone who the word 'character' was designed for. Now I hear that his wife Edna had a fall in the street recently and broke her hip. She is now home again after almost 6 weeks in hospital. From everyone at DaC, best wishes for a complete recovery, Edna...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

New Year

Quite amazing! I'm sitting here typing this report ten days before Christmas - 13th December to be precise - because the Editor keeps putting pressure on me to complete an article as the printers will be closed during the Christmas period. He wants to have the magazine produced before Christmas so that it's ready printed to post on December 23rd for you to read before January. Consequently, it appears to me that I have just finished my last report and I am now endeavouring to find something to write about for January! Perhaps there is a case for not having a *Call Sign* in January due to the Christmas holidays? Probably more pressure now from the Editor! (Ed's note: At least you can now enjoy some time off to explain to your two gorgeous grandchildren how misunderstood Scrooge was! Me? I've got to also fill another 35 pages!)

Chip and Pin... and Edinburgh!

I recently went to the producers of our Pin Entry Device (PED), *Ingenico*, together with our Director of IT **John Bankes**. He is now happy the system is working well, so we went to Edinburgh to have a look at their premises and finalise details of the purchase. It all went very well.

Whilst in Edinburgh we used four taxis and as most of you probably know, they only use 'purpose built' vehicles in the Scottish capital. One of the taxis we hired was a four week old *Vito* that the driver told me had been purchased from KPM. It so happened that the taxi was on radio, in fact one of the *ComCab* fleet operating in Edinburgh. However, what did surprise me was the monthly subscription the driver told me he paid - and that was £410 per month!

The driver also told us that there were two other taxi radio circuits in Edinburgh, both of which were co-operatives similar to Dial-a-Cab. He explained that one of the companies was called *Central* and on joining it, the driver has to purchase a share - much as we purchase our £50 share. However, the difference is that to join *Central*, it actually costs the driver £7000!

I have to assume that the above information is correct, after all, I was told it by a taxi driver...!

Richard's Call Sign article...

Elsewhere in the magazine you will find a letter from **Richard Barford (R39)** called *My views on DaC*. The Editor sent me the letter to see whether I wanted to respond. Richard's name rang a bell but I just wasn't sure where I knew it from. But on further investigation, it would appear that Richard was the lucky member who won the new TXII *Gold* taxi in the Christmas 2005 incentive scheme. It is always a good sign if a member's name and call sign do not readily come to my mind - it just proves I



do not have a particular reason to remember it!

However, I do remember Richard as a polite, articulate young man as his letter shows. I also noted after looking at our records that he seems to have parted company with the *Gold* cab he won and has now invested in a newer model. I hope the cab you won served you well, Richard.

Getting back to his letter, which I believe the Editor has published as an article in its own right, there is not much I have to disagree with. However I'd like to clear up one or two small points.

Regarding the cash booking fee of £2; as you are no doubt aware it is part of the tariff and charged by all three of the radio circuits for continuity. One of the reasons is that all three are part of the *One number* programme and it would be quite confusing for customers if some circuits charged the fee and others didn't. As you are aware, £1.50 of that fee goes to Dial-a-Cab and if we were to forfeit that income, there would have to be a small increase in subscriptions to accommodate the shortfall. Also, the other two circuits would have to conform with us or we would have to leave the *One number* scheme. Incidentally, when a customer telephones *One number*, the call is distributed to one of the three radio circuits on a round robin basis.

This now brings me onto Richard's point regarding waiting time and gratuities; I personally agree with him on both points. If a client is looking for a reduction in his taxi charges, the first thing I look at is the waiting time and if he is paying extra waiting time then I will scrap that charge immediately. Secondly, I am a firm believer in paying gratuities. However, if a client is looking for a reduction, I believe there is scope to 'cap' the gratuity in certain instances and I know most members will understand that.

Finally, regarding the 'Applications' (Apps); over 98% of the work we do is account work for our credit customers and it appears this is what most members wish to do. To have an App for these customers, when some clients require up to eight reference questions would be quite a formidable task and very difficult to implement. It does sometimes seem to appear that many believe an App is the answer to all our problems. Yes, it may help with credit card bookings and if you wish to take the chance,

with cash work too. But it will not re-invent the cab trade as some would have us believe.

At the moment it is not our priority as we are installing chip and pin and contactless, producing the software and testing new terminals, installing a new in-house designed accounting system and also producing our own e-billing to clients, thereby eliminating a third party. We have plenty on our immediate agenda, however I believe our Director of IT will be producing an article on this very topic in the not too distant future.

Finally Richard, whatever way we dress it up we will always find it difficult to compete with the likes of Addison Lee for two major reasons. Firstly the minicab driver is prepared to work for a lesser amount of money than a taxi driver - and so he should as he has not had the training of a taxi driver and becomes the cheaper option. Secondly - and probably the most important of the two - taxi drivers have a choice while a minicab driver does not and just does as he is told. I am not advocating the BoM should become despots, but whilst the above prevails it is difficult to compete against a workforce that does exactly as they are instructed to do whilst we in the taxi trade do exactly as we wish and will not take instructions from anyone if it does not suit us.

A rather depressing point to end the year on, but we can hope that as 2012 kicks in with all the excitement it looks like producing, things may well improve. Let's hope so and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a happy and healthy year ahead...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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Free Eco Driving Lessons

Last July, *Call Sign* was invited to participate in an **Eco-Driving** instruction course which LTPH say may become part of the driving test requirement for new taxi-drivers in the not too distant future. The course was operated via the **Energy Saving Trust** and TfL and was 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.

At the time of Call Sign's lesson, Energy Saving Trust had trained over 20,000 drivers from over 500 organisations – and now, courtesy of Transport for London and the Department for Transport in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust, it's the turn of the London taxi driver!

The free course will only be offered to the first 200 drivers applying, it lasts 90 minutes and all lessons will take place between January 12 and 26 March. They will begin from The London Taxi Company's (former M&O) London dealership at Brewery Road and take place in a TX4 specially fitted with the computers needed to measure the before and after fuel usage readings. And they will



Computers measure your fuel saving

be totally free to the first 200 drivers. There are no strings attached.

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, we had to use a Viano as no taxis had the correct computers fitted, but now thanks to the London Taxi Company kind offer the lessons are in a TX4. However, whichever vehicle is used the driving is the

same and on his two runs our reporter averaged 21.2mpg on the first one and after being shown how he had "wasted" fuel, he went out on the same run and averaged 28.2! The saving was close to 30 percent!

No one earns anything out of this offer. TfL and the DfT together with the Energy Saving Trust plus the kind offer from the London Taxi Company to provide the cab are doing it to help the trade at a time when fuel prices are horrendous. But it will only be for the first 200 drivers who apply!

Interested? Then email smarterdriving@est.org.uk and put taxi lessons in the subject space with your name in the main writing area. You will be contacted as soon as possible. If you want to read about smarter driving, go to:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/england/Transport/Business/Fleet-consultancy-and-certification/Smarter-Driving

*For those interested but who are not online, send your contact details (name, callsign and contact phone number) to **Call Sign** and we will apply on your behalf. There is also a direct link at the Nash's Numbers website. Go to: www.nashsnumbers.co.uk*

The Retail Motor Industry represents the interests of operators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland providing sales and services to motorists and businesses...

NO FUEL DUTY RISE WAS RIGHT DECISION

RMI Petrol Chairman, **Brian Madderson**, has told *Call Sign* that the Chancellor's decision in his Autumn statement to cancel the fuel duty increase planned for 1 January was the right one.

He claimed that the increase would have raised prices at the pump by 4p per litre within days and that based on current average UK pricing, this would have pushed diesel to a new record high of over 145p per litre. Mr Madderson added that even with this standstill, the UK still levied the highest duty on diesel in the European Union.

"Duty needs to be cut by 26p per litre to achieve parity with average diesel rates across the EU," he said.

"Foreign HGV's and other diesel powered vehicles are still entering the UK with full tanks up to 1500 litre capacity. RMI Petrol estimates this duty disparity loses HM Treasury at least £1.2bn a year in fuel tax as well as continuing to threaten our small/medium size hauliers. This needs to be urgently addressed by the Government because fuel tax unfairly penalises the low income earners, single families and rural communities that often have poor public transport alternatives. Mr Madderson ended by saying that RMI Petrol would continue to lobby Government and their officials to defer the duty increase still planned for 1 August next year.



Brian Madderson

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.

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



Enjoy yourselves lads; you can have what you like - it's election year!

"WHO HACKED BOB CROW'S PHONE?"



The **RMT** union, which claims taxi drivers as members, has written to lawyers for **News International** demanding to know which journalists were involved in instructing an undercover surveillance operation against RMT General Secretary **Bob Crow**. The RMT is calling for a full disclosure of information relating to the News International surveillance and to any blagging and hacking operation against the union and its General Secretary, whose name was said to have been among those on the operative's surveillance list.

In evidence to the **Leveson Inquiry**, the RMT have outlined details of a long and sustained campaign against the union by News International titles and the *Mail on Sunday* dating back to 2002.

These are said to include the illegal sourcing of data on the union and its officials from the DVLA and Police National Computer by an investigator, who was then alleged to have sold the information to the *Mail on Sunday*. Also alleged is the trawling of bins by News International operatives at the union's national conference last year, currently subject to police investigations.

A union spokesperson said: "RMT lawyers have written to News International's lawyers demanding information on the surveillance operation mounted against the union and asking for the names of those involved. RMT has also submitted a full dossier of information to the Leveson Inquiry dating back almost a decade and we expect to be called to give further evidence in the near future."

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Mark Sherlock (W41) has been on **Dial-a-Cab** for around 8 years and up until November 2011, had kept his upper lip clear of anything remotely looking like a moustache - especially after his one brief attempt caused his wife **Tina** to compare him to a walrus! So why has he now grown something under his nose that resembles a sleeping caterpillar and become a member of the strangely-named **Mo Bros**? Mark explained to **Call Sign** the reason and good cause that is benefitting from his sudden follicle expansion...

"The reason is *Movember*. During November each year, *Movember* is responsible for the sprouting of moustaches on thousands of faces in the UK and around the world. The aim of the sudden growth on upper lips is to raise vital funds while creating awareness for men's health - specifically prostate cancer and other cancers that affect men.

I first noticed a pal of mine sporting a moustache this time last year and enquired why? He explained that it was for charity. You shave on 31st October and then spend November fashioning the best moustache that you can.

So I made a mental note to do it this year and when the time came, like a fool I refused to chicken out! Friends have given me no end of abuse and the good lady wife can't look at me without breaking out into fits of laughter - at least there's no change there! But the ends justify the means and hopefully I aimed for £300 by the end of November.

I have been sponsored by friends, family and cab drivers including many on DaC. Even **Call Sign** and **Brian Rice** have contributed. So a big thank you to everyone who put their hands in

Mark's Movember 'Tache!



Mark before and after becoming one of the Mo Bros!

their pockets to help and added to sponsorship from friends and family, I managed to raise a total of £353 for the charity. I shaved the 'tache off at 12.01am on 1st December and by the time you read this I will be looking like my normal self again...shut it!












So will I do it again next year? No, never ever

again will you see me with a moustache! The general mockery and pitying glances from complete strangers, in addition to the awful itching won't be missed in the slightest! Not one bit! Well I don't think so."

Mark Sherlock (W41)

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On the night of 7 November 2010 - around 14 months ago - *Call Sign* asked 132 drivers the same question: If trading conditions remain as they are, do you expect to work over the four-week period covering the 2012 London Olympic Games?

Out of the 132 drivers, 103 said that they would be working, leaving just 29 who said they wouldn't. If we were to retake that survey, we suspect that percentage-wise the numbers would be similar.

So this time we have asked a much smaller number if they intend working and what they thought of the idea of the meter staying on **Rate 2** for the period?

Whilst some were blaming the LTDA for asking at a Games trade meeting, *Call Sign* understands that the Rate 2 suggestion was made in response to a TfL question asking what would make London taxi drivers work throughout the Olympics? With no ideas coming in, the LTDA suggested that a higher rate meter would probably help but were not attempting to force the idea through. The problem then occurred when someone went to the *Evening Standard* with the "story" of greedy drivers. What that did wasn't to the detriment of the LTDA, but to this trade as a whole. Who told the press? We can only guess, but it is now irrelevant because the 'greedy cabbies' slur has stuck having been picked up by news agencies around the world. *Call Sign* responded to newspapers from the USA to India to New Zealand with the CBC network in Canada even asking us whether London Taxidriver could ever "recover from this slur!"

So we picked eight Dial-a-Cab drivers from our photo library and phoned them to ask whether they intended working and would they want to have Rate 2 throughout the Games tenure?

Colin Jenkins (Y22):

"Yes, I'll probably work through what will undoubtedly be horrendous traffic conditions, but do I want Rate 2 to be there all day? No, no, no! The negative publicity would take this trade back years and the greedy slur will become a millstone around our necks!"



Bernie Silver (G08):

"I'm not sure about working, but if the Olympic committees want to do something useful, then they should ban cars from central London during the Games unless they have a legitimate reason for being there. Rate 2? You must be joking! Many consider us to be too expensive as it is!"



Call Sign Survey

THE OLYMPICS AND RATE 2

John Connor (Y11):

"I won't be working during the Olympics because the traffic will kill business and the hassle we get from passengers in a hurry to get to watch their event that has probably cost them a fortune, will be manic. Rate 2 certainly wouldn't make me work as the idea of passengers watching the meter shoot up in those traffic conditions is just awful. **Dial-a-Cab** would take so much flack that it would take years to recover."



Dean Suett (V44):

"I will test the water by working for the first week or so, but if traffic conditions become unbearable, I may just stop and wait for the Games to finish. I certainly don't want to do that because it will cost us such a lot financially, but if the conditions are as bad as I think they will be, then it just won't be worth it, Rate 2? You're having a laugh! No one will be able to afford it with fares costing far more than the tickets!"



Len Ahearn (T62):

"I'll definitely be working throughout the Olympics as it should be busy. However, the traffic conditions will be horrendous. As for Rate 2, I think that is a terrible idea - especially when the Paralympics take over. Some of the passengers at that time will have no choice but to use taxis and if we are not allowed to use the Olympic Route Network, then fare prices will be horrendous. We don't need publicity like that..."



Ray Sorene (A53):

"I won't be working during the Games as I'm not sure how my health will be and I currently have some issues that need to



be sorted out. But if I had been working I would be totally against the suggestion of putting our fares up when the eyes of the world are on us. The term 'greedy' would certainly fit well and the resulting publicity would kill the name we have spent 350 years in building up!"

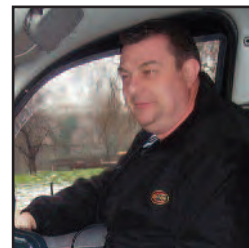
Richard Bond (P03):

"I'll definitely be working during the Olympics as it will be busy and I still have to pay the mortgage! But I'm really disappointed that the ORN lanes won't be open to us. Had they allowed us in and we could skate round, then an increase wouldn't have been too terrible, but as they aren't then fares will be horrendously high and quite honestly Rate 2 would become an embarrassment."



Rob James (O45):

"I will definitely give it a go, but I'm sad that we aren't considered important enough to be allowed access into the ORN lanes - which will probably be under-used anyway. I don't think Rate 2 is a good idea at all, it will create ridiculously high fares that some won't even be able to afford."



Call Sign can say in reasonable safety that our survey shows a large majority of London taxi drivers would be against the introduction of Rate 2 throughout the 2012 London Olympics...

Call Sign January 2012

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Dial-a-Cab driver **Gerry Dunn MBE (S84)** will always be intrinsically involved with the London taxi business - not just as a driver or long term committee member of the *London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children*, but also through his parents **Millie and Lou**, who were married for 68 happy years. Now Millie will reach the magical age of 100 on January 27.

"She still looks remarkably well," Gerry told *Call Sign*, "she still lives at home and enjoys life. There is never a shortage of visitors."

Both Millie and Lou were special guests at the DaC fiftieth anniversary ball held in 2003. Sadly, Lou died soon afterwards, leaving Chairman **Brian Rice** to wonder aloud to *Call Sign* exactly where DaC would have been without people like **Lou Dunn** in our past.

Millie may have stayed in the background in 1952, but Lou told *Call Sign* during a visit to Brunswick House - at the age of 93 - in January 2003 that he couldn't have done what he did without her constantly supporting him in his efforts to put radios into taxis. What was it he did? Well it is quite feasible that without Lou Dunn, Dial-a-Cab may not even have existed.

It was 1952 and in order to get on to the radio, you had to be a fleet driver with either **York Way Motors** or the **London General Cab Company**, both of whom ran their own radio circuits. There was no such thing as an owner-driver's circuit - with ODRTS still a year away. So several drivers got together and the **Radio Owner Drivers Association** was born.

GERRY'S MUM IS 100



Gerry and mum

Both Lou and Millie were always full of fun and during Lou's DaC visit he decided to leave the then 91 year old Millie at home. As the Chairman showed Lou around, Brian asked where Millie was?

Known as RODA, word got around quickly and it soon had enough drivers to operate. Sadly, problems - mainly financial - beset it and it folded in the face of the new oncoming ODRTS. However, it was the RODA lead that **Bonnie Martyn** used as an example when the following year he began the process of founding our company. Bonnie often said that had the RODA committee all been as honest and straightforward as Lou Dunn, there may not have been a need for a new owner-driver's circuit.

"Someone has to do the cleaning," Lou replied with a smile, "besides," he added, "Millie wouldn't understand your amazing computerisation, it is just so amazing... as are many of your female operatives!"

He said it with a twinkle in his eye and all the young ladies he had admired gave the 93-year old a friendly wave! Now he is undoubtedly looking down on Millie with that same twinkle in his eye! So a very happy birthday to Millie Dunn from all at **Dial-a-Cab** and our grateful thanks to you and Lou...

Bye, bye bendies!



Bendy catches fire!

With just a few sad goodbyes, the last bendy bus made its way back into the garage on the evening of Friday 9 December, fulfilling one of Mayor Boris Johnson's promises to rid London of the lengthy red beasts.

The only disappointed comments came from disability groups who had praised the buses ease of boarding. Most drivers hated them - especially when they travelled in groups of three or four, making them virtually impossible to pass.

Over the years, several of the buses caught fire - the latest being in September outside Victoria Station. A campaign to have them taken off the road due to their poor safety record failed - until that Friday when the last one vanished!

Transport for London claim that taking the bendy buses off the road will save them over £7million in lost fares with some passengers "escaping" before paying.

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Bill and Grace Tyzack

The Holiday Inn London Kensington Forum recently saw the 39th annual **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity's** dinner and dance, with all funds collected being equally shared by the trade's charities. They are the London Taxidrivers Fund for Underprivileged Children, East London Cabbies Outing, the London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled, the Albany and the Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children. All received a four-figure sum for their respective charities.

Guest of honour was **Helen Chapman**, Deputy Director of TfL's Taxi and Private Hire Office and with *Call Sign* watching, we couldn't help but notice that she was a constant visitor to the dance floor – even grabbing one dance with DaC's Chairman! But with an excellent Christmas dinner and dancing to **Fraternity**, it would have been difficult for guests not to enjoy themselves - with laughter and a full dance floor seeming to suggest that aim was achieved!

Russell Poluck MBE (T55), Honorary Chairman of the TDOY Charity Fund and his wife **Barbara** work really hard every year to organise this event and it was good to see that Russell seems to have fully recovered from his heart by-pass operation of last year. With next year marking the Charity's 40th anniversary, the next 12 months will fly by and demand for tickets will be hot. So look out for the announcement of them going on sale!

There were a number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers there including the always irrepressible duo of **Bill Tyzack (C06)** and wife **Grace**. Last September saw Bill celebrate 50 years on DaC and of course he was also there in his official position with the charity! As always, DaC took a table with places taken by **Brian Rice**, **Allan Evans**, **Mike Son**, **Shelagh Adkins** and partners. Editor **Alan Fisher**, his wife **Linda** and trusty camera **Bertrand McGee Number 3** were also there. Sadly, no other circuits were represented again but the unanimous verdict by those there was to bring on next year! If you weren't there but purchased a raffle ticket, the winners were:

1st: A 4 day Europe trip – **Martin (JJ Autoteck)**; 2nd: Overnight stay at the **Connaught Hotel** – **Dave (London Airport)**; 3rd: iPod 'touch' – **Mr Hutch**; 4th: Food Processor – **Lyn Brown**; 5th: Overnight stay at **The Berkley Hotel (Ray Ali)**; 6th: Hostess Tray – **Lyn Brown**; 7th: Water Feature – **Mr Cash**; 8th: Coffee maker – **Ian (South Holmwood)**; 9th: £50 **Ocado** voucher – **Derek Casey**...

TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR

Dinner and Dance



Brian Rice has a twirl with Helen Chapman

DaC's John Dixon (B67) and lady friend Jean1



Russell Poluck (R) presents the cheques



Gill Evans doesn't look worried that hubby Allan will put her on complaint



The first Christchurch earthquake (September 2010) had a magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter scale and caused much structural damage to the centre of the city. Then in February 2011, a second quake hit the Canterbury region of New Zealand's South Island, around 6 miles south-east of the centre of Christchurch exacerbating damage to already weakened buildings that had not yet been repaired. A total of 181 people were killed in that second earthquake. A state of emergency was declared, which stayed in force until April 2011. A further powerful 5.2 aftershock in June made the situation even worse.

One of many taxi drivers who suffered from the quakes was Christchurch driver Lindsay Hooper. He and wife Elizabeth had recently moved into the retirement home they saved up for, for 42 years. It was demolished in the September quake. This is his story...

Lindsay's taxi driving career goes back 30 years to when he first joined **Blue Star Taxis**. He has been driving taxis ever since and still has a cab on the road, although he has another driver at the wheel most of the time. Like thousands of others in Christchurch, life had not been easy as the city got struck by a series of major earthquakes but they still moved into the house they had built for their retirement just months before the first quake struck. It now has to be demolished, along with many others around it.

The government's offer to buy it will leave Lindsay and Elizabeth with NZ\$80,000 (£40,000) less than they paid and the prospect of going along to the bank to try to get a mortgage. Their home was in the heart of what became known as liquefaction city, where the earthquakes came through in waves. The first big one picked up the back of their house and pushed it forward about 7 inches, then as the wave moved on, the house moved some of the way back again leaving a gap at the back of the house, cutting off power, water and sewerage. The concrete floor broke in three places and one wall was left leaning dangerously. Then the big shake in February pushed the house forward again, leaving it almost 7 feet off its surveyed site.

"The roads around our area were badly damaged," said Lindsay, "and it was dangerous to drive, so I didn't take my taxi out. You just could not be sure that the car wasn't going to end up head first in a deep hole filled with water and mud!"

The Hoopers went into survival mode with no money coming in and by the time the taxi finally went out again, the couple's income was well down. Elizabeth had been involved with the Salvation Army and despite their own hardships, they began helping provide assistance in the form of food, clothing, bedding and heating to needy families. Lindsay drives the church's heavy truck to pick up and deliver supplies. The couple spend most days at the Sally Army centre making up food parcels and providing other help.

Lindsay continued by saying: "Keeping busy has taken our minds off all the other hassles. We've had five visits from the Earthquake Commission and three from the insurance company, but we are still waiting for them to tell us what they are going to do. We had always planned to spend the rest of our days at this house and agreed the only way we were going out would have been in a wooden box! We put in the best of what we could afford and were insured for full replacement value. But the insurance companies don't seem to want to know about that. You ring them and get someone in Brisbane, who puts you through to someone in Auckland who is not really interested.

"Our house lost all its services and if you try to get a plumber or electrician, they want to know how you're going to pay. They won't accept sending the bill to the insurance because they have to wait too long to get their money back. So you end up paying it yourself, then claiming it back - less the policy excess."

Lindsay and Elizabeth have been looking out of town for something they can still afford.

"It has been a really traumatic and trying time. It's just so hard to get answers out of anyone. They are spending a lot of money in town trying to get businesses up and running again but should be spending more of it trying to get people back into their homes. There's a big pit full of money, but it's not going to the right people..."

Last year saw shocking images from Christchurch, New Zealand, where the city was struck by three major earthquakes. There are many stories about taxi drivers following the quakes and courtesy of Call Sign's friends at the New Zealand Taxi Federation, this is just one of them...

A taxi driver's life after an earthquake!



Despite losing his home, Lindsay spends time after the quake helping others with food parcels etc

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Cecil answers some of the questions...

I read with interest the Chairman's report in which he makes recommendations to turn the Society into a PLC. There is no doubt that these proposals, although not yet formal, are the most radical in our history.

Since the news was published, several members have asked me for my views and to explain various aspects of what is on offer as at this stage it IS only an offer and the members will finally decide. Let me say first of all that in principle I am in favour of what is being suggested. I am sure that some will be surprised at my support considering that I have been a severe critic of ComCab's attempt to float on the AIM, but I must point out that what Brian wishes to do is poles apart from the LTDA scheme. The LTDA stated that members would not receive any free shares, only a 10% discount. This was adding insult to injury as the ComCab drivers were contributing a Capital sum of £1260 + VAT towards the cost of *Mobistar*. In our case, we are being offered the complete equity of the business without any further charge to the member.

ComCab needed the money raised in the float to reduce debt and to complete the development of their AVL system. We on the other hand have a strong balance sheet, no cash flow problems and no high capital commitments. This begs the question: Why bother with it at all?

I believe there are two main reasons why we should go for it. At present, no matter how long a member has been in the Society, he/she comes out with the same £50 that he/she put in when starting, irrespective that the business could have grown tenfold during their membership. The other reason is that the financial situation of one of our major competitors has changed and we are now competing with a company that has vast capital resources. Therefore we must be in a position to raise money should we need to, both for expansion and for new equipment. It is far better if we have an alternative to borrowing. We must be prepared for any new government legislation on licensing, which may make competition even tougher leaving only the financially strong and well managed circuits to survive.

Several members have expressed some concern regarding both their own personal future on the circuit and the future of the circuit in general, so I will now attempt to deal with some of these fears...

Will we lose control?

Yes, we might if the members decide to sell

In this issue, the Editor has raised the topic of demutualisation. In 1997, Brian Rice and his Board offered drivers a vote on the subject and Cecil Selwyn gave his views in Call Sign. We are republishing that article for no other reason other than it explained exactly what demutualisation meant in a clear and concise way. Cecil sadly died in 2003...

THE SELWYN VIEW ON DEMUTUALISATION

their shares, but we cannot have it both ways. If we want to continue to have a say in the business, we should leave our equity in the company. In any case, history shows that over a long period of time, shares in commercial companies generally show a better return than savings in banks or building societies.

The drive for profits will be made at the expense of the driver's earnings?

Any board of directors would be foolish to try this, as the drivers are the most important asset the company has. Drivers are very quick to realise when their pockets are being picked! Treat the drivers unfairly and your profits go down not up. The way to growth and profitability is by investment, expansion, incentive and internal efficiency. One of the ways to protect interests of the drivers is to ensure there are non-executive directors who are working cab drivers. Non-exec directors attend Board meetings and have an equal vote, but do not actually manage.

We will have non-taxi drivers on our Board?

I have never had any problem with this. I believe the ideal management set up for us is a mix of taxi drivers experience together with outside expertise of commerce and technology. It has been suggested that if we require outside expertise, we should simply employ them. But what is a company director if not a high level employee?

I was a journeyman for six years and then bought my own cab six months ago. If bonus shares are given for length of service, how long have I been here?

Your length of service in that respect would be for the time you were given your single £50 share. You cannot have that share as a journeyman, only as an owner. Therefore your length of service so far as a share issue is concerned would be six months.

Will our staff be entitled to shares?

As they are not members of the Society, they have no entitlement from the initial issue. But I believe that if we do become a PLC, the staff should share in the success of the company. Most successful companies such as Boots and

Marks & Spencers have been running staff share schemes for years. Some of our staff have been with us for over a decade having served us loyally and are dedicated to the business.

Will our competitors be able to buy our shares?

Yes, if they are available on the market. Perhaps if they do they may learn something about running a radio circuit!

Will we still have to leave our Rollerbond in?

I believe that if we call for further Capital above the initial issue to members, that the Rollerbond should be refunded. Either we capitalise our business by market capital or we don't.

Will all this affect our normal working practices?

I do not anticipate that it should. As I have already said, without the co-operation of the drivers we do not have a business.

Will our existing Board be offered extra shares or share options?

On the initial issue, they can only receive the same amount of shares as other members of the society. Any other offers can only be made with the approval of the shareholders.

Will I have to leave the circuit if I sell my shares?

No.

Are there any other options open to us whereby we can have the advantage of being able to share the value of the business without some of the risks such as losing control?

That's a difficult one to answer. I have been giving a lot of thought to this and may have a few ideas, but I need to do some more research to see if what I may suggest is both legal and feasible. If there are developments from my research, I will publish them in a future issue of Call Sign...

Cecil Selwyn (V76)



LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

Who can judge?

As you read this, we will know the winners of both *X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing*, although speaking personally I'm tone deaf and can't dance, except like a drunken uncle at a wedding!

But the one thing I am good at, and I'm probably not alone, is being an expert at judging others from the comfort of my sofa.

As we are now into the official Olympics Year, I cannot wait to show off my keen eye and athletic knowledge! They will stand me in good stead as I become an expert in the Pool events such as High Diving, awarding points to gymnasts and ice skaters, boxing is a forte and how dare that judge contradict my 5.4 mark in synchronised swimming! I can also spot a false start before the gun has gone off, should a runner break their lane before the set marker I will spot it, I don't need Steve Cram, Brendan Foster or any other expert to cloud my sense of judgement.

But not content with just being an 'expert' in sport, I have even gained an ESP in the art of being able to taste food on TV, sampling the texture and smell on *Masterchef* - sorry Torode and Wallace. It's my opinion that counts, not your years of being in the industry, a wine expert to put Floyd (RIP) - never mind Goolden - to shame.

I can also give valuations on property, antiques and boot fair items. Yet in spite of all this, I count myself as not a judgemental person. You be the judge...

Low price heating for pensioners...

With all the seasonal cheer now passed and a long winter ahead with energy prices soaring to increase heating bills, there is the shocking statistic that 3.5 million older people live in fuel poverty. Households are classified as 'fuel poor' when they spend a tenth or more of their income on their energy bill.

Age UK estimate that half of all fuel poverty is among the over 65s. Whilst government cold weather grants have helped towards keeping pensioners warm, it is still a long way short of what is required. Recently released figures show that in the winter of 2009/10 there were 25,400 cold-related deaths with 20,600 of those among people aged 75 and over.

Whilst this is fewer than previous years, it is still unacceptable that tens of thousands older people die in this country every winter from the effects of the cold weather. I feel there are other ways that society and the large energy firms and supermarket conglomerates could introduce schemes and incentives to reduce the burden.

When I pay my energy bills, I notice that I gain *Nectar* or *Clubcard* points towards vouchers to spend or receive other benefits in my shopping trips. I would be more than happy give up these points in a scheme to subsidise a pensioner's fuel bill. Why not have a *Cold Air Miles* scheme as opposed to the other one? Every supermarket will run schemes throughout the year to collect vouchers for schools to provide computers, gardening equipment and many other projects.

Ironically, it is the pensioners you see collecting these vouchers as they spend their meagre pensions. Surely it would be more beneficial and rewarding if every time a youngster bought a computer game or toy, they could collect vouchers to be redeemed against a pensioner's heating bill. I would go as far as to say that the whole voucher schemes should be dedicated towards assisting residential care homes and other elderly sheltered accommodation.

Perhaps in addition to heating bills, a few computers wouldn't go amiss with lessons to teach pensioners how to fill out on-line forms, send emails, search the web etc. I believe that a society should be judged on how we treat our old and young. Sadly we are failing in our *Elder* section.

A very happy and healthy New Year to all taxi drivers everywhere...

Tom Quigley (Y33)

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GOD SAVE THE KING

"It was quite a while ago now," Colin Brown (K66) told *Call Sign*, "but the memory lingers on." He smiled as he recounted his tale to our apprentice reporter out on his first story.

"I live quite close to a golf course and the wide open spaces associated with such places, so I guess it was going to happen sooner or later." At this stage he hadn't actually described the problem he had with his **Dial-a-Cab** taxi.

"It was a cold morning as I tried to start the cab and I was fully expecting it to burst into life as it always did. But, nothing! I made several more attempts to get it running so that I could get out to work, but it became obvious the cab wouldn't start and didn't want to know! So eventually I had to call the recovery service to get me to my garage. When they came and opened the bonnet to check things out, they noticed part of the electrical wiring loom had been eaten through! The tiny teeth marks were quite clearly visible!"

Call Sign's young reporter covering his first story for the magazine stepped back in apparent fear! Were we talking of aliens or ghosties here? He was just a cab driver and didn't fancy either! His fear was broken by Colin's voice.

"Can you believe that," he queried, "eaten right through!"

On closer inspection around the engine bay, the breakdown service mechanic had spotted rat droppings and that's when he realised it must have been a rodent that had crawled up into the warm space near the engine to stay comfortable

With memories of James Cagney, this is the story of DaC's Colin Brown and...

Yoo doyty rat!



Colin and new "friend"

and dry, rather than sleep out on a frosty golf course! The rat, although safely tucked up in the warm, was obviously also feeling peckish - so hungry in fact that it ate through the wiring

loom in Colin's TX4 and that's why it wouldn't start! *Call Sign's* reporter recoiled after briefly feeling relieved that there were no signs of extra-terrestrial activities or apparitions, because he wasn't that keen on rats either!

Colin continued with his tale. "I'm usually the last person home at night, so my taxi engine is still warm for quite some time after I have finished work. That's probably when Roger Rodent seized his chance and made himself at home under my bonnet. It cost quite a bit of money to replace sections of the wiring loom and I have now taken precautions to prevent any recurrence of unwelcome visitors, but it still amazes me when I think back to the whole saga."

Feeling sorry for our reporter, Colin ended his story: "The moral of the story is to park in a garage or other secure place whenever possible - or move next door to a cat sanctuary!"

Note: No plague carrying, flea ridden, disease-spreading, cable-knawing rodents were hurt during the relating of this story!

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Yellow badge online check!



Now you can
check
online
whether
a taxi is
suburban
or all
London...

Dial-a-Cab drivers have long complained to *Call Sign* about seeing yellow badge drivers picking up fares inside the green badge areas. In addition to the promised yellow and green stickers, LTPH will now be enhancing the current functionality available on the TfL website for checking active driver and vehicle licences.

All active private hire driver, operator and vehicle licences can currently be checked on the website, but with effect from sometime in December, the licensing authority are hoping to extend this to include taxi driver and vehicle licences and it will also confirm whether the licence is for an *All London* green badge or a *Suburban* yellow badge driver when the badge number is entered. It will also confirm whether the licence is currently active.

According to LTPH, the data on the licence checker is frequently refreshed, but if anyone discovers an anomaly, then please notify them via www.tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk. The licence checker is at www.tfl.gov.uk/tph.

If you have not yet registered to receive updates from LTPH, just send your email address to www.tph.enquiries@tfl.gov.uk.

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If you're looking for a great deal on a used TX2 or TX4, then look no further! The **London Taxi Company** has teamed up with **Black Horse Taxi Finance** to offer finance deposits of up to a fantastic £2,750 off selected used vehicles, all available to see on www.london-taxis.co.uk.

There are a variety of vehicles selected as part of the **Winter Sale** event, offering business users the chance to snap up a great deal with finance at 3.99% and a finance deposit of up to £2,750.

Rob Laidler, LTC Sales Director, told *Call Sign*:

"There are a range of vehicles in the sale from TXII to TX4, with a mix of mileages and ages. We're clearing the decks ready for the New Year, so some of our customers are going to snap up London Taxis at a low rate of 3.99% fixed for five years through Black Horse Taxi Finance. If a customer sees a vehicle they want to buy, no matter where in the country it is, we'll bring it to their nearest dealership for them - free of charge!"

There are over 50 vehicles included in the *Winter Sale*, with finance deposits of between £750 and £2,750 available.

To view the entire Winter Sale stock selection, visit www.london-taxis.co.uk or alternatively visit any of **The London Taxi Company's** dealerships in London, Coventry, Manchester, Edinburgh or Glasgow to find out more.



Hello again, it's that time of year again when our thoughts are turning to whether we could really afford the recent Xmas and upcoming New Year festivities? I know as well as you that things are tight on the work front and with the January tax bills just around the corner, this could be the ideal time to take a loan to tide you over. As taxi drivers, we could have done extra hours in order to try and save some money for the hols, but it does get harder to motivate oneself when sitting on a rank for ages or driving round in circles! The lead-up to Christmas was the time to get your money together to get you through January, but I can't remember the last time I saw people arguing to get into my cab... can you?

Still, let's not dwell too much on that. Onwards and upwards and back to the thing I began with - LOANS! At the moment, your credit union has money to lend and if you're struggling with credit card payments or if you want to pay off your cab, give us a call at the office in Hackney Road and we may be able to help. You'll never know if you don't ask. I've found that some drivers are a little embarrassed to ask, but do need our help. So pluck up the courage - come in and see us. You will soon realise after a chat that there really is nothing to be embarrassed about as we're all cab drivers. We're just the same as you with the same aggro - except Lil, who as most regulars know is 4-foot nothing and all smiles!

If you have friends or relatives with some kind of monetary problem, well we have a way to help them as well with the other Credit Union we run called **The Harp**. This CU is the one we were asked to help out and run by the FSA no less... and we have! With help of new members, we have turned it around from being in the red to being in the black, so I'm sure if you want help - either big or small - we could accommodate you, but unless you ask you will never know.

High interest account...

Don't get excited all you investors out there, we are NOT opening our high interest account just yet and people do constantly phone to ask when it will be re-opening, but don't worry, you will be notified via your terminal and also **Call Sign** when it does. As you know, we at DACCU are licensed deposit takers by the FSA and are duty bound by their rules and regulations. At the moment we have money to lend out; therefore we have no reason to open it just yet, but hopefully sometime next year. I hope this helps...

The Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

THE TAXMAN COMETH - IT MUST BE LOAN TIME!

Harp Credit Union

As I have already mentioned, the Harp CU is open to all non-Dial-a-Cab people as the FSA have loosened the noose on what they call the common bond. For those who are not sure what that means, a common bond is all DaC members or staff members or relatives who live at that person's address. Most people who save with the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union know how easy it is to save either via your credit work or standing order. Someone recently asked me why we only use standing orders and not direct debits. Firstly, it costs us to do a direct debit and secondly, with a standing order YOU have control on what goes out of your account, whereas with a direct debit - at least in theory - we could take what we wanted! I hope that clears the query up.

So don't be shy, give Lily a call on 0207 033 9434 and join up either DACCU or HARP. She's not fussy! If you can't get to the office, she will happily post you out a form.

Tiger Tyres

Last but not least, DACCU's downstairs neighbours **Tiger Tyres**. It's good to see all you DaC drivers coming down for your tyres because - and I'm not sure if you know this - as we share the unit, they help us pay the rent so it makes it nice and easy for you to visit, with us being so close to the square mile.

I get occasional comments about *Costco* and that they are cheaper for *Michelin* tyres. Ok,

Tiger Tyres may not be able to beat their prices, but what Jamie can do is to get your new tyres on with a smile, save you having to walk around a Costco store spending dosh on things you don't really need, get your tyre fitted and be back on the road whilst still booked into the system! Bet Costco can't beat that!

Tiger do tyres for all budgets from really good remoulds to the Continental for the Vito. Also, if you require a tyre or tyres for you or your friends or relatives car, give Jamie a call and he will call you back with a price. If you like what he tells you, he will order them in and they'll be in the workshop usually by the next day; prices quoted will be fitted, balanced and include VAT.

And before I go, the beauty of being a Credit Union member is that you can even pay for your tyres either by a loan or from your savings! It's that simple, so now you know you can come on down to Unit 14, Peterley Business Centre, 472 Hackney Road, E2 9EQ or call either the Credit Union number on 0207 729 8171 or Tiger Tyres on 0207 729 5237.

On behalf of everyone from the Credit Union and Tiger Tyres, I would like to take this opportunity of hoping that you all had a very merry Christmas and to wish you a happy and healthy New Year.

Be lucky... but above be very careful out there.

**John Riley (K38)
DACCU Vice-President.**

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Recent issues of *Call Sign* have contained several controversial points. I would like to give my views as a **Dial-a-Cab** driver on some of them. Let me start by saying I believe the DaC Board do a great job in difficult circumstances and I'm pleased to read that they are trying different ways to win new and old accounts back. I realised that was more than just words when I picked up at an account in Bunhill Row that I believe had left us some years ago...

Gratuities, waiting time and phone booking fees...

But I do have a few points to make, so let's start with **gratuities**, which I believe we should keep. If the average cab driver takes £100 on 5 radio jobs in a day, that's an extra £10 we will lose. If we are going to do something, then why not forsake the run-in? This would also work out at around £10 and I'm sure would be a better selling point, but personally I would stick to the way things are. But I would definitely get rid of extra waiting time. I remember **Allen Togwell** asking around a year ago for any cab driver to write to him and state why we should get waiting time on top of the meter? Apparently he didn't get one reply! I assume that the Board could make or request this change.

I would also get rid of the **£2 phone booking fee**. Just because the other circuits do it, that doesn't mean we have to. Remember, we are trying to win work but by charging this extra cost, we are virtually asking customers to use car companies such as **Addison Lee**. It would be interesting to see how many cash / credit card bookings a day we get. I'm sure it's not enough to employ separate call takers! I don't get the argument where account customers would then change to credit card / cash bookings to avoid our charges, after all, if they wanted to avoid those charges, plus a £4.20 run in, plus 10% gratuity, then why not just hail a cab off the street?

Fixed prices...

With regards to **fixed prices**, I work days and think it unfair to have to cover them during the hours of 7.30 - 9.30. This is the period where day drivers have to make as much money as we possibly can. With traffic the way it is in the mornings, it doesn't make any sort of financial sense to take an F/P job during the rush hour. However, I do agree with **Brian Rice** and believe we should offer F/P jobs on longer journeys and I would be quite happy to do an F/P trip to Heathrow for £57 from Berkley Square as opposed to an £8 job to Paddington.

I don't mind covering F/Ps outside rush hours once I know the traffic has calmed down. Although many don't believe it's a path we should go down, it is obviously an option to perhaps use if it is a big

Board Members usually get a page to write, drivers get a piece on the Mailshot page. So for once Call Sign is giving a page to a driver. Richard Barford (R39) gives his views on DaC...

MY VIEWS ON DIAL-A-CAB

account and they have asked about them, as opposed to volunteering the info. I have always thought that every job coming back into town from the airport should be on an F/P with an extra supplement during peak hours. I don't work **Heathrow** very often, but it would be interesting to see whether we are covering more or less trips from there over the past 5 years. I personally think that one day we will lose the airport to private hire and that there will then be an extra 500 cabs in town looking for work.

Dress code???

I had a radio job from T5 a few weeks ago and was surrounded by a multitude of minicab drivers - many of them from Tristar. They might have all been speaking in their native tongues, but one thing you couldn't knock them for was their dress code! I agree with **Allen Togwell**; we do need to smarten ourselves up. I wear trousers and a shirt - not a tie, but would do so if needed. I'm often embarrassed by the way some taxi drivers dress. I think if you are going to have to meet a client at an airport, you should be wearing trousers and a shirt - not track suit bottoms and trainers. I had a radio job from **City Airport** a few months back when the weather was still warm and felt embarrassed standing next to the other two taxi drivers who were dressed in their shorts and sandals. I was only standing with them as I knew one of them. The only consolation was that they were not on **Dial-a-Cab**.

DaC courier service?

Perhaps even more controversially, I would look at trying to set up our own courier service. We have Knowledge boys who would probably enjoy the opportunity of earning extra money whilst learning London. We already have the call takers and I'm sure we have account customers who would be happy to use a courier service in addition to our taxis. If we could make a profit from this, then we could use that to help bring our service charges to clients down.

Why not even try and sell the advertising space on one of our tip-up seats? We have 2,000 Dial-a-Cab drivers working all over London and a company like Foxtons could be interested?

Addison Lee and Rate 3...

Regarding the situation with **Addison Lee** that we read of in last month's *Call Sign*, I think we have to realise they are a big danger to our future. I had a conversation with my best mate who works for a City bank. It broke my heart when he said how good **Addison Lee** were and how they now use them regularly. Yes, DaC are cheaper than them on some fares, but dearer in others. Where we can't compete is on **rate 3**. I personally think that is too high and not good for the trade. It could even be our downfall in the end.

Another reason we are more expensive is that our vehicles are virtually double the price of the opposition. When I heard that **Mercedes** were making a taxi, I thought it was excellent as the price to buy a cab would then come down. But it's had the opposite effect with the £42K **Vito**! Also

the price for a **TX4** will be going up by £3,000 with the **Euro V** modifications. We should have all vetoed (*sic*) the Vito, so that they had to bring the price down!

Our biggest problem is that we don't have just the one voice, unlike A/L. We need the licensed taxi trade to sit down together, but until that happens nothing will change and I'm not holding my breath! I'm just another cab driver who has an opinion. Right or wrong, that's certainly one thing we cab drivers are good at - we have 25,000 opinions between us!

We have to remain positive and hope that things get busier, but it was nice to get some positive news from **Keith Cain** in *Call Sign* when he said that a large account was looking to come back to us, but as Board members often point out, it is really up to us as to where our destiny lies! We have to stick together and make changes where we don't want to, but I honestly feel that if we don't at least begin to make these changes now, it just might be too late in the future. We're part of London, but then again so were red telephone boxes and Routemaster buses. But I don't see many of either around London now.

I meant to send this letter a few months ago but decided against it. Since then things seem to have got worse. We could be a sinking ship and everyone in our trade has to realise that unless we change, account work could be a thing of the past. We know it's quiet at the moment, but this is a period where we should be swept of our feet. God knows what January will be like! All you have to do is read this month's *Call Sign* magazine to see how far business has fallen. As **Brian Rice** said in a recent issue of the magazine, it was just 4 years ago that our Society gave away £521,000 in Christmas bonuses! Now we have a £500 competition. **John Griffin** must be laughing, it certainly breaks my heart! (*Ed's note: The competition was nothing to do with DaC; it was purely some Xmas fun from Call Sign*).

DaC app?

On top of A/L, we now have **GetTaxi** and **Hailo**. I'm not into today's technology, but why can't we have our own **app**? Perhaps it could be linked to our new terminals? Every account client has a choice and as **Brian Rice** pointed out, at a cheaper price too. We have to make that extra effort to cover account work in busy periods - even when it's raining or on Thursday evenings - in addition to watching our run-ins. I'm sure our Sales department's job is even harder now that A/L have taken over **Lewis Day**. We, as a Society, need to make changes and I'm sure I'm not the only driver worried about the future. If we bury our heads in the sand and don't change, then we will only have ourselves to blame.

And finally, in response to **Alan Fisher's** editorial last month, no I wouldn't sell my share for £20,000. Mind you I wouldn't have played for **Spurs** either! It's not always about money - unless you are **Emmanuel Adebayor** of course!

Richard Barford (R39)

“I STIR MY OWN!”

“It gives my left arm and leg some exercise and something to do,” Fred Cooper (Z18) told *Call Sign* with a smile when we spotted the manual gear lever on his new TX4.

“I did my *Knowledge* and *Drive* on an FX4R manual, plus I’ve owned a Metro TTT manual, so you can see where I’m coming from,” Fred asserted. “It’s probably something of a rarity in this day and age, but for me it’s just fine. I live down in Chatham, Kent and usually start work from City Airport or E14, which is about 38 miles from home so the gear changing does not really bother me unduly, although I accept that for drivers who live and work predominantly in town it might not be the best idea!”

Fred admitted that the gear change was still a bit ‘notchy’, not like the silky smooth gear-boxes of his previous cabs, but he expected that to improve after the cab had been well run-in.

“Living in the *Garden of England* means I



Fred is one of just a handful of London drivers still using a manual cab

knock up considerable mileages just getting to and from work, so for me with the cost of fuel being what it is, fuel consumption is a major factor in my overall running costs. I am cur-

rently checking the fuel consumption and bearing in mind that the cab is still new and the engine is hardly ‘run-in’, I’m getting between 32 and 34 MPG with a mix of driving conditions both around town and on longer runs, so things are looking quite reasonable!

“The initial cost of the cab is cheaper than the automatic version and with the added advantage of greater fuel economy, I’m hopefully contributing to less pollution and better air quality. Well that’s what I would like to think!”

Fred grinned broadly before adding: “I do accept that ‘stirring your own’ up and down the gearbox all the time is not everyone’s idea of fun as it does involve a lot of leg work, but it works well enough for me.”

Call Sign asked Mark Brown, London Taxi Company GM how many manuals they sell and whilst out-of-towners still buy them, so far as London Green Badges are concerned, he thought they numbered just 4 or 5 a year!

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Mike Son writes about a sad day...

JACK TAYLOR SCHOOL TO CLOSE

Some members who have been with **Dial-a-Cab** for many years will remember one of our previous Chairmen, **Jack Taylor**. As well as being DaC Chairman from 1964 – 1969, he was also for many years a committee member and then Chairman of the **London Taxidriers’ Fund for Underprivileged children**. Jack passed away in 1988 after a long battle with cancer.

Because of Jack’s commitment to both the taxi industry and the LTFUC, the committee wanted to create a lasting legacy in Jack’s name. So in 1990, the LTFUC approached the Governors of **Alexandra Priory School** as it was then known in Ainsworth Way NW8, about changing the school’s name in memory of the much respected founder member of the Fund.

On Thursday 19th September 1991, the school was renamed the Jack Taylor School. At a special ceremony, Jack’s widow Edna unveiled a portrait of Jack, which hangs in the foyer to this day.

Sadly however, in 2012 the school will close and the children will reallocate to the Swiss Cottage Specialist School.

The LTFUC has supported the school during all these many years with the purchase of recreational and medical equipment. There have also been many outings including, just before Christmas, when the LTFUC took the children to Clarence House to meet the Duchess of Cornwall (see report elsewhere in this issue).

It is also depressing that many of the teachers and staff who have served the school and children in some cases for 25 years, will lose their jobs. Having recently had a meeting at the school, it is hoped to maintain the historical links with the LTFUC and the cab industry by keeping the name of Jack Taylor in the new school, perhaps as a special room or library. I am sure there will be discussions between the school’s senior management and the appropriate authorities.

The mixed faith day school teaches children and young people with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and is the only school of its type in Camden. Some of the subjects taught include art, design technology, humanities and modern foreign languages. They are taught through topics or modules on a termly basis. But sadly, this will be the school’s last year...



The school was renamed after Jack Taylor Now it is to close

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects

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

Kupkake's Korner



Overweight and over here???

I know I was right
know what I saw,
late Thursday night
in an old Rickshaw!

The driver bloke
(from who knows where),
was sweating buckets
near Leicester Square!

Whist in the back
wedged really tight,
sat 6 young women
out for the night.

Slowly as he pushed that bike
the wheels were buckling
the girls took fright,
I thought there just might be a fight
as I followed on behind.

Then a sound like a thunder clap
as the chain broke and the axle snapped,
and the 6 women fell out of the back
and spilled out on the road!

They screamed and cursed
one whacked the chap,
with her red designer purse -
he just collapsed!

A small crowd gathered
to see the fuss,
as people stared out from a passing bus!
But they continued to swear and cuss
in their spiky 6 inch heels.

Then they walked away, they didn't care
they never paid the Rickshaw fare,
without a second glance they left him
there.

And me? I just drove on...

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Can I wish you all a Happy New Year...

Theatre review ***** Theatre review ***** Theatre review

The Ladykillers

I was recently at the opening of **The Ladykillers** at Shaftsbury Avenue's **Gielgud Theatre** and I'm pleased to say that this new show does exactly what it says on the tin - it entertains!

Reading my reviews, you'll know I believe the hardest job in the theatre is to carry across humour and comedy from the stage to an audience that may have just come in from a cold winter's evening. This comedy achieves that task by using a cast of well know actors at their finest.

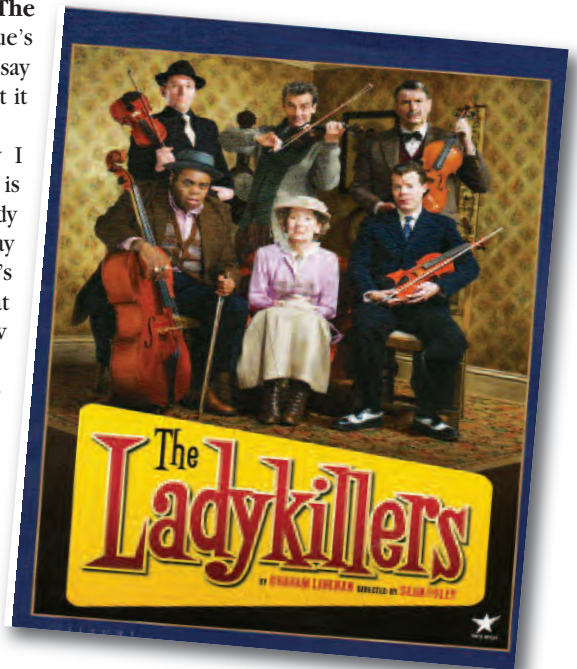
The show is an original adaptation - with affectionate similarities to the 1955 Ealing comedy starring **Alec Guinness** and **Peter Sellers**. Transferring any show from film to stage is a difficult job at the best of times, but this show brilliantly reproduces the film fun, robbery, police car chase and much more on the stage in front of you!

Marcia Warren puts in a wonderful performance as the frail *Mrs Wilberforce*. She is the fantasist who believes the story four prospective robbers spin her of being musicians whilst plainly unable to hit a correct chord between them! After a performance like this, Marcia should be first in the queue for any future Miss Marples mysteries!

A variety of excellent actors appear in *The Ladykillers*. They include **Peter Capaldi** (*Professor Marcus*), **James Fleet** (*Major Courtney*) - the well-known soppy boyfriend in *Vicar of Dibley* - **Ben Miller** (*Louis Harvey*) who was seen recently on television in *Death in Paradise*, **Clive Rowe** who plays ex-boxer *One Round* who many will recognise as the panto dame at London's *Hackney Empire* and **Harry Peacock** (*Constable MacDonald*) who has appearances in *Doctor Who* and *Jonathan Creek* amongst his credits. The whole cast portray their characters with such believable charm that you really do not want the show to finish! The revolving stage, which gives views of the inside of the house, roof, frontage and railway tunnel, is an added joy to the play's continuity.

If you want to take the family out to see a show that you know they'll enjoy, then *The Ladykillers* is the one to go and see. The **Gielgud** is also a theatre where you have enough room to relax and move your legs and not to worry about maybe getting DVT!

Tom Whitbread
DaC BoM



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PCNs may be a fact of life and even though **Barrie Segal** saves **Dial-a-Cab** £thousands each year, there are times when drivers get ticketed for just having to stop – going to the toilet being one reason. But this story from **Mike Lyons (Y52)** surprised even **Call Sign** – and we hear many weird stories involving PCNs.

Mike has been with DaC since 1994 and had his share of tickets. Nowadays he fights them all and will go to adjudication if he has to. You can read about the PCN he won in this issue's *Mailsbot*. But this one is just astonishing because of Westminster Council's response...

Mike needed to use the loo and parked at Aldwych by the RAF church. He hadn't spotted the Westminster smartcar and soon after received a PCN for stopping on a yellow line. Footage taken at the time showed Mike exiting his cab and walking down the stairs leading to the loo.

Appealing to Westminster left that council totally uninterested, so Mike put his case to the Adjudicator. He explained how difficult it was for taxi drivers to find toilet facilities and that even when they did, the chances were that no stopping was allowed. The Adjudicator listened and was fully sympathetic to the predicament Mike had found himself in, so he adjourned the case for two weeks whilst writing to Westminster Council to ask for some discretion. After all, taxi drivers may work for up to 10 hours and unlike adjudicators and councillors, they can't just pop out to the office toilet.

Westminster responded by saying they noted the Adjudicator's recommendation to the Council that there were compelling reasons for the City council to consider discretion in this case given his "daily working circumstances."

It sounded good. Then Mike read the next paragraph where this caring Council who had wanted to kill London with parking restrictions

WESTMINSTER AND THE ALDWYCH TOILETS!



On their way to use the Aldwych Loo? Don't bother as Westminster would rather your bladder burst!

until late at night, continued:

"Following receipt of the {Arbitrator's} recommendation, on further consideration of the circumstances, the mitigating factors outlined by the Adjudicator were not sufficient reasons to merit cancelling the PCN."

The caring Council added that although their response "may not meet all your expectations," they hoped Mike would understand their position. We feel sure he does and that next time he needs to go to the loo, he travels 2 miles west and does it outside their building in Victoria Street – possibly assisted by several hundred other drivers!

Mike ended by wondering whether the Council were walking over our human rights and whether they realised the health implications involved. He wrote to the Mayor's office to tell him the above story. Mayor Johnson responded that he shared Mike's concern re public toilets and retold his plan called *Open London* where stores allow use of their toilets without the need to make a purchase. All he didn't say was where you leave your cab whilst popping in???

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign online

Taxi lost property toys bring joy to kids!

Transport for London's Lost Property Office has donated hundreds of toys to The Salvation Army, which they then gave to disadvantaged children in south London over the Christmas period. The toys appealed to children of all ages and ranged from soft toys and board games to sports equipment. The Sally Army in Deptford worked with the local council to distribute the toys to families in need.

Paul Cowan, Manager of TFL's Lost Property Office and Travel Info Centres, told **Call Sign**:

"Of the hundreds of thousands of items of lost property received each year, toys and children's gifts have a particular significance. Many are unable to be traced to an owner and perhaps due to their perceived value or belief that they will not be handed in, remain unclaimed after three months. Pre-loved items are donated to our charity partners on a regular basis, however new toys and gifts are saved until the end of the year when their donation has a much greater impact. For those who have lost these items, their original intention of bringing joy to a child has still been achieved. The Lost Property Office team take great pride in the work they do and it's rewarding for them to be able to complete the cycle of giving through the donation."

Captain Kevin Stanbury of The Salvation Army's Deptford Community Centre, added:

"More people than ever are struggling financially and this is never more apparent than around Christmas time. Right across the country, The Salvation Army provided toy parcels to those families who would otherwise have gone without. This service was made a little easier due to the kind donation from organisations such as Transport for London. Over the past five years, they have donated countless toys, all of which helped bring joy and laughter into the life of a London child. We thank the Lost Property Office and its staff for making this scheme possible."

The LPO has handled over 200,000 items of lost property in 2010/11. On average one in three items is reunited with its owner. Over the years, people have handed in many unexpected and unusual items including Rolex watches worth more than quarter of a million pounds, £10,000 cash, human skulls, breast implants and a lawnmower!

All donated items would have been unclaimed for at least three months...



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I didn't get a chance to wish everyone a happy festive period, but I hope you all received from Santa everything you wished for! 2012 is going to be, at the very least, an interesting year and I really hope it is a prosperous one for you all.

Following on from the messages that Allan Evans has been sending out regarding excessive run-ins, I'm pleased to report that the whole fleet has responded brilliantly. I personally didn't feel the problem was a huge one, but the monitoring has ensured all is ok. However, that does not mean it has stopped completely. Controllers are monitoring all shifts including weekends and unless the trip informs you of an increased run-in amount, all trips are subject to a maximum amount of £4.20.

Just to remind you the run-in for an *as soon as possible* trip is £4.20. This means no more than this when you arrive, also for a pre-booked trip the maximum amount showing on the meter at the pre-booked time must not exceed £4.20. There have been a few drivers who did not see the messages and it was necessary to speak with them to remind them of the run-in rules.

It is amazing what turns up when we start to focus on the run-ins - late POBs being one. We have found that a vast number of drivers keep forgetting to press their POB button when the passenger gets in the cab. We accept that there are occasions when the passenger starts a conversation as soon as they enter cab and the driver get distracted, but unfortunately we have also found there to be a number of drivers who seem to forget on almost every trip. It is so very important that the POB button is pressed as

CONTACT CENTRE CHAT

With Keith Cain



soon as the passenger gets into the cab because late POBs distort the waiting time reports we send to our clients. More importantly, it can cause an additional unnecessary charge. Most of our major clients do not incur additional waiting time costs, but the accuracy of their reports is very important. Should any driver forget to POB at the correct time, then they must ask the contact centre to have a note put on the trip log and any waiting times minutes must be overridden when clearing the trip to the correct time. I nearly forgot to mention that the system captures the position of cabs when the driver presses the POB button. Easy for the controllers to monitor the forgetful ones!

Over-estimating street credit card trips

Another problem that raised its head recently is with regard to off-the-street credit card rides. The problem is that drivers are over-estimating the authorisation value on the card. Recently we had a trip from E1 to EC2 and the driver authorised the card for £100, just in case the customer changed their mind and wanted to go on. On that occasion they only went to EC2, but when they went to use their card later in the day it was declined because it had reached its credit limit!

When a driver obtains an authorisation for an amount, that figure is reserved against the card. Basically it's the same as a transaction for that amount being made. If the credit limit is near its maximum, it does cause a problem. Even though on the trip I mentioned above there was £90 that is not required, it takes the processing time four days to put the £90 back onto the card. It really is so important you do not over-estimate card authorisations by more than £5 or £10. Should it arise that your passenger does want to go further, then just call the controllers who can manually obtain another authorisation on the card for the extra journey.

Keith Cain

**Contact Centre Manager
Driver Operations Manager**

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



A few weeks before Christmas I had a routine ride with an elderly passenger from King's Cross down to London Bridge. While stuck in some traffic in Farringdon Road, I looked over to the upheaval taking place with the new Farringdon Station being prepared for *Crossrail*.

My *Guiding* knowledge reminded me that the very first underground station

was opened here in 1863 - the Metropolitan Line which ran to Paddington - constructed using the *cut and cover* method. It was a shallow dig that had steam trains running just below the streets of London.

Then that age-old fact that most cabbies know came to mind, the last public hanging took place outside Newgate Prison in 1868 and so thousands of people would have gone to this event by using the underground!

As the traffic eased, my passenger (who hadn't said a word up to this point) and I had reached King William Street and I was reminded of another fact as we passed the junction with Monument Street. Just a blue plaque on the wall outside Regis House pays tribute to King William Street Station, which opened in 1890. It was the world's first-ever tube line - a deep level electric railway that took in six stops on its way to Stockwell.

The station lasted just ten short years as the new Bank Station replaced it. But it's still down there, platforms and all but only accessible nowadays via a manhole in a broom cupboard in a storage room in the basement of Regis House! The last time it came out of moth balls was during World War 2, when used as an air raid shelter.

Just as we turned into London Bridge Station, my very elderly punter piped up for the first time:

"Cabbie, do you know that London Bridge was London's first ever

mainline railway terminus when it opened in 1836?"

But I couldn't resist it: "No Sir," I piped up in the way only a London taxi driver can, "there were delays in extending the line to the new station - so Spa Road, Bermondsey had that privilege for many months."

Smiling, he told me that many years earlier he had been employed by London Transport as a designer of posters for the tube network. While taking an age to alight from the cab, I was left thinking what a shame we didn't get the chance to talk about this en route, but because he was taking so long and needed my assistance, I did consider for a split second that he might have been around when the station first opened!

Happy New Year to all at Dial-a-Cab!

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)

Saint Genies de Fontedit, Languedoc, France



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster
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10% discount for DaC drivers and staff

**Fellow of the Guild of
Professional Toastmasters**

In 2007, this magazine published details of an extraordinarily kind offer from **Call Sign** online reader and *London Vintage Taxi Association* Dutch member, **Hans Dooren**. His offer was to attempt to find and visit the war grave of any **Dial-a-Cab** driver's relatives buried at **Venray**.

Many buried there would have been involved in the **Battle of Arnhem**, a WW2 battle fought in and around the Dutch towns of Arnhem, Oosterbeek, Wolfheze and Driel in September 1944.

It was under **Field Marshal Montgomery**, the Allies had swept through France and Belgium and were poised to enter the Netherlands. His idea was to make one single thrust over the Rhine and allow the British 2nd Army to bypass the German Siegfried Line and attack the German Ruhr district. The Allies launched **Operation Market Garden** on September 17th and Allied paras were dropped into the Netherlands to secure key bridges and towns. In the meantime, the British 1st Airborne Division supported by men of the Glider Pilot Regiment and the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade, landed at Arnhem to secure bridges across the Nederrijn. Initially expecting a walkover, British XXX Corps planned to reach the British airborne forces within two to three days, but the German 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions put up a strong fight. After four days, the small British force at the bridge was overwhelmed and the rest of the division became trapped in a small pocket north of the river. Assistance from the Poles or XXX Corps was impossible and after nine days of fighting, the shattered

Tracing relatives from Venray war graves



Hans Dooren will try to trace your relatives war graves at Venray

remains of the airborne forces were withdrawn in Operation Berlin. There were many fatalities.

Now Hans has reiterated his offer. Just send **Call Sign** as many details as you can about the relative you believe to be at Venray and we will be happy to pass them over to Hans who will then do all he can to find their grave. If you just want Hans to visit a grave at Venray and you know where it is, he would be happy to do so. He has found a number of graves and also sent photos to relatives.

The Commonwealth cemeteries are very well looked after and each year Hans and others attend several commemorations by visiting

veterans groups such as the **Old Comrades Group of Market Garden** and the **Anglo-Dutch Bond**. They all meet yearly at Venray.

Hans told **Call Sign**: "I am now 5 years older and will be 77 in 2012. Perhaps I am a bit slower but we get along! The work load still contains a full day's work. Finding what relatives seek is not always successful, but I will do research on any request. I need as much information as relatives have - both army and civil particulars, in fact all you know about the person you would like to trace. Do not withhold anything believing that I wouldn't need it. My experience is that the more information I have, the more chance there is of tracing someone."

"I must mention two of the oldest visitors that we greet. These are our friends **John and Margaret Sleep** from Staines who have returned to Venray each year for the past 25 to remember fallen comrades. John was badly injured and still suffers daily from his war injuries. It gives us so much pleasure to assist them for a week with their plans and visits. It is amazing to see the very strong social ties they have with our Dutch families. They are of the Anglo-Dutch Bond and all over the Netherlands we still have these contacts with Allied veterans and local populations."

If we can help **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, we would be delighted to try."

The battle against minicabs

TOUT HAS CAR CRUSHED!



A sign of things to come!

Mayor Boris Johnson and TfL gave notice of the war against touts when in the weeks leading up to Christmas, a shocked minicab driver wasn't just nicked, but had his car crushed! That coincided with an increase in police enforcement activity against touts and other illegal "cabs."

Operation STaN – Safer Travel at Night – involves officers from TfL, the Met, Service Safer Transport Command and the City of London Police. Cab related offences were said to have fallen by 21% last year, but the STaN team's aim is to make travelling in London after dark even safer for Londoners and visitors to the city this year. Since 2007, police resources focused on this issue have doubled with a new team focusing on sexual offences being set up. Last year over 1,250 arrests were made for cab-related offences.

With over 180 arrests for touting and other cab-related offences having been made over three weeks this past autumn, the first phase of Operation STaN involved officers checking over 5,000 vehicles and speaking with thousands of Londoners and students to provide safer travel information and encourage Londoners to use licensed taxis or licensed minicabs.

It could be a crushing blow for some touts!



**THE HON PRESIDENT, HON CHAIR AND COMMITTEE OF
THE LONDON TAXIDRIVERS' FUND FOR
UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN**

WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU ALL

**COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON
AND A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO DRIVERS,
SPONSORS, HELPERS AND SUPPORTERS**

"None walks so Tall as he who stoops to help a Child"

www.ltfuc.org.uk

Firstly, a Happy New year to all of *Call Sign's* readers, **Dial-a-Cab** drivers and their families.

Well it's been a long time coming, but 2012 is here at last which means that in July the whole world will be watching us! While **David Cameron** argues that the EU needs the UK more than the UK needs the EU, we in London will be holding the world's biggest sporting event - the 2012 **Olympics**. Let's hope we do a good job and prove to the world that we do things better than anyone else. This is something I know we can do and it can't just be by chance that the UK will be the only country to have been given the privilege of holding the games three times.

Last September I whetted my appetite for the London Olympics, visiting the Olympic Stadium in Munich. In amongst all the clanking of steins, singing to oompah bands and watching all the pretty girls in lederhosen at the *Oktoberfest*, a friend and I soaked up the atmosphere circa 1972. Having swum for GB schools as a teenager, I couldn't help but feel awestruck visiting the swimming pool complex where **Mark Spitz** won an incredible 7 gold medals - without hat or goggles! That feat had never been achieved before and was only recently beaten by **Michael Phelps** in 2008. Most people think swimming is easy compared to other sports, but it is the only sport where you train in isolation, ie you can't talk to your colleagues whilst participating because your face is full in the water, thus making things even harder.

Spitz retired at 22, winning nine golds, one silver and a bronze. In those days you had to get

Former fireman **Richard Potter** and life behind the

POTTER'S WHEEL



a job, as sports stars were not well paid and there was limited money available from advertising - and in any case they were meant to be amateurs! Indeed Spitz was cited for product placement, when he displayed a pair of shoes he was holding whilst accepting one of his medals! How things have changed. On a wall inside the Olympic Park is a list of names of Gold medalists; remember Olga Korbut, Lasse Viren and Valerie Borzov?

One event that occurred during the Games, although nearby the stadium in the Rudi Sedlmayer Halle, was the basketball final between USSR and the USA. In true cold war

style, controversy of the highest order happened in the final seconds of the game. Those of you who can remember will know why the USA team's medals are still in a Swiss bank vault. If you want a lesson in how to officiate a game with the highest level of ineptitude and to save column inches, have a look at a rerun on *YouTube*, as that is the easiest way. To say the USA were robbed is an understatement. You decide for yourselves but I hope nothing like it happens again.

Finally we took a look at the Olympic stadium. Not just the place of sporting excellence but for a number of years, the home of German football. Remember the 1974 World Cup Final with the excellent **Jack Taylor** awarding a penalty against the Germans on home soil - courage and officiating of the highest order.

Also, who could forget **Trevor Francis** scoring for Nottingham Forest, **Marco Van Basten's** volley or **Michael Owen's** hat trick. As *Radio 5Live's* **Alan Green** said: "Get this for a score-line, Germany 1 England 5."

Let's hope history repeats itself and the 2012 Olympics will leave us with an Olympic complex, Olympic memories and a legacy that will last a life time - and for all the right reasons...

Richard Potter (T51)

In a message to both sections of the trade, *London Taxis and Private Hire* Director, **John Mason** has said that from the new Year a list showing the name and licence number of drivers whose licence has been revoked as a result of a touting conviction, will be published on the TfL website and that a Privacy Notice has been updated to cover publication of the information.

Any licensed private hire driver convicted or cautioned for touting will have their private hire driver's licence revoked.

Mr Mason explained that in order to carry out the day-to-day taxi and private hire licensing functions, all applicants and licensees have to submit a range of personal information to TfL. However, the *Data Protection Act 1998* regulates the use of personal information by organisations including TfL, so the **London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH) Privacy Notice** will set out how TfL will use the data provided by all applicants and licensees.

Any licensed private hire driver convicted or cautioned for touting would have their private hire driver's licence revoked and should they decide to appeal against it, then they should inform TfL immediately.

Mr Mason ended by telling *Call Sign*: "Touting is a serious offence that puts the public at risk and is a threat to the business of licensed and law abiding taxi and private hire drivers. The publication of the name and licence number of drivers who have been convicted of touting and had their licence revoked, is intended to deter licensed drivers from illegally touting, improve public safety and support TfL's *Safer Travel at Night* initiative."

More information about how TfL uses and protects personal information about taxi/private hire licensees is available at www.tfl.gov.uk/privacy.

TOUTS TO HAVE LICENCE REVOKED!

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!

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"It was one day back in August, notoriously one of the quietest trading months of the whole year," **Ted Bond (P04)** told *Call Sign* with a cheeky sparkle in his eyes, "and all I could manage was just one credit ride job all day! Mind you, it was no ordinary fare; in fact, it was almost certainly a unique career opportunity!"

So with *Call Sign's* attention threshold raised, we listened to Ted as he told his story...

"I live in West Wickham and start work around 7am each day. On this particular morning I signed on to my DaC terminal as usual and booked into my home zone. Within a few minutes, the terminal beeped into life with a trip offer to pick up a credit trip from near Crystal Palace going to the City and then on to London City Airport. Naturally I accepted the trip thinking what a lovely start to the day!"

It was only when I scrolled over to page 2 of my instructions that I realised this was no ordinary job and I had to look twice at my screen to confirm what I had read - *You will be needed all day...*

We made numerous stops in the City - Bread Street, Poultry, Threadneedle Street and several other addresses within the square mile, including Bishopsgate where we collected a young lady before they stopped for lunch in Fenchurch Street.

I was very careful where I waited while the passenger was at various meetings, explaining to him about the zealous use of enforcement cameras and he was appreciative of the problem allowing me to circulate the roads when I could not park comfortably nearby his meet-

JUST ONE JOB!



Ted after his once-in-a-lifetime job!

ings.

Occasionally I would pop off for a coffee and so long as I was back in time to get him to his next appointment, it was all fine. It was around 13.30 and I managed to park up at the back of Fenchurch Street station rank over the lunch period before the next round of business meetings continued apace.

Then came the crunch terminal message that turned this from a brilliant job into a once-in-a-lifetime one. It said that my final destination

was no longer City airport but that I now had to take him to Heathrow Terminal 5 instead and just to make life more interesting, it was via yet another meeting in St. James Street. We finally arrived at Heathrow at around 17.30 - over ten hours since I first accepted the trip!

Making the day even more pleasant was the fact that it was holiday time and the roads were generally quiet so I was able to keep to good time between meetings and get out to the flyers without too much worry.

That customer was a real first rate gentleman throughout the day, understanding my waiting and parking problems, allowing me to do whatever I felt necessary to stay out of trouble. So long as I was back in time to get him to his next meeting, he was happy.

After I set the passenger down at T5, I shot round the M25 towards home. My wife hardly believed me when I related the days' activities to her and I reckon it's a 'once-in-a-career' scenario for me too...especially the £400+ and 421 minutes waiting time I clocked up!"

With a broad grin, Ted drove off in case a fare wanted to go to West Wickham!

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Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers

EIGHTH ANNUAL LIVERYMEN'S DINNER

The *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* held their 8th annual Liverymen's dinner on 24th November 2011. Liverymen and their guests attended a champagne reception before the dinner itself at the magnificent Cutlers Hall in Warwick Lane. During the court meeting, which took place before the dinner, **John Sheen** was admitted as a Court Assistant. John retired from his role as WCHCD Beadle last year and was subsequently invited to join the Court of Assistants. His position as Beadle was taken by Dial-a-Cab's **Sean Ferry (T90)**.

Prior to the reception, some important admissions and presentations were made and as usual, several were from **Dial-a-Cab**. Firstly, six Freemen of The *Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers* were clothed in the livery and one Honorary Freeman was also clothed. This was **Philip Scott**, one of the police officers who is involved in the annual *Magical Taxi Tour* and a keen supporter of the WCHCD. The Freemen clothed were **Dennis Heavin (A01)**, **Steve Tyson (V99)**, **James Black**, **Anthony Collins**, **Sandra Cox** and **Garry Holman**. Three new Freemen were also admitted to the Company - **Richard Chamberlain (C96)**, **Gurinder Dhillon** and **Kelati Measho**. The clothing and admissions ceremonies were followed by the presentation of badges and certificates to the latest students to have passed the **Cab Guide Course**. All the students agreed how much they enjoyed the course and the knowledge they had gained from it. The 15 students, as well as the new Freemen and Liverymen, were all congratulated by the Master, **Eddie Crossley**, during the dinner. The WCHCD is proud of its Cab Guide Course and the number of interested enquiries regarding future courses shows how popular the course has become.

The next course begins in February 2012, further details of which can be obtained from The Clerk, Mary Whitworth via email: wchcd@tiscali.co.uk or Tel/Fax: 01494 765922.

At the dinner, one of the WCHCD Awards was made. These Awards are made in special circumstances to acknowledge an act of bravery, The *Hitch Award* or the *Friend of the Cab Trade Award*. This year, the *Friend of the Cab Trade Award* was made to **Piero Marzzi**. As he presented the Award, the Master said: "This award is being presented to someone many of you will know if you frequent any of the **Piccolo** café bars. Piero has given continued support for our trade over the last 35 years, not only for his first class hospitality and refreshments but for successful campaigning for rest ranks outside two of his premises, Queen Victoria Street and Gresham Street."

Guest speaker was **Adrian Leppard**, *Commissioner of Police for the City of London*. He gave an interesting speech that showed an understanding of the cab trade and the demands made on it. He also spoke to several Freemen and Liverymen after the dinner about the challenges faced by the officers serving the City of London with regard to touting and illegal minicabs. He also spoke of supporting the trade in regard to using the Olympic lanes.

Membership of the WCHCD is very diverse and all members have one thing in common. They wish to promote the world famous taxi trade as the best in the world. Social events such as dinners are a good way of talking to colleagues within the trade. Many drivers attending this event took part in this year's *Magical Taxi Tour*. Charity and education are important roles within City Livery Companies and the WCHCD is held in high esteem throughout the City.

Our thanks to Sandie Goodwin for the report...



New Beadle, DaC's Sean Ferry

In the December 2008 issue of *Call Sign*, a **Dial-a-Cab** driver told how he had been accused of kidnapping his passenger, even though he was just taking her to the police station after she threw up in his taxi and refused to pay him anything. She also attempted to kick the driver's taxi windows out! Fortunately a *Big Issue* vendor saw everything and corroborated the DaC driver's version of events. His passenger was charged with criminal damage, found guilty and ordered to pay the driver £300 in damages.

Now Manchester based **Howard's Solicitors** have told this magazine of a similar incident. The case centres on false imprisonment after a dispute over a taxi fare. The resulting accident and liability that was attributed to the taxi driver for the injuries sustained showed that should an incident such as refusal to pay a fare happen, then alternative legal ways must be sought and that taking the law into your own hands will probably not have such a happy result as our driver had in 2008.

The consequences in this new case over a fare dispute amounted to just £3, should act as a warning now that the Law has further clarified this issue.

Taxi law experts **Howards Solicitors** are warning drivers not to take the law into their own hands, even if they believe they are being provoked following a new landmark ruling. The case of *Eve Lamb v Equity Red Star* has set a new precedent for the duty of care demanded of taxi drivers towards their passengers and other road users. The taxi driver who was insured by **Equity Red Star** - the UK's sixth largest insurers - had been found liable of false imprisonment after he refused to let his passengers leave the vehicle following a fare dispute.

Taking the law into your own hands???



The damage to the DaC taxi in 2008. That driver won but may well have lost today

In the ensuing confrontation between the driver and Ms Lamb's partner, she suffered a broken hip that required 6 weeks in hospital after the driver lost control of his vehicle. Just as in the DaC driver's 2008 case, the Manchester taxi driver decided to take the couple to a police station despite repeated requests to be allowed to exit - an action that was deemed as false imprisonment by the court.

This has led to a key ruling that the dri-

ver had a strict liability, which makes him legally responsible for the damage and loss caused by his acts regardless of fault. Ms Lamb was awarded £13,250 in damages.

Deputy District Judge Jones also commented in his judgement that the driver had the option to stop his vehicle, but continued and so posed a significant danger to other road users as well as his passengers. Howards Solicitors, who work closely with the taxi trade, represented Ms Lamb and believe that taxi drivers must take away key lessons away from this case.

Gavyn Atkinson, head of personal injury and civil litigation who worked on the case at Howards, has advised: "If you are a taxi driver who believes that you have been wronged, do not take the law into your own hands, pursue other options. If you find yourself in a difficult position, call the Police, drop off passengers outside their homes or places of work and note the address. If you can install cameras in your cab, then so much the better."

Mr Atkinson continued that only in cases of self-defence where you honestly believe that there is a threat to your physical well-being, would it be acknowledged that there might not be any reasonable alternative. However, cases that go to court are often not clear-cut in regards to self-defence.

Howards Solicitors are at www.howards-solicitors.co.uk.

Taxi drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd

www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk



Taxi drivers Legal Protection Ltd was formed in 2009 by **Alan Fleming** and **Dave Cohen (E94)**. We were both involved in the LCDC for many years, our roles being Chairman and Treasurer / Membership Secretary.

Taxi drivers Legal Protection is not a political organisation, but we provide vital legal representation for members to protect their licenses. We offer cover for all Hackney Carriage, motoring offences and representation for revocations and suspensions of your cab driver's licence, which could arise from health issues, malicious, spurious or unfounded complaints.

We now operate nationwide and have a team of Legal Appointees whose services can be called upon if and when required.

Exclusions

The only exclusions relate to claims made retrospectively when an applicant joins after the date of an offence. However, we will provide advice where appropriate or provide you with a legal contact at your expense. Non-trade related civil matters are not covered including Motor Contract Disputes, which are not covered under the terms of our Legal Insurance Expenses scheme.

Subscription Rate

Our subscriptions now start at just £8.00 a month, which are payable by Standing Order. Alternatively, subscriptions can be paid quarterly at £24.00 or a one off annual payment of £96.00. You can also submit one cheque for £32 and two post-dated cheques dated one month apart for the same amounts. We can also accept annual fees via **PayPal**. Further details are available on our website.

Joining Taxi drivers Legal Protection Ltd could not be simpler. Just take a look at our website, www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk where you will find a printable application form for posting or joining directly online and further information regarding our services.

If you would like further information, take a look at our website; www.taxidriverslegalprotection.co.uk or call Dave on 07956 894701 or Alan on 07831 092123. If you have any questions, you can contact us via our electronic Online Mailing Form, which can also be located on the website.

If you are already a member, please remember to increase your monthly or quarterly payments by instructing your bank to amend your subscription. Finally, remember that stopping to pick up or set down on zigzag markings is an offence and should be avoided. However, it is another issue if a passenger decides to board or alight while you are allowing pedestrians to cross the road or in stationary in traffic.

Dave Cohen (E94)

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



Hello Ladies & Gents,

Due to the imposed deadline at **Call Sign's** printers, I'm writing this article in mid-December, so I hope you all enjoyed a busy lead-up to the Christmas period and into the New Year.

The year ahead promises to be highly competitive and it is even more important that we all work within the rules of the Society. Run-ins must be adhered to, high levels of customer care are vital and generally speaking going that extra mile to keep us ahead of the competition is so important.

Together with the help of the Call Centre, I will do all in my power to ensure that our Society is safeguarded and that the system is not only equal for all, but that every member is dealt with equally. It is my opinion that we are fortunate to have a vastly experienced Board in place that can - and will - confidently face up to the challenges that lie ahead.

Eurostar late night pick-ups...

In last month's issue of the magazine, both I and

the Editor mentioned that a number of our members had reported some problems and delays at the Eurostar St Pancras coach park whilst waiting for their account pickups - particularly late into the evening. I was eventually able to contact the Operations Manager at Eurostar and rather than change any of his answers, I thought it would be better to insert his reply to my original email, which is self-explanatory:-

The coach road is only manned from 06:45 to 22:45 Monday to Sunday. Due to the relatively low usage of the coach road outside of these hours, there is no business justification for this position being manned. Therefore out of these hours taxi drivers will need to call the station control room on 0207 843 4261 - the controller will then radio for the nearest member of staff to attend the barriers to let the taxi drivers out, which should typically not be more than a few minutes at most. However if the number is not called, then it may be a while before a member of staff happens to be passing. Repeatedly beeping the horn (which often happens even after 11pm) will have no effect as it cannot be heard in the control room, so it may well be worth briefing out the telephone number to drivers if you have such a facility open to you. I will also ask the control room to try to monitor CCTV images for this area after 22:45 and to look out for vehicles waiting to leave. However, due to the activity in there this can still be missed, so would advise still calling the number.

In terms of operations during the day, we are looking into fitting a remote control system for the exit blockers that can be operated from the but in order to let vehicles out,

which should make it quicker for vehicles to leave the coach road. However as the station is a grade one listed building, it will take some time to get approval for this and at this stage it has not yet even been confirmed as there are a few other obstacles we need to overcome. I will update you should any further progress be made around this.

And as a reminder...

It's a New Year and at the risk of repeating myself, there are a number of points I would like to remind you of:

- * The maximum run in (excluding TaxiCard trips or otherwise authorised) is £4.20 at the PB time or on arrival for an ASAP trip.
- * Remember to press your **On Board Button** (PoB) as soon as the client enters your taxi.
- * You must be on the actual rank at City Airport (CC00) before booking in.
- * There is no minimum fare on a Scrubbed trip.
- * To ensure payment on a Credit Card trip, it is essential to obtain a signed manual receipt if you're out of signal range and unable to print a receipt through the terminal (most important).
- * Please remember when you press the **Arrival** button it does not automatically advise arrival. To advise arrival press **Advise**.
- * If you use the **Parked** button to inform the Call Centre of your location, this must be done before you actually press advise arrival (**Advise**).

Finally, can I wish all of you and your loved ones a Very Happy and Prosperous 2012, may you all be very lucky...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

Half of women say partners affect their driving, so what of those on Dial-a-Cab???

DRIVING WOMEN DRIVE MEN CRAZY?

A recent survey carried out by the UK's largest insurer, **Aviva**, suggests that over half of women drivers admit that having their partner in the car adversely affects their driving! The results say that partners being present makes females feel stressed and nervous.

Men are said to feel less likely to be affected by having their partner in the car, although one in ten say they drive more carefully when their partner is in the car with them! However, the research also shows a similar number of men refuse to let their partner drive their car. Of these, 20% say it's because they do not rate their partner's driving abilities as highly as their own, 26% believe their car is too powerful for their partner to drive and 16% feel their partner suffers from a lack of confidence when driving!

Heather Smith, Aviva's director of marketing, told **Call Sign**:

"While men in relationships might feel more comfortable taking on the majority of driving, it is important that both men and women regularly get behind the wheel to ensure that their skills remain fresh."

Call Sign asked two of Dial-a-Cab's female drivers whether they felt the survey results were accurate and that having a partner in the car with them made them feel nervous...

Natalia Shalom (A34) was the obvious first choice as her partner **Daniel Woodhouse (K84)** is also a driver on Dial-a-Cab. Natalia told **Call Sign** at first that Daniel's presence in the car had no effect on her driving, but she suddenly changed her mind.

"Now that I think about it, there are times when I'm driving and Daniel is a passenger when I do feel slightly nervous. That probably reflects itself more in my parking, because on my own I park very well but when Daniel is next to me, I seem to lose a bit of confidence. Yet Daniel never comments or looks as though he even wants to!"

Jackie Kott (Y88) backed Natalia's comments and also surprised **Call Sign** by confirming that the survey results were probably correct. She told us that when she was in her taxi, she had the ultimate confidence in her driving ability and had often been complimented by passengers who perhaps were still surprised to see a woman taxi driver.

"Yet when I'm in a car and a man is next to me, I do tend to feel nervous and I really don't know why. If that person criticises your ability then it would possibly be understandable, but even when they just sit there it tends to make me nervous. I recently road-tested a car with a view to buying it and I felt really nervous with a salesman next to me, yet if that same man had been in the back of my taxi it wouldn't have bothered me in the slightest!"

If you are a female on DaC, do you agree with the survey results? Call Sign will be happy to publish your comments...



Natalia feels nervous when Daniel is a passenger



Jackie is also a nervous car driver when a male is in the passenger seat



Call Centre Manager Keith Cain presents Jackie with Call Sign's £500 cheque

After almost 15 years of running competitions, finally a **Dial-a-Cab** call taker has won **Call**

At last! Call Taker wins Call Sign comp!

Sign's prize! And in an ironic twist, this competition had the highest entry number ever for any prize offered by ANY taxi magazine anywhere, with a huge number of entries from drivers swamping the twenty or so from DaC's third floor.

There were 672 entries in total for a competition that offered a £500 prize for naming three stills from old television programmes. The stills tied in with the 75th anniversary of the first ever broadcast and to also show that the old progs don't get forgotten. To make life even more difficult, very few of the 672 entrants got the answers wrong.

For those who weren't sure, picture A had the Lone Ranger and Tonto in **The Lone Ranger**; B saw Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz in **I Love Lucy**

whilst C saw the inimitable Sgt Bilko in **The Phil Silvers Show**.

The draw was made on Monday 12 December by **Dionne Bennett**, DaC's *Human Resources* officer. She picked the winning name out of a huge bag stuffed with entries. The name was **Jackie Franklin**, a Call Centre CSR. Dionne then picked out several others just to confirm that all the entries were different.

When **Call Sign** told Jackie she had won, she gave out a loud scream. At first we thought she had misheard us... but she hadn't. It was a scream of joy followed by a one-word comment: "Brilliant!"

So well done Jackie, we're sure £500 won't have harmed her Christmas and New Year too much!

GOVERNMENT RETHINK ON ENHANCED CRB CHECKS?

As new CRB system is launched...

The Minister for Crime Prevention, **Lord Henley**, has announced that the Government will reconsider its view that enhanced criminal records checks are not needed for taxi and minicab drivers. The **Criminal Records Bureau** informed councils earlier this year that it was ending the 10-year practice of checking drivers via the enhanced check.

Lord Henley made the announcement during the Lords debate of the *Protection of Freedoms Bill* following a proposed amendment to reintroduce the checks by **Baroness Doocey**. She had stated that in London alone, 10% of all licence applications were refused as a result of discoveries made through an enhanced check, demonstrating the check's clear contribution to passenger safety.

Both TfL and the LGA have been lobbying for HMG to reconsider its position and welcome the announcement. TfL worked closely with Baroness Doocey over the tabling of the amendment, which was withdrawn, but HMG committed to taking it forward through other methods. The changes can be made using an amendment via the *1997 Police Act* and could come into force as early as February 2012.

In the meantime, the CRB have announced a new and more efficient procedure to help reduce processing time for London Taxi driver licensing applications. From the end of November, the umbrella body for the CRB, TMG CRB, who are established experts in this field, will process CRB checks for taxi driver applicants on behalf of Transport for London. As part of the change, TMG CRB will offer all drivers the option to complete the CRB application online. However, the traditional method of completing a paper application form will still be available if preferred.

TMG CRB will also provide a dedicated administration team to handle all queries and issues regarding CRB applications. Guidance regarding the forms and further information will be included in licensing application packs and will also be available on the TMG CRB website. There will be an administration cost of £13 for a paper application or £11 for an online application (inclusive of VAT).

London Taxi and Private Hire will continue to hold the decision-making powers on all licensing applications. **Helen Chapman**, Deputy Director of LTPH, told **Call Sign**:

"I'm very pleased to announce a new process for carrying out CRB checks and I hope that applicants will quickly reap the rewards of a quicker, more efficient application process."

Critically acclaimed new British restaurant has launched a brilliant incentive for licensed London taxi drivers

Bring 10 individual reservations, receive £50 voucher to spend at the Restaurant

Bring a further 10 individual reservations, receive £100 voucher to spend at the Restaurant

Register your details with your driver number at the Restaurant or by email or telephone

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Camilla, *The Duchess of Cornwall* and Patron of the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children**, thrilled the eight children, eight carers and nine committee members who all got into the festive spirit assisting her in decorating the Clarence House Christmas tree. The Fund was invited, along with 16 youngsters supported by the **Helen and Douglas House Hospice** for children.

After helping the children decorate the tree, The Duchess also supplied some Clarence House tea along with biscuits, chocolate, crisps and cakes! Her Equerry, **Captain Charles Fraser-Sampson** of the Welsh Guards - who was dressed in his traditional scarlet tunic - cheered the children by letting them try on his bearskin!

Before tea, LTFUC's Hon President and **Dial-a-Cab's** longest serving driver **Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)**, introduced each Committee member separately to Her Royal Highness while the Fund's Hon Chair **Susan Angel** thanked her for inviting them. Before leaving, Camilla handed each child a goody bag filled with sweets and Christmas gifts and then went outside to inspect the fund's Reindeer taxi. Her broad smile told how amused the sight made her!

The eight children supported by the LTFUC are all students at the **Jack Taylor School** for children with severe learning disabilities. They were collected from the school in Swiss Cottage, and driven to Clarence House in a fleet of taxis.

Camilla thrills the LTFUC Xmas kids!



Camilla helps 3 year old Finley Middleton decorate the tree



Rudolph leads the way!

One of them had *Call Sign's* photographer **Alan Green (E52)** squeezed in, whilst the lead cab, driven by *ComCab's* **Steve Bell** certainly created a stir as it drove the journey decked out as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer!

Dial-a-Cab Board member and LTFUC Committee member, **Mike Son**, told *Call Sign*:

"The Duchess was just brilliant with the children. Not only was she the perfect host but she

remembered the name of every one of the kids. It was just a magnificent day with her staff admitting that this was one of her favourite days of the year!"

The NW8 school was named after the former DaC and LTFUC Chairman, **Jack Taylor** (see Mike Son's article in this issue for sad news about the school)...

The Vito and Albert Bridge

Last month's *Call Sign* gave the date when **Albert Bridge** would be reopening. The article mentioned nothing about exceptions, however a driver on **Dial-a-Cab** put out a message that said that so far as taxis were concerned, only TX4s would be able to use the repaired Thames crossing and that due to the Vito's heavier weight they would not be allowed to use it. Naturally that caused Vito drivers some considerable concern with the fear that trips in the *Mercedes* taxi would cost considerably more than the same trip in an LTI cab.

That driver's information was incorrect and Albert Bridge's new weight limit of three tonnes (up from the previous two tonnes) is more than ample to allow Vitos cross there. However, Vito owners should be extra careful when negotiating the northbound bollards just before the bridge as the gap doesn't allow Vitos too much room.

When asking the Contact Centre to put a message out, please be certain that the information is correct as that driver's message reached the hallowed halls of **London Taxis and Private Hire**, causing *Call Sign* to get a message from our licensing masters asking whether the original message came from **Transport for London** as LTPH hadn't been told about it. As it wasn't true, that probably explained why they hadn't been told!

But the bottom line is that Vitos CAN use Albert Bridge...

Alan Fisher



The Vito CAN use Albert Bridge!



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

Dial-a-Cab's daytime shift operations Manager in the **Contact Centre**, **Lee Moreland**, recently completed the annual **10K Santa Run** in aid of the **Rainbow Trust**. He ran with his brother-in-law **Stephen Palmer**, who works for **Nomura** - part sponsors of the event.

Lee told **Call Sign**: "I joined 2,000 other Santa's to take part in the charity run around Greenwich Park. I was running for Rainbow Trust, a very special organisation that supports families who are facing the unimaginable prospect of losing their child to a life-threatening or terminal illness. By providing both emotional and practical support, they strive to help families through this devastating time."

The support given to the families in Rainbow Trust care starts from diagnosis and can continue throughout treatment. Rainbow provides immediate help to families in turmoil."

All the money that came in through Lee's sponsorship went directly to Rainbow Trust, helping them to support 1,150 families in England over the Christmas period, many of who spent the festive season in hospital. Rainbow Trust can't change the diagnosis or

Lee's Santa run for Rainbow Trust



Lee after the Santa run

the treatment, but they can - and do - help families to cope.

So well done Lee. Mind you, we didn't realise you had a disguise on!

Fiona's Disney at Disney!

If you have been in the taxi business for more than 10 minutes, you'll know that the **Children's Magical Taxi Tour** is organised yearly by the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**. Each year it takes around 200 children - many of whom suffer with life-threatening illnesses - to the Disneyland Resort, Paris. Many of the volunteer drivers and organisers are from **Dial-a-Cab**, but in this case that comes second to the brilliant job they all do. The children have an amazing weekend and the trade gets some welcome good publicity rather than the nit-picking the press usually love to lay on us!

Once each year, the WCHCD lay on a Christmas gala ball in which they raise funds for the next Disney trip via raffles and an auction. This year's ball raised over £4000 and included in that magnificent total was a hand-made **Disney** cross stitch picture of **Mickey and Minnie Mouse** from **Dial-a-Cab Customer Service Representative, Fiona Mclachlan**. This is the second time Fiona has made a cross stitch for the WCHCD auction and just like last time, it was snapped up in ultra-quick time.

On behalf of WCHCD Master, **Eddie Crossley**, DaC driver and former Master **Jim Rainbird (T25)** asked **Call Sign** to thank Fiona for her amazing piece of artistry. And of course we are happy to do so...



Fiona with her amazing cross-stitch

Presented to the London Taxi Company's Nigel Walters...

Fellowship of the Institute of Export and International Trade!

On 8 November 2011, The London Taxi Company's **Nigel Walters**, who is their *Export Logistics Manager*, was awarded a Fellowship of the Institute of Export and International Trade.

Nigel has been working in the overseas logistics business for over 26 years. During his latter 11 years and while working for **The London Taxi Company**, Nigel has seen the iconic and purpose-built London Taxi sold into more than 60 countries around the world.

Nigel is also active within various export forums in his local community, which help support and inform local international traders.

He was presented with his Certificate of Fellowship by **Doug Tweddle CBE**, who is both National Chairman and Vice-President of The Institute of Export and International Trade, having recently retired as Director of HM Customs and Revenue.

"A Fellowship can only be given by invitation from the Institute and it is always a pleasure to reward local members who have made an exceptional contribution to the achievement of the Institute's principal aims of representing and supporting the interests of everyone involved in importing, exporting and international trade," said Mr Tweddle during the presentation.

Nigel told **Call Sign**: "I am obviously flattered and pleased to receive this award and would like to thank The London Taxi Company for their support in allowing me to be so involved in my vocation."

2011 was a record year for exports of the London Taxi with an order of 1000 vehicles received from Azerbaijan and over 125 vehicles delivered into the Middle East.



Nigel (left) is presented with his award



For the past two issues of *Call Sign*, D a C Company Secretary **Howard Pears** has advertised a vacancy for one DaC subscriber to become

an Arbitrator. Howard asked for those interested who could meet the minimum criteria of

Arbitrator elected unopposed!

five consecutive year's membership, to apply before Monday 12 December and that a postal ballot would then take place at a future time. Candidates were also invited to send a brief CV for publication in *Call Sign*.

By 12 December, just one driver had applied and will be classified as a volunteer for the DaC Arbitration committee

and no election will now be needed.

The new member is **Garry White (L65)**. He has been driving a cab for 24 years and been a member of Dial-a-Cab for 22 of them.

Garry told *Call Sign*: "I am delighted to be on the Arbitration committee and will always give my fair and considered opinion whenever asked to do so."

Goodbye to DaC...

It happens to us all at some time and now it's Monty Dobrin's (B56) turn! Monty tells *Call Sign* the story...

"I have been a licensed taxi driver since 1958 and a member of ODRTS since 1975 and enjoyed every minute of it. I only work two days a week now and my P Reg Fairway taxi, which is still in good condition, has to come off the road by 17th February 2012. I am too old to buy another taxi and don't want to go and hire a taxi from a garage as I don't like working without the radio.

So I have now decided that enough is enough and I am going to retire and would like to wish *Call Sign* and everybody at **Dial-a-Cab** the best of luck for the future. But does anyone know what I can do with my Fairway in February...?"

So the best of luck in your retirement Monty. But can anyone tell Monty what he can do with his Fairway – and please keep it clean!

As Monty says goodbye to DaC, he wonders what he can do with his Fairway? Any ideas?



TOBY THE TAXI MEETS THE QUEEN!

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In the charming full colour children's book *Toby Meets the Queen* by Edwin Vaux (Troubador Publishing £5.50) **Toby the Taxi** takes a job in a million when his passenger asks to be taken to Buckingham Palace! The title of the book gives a clue to all the fun and excitement that is about to befall Toby.

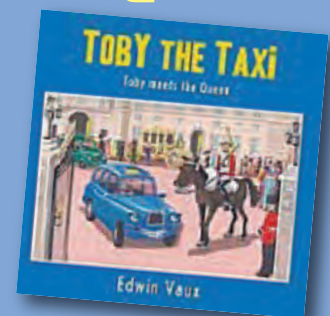
This is the first in the *Toby the Taxi* series, which follows the adventures of a rather special London taxi. He encounters many unusual situations as we London taxi drivers often do, but despite difficult circumstances everything will turn out well in the end. The series is educational and informative for children, introducing the geography and history of one of the world's great capitals.

As Toby reaches the Palace, he desperately looks for a glimpse of the Queen but to no avail. However, his disappointment is forgotten when a curious encounter occurs later that day.

Toby meets the Queen is beautifully illustrated, bringing the scenes in the book to life whilst enhancing the delightful characters in the series. No, Toby isn't on **Dial-a-Cab**, but he really is a very nice taxi and all children will love reading about his adventures.

Author **Edwin Vaux** has been inspired by his life experience having been a London cab driver since 1963 and of course he has the Knowledge in addition to lots of stories and situations for Toby to get into!

***Toby Meets the Queen* by Edwin Vaux (Troubador Publishing £5.50)**



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I'm pleased to say that in 2012 the **London Taxidrivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** will be celebrating 84 years of helping disabled and disadvantaged children. The fund is made up of a group of trustees - eleven men and two women - and it gives me pride and pleasure to say that following the footsteps of many great honorary Chairmen, I became Honorary Chair in December 2010. My first act was to present the *Joseph Clarke School* (for children with visual impairment and other health problems) with some special computer equipment enabling them to take their GCEs and A levels on software compatible to their needs. The energy of the pupils and commitment of the teachers was amazing and very heart rendering.

In **December 2010** we were graciously invited to *Clarence House* by our patron *Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall* to take some disabled children from the *Jack Taylor School* for lunch and to help decorate their ground floor Christmas tree. What a day we all had and may I thank HRH the Duchess of Cornwall for the most special invite.

Also in **December 2010**, for the first time in this charity's history we held a *Gala Christmas Concert* in St John's, Smith Square featuring *The London Charity Orchestra* with *Sir William Carslake* conducting, guest flute soloist *Emma Halnan* and harpist *Hannah Butler* and the choir of the *Finchley Children's Music Group*. I would like to thank all those wonderful musicians and choristers for their time and expertise and for making the evening such a tremendous success. I would also like to thank those who sponsored the evening.

Then came January 2011 and the 39th annual *Mad Hatters Tea Party* in the Great Room of the *Grosvenor House*. There were over 600 disabled and disadvantaged children at this great event and I'd like to thank all the celebrities, performers, clowns and furry characters etc for their input. I would also like to thank the *Grosvenor House* and staff for their continued support in allowing us to stage this event.

In **June 2011** *Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)*, *Lilian Julier*, *Ray Levy* and I were invited to meet *HRH The Princess Royal*, *Princess Anne* at *The Aboy Centre* in Bermondsey. *Princess Anne* was very gracious and understanding on the subjects that we London cabbies like to chat about - you know, the weather, traffic and putting the world to rights!

In **July 2011** we had our annual outing to Southend for over 300 disabled and disadvantaged children. A great big thank you is sent to all those people involved. Also in July 2011 we attended the summer barbecue of *Giving Kids a Break*. We donate to this very good cause and it is good to see how well spent our donation is.

September 2011 saw us participating in the *Pearlies Harvest Festival* at The Guildhall and afterwards at the famous *St Mary-Le-Bow Church* in the City. The Pearly King and Queens support us constantly, for which we are very grateful. **October 2011** saw our *Fun Day* in Covent Garden when we took over part of the Piazza and a great time was had by all those attending. In **December** we had great pleasure in attending the *Taxi Driver of the Year* dinner and dance and are very grateful for their con-

LTFUC Hon Chair Report 2011



tinued support and for the cheque donated to us.

My first year as Honorary Chair has brought many exciting and wonderful events to preside over. The meetings are always a lively affair with each project sorted, sometimes with or without humour, but always with professionalism. I work alongside a most wonderful set of committee members, these hard working guys and girls are a great team. We work as hard as we can for no remuneration and give that most precious commodity - time. I look forward to whatever the next year brings us as trustees, because I know we will do our best and I thank them for their continued support.

I would also like to thank the wives and partners of the trustees, *Grace*, *Evelyn* and *Sandra* for their help and understanding, *Maureen* for her help, kindness, for the party entertainers

and for her website prowess, *Elaine* for her help at events, *Ros* and *Maxine* for their help and common sense, *Maria*, *Tony* and *Susan* for your help and kindness and all for their patience and last, but not least, my husband *Gerald* whose love and support I could not do without.

Larry Abrahams retired at the AGM, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of the Honorary President, trustees and children for his hard work and commitment over the many years he has belonged to this Fund. I would also like to thank his wife *Susan* for her hard work and support and wish them good health and happiness in their retirement.

Sheldon Collins left the fund this year and on behalf of the Honorary President and trustees, we would like to thank him for his past endeavours. I also thank *Helen* and the children for their help and wish them all the best for the future.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the *drivers*, their *partners*, families and all those people who tirelessly give up their time to come along and support the LTFUC time and time again.

Fund activity reports can be found at www.thelondontaxidriverschildrenscharity.co.uk.

Susan Angel
LTFUC Honorary Chair

Welcomed by the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign as we head towards the Olympics...

TAXI ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS

Taxi ranks at Heathrow, Victoria, Kings Cross, City Airport, Stratford and Paddington have seen the launch of a new accessibility awareness campaign from LTPH compliance officers, which has been welcomed by the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign *Trailblazers*, a leading campaign group for young disabled people.

Over the course of three days, the officers visited the ranks and engaged with around 500 drivers, handing out leaflets reminding them of specific responsibilities to disabled passengers. Many drivers were from **Dial-a-Cab**, who already cover the *Westminster TaxiCard* account. **Bobby Ancil**, *Trailblazers* Project Manager, told **Call Sign**:

"Accessible taxis are often the only mode of transport that many disabled people can use to get to their destination safely and independently in and around London. Hackney carriages in London are physically accessible to many wheelchair users, which should be recognised and celebrated. Given this, it is regrettable that it can often be a driver's attitude that leads to a person being left stranded. The freedom to be spontaneous and hail a taxi on the street should be the same for anyone, regardless of whether they are disabled. So TfL's campaign on-street activity is a welcome decision so that drivers understand not only their legal obligations, but also their responsibilities as taxi drivers. Providing exceptional service is a long term investment providing a vital service enabling disabled people to live independently and with confidence."

The awareness raising exercise gave drivers the opportunity to engage directly with compliance officers and to ask for advice in using equipment such as the intermediate step, access ramp or securing wheelchairs correctly.

The rank visits mark the start of a concerted campaign by TfL to ensure London's taxi trade is fully prepared and equipped to provide a top class service for all visitors to the capital, ahead of the Olympic and Paralympic Games next year.

Director of Taxi and Private Hire at LTPH, **John Mason**, told **Call Sign**: "I was delighted to hear of the positive response to our accessibility campaign, which once again highlights why London cab drivers are so widely respected around the world. I am sure the London's cab trade will continue to support this campaign and ensure that they and their vehicles are fully equipped to cater for all passengers in the run up to and during the London 2012 Games."



Mailshot

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

Addison Lee

Hi Alan

I've been thinking about Addy Lee's taking control of Lewis Day's minicab fleet and it got me thinking (if you say I shouldn't think, then you're not the first)! That's two big players under control of Addy Lee now, the first being Premier Cars before Lewis Day. So how many big minicab fleets are left? When it comes to tendering for these huge corporate accounts, who's left? How many car companies are left with fleets of more than 200 or 300 cars? How many cars do you need to tender for a major investment bank or corporate law firm or to service a London airport terminal? It makes me wonder why Lewis Day has given it all up, do they see little profit from this work? As I understand it, their hospital transport is still in business. This may be good for the radio taxi circuits, the fewer firms that can tender the better for us. I know there are some companies that tried minicabs and have not been happy with their service or drivers, or am I just a dreamer?

With Addy Lee taking over these companies, that gives little scope for DaC to step in and take over a profitable car service to take them on.

Jon Robinson (E88)

Hi Jon, yes, there are still a number of big minicab companies out there and some, like Brunel, carry a substantial amount of respect. I can't help but wonder whether there will come a time when the names of Dial-a-Cab and A N Other Cab become one? Either way, I now believe that there may be just two choices left for us. One is to maintain the *status quo* and remain as we are and as things stand, that could be a dangerous ploy with traffic overtaking us all around. The second choice - and as much as I never thought I would say it in print - could be to demutualise and put the fear of God into everyone else ...Ed

Addy Lee and bus lanes

I just heard a conversation between a Lewis Day driver and Marshal outside DB at London Wall. They were talking about LD merging with Addison Lee, that AL had recently been involved in a case in the European Court re the use of London bus lanes and that they would be using them as of March 2012. Then one said that John Griffin would pay any PCN fines as he did on the M4 bus lane. Is it just gossip or will that come true?

Divyesh Ruparelia (V59)

If John Griffin told his drivers to use bus

lanes regardless, as he did the M4, he would then refuse to pay the PCN fines and elect to go to the European court where he always claimed that he would win. But I can't see TfL or the Highway Agency allowing rulings from Strasbourg to overtake our own ones, because if every minicab firm was allowed in the lanes then they might as well be shut anyway. But we'll see ...Ed

Thank you Jon and all of you...

Friends,

I had a visit today from **Chris Hanrahan (B47)** with a card and gift on behalf of **Jon Trevor (W94)** and a whole bunch of London's finest, which rendered me speechless. For some time I was feeling slightly embarrassed; that gave way to feeling humble and hubris at the same time. I felt humble to have received so generous a donation from colleagues and friends, some of whom I now meet so infrequently. I regard it as even more generous when you consider how hard it is to make a crust out there at present. Therefore be assured your generous gift will not be wasted but spent wisely on wine, women (at least one), feasting and song!

My feelings quickly changed to one of immense pride - pride in being able to count as friends a group of people possessing such a generosity of spirit, which is incalculable and transcends money. Wherever I travel, I shall always rejoice in belonging to such a group.

Vaya Con Dios...

Jeff Foster

Last month's *Call Sign* told how Jon Trevor did 1000 push and sit ups in aid of his friend, former DaC driver and Saracens rugby player, Jeff Foster, who after being diagnosed with cancer had to have a kidney removed. We all wish you well Jeff ...Ed

Taxi or minicab???

Hi Alan

I thought this might interest *Call Sign* readers, bearing in mind the trade description act etc. Take a look at this website with its flagrant use of the word taxi for what is obviously a minicab company. It is www.taxisin-london247.co.uk. Mind you, they do have two sizes of plumber's vans!

Jon Robinson (E88)

Thanks for passing it over Jon. Among other things, after welcoming readers to the 'taxi company in Camden' this website for Camden Taxis or CLC Express claimed to be a 'local and reliable taxi company' and that they provided 'taxis

for local and long distance journeys'. We showed the website to LTPH Director John Mason, who came back later that day to tell us that they had now spoken to the operator/owner and explained why he couldn't use the word 'Taxi'. LTPH then gave him 5 days to have his website amended. This was followed up by a letter, so hopefully by the time you read this Camden Taxis will be renamed CLC Express and have removed any mention that suggests they are what they patently are not - taxis! John Mason went on to add that LTPH recognise that the place to stop this type of thing is at the point of licensing and that there should be no reason why anyone they licence should be in any way unclear about their obligations and the regulations. He ended by telling *Call Sign* that they were looking to strengthen what they did in that respect ...Ed

PCN win

Alan

Congratulations on getting off your Waterloo PCN (*From the Editor, Dec Call Sign*). I'm gutted now that I didn't appeal my PCN and just paid up...

Barry Spear (Y16)

I appeal every PCN Barry, and I now also add that I am a part of TfL's transport system! It worked for that one at Waterloo (Lambeth Council) and the one I got on the same day along Euston Road (TfL), where my front wheels entered a yellow box junction. Sadly I cannot offer any guarantees that it will help - but I don't suppose it can hurt either! ...Ed

GPS v Zonal

Dear Al

I was on Mountview (Radio Taxis Group for new drivers) when they had the same MDI system that DaC was using at the time. Work flooded in. Then they decided to change to GPS via the Pathfinder satellite system. There was an immediate drop in the number of jobs being offered. It was probably due to the fact that as **Richard Potter** said (*December Call Sign*), the work comes to you and drivers who previously did little radio work were accepting work that they hadn't bothered with before. But if the closest cab rejected a job, it wasn't necessarily offered to the next nearest. Perhaps they have improved the system, but you were always a slave to the GPS and it got to the point where Mountview became the radio circuit with the most street work! You rarely had a chance to use your brain.

But there are anomalies with the Zonal sys-



Mailshot

continued from page 33

tem. Why for instance is NW4 the back-up zone for NW2, NW7, NW11 and N3, yet NW11 only seems to back up NW3? But on the whole, ours is an excellent system and I don't think it can be beaten.

On a different topic, over the past couple of years more than one driver has suggested the introduction of fixed prices. The BoM's reply has always been the same - if we offer customers cheaper fares, then they'll demand them when things get better! But it seems that everyone from **George Osborne** to the guy selling the *Big Issue* outside Kings Cross knows that's not going to happen anytime soon. So with **Addison Lee** even bigger than ever, should we still persist with that attitude? On the other hand, if the BoM know when things are going to improve, can they please let me know as I don't want to be on holiday when that day comes!

Geoff Levene (W32J)

Brian Rice replies: Hmmm! Going by what we read in the papers Geoff, I doubt that you can book up a holiday that far in advance anyway! On the other hand, the papers are not always right and let's hope that is the case this time. Regarding DaC's backup zones, every zone has up to eight back up zones and the Contact Centre will dictate what those zones are. If there is an anomaly, then it can be changed...

Yellow badges and stickers

I was wondering whether other drivers have noticed the overwhelming numbers of yellow badge drivers swamping central London. Could this escalating problem please be mentioned in *Call Sign* along with TfL's reason for delaying the identification yellow and green stickers?

David Bowers (N28)

I know in the last issue I said I didn't know the answer, but I've now heard that they are on order and will be issued shortly. The process will begin with green stickers but will obviously have missed the holidays so far as yellow badges are concerned. But it looks like being the last Xmas that those yellow badges who flout the rules will be able to do so as easily as they have in the past. I am also delighted that LTPH took no notice of the ludicrous argument put forward by a "spokesperson" for yellow badge drivers who seemed to have created his own organisation with the sole intention of stopping suburban drivers having to use yellow stickers on their taxis. His reasoning compared the stickers with the awful yellow star that Jews had to wear as identification in Nazi ghettos and death camps during the war. The fact that he saw no objection in wearing a yellow badge told its own

story. My only hope is that the stickers are difficult to remove in case the odd "dodgy" passenger is searching for a green badge sticker! I'm sure you get my drift.

You will also read inside this issue of a new facility available where you will be able to check online whether a taxi is green or yellow badge. In addition, LTPH / police stepped up their enforcement checks at ranks and set down spots to check whether yellow badges were working, in addition to checking that driver's Bills were genuine with stories of some cloning doing the rounds ...Ed

DaC defection?

I have heard from a reliable source that a member of the Dial-a-Cab Board has defected to Brunel. Could you please confirm this and tell me what will happen with regards to electing a replacement at the next AGM, which is a non-electable one?

One of 43 drivers sending in the same text!

As Call Sign readers know, I rarely publish letters where the writer does not want their name published, however in this case the reason I have left out any name is because the above rumour spread like wildfire and after 43 text messages on the subject, I was forced to put my phone on silent as it was stopping Linda enjoying Emmerdale!

The truth is that no Board member has departed to Brunel and neither were any asked to jump ship. Like most rumours, this one probably began with a driver hearing a story, putting two and two together and arriving at 94.75! The story involved former DaC Sales Manager, David Adelman, who had been with Brunel's Sales department for many years. He has now moved back into the taxi side with one of the new App companies. Someone must have heard that, possibly didn't realise that David left years ago and Bob's your uncle, the latest rumour to sweep the trade! ...Ed

Taking a tip from an old fuddy duddy?

I admit before starting that I am an old fuddy duddy but if drivers would actually give some thought as to what we may be able to achieve, we could possibly help to alleviate a problem. So once again I'd like to say in *Call Sign* that I believe we should consider the abolition of gratuities. I know some of you will be up in arms about it but without wishing to sound condescending, if that increased our share of work and was beneficial would we even notice the lack of tips? I realise that



we are not in the same league as the multiples, but if they can cut prices while increasing their turnover, why can't we also make that small gesture? After all, some big accounts already have a cap on gratuities of just a £2 and just one extra trip a day would more than make up for it. And how many street legals do you now get anyway? It's almost becoming the norm.

We are heading into what could be the worst kipper season for many years, so please let's give some thought as to how we can induce our clients to use us more. I am trying to be a bit shrewd and not condescending, but please just give it some thought because whichever way you look at it, ten percent of nothing will never come to more than nothing.

From everyone in the Contact Centre, may I wish you a very happy New Year and a not too bad kipper season.

Ivor Belkin (C97)

Whether you agree with Ivor or not, as someone who both drives a taxi and also works every Saturday in the Call - sorry, Contact - Centre, his views must be worth at least listening to ...Ed

Winter tyres...

Hi Al

I have a Mercedes Vito and read in *The Sun* that many people are fitting winter tyres to their cars, but that they should check with their insurers whether they are covered as sometimes the tyres are not fitted correctly to the steel hub. In the event of a claim, the insurer could refuse to pay out. I have now written to Hancock Tyres to enquire about their winter tyres as they seem to be the only people with winter taxi tyres. The only problem is that they seem to be only R rated. I have asked whether they are prepared to build a taxi winter tyre. I will let *Call Sign* know if I get a positive response.

Gary Cox (O46)

CBC Canada

Hi Alan

I was driving home yesterday afternoon listening to the *CBC Winnipeg* report on how London taxi drivers have big brains from memorizing street names. The reporter said he had interviewed a London cab driver for the segment and I thought to myself: "I wonder if it's going to be Alan?" And it was! Nice to hear your voice at last...

Norman Beattie

Winnipeg, Canada

For some reason, Canada and the US have resurrected the London taxi driver's hippocampus debate and Canada's CBC network interviewed me to ask how big my brain was! They seemed

Mailshot

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quite surprised when I told them I knew around 28,000 streets but couldn't remember the name of our neighbour's dog! For those who weren't around at the time, Call Sign was approached some years ago to recruit volunteers to have their brains scanned. Expenses were paid and from that day both we and our hippocampi became world-wide celebrities! Norman Beattie is a taxi historian who has written for Call Sign on several occasions ...Ed

Yellow box PCNs and how to win the appeal!

The roadworks in Piccadilly and St James were an absolute nightmare and thank God they are now finished - in particular the yellow box at the junction with Berkeley Street. Traffic often backed up to Hyde Park Corner and it could take 20 minutes to exit Berkeley Street. The choice was often between going through a red light or getting stuck in the yellow box. I chose the latter and received a PCN with a single photo showing my cab in the box. Unless I could access the internet footage, I had no idea from the single pic whether an offence had been committed or not but Westminster said that one photo was all they needed to send. I found that astonishing! I appealed on the grounds that the yellow box was unworkable while the roadworks were going on and some weeks later I

found myself in front of an Adjudicator. He played the footage and without me even saying a word in my own defence, he dismissed the case! I was almost disappointed at not being able to state my case, but at least I left there with a broad smile. The Adjudicator said that the footage MUST start before the vehicle enters the box junction. In my case I was already in it. So I have to ask how many people have paid up in box junctions when they didn't need to?

If any DaC drivers find themselves with a PCN for entering a yellow box junction, it may be helpful if you quote Paragraph 7 (1) of Part II of schedule 19 to the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002.

If you get caught in a box junction, always make a representation that the relevant council must reply to. The fine will remain at its original cost and even if you don't win at least you will have had the satisfaction of delaying payment and giving the council some extra work to do!

Mike Lyons (Y52)

There is an article elsewhere in this issue from Mike Lyons about a shocking disagreement between an Adjudicator and Westminster following his use of the Aldwych toilets ...Ed



Thanks from the Poppy Ball

Dear Mr Evans

The Poppy Ball Committee would like to thank you very much for your wonderful help with the Ball on 10 November. It was wonderful to have both Marshals (Steve Tyson V99) and Mike Harris (F79) on hand to help our guests after the Ball. They were extremely charming and handled our guests in a very professional and friendly manner as it was an extremely difficult area to find taxis after midnight.

We hope we may continue to count on your support next year. The date of the ball has now been set but the venue is currently being scouted.

Marina Lobanov-Rostovsky and Rula Al-Adasani

Poppy Ball Co-Chairmen

Last month's *Call Sign* told how Steve Tyson got rid of several drunkards who made a show of themselves outside the Drapers Hall venue, eventually needing the assistance of the police. He also thanked drivers on the rank for coming to his assistance when one of the drunks began pushing him, so this show of gratitude is most welcome ...Ed

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