

July 2012



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*Why is John Barry
holding up an
obviously fake
£50 note?*



*DaC Marshal
takes wife
and grandson
on job!!!*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

With the Olympics here in a few days and hopefully a lot of work, many trips will be to hotels. I have listed a few newish chains and allowed you to sort out the Premier Inns from the Travelodges. This list is only from 10 Chains and 85 hotels. The on-line version covers 34 chains and over 400 hotels. See bottom of page.

London Hotels

APEX HOTELS			
Temple Court	1-2 Serjeants' Inn, Fleet St, EC4Y 1LL	City of London	1 Seething Lane, EC3N 4AX
London Wall	7-9 Copthall Avenue, EC2R 7NJ		
DOUBLETREE HOTELS			
Courthouse	19, Gt Marlborough St. W1F 7HL,	Ealing	2-8 Hanger Lane, Ealing W5 3HN
Hyde Park(not Coburgh)	St Petersburg Pl, W2	London Hyde Park	150 Bayswater Rd, W2 4RT
Heathrow	745 Bath Road, Cranford TW5 9QE,	Regent Street	19, Gt Marlborough St. W1F 7HL,
Tower of London	7 Pepys Street, EC3N 4AF	Victoria	2 Bridge Place, SW1V 1QA
West End	92 Southampton Row, WC1B 4BH	Westminster	30 John Islip Street, SW1P 4DD
DOYLE HOTELS			
Bloomsbury	16 Gt Russell Street, WC1B 3NN	Kensington	109-113 Queens Gate, SW7 5LR
Marylebone	47 Welbeck Street, W1G 8DN		
GUOMAN HOTELS			
Charing Cross	Strand, WC2N 5HX	Royal Horseguards	2 Whitehall Court, SW1A 2EJ
Cumberland	Great Cumberland Pl., W1A 4RF	The Tower	St Katharine's Way, E1W 1LD
Grosvenor	101 Buckingham Palace Rd, SW1W 0SJ		
INDIGO HOTELS			
Paddington	16 St, W2 1HL	Tower Hill	142 Minorities, EC3N 1LS
Kensington	34 Barkston Gardens, SW5 OEW		
MERCURE HOTELS			
City Bankside	71-79 Southwark Street SE1 0JA	Gatwick	Povey Cross Road Horley RH6 0BE
Bloomsbury	130, Southampton Row, WC1B 5AF	London Bridge	71-79 Southwark Street SE1 0JA
Kensington	1a, Lexham Gdns, W8 5JJ	Paddington	144, Praed St, W2 1HU
St. Ermines	2 Caxton Street, SW1H 0QW		
NH HOTELS			
NH Harrington Hall	5-25 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JW	NH Kensington	202-220 Cromwell Road SW5 0SW
PREMIER INN HOTELS			
Angel Islington	18 Parkfield Street, N1 0PS	Blackfriars	1-2 Dorset Rise, EC4Y 8EN
City (Tower Hill)	24, Prescott St, E1 8BB	City(Old St)	Corsham Street, N1 6DR
County Hall	Belvedere Rd, SE1 7PB	Docklands Excel	Festoon Way, E16 1RH
Euston	1 Dukes Road, Euston Road, WC1H	Gatwick South	London Road, Crawley, RH10 9ST
Gatwick North	Longbridge Way, Crawley, RH6 0NX	Gatwick Manor Royal	Fleming Way, RH10 9DF
Gatwick East	Balcombe Road, Crawley, RH10 3NL	Hammersmith	255 King Street, W6 9LU
Hampstead	215 Haverstock Hill, NW3 4RB	Heathrow Bath Rd	15 Bath Road, Hounslow, TW6 2AB
Heathrow Hayes	362, Uxbridge Rd, UB4 0HF	Heathrow M4/J4	Shepiston Lane, UB3 1RW
Heathrow T5	420 Bath Road, W. Drayton, UB7 0RF	Islington Green	18 Parkfield St, N1 0PS
Kensington(Earls Court)	11 Knaresborough Place, SW5 0TJ	Kensington Olympia	32, West Cromwell Rd, SW5 9QJ
Kings Cross/St Pancras	26- 30 York Way, N1 9AA	Leicester Sq	1, Leicester place, WC2H 7BP
Putney Bridge	3 Putney Bridge Approach, SW6 3JD	Southwark (Borough	34, Park St, SE1 9EF
Stratford	International Sq, Westfield, E15 1AZ	Tower Bridge	159, Tower Bridge Road, SE1 3LP
Victoria (Gillingham St)	82, Eccleston Sq, SW1V 1PS		
TRAVELODGE HOTELS			
Aldgate East	6, Chamber St, E1 8BL	Bank	19 St Swithins Lane, EC4N 8AD
Battersea	200 York Road, SW11 3SA	City Airport	Hartmann Road, E16 2BZ
City Road	1-23 City Road, EC1Y 1AE	Covent Garden	10 Drury Lane, High Holborn, WC2B 5RE
Docklands	Coriander Avenue, E14 2AA	Euston	1 Grafton Pl. NW1 1DJ
ExCel	1016 Dockside Road, E16 2FQ	Farringdon	Gwynne Place, WC1X 9QN
Fulham	290 North End Rd, SW6 1NQ	Gatwick	Church Road, Lowfield Heath, RH11 0PQ
Gatwick Central	Povey Cross Road, RH6 0BE	Heathrow T5	Calder Way, Horton Rd, Colnbrook, SL3
Heathrow Central	700 Bath Rd, TW5 9SW	Kings Cross Royal	100 Kings Cross Road, WC1X 9DT
Kings Cross	Grays Inn Road, WC1X 8BH	Liverpool Street	1 Harrow Place, E1 7DB
Marylebone	Harewood Row, NW1 6SE	Southwark	202 Union Street, SE1 0LH
Tower Bridge	1 Goodmans Yard, E1 8AT	Waterloo	195 -203 Waterloo Rd, SE1 8UX
TUNE HOTELS			
Paddington	41-47 Praed Street, W2 1NR	Liverpool St	13-15 Folgate Street, E1 6BX,
Westminster	118 Westminster Bridge Rd, SE1 7RW		

For the comprehensive on-line list of 34 Chains and over 400 hotels, go to www.myfav.co.uk click the blue "LOCKED" button. When the new page appears, type 'taxi' in the "Unlock Code" box and then click "Submit". The page will reload with not only an iconic link to the hotels list, but many other useful taxi related icons.

from the editor's desk

Things to come?

Yes, it's nice to be back after having June off and yes, I did miss the buzz I still get from putting out each issue of *Call Sign*.

But now it's July and I'm sure I don't need to say what it is that starts at the end of this month! In days of yore when picking up passengers from Liverpool Street or Stratford who asked to be taken to Hackney Wick dog track, could anyone in their wildest dreams have envisaged that where the dog track stood in its moulding glory, one day would stand the 2012 Olympic Stadium! Well, there's no need to use your imagination because it's now here and our only concern should be about how it affects the taxi trade.

We know about the *Olympic Route Network* and how that will cause London to snarl up as Olympic athletes and executives make their way to Stratford. What we haven't yet been told officially is whether those same executives will have any priority access on the way back to their Park Lane / Knightsbridge hotels in the evening in case they should be late for din-dins at *Le Gavroche* or maybe *Joel Robuchon's L'Atelier* gaff in West Street!

We also know that there will be facilities for setting down and picking up at the Olympics, but will the security – that is being hired provided applicants can stand up for 20 seconds without falling over – actually know what a taxi is?

We will soon also have the Paralympic Games and without meaning to sound condescending in even the slightest way, that will probably involve passengers with disabilities going to watch, perhaps some even in wheelchairs. After all, we are the only 100% wheelchair accessible form of transport. And of course we should remind ourselves that as taxi drivers, our vehicles come under the auspices of the *Equality Act 2010*. Most of that is commonsense and stuff that we would do without needing to know exactly what it entails. So will the Olympics and Paralympics security know what a taxi is?

Let's go back to a story that would have appeared in the June issue – except that we don't have one of those! So better late than never, let's talk about 19 year old **Hannah Cockroft**. Beautiful and talented, Hannah is one of the favourites for the 100metres wheelchair race at the Para Games. Yorkshire born Hannah has cerebral palsy, but has never allowed that to slow down her ambition of being one of the world's top wheelchair athletes. She has even been referred to as the new **Tanni Grey-Thompson**.

But despite holding two World Championships, Hannah has to do what every athlete does before an event – the basic task of getting to the stadium!

On May 8, the Olympic Stadium had a "test" Paralympic event. Hannah was due to travel in a coach, but it broke down. So what did she do? She called a licensed taxi to take her to the stadium. The driver seemed delighted at this test of how to get into the Olympics and Hannah was relaxed as she explained to the driver about the coach.

They reached the security barriers and the driver told them he had one of the athletes in his cab, but they wouldn't allow him in. Hannah told them she was scheduled to be in the 100 metres and that she had already missed her warm-up time, but nope! "No taxis in here mate!" So Hannah had to get out and find her own way to the track.

After the race, Hannah said that it had been the worst preparation she'd ever had before a race. She missed the warm-up and had to just get her numbers on and go straight onto the track for the race.

Is that what is going to happen to us? Let's hope



that after reading this, **Transport for London** will explain to the security just who we are and what we do. Perhaps a drawing? My 7 year old granddaughter, **Imogen**, could probably help them out with that! Or *Call Sign* has lots of photos...

Oh yes... how did Hannah do? Well, no thanks to the stadium security, she became the first athlete to break a world record at the track after flying round in 18.56 seconds! Hopefully that's a sign of things to come over the next two months – our athletes winning medals and not security being pillocks...!

Accessible transport?

Ok, there's a lot about the Olympics here and let's be honest, I have an ultra- low threshold when it comes to having a moan. We tried when it came to the ORN and got a few crumbs thrown at us regarding right turns together with the usual compliments from the Mayor's office (wonderful, excellent, nice chaps etc), but when it comes to it, it has always been us against authority. The world's passengers consistently vote us as the best and I honestly believe that LTPH agree with that, but are afraid to say anything that might upset the applecart – for applecart read private hire. The problem is that as soon as one matter is pushed away, another appears. For example, the world can now get information about the Games, including travel hotspots etc at www.getahead-ofthegames.com. Everything you'd want to know about transport during the Games is there: Underground, DLR, Overground, Buses, River services, Dial-a-Ride and National Rail. I guess that covers all London's transport? Whaddya mean there's one form of transport missing? And a 100% wheelchair accessible form as well? Ah well, it couldn't have been that important!

In the meantime, if yours or your cab's licence expires shortly, make sure you allow that bit more extra time to book a trip to SGS or to get your licence renewal application in.

Olympic rehearsal?

Yes, it peed down and viewers around the world watching the Queen's Jubilee celebrations must have thought June was mid-winter in the UK. I was more interested in how crowds left the Embankment viewing areas after the event finished. The answer was that it was total chaos; but that was nothing compared to how the Olympics will be for the best part of seven weeks. I know it's a total waste of time, but it isn't too late to overturn the Tsars of the *International Olympic Committee* whose main interest appears to be the athletes – great – but also their own interests. If

they want to go to the stadium, let them go to St Pancras like ordinary people and take the world's press with them. Of course they could let taxis use the ORNs and we'll get them there in double-quick time. Or they could join the flying pigs...

Buses? What a load of boxes...

Mike Leo (Z09) recently wrote to *Call Sign* to tell us that an appeal against a PCN for him stopping in a yellow box junction in East India Dock Road for 52 seconds had been overruled. However, he took a note from the *April Call Sign* where **Dean Mussett (M40)** asked *Westminster Council* via a *Freedom of Information* request, how many PCNs they had given to London buses for stopping in the boxes? After all, hardly a day goes by when you aren't stuck at a junction thanks to a bus plonked right in the middle of a yellow box. Westminster's answer was that from December 2010 to December 2011, they had issued just one ticket to a bus! We don't know whether it was embossed and framed!

So Mike Leo wrote to *Tower Hamlets* asking the same question under a FOI request. The east end council didn't just send Mike an answer for one year, they sent him a total for the last FIVE years! And the answer? 120 PCNs were issued to buses in that period – or if you prefer, 24 buses per year! Hmmm? That works out at almost half a bus per week, so keep an eye out the next time a bus blocks you in at a box junction and we can run a survey as to which end of the bus gets the most tickets – front or back! If you miss it, then they'll be another chance next week!

And in a packed programme...

Hopefully there's something for everyone inside this issue of *Call Sign*. Besides around five pages of reader's letters in *Mailshot*, there is also an advert from DaC driver **Steve Denison (W65)** that some may want to print off and possibly give copies to their passengers. It shows the difference between us and minicabs. Congratulations to Steve for not being prepared to just sit down and do nothing!

Also, with the 15 year limit beginning to bite, we have an update from former DaC driver **Stanley Roth** who is pushing to get a TX1 and TX2 converted to run on gas – while at the same time getting an extra five years on the cab's life for anyone who has the same operation!

In addition, **Peter Begley (K98)**, who knows far more than us about how taxis work, tries to help those looking to buy a new cab as to whether a TX4 or a Vito would be best for them. He also looks at the Peugeot E7, which is hoping to be licensed for London should the *Conditions of Fitness* ever be dropped.

Oh, and one last thing! Most issues of the magazine carry a *Flashback* article reprinting old articles from *Dial-a-Cab* magazines going right back through *ODRTS Newsletter* in the 1950s to *ODRTS Monthly* in the 1960s, *News 'n Views* in the 1970s and *Call Sign* ever since the 1980s. This issue's *Flashback* has one of the newest ones we have ever used – from 2003, which to *Flashback* is like yesterday! It was written specially in 2003 for *Call Sign* by an Australia cab driver who had been around during the 2000 *Sydney Olympics* and issued a warning as to what we should expect. Reading it now could make us wonder why we never took more notice at the time.

See you next month...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

The Island

At the time of writing, I have been informed by one of our clients that is in the process of moving their operation to the *Island*, that they will require a rolling rank operating very similar to one of their neighbours that we also service at Canada Square. This scenario came about because a new senior Banker is now employed by the Bank that is currently in the process of moving, but who originally came from the Bank situated in Canada Square!

No, I am not writing the above in code and I apologise if it is a little hard to follow, but everyone seems to be a little sensitive these days when it comes to actually mentioning names.

The new Banker that has recently been employed by the Bank in the process of moving, was so impressed with what we delivered at his previous establishment, that one of his first tasks was to start the process of negotiation for installing a rolling rank at his new Bank.

At the time of writing, it seems fairly certain the rolling rank will be implemented, however I cannot be certain of the date at this stage, but it looks as though it could be 1st July – which is around the same time you will receive this issue of *Call Sign*.

We have put forward our proposal for the rank and all we need at the moment is for the Bank to ratify the situation, which at the time of writing has not yet been forthcoming. As soon as the situation becomes clear, you will of course be notified – probably via your terminal as we may well receive very short notice that they wish the rolling rank to be implemented.

Olympics

This is the last *Call Sign* before the **Olympics** commence and even at this stage, we are unsure of the situation and no-one has any real idea of the traffic conditions that might ensue. I, like most of you, was under the impression that a booklet was being produced to inform all interested parties the details of the Games, regarding venues, times etc. Hopefully by the time you read this, you will have received it.

However, at the time of writing we have not received anything and there are only six weeks to go. I am really getting an uneasy feeling about the situation and I'm also very concerned regarding the service we supply to your customers, the ones that



are with us for 52 weeks of the year and not just once in a lifetime. My hope is that we can still supply a reasonable service otherwise there could well be a high price to pay following the conclusion of the Games.

Whilst on the subject of the Games, **LTPH** inform me that any members who receive their 'pack' from them regarding renewal of their licenses, should deal with the renewal immediately because as you can imagine, there will be heightened security during the Games and your life will be made a little easier if everything is up to date.

You may also be aware that the contract **SGS** had with **LTPH** is coming to an end next year and the new contract has been awarded to **NSL**. I believe that is the same company that operates the system at Heathrow. **NSL** will actually take over the operation on 28th February and the **SGS** contract will terminate in April.

Coverage

Due to the current economic situation, we have lost some members over the past few months. They, like any other businesses, look at their overheads and if they believe they can save money then they will make that economy.

Personally, I believe that to be a very short sighted view, but you would probably expect me to say that anyway.

However, that situation has led to some coverage problems at certain times and anything you can do to alleviate the situation would be very welcome. You don't need me to tell you that our business could turn into a downward spiral; we lose members due to the economic climate, consequently our coverage suffers, when the coverage suffers we lose clients, and when we lose clients, we then lose more drivers *ad infinitum*.

The only people than can halt a downward spiral are you, the **Dial-a-Cab** members. So if you can put yourself out occasionally, it could make all the difference. I know business has been quiet, but at certain times of the day we need better coverage because we are still spending several thousands of pounds every couple of months on premiums to cover the work.

Terminals

At the moment, everything appears to be on track regarding your new terminals and as you are probably aware we have some on test at the moment. But we have decided not to fit any to the fleet before the commencement of the Olympic Games and instead will wait until the close of the Paralympics before we consider installing any new terminals.

Joe Skeggs

I was very sad to hear that **Joe Skeggs** (V34) had passed away. DaC drivers will remember Joe from the many times he got up at AGMs to have a pop at something or other – often my name got mentioned! But there was always that wink of the eye afterwards that showed a mutual respect.

Joe may well have been upset at something that happened, but once the AGM was over he was back telling you a funny story or a joke. The word 'character' is often bandied around, but in Joe's case it represented an accurate picture of a lovely man. My sincere sympathies to his family...

Finally, I hope you have a very busy Games period and that the traffic is not too horrendous. But please give a special thought to your Account Clients that will hopefully still be ours long after the Games have gone.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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FREE QUOTATIONS

Spare DaC taxis

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

For any non-fault accidents try either:

Chief Taxis: -----0800 055 6221

Cab Aid: -----0800 028 3253

Overhauls or accident repairs:

Cricklewood Carriers: ----- 0208 452 5461

KPM: ----- 0207 375 1179

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

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

What would the Mayor think of this taxi?

102 year old taxi for £20,000...!

Never mind the 15-year limit, a 102 year old black London taxi has been discovered in an old barn in Gloucestershire. This rare cab of a bygone era has now been restored and put up for sale where it is expected to fetch over £20,000. It still retains its original taxi meter and switches in the back so that passengers could indicate to the driver the direction they wished to go.

It has a top speed of 40mph and is the only one left of its type as most of this particular taxi were destroyed or have just faded away.

The cab is in excellent condition with most of its original leather interior intact. It possesses a 16 hp engine with a three-speed gearbox. It has wooden wheels with pneumatic tyres and paraffin lamps both in the front and rear. The auction was held at The Castle Combe race circuit in Chippenham on 30th June.



87 years past the 15-year limit!

Legalise London Brothels for Olympics!

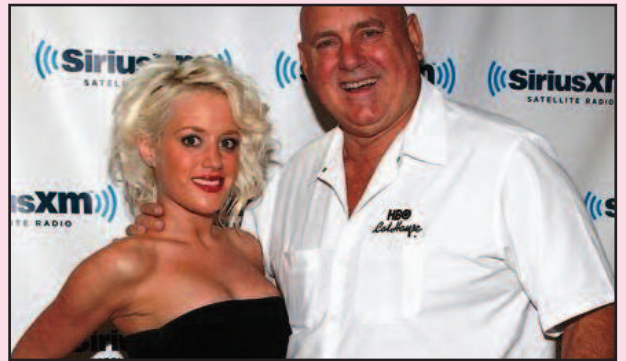
Nevada brothel owner, **Dennis Hof**, says he wants to start a new and fully legal brothel in London during next month's summer Olympics. Mr Hof claims that it "would stop human trafficking by international criminal gangs."

Mr Hof, 65-year-old owner of the Moonlite Bunny Ranch in Nevada, promoted legal prostitution during a debate at the Oxford Union and told **Call Sign** that he is on a mission to convince Mayor Boris Johnson that legal brothels could be just what London needs during the Games..

"Illegal brothels are disgusting," said Hof, "the girls are not tested for diseases and they're trafficked and forced into it. I'm saying that it doesn't have to be like that. We can provide the client with a clean, safe and fun experience."

With a projected 900,000 visitors expected to visit our capital during the Olympics, Hof estimates he would make much more than he could during a similar period at the Nevada brothel where he employs 500 girls.

While prostitution isn't illegal in the UK, operating a brothel, pimping or streetwalking is, as is paying for sexual services from someone who has been coerced into prostitution. Mr Hof believes that establishing legal brothels around metropolitan London for the duration of the games would provide safe sex for tourists and Prostitutes - as well as providing much-needed tax revenue!



Mr Hof, who says he only dates prostitutes, came to London with Carni Parker who he claims is his number one girl at the Moonlight ranch.

TfL tout reporting

Taxi drivers are reminded that by logging on to www.tfl.gov.uk/cabenforcement and clicking on **Report illegal activity**, you can report suspected touting activity directly to TfL

Information and intelligence gathered through this online reporting tool enables the TfL Taxi and Private Hire Compliance team to strategically manage deployment and target those areas that are of the greatest risk to public safety. The Metropolitan and City of London Police deployment also takes into account reports received through this tool to conduct intelligence-led operations. Over seven thousand arrests have been made in the last eight years for touting and cab offences in London.

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Jery's World



Thanks for voting me back in chaps, but I didn't really mean I would get rid of roadworks! I thought you guys had a sense of humour!

A university experiment into satnavs leads Call Sign to ask....

Are Addison Lee passengers at risk?



Concentrating on satnav directions?

Satnav systems aren't infallible and can send drivers the wrong way, but a shock report from both **Lancaster** and **Royal Holloway** Universities show that they can also impair the user's driving ability.

An experiment showed that drivers' performances were affected when listening to satnav directions when volunteers were set tasks by a computer which mimicked instructions given by a satnav. The results showed that when people were following complicated satnav routes, they tended to drive faster with more steering variations, as well as being less likely to notice pedestrians who might step out.

Dr Polly Dalton from the Department of Psychology at Royal Holloway said:

"What's interesting is that people were able to follow one simple instruction without any significant impact on their driving, but as soon as they had to remember a compound instruction consisting of two sequential directions, we

began to notice a difference in their driving ability. A lot of effort has gone into designing visually-friendly satnav devices, but our research highlights the importance of the way in which the auditory instructions are given."

Every **Dial-a-Cab** driver will soon have a satnav incorporated into their new terminal, but it will rarely be needed because of our Knowledge of London. With drivers from the UK's largest private hire company, **Addison Lee**, relying almost entirely on satnavs, we must ask how safe they are when it comes to transporting passengers?

Call Sign July 2012

Editor: Alan Fisher

Address: 39 - 47 East Rd, London N1 6AH

Tel: 0207 251 0581 Fax: 0207 553 7293

Email: callsignmag@aol.com

Website: www.dac-callsign.co.uk

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Tel: 07958 300 428

Email: dfdannyfresco@gmail.com

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"COLUMBO" MARC AND THE LADY!

Or the trip to a strict adjudicator...

DaC driver Marc Turner (R97) has been in Call Sign many times with incidents varying from chasing Luton taxi drivers away from picking up trips on a busy London Saturday night, right through to annoying an Addison Lee driver by telling him to get off the taxi rank at South Kensington's Marriott Hotel. Mr Addyman then tried to run Marc over! Now Marc tells of his latest battle with authority...

"Our 'friends' at Camden Borough have never been beyond sending out dubious PCNs with rather dodgy evidence to we licensed taxi drivers. On this occasion they alleged that I had turned left into Shaftsbury Avenue from Bloomsbury Street, ignoring the straight ahead signs at 02.37 on the morning of 8th October 2011. I phoned the LTDA's Barry Hooper and he viewed the images. He said I had a decent case for an appeal. Camden had used the camera that makes them a fortune nabbing motorists in the yellow box.

Even though the images showed my unfortunate left turn, the straight ahead signs were not in view in any of the available pictures. When I denied the charge, the best Camden could do was to send me some beautiful pho-



tos of the junction with the straight ahead signage taken on the sunniest, cloud-free day in history. So I decided to go to adjudication and play for high stakes – or £130 to be exact!

Barry H was very helpful in constructing my defence. In the past on DaC PCNs I've been successfully represented by **Barrie Segal**. This time I decided to represent myself, as I thought it might be a good and useful experience!

I came face to face with the adjudicator at 09.15 on Saturday 14th April. She, an imposing middle aged lady possibly reminiscent of a St Trinians headmistress, while I, just woken from a kip in the cab on a very cold morning after the mother of all nightshifts and then having walked from the city to Angel. It wouldn't be too unfair to say that I more resembled **Peter Falk's** detective, **Columbo**!

The Lady was strict and obviously not prepared to suffer fools gladly. Although I remained calm, she was undoubtedly pulling ahead on points. She proclaimed that "neither my misdemeanour nor the straight ahead signs

were in dispute" and reminded me that the signs had been there since 1987 (as if I ever knew). She was tearing my defence to shreds and began to dominate me (yes, I know I should be so lucky)!

With the proven successful combination of clutching at straws and praying for divine intervention, I retorted that perhaps as it was in the early hours and there were no signs on the images and footage, the bulbs had probably gone on the signs?

Madam looked at me with seemingly incredulous disbelief, before exclaiming with the mildest hint of boredom that she would write to Camden's *Department of Works* and check on the maintenance of the signs over the period. Then it was the briefest of acknowledgements: "Case adjourned for 28 days, Goodbye!" I left feeling somewhat disappointed; I knew I was on a sticky wicket and that *Her Ladyship* was probably just postponing the inevitable.












But then on May 4th, I received the judgement in the post. Camden had not responded to the adjudicator's request for more info, therefore the contravention did not occur and as a result the PCN was cancelled! Happy Days!

Guys and girls, we have to stand up to these modern day highway robbers. Even the adjudicators are aware that the boroughs are a bunch of chancers. If you don't take it all the way, then the boroughs will win. Appeal, appeal, appeal..."

Marc Turner (R97)

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Unlike the photo that admits to not being real, John's £50 note was nothing but a...

Fake!

"I'm annoyed with myself more than anything else," **John Barry (O51)** admitted to *Call Sign*, "because usually I am very careful, but these blokes were very convincing and knew what they were doing."

John's tale took place in the evening just as the light was fading. He stopped after being hailed on Holloway Road by three smartly dressed men who although they had obviously had a drink, certainly didn't look at all inebriated.

"They asked for Columbia Road E1 and offered to show me the way – something that has never bothered me although I know some drivers take offence. Throughout the journey they were full of chat and general banter and I responded only when appropriate. They directed me to the one-way Shipton Street. Two of them got out of one door while the third came around to my side. They each made with their hands to feel their pockets and one kept saying that they should not forget to get a receipt. Then one of them 'found' a new style £50 note and apologised for not having anything smaller. By now there was a van behind beeping me to hurry me up, so I quickly held the note up to the light and the watermark looked decent, so I speedily gave them the change and they hurried off towards the nearby pub."

John then drove off, stuffing the note into his shirt pocket as he went and made for the Texaco garage on Shoreditch High Street. But when he handed the £50 note the cashier, he was told that the note was a dud and politely asked if he could pay with *real* money!

"I was astonished," said John, "and rather hacked off as you might imagine! I raced back to the pub thinking and hoping that they might still be there, but the bar-tender said he saw three men running down an alleyway across the road after they got out of my cab. It was a very polished performance, which they had apparently practiced numerous times. I realise now that all their searching through pockets for money was an act when all they wanted to do was palm me off with that fake £50. In better circumstances, it would have been an act worthy of an Oscar nomination! But at the end of the day, I'm still mad with myself for being so easily caught out like that."

In daylight, the green strip that runs down the note from top to bottom was not quite right, but given a quick glance as John had done the night before, the new-style note looked

ok to him – especially when you are being hooted to get a move on..

"No doubt they will try that scam again," said John before leaving *Call Sign's* reporter, "so I hope my experience will be a warning to others. I often work late into the night and early morning and do not usually have problems. I'm careful but I am also prepared to give

people a chance. Perhaps I shouldn't be quite so tolerant..."

Call Sign checked on the Bank of England website where great play is made of the additional security features embedded in the new-style £50 note. It has only been in circulation since November 2011, but such is the speed and sophistication of modern day forgers that even recently introduced Tender with supposedly improved and advanced security measures, can apparently be forged. That must surely be a wake-up call for anyone handling high denomination notes...



This note obviously isn't real - sadly for John, neither was the one he accepted!

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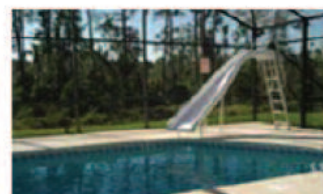
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DaC Credit Union

"best in the country!"

Although the **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union** AGM took place over two months ago and would have been reported on in the June issue had there been one, *Call Sign* can't let go the fact that in his report at the meeting – held at DACCU's Hackney Road office – the representative of their Auditors **Appley and Wood, Terry MacPherson**, told members present that they should be proud of themselves for probably now being accepted as one of – if not THE – best run credit union in the country!

With membership now close to 1000, those in DACCU who in addition to being able to take much larger loans than ever dreamed of in its early days, also have access to possibly the best savers rate in the country.

DACCU President **Terry Dodd (W15)** and Treasurer **Brian Flanagan (T79)** told *Call Sign* after the meeting that they were proud of the credit union's success and the Auditor's words. They emphasised that they were always happy to welcome new members. Their ad is in every issue of the mag...

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"I like to keep fit," **Micky Doyle (ex-A47)** told *Call Sign* as we chatted at **Dial-a-Cab's** Roman Way depot, "it keeps me looking and feeling younger than my 74 years. But my faithful old Fairway is coming off the road very soon, so I'm going to take a 6 month sabbatical to allow me more time to pursue my hobbies - which are an expensive indulgence - but I enjoy the lifestyle of athletics, golfing and scuba diving. I can always come back to cabbing, although after 50+ years, a change of routine will be welcome!"

Micky's time on DaC goes back to Affleck Street and historic **ODRT's** characters such as **Jack Taylor** and **Jack Russell** or voice dispatcher **Johnny Thwaites** still sprung readily to his mind.

"Jack Russell and I were in the same army regiment, the **Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers**, although I joined sometime after him. When I left the army, I promised myself I would *never* polish another piece of brass, so from the day I got my taxi badge back in 1960 to this very day, I have not cleaned it - even though I still take great pride in what it represents."

Micky continued by telling us that his National Service time in the army included a stint at **Spandau Prison** in Berlin, the place where **Hitler's** deputy, **Rudolf Hess**, was held prisoner.

"I have enjoyed my years on **Dial-a-Cab** but now it's time to take a breather from the cab and focus even more on my sporting interests. I attend the gym five days a week, play golf at every opportunity and am passionate about scuba-diving, which I took up when I reached 70 - diving usually in exotic places around the world!"

Micky is a *British Sub-Aqua Club* qualified diver to 35 metres depth and has also completed several 100 mile annual walks as a member of the *Long Distance Walking Association*, which he added on as though it was akin to a stroll down to the corner shop.

Before driving off, Micky mentioned that in addition to the occasional celebrities we all pick up, he has picked up three Prime Ministers in **Ted Heath**, **Jim Callaghan** and **Alec Douglas-Hume**,

DaC's sporty septuagenarian!



Now: Mickey is taking 6 months off



Then: Fifty years ago, Mickey and friends wangling

although they weren't serving as PMs at the time. But none were as important to him as picking up **Petula Clark** - "I'm a

big fan," he called out as his Fairway pulled away..

© *Call Sign Magazine* MMX11

Leon off to retirement!

Brian Rice once claimed that there are far more over-fifties in the taxi business than under-fifties. Well another long time **Dial-a-Cab** driver has now retired with **Leon Singer (D92)** being the latest to decide that relaxing is a better way of passing his time than driving a London taxi!

Leon told *Call Sign*: "I am taking this opportunity to thank Dial-a-Cab for the support they have given me over the past 57 years. It has been a great experience working with the team. The years have passed so quickly and I can't believe I am signing off for the last time. I will miss the comradeship of the dispatchers and through the magazine I would like to wish you and everybody at DaC including staff and drivers all the best of luck for the future. But I don't know how you will cover the work without me!"

Enjoy your retirement, Leon...



Allen Togwell's Looks at Motivation

Driver motivation

During the 40 odd years I've held a *Bill*, I have heard a lot of whinging in the cab trade about everything on earth, including of course the proverbial *'the cab trade is finished'* that I, and probably every one of you heard when we did the *Knowledge*. Yet if any of these whingers were to stand back and take stock of their lot and then compare it to the many thousands of people they see trotting out of stations or standing at bus stops every morning in all weathers like zombies on their way to a job that many do not do by choice but simply to earn a living, they would realise exactly how well off they really are. Admittedly driving a cab can be a solitary life in as much as having no interaction with fellow workers, but this is often compensated by the many interesting people you carry. Being self-employed, there is also the freedom to work as and when it suits you, the manner in which you dress, the hours you wish to work and of course having nobody to answer to.

However there is one common factor that affects both the employed and self-employed, no matter what that work involves. Be it a cab driver, office worker or a premier league footballer - and that common factor is motivation.

We often hear that money is the biggest motivator. Yet talking of footballers, **Andre Villas-Boas** just before he was sacked as **Chelsea** manager said that Chelsea were losing matches because the players who earned £millions each year were not motivated enough, which dispels the theory that earning big bucks is a motivator. Being unmotivated is akin to being bored and the definition of boredom is impaired physical and mental efficiency, fatigue, commonly caused by monotonous routines, which is one reason I'd guess why so many cab drivers in repose look so miserable!

Most people suffer boredom at some time in their lives and when bored, there comes a feeling of everything being an effort, no enthusiasm, no motivation, they become passive and blame everything and everyone for all their ills, while forever coming up with excuses why they shouldn't or cannot do this or that - including, I might add, giving much attention to their appearance; they just can't be bothered. A fair description I would say for many within our own cab trade.

Staff motivation

At **Dial-a-Cab**, like many companies, motivating staff is an important part of running a business, because apart from increasing productivity, raising morale, improving customer service and staff loyalty etc, it costs more to replace staff than to keep them. It's important to keep staff happy and this can be achieved, not necessarily with financial incentives, but by organising schemes that involve the staff having fun; breaking a repetitive and what at times can be a boring job by doing something different. An example of this you would have seen in the May edition of *Call Sign* and the **Great Dial-a-Cab bake-off**, organised by **Christina Simms** and her *Human Resource* colleagues.

Being one of the judges, I was genuinely sur-



prised by the response from both male and female staff, it was fun, it was an opportunity to show off baking skills and it was for a good cause with £350 raised and donated to *Sport relief*. But equally important is the relaxing atmosphere it creates in the workplace, which in turn helps to increase motivation.

This same philosophy can apply to self-employed people who work alone, such as cab drivers. There are for example, many cab drivers that start work exactly at the same time every day and stick to that religiously as though they were clocking in at a factory, which is what I did when I first got my *badge*. But after a year, I decided to do the opposite. One day I would start at 7am, the next day 5am and another day 6am and so on. The same with the times I finished and the routine when stopping for lunch. Unlike several of my close cab driver friends, who no matter how slow the work was would always meet for lunch at the same café every day, which meant there would be occasions when certain work would be ignored just so they could get to the café at the allotted time.

I could never see the logic in this and only joined them if I happened to be in the area. Also in an effort to break the habit of a regular routine, particularly in the summer, I would buy a takeaway meal and sit in a park or if I could find a parking space, eat lunch in a museum or art gallery or somewhere similar, which are also ideal places to meet other people. That particularly applies to the **Tate Gallery** which used to have two long tables in the cafeteria where on finding a space and asking if it was free, within minutes of sitting down you would have a common interest with the person on either side and it was easy to strike up a conversation. I also made it a habit to break the time spent sitting behind the wheel. I would park up for 15 minutes, take a break, go for a walk or even sometimes go into a church and listen to an organ recital. I was never an airport face, in fact I probably never ranked up at the flyers on more than a dozen times in 40 years. And if I worked late, I only went on the Finz on the odd occasion. The beauty of driving a cab is how varied you can make your day and how easy it is to avoid making the job repetitive and getting bored. I also found getting out of the cab, being active and coming into contact with people had a positive effect on my appearance.

One of the most common negatives about being a cab driver is that it can become so self-consuming, if allowed it can take over

your life. I know a number of drivers who when stuck with nothing to do in their free time, would go and do a few hours on the cab!

When you are in company and especially in the company of other cab drivers, the conversation soon steers to cab trade issues, events and experiences. I personally can't think of any other profession that dictates conversation as much as the cab trade does. The freedom of having a *badge* allows the driver to indulge in a huge number of activities outside of the cab trade that apart from making the person an interesting individual, also release boredom, increase motivation, increase self-esteem and above all put a smile on your face, which is what your passengers, your family and our clients would like to see.

E-reading

In the recent past, I've mentioned the issue of reading and that apart from being an excellent source of entertainment and relieving boredom particularly when sitting on a rank or waiting for a client, books are also a good talking point when meeting other readers. In recent months, there has been talk about paper books becoming a thing of the past now that e-readers are taking over the market. Most avid readers such as I will say they prefer the feel and smell of a paper book and the enjoyment from visiting bookstores and libraries, plus books can also be shared. And it was for that reason that I had no interest whatsoever in e-books such as **Kindle** or **Kobo's** etc. But that was before I was given one recently as a birthday gift. And I have to admit it is a fascinating piece of technology. The ability to download books in a matter of seconds is very convenient, especially on the occasions that book stores or libraries are closed. It is easy to carry, the font size can be adjusted and the battery lasts a month before recharging. Initially, when Kindles came on the market in the UK in 2009, they were quite costly compared to the latest slim line version that can hold up to 1400 books and be bought for little more than the cost of a trip to the flyers. I mention the above because I honestly believe e-books are an ideal companion for people on the go - especially cab drivers.

Slowcoach?

In my last article when I mentioned the London 2012 Olympics, I forgot to end with the strange tale concerning the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm. It involved **Shizo Kanakuri** who disappeared while running the Marathon and was listed as a missing person in Sweden for 50 years, until a journalist found him living quietly in southern Japan. Overcome with heat during the race, he stopped at a garden party to drink orange juice, stayed for an hour, took a train to his hotel and sailed home the next day feeling too ashamed to tell anyone he was leaving. Then in 1966, Kanakuri accepted an invitation to return to Stockholm and complete his run. His final time was 54 years, 8 months, 6 days, 8 hours, 32 minutes and 20.3 seconds. A record that will surely last forever...

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing

Areti Mastrodouka, who is trained by **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Alec Wilkey** (W83), put on an emphatic display in only her second professional bout with a resounding stoppage win against **Julija Cvetkova** at Bethnal Green's York Hall recently. Areti was looking to build on her successful debut back in March and did so in style with referee Marcus McDonnell having to step in to call a halt to the fight late in the second round as Cvetkova was in no position to continue.

The 36-year old female fighter made the trip from Athens to London in order to train for the fight against the experienced Latvian. Areti - nicknamed **The Master** - recently joined the setup at the **TKO Gym** in Canning Town after deciding to turn professional. After a flourishing amateur career that included a silver medal at the World Championships, Mastrodouka decided to make the transition into the pro game under the tutelage of coach **Alec Wilkey** and manager **Johnny Eames**.

She won her first bout against **Kristine Shergold** with a points victory and was confident coming in against Cvetkova, who had previously been in the ring with some experienced fighters and taken many the distance. Despite being only 20 years of age, Cvetkova had already fought in 13 professional contests prior to her match with Mastrodouka.

The female match-up in the feather-weight division was scheduled for 6x2 minute rounds and was to be the second bout of the afternoon. A packed crowd – including some DaC drivers - took to their seats for the 8 fight card featuring some good match ups and different styles.

Areti got off to a slow start as both fighters fathomed the style of their opponent. But Mastrodouka then took the initiative, finding her range with the jab. The first incident of significance came late in the first when Cvetkova hit the canvas. Although Mastrodouka threw a punch, it appeared to be more of a slip from Cvetkova, but the referee scored it as a knock-down and gave the Latvian an 8-count. This gave Mastrodouka confidence and enabled her

Win number two for Areti!



The ref lifts Areti's hand in another victory! Trainer Alec Wilkey looks on..

European fighters. She fought a great fight and finished it well."

Also performing on the day were other boxers from the TKO Gym camp including **Danny 'Cassius' Connor** who fought for the vacant

to gain some rhythm towards the end of the round and it was evident it was going to be a one-sided contest after that.

'The Master' came out firing in the second hoping to build on her first round performance, aiming some sharp hooks to the body of Cvetkova which looked to be taking their toll on the smaller Latvian. Southpaw Mastrodouka was keeping her opponent on the back foot and landing some scoring left hands and then after a barrage of punches, Cvetkova eventually went down. She beat the ref's first count but after another slip and more pressure from the Greek fighter, the referee had no other option but to stop the fight towards the end of round two.

Areti told *Call Sign* after the bout, "My opponent was experienced but I thought I dealt with her well. Hopefully I can now get a few more wins and in the future, a shot at a world title." Trainer Alec added, "Areti showed her class against a decent opponent who has fought some good

British Masters Welterweight Title against **Tyler 'Tornado' Goodjohn**. Connor, who is also trained by **Alec Wilkey**, displayed some good boxing skills and used his jab to good effect to come out on top over the 10 rounds in a thrilling main event getting the judge's decision by a point (96-95) and taking the title.

Menay Edwards recorded another win against opponent **Remigijus Ziausys**, taking his tally to 8 wins and 1 loss, while **Eric Mokonzo** was unlucky on his debut, getting stopped in the second round by **Darren McKenna** but not before he had floored McKenna in the first.

Areti is currently seeking a sponsor in order to take her career to the next level and chase her dream of becoming world champion. If you are interested contact Alec on: 07944791360...

David Wilkey

Mike and the Peacock

"I could hardly believe my eyes" **Mike McGlynn** (F60) told *Call Sign*, paraphrasing actor **Richard Wilson** from the TV series *One Foot in the Grave*.

"I was going along Abbotsbury road when suddenly a peacock appeared in the road just ahead of me. It ambled unhurriedly towards the centre of the road, stopped momentarily, turned in my direction and fanned his tail feathers. I don't know if he was trying to impress me before giving me a real snooty look from his penetrating eyes as if to say *you're in my way*, before casually strutting off as quickly as he had appeared!"

Mike, still laughing at the vision, continued with his tale. "I narrowly missed hitting him, or at least crushing some of those colourful tail feathers with the wheels of my cab. But he seemed quite unfazed as I bore down on him, although my own blood-pressure shot up because I'm not used to seeing jay-walkers of the animal variety wander in front of the cab! He must have escaped from Holland Park aviary, but goodness knows how he did it. The way he was flashing those fancy feathers at me, I reckon he might have had a peahen girlfriend on his mind somewhere on the other side of the road! Had I been going any faster, he would never have made it to see her but would have ended his days hanging upside down in a posh game and butcher shop somewhere in W8!"

Mike, still giggling at the unusual street walker, suddenly had a final thought. "Perhaps he was just looking for a cab! I bet that's another ride I've lost..."



Why did the peacock cross the road?

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When it comes to sheer guts and determination to see the job through to the end, DaC driver **Del Oldfield (D32)** probably ranks up there with the best of them, having struggled to complete the 26+ miles of the 2012 **Virgin London Marathon** after going seriously lame early on in the run.

"No, it wasn't too easy," Del admitted to **Call Sign**, "but there were a lot of people relying on me to finish the race, not to mention quite a lot of money at stake that my chosen charity, **Whizz-Kidz**, desperately needs to continue its excellent work. So I closed my mind to the pain, focussed on the task in hand, and carried on regardless!"

Winning once again as he was reminded of that pain through talking to **Call Sign**, Del continued: "This was my first London Marathon, having applied in my own right and getting through to the ballot stage. But then **Whizz-Kidz** offered me one of their slots, which meant I didn't need the ballot. I jumped at the chance to raise funds for such a good cause! In fact, I had only been training since November 2011, although I have been playing football regularly throughout the season.

"I was among 562 **Whizz-Kidz** entrants who all met up at Greenwich Park prior to the run for a photo shoot; then during the run itself, members of the **Whizz-Kids** organising committee cheer you on at several points along the route. That really does help you.

"At around the five mile mark my left knee began giving me increasing discomfort from a previous injury, then both my leg calves started to cramp up so I was in real trouble by the thirteenth mile and needed a twenty minute pit-stop for the **St John Ambulance** people to help sort me out. There wasn't a huge amount they could do about my knee and when an officer took a look at it - by then heavily swollen - he advised me not to continue to run for fear of causing lasting damage. I thought about the

Del's Marathon pain for Whizz-Kidz



Del proudly holds his Marathon medal after running most of it in severe pain...

advice for a few seconds and then thought about the Charity, the fund-raising and the huge support from my family and friends. I disregarded the advice however well meant it was, but there was just so much riding on my completing the course.

"I have to admit being close to tears with the pain, and I did wonder what damage I might be doing, but I walked and even hobbled the rest of the course with my family literally walking alongside me for the last 600 yards to the finish line. They were on the spectator side of the crowd barrier, while I pounded the tarmac of the competition course!"

At this point, we gave Del a few seconds as we could see that the memory was becoming painful.

"It took me 6 hours and 31 minutes to complete the 2012 London Marathon and I raised around £2000 for **Whizz-Kids** in the process. I would like to publicly say a very big 'thank you' to all the family and friends who supported me both emotionally and financially throughout this challenge."

And finally Del began to smile broadly.

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From this to that!

...or from Hackney Wick to the Olympic stadium!



A trip to **Hackney Wick Stadium** used to mean either an evening at the dog or speedway track. It also used to provide taxi work from Liverpool Street Station and all parts of east London. As you approached the narrow pre-East Cross Route roads around Eastway, signs to the dog track advertised parking for 2/6 (12p) with track admittance for 1/6 (8p).

If you go to where the track was today, you won't find any sign of the old traffic but instead will see the amazing Olympic stadium. In the old days, the only things you couldn't take in were... well you could take anything you wanted in provided it fitted through the turnstiles. In the Olympic stadium, you can't take devices capable of discharging a projectile, firearms, bows and arrows, harpoons, spear guns or devices designed specifically to stun such as lasers or stun batons. Neither can you take any kind of chemical spray - such as mace or pepper spray - or

animal repellent or animal killer! Sharp pointed instruments are banned, as are axes, hatchets, cleavers, swords and sabres. Naturally, no crowbars or portable power drills / saws and blowtorches are allowed. Just as obvious, bolt and nail guns are also on the prohibited list as are baseball and softball bats... but you knew that already!

No explosives or detonators - private or military and including mines and grenades - can be taken into the Olympic stadium and of course, no alcohol or food specifically designed to save you money can accompany you. Everyone entering the stadium will be searched.

Mind you, the old stadium had some rules too - if you could provide the right money it would be appreciated. Oh yes - you could take your kids together with their bags of sweets and drinks in free of charge, but would they mind putting their rubbish in the bins provided...

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month's Flashback returns to 2003 and an article by Call Sign's Australian correspondent at the time, David Gawthorn. He wrote about the Sydney Olympics just 3 years earlier and issued a warning to Dial-a-Cab drivers...!

From Call Sign, July 2003 **The disaster that was the Sydney Olympics...**

With London now officially in the race against Paris, New York, Moscow and others for the 2012 Olympic Games, drivers may well be thinking that nine years from now could be a real boom-time for the taxi industry.

But is that how it worked for other Olympic cities? Taxi Driver **David Gawthorn** was born in the UK but resides and works in Melbourne, Australia. He is also the author of a book on his Australian taxi experiences and has his own weekly radio show. *Call Sign*

asked him about the Sydney Olympic Games and whether their cab trade benefited...

"They were a total disaster for Sydney cabbies, the whole city shut down for the period that the Games were on and just concentrated on the big event. Even Sydney's public transport, which is notoriously bad, ran properly for the duration of the Games! In addition, all transport was free on production of an Olympic ticket - and very often if you didn't have a ticket! The system strongly favoured public mass transport rather than the inferred 'expensive' cabs. In fact the Taxi rank was about a kilometre from the main stadium and many people who might have considered taking a cab, took the free train instead. Who could blame them?

My wife, youngest daughter and I made the pilgrimage to Sydney and stayed about 80 kilometres out. Even though we had no intention of going to any of the events, we got to travel free on the trains to get into the city! Not much use to cab drivers!

Apart from bits and pieces of Olympic work, there was also less of the regular cab driving work as so many streets were



closed. Even those that remained open had what they laughingly referred to as **Olympic Route Networks** which

banned cars and taxis. They were the final nail in our coffin because we were just stuck in never-ending traffic hold-ups and who is going to pay to do that?

And it wasn't just we cabbies who complained; many retailers, restaurants, bars, cafes and pubs that weren't in the immediate area of the events and the city saw their takings drop as non-sporty tourists just stayed away, with those that did come paying horrendously high hotel prices."

So what about London? As Transport for London will obviously be looking to Sydney to see how they planned the event, it looks like London's taxi drivers may have a battle on their hands rather than a windfall! Perhaps we shouldn't wait until 2012 to make our point? If London is confirmed as getting the 2012 Games - and admittedly that is still a year or so away - then the time to start putting our case will be as soon as we hear if we have won and not the day before the Games commence....

**Flashback
2003**

Obituary

JOE SKEGGS

I, like many other drivers, must have been shocked and saddened to receive the news of **Joe Skeggs** death - a DaC driver who was a great character in my eyes.

I knew Joe from the time he joined **Dial-a-Cab** in 1987 and seeing it was the month of April, I could have expected a fool. But Joe, in his flat hat, dark rimmed glasses and quite often brown leather jacket, was far from being a fool.

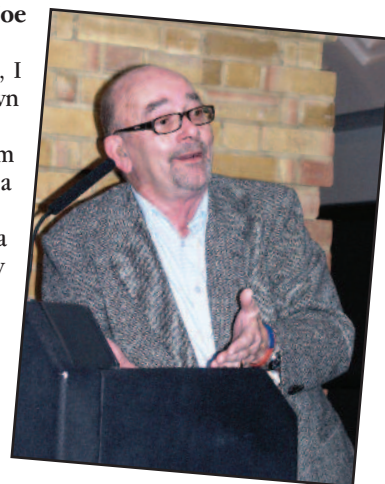
He could stand up at an AGM and gain the drivers' attention with his humour and then hit them between the eyes with the real point of his verbal assault. He had no fear of the Board, if he had a point of view he would make it known. But he would always be polite and courteous.

Many a time when I was your Complaints/Compliance Officer, I was on the receiving end of a tongue lashing, but we would always end up staying the best of friends and there was never any grudge held.

He even told my wife one day that he thought she must have been a Saint to have put up with me for so many years!

The taxi trade, **Dial-a-Cab** and myself, will have lost an ally, a fighter for justice and to me, a very good honourable friend. Everyone, including my wife Anne and myself, would like to send our condolences to his family on their sad loss.

Tom Whitbread



KPM Vito Verifone warning

KPM have issued a warning to drivers purchasing a **Vito** on their latest *Agility* lease scheme through KPM with Mercedes Benz Finance, where a guaranteed repurchase by the company after three years is involved. The warning follows an article in trade newspapers allegedly from **Verifone** who claimed their card payment system had been approved by Mercedes.

KPM are now saying that is incorrect and no such approval has been given and that the fitting of the Verifone system can damage interior trim panels. The company said that Verifone "making good" may still not suffice. They added that the Vito's warrantee may be affected and could involve what the company describe as an "unexpected charge" at the end of the *Agility* contract.

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Where do we start? These two vehicles are vastly different to each other in almost every way but yet are designed to perform exactly the same task - that being to convey the public to an array of destinations, generally

around London. So if you are fed up with the everyday routine of driving around our streets and would like a change, what options are open to you as a London taxi driver?

Well, we could change our shift from days to nights or *vice versa*. We could start working the airport instead of trawling the streets. We could choose to do radio work or perhaps take advantage of technology and use one of the increasing numbers of app-based companies competing for a share of the London taxi market. Any of these could be considered as change... but are they?

As our job is tied to London, any move of location is affected by the need to work in the capital. So what can we really do? The answer is not much really - we're stuck with our lot. So what about changing the place we actually work, because we now have the option of an additional office in which to perform our work duties.

I am of course referring to the latest version **Mercedes Vito 113 cdi** which is euro five compliant. So does it offer anything to us that the TX4 from the **London Taxi Company** doesn't? Well, the answer is a resounding yes! It offers a host of things that would help us perform our duties as taxi drivers to the more than ever demanding public of London. But hold your horses before we get carried away too much; the long established market leaders, LTI, have also recently introduced a newer updated version of their **TX4**, which is also euro five compliant. So do these two very different taxis offer us an opportunity to update or change our 'real' place of work - our office so to speak?

Quite some time ago I jumped ship from LTI and purchased a euro 4 Vito, which I enjoyed both driving and owning. When it initially hit the streets, I resisted for a while but eventually purchased one - I like shiny things!

But I really didn't expect the jump from euro 4 to euro 5 to be quite as dramatic as it was. The euro 5 Vito is a pleasure to drive. So any comparison I make of the euro 5 Vito to the TX4 would, of course, be biased in favour of the euro 5 Vito? Wrong!

I always approach any judgement I make or consider with an open mind. A fair and honest appraisal has to be free of bias, or any purchase from judgement could be an extremely costly mistake because both of these vehicles are in my honest opinion, vastly overpriced in a market that historically is monopolised. Having said that, it's where we find ourselves.

I'm now currently test driving an early euro 5 TX4 Elegance courtesy of LTI. I mention it as 'early' as I'm informed that LTI are pursuing a policy of asking owners and drivers for their feedback so they can update and improve this current model of TX4 as they produce it.

So which of the two vastly different vehicles is better suited to the rigours and demands of life as a London taxi? The answer is not that one is better than the other, as they are both far superior to

Thinking of buying a new taxi but undecided between the euro 5 Vito and TX4 versions? Peter Begley (K98) has a few of both and gives his unbiased view below...

TX4 or Vito: What should I buy?

any taxi licensed to ply for hire in London to date. We as drivers need to decide what job of work we want to do, as both these taxis excel - but in very different ways.



The Mercedes Vito

As an over-all package from purchase to driving and servicing, the Mercedes experience takes some beating. It is an indulgent luxury to have a man from a Mercedes dealership turn up at your door in the morning, take your Vito away and then return it later that day serviced and cleaned at no extra charge!

TX4 drivers did read the last sentence correctly - Mercedes come to you!

The Mercedes Vito is everything you would rightly expect it to be for a former van that has been 'customised' into a luxury taxi. It is quite modern in comparison. Once sat behind the wheel of the enormous Vito, the dashboard is both impressive and huge. It has modern gadgets such as cruise control - however, I have never even turned that on! I see no point of having it in a taxi designed to work in London. It might possibly get used by drivers that work the airport.

It also has a speed limiter, which I found extremely useful and easy to use. The steering wheel houses buttons that control the stereo - which isn't DAB but really should be considering the high cost of the vehicle. It also controls the telephone *Bluetooth*, which is really impressive. You can turn the sound of the call up and down via the stereo buttons. The name or number of the caller is displayed on the stereo, which can also be set to dim automatically at night fall.

The power steering is incredibly light for such a big vehicle and makes driving around London almost joyful! I also found the standard parking sensors very handy, as are the folding door mirrors around the small busy streets. There is plenty of storage with a glove box that could almost house a family of four; but much of the storage is useless when driving unless you possess the arms of an orangutan as most of it is out of reach. And God forbid you drop anything in the footwell, you have to stop, get out and take what feels like a Wainwright walk around the vast width of the

Vito to retrieve it!

The diesel filler cap is not only on the wrong side - which leaves you vulnerable when filling - it is also far too low down. The boot is accessed via a huge slab of metal and glass clad in plastic that ought to be automated as it's so big. The space is useful but vastly reduced as it houses both the spare wheel and prehistoric folding ramp - a massive step backwards not to mention a pain in the arse to use. It also has some very sharp edges.

Forward vision is superb and the wipers do a great job - and very quietly. The climate control is very easy to use and what's even better, passengers have no control over it! I haven't bothered to discover how the cab does it, but the heater blows hot air in the morning even though the vehicle hasn't been used for hours, a genius idea for early starters.

The engine is a joy; it's very quiet, yet powerful, responsive and pulls well in any gear. The brakes are simply brilliant and if pressed aggressively, they will lift you off the seat! The meter is mounted in an awkward place but you get used to that. The rear doors are not as big an issue as they're made out to be; generally speaking, the public who use cabs regularly are used to them now and most users now know it's a taxi. However, I still see hands go up after passing a punter - who then raise their hands as the 'iconic' shape of a TX4 comes into view. This happens even more when the passenger approaches from the rear.

Then there is the Rear Wheel Steering that the Vito uses to ensure it complies and passes the conditions of fitness test. It plays up on a regular basis - on some days it can go off ten or more times. The real let down is that no one in the servicing department of the east-end selling dealership seems to know why and they still find it acceptable to leave uninformed customers sitting for hours in their waiting room. This is NOT the Mercedes way. It is, in my view, shockingly bad considering the money the Vito costs.

But in summary, I have enjoyed driving my Vito's. They really excel on roaders and I achieved 44.1 mpg on a recent run up the motorway. In town, my euro 5 Vito was getting around 30mpg. I also often get asked if I can be pre-booked as it is so spacious and comfortable.

The London Taxi Company TX4

Now onto my experience of the newly updated version of LTI's euro 5 TX4. The TX4 itself has been in service since 1995 - albeit with three different engines. The engine changes have been the only real differences up to now as it's basically the same vehicle as it was when first launched. This is probably because of the huge costs involved in

Continued on page 17

Almost halfway through her 101st year, Call Sign now has to say...

GOODBYE MILLIE

May 9 was a sad day for the London taxi trade, even though many outside of *Call Sign's* band of readers may not even know why. But it marked the day that **Millie**, the beloved mum of **Gerry Dunn (S84)**, bade farewell to this life and joined husband **Lou** somewhere out there.

Millie Dunn was a cabdriver's wife in the true sense because Lou was always out trying to do something or other that would benefit the taxi business, always having a meeting lined up with someone. Millie never complained at the number of burnt dinners she had to throw away!

But so far as the early history of Dial-a-Cab was concerned, it was when Lou and several other drivers formed the Radio Owner Drivers Association that this Society became more than just a pipedream.

In 1952, in order to get "onto 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. It was then that Lou and those few friends decided that a circuit for owner drivers was important for the progression of the trade.

History tells us that soon after that time, **Bonnie Martyn** joined RODA before realising its potential and together with a handful of other stalwarts, founded the **Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service** – which later became **Dial-a-Cab**.

It was in January 2003 that Lou was shown around DaC by **Brian Rice** and then just a few months later, both Millie and Lou were special guests at the celebrations built around this Society's 50th year. It was that night that Lou told *Call Sign* about his life before surprising us by saying that he could never have done it without the 100% backing he always had from Millie.

Before the year was out, Lou had passed away at the age of 93 leaving Millie to cope for herself. And she did! She had a large family to help, but made it clear to Gerry that whilst she loved seeing them, she was only 91 and more than capable of looking after herself and living comfortably on her own!

Millie Dunn made her final "public appearance" at this year's **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's Mad Hatter's party** in January at the Grosvenor House. She had reached the magical age of 100, but wouldn't allow that to stop her going out. She asked *Call Sign* to pass on her thanks to DaC for the bouquet they sent her, while we joked about where she would be going to celebrate her 101st birthday. She died peacefully four months later.

True that Millie was in the background when compared to the work Lou had done, but as Lou said, he couldn't have achieved a fraction of it without her! So whilst our sympathies go to Gerry, his two sisters Pamela and Bernice and to all Millie's family, we also celebrate an amazing life...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online



Millie and Lou at DaC's 50th anniversary party in 2003. Both were in their 90's

TX4 or Vito Continued from page 16



changing and testing any new vehicle. Now however, LTI along with its new partner Geely has had to change. But why? Well there are two reasons - emissions and the Mercedes Vito taking the fight to them. So really they've had change forced on them. But have the changes produced a vehicle able to stand its own against the new entrant in the London taxi market? So let's have a look at the latest offering from LTI aka The London Taxi Company.

The first thing I noticed even before I got into the new TX4 is that the shut lines (gaps between the bodywork panels) have been vastly improved. It makes me wonder why we were so accepting of the previous TX4s enormous gaps between the external panels.

I sat in the driver's seat - which I found to my surprise was really, really comfortable and supportive. In fact I found the driver's seat more comfortable than that of the Vito! The single added feature of a proper armrest to help the driver's posture whilst working gets top marks here for LTI. The interior panels, dashboard and partition look the same but not only are they made from better quality materials, they are fitted together much bet-

ter than before. And it didn't rattle - apart from one little rattle in the partition, which weirdly is the same one as my Vito euro5 possessed near the money tray!

This new TX4 is by far the smoothest and sure footed TX4 I have ever driven and I never thought I'd be saying that in a million years! So well done to LTI. I was really enjoying the drive until I pushed it a bit harder. It wallows from side to side when pushed hard on corners and doesn't seem to like being on motorways as the buffeting winds make it feel somewhat unstable.

The key fob that up to now has been made from what seemed like a cheap bit of recycled plastic, is now quite nice and works very well in its operation. The key on the other hand, although also changed, is no better than the old one it is replacing.

But I do have a big issue with the interior and that is that although it's made of superior materials than before and screwed together far better, it is really dated and missing many standard and modern fittings and gadgets that could prevent me from purchasing a car if it didn't have them as standard.

Here is a quick list of things that LTI still have to replace for the TX4 to take that last step to be able to compete much more closely with the Vito.

Air conditioning should by now have been updated to climate control. There should be an airbag in the steering wheel - which should be replaced as it is of poor quality and feels really dated to hold. The front and rear fans are still very noisy. Both front windows would benefit from a one-touch up switch. There is very little storage in the driver's compartment. Legroom is still poor for the driver while the internal and external light-

ing is still very poor. The new TX4 euro 5 still runs hot, maybe hotter than before. This in part is due to the location of the particulate filter, which is just below the driver's right foot and can reach temperatures of up to 800 degrees.

In conclusion, the latest offering from LTI must be viewed as a work in progress. It's been really quite a pleasant place to work but is drastically let down by a usually harsh engine note when in low gear and especially when under strain.

But the story isn't quite over because I was then given the very latest TX4 euro5 to try. I have now been driving it for four days and I'm very impressed! The harsh engine note remains and sounds worse when cruising at 60-70mph on the motorway. Talking to your passenger can become a bit of a shouting match. But I am still very much of the opinion that the TX4 is a far better taxi for working in town. That's not to say that it isn't capable of undertaking motorway journeys, because it is. It's just that the Vito with its superior and more refined engine, which sips diesel as if it were a fine wine returning in excess of 40mpg, takes motorways in its stride.

So the time has come to nail my colours to the mast. Am I going to purchase a new TX4 euro5? Yes, it's certainly its father's son, but it's also an extremely good cab and much easier to work in town, which is my main hunting ground. Anyone who says the Conditions of Fitness are obsolete is kidding themselves and I for one am surprised to realise the extent to which I have missed the rear steering. So with that in mind, I have placed an order for two new TX4 euro5 Elegances with LTI at Brewery Road, one of which I shall pushing around the streets of London myself.

Peter Begley (K98)

The longer I am a London taxi driver the more I question why we collectively accept such poor quality service from those who come to us in the guise of trade saviours – be that dealership garages, small garages, bodyshops, spare part and meter suppliers, many of whom offer their services for just eight hours a day, five days a week in support of a trade that functions 24 x 7 - year in year out.

As a trade we have suffered enough. But now they say that the wait is over! Well, God help us if the answer to our prayers is the Peugeot-based E7 from Cab Direct! **Let me say I had a good look round the E7 but did not actually drive it. Also, this is my personal opinion and I have no foundation on which to base my opinion other than instinctive gut feeling.**

This cab has enjoyed success in most other UK cities, however London is not like any other city and the taxis required to work here must be in a league of their own. Some sectors don't like or agree with this and they are entitled to their opinion. This one, though, is mine. And let me assure you that is the way it is... end of!

There is a great need for all London to see for themselves the Peugeot based E7 being offered. You know that expression: "Surely it can't get any worse, can it?" So let's make a start...

Although the driver's seat feels comfortable, the driver's cabin itself feels very cramped compared to the space in the latest LTI TX4 or even worse when compared to the cavernous Mercedes Vito! As you look around, you're surrounded by oceans of poor quality plastic, the likes of which I have not seen since I toured a Ford plant in the 1980s, Billy Ocean was riding high in the charts and I had a rummage around in the Escort spares bin!

The manually operated sliding rear doors open to reveal a rear cabin that has an enormously high entry step coupled with an extremely low headroom height, which is very worrying indeed. I can see these two combined causing severe difficulty for a large number of passengers whether young, old, disabled or just slightly intoxicated.

The pull out sliding ramp seems like a good idea, but in practice produces a ramp that is at such an incredible incline, I thought it must be a preproduction mule. The use of poor quality plastics continues inside the rear cabin. The flip seats felt ready to break - this in a new

Those who believe the Conditions of Fitness are on the way out...

CALL SIGN LOOKS AT THE PEUGEOT E7



tainly looks to have been made on the cheap.

The salesman I spoke with said the E7 would be offered in London as an automatic at extra cost. He also confirmed it did not comply with the COF required in London (I admit to being in favour of the COF as it helps to maintain a standard) and that the E7 requires servicing every 12k miles with no service

unused E7! The rear seating is made up from separate seats that can be moved into varying combinations, which in a family situation could be of benefit. However, in a London taxi it would cause all sorts of grief in use with hinges and clips breaking - not to mention the number of times that punters would keep asking the driver to retrieve items from the boot/rear. As for the seats being flexible, in London we drive taxis and not minicabs - it is just not required in a London taxi. Full stop. Myself and two close friends found ourselves even closer than we thought possible when sat together in the three rear seats. My head was wedged against the roof lining at a very uncomfortable angle. Everything about this vehicle feels cheap and nasty – I mean really nasty. On the bonus side, the switch that came off in my hand was quite easy to put back - well it was the first time. Even if the poorly finished E7 had the coveted turning circle which it does not, it would still not make it into my garage. It just feels too poorly assembled. If the *Rear Wheel Steering* offered by Mercedes accounts for as much as 12k of its price, the E7 be should be offered at about £22-24k maximum.

But it isn't all bad news, I did find two things I liked a lot in the Peugeot E7 - those being the rear spoiler and the alloy wheels. But the thing I find remarkable is that the E7 might be offered to us as a cheaper alternative to both the LTI TX4 and Mercedes Vito. Well, it cer-

package offered. The cost of this 'cheap alternative' is £35,995. Add in the servicing costs of approximately £2500 - £3000 and it's likely to be almost as expensive as both of the taxis currently on offer in London, which in my opinion are over-priced anyway but without the cost to the vehicle producer of developing and testing plus production costs of the coveted turning circle.

I don't smoke and I never have, as I know I won't like it. It's the same for the Peugeot E7. I didn't test drive it as I know I won't like it and will not purchase it, it is that horrible. So my message to Cab Direct is stay away from London with that pile of rubbish. We're not as stupid or desperate as you obviously think we are... With all its design issues and very poor quality interior fit and trim, I've also had feedback from drivers I've spoken with who have one in other parts of the country and who tell me that they experience severe warranty disputes with Peugeot, who for various reasons do not want to cover varying parts on a vehicle bought as one type of vehicle and converted into a taxi by an outside party.

As a footnote; I'm not sure why, but the E7 on show at Southbank had the window sticker of £35,995, yet in *TAXI Newspaper* it is advertised with an on the road price for a manual of £25,495 or an automatic with an OTR price of £27,495...

Peter Begley (K98)

Karen motorcycling to Germany to help MS

Beginning on 2nd August, Dial-a-Cab driver Karen Menpes (E01) will be riding her motorbike to Germany and then onto Scotland in aid of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

The total distance facing Karen before arriving at the finishing post is around 1600 miles, but she is absolutely determined to finish the ride and help raise some much-needed funds for the MS Society.

Karen's brother, **John Tadman**, has been badly affected by MS and the MS Society has been an invaluable source of help to both her brother and many other sufferers.

Multiple Sclerosis is a condition of the central nervous system where the coating around nerve fibres is damaged, causing a range of symptoms. Around 100,000 people in the UK have MS. It's normally diagnosed in people between the ages of 20 and 40 but once diagnosed, stays with you for life. However, modern day treatments and specialists can help to manage the symptoms. No cure has yet been found, but research is progressing fast, so any donations would help towards that aim and be greatly appreciated.

Just go to www.facebook.com/motorcyclecharityuk and follow the link.

Anyone who would like to ask questions can call the MS Society helpline between 9am and 9pm on Monday to Fridays. Tel 0808 800 8000 or email helpline@mssociety.org.uk.

Time's running out to take the TX4 test drive!

So far The London Taxi Company has given away almost £3,000 to drivers who have taken the TX4 (Euro 5) Test Drive, but time is running out to get your hands on £100 in Tesco vouchers. The campaign will end on Thursday 12 July when there will be a final grand prize draw and three lucky winners will be selected to win either £500, £1,000 or £2,500 in their choice of travel vouchers. See the ad on the back cover for details of how YOU could win...

You can sometimes just sit looking at four walls; how often have you heard that? Well, as a **Dial-a-Cab** taxi driver it's three glass walls that just keep changing.



Those words were spoken to me during tea by the great director, producer and screenwriter, **Sir David Lean**.

I have put it in my locker of life and kept it in my minds' eye, alongside that poster of a girl scratching her bum whilst holding a tennis racket and whose house I never went to for afternoon tea - her loss not mine!

I would love to say at this point that I pulled down the window and just said where to guv! Alas those days have long gone. You know the type, 98 in the shade, ramrod back and shoes to match. Oh... and a tie that says I'll kill for your freedom and democracy and I'll defend your right to say whatever you like - even if I bloody well disagree with you. Then a calm and measured voice arrives:

"Would you be so kind as to drop me off at Piccadilly and take my good wife to Cheyne Walk please."

So off we go, dropped the chap off along Piccadilly with his Telegraph under his arm. At this point, any cab driver will know where he's off to, marching up the stairs and into the club.

As we pulled away, I snatched a glimpse of the new Bomber Command memorial. Bang on cue the lady, who has not said a word, says to me: **"Oh look, that's for men like my daddy."** For a moment in time I was as proud as punch, as the tears flowed down her face. James Bond was out of the way so it was me

After 55,573 deaths, Dial-a-Cab's Gary Cox says..

Finally Bomber Command gets its memorial!



At last Bomber Command gets a memorial

who gave her a man sized Scottie paper hanky out of my man sized box. The old girl went on to explain her career - as she called it - being married to an RAF chap. Once we had touched base about the kids, dogs and life on and off bases around the world, we moved onto the hellholes around the planet. And I found out that hubby was not allowed to take the stock, as she referred to the family! I looked in the mirror as an old girl suddenly turned into a lady who, had she been stuck in Singapore when the Japs arrived in WW2, well I don't think I'd have fancied their chances! I rather sheepishly asked what advice she would give to someone going to live abroad? Other than my winning the lotto, there was little chance of it happening but still worth keeping in the locker just in case!

"Make use of all the local ingredients and talk to all the locals about recipes, because if you're ever inclined to do a dinner party its always handy if you're entertaining international gentlemen and their spouses," came the immediate response. Then she sprung up and out of the cab, paid the fare, while at the same time giving me the recipe for quick fire lemon curd!

All those years later, that lady had got a real present from her country - a memorial to her daddy as she still called him. Oh yes, don't forget **Help for Heroes** because we're still making them out there somewhere in the world. Don't you feel a little green with envy for our hero who's done her bit for her nation as she would surely refer to us. Then again, you could be a hero for all I know! It's never easy not opening your mouth in what can be one of the loneliest jobs in the world at times; but the rewards can be great if you can get the passenger to impart their knowledge. Me? I got a lemon curd recipe and a job to LAP the following week - a result all round, methinks.

Thank you David Lean - shame you never made me a hero in one of your films. We could have done a remake of *Reach for the Skies*. I would have looked good in that uniform

Roger and Out! Roger...

Gary Cox (046)

Credit card usage on the up

According to credit card payment specialist **CardSave**, taxi drivers have seen a marked increase in card takings with turnover almost doubling in the first quarter of this year compared with the same period last year. This is according to an analysis of card payments at over 540 taxi companies around the UK. CardSave CEO, **Clive Khan**, told **Call Sign**:

"With more consumers preferring to use cards, taxi companies such as **Dial-a-Cab** that accept debit and credit cards are seeing the effects on their revenue. Card payments are increasingly important for licensed firms and we expect more taxis to adopt card payment solutions over the next year."

A recent **YouGov** poll found that 62% of the UK public tend to carry £20 or less in cash on them, while 93% carry at least one card.

Mr Khan continued: "The public feel increasingly comfortable using their cards for lower value spends and on things which they would previously pay for with cash - like taxi journeys. For drivers, the case for accepting cards is strong and removes the need to stop at ATMs and the PCN problems that entail, or just having to put up with punters caught short on cash."

"In recent years, the option to pay by card was a luxury, but Britain is swiftly moving towards becoming a cashless society and there is now strong customer demand for card payment technologies. Our *Small Business Payments Index* indicates that business owners with card payment facilities can significantly increase their total business revenue."

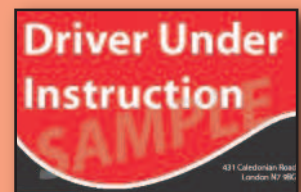
The survey reveals the prevailing public sentiment towards cash as a soon-to-be outmoded form of currency. A majority of the public (57%) believe that cash will become extinct at some point in the future - with 50% predicting that this will be by 2035!



CardSave CEO Clive Khan

Red Tuition Identifiers

A plea from Knowledge Point



As the debate rambles on in **Call Sign** about Green and Yellow badge identifiers, **Knowledge Point** would like to make a plea for some consideration to be given to knowledge trainees. Whilst it is true that you don't have to display an identifier if you are not working, knowledge trainees when under tuition or on a taxi driving test will have either a tutor or an examiner in the back that could easily be perceived as a passenger. So Knowledge Point taxis will be carrying **red identifiers** when being used for tuition or taxi driving tests in the hope that drivers who spot them will give due consideration to their trainees - after all we have all been there at some time in the past!

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



Hello ladies & gents,

I'm sure that by now many of you will have been or are just about to go on a well-deserved summer break. I hope that if it is in the UK, then the weather improves for you!

Joe Skeggs

I must first start on a very sad note; I am sure many of you would have known **Joe Skeggs (V34)**. Apart from being a long standing member of our Society, he was one of the real characters. Joe sadly passed away after a lengthy illness on Saturday 2nd June and on behalf of the Board of Management and everyone who knew him at **Dial-a-Cab**, I would like to pass on sincere condolences to his family and friends. Joe was never afraid to air his views and he will be greatly missed.

Complaints

As you can see from the Complaints Results

on page 39, a hearing took place on Thursday 17th May with a subsequent Appeals meeting on Friday 1st June for two of the members. It was interesting that two members due to attend the hearing decided to cease their membership rather than face their fellow peers to fight their case, something which probably speaks for itself. All other findings by the committee on the day were accepted or upheld at the Appeals meeting.

New terminals

I'm sure you are all aware that we are soon to be fitting a new terminal into your taxis and many of you have enquired as to which meters are fully compatible with the new system. At this moment in time, the following meters have been successfully tested by our IT department. They are still waiting to fully test additional meters providing that the software in the meter is successfully upgraded by the relevant manufacturers. The four meters so far listed are shown in alphabetical order, but I am sure you will be looking for the best available deal. **The four are Cygnus, Digitax, Global and Viking.**

Some of the older meters will be superseded by later models, but as I have mentioned, DaC's IT department is working hard with other meter companies and the list will gradually grow as additional meters meet the Dial-a-Cab protocol.

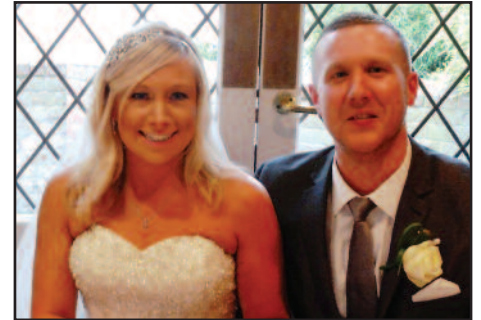
Buy a taxi now and pay later!

Singers Asset Finance are offering any **Dial-a-Cab** member that wishes to buy a new or used vehicle from either a taxi dealer or direct from another driver, a 3 months

deferred payment holiday! This will be on agreements signed up before the 31st August and subject to status and business users only. The offer is for taxi purchases only. This will give buyers a chance to upgrade now and not pay a single penny for 3 months!

If interested, contact Ian Butcher, the Development Manager of Taxi Finance at Singers Corporate Asset on 0870 600 1218 or 07584 346179.

You can read about Singer Asset Finance at www.singersaf.co.uk



Claire and Kevin

Finally, I'd like to finish on a happy note. One of our regular Marshals, **Chris Grote (C66)** and his wife **Ann** celebrated the marriage of their daughter **Claire** to **Kevin** on 20th April. My wife and I were lucky enough to be invited to the wedding. Our families have been friends for many years and I can only say that they did their daughter and new son-in-law - also a London taxi driver - proud with no expense spared! It was a fantastic day and as you can see from the photo, Chris was flying the Dial-a-Cab flag (*see cover... Ed*).

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

Another true story from Geoff Levene...

A GOOD DAY?

We all want a good start to the day. On Sundays I only do a few taxi hours in the morning, so it's really essential for me. And I wasn't complaining the other week when in Hendon at 6am I trapped a young Irishman. The combination of a few drinks and the broadest brogue I've ever heard - and I was brought up in Cricklewood - meant it took a while to decipher that he wanted to go to Ealing. As we went round the North Circular, he told me firstly that he was actually English (yeah right) but 'Daddy' had decided to move to Ireland. Secondly he said how much he hated foreigners. I think there was a moral there somewhere but I'm not too sure what it was! Then after a vigorous debate over the fare, he finally paid and I headed east.

As I hit Acton, four young Italians asked the price to Gatwick! We agreed on a sum (very favourable to them) and off we went. They soon all fell asleep and I eventually dropped them off safe and sound after a nice quiet journey. So by the time I drove back down Brixton Hill, I had that feeling that it was going to be a good day, especially when two men in their forties and a younger girl suddenly put their hands out. They looked as if they were going to a station for a day out. One man leaned in and speaking fluent Scouse said: **"Awright pal? We wanna go to West Norwood!"** I gave a silent gulp, **"...and then Railton Road."** My gulp became a silent screech! But there was more: **"And then onto Camberwell. Is that OK,"** the scouser asked with the knowing wink that I wouldn't say no! I squeaked an 'ok' that got stuck somewhere in my gullet as my thoughts of that good day slowly went into reverse.

From some dark and dusty corner of my hippocampus, I dredged up the way to West Norwood and was directed to a block of flats. *Scouse Number One* went in and whilst waiting, I picked up the conversation between *Scouse Number Two* and the *Girl Who Was Probably a Prostitute*. It appeared that *Scouse Number One* was getting some money so they could buy 'the stuff' in Brixton. What, I wondered, could 'the stuff' be? I know what I like to buy on a Sunday morning - beignets and smoked salmon! Was there a place on the front line where alongside the curried goat, rice and peas and Jamaica patties where they did egg and onion, chopped liver and maybe some lokshen pudding?

In Brixton, the *Girl Who Was Probably a Prostitute* took the money, walked up the road and disappeared round the corner. We waited. *Scouse Number One* got out and smoked nervously, while *Number Two* twitched and sweated. And then, just like a mirage shimmering on the horizon, she was back with a grin not as wide as Buckingham Palace. Sighs and a sense of relief filled the passenger compartment and on we went to Camberwell.

As we drove along Coldharbour Lane, *Scouse Number One* leaned forward. "Eh pal, wouldya settle for thirty quid?"

I looked at the meter showing thirty two already. I made a decision. "OK," I said, "but I want the money now."

It appeared over my left shoulder. Now the *Girl Who Was Probably a Prostitute* spoke saying that it wasn't very nice of me to ask for the money up front. It was only with the greatest effort that I didn't respond to her by inferring that I thought that was normal business practice in her line of work! But the words never materialised as I heard myself say that her friend didn't seem to mind.

And that was it. In Camberwell we went our separate ways. I suppose night men are used to that kind of thing. As for me, I'll stick to days...

Geoff Levene (W32)



Camden, Westminster and City of London ask Mayor Johnson...

Ban 10-year-old taxis!

Councils at Camden, Westminster and City of London have written jointly to Mayor Boris Johnson calling on him to take more action over London's poor air quality and have included in that a desire to review the new 15 year age limit for taxis and reduce it down to 10 years! The letter calls for funding or grants to be offered to taxi drivers to help them upgrade their cabs in addition to new technology being brought in to help reduce pollution.

The letter states: "We need to focus on the worst polluters and our evidence suggests that

black cabs account for a significant concentration of dangerous particles from vehicle sources in the air in Camden. If the Mayor and TfL are serious about improving air quality, they should be offering incentives and assistance to London cab drivers to help them reduce pollution while keeping the capital moving."

Camden have now offered to help taxis, however, the last time they offered assistance was via *Call Sign* when the council paid for 15 Dial-a-Cab taxis to be converted to gas. What they failed to provide were garages where the

converted vehicles could be serviced! As a result, most had problems that couldn't be sorted out.

As the Mayor has only just brought in the 15-year limit, it would seem unlikely that he will accede to this new request. Perhaps one answer would be to reduce traffic flow and if the three councils aren't sure how they can do that, *Call Sign* is sure that we can help them out by providing representatives of this trade with some common sense – something that often seems to be lacking in the three councils..

Studio apartment in Putney Vale for sale



A refurbished studio apartment in Putney Vale, just moments away from the A3 and bus routes into both Putney and Kingston, has been put up for sale by a Dial-a-Cab driver. The property comprises a large studio area kitchen and luxury shower room. It has its own parking space.

Price £159,950. Contact Tony (R09) on 07811 474 516 for more details...

THE PLAYBOY IS BACK

And looking to work with the taxi trade...



Very few of us choose to become London taxi drivers when we leave school, but the Knowledge seems to be something we just fall into. Before driving his taxi, **Alex Constantinou (N05)** had a career as a croupier, working in many London clubs - and even on the QE2! Now combining the two, Alex has visited the **Playboy Casino** in Old Park Lane for *Call Sign*...

"I eventually went on the Knowledge, but one of my good friends, **Adam**, stayed in the industry and has now become the *Gaming Director* of the newly opened **Playboy Casino** on the site of the old *Rendezvous Casino* in Old Park Lane. The name Playboy was at its peak in the seventies and early eighties when along with the draw of the tables and **Bunny Girls**, **Hugh Heffner** made the club one of the best and most famous nights out on the town in London - even our editor was a member! (*Ed's note: I told you not to say anything!*)

So it was great to get a call from Adam to come and look around the club and have a meal. He has always supported the taxi trade and hopes to get a rank put outside the Playboy as well as organising a driver incentive for dropping off well-groomed passengers who are looking for a great night out with the option of eating, drinking, gaming or even dancing in the Cottontail club. At the moment it is a member's only club, but that is all going to change in August when **Salvatore's Bar** and the **Cottontail** will be open to the public and you will only need to be a member to go into the casino.

For the meal, I was accompanied by fellow ex-croupier and Dial-a-Cab driver Andy Gorman (B76) who didn't have to think for too long when I asked him to join me for the outing!

After welcoming us to the Playboy Adam gave us a tour before we'd sit down to eat. Downstairs accommodates **Salvatore's Bar** – where the amazing **Salvatore Calabrese** is said to be one of the world's greatest cocktail mixers! Also on that floor is the Cottontail club, a venue for acts such as **Rizzle Kicks** and the **Rat Pack**. Then we went upstairs to the Player's bar and gaming floor with its private rooms and of course, the **Dining Room** restaurant...

As we sat down amidst some amazing lighting, we knew we were in for a treat as we instantly recognised *Executive Chef Judy Joo* as one of the **Channel 4 Iron Chefs**. Judy was trained by **Gordon Ramsey** and looking at the menu, you could see his influences – but with the undoubted Judy Joo stamp on some of her American-Korean dishes!

I started with the *American Shrimp Cocktail* while Andy went for the *Baked Oysters Rockefeller*. We agreed that both dishes were presented immaculately, but of more importance were packed full of exquisite flavours. All the main courses sounded just amazing, but we were probably only allowed one each so we had to pick wisely! I opted for the *rack of lamb* with an *Asian marinade*, *miso aubergine* and *bok choy*. Andy, who thought he was still dreaming until realising he might wake up too soon, decided to go for it and had the *grilled whole lobster with garlic butter* and *steamed vegetables*. There is 'really nice' and then there was *this*! Both plates contained food from heaven, absolutely cooked to perfection with each mouthful tasting like the mythical manna that heaven emits.

I won't bother describing the desserts other than to say that if you have the room, then it is well worth a dip with a *Snickers*! All the while, we could also taste the atmosphere of our surroundings and both Andy and I agreed that it made the dining experience even better – if that were possible!

No one can pretend that an evening at the Playboy is cheap, but it is an experience that you'd be hard pushed not to enjoy. Even so, there are appetisers ranging from £10 to £40, whilst main courses begin at £12 and go up to £100 for the *Wagyu New York Strip*, a loin steak that is aged a minimum of 35 days before being hand cut! It sounded amazing, but we might have been seen as pushing our luck a bit had we selected it! There are also the ultra-British *fish and chips* or the US equivalent of a *cheeseburger*, which probably has as much in common with a Big Mac as DaC has with Addison Lee!

We left the Playboy feeling that we had not just had an unforgettable meal at one of London's premier and iconic nightspots, but had been part of an experience.

Our thanks to Adam and it's nice to hear of a top London venue wanting to support the taxi trade while we help put such an iconic club back onto the map. And yes, the **Bunny Girls** still look great!"

The Playboy Club London, 14 Old Park Lane. Tel: 0207 491 8586...

Alex Constantinou (N05)

Well, perhaps that heading is somewhat misleading because it gives the impression that **Dial-a-Cab** and **GetTaxi** are buddies – and they aren't. **GetTaxi** isn't like the plethora of taxi apps fighting for position in our tiny market; it involves fitting hardware into your taxi and as such not only does it classify as direct competition to **DaC**, but any driver caught with **GetTaxi** equipment in their cab could face a meeting with **Allan Evans** and possibly even a date with the Complaints Committee!

So **Call Sign** took a trawl back through its files to find out when – or indeed if – any precedent has been set. And indeed it was a trawl – back to when the majority of current subscribers were small children or more probably not even yet born! Back, no less, than 58 years to the year 1954!

Can you remember a time when there was just one TV channel with the birth of **ITV** still 12 months away and the **BBC** about to broadcast the UK's first-ever "soap." That came when **The Grove Family** hit the black and white 11-inch screens of those that could afford a set!

Microsoft's **Bill Gates** and **Steve Jobs** were both still a year away from being born into a world where the only computers took up a complete room and even then were less powerful than any of today's modest laptops. **Microsoft** was a meaningless name.

The charts – then known as the *Hit Parade* – showed **Eddie Calvert's** *Oh Mein Papa* as being at number one, with **Frankie Laine** and *Answer Me* holding down second from **Winifred Attwell's** *Let's Have a Party* at three. **Bill Haley and his Comets** were still 9-months away from their UK debut single, *Shake, Rattle and Roll* and almost 18-months away from the record that changed music forever, *Rock Around the Clock*.

Wolverhampton Wanderers have been relegated this year, but in 1954 the club won the Football League First Division title – that year's Premier League – for the first time in the club's history. Also that year, **Roger Bannister** became the first person to break the *four-minute mile*, the *rationing* that had been introduced at the onset of WW2 came to an end and **Winston Churchill** became the first – and still the only – British Prime Minister to reach his 80th birthday while still in office.

So what happened at **Dial-a-Cab** – then known as **The Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service** – in 1954 that brings **Call Sign** back to **GetTaxi**?

It was in March 1955 that the famous blind MP of the time, **Sir Ian Fraser**, came to 172 **Pentonville Road** for the official **ODRTS** opening, but we're travelling back even further to just after the time on 26 January 1954, when our first job was dispatched. No MPs were available at the time, so Chairman **Bonnie Martyn** arranged a delayed official opening through a friend at the **BBC** – which much later was to become the Society's first account customer. In the meantime, it was all unofficial.

Within weeks of that first job going out, an incident occurred that was considered to be so serious that it involved **Bonnie Martyn** receiving a letter from **George Steadman**, head of the **London Carriage Office**, informing him that **ODRTS** faced closure because of it!

The "incident" involved popular Council of Management member – they hadn't yet referred to themselves as Board members –

The DaC and GetTaxi connection???



What does BBC's 1950's soap **The Grove Family** have to do with **GetTaxi**?

David Fiertag, who had previously been the Society's Treasurer. He was spotted by a fellow driver as not only having **ODRTS** **Pye** radio equipment fitted in his taxi, but also that of **Lew Levy's York Way Radio Cabs**, who also used **Pye** radios. **Lew** had been taken to New York in 1950 by **Pye** to see how radio could change the way taxis operated. One year later and **York Way Radio Cabs** on **TERminus 8800** were launched to London with a swish do at **Mayfair's Empress Club**. **Lew** copyrighted the name **Radio Cabs** and so far as **Call Sign** knows, the name cannot be used by any taxi or private hire company as part of their name.

On 2 April 1954, an emergency meeting was held at the **Pentonville Road** office to discuss **David Fiertag** having two sets of equipment fitted to taxicab registration **KG 797**. He allegedly also had two callsigns – he was **Dan 5** on

ODRTS and **Dog 21** on **Radio Cabs**. Fellow CoM member **Alec Cobden** put down a proposition that **David Fiertag** should be expelled and the rest of the CoM carried it. As yet there was no Complaints department. **David** had his £1 loan returned and as a gentleman, went immediately to **Marylebone Mews** where **Pye's** engineers removed an **ODRTS** driver's radio equipment for the first time. His place on the CoM was taken by **Charlie Young (A24)**.

So yes, there is a precedent set for anyone found with another company's equipment fitted. It may not be the disgrace it was then, but it won't be classified as much of an honour if **Allan Evans** finds out!

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

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"I laugh about it now," **Melvin Green (E55)** told *Call Sign* while relating a story from the past, "yet at the time it was anything but funny." He smiled broadly, his mind going back to the incident from his nocturnal cabbage career of some years ago.

"I stopped for a street hail on Edgware Road near George Street. The fare requested Rickmansworth and I agreed to take him. He said to take the A40 / M25 and he would direct me from there when I asked if he had a preferred route.

What I didn't see in the dark was the half empty bottle of wine he was hiding under his jacket! Anyway, off we went and of course he soon fell asleep in the back. As we approached Hillingdon roundabout, he woke up rather confused and began hitting the central partition with the wine bottle shouting off about me going the wrong way and where were we etc. He said he didn't recognise the area. So I pulled into the kerbside, stopping sharply as I did so because by now I too was feeling somewhat flustered

The latest in an ongoing Call Sign series about DaC driver's strange customers and jobs!

I WON'T BE LONG... hic!

and fed up with his antics. I offered to let him out of the cab there and then!"

Continuing his tale of woe to *Call Sign*, Melvin said: "He had fallen onto the cab floor from the force of my stopping so abruptly and it was from the carpet that he proffered sufficient money to tempt me to carry on with the journey, so off we went again as I stuffed the notes into my shirt pocket.

"However, a few minutes later he began complaining again by which time I had really had enough, so I made my way to finding Uxbridge police station. That was an achievement in itself because with him still sounding off in the back, my blood-pressure was going up very quickly!" Melvin's voice was now quivering as he re-lived the trauma.

"I breathed a sigh of relief as the familiar blue lamp on the front of the building beckoned out of the gloom. Two policemen came out to me and tried remonstrating with the passenger, whose attitude towards them was also less than friendly. One of the policemen turned to me and asked if I had been paid, otherwise he smiled and suggested that they

would shake it out of him!"

"He can then sleep it off in one of our cells overnight," one of the coppers said as they each grabbed an arm of the fare, frog-marching him unsteadily towards the nick and his overnight accommodation!"

Then came the drunk's final request that turned the whole incident into one that the **Dial-a-Cab** driver can't forget for a combination of irritation and laughing! The drunk, his legs struggling to keep him upright turned towards Melvin and said:

"I won't be long; you can wait and take me home!" Melvin started giggling to our reporter at the optimistic comment!

"With the drunk safely out of sight and in the care of the boys in blue, I slid the cab into gear and drove away, still unsure how I was feeling - but grateful that I had got paid!"

If you have a favourite story about a job you have done, let Call Sign know...

© Call Sign Magazine MMXI

DaC's Lee fails in world record attempt!

Regular *Call Sign* readers will know that **Wembley FC** goalkeeper and **Dial-a-cab** driver **Lee Pearce (J71)** are one and the same! Wembley are now sponsored by **Budweiser** and play under the watchful eye of the team's *Technical Advisor*, no less than former **Spurs** manager and star midfielder, and much later, **Barcelona** manager, **Terry Venables**.

At this year's FA cup final at Wembley Stadium, Lee was involved in a world record attempt that took place during the match in which Chelsea beat Liverpool. During half-time, three separate challengers took part in an attempt the break the world record for the most goals punted from midfield in 60 seconds. The current record of 11 was by Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas in Beijing, China last year.

Organised by **Budweiser**, the three goalkeepers selected for the record attempt were **Lee Pearce**, **Richard Alford**, who won the slot in a competition and former Everton FA Cup winning star **Neville Southall**.

So at half time, the three goalies stood on the halfway line in front of 90,000 fans attempting to punt the ball into an empty net and to beat Casillas record of 11 goals from his hands to his boot and into the net in 60 seconds! Sadly all three failed to get anywhere close with Neville Southall on 6, getting closest!

Earlier, Lee was involved in another **Budweiser** competition at the Power League pitch just outside the main stadium. This one involved fans queuing up to take penalties against him with signed footballs by the cup finalists going up for grabs.

The funniest part of the day was when Lee saved the penalties of three friends - but then deliberately allowed their wives to score! Luckily the men had a sense of humour!



Fans queue up to try to beat Lee with a penalty kick. Most failed...

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Call Sign ran a report in our *February* issue when **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Martin Hizer (M47)** had the catalytic converter stolen from his **TX2**. That was just one of a spate of taxi catcons being stolen at the time from vehicles while they were left unattended, usually overnight.

It seems the thieves have now returned to this lucrative source of supply, especially in the Essex borough of Havering where, other than northwest London, taxis are in their most plentiful supply.

This time round it was **Robert Webb (A03J)** who told **Call Sign** that, rather amazingly, he had driven his **MB Vito** taxi for several days without realising the taxi was short of its catalytic converter and even then, he was only alerted to the loss when a fellow taxi driver and near neighbour knocked on his door to warn him about the thefts! Alas, it was too late for Robert, even though he had parked his cab just yards from his own front door!

"The cab was running fine," said Robert with a puzzled look, "but when I checked the underside, there it *wasn't*! When I phoned to enquire about the price and stock of the item, I was given to understand that these thefts are rife in the area and reaching almost epidemic proportions! If correct, that makes it a very worrying situation."

Robert is now investigating ways to protect his vehicle. Although cars are also being targeted, it's not quite as easy to remove them as they sit lower on the road, but a taxi has that much more ground clearance and removal of

WHERE'S MY CAT?



Robert's Catalytic Converter was stolen from his vito

the 'Cat' with bolt-croppers can be achieved in about 30 seconds.

"These items are around £1000 a time to replace and can be removed in less than a minute, so if thieves are stealing around 50 units a night, that can be a good result for the villains," Robert added. "If the items are then sold to less scrupulous scrap metal dealers who don't ask too many questions, the market for these stolen emission controlling 'Cats' will surely flourish."

Robert walked off looking like a man who had just spent £1000 for no reason. Police are tending to agree with Robert's synopsis that the thieves aren't doing it to resell the catcons, but purely to sell on as scrap metal. They also added that theft numbers have more than quadrupled in less than two years.

Unlike personal radios, a catalytic converter can't practically be removed from your taxi every night. But there may be an answer. See below...

© Call Sign Magazine MMX11

Protecting your Catalytic Converter

Call Sign has published several articles about drivers who have had the catalytic converter stolen from underneath their taxi. Another appears inside this issue. But now there is an answer.

It does appear that the reason for the thefts is due to the increasing price of metal rather than any shortage of the cats. The converters contain rare metals including Palladium, Platinum and Rhodium and represent a fairly easy target for thieves. The reason more vanish from Vitos rather than from LTI is because they are easier to reach on those vehicles with a higher gap underneath.

But a new product called **Protectavan CATLOC** has come onto the market and encompasses the catalytic converter in a strong stainless-steel wrap which is then secured to the chassis with an equally strong stainless-steel cable. The device uses high security shear-nuts, making thieves tools ineffective. **ISR Marking** is included as standard with the CATLOC device, it engraves the Catalytic Converter with a unique identification code that can be used to trace the owner of the catalytic converter should it be stolen and for increased protection and added deterrent, the CATLOC comes with the International Security Register marking and registering system as standard. Calls to 07000 111333 at any time of day or night will be answered by highly trained operators who will

verify details of registered items, ownership, status (reported stolen or lost) quickly and efficiently under strict security protocols - all for just the price of a phone call!

Call Sign was told that the device can be fitted with just the use of a 13mm spanner. We have also been informed that the device has been approved by LTPH for use by the Vito only.

More details from Protectavan, Orsett
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Another batch of views from Tom that do not necessarily reflect the views of DaC...

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TOM WHITBREAD

At the beginning of every other month I get an Email from the Editor informing me that he needs an article for the next month's magazine. So by the time that you get to read the article, it is at least one month old so you may think that I've plagiarised articles from other magazines or newspapers. (*Thomas, I think we should bear in mind that you don't actually send it until around 2 weeks after I ask for it...Ed*). But you'd be wrong as my views are often on paper before the ones you see in other reading matter. So with that in mind, carry on reading in the knowledge that it was my views first!

Olympics and Europe

I thought that it was just me who was getting a bit fed up with the entire Olympics PR, which claims it is going to be the best thing for England since sliced bread. So seeing that I am on the wrong side of 21 by a few years, I thought it was me that was just being a misery. So I went about deliberately asking family, friends and people I met how they felt about the Olympics? This is going to be a shortened version, as I will have to leave out the profanities due to children and religious persons who read this magazine. But I may give you a taste by replacing letters with the symbol *****!

It was apparent that I am not in the minority on finding how many others are sick of hearing about every little detail and how much money is being wasted at a time when the country is in dire straits. But to my amazement and without any prompting, many stated that they were sick and tired of the smarmy B*****d **Lord Sebastian Coe**, a man who spends more time promoting himself and informing you how many well-known friends he has.

We also have traffic problems that will cause so many firms to lose money and good will from their clients. This is including we Licensed London Taxi Drivers. Already we have posts with pennants informing us that Lea Bridge Road and thousands of other roads are in the *Event Zone*. So bang goes my Thursday shopping trip to ASDA at Leytonstone, while Lord Coe swans along an empty Olympic lane to the Stadium to quaff his Champagne and *pâté de foie gras* whilst watching the sport.

Like every true Englishman, I would love to see England win gold medals, but with our history of never having a government that supports the training and encouragement needed for our athletes, that seem a little unlikely. Other countries including the USA, Australia, Russia and China get behind their athletes and supply them with the facilities they need to excel at their sport. This does not happen in England; our athletes have to rely on charity. Then if we get low standards and a minuscule number of medals, Lord Coe will disappear and all the BBC pundits will give you the biggest load of hogwash having wasted your licence money on it first.

The BBC plan well ahead and they knew they had two great events in London this year - the Queens Jubilee and the Olympics. So last year they relocated most of the cameramen, technicians and presenters up to Salford. Why didn't they leave it for another year and save the expense of accommodation and travel for these people coming back to London?

So I hope in the coming month you do not lose interest and concentration due to the terrible traffic congestion surrounding the



roads leading to the Olympic site. We must not forget that we still have long standing prestigious clients who will be trying to keep their business afloat, which includes needing our help.

But what did give me a good feeling was the spectacular display over the four days of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee; my one mistake was to watch the river pageant on the BBC. To say it was amateurish is an understatement; they used young ladies as presenters who didn't have a clue, even down to remembering the names of the people they were interviewing. It was intermingled with silly bits about cooking, painting and what was supposed to be a comedy sketch on history - a waste of licence payer's money and that's assuming the cameras showing the items continued to work as many didn't. I just wish I could have wrestled the remote from my wife's hand and switched over to Sky!

But you have to admit that when it comes to putting on a pageant, we still come out on top; the precision and colour was spectacular. Then you had the Queen herself, a lady of 86 who has the energy of a much younger person. She could only have been surpassed by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother who was still active and completing her Royal duties at 100 years of age.

Of all the other Kings and Queens throughout the world, our Queen has kept the respect and dignity of all sensible people worldwide. We do not read of any indiscretions committed by her, maybe by her children or grandchildren, but she has remained a Head of State to be held up as an example of the way other countries leaders

should act. As many of you know, I hold great respect for the Royal Family having worked for Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother for 17 years on a part-time basis and holding a *Royal Warrant* for her.

If you would like to read more of my life working for Her Majesty, then you can by getting hold of that very fine magazine CallOver, which is aimed at future taxi drivers who are on the Knowledge. You can usually pick up a copy in the Dial-a-Cab Drivers Reception. It even has bundles of information which will assist you in your daily work routine.

And the fault lies with...?

We have the spectacular array of troops and uniforms, with the backdrop of our historical buildings. Who could hold a better pageant; remember the Royal Tournament that used to be at Earls Court and the work we got from it? This pageant probably made the European Union jealous. But all that could soon come to an end due to BBC (Blair, Brown & Cameron). They have cut back on everything to do with the armed forces so they can send your money abroad or use it to keep all the politicians, civil servants, mandarins, consultants and legal aid lawyers in the manner that they now expect to live in.

I can imagine **Winston Churchill** and the millions of soldiers who died in two World Wars spinning in their graves. They died fighting a dictatorship so we could have freedom in our lives. But these three weak Prime Ministers have continually been dictated to by Brussels and a tubby German woman called **Angela Merkel**. They then roll over and accept it.

If ever another war was to erupt over the Falklands or somewhere else that was under our protection, we would have a re-enactment of an episode of *Dads Army* as our soldiers run forward with substitute wooden model guns shouting out *Bang!*

So how long will it be before Brussels runs every aspect of our taxi trade, dictating how much we can charge foreign tourists and which German or French car we must drive?

**Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member**

Cable car service opens!

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has fulfilled his pledge to build and open the UK's first urban cable car service when the **Emirates Air Line** opened to the public on 28 June, providing a vital new river crossing for east London.

The five minute 1km river crossing, which links the Greenwich O2 and Royal Docks Excel, will have capacity to carry up to 2,500 people per hour in each direction. The 'Gondolas' will travel 160 feet above the Thames and run every 30 seconds. Initially the cable car will operate 7 days a week, from 0700 to 2100 Mondays to Fridays, 0800 to 2100 on Saturdays and 0900 to 2100 on Sundays.

The fare is £4.30 (£3.20 on Oyster).

Those who want the experience of an extended journey to enjoy the fantastic views of the City including Canary Wharf, Thames Barrier and Olympic Park will have the option to take a non-stop return journey. It will also provide more work for taxi drivers as tourists go to try it out...



STEVE'S TAXI FOR HIRE AD

The advert you see on this page was dreamt up by **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Steve Denison (W65)**. While we cannot suggest you put it up in a place where tourists to the capital can see it during the tenure of the London 2012 Olympics as it hasn't been shown to LTPH, with so many drivers having their own PCs and printers nowadays, you could always copy it and give one to any passengers who look like they may not understand how taxis operate.

If you'd rather get it emailed to you, just send your email address to callsignmag@aol.com and ask for the taxi for hire ad. And yes, well done Steve...

TAXI FOR HIRE

We will be hosting visitors from all parts of the world to the UK in the next few months.

Please alert them that a Taxi is only a Taxi if it has a 'For Hire' light and a meter to display the fare.



All licensed London taxi drivers (Hackney Carriage) have the **Knowledge of London** and are regulated by TfL (Transport for London) and they will be wearing a badge:



Their badge numbers will also be displayed on the front and rear screens of the vehicle.

There are 4 models of Taxi on the streets of London



All other makes and models are not taxis



Translated in any language:

Taxis are Taxis only if they have a For Hire light

Always use a LONDON TAXI



Have a great time in our country



Classic FM... and me!

"I have a philosophy," **Cliff Giffin (C55)** told **Call Sign** "and that is that when things get a bit stressful on the rear seat, I stay calm and professional while doing the best I can for my passengers - particularly account clients.

"So when passengers approach me looking obviously harassed, for whatever reason, I make sure they're sitting comfortably and



It's all down to the classics

then whack up my music radio on *Classic FM* or sometimes *BBC Radio 3* and you can virtually see the stress drain away from them as they soak up the atmosphere of a symphony or sonata wafting through the speakers. Generally, they leave the cab in a much better frame of mind than when they got in and quite likely it could set them up for the rest of the day!

"There is nothing I can do about traffic conditions - and they really have been bad these last few weeks - or any other unexpected road problems that can delay our progress towards the intended destination. So when things start to get a bit heated in the back, I assure them I'm doing the best I can, that their anxiety is not helping get them there any quicker and then I gently turn the radio volume control up a couple of notches, and bingo! That often works a treat." Cliff smiled at the thought.

"There is one account client who frequently gets into the cab long after the booked time and then expects to whizz along the streets, often getting agitated at the slightest delay. This doesn't wash with me at all, so on goes the radio, up comes *Classic* or *Radio 3* as the mood befits and *voilà*, peace in the rear carriage means peace in the front for me as well!

"Staying calm when you're under pressure is all part of the job and gentle music wafting around inside the cab is a great way to stay cool and reduce any tension."

Cliff walked back to his taxi with a knowing smile while whistling Mozart's symphony number 40 - in G minor of course!

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

CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE

I raised my gaze one wet evening (it was raining in London - just for a change!) after setting down a fare in Webber Street, to look towards the 'Bell' public house - a watering hole I have to admit was one of many I frequented in the hostleries of Lambeth and Southwark in my distant past. But it wasn't there! Only the facade was hanging onto dear life awaiting the wrecking ball - probably the next day!

Sadness really, that was the emotion I could not hide as I realised that I could never (not that I would ever want to) have another pint of Guinness in the 'Bell' again! But it was probably



no surprise really; pubs (landmarks to cabbies) are closing down in all corners of London as they are in the rest of the country! We built an Empire on the strength of loyal drunken men, but now the punters need milky coffee at £3 a mug (mugs alright!).

As I looked at the building site that used to be my local, a guy in a car pulled alongside me to ask directions to 'South Work' road - I didn't realise he was a minicab driver till he pulled away in the opposite direction to my instructions!

Talking of minicabs, this guy **John Griffin** has got some neck over this bus lane issue, hasn't he? I know a lot has been said in the cab trade press - long before my thoughts - but what chance have we got when lazy journalists such as **Joshua Rozenberg** in the *Guardian* (26th April) writes:

"Should **Addison Lee** taxis be able to use Bus Lanes?"

What chance indeed, when the whole single reason they can't use bus lanes is because they aren't taxis! Madness! Griffin said in an *Evening Standard* article that he 'was ready to rock' - he got that line from **Alan Alda** in *The Tower Heist* - and in another article stated that he would instruct his drivers not to use the bus lanes 'in the spirit of co-operation!' Are you sure John? Co-operation because you now agree to obey the law? What a tosser this guy is!

A bientot...

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

In the *April* issue of *Call Sign*, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Terry Catherall (Y90)** told how he planned to cycle to Paris beginning on 30th August to raise money for the **Royal British Legion**. The Legion has long been tied into the London taxi business, especially following the cessation of hostilities at the end of WW2. The Legion helped many of those who had fought for their country but who, on discharge, came back to *Civvy Street* with no job to return to, by offering financial support as well as assistance in getting them onto the Knowledge.

Terry's red and black bike - nicknamed **Poppy** - was made especially for the event by Russell Coe of *Vandome Cycles*. On the trip, Terry will be cycling via the war memorial at Calais, where he will pay respect to the fallen heroes with a second stop at the war memorial in Beauvais. Terry's cycle ride ends on day four at L'Arc de Triomphe with a poignant wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Terry has been in training since February in preparation for the event. Now he has told *Call Sign*:

"Training is going well, I'm doing longer rides, faster times and the hills are getting easier. But the weather is getting in the way a bit and I find myself at the local gym doing spinning classes more than I really wanted to. But it is good for stamina building.

"Fund raising is coming along nicely, though, with some very generous people out there. However, even the small donations mean a lot to the Royal British Legion. All expenses are

TERRY ALL SET TO GO

As he prepares to cycle to Paris in aid of the British Legion!



Terry cycling to Paris to raise funds for the Royal British Legion

paid by me, which is only fair as it's me who's having all the fun! If any DaC driver or their families can help me raise funds for the Legion, it would be so appreciated."

Terry originally set his target at £1000 but has already passed that! You can help Terry reach his new target of £2012 via **Virgin Money Giving**. Donations are quickly processed and passed onto the charity. Virgin Money Giving is a not-for-profit organisation and claims gift aid on a charity's behalf where the donor is eligible.

You can donate at:
www.virginmoneygiving.com/terrycatherall

In aid of Children with Cancer UK...

JOHN COMPLETES LONDON MARATHON



John completed the 26 miles for Children with Cancer

Due to there being no *Call Sign* in June, we are a bit late reporting on one of the **Dial-a-Cab** drivers who ran in the **Virgin London Marathon** and who this magazine sponsored.

John Davis (V41J) isn't new to doing something

fairly crazy for a good cause

and several years ago jumped out of a plane in aid of the charity **Children with Cancer** was a worthy enough cause for him to run over 26 miles.

John told *Call Sign*: "I have always wanted to do the Marathon but just never got around to it! In order to get a place, our very own cab trade character 'Roger the Rabbit' pointed me in the right direction to the charity of Children with Cancer. I started training 24 weeks prior to the event.

April 22nd had come round far too quickly. I didn't tell anybody or collect any money prior to the Marathon as I thought it'd be unfair if I didn't finish; Admittedly I wasn't the best trainee, but I did it!

I completed the course in 6 hours 42 minutes 41 seconds. So if any of my friends and colleagues would now like to donate, they are more than welcome - preferably by using the Virgin 'money giving' link which you can find at: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/johnthetaxi>. If you donate this way, you claim 25% tax via gift aid from the government making it by far the best way to donate.

As for next year, I hope to get a place and run in my own right raising money for our very own cab trade charities, mainly being the **London Taxi Drivers Fund for Underprivileged Children** and **Dial-a-Dream**.

So everybody watch this space in 2013 in memory of Jack Pitcher, who benefited so much from these two charities before he sadly died a few years ago.

Finally many thanks to *Call Sign* for its sponsorship...

John Davis (V41J)



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster
Master of Ceremonies

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Mobile: 07774 860 374
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10% discount for DaC drivers and staff

Fellow of the Guild of
Professional Toastmasters

Green v yellow badges

The ID scheme has been working for a few months now, with green badge holders happy to put the cards in their front and back windows. However, there have been a number of sightings of yellow badge drivers not complying at all or putting yellow IDs in the front window but not the back. Putney High Street outside the station, the old Arndale, Stratford and Lewisham Stations, City Airport and Clapham Common ranks have been the problem areas. Personally I think that LTPH are going to have their work cut out trying to check IDs against driver's badges and bills and the problem of yellow badge holders working out of the sector only occurred in the first place because there were very few checks.

My suggestion is for LTPH to make a request for both green and yellow badge drivers to volunteer to be accreditation checkers. The marshalling system administered by taxi drivers at Heathrow has worked well for years, so if funds are tight at LTPH they could train people to help assist them. I think it would be good for the trade if we could show some self-governance and give LTPH a help to clean up our act. I am all for the identifiers, but feel that if we could be trusted to keep an eye on this issue then it would leave LTPH time to deal with issues of a bigger nature ie PH touting.

The ID scheme has brought a new focus on where yellow and green badge sectors are and most of the problems occur where yellow badge ranks are close to green sectors or island ranks, which are yellow ranks actually situated inside green badge sectors.

From what I've seen, these ranks were initially meant to be for yellow badge holders to service street hirings, but it has become apparent that these island ranks are being used by suburban drivers on other radio circuits as leapfrog ranks where it gives them a greater chance of getting radio work in a GB area rather than that work going to green badge holders. Even though they are entitled to do this, I would question whether the Island ranks system is working effectively and if not, they should be withdrawn.

With the lack of work, GB holders can easily cover these areas now, so why the need for them? Clapham Junction, a green badge only rank, is a good example of a rank that in the past was regularly, if not illegally, serviced by yellow badge holders. It is now serviced successfully by green badge holders on their own. So

Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

POTTERS WHEEL



why can't green badges cover the other island ranks?

Currys price promise?

I have always been an internet buyer simply because items are cheaper and being an online buyer has brought down the price of High Street goods. Recently I was shopping around for a new Hoover in Currys, as my old one had finally packed up. Currys do a *price promise* and say they won't be beaten on it, so I felt pretty confident I was buying something I would not find cheaper online. But when is a price promise a price promise? I brought a Hoover TSP 2004 for £119.99 and when browsing, put in a price check on Amazon. It came up with a result that Macro in Croydon was selling a Hoover TSP 2005 for £48 and there were no other matches for the TSP 2004, which I

thought was a bit strange. In fact I couldn't find anywhere else that sold the TSP 2004, yet the TSP 2005 was available in most places. I checked the Hoover website to find a page displaying the TSP range with the TSP 2004 and TSP 2005 models next to each other and with exactly the same specification. So I phoned up Hoover and spoke to their sales department. They informed me that the TSP 2004 and TSP 2005 were indeed exactly the same; however the TSP 2004 was exclusively produced for Currys! Now bearing in mind that the price guarantee only applies to some model products, I thought this was pretty poor practice and by having their own model products, it simply allows Currys to charge you £70 more, thus making the price promise worthless. I'm astonished a company like Currys will go to these lengths to avoid having to refund a price promise and what is in theory, to mislead their customers. I made an official complaint to Currys but have not yet received an answer. So next time I will go back to doing what I used to do, have a look in Currys and then go home and but it cheaper online!

Richard Potter (T51)

Ed's note: Soon after Richard complained to Currys, they reduced the Hoover TSP 2004 from £119.99 down to £54.99. However, they never saw fit to apologise...

Barking Physical Therapy Centre

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

Kupkake's Korner



Don't mention the Olympics!

Roll up and be attentive
listen to the spiel,
make sure you're not retentive
so you'll forget how good you feel.

You've been conned for several billion
and there is no place to run,
you're just one of 6 plus million
paying for the "fun."

With road closures like a war zone
and a city under siege,
taking forever just to get home
and delays beyond belief.

They offered us more money
we said "just let us do our job,"
don't restrict our working practise
we don't want the public robbed.

I wish the French had won the bid
or anyone but us,
how about the details carefully hid
so we didn't make a fuss!

Twenty contracts sealed our fate
signed by smiley Ken,
only revealed when it was too late
to challenge or alter them.

He *knew* about the Olympic routes
he *knew* we would object,
but he bowed and kissed their boots
as our working lives he wrecked!

Challenged about the cost
Ken said the price of a Walnut Whip,
but that was before he lost
the Mayoral leadership.

So prepare for the Olympic Games
prepare to lose your wage,
as you sit and roast on station ranks
turning another page...

"Don't mention the Olympics in my cab!"
Copyright Kupkake 2012

Just before the Queen's Jubilee celebration in June, DaC Board Member Mike Son was invited to a garden party as a representative of the LTFUC. He told Call Sign about it...

MIKE AT THE PALACE

My wife Maxine and I, together with LTFUC Chair Sue Angel and her husband Gerald were excited to have been nominated to attend HM Queen's Garden Party in late May. We were extremely lucky with the weather; in fact it was a bit too hot!

The Garden Party took place between 4 and 6pm, although the Palace gates are open from about 3pm onwards. The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied by other members of the Royal Family, entered the garden at 4pm on the dot when the National Anthem struck up from one of the two military bands playing selections of music throughout the afternoon.

It was a great day, especially for all the ladies that attended and I am sure the fellows enjoyed it as well. I must say the Queen looked absolutely beaming and the Duke really looked well. What was surprising was that together with the other members of the Royal Family, just how far they had to walk when greeting the many dignitaries and we fairly ordinary folk!

It was also nice to see WCHCD Master Eddie Crossley together with his lady at the garden party and being introduced to the Queen and Prince Philip. Although Eddie and I had a chat, no, we didn't talk about the cab industry (well maybe a bit)!

Drinks (no alcohol), sandwiches and pastries were served in ornate marquees plus some VIPs were invited to the Royal Pavilion to meet the Royal Family. I thought I would gain entrance if I were to mention that I knew Brian Rice, but no luck. They said only Brian himself would have an open ticket!

The day ended far too quickly and the following day was back to reality - driving the cab!



Mike and Maxine Son (r) with Sue and Gerald Angel at the Garden Party

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects

Sacre Bleu! C'est la Français...

Tooley Street's **London Dungeon** recently commissioned a *thrill engineer* in Professor Brendan Walker to see how different nationalities reacted to its gruesome shows. The Professor conducted a series of tests into the 'scare thresholds' of visitors and came up with a top 10 of those that showed the most – and least – fear.

The tests involved the use of live rats and maggot-infested meat and the results – taken from heart rate, sweat levels and facial expressions – were put together to get a scaredy-cat top ten with research concluding that the French were easiest to frighten! They were followed by Italians, Brazilians, the English and Scots. Americans and Germans proved to be the hardest to scare.

London Dungeon general manager Ben Sweet said: "The results have enabled us to introduce an international rating system across our shows, so guests know what level of scare they are in for. It will also be useful for our team of actors, enabling them to ramp up or tone down the experience for different groups."

So next time a French passenger asks for the London Dungeon, enquire if they have life insurance!

Drivers who often do the **Dial-a-Cab** evening run to take Contact Centre staff home will know the name of **Gerry Hansen**. Gerry lived in SE13, which he gradually renamed from Catford to Ladywell Village! But no one ever had to worry about how to get there as Gerry always liked to go the same way and would give directions before drivers left – but always in a way that couldn't possibly offend anyone. And if they wanted to talk about Millwall FC then he'd be your friend for life!

Now Gerry has decided to call it a day and go into retirement after almost 15 years and the Board decided to make him a surprise leaving party.

"I had no idea," Gerry told *Call Sign*, "I really was amazed and very touched that they should go to so much trouble for me. Having said that, DaC have been so good to me over the years that perhaps it shouldn't have surprised me."

Gerry explained further: "In 2003 I had a heart attack and DaC were very kind to me, saying that my job was safe and that I could return whenever I felt ready. Then when I asked if I could go part time as I didn't think I should push my health too hard, again there was no problem. I can honestly say that this has been a really wonderful company to work for. Mind you, working with such lovely people in the Contact Centre is always a

Gerry Hansen retires



Gerry at his leaving party with Chairman Brian Rice

great help for a good working environment."

Gerry now intends spending more time

with his sister in Wales. Our best wishes go to him for a long and happy retirement...

Granddad Christian!

Christian Barrett (L17) has been with **Dial-a-Cab** for around twenty years. His daughter, **Esther Barrett**, works for DaC client **Deutsche Bank** and recently wrote to *Call Sign*:

"My dad, **Christian Barrett**, is a taxi driver on **Dial-a-Cab**. He recently became a granddad for the first time after my sister **Becky** had a little boy, **Joe**! We recently took **Joe** on his first trip to the City and I wonder if he is now **Dial-a-Cab's** youngest ever taxi driver!"

We don't know whether Christian knows about his grandson's photo being in this issue, but we hope **Joe** is booked into the correct zone because just being gorgeous won't be accepted as an excuse!



Joe already has a badge!

EMBASSY GARDENS...

A place to remember

While *Call Sign* was enjoying its summer vacation, **Dial-a-Cab** drivers were taking a complimentary breakfast and a sneak peek at one of London's most prestigious new developments.

Launching in the autumn, **Embassy Gardens** will offer 2000 stunning riverside homes planned by the UK's foremost Master planner, **Sir Terry Farrell**. Strongly influenced by the architectural style of New York's meatpacking district and London's Victorian and Edwardian mansion blocks, Embassy Gardens has a unique and distinctive style and will be London's newest landmark destination. At its heart will be the new architecturally stunning **US Embassy**.

With an enviable central location on the banks of the Thames and being close to London's cultural Southbank, Embassy Gardens takes in spectacular views of Westminster to the east, Chelsea and Pimlico to the north and the iconic Battersea Power Station to the west.

Embassy Gardens comprises approximately 15 acres, transforming almost 200 hectares of central London real estate.



Sir Terry Farrell



LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

ORN to the abyss!

Well it's finally upon us! Virtually every customer is asking if we are going to work or are we ready for the Olympics? Well of course I'm going to work as like most of us I cannot afford to have six weeks off! But I'll probably adjust my hours to suit the conditions. As for being ready, I've made some preparation works; whilst the majority of visitors will be here for the Olympics, there will also be plenty of unscrupulous rogues visiting - be that pick-pocket gangs, shoplifters, credit card fraudsters or the many other money making scammers. So I have my infrared torch, a note marker pen, a closer inspection of credit cards from street jobs - preferably backed up with another form of ID (passport) etc. As usual, my doors are permanently locked both before pick up and during the journey (for the passenger's safety as well, as it's not unheard of for gangs to open doors and snatch bags etc.

If you think I am going over the top or being pessimistic, well the whole point of the ORN was to make sure dignitaries get back to the safe areas of London to wine and dine the evening away! It reminds me of **Jack London's** 1903 book *The People of the Abyss* where the American author in 1902 decided to live in the East End of London, struggling to get a wary Hansom Cab to take him there. He had advice from the police that it would be safer to spend the day there and come back to his Mayfair residence at night, but not to worry because as he had now visited them they would be able to recognise his body should anything untoward happen! He even went to *Thomas Cook*, then

the leading world travel consultants, who could not help him as they had never done specialist trips to such a rough area of the world as **Whitechapel!** Enjoy the games, but take care...

How to cause a fiasco...

With the fiasco on the Central line when a water main burst leaving 1000s stranded at Stratford waiting to go to Leytonstone and beyond, what would you have been prepared to bet your house on? Right in one - some idiots closing the Green Man Tunnel on the A12 because it was scheduled and forcing those picking up stranded relatives into a huge traffic jam! What a predictable life it is...

Lack of alcohol destroying football!

Allowing alcohol to be promoted in the form of advertising and major sporting occasions are strange bedfellows, especially in the world of football. We have *Carling* and *Budweiser* sponsoring cups, *Amstel* promoting the Champions League and other major brands and brewers who have been used in countless promotions.

There is a strong political and health campaign to stop the use of alcohol in such a major mediums. Whilst I have no vested financial incentive to write this in support of the alcohol industry, there has for too long been a silent slow kill of grassroots adult football with the demise of pubs. They are now closing at the alarming rate of four a day. The effect is that with the closures, there are fewer Sunday morning football teams. Many of us have

played on Hackney Marshes, Wormwood Scrubs, Purley Way or any other large playing field area generally turning out for a local pub side that would sponsor the team for the price of the kit and a bit of grub laid on back at the pub. The usual raffle would cover other costs. The pub recuperated the money in takings and prestige in winning a local Cup final.

The serious effects on this lack of support from landlords/ladies and governors have made the running costs of local grassroots football much more expensive. The general price for a pitch on an individual match basis, normally met by the home side, is now around £80 alongside the cost of a referee (£30). Align that with the price of match balls at £15 to £20, training night (if you can afford it) for a floodlit area runs out at £50 an hour and team kit is £450. Most local teams now have a signing on fee of £30 and £10 a week subs.

Along with the advent of health and fitness clubs competing for the sports minded person's money, the support of this money from the pub trade has kept many a local playing field's running costs viable, staving off the threat of supermarkets and local developers whilst ironically the remaining pubs seem to thrive on showing live football on TV! Support to keep more public houses open should be in the national interest, otherwise a non-supported grassroots football system will fold and if you put into the mix other hobbies and sports such as darts, pool, quiz nights, Crib leagues and what bowls or cricket club wouldn't fold if it wasn't for bar takings? To me, working at the deep end of grassroots sports, the link between alcohol and sport is definitely not all bad...

Tom Quigley (Y33)

Got oil, grease or diesel on your hands? Worry no more cos we've got the answer!

Grime Boss Heavy Duty Hand wipes

Nice-Pak International, Europe's leading manufacturer of wet wipes, has created the ultimate tool for tackling oil and grease: **Grime Boss Heavy Duty Hand Wipes** are specifically formulated with motor professionals in mind – and who can be more professional than a London taxi driver!

Designed for hard working hands, the tough and effective wipes work quickly and effortlessly to remove a number of tough soil types including oil, grease, diesel/petrol – even adhesives and paints!

With a 2-in-1 *ActionScrub™* formula, one side of the extra large and thick, citrus-scented wipe includes a tough scrubbing texture to remove stuck on dirt and residue, while the other is smooth and gentle enough for cleaning the hands, face and arms. A *Pro-Klean Moisturising Formula™* also helps to protect and moisturise hands with *aloe vera* and nourishing vitamin E.

Easy to store and ideal for quick on-the-go cleaning, one convenient wipe will do even the toughest of jobs and the re-sealable pack, which features on packs of 30 and 60 wipes, means that they won't dry out, resulting in a long lasting and reliable product that is ready for use at any time.

Andrew Freeman, commercial manager at Nice-Pak International, told *Call Sign*:

"Grime Boss Heavy Duty Hand Wipes have been created especially for professionals. They work hard at getting rid of tough dirt in environments where water for hand washing is scarce and time is also precious. It's essential that motor professionals have the ability to keep their hands clean to avoid contamination of materials while at work and the transfer of grime when arriving home at the end of the day. Dirt that traditionally has been very difficult to remove, such as oil and grease, can now be cleaned away without the need for harsh chemicals and the citrus scent also helps mask any lingering smells. Nice-Pak International is the largest manufacturer of wet wipes in Europe and Grime Boss has been developed with expertise and scientific know-how, guaranteeing a reliable and proper wipe that gets the job done."

Call Sign did some quick tinkering under the bonnet, enough to get an uncomfortably greasy hand. We reached for a Grime Boss Heavy Duty Hand Wipes and sure enough it all came off leaving a nice lemon fragrance!

Made in the UK, Grime Boss Heavy Duty Hand Wipes are available in packs of 10 (£2.99), 30 (£4.99) and 60 (£8.99) and are available to buy at leading stockists. For further information on Grime Boss Heavy Duty Hand Wipes, just visit www.grimeboss.co.uk.



For more information or to purchase a plan, contact any London Taxi Company dealer. Visit www.london-taxis.co.uk to find your nearest retail outlet or nearest Approved Service Dealer.



During the 2012 Games, London will be turned into a massive sporting and cultural venue. This will have a major impact on roads, so TfL will be putting in place the Olympic Route Network (ORN) and Paralympic Route Network (PRN). The ORN is a 109-mile network of roads linking Games and accommodation venues. It is vital to ensure all athletes, officials and the world's media get to their events on time and keep London moving.

30 miles of the ORN includes Games Lanes (available only to vehicles carrying the 'Games Family' – the athletes, officials, media and some sponsors).

When will the ORN/PRN operate?

The ORN and Games Lanes will begin operating on **Wednesday 25 July**, and will end on **Tuesday 14 August**. They will not be in force between the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The smaller PRN will also begin operating two days before the Paralympic Games on **Monday 27 August** and will end on **Tuesday 11 September**. Once events are completed at a particular venue, ORNs will be removed.

Creating the ORN/PRN

A programme of temporary road changes needs to take place ahead of the creation of the ORN/PRN. **This includes installing temporary traffic islands and barriers to simplify junctions and changing around 1,300 sets of traffic signals to prepare for the expected increase in traffic.**

To keep any impact to a minimum, work is being carried out over a 4-day period beginning on **Friday 20 July** and finishing on **Tuesday 24 July**. Most of the works will take place overnight but depending on weather conditions and restrictions in certain areas, some daytime working may be required.

Creating Games Lanes

From **Sunday 1 July**, road markings will be put down along the ORN to create the **Games Lanes**. This work is weather dependent so it's not possible to specify the exact dates but works will take place overnight between 21:00 and 06:00. Games Lanes will not be operational and enforced until **Wednesday 25 July**, so you will be able to use them until this date.

During the Games, vehicles that drive in the Games Lanes, load, park or stop illegally on the ORN/PRN will be removed and

TfL have now said how the ORN/PRN will affect us. All text in bold is from Call Sign...

Olympic and Paralympic route network

will face a £130 Penalty Charge Notice.

It will take between 10 and 14 days to create all the Games Lanes. There will be advanced warning signs along the route advising which dates the works will take place.

Other key road changes

From Saturday 7 July: Traffic direction through the Kingsway Tunnel will be temporarily reversed to flow southbound only. This will be vital for assisting movement to and from the Media Hub in Bloomsbury. The road will return to normal in mid-August after the Olympic Games and the change is not required for the Paralympic Games.

From Monday 16 July: The M4 Games Lane will come into operation owing to the arrival of the Games Family which include athletes, officials and the world's media.

From Tuesday 24 July: The designated pedestrian crossings and parking/loading bays along the ORN will be suspended and blocked off overnight. TfL will remove each section of the ORN after it is no longer required. These works will take place over a number of nights. It will also be necessary to re-instate some of the network for the Paralympic Games and works will take place overnight from **24 August to 26 August**. The PRN will be fully operational and enforced from **06:00 on 27 August**.

There will be additional changes to roads and local parking around Olympic venues. These are being put in place by the organisers of London 2012 to ensure that resident and business parking is protected and the venues can operate safely.

Full details of changes and timings can be found at london2012.com/local-residents.

Advice for road users

During the implementation programme, roads will remain open but there may be rolling lane closures and local diversions, which will be signposted. Local access to properties will be maintained but please do not park along the ORN/PRN as cars may be removed. If possible, do not travel on the route while the work is taking place. This will help

avoid delays. The work will not affect pedestrian access, but may affect bus stops along the ORN and information will be provided on any affected stops.

From mid-July, motorists should avoid central London, roads around the ORN and Games venues. Motorists should also avoid areas around the road events on competition days, such as the Cycling Road Races on 28 and 29 July.

Every day of the Games is different, so if you must drive, plan ahead and allow more time.

Go to getaheadofthegames.com to find out how you can avoid the road hotspots during the Games.

Planning ahead

To ensure that everyone begins to plan their Games time travel, please pass this information on to colleagues and regular contacts, and promote it through any available communication channels you may have. All properties on or within 400 metres of the ORN/PRN will receive letters outlining the works schedule and offering advice for residents and businesses to help them prepare ahead and during the operation of the ORN/PRN. More info at getaheadofthegames.com (see From the Editor).

Keeping London moving

TfL is committed to keeping London moving throughout the Games. To help achieve this, the Games Lanes will operate as flexibly as possible and be open to traffic when demand from Games Family vehicles is low and capacity is available. Signs along the route will advise motorists when Games Lanes are open to regular traffic throughout the day.

I apologise in advance for any inconvenience that these essential works may cause. You can find details of the planned changes on the ORN/PRN, the latest on the build programme timetable and other Games-related travel information at GetAheadoftheGames.com. You can also follow @GAOTG on Twitter, sign up online for email bulletins or call 0843 222 1234.

David McNeill

Director of Public Affairs & Stakeholder Engagement

CallOver now available at DaC

May's **Call Sign** contained a small article on the launch of new magazine, **CallOver**, aimed at those on the Knowledge. But when a message went out via driver's terminals to say that there were some copies in the **Dial-a-Cab** driver's reception and that if they knew anyone on the Knowledge, this magazine would be a useful tool for them, all the copies were snapped up before you could say leave on the left Northumberland Avenue!

We have spoken to Editor **Frankie Peet** and DaC is now on the



list of places where the monthly mag is left. If you have a son, daughter or even a neighbour who is doing the KoL then keep a look out for CallOver in Driver Reception and pass a copy along to them. You may also find it useful!

CallOver is a welcome addition to all the stuff Knowledge students accumulate...

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

Mailshot

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

Tom and scruffy drivers

Dear Alan

Board member Tom Whitbread may take pride in the fact he is not one to hold back on his comments (*April Call Sign*). He also believes that in time he will be vindicated for his controversial view that scruffy and casually dressed DaC drivers are the main reason we have lost so much work to PH. No one can deny that a few of our drivers could be considered scruffy and that many more choose to dress casual. But for TW to claim those drivers who choose to dress in a more casual way, such as a track suit, jeans, trainers, or polo shirt are solely responsible for the loss of our work to me sounds like someone void of any ideas other than to criticise and blame the very people whose efforts provide him with a comfortable living. There may well come a time when TfL implement a dress code for taxi drivers, but until such time, if TW (and AT) wish to set themselves up as the style police, by all means let them be the ones to face and challenge drivers on their attire.

For TW to have the audacity to suggest that drivers who choose to dress in a more conservative way (I happen to be one), that we should make it known to our fellow and more casually dressed drivers that because of their choice of attire, they are the ones destroying our work is in my opinion an outrageous suggestion. Tom, in my view, should be promoting us. Instead he states that because of the use of satnavs by PH, this somehow eradicates the difference between licensed taxi drivers and private hire. The difference is that every day hundreds of passenger's appointments, meetings and getting to work on time are only possible because of the skill and knowledge that we drivers have spent years learning in order to become a taxi driver. We are constantly thinking of quicker or alternative routes as we encounter traffic jams. How many times do passengers stuck in an unexpected traffic jam ask if there is another route? The driver knows exactly whether to turn left, right or U-turn. The same request to a PH driver would probably be answered with: "Sorry, but the Satnav says NO!"

Besides the use of bus lanes, we also drive a purpose built vehicle which separates us from our passengers, so what we wear makes little difference and unless we are on a *meet and greet*, most passengers will only ever see the back of our heads. This separation gives passengers the privacy they would not enjoy in a PH car. Also, just because a PH driver wears a suit does not make them immune from smelly feet and any personal hygiene issues. We may be a bit more expensive, but when time is money we are by far the most cost effective.

For Tom to even suggest there is little difference between me/us and a private hire driver (who can get a licence in a few weeks and that because they wear a suit and have the use of a Satnav think they are equal to me/us) is an Insult. I'd be interested to know exactly how many accounts we have lost solely due to scruffy drivers. I'd be surprised if there was even one. I believe the reason for TW's verbal attack on driver's choice of attire may be due to an inability to fathom out any viable reason for the loss of work to PH. My opinion is that radio drivers historically paid their subs for both account and cash work, drivers preferred radio cash (as opposed to street cash) with a run-in and normally a good tip. It was worth the run. It also was a very good way to promote the circuit; customers were loyal and regular users and many even opened accounts. Then the £2 surcharge was implemented, a great new source of income for the radio circuit but not so good for the customer and driver – who also lost out on the tip. The customer was unhappy with £5 - £6 at start of the journey but the circuits didn't and wouldn't listen to the concerns of the drivers. So over time drivers found radio cash uneconomic and returned back to the streets for cash. Consequently, the service deteriorated. This seems to have coincided with the licensing of PH and so customers now wishing to be picked up at their door don't ring us, they ring PH.

As for accounts, how many times have I read that tendered accounts were lost due to us not compromising on a deal such as the recent UBS client who it seems did not want to pay a driver's gratuity? So we pull out to allow other circuits to snap them up. I wonder how many drivers doing up to a few hours on EC5 wouldn't mind a USB job minus a £2 or so gratuity? And the reasons given for our complacency? We want the rate for the job and if things do get better it will be difficult to raise our prices. Surely simple economics dictates in a supply and demand market and when things eventually do get better, we do what everybody does and stick our prices up. How long can we go on taking this stance? We even had the London Underground account that we didn't bother putting a tender in for. And the reason given? It's yellow badge work and low fixed prices. So through this recession, RT drivers enjoy early jobs in and late ones home.

For years the Board have dithered over a new system, so when we do get our new terminals, which seems to be just an upgrade with a Satnav and one we might be able to see in the day, I'm sure it will be very nice but will the customer get a cab any

quicker? No, because it's still fully zonal. When every other provider is boasting of the latest GPS, Apps and what have you, how do we sell our service to a potential client? "You may not get the nearest cab, but the one that's been waiting the longest in the zone because we think it's fair on the driver!" Many times drivers have written in *Call Sign* of ways to secure work and win lost work back. None to my knowledge have been tried. I conclude my long drawn out rant by saying that as TW opened the door to not holding back on comments, I would say that just maybe some of the Board are now past their sell buy date when the best they can come up with to win work back is to have us all dress like *Man from C&A*! Maybe it's time they considered making room for some younger members with new ideas and vision and actually encourage them onto the Board to redress the balance? Failing that, spend some of the money sitting in the bank doing nothing and headhunt people with a proven record who can promote and sell the service we know we can provide.

Ian S Connelly (T21)

Thanks for taking the time to write such a long but interesting letter, Ian. I was going to ask the Chairman to reply, but then changed my mind because when you use the word historically in regard to DaC drivers, I think my 38 years here - out of 41 since getting my bill - qualifies me! So please don't think I was born as Call Sign editor, the majority of my time here has been as just another driver. However, my editorship does allow me to see stuff I had no idea about prior to getting the job and in any case the Chairman would like to add something at the end. Two for the price!

So far as Tom Whitbread's article is concerned, it says at the top of the page that his views are his own and that they shouldn't be assumed as reflecting those of the BoM. I don't stop you saying whatever you want and neither do I stop Tom. Re-reading it, I don't think for one second that he put driver's dressware down as the only reason, but his article was about the way some dress and how they let us down. I agree with you that most passengers just see the backs of our head, but I do know of complaints received from account clients about the way some of our drivers look and of at least one corporate that asked if we could advise arrival rather than have our drivers enter their reception! That is an insult to smart drivers such as you, but nonetheless a fact that shames us. But you're right in that



Mailshot

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wearing a suit doesn't mean your feet don't smell!

Satnavs? You may well remember my views on drivers with one stuck onto their screens as minicabs do, I believed they would harm us and give the impression that we needed them. That has come true with many passengers getting into the cab and giving a post-code as though we are all minicabs. Hopefully our new integrated terminals will make them far less conspicuous.

Cash work? No, I don't like the £2 either but all the circuits have it and even Addison Lee have an £11 minimum charge that now covers just the first two miles – it was three miles until a few months back. That hardly represents a cheap ride, but the difference is that their drivers will take anything. When it comes to cash, we are fussier and coverage of those rides is not good and to be honest, I don't remember it ever being popular on DaC except during the morning rush hours when drivers tried to guess whether it was an LAP or not. Pretending that it's just the £2 is hiding the fact that we have never been a cash circuit. Suddenly it's quiet, yet cash trips still go round and round the system. On the rare occasion I accept a cash ride, I put the meter on when I get there to save the problems you write of.

Should we have tendered for LT? As the trips don't apply to the hours I work, perhaps I'm not the right person to comment, but I have spoken to several RTG drivers who say that when it's quiet then it's just about better than nothing. Some fares give not much more than 60% of the fare. If we were to tender we'd have to go in even lower, so how much should we go in at? Half? Where does it stop and what happens if it gets really busy and Olympic fever hits? Coverage of cut price jobs will plummet and drivers will ask why we tendered? And Ian, do you really believe that if it suddenly gets busy that you can just change the prices you tendered for the account at? I don't think so. And whilst on the subject of RTG drivers and GPS, why do the largest number of drivers joining DaC come from RTG if their system is so good? I believe that one day we probably will go over to a GPS dispatch system, but you won't see me cheering from the rooftops. Then again *Call Sign* is all about opinions, but you certainly wouldn't read a letter such as yours in the RTG mag.

As for getting younger Board members, I agree with you. But I don't see any queue of drivers with the talent needed to get onto the Board. Every time there is an AGM – especially an electable one – I get on my high horse

and almost beg drivers to attend, after all it's just once a year. But no, they voted for postal balloting years ago and obviously are happy with that. So it is difficult to get on, but I see few even bothering to try. On the other hand, most of DaC is now run by professionals with the part played by the BoM getting smaller. Sorry to go on Ian, but as you know, I enjoy a chat! ...Ed

Brian Rice adds: Hi Ian, I notice that you seem to interpret Tom's personal view on dress for all the ills of Dial-a-Cab and our trade. You have been with us for five years now, so you must have an idea of how we work and perhaps some things do need changing. If you feel as strongly as your letter suggests, then perhaps you should consider standing for the BoM next year and endeavour to influence change. I also notice from your past correspondence on the Call Sign website that you are a strong advocate of As Directed and Non Rejectable trips 24 hours a day except for the last hour of a shift. It would also appear from your current letter you are in favour of scrapping gratuities and working more cheaply. I believe those suggestions would go down like a lead balloon with the majority of members, but what do I know! Consequently, endeavouring to manage Dial-a-Cab is not just about coming up with ideas, it is coming up with ideas the members will embrace.

I have no doubt you mean well Ian and I know the Editor has answered your letter, but I would like to leave you with a thought as there wasn't a Call Sign in June and you will probably read this in the July issue although I'm writing this piece at the end of April. So I hope you can understand and bear with me. I'm just leaving home to watch QPR away at Chelsea and whilst there, I am going to be you Ian! By that I mean that while I'm sitting in the stand as a spectator, I am going to be the best player on the pitch by a mile! Think about it Ian, if you can really change things and have so many ideas (which of course must be acceptable to the majority of the membership), stand for the BoM next February.

Ed's note: I reckon that even Postman Pat could have been the best man on the pitch as QPR went down by 6 – 1...!

The opposite view from down-under...

Hi Alan

I have just finished reading the *April Call Sign Online* and what an interesting read! I just wanted to say that I agree wholeheartedly with Mike Pollington (K17) - why are you wasting time with ID stickers? Tom



Whitbread's *Taxis versus PH* and your good self with *should we just become minicabs* said it all. All along the same lines and something that I believed would start to happen as soon as PH became legalised - unless the trade fought back.

Punters, in the main, are only interested in getting from A to B as cheaply and as quickly as possible. So long as they can open a door to get in and sit on a seat, they don't care what the vehicle is or how – in the main - the driver gets there. Account clients hold a slightly different view; they want the above but they also want a clean vehicle and a clean, smartly dressed and polite driver no matter how impolite some of them can be! The licensed taxi trade is a service industry and as such has to compete with others in the same game. As a radio circuit, DaC is in direct competition with PH and they will never be beaten by the trade using the old weapon - that we have done the Knowledge. Satnav has seen to that, so they have to be beaten at their own game starting with smartly dressed drivers and clean cabs. The trade still has an advantage over satnavs, via radio and the Knowledge. Roadworks, demos and accidents etc that occur around London at any time can be instantly dealt with by altering course, satnav does not have that capability. Also, as you so rightly pointed out in the article about AL, long journeys may be cheaper via PH, but short journeys are cheaper by cab and less time lost if the PH driver is stuck in traffic that he knows no way of getting around! Unfortunately, the trade is having to fight with one hand tied behind its back with regard long journeys because the meter is not regulated by the trade, so longer journey fares will always be a problem.

Be proud of the fact that as a London licensed taxi driver, you are unique in the world. We all worked hard for that badge and as Mr Wicks told us at our first PCO interview all those years ago, 6 out of 10 people in that room would never get a badge. Don't be somebody who can find their way around London - anybody can do that! We trained to be people who *know* our way around London.

Fight PH, win back the work and be lucky out there...

Howard Sales (Ex-A11)
Queensland, Australia

In addition to being a driver on DaC, Howard was also a driver trainer when we first went from voice to data transmission before he finally emigrated to Australia. Like many other former drivers, he keeps up to date with our online version ...Ed

Mailshot

Continued from page 35

Give me a sign!

Hi Alan

Just thought I'd mention the subject of road sign theft and difficulties in finding locations outside London. I would usually have used my satnav; however I was reliably informed by my passenger that I could pick up the Rainham junction from the A13. It was late at night, I was not tired and my eyesight is very good. I saw no signs for Rainham off the A13 and missed the junction by about 4/5 miles, seeing as I was on a very fast road and do not live in Essex. I had no idea why Rainham is not signposted off the A13 since it is literally north of the A13 until I found some internet links regarding metal thieves stealing road signs! I remember walking though Bethnal Green very recently and finding loads of missing drain grills at the side of the road!

Just thought, I'd mention the road sign issue in case a driver tries to get someone home using the 'road sign' method. It's satnav for me from now on!

Karen Menpes (E01)

Thanks for the letter Karen. According to senior Essex detective DCI Mark Wheeler, metal theft is a serious and growing national problem and Essex has been badly affected by incidents increasing over the past few years with around 1,300 reports of metal theft reported across the county since the start of 2011.

TfL also wrote to Karen and admitted that the junction of the A13 with Ferry Lane was not signposted for Rainham because its prime purpose is to serve the industrial areas to the north and south of the junction. TfL said they didn't want to encourage traffic to use Ferry Lane as a distributor road to Rainham and beyond. TfL also added that since this section of the A13 had been opened to traffic in the late 1990's there had been no other recorded concerns raised about the lack of signing to Rainham and Upminster, presumably because most road users were familiar with the local road network or because they relied on satnavs. So TfL considered there was no justifiable case to allocate funding for amending the existing signing! Well, Call Sign has heard some excuses in its time, but that must jump straight into the top five! ...Ed

Roller Bond

Hi Alan

Why is it that drivers have to wait so long for their roller bond? I requested mine be paid into my bank account on Monday 23

May, but was told by driver services that I would have to wait eight days until 31 May. I needed the bond urgently because my cab was in a garage after I lost all power to drive it while on an account job. The AA got me to my home address from Kensington and the next day I got it to my garage. This was three days before I went on a 3 week holiday. On returning home from holiday, I was faced with a repair bill of over £2,000. I did not have the full amount to pay for the repairs, so requested payment of my bond. It was then I was told by Viv at Driver Services that it would be an eight day wait. I explained to her the circumstances, but she said there was nothing she could do. I then asked Viv if I could speak to Allan Evans. I explained it all to him but he said he had no idea we had to wait eight days for the bond and he said he would look into it. On Wednesday 25 May, I checked my bank account again and still no bond. I then phoned Driver Services again and spoke to Nuala. I asked to speak to Mr Evans but he was off that day so I explained it all to Nuala and she said to leave it with her and she would get back to me later that day - and she did! She informed me the bond would be in my bank account on Friday, that was the quickest it could be done. Thank God for Nuala, she always comes through! However, that still did not help me. If I waited until Friday, it would be a week without work. I had already lost two days work so far that week and couldn't afford to lose another three days. So why is it that DaC has £1000 of my money in their account, paying no interest and I cannot get access to it in an emergency for eight days? That cannot be right.

My son has now loaned me the money and I'm off to get my cab now, but if he had not been able to loan it to me I would be sitting on my hands until Friday the earliest. I believe this rule should be changed.
Peter Rowe (O75)

DaC Financial Controller Warren Smith replies: A driver can request their roller bond when it reaches £1000. If it is required and the roller bond is not at the £1000, cash to the value of the difference must be deposited at Driver Services and then we will release it. All requests (phone, email, fax, carrier pigeon etc) have to be in by Friday midday to be paid in the bank by Tuesday. Exceptions are Bank Holidays, Easter and Xmas. However, in cases of a genuine emergency, speak to Nuala (as you did) and she will try to get an earlier authorisation...



Hailo and DaC

Hi Al

I picked up an account customer from EC5 the other night and he started a conversation about Hailo. He went on to say how good it was and asked why I wasn't on it. I agreed it was a fantastic app as I had seen both the driver and public app, but that I wasn't interested even though some of my colleagues are on it and had boasted how good it was. Getting to the point, he said that his company may go over to Hailo altogether because it is a much simpler booking system as you don't get asked so many questions such as the exact pick up, address, name, account etc and that it is cheaper. As this was a fairly small account, I thought that maybe it could possibly work. My questions are that when our new system is up and running, will the DaC app make it easier to book a cab, will there still be a 12% charge on credit cards, will we ever be going full GPS so avoiding the need of having to book into zones and will there be a separate visit to get retrained to use the new system?

George Georgiou (L01)

Brian Rice replies: The Hailo App looks good and I am sure customers will like it, as some of the expense when ordering a taxi will be transferred from them with the cost borne by the driver. For instance there is not any run in, there is no gratuity and the driver waits at the pickup for five minutes before even putting on their meter. The driver then pays 10% of the fare and gratuity to Hailo, plus another 4% if there is a Credit Card transaction. Hailo does not have to supply any equipment to the driver as the driver will supply the phone and air time. Yes, it is a fantastic deal for the customer and for Hailo. The only loser is the driver. The Hailo system will work when it is quiet, but come rain, heavy traffic or just busy and the service to the customer will fail, as I believe the average taxi driver will not work for nothing when there is a better alternative available - whether that be radio or the street.

You have probably realised, George, that Hailo cannot accommodate pre-bookings as the app can only direct the vehicle to where the customer is at the time they use the App. We have an App which I have seen working and it has been built in-house at Dial-a-Cab. Initially we will only use it for Credit Card bookings and it will probably be available at the end June/July. Regarding the cost of the transaction, as I have stated above Hailo charge the driver 4%

Mailshot

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plus 10% of the fare and gratuity. At the moment, all radio circuits charge the customer 12.5%. We will have to give some thought to our transaction charge, because if we charge too little it will deter customers from having a credit account with us.

We will be retaining our zonal system and there will not be any need for re-training as the new system is a simple continuation of our old system, however, we will have staff available for anyone that wants further advice regarding the new system.

We have a customer App, but would you like a Driver App? The only purpose that would serve is we could supply any London Taxi driver with the App and he would not receive credit work, but be able to receive cash and credit card trips for a fee. However, if the trip went to a Dial-a-Cab member, then the service would be free. If that were to be implemented, it would be for members to decide if you wanted that situation. You would have to vote on it as I believe it would call for a rule change, as drivers that only had the App on their phones would not be members of Dial-a-Cab, neither would they have our equipment in the cab. You should not automatically believe the above is our future strategy, I am just relaying my thoughts on how the situation *could* evolve in the future.

Finally George, we are beginning to struggle in the mornings in some areas with coverage, is that because some members are doing Hailo work instead of ours? If so, how do they get them to do it with their no run in, free waiting, no gratuity and then 10% of the fare and gratuity to Hailo, whereas Dial-a-Cab offers £4.20 run in and 10% gratuity and the fare paid in full to the member? Yet, as I have said, we still struggle!

Some you Wynns...

Hi Alan

A recent letter in *Mailshot* from Mickey Lappin (E46) caught my attention. He mentions a Wynns cleaner but not specifically which one. I wonder if it was *Diesel Clean 3*? I think his problem may be different from mine as he mentions black smoke, whereas my cab drives fine but the EOBD light sometimes comes on. Did his light come on? Oddly, the light goes off after my meal break. Could you please ask Mickey... Alasdair Kay (C47)

Mickey isn't sure of the exact name, but it says diesel fuel injector and EGR valve cleaner on the tin. And no, his light never came on but his TX2 runs like a dream. So Alasdair, why don't you eat before you start work, then the light will go off straight away! ...Ed

Thirty five years on DaC

Dear Alan

I have now retired after being a taxi driver for 45 years, of which the last 35 were on Dial-a-Cab. I would like to thank you for editing *Call Sign*; I have enjoyed so much reading yours, the drivers and Board member's views. You do such a great job in making *Call Sign* so informative.

So as a farewell to my happy time with DaC, I would like to send my best wishes to everyone for good health and happiness for the future.

Ellis Cohen (ex-L24)

Thank you for your kind words Ellis. The best of luck to you for the future ...Ed

Arbitration appeal

Hi Alan

Thanks for putting my 'non-brush' with a Civil Enforcement Officer - ie traffic warden - into the *April Call Sign*. I had popped into the opticians in George Lane, South Woodford, when I spotted a lurking warden sniffing around fairly close by. So I went straight back out and drove off. I later received a non-payment letter. I appealed saying that the warden hadn't attached any PCN to my vehicle and the optician also gave me a note to confirm that nothing had been put onto my windscreen. The council rejected my appeal saying that they took the word of the warden who said that he handed the PCN to me. As it said in *Call Sign*, what chance do you have when they don't believe what an optician says he saw!

Anyway, I appealed to PATAS and Adjudicator Edward Houghton. He accepted my appeal and hopefully it might help another driver. The case number was 2120134320 and PCN AF56057740. His *Adjudicator's Reasons* were:

"It is not in dispute that the vehicle was, briefly, in contravention nor is it in dispute that the Appellant left the opticians to encounter the CEO by his vehicle. His case, as it has been from the outset, is simply that he then removed the vehicle before a PCN could be issued. The CEO has recorded banding the PCN to the driver. Having heard the Appellant in person in some detail, I find his evidence persuasive and it is supported by the evidence of the optician. On balance I am unable to be satisfied to a substantial degree that the impending PCN was banded to the Appellant before he departed and the Appeal is therefore allowed."

Gerry Tobin (L32)

Well done Gerry, the answer to everyone is that unless you are happy that it was a fair cop, then you must appeal ...Ed

Yellow badge identifiers

Hello Alan

I was fortunate enough to get a job to City Airport on 2nd May and heard on the radio that the DLR was not running due to a fault, so thought I would try my luck and go onto the LCA rank - not something I have done many times before in my career. The rank, in my opinion, moved relatively quickly from putting on to getting a job - around 60 minutes. But what an eye opener those 60 minutes were!

Because of the way the rank is laid out, you can sit and watch every cab that heads down to the front of the rank and it didn't take me long to notice that many cabs do not bother with identifiers. Yes, I know that City Airport is serviced by both Green and Yellow badge drivers and some may say that my finding just 18 taxis in the space of 60 minutes at a busy airport is nothing, but you stand at Hyde Park Corner in the morning, or watch taxi after taxi exiting the feeder park at Heathrow and see how many don't have identifiers on them. Very few! So I can but wonder why as you go further out towards Yellow Badge sectors, the number of taxis without identifiers increases in frequency? Is it just purely by chance that Yellow badge drivers are more forgetful about placing their identifiers on display, or is it that they purposely don't wish to display them in the belief that if they should be lucky enough to get a job going into town, that they will chance their arm and their licence and continue working in an area that they should not be working in? And are they fooling themselves in thinking that because they have no identifiers on display but working in a Green badge area, that the cabbie behind them will think that the poor bloke has forgotten to put his identifier on that morning when in actual fact the driver is actually taking down their details to put onto the TfL tout website later on!

Name and details provided to Call Sign and LTPH/TfL

The driver who wrote the above letter is the same one who revealed the extent to which taxis with either Yellow identifiers or none at all were picking up along Lower Richmond Road following the end of the Boat Race. We gave him permission to keep his identity secret as he may not have made himself too popular with some suburban drivers. We know who he is and following his first report, TfL have now said they will be clamping down on those caught picking up out of their area - other than with a legitimate reason - or not displaying any identifiers on their cab ...Ed



Mailshot

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And more...

Hi Al

Re the article in the last issue of *Call Sign* about Yellow badges in Putney plying for hire along Lower Richmond Road, I was on the City Airport rank recently and spotted 16 taxis with no identifiers...

Jon Robinson (E88)

Call Sign told TfL about both Putney and LCA (and Twickenham in the last issue) and we are pleased to note that they are now going to take action. Hopefully just a word in those driver's ears will suffice - if they don't do it again ...Ed

From Metro's 'Good Deed Feed'

A huge thank you to Dan 52 at Dial-a-Cab for returning my phone to the hospital, I am just so grateful to you and the lost property girls at the taxi company...

Julie, Northamptonshire

Thanks to all the drivers who sent in the above clip from the Metro newspaper's Good Deed Feed and well done to Steve Crisp (D52) for being the recipient of such a nice mention ...Ed

Shalom from Israel...

Hello Guys

I cannot call myself a regular reader of *Call Sign* as I just receive the occasional copy from my brother-in-law (ex G12). I retired from the trade in 2008 and have lived in Israel ever since. I drove a cab for 33 years and have worked on all three circuits. I was a nightman to R34 for a number of years and W18 in the early days. I also shared a cab with Harold Harris. *Call Sign* is a great read and I still get worked up reading about the touts, the likes of Addison Lee and the appalling behaviour towards the trade by traffic wardens. It is also interesting to read about yellow badges picking up in green badge zones, which has been going on for yonks but I think is a reflection on how tough it is out there. If I may just add re the Westminster account; when I was on ComCab we had the London Transport account and in many cases you were paid 75% of the metered fare, it was a blinding account but we lost it to Radio Taxis where the percentage was cut even further. There is nothing you can do about it but just carry on.

I still regard myself as reasonably young being in my late 60s. I'm glad to have had the privilege of retiring, but it is also interesting to keep abreast of the trade by reading *Call Sign*.

Bernie Goodman.

Israel (Ex-R34J)

Nice to hear from you Bernie. As you emailed me, you obviously have access to the internet so no longer need to rely on your brother-in-law to read *Call Sign*.

Just go to www.dac-callsign.co.uk and you can read the latest issues - and the old one too ...Ed

New drivers

Alan

Why when drivers are struggling to get a living on Dial-a-Cab these days, has a full page glossy advert been placed in TAXI mag inviting new members to join straightaway with the added carrot of a free radio fitting? Whatever happened to the days of holding back on new members when it was quiet? Please don't insult the membership by saying new members are needed or that it's for the Olympics. Tell us it's just greed driven to rake in more subs, never mind there's no increase in work. You certainly won't admit that it's slowly but surely dwindling on a daily basis before our very eyes. So the bottom line is no more new accounts, but you're taking on all and sundry. So come on Brian, let's hear it...

John Stowers (K40)

Brian Rice replies: Ok John, here it is! Since the downturn in the economy from 2008 onwards, the size of our fleet has decreased by over 33% but we have allowed the fleet to shrink as the Board is fully aware of how difficult things are. However, there comes a point when a level has to be maintained in order to maintain income and of course, our service levels. We lost even more members recently when the Westminster TaxiCard scheme joined the remainder of the boroughs and of course the 15 year age limit for taxis is also having an effect on DaC as older members are not replacing those vehicles when they come off the road.

What is also amazing during the last few months is that we have spent over £6000 in premiums just to cover the work! We have now reached a fleet level that will have to be maintained, otherwise member's subscriptions will have to rise even further and of course your customers want more for less and there is tremendous pressure on the income we receive from clients.

I am thankful that we were prudent with the Society's income during the good years, otherwise we could not possibly have afforded to allow the fleet to dwindle to its present size without a considerable increase in subscriptions. It is fortunate during this double dip recession that your Society has considerable reserves.

Incidentally, John, the adverts you are alluding to led to ten enquires and of those ten, five have been fitted. So there you are John... you've heard it.



Using GetTaxi?

Dear Sir,

A recent terminal message from Brian Rice informed us that a customer in EC4 was trying out the services of GetTaxi and comparing their service to us. It is extraordinary that there is a fleet of licensed taxi drivers who provide us with competition and who are prepared to pay a 10% fee on account rides with no run in. I have just compared my latest two-weekly statement with the package offered by GetTaxi. After stripping out the waiting times, fixed prices and DaC street hails, I would be a staggering £360 worse off as a proud GetTaxi driver! What to make of the mindset of these people? *Kamikaze* comes to mind. The man in EC4 can decide on service levels of course, but the market has certainly changed. Is our Society too unwieldy to meet the challenge? Despite recent tinkering around the edges, we are still operating as if the corporate client wants to use licensed taxis instead of an environment where we have to persuade them to use us. There are obvious changes to gratuities, incentives, masking destinations and fixed prices that would increase our competitiveness. Unpopular? In the short term for sure, but growing volumes and market share in this market is not going to be easy.

Jeffrey Petit (L77)

Jeffrey's letter was one of several similar ones received in response to Brian Rice sending out a terminal message about coverage and using the example of one City account. *Call Sign* spoke to the Chairman afterwards and his *raison d'être* was to point out that we were failing to cover enough work (we had spent £6000 on premiums) and that drivers shouldn't be surprised if customers looked elsewhere. The only saving grace (if that's any excuse) is that while customers are looking to save money, apparently the other company's record of coverage isn't very good and at the time of writing, the client is still using DaC. Would masking destinations make coverage better? Are you someone who doesn't do fixed prices? *Mailshot* is always happy to publish driver's letters ...Ed

The Eccleston Square Hotel and a lost jacket...

Hi Alan

I'd like to write about an incident at the Eccleston Square Hotel. In April, my son and his girlfriend booked a night at this hotel after going to a wedding reception nearby. As it was just for the night, they did not unpack their bags but my son hung his

Mailshot

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jacket up in the wardrobe. The following morning he forgot the jacket and only realised the following day. He called the hotel and was told that they had found it in the room and had entered it into their left property book. They advised him that they held left items for 1 year. He explained that his girlfriend would come to collect it within a couple of weeks. When she went there, she was told that they could not find it and that until a member of their household staff came in, they couldn't help her. The following morning I called in and got the same story. This went on for over a week with me calling and being given the complete runaround. Finally I asked for the name of the manager and was told it was a lady called Olivia Byrne. As she was away for a few days, I emailed her explaining the situation. I got no reply so called on her return. Again I was fobbed off but persisted and finally spoke to her. She basically said that even though the jacket had been found and logged into their book, they could not find it and that no compensation would be given to my son.

I contacted *Citizens Advice* who told me that the hotel had a duty of care and was

responsible after finding items left by guests. I have been back in touch with Ms Byrne, who stands firm that she will not compensate. She has now said that the jacket was never found despite my son, his girlfriend and me all being told by different members of staff at the hotel that it had been found the day after my son checked out. Apart from claiming legally, which I don't know if we can be bothered, I feel frustrated to just let this go. So I would like to ask drivers to pass on this story to any customers who are thinking of staying at the Eccleston Square Hotel. Certainly if my son had read that this was the attitude of care at this hotel, he would not have booked a room there!

Debbie Hope (W18)

For such a longstanding hotel, I find their attitude somewhat bemusing ...Ed

Allowing extra time?

That was good advice from LTPH to allow extra time for anything that needs doing around the time of the Olympics. So I applied for my overhaul date just over 6 weeks prior to the date, but they told me I couldn't do it and to try again the following

week. Good advice but apparently pointless as well as SGS won't book you in without an official LTPH letter anyway...

Bernie Silver (G08)

Medicals?

Hello Alan

I'm having a slight problem finding out at what ages we need medicals. I've rung TfL who are rather vague. I'm 60 years old with no prior medical problems. I thought my next medical would be at 62, but I'm getting conflicting answers from fellow drivers. If you could answer my question, I would be obliged...

John Woodgates (T43)

Call Sign asked LTPH/TfL Licensing Manager Michael Stack for the answers. They are 50, 56, 62, 65 and then annually. TfL apologised if John had received vague answers and also for him being sent the wrong licensing pack ...Ed



COMPLAINTS RESULTS

A Complaints meeting was held on 17 May 2012. The results are below...



Name/call sign

Paul Groome (T78)



Nature of Complaint

Driver booked into EC5 when true location was Redbridge roundabout & accepted a trip

Driver booked into EC5 when true location was The Mall & accepted a trip
Rules 2, 11



Verdict

2 weeks susp

Gary Beckett (W33J)

Driver booked into S50W when true location was Hatton Cross & accepted a trip
Rules 2, 3, 11

1 week susp

Michael Appleby (L73)

Driver accepts fixed price trips & as soon as he *POBs*, soon to *clears* into a favourable zone. Then uses *temp off* to hold queue position
Rules 2, 3, 11

**2 weeks susp
upheld on appeal**

John Sawyer (T36)

Driver booked into E14 when true location was SE16 & accepted a trip

Driver booked into E14 when true location was Rainham (Essex) & accepted a trip
Rules 2, 3, 11

2 weeks susp

Keith Kew (J42)

Driver booked into S50C when true location was St Johns Hill & accepted a trip in S99
Rules 2, 3, 11

**3 weeks susp
upheld on appeal**

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