

March 2012



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*White-out!
Snow hits the AGM...
Luckily Call Sign got there!*



*DaC's boxing trainer & driver Alec Wilkey
takes a lady boxer under his wing!*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Is it Morse code for the meaning of life or a campanologist sheet music for a church's most elaborate peel? No it's the London City Airport arrivals timetable!
London City Airport Arrivals (correct as of 12/02.2012):

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A larger version of this table with 'From' and 'Flight Numbers' can be found at www.myfav.co.uk on the TAXI page. Click the 'U.I.D Pt 10 Airports' icon. To get the TAXI page you need to Register with taxi in the unlock field. Not only is it free, you can win the monthly £100 prize. (T&C's apply)...

from the editor's desk

First cab – first job?

Officially, passengers can walk up to a rank and select whichever cab they want. Taxi drivers don't like it and feel that as every one of our vehicles has to pass the same stringent tests, that every London taxi on the road is *fit for purpose* – that being the carriage of passengers from one place to another.

Of course we live in an imperfect world and there will always be exceptions. Street hails for example. **Tony Arnold (F03)** has taken his taxi around the world in his other life of teaching other taxi drivers from around the world how we London types do it. With the best will in the world, you wouldn't want to take a Fairway or Metrocab to Nigeria where temperatures can – and did – reach 125°F for poor Tony. Poor, because even in his new cab at the time, the aircon still packed up (see *May 2005 for the story*)! Strangely enough, you can read more about Tony inside this issue and it has nothing to do with travelling! But back to the subject...

There was the time when Dial-a-Cab driver **Mark Thurbin (M96)** was driving along Pall Mall in his then-top of the range *GoldTXII* and following several other empty taxis. Suddenly and surprisingly – as they had let all the other cabs go past – a hand shot out with a waiting camera crew asking that obvious question: "Driver, can you please take us to Marrakesh!" The passengers had been waiting for a taxi with aircon in the back. Mark took them for the ride of his life (see the *August 2006 issue*).

But in general, it's usually first cab – first job and my question to you is what you would do under the following circumstance?

It was in early February. I was second to go on the Marble Arch M&S rank, sitting behind a series 3 Metrocab. A couple came out and walked past the Metrocab and came up to me and my TX4. At first I assumed they wanted to pay by credit card or had a DaC chargecard – the Metrocab wasn't fitted for either. But no, it was can you take us to Westfield at Shepherd's Bush please. Quite a nice ride but sadly it belonged to the cab on the point and I told the duo that they had to walk back to the first taxi. But they said they didn't like Metrocabs as they tended to bounce quite a lot. However, I explained that they had probably just been unlucky in the past, but had to take the first cab. They were having none of it and walked along to the third cab – which happened to be a Vito. I saw the doors slide open and the passengers jump in. The driver wouldn't have known what had happened so I got out and explained. He said he couldn't care less, reversed so that he had space to get out and just drove away towards W12.

As I said earlier – and I stand to be corrected – I think passengers can select any taxi from a rank, but tradition dictates that it's a *first cab – first job* scenario that we usually follow. Has the fact that it's fairly quiet out there turned us against each other? If so, then we are further along the road to destruction than I thought. Would you have agreed with me or just taken them? All answers are published...

Olympic greed?

Last year, drivers thought that the LTDA had recommended to TfL that there would be far more drivers going out to work during the forthcoming Olympics if we were to have the meter working on rate 2 at



times when it would normally be rate 1.

In reality, then-General Secretary **Bob Oddy** had been asked of ways to ensure how a good turnout of licensed taxi drivers could service passengers and he said that upping the rate might help, but he told *Call Sign* at the time that it was never put down as a definite answer and was only spoken of as one possibility as no other trade organisation had come up with any suggestions. Drivers came out as being against it, realising that the heavy traffic that the Olympics will bring on rate 2 could do far more damage to the reputation of this business with its outrageously high meter readings, than any good that a few weeks on rate 2 would achieve for our bank balances. So the end result is that for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of working during an Olympic month, we will be working for the normal rates and hoping that it will be busy.

But then, in early February, **Metro, LBC** and **ITV** all reported that the Mayor had "turned down" taxi driver's demands for a 22% fare increase during the Games. New Gen Sec, **Steve McNamara** had to go on TV to tell the world that we hadn't asked for the increase and that nothing had changed since the original misunderstanding. The taxi trade needs to make a living, but we are not greedy and certainly didn't appreciate the suggestion that "the Mayor had turned down our claim for a 22% increase. Untrue statements such as those could do much damage to a candidate's credibility during an election.

Sadly, not all transport organisations are displaying our work ethic and I hope that those coming to London as visitors during the Games will know that any excessive demands do not come from us.

I don't know how much extra cash tube train drivers will finally get for the privilege of just going to work because they certainly won't have any horrendous traffic conditions to work under. All I know is that their union, the RMT under **Bob Crowe**, turned down a £500 bonus for just doing their job and guaranteeing not to strike that month, as not being enough! Their job is obviously a responsible one, but the DLR shows that trains can actually run without drivers – although the 500+ workers at the Dockland system are still getting a whopping £2500 for doing whatever they do during the Games! So the RMT say that's what their 14,000 LU members should all get as well!

I'd like to know why London Underground workers should be paid extra for guaranteeing not to strike? Ok, perhaps a commemorative mug to

swig their Typhoo out of, but £2500? Nope, not even £500. Or am I just old fashioned???

White? No, Wong again!

His logic was always Chinese, but how on earth can someone expelled from **Dial-a-Cab** many years ago still give views that are so wong – er sorry, wrong! Fortunately for me, I do not subscribe to the online **London Taxi Drivers Forum** – even though someone apparently uses a version of my name. But several drivers have sent me some of the ramblings of **Mark White**, because he enjoys talking about people behind their backs as that means he will always be right!

Sadly, it seems his views are often totally incorrect, but as I'm usually just told of his comments rather than see them, there is no point me saying anything. But as drivers have sent me his latest efforts, I can now confirm that as per usual, he is totally wrong again.

The question involves this column and the subject of demutualisation. In my Editorial of last January, I wondered whether demutualising could help us compete against the likes of Addison Lee who are expanding in size all the time, by inferring that it would give us the option to double the fleet size and work by taking over another taxi company. After all, we could easily afford it. But we couldn't do it under our rules. But I said at the end of the piece:

Could I also add that this view is purely mine and no one has put me up to it – including members of the DaC Board.

And that was 100% true. The only comment I got from the Board was Chairman Brian's after he had read it. His comment, said with a huge smile on his face: "You're going to get me into so much trouble!"

There were no wild anti-comments in *Call Sign*, in fact most of the drivers I spoke to said it was worth looking into – although two former RTG drivers were vehemently against it for obvious reasons. But it hasn't happened and as I said at the time, it was just my view as one way we could compete against a minicab company who will soon be double our size.

But apparently Mark White thinks that I only write what Brian Rice tells me to and after all these years of saying that I edit the mag, I can't be bothered denying it anymore – especially to someone who was expelled but refused to return his terminal and who still has it somewhere – or was that the terminal that made an appearance some years ago on *eBay*?

So this time, after telling LTDF readers that Brian Rice has now proposed demutualisation, he has challenged any DaC driver to put a copy of the Chairman's Report within the Annual Report onto the website where Mr White says that Rice, as he so charmingly refers to him, will include details of a possible demutualisation. Of course I may have missed it, but I failed to see even the word, let alone the subject.

Mark White apparently refers to me as Lord Haw-Haw, after the *Germany Calling* radio station that pushed out Nazi propaganda in English during the war. From some people, I could count that as an insult, but with Mark White, you feel like just patting him on the head and feeling sorry for him. And as the terminals are about to be replaced, you can keep your one Mark!

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Subscriptions

The last time we increased subscriptions was back in September 2009. From that date up to the present time we have increased staff salaries on an annual basis, but there does come a time when we have to look towards subscriptions for greater income.

I know some will complain about any subscriptions increase, but I believe it is justified and should really be increased on an annual basis - probably at about the same time as we receive a tariff increase. However, in the past we have refrained from taking that course of action and endeavoured to cut our operating costs as we realised that business is not buoyant and any increase was obviously unwelcome.

So as you can imagine we were quite reluctant to increase anything at this particular time, consequently I looked to the past to see what we were charging. In April 1996, we increased subscriptions to £110 per month plus VAT, on April 13th we intend to increase subscriptions to £130 per month plus VAT, consequently that is an increase of £20 or a fraction over 18% in a sixteen year period, which I think you will agree has been quite a remarkable achievement.

However, nowadays we charge subscriptions on a fortnightly basis so as from 13th April this year, the new rate of subscription will be as follows:

£60 per fortnight plus VAT, making a total of £72 for a member or journeyman. A second driver on a vehicle will be £32.31 per fortnight plus VAT, making a total of £38.77. Any third drivers will be £10.62 plus VAT, making a total of £12.74 per fortnight, which represent an increase of less than 5%. The long service subscription, which is £1 per month plus VAT, will remain unchanged.

Member's statements

I believe you will find elsewhere in the magazine an article from **Warren Smith**, our Financial Controller, regarding a new method on how you receive your fortnightly statement from us. At present you go into our website and view your statements or trip payments. This will cease on the 30th March (as the 31st falls on a Saturday) and as from 1st April, Dial-a-Cab will send an email to you regarding details of completed trips and the amount to be paid into your account.

However, past information will be available on our website until 30th June, at which time it will cease to be available. Consequently, if you require any past statements you will have to view or print them before the 30th June. We believe our new system will be better and more convenient as we will automatically send you the completed transactions that you can store in a folder should you so desire. As you can appreciate, we can only send you a statement if we have your email address; if we do not already have that address and you would like your statements by email, then just email driverservices@dialacab.co.uk stating



your call sign / badge number.

The more members and journeymen that can participate in this new procedure makes it more advantageous to members, Dial-a-Cab and of course the environment. In the past, we had to pay for a third party to supply you with the facility to view your statements, the new procedure has made the third party redundant with a cost saving to Dial-a-Cab.

Arrival

You do not need me to tell you how tough things are at the moment, consequently we do not wish to give clients the opportunity to complain about an issue that can be avoided. You may have seen a couple of terminal messages from me recently where I asked you to make sure you press your *Arrival* button when you arrive at a client's address. It is at that point we read the meter so we know the amount of run-in.

Many clients require that report at the end of the month and of course it can show an anomaly when in fact there isn't one. If a dri-

ver forgets to press his arrival button and his meter is still running, then when he endeavours to *AAR* or *POB* and the buttons are not there, it is at this stage he realises he has not pressed his *Arrival* button. On pressing the *Arrival* button, the metered fare is recorded and included on the client's report at the end of the month. The client may then complain that we have arrived with too much on the meter, when in reality what has happened is that the driver has forgotten to press his *Arrival* button. I know it can easily be forgotten, especially when the member is faced with a distraction as he arrives at the address, but please try to remember as we do not wish for clients to complain, when in fact there is nothing to complain about.

AGM

I believe elsewhere you will read a report from the Editor regarding the AGM held on 5th February. We had thirty members in attendance and as there were no rule changes or propositions and it was not an electable AGM, the meeting finished very promptly. With that being the case, we had over an hour of AOB, something which proved to be very enlightening.

I would like to thank the members that attended as it was a treacherous morning regarding the snow and the members present behaved in an impeccable manner and conducted the AGM in a manner that was a credit to everyone that attended.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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DIESEL HITS RECORD NEW HIGH!

Something that affects every single driver on **Dial-a-Cab** is the cost of the fuel that propels our taxis – diesel. Now the price has hit a record high having rocketed by 10p per litre in just 12 months – an inflation-busting 7% rise – according to *RMI Petrol* Chairman, **Brian Madderson**.

The increase puts diesel at 143.05 pence per litre, a level that could derail Government plans to curb inflation, is a disaster for motorists and puts the livelihoods of hundreds of fuel retailers at further risk. But that isn't the whole story because more grim news is expected as a "perfect storm" of global factors including rising crude oil prices, closing refineries and pressure on supplies mean that by Easter we could well see diesel (and petrol) prices go even higher!

Mr Madderson continued that inflation for diesel was now almost double that of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 3.6%. He told *Call Sign* that the coming March Budget was an ideal opportunity for Chancellor **George Osborne** to cut the rate of duty on fuel, as he did last year. Mr Madderson also called on the Government to ease pressure on motorists and the economy by ditching plans to raise fuel duty by 3.02p per litre from 1 August 2012. Such a rise would result in a 4p per litre price hike once VAT at 20% was included.



"Sixty percent fewer fuel forecourts since 1990!"

Brian Madderson continued: "It's all very well for the Government and the **Bank of England** to declare that CPI is heading down, but try telling that to our cash-strapped retailers and to the millions of motorists, truckers and taxi drivers now paying an average 143.05ppl for their diesel. We are seeing run-away inflation for diesel."

RMI Petrol is so concerned after months of

intensive evidence-gathering, that it has made a formal submission to the Office of Fair Trading recommending that it conducts an urgent new study into the UK fuels market. Brian Madderson added:

"Alleged unfair pricing and predatory pricing tactics by some hypermarkets and oil companies are driving independent operators out of business at the rate of 250 to 300 sites a year. This death of the independent fuel retailer will lead to higher prices and a loss of refuelling facilities, particularly in rural areas. This will be the most important study of the troubled UK fuels market for more than a decade. Rising pump prices show no sign of abating. Now more than ever it is absolutely crucial that the OFT obtain real transparency into the structure of wholesale costs and retail competition. We would welcome, as we know would many MPs, swift action by the OFT to progress this study."

In 1990 there were more than 20,000 forecourts. Today there are just 8,500 – a massive drop of nearly 60% – leaving huge areas of the UK as fuel deserts where motorists have to drive miles to find a forecourt.

Current UK fuel duty is 57.95ppl, amongst the highest in Europe, especially for diesel.

6-A-SIDE SOCCER TOURNAMENT

Dial-a-Cab driver Del Oldfield (D32) is hosting a charity 6-a-side football tournament for *Whizz Kidz*. If you can get a team together and fancy your chances, this is how you enter.

The football tournament will be held at the **London Soccerdome** – Europe's premier indoor soccer arena (formerly known as the *Beckham Academy*) in Greenwich on **Sunday 25 March** at 2pm. Entry is £80 per team for a squad of 8 players (£10 per man).

There can only be a maximum of 24 teams, so it has to be on a first come - first served basis. There will also be Soccer Skills games for the kids too.



To book your team in, call Del on 07841 526 751...

'Smarter Driving's' amazing results!

The January and February issues of *Call Sign* gave details of what was then an exclusive offer to **Dial-a-Cab** drivers to participate in an ECO-driving instruction course operated jointly via the **Energy Saving Trust** and **TfL**. The offer gave the first 200 drivers to apply the 90 minute course free of charge before opening the offer up to the rest of the trade.

Call Sign has now received a summary of the first 43 taxi drivers' results – many of them on DaC - and excellent reading they make. There was an average 25.4% improvement in fuel consumption, which would make an annual saving of £1,831 per driver! Put simply, that gives you one day a week where your diesel is free! Even if drivers only kept up half the improvement, then £900 a year must be worth that one-off 90 minutes of anyone's time!

In terms of MPG, the average increased from 19.9 to 26.8 with the data also showing no decrease in average speed, in fact a slight increase. Every one of the DaC drivers we spoke to who had taken the course said they were surprised at how their fuel consumption had improved. And at 143p a litre, every pound is worth saving – let alone £1831 per year!

There isn't room to publish all the results, so we've picked the first one from each cab type. Some had better, some worse but all the results are genuine and if anyone would like to see the list, email callsignmag@aol.com and we'll email the Excel file straight back to you.

Jan 12 Vito: Up from 17.6 MPG to 22.1

Jan 12 TX4: Up from 20.7 to 24.9

Jan 16 TX2: Up from 21.7 to 29.3

Jan 16 Fairway: Up from 20.7 to 28.6

Jan 19 TX1: Up from 18.3 to 30.5

Feb 3 Metrocab: Up from 22.1 to 25.6

If you would like to apply, go to www.smarterdriving.net where you can log on with your own email address, using the password *savings*. You will be directed to the website and be able to see which dates and time slots are still available. And some more free ones are also there.

Fuel Saving (£) as a Proportion of Total Fuel Cost



Jery's World



Er...I think there's a stopping place with no zigzags about half a mile down the road. I'll wait there!

ABUSE OF TAXI RANKS

London Taxi & Private Hire Director, John Mason, has written of a topic that irritates many taxi drivers – especially in these quiet times. Yet those same drivers may well be just as guilty as those they condemn. It involves leaving taxis on ranks. Mr Mason writes:

“There have been several complaints regarding taxis being left unattended on taxi ranks – the most recent example being around Victoria Station and the surrounding roads, in particular **Gillingham Street**.

All taxi drivers are reminded that they must not leave their taxis unattended on a taxi rank. Unattended taxis cause obstructions to other drivers, passengers and road users and can also cause security risks. *Transport for London* work closely with London boroughs to appoint taxi ranks where road space allows. But that space is difficult to obtain for taxi ranks and drivers abusing them run the risk that borough will reallocate the road space for other purposes if it isn't being used correctly as a working taxi rank.

TfL has specifically been asked by *Westminster City Council* to inform drivers regarding the unacceptable situation on the taxi feeder rank in Gillingham Street. This rank is the final portion of the ranks serving Victoria Station forecourt and is for three taxis. It is the only space in this street where taxis can legally wait to join the taxi rank on Vauxhall Bridge Road.

Unattended taxis left on this rank cause significant problems for other taxi drivers who then over-rank which, in turn, causes problems for other road users.

All drivers are also reminded that if there is no available space on this taxi rank, for any reason, then drivers should not stop but move on to another taxi rank where space is available.”



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In a sensational judgement, a judge decides about Kensington and Chelsea:

Dial-a-Cab's PCN guru, **Barrie Segal**, has told *Call Sign* of a sensational legal verdict against Kensington and Chelsea Council's parking enforcement contractors, *NSL Limited*.

An employment tribunal judge issued the devastating judgement against NSL, who were named as the employers of parking attendant Hakim Berkani, who claimed he was sacked from his job as a parking attendant for not issuing motorists with enough PCNs!

According to the judge, NSL - who also operate parking enforcement for Westminster City Council - maintained a 'clandestine quota system' to issue parking tickets to motorists in a 'predatory and dishonest' way.

The judge's decision shows that the Kensington and Chelsea Council contractor set its civil enforcement officers a minimum quota of ten parking tickets each day.

NSL is unquestionably the most significant business employing civil enforcement officers in the UK, offering on-street parking enforcement for in excess of 60 local authorities. But they denied setting quotas and said they were disappointed by the judgment and contemplating an appeal.

Judge Burns decision was that Mr Berkani was unfairly sacked. His judgement read:

"We found the claimant and his two witnesses to be straightforward, clear and consistent. We did not feel the same way about the respondent's (NSL) witnesses and particularly Mr Dunbar and Mr

Wardens Operate PCN Quota System!



Wardens told to issue at least 10 PCNs a day!

Rowland. Where the evidence produced by the claimant disagreed with the respondent's evidence, we preferred the former.

"We accept the claimants evidence that managers clearly wanted more rather than less PCNs to be issued. This is corroborated not only by Mr Foudil (Mr Berkani's witness), but by an email from Emma Collins, regional manager within NSL to Jeff Miles and Andrew Davison (then contract manager) dated 9 November 2009, which read:

"There are still significant numbers of people issuing at a rate of below 9 per hour. We should not feel uncomfortable to use the disciplinary process ... etc."

The judgement continued: "This regrettable situation appears to have been contributed to large-

ly by the lack of clear open and honest management, particularly on the issue of a proper approach to the issuing of PCNs, which lead different CEOs to adopt different approaches and to their being pitted against each other - some feeling compelled to comply with an unwritten quota system while others, such as the claimant, adopted the opposite approach apparently without attracting either formal disciplinary sanctions or proper guidance as a result."












Without publishing the complete judgement, which we have seen and which would fill this issue of *Call Sign*, the bottom line was that the judge turned down NSL's claim that Mr Berkani was sacked for misconduct (they said he was too scared to issue tickets) and that the real reason was his opposition to NSL's quota system for issuing parking contravention notices and also his trade union activities, neither of which were said to be fair reasons for dismissal. The judge also said that three people he had earlier named (Messrs Davison, Dunbar and Rowlands) were party to a campaign against the claimant that were designed to "frame him on trumped-up charges."

The judge ended by saying that the NSL disciplinary process was a sham designed to get rid of the claimant while skating over or ignoring the genuine serious counter-complaints which he had raised.

Our thanks to Barrie Segal...

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When London heard that it had been selected to host the 2012 Summer Olympic Games, some celebrated, some said no thank you and one famous Mayor said it would cost every person in the UK the cost of a walnut whip on their council tax! But there was always an underlying sense of excitement.

In July 2009, *Call Sign* was invited to go the Olympic village to see how much building work had been achieved – and yes, there was a lot of mud, but it was nonetheless impressive. Then, again last month we were invited to see the progress made. This time we sent **Tom Whitbread** to take a look and even though security dictated that everyone stayed on the bus, Tom admitted that the building work was incredible and the buzz of hosting the world's most prestigious and exciting sporting occasion was definitely there.

And that's how it stayed until the evening of Valentine's Day – 14 February. On that evening, **Channel 4** put out one of their occasional **Dispatches** programmes – this one called **Olympic Tickets For Sale** and it has raised doubts over the legitimacy over anything approaching fairness regarding ticket distribution or more importantly to us, usage of the **Olympic Route Network**.

In a recent *Call Sign* article, **Brian Rice** said he believed that sponsors would be given access to the ORN lanes and that has happened, but according to *Dispatches*, that is just a small part of the problem. Introduced by **Antony Barnett**, the program said that British taxpayers had spent £9 billion on putting on the Games, adding that organisers claimed London 2012 would be an accessible and affordable Games that would leave a lasting sporting legacy. He went on to say that 1.8 million British people had applied for tickets in the public ballot with over a million applying for the 100 metres final alone – yet the vast majority were disappointed. That begged the question: Who got the tickets and for what events because 75% of the tickets were said to be going to the public. The question, according to *Dispatches*, is what the other 25% included? The answer seems to have been all the top events and as **Baroness Doocey** told the program, so far as the opening ceremony or 100 metres final was concerned, just 36% went to the public and not the advertised 75%.

Some considerable time after the ballots ended and those applying were probably sent tickets for the synchronised swimming rather than the athletics or swimming finals, *Dispatches* discovered that if you booked exclusive packages through two agencies, you could still get best seats for the top events, including that 100 metres final! The only downside was that they could cost you in excess of £3000 per person, with one company asking for up to £9000 for just one ticket! In fact, that company – a well-known High Street tour agency – also offered 6-night packages including 5 star hotel and the top Olympic events for just under £20,000 per person!

But that part is for the mainstream press to look at, *Call Sign* was more interested in the section involving the ORN because according to *Dispatches*, many of those ultra-expensive corporate packages also included access to the Olympic

Olympics: Is it all an IOC jolly???



Does use of the ORN depend on whether you can afford to buy use of it?

Priority Lanes.

Tory *London Assembly Member*, **Andrew Boff** said that if you were in your taxi or even riding your bike and you saw chauffeur driven BMWs sweeping past you, you could get rather annoyed! *United Cabbies Group* spokesperson, **Jonathan Myers**, told the program that taxi drivers would suffer with the closure of The Mall etc and described the Olympics not as the premier sporting event it has been called but as a 'jolly' for its organisers. He said we had all been "mugged off!"

Lord Coe called the lanes essential, but Antony Barnett wondered whether everyone using the lanes really needed to because the program said the majority of the 10,500 athletes only needed to make the half-mile trip from the Olympic village to the stadium. The rest of the 39 miles would appear to be for officials staying in Park Lane, together with the Games sponsors and the media, who obviously can't allow extra time like the rest of us.

Both the hospitality providers the program spoke of were secretly recorded and both said that use of the ORN was included in their packages – even for non-Olympic events in the evenings assuming the lanes had not reopened. The High Street hospitality provider claimed that the lane usage needed to be kept quiet in case people said that you could buy access to the ORN. Really? *Call Sign* would never have thought that!

LOCOG denied that access to the ORNs could be bought, but admitted that access

could be purchased via separate deals with other companies. That's ok then! *Dispatches* also obtained an official paper showing the International Olympic Committee's demands that have to be met by the host country. They include the use of only 5 star hotels including free room service, only air conditioned limousines to be used for the IOC bigwigs with drivers who must wear hats! Is that because they might ask the driver to cook them a meal as they whiz along the traffic-free ORNs that are naturally included on the list.

Jonathan Myers words that the Olympics are just an IOC 'jolly' suddenly seem remarkably correct. *Dispatches* has certainly put a dampener on this so-called once in a lifetime event, because for the IOC, it's appears to be a once every four years jolly-up with mugs like us who have to cough up to pay for it. Of course, we can still use the lanes because providing the passenger coughs up the possible £200 fine on top of the fare, then what the hell! After all, everyone else seems to be on the make!!!

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The reason I am writing this is because on a recent Friday we were unable to cover a **Citigroup** trip going from Queen Elizabeth Street (SE1E) to Canary Wharf. There were four cabs booked into the zone, but not one of them was prepared to cover the job. I'm not going to say it was a fantastic job, but sometimes as a cab driver you have to put yourself out for the sake of the Society - well at least that is what I believe. If those four drivers were on London Bridge Station, they may well have done a cash job going to the Wharf anyway. They would then be ranked up at the Wharf hoping for a radio job from Citigroup!

We have to understand that work generates work and when we can't cover a trip, that client then has to use another service. So I would like to know why this job from SE1E wasn't made non-rejectable? I have in recent months covered jobs that were non-rejectable, as no doubt have other **Dial-a-Cab** drivers. I feel sure that in the best interest of our Society that this was the only option to take to get the trip covered. The passenger cancelled the taxi due to our poor service.

I know we can't cover every job and sometimes it's just as frustrating to us as taxi drivers when there is a good job in SW16 that can't be covered, but to tell a top client that we can't get them a cab in SE1E is unacceptable. Would I have covered the job? Yes I would.

I don't think that we as cab drivers realise how hard it is to win contracts and it was interesting to read that **Brian Rice** had to visit new clients on several occasions to win us a new contract in Bunhill Row. So I think we should play on cab drivers consciences, surely a cab driver (at least I'd like to believe) would think twice about accepting a cash job over a radio job if we were to put messages out that for every job we don't cover, then **Addison Lee** will.

The company my partner works for have just lost their account with Citigroup, not due to the service they were providing but due to costs (nothing to do with taxis). We have to realise that clients are looking at ways to save money and we must not give them an excuse to look at other providers due to the service we give them.

I think we should get more feedback from our Sales team - whether it be negative or positive.

DaC driver Richard Barford gives a view on just one uncovered trip.

WORK GENERATES WORK???



The internal letter received by Richard's partner:

Dear all,

After a long period of negotiations, we have been informed this morning that we have lost the contract to support CITI with *****

This is a real shame for us as a business, not only in respect of the value to us but also in respect of the friendships and relationships that we have formed over the last 8 years.

We are being retained for the next 6 weeks to help with some ***** they have over this period and it is important that we continue with the high level of service that we have always provided to them.

CITI have been keen to say that losing this contract is no reflection on everybody that has worked on and around the account and their decision has been a very difficult one to make, but will help them to make their own significant savings.

Whilst this is a big loss to us, we will work harder than ever to ensure that we are able to replace this work with similar contracts and projects. I am sorry to have to report on this, but we must remain positive in closing out this contract professionally. And to all, keep mindful of new opportunities...

itive. It must be very frustrating for the Sales team to talk up our service, only for us to then let them down.

We've all been there as cab drivers on Dial-a-Cab when you get an *As Directed* job during the day only to find out that it's going round the corner. But then how often does it also happen that you then get a decent job straight afterwards or later in the day - perhaps even an airport. You then realise that you had to do that local job to get the airport. Sometimes we need to look at the bigger picture and think not just of the present, but also of the future.

I just hope that the trip we failed to cover on that Friday is not the job that loses us the contract. If it does, then those four taxi drivers who were booked into SE1E but who were not prepared to cover the job, only have themselves to blame...

Richard Barford
(R39)

Pedicabs: Jakarta leads way!

An officer with **Jakarta Transportation Agency** inspects some three-wheeled motorised pedicabs. The crackdown began at Grogol station in West Jakarta and spread across the capital in the search for the unlicensed three wheeled menaces. The JTA say they will destroy the confiscated pedicabs. Can London learn anything from that?

Pic courtesy Antara/Dhoni Setiawan and The Jakarta Post...



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To answer **Richard Barford's** article on the previous page (*work generates work*), let me first say that when I read the first two paragraphs I thought how refreshing it was for a member to put into writing the same words that are normally said by a Board Member. He asked why that particular trip was not made non-rejectable.

It is the controller who has to make the decision and making any trip non-rejectable does have its consequences for the controller. By consequences I mean flak from members of the Society. While I fully accept that the decision to make a job non-rejectable is in the best interest of the whole Society, those drivers who are forced into taking a trip never see it that way, so I believe that in some cases controllers do bow to pressure from some drivers. Let me add that this should never be the case when doing your job, but after all, our controllers are only human.

This trip was a 7 am booking and therefore would have been masked as an 'as directed' trip. So the initial trip offers would not have shown where the trip was actually going and the only reason I can see as to why it was not covered was because those drivers who did not accept it were not actually within the SE1E zone.

There is also the question that Richard raises about playing on driver's consciences and this can work the majority of times, but it can have an adverse effect especially when the booking is running close to the pre-booked time.

I have retrieved messages from that Friday that I feel make interesting reading. These were in response to the controller's message about the seriousness of not covering the work. The first one read: *Please direct your messages to the drivers who rejected the trips. It's busy out here.* In contrast, another message read: *Our drivers are either out to work or not? Burying their heads in the sand is not the right answer.* I feel that both

Contact Centre Chat

With Keith Cain



of those messages showed that the majority of our members are conscientious and expressed frustration about the work not being covered.

Serious problems controllers do have of which I mentioned earlier in this article and have been written about many times before is when a driver is booked into a zone that they are nowhere near to.

Unfortunately I cannot go back and check the drivers who were booked into SE1E to see their exact position, but for controllers to actually check this does take a lot of time and requires them taking a print out of the screen in real time. On this day with it being so busy it was impossible to do, but we know when we've had purges on driver zones, on many occasions they are booked into zones that they are nowhere near. When you see, as was the case with this trip, that there were four drivers booked into SE1E, it is

possible they were nowhere near close enough to accept the booking and be there on time. The non-rejectable issue then causes them to break the procedural rules by letting the trips time out and the controller has to be physically monitoring the system at the time to see this happening before being able to put a driver on complaint. Again, with the weather and the work being as it was, it was just impossible for the controller to police.

Another possible scenario could have been that one or all four of the drivers booked into SE1E were on a STC, which means we have to wait for them to become available before the trip was offered to them. It is also interesting to note that when a controller makes a trip non-rejectable, it goes back out to the primary zone only as non-rejectable. If it then goes to a back-up zone, it automatically reverts to a normal trip unlike the *Executive Account* trips, which are non-rejectable at all times.

Finally I would like to say that I fully agree with the comments Richard makes about drivers putting themselves out for the sake of the Society and I would also like to add that no matter what a controller does to a trip, there are occasions when the good service we give to clients in the majority of times does sometimes fail. Just as it did on that Friday, but happily that still remains a rarity...

**Contact Centre Manager
Driver's Operations Manager**

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Mayor rejects a fare increase for the games that wasn't asked for!

The TfL Board under Mayor Boris Johnson have rejected a proposal to increase taxi fares by 22 per cent during the London 2012 Games. Boris had previously described the proposal as a 'major own goal' for taxi drivers and that when TfL consulted the taxi trade, the vast

Olympic Fares Increase "Rejected"

...even though it wasn't asked for! But we do get 5.3%...

majority of drivers were said to be against the increase as they believed it would reflect badly on taxi drivers and discourage custom.

However, when *Call Sign* asked LTDA General Secretary Steve McNamara about the proposed increase, he told us that it had never been asked for and was only ever put forward as one possible way to get more drivers to work during the Games.

"We never put in an official request for an increase. It was purely a suggestion because when trade reps were asked by TfL for any suggestions as to how we could make sure a good taxi service would be available during the

Olympics, none were forthcoming and so we put that idea forward. It was never official policy though and I can't really understand why TfL are saying that it was."

At the same time, TfL approved a fare increase of 5.3% for the coming year. Fare increases are subject to an annual review and calculated using a long-established formula based on costs associated with working as a licensed taxi driver. There is also a 20p increase to the £2.20 flag fall taking it up to £2.40 - the first increase to this fee since 2005.

Call Sign Comment

Taxi licence checker closed

Following representations from drivers concerned that the LTPH licence checker could lead to the possibility of driver's addresses becoming known, the licensing authority closed down the facility but claimed in doing so that addresses had not been included in information given out and that there was no facility within the system to find those details out.

According to LTPH, the checker so far as driver's details was concerned involved names, licence expiry dates, badge numbers and which area licenses were for. Information regarding the taxi itself was based on the registration together with expiry dates, make and model etc. But some drivers were still concerned that there were websites where you could get an address if you had enough information.

Call Sign was criticised by a website for publishing the original article and although we did not call the suggestion "fine and dandy" as the site suggested, neither do we make an apology for publishing it. We have been in the forefront of attempting to stop yellow badge drivers working in London – not because we have anything against yellow badges, but because our readers wrote in telling us they were fed up seeing suburban drivers taking green badge work. If the licence checker was so bad, why is it that the vast majority of green badge drivers placed their identity stickers with their badge numbers on their cabs as soon as they received them – some 5 or 6 weeks before the official launch date of 1 March? They didn't appear to be too frightened!

This isn't to have a go at the **Anderson Shelter**, because it undoubtedly is a very good place to keep up-to-date with trade matters. But no one knows everything – although some sometimes give the impression that they do...

Alan Fisher

NELLIE'S RESTAURANT

If you're feeling peckish between the hours of 9.30 in the morning and mid-night, then Nellie's Restaurant at 12 Greville Street, off Hatton Garden, will not only solve any hunger pangs with its great menu, but if you show your badge, then you will get a whopping 20 percent off the bill!

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Call Sign

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DaC Chairman Brian Rice writes on Pat Sheehan (W54) who passed away in January...

James (Pat) Sheehan

I was really shocked when I learned of Pat Sheehan's passing. I knew him for over thirty years and he was one of the nicest men that I have ever met.

Pat had been with Dial-a-Cab for almost thirty years, having joined the Society in March 1983. But I knew Pat before he became a member here.

He always had time and a friendly word for everyone and I do remember him having lengthy conversations with our female staff who attended the DaC AGM's! Pat missed very few and our staff were as shocked as I was when they learned of his passing.

It's true that Pat did always like to have his say, but it was always in a polite and friendly manner, something that reflected his nature and personality.

I just cannot imagine how Pat's family must be feeling at the moment; his wife, children and grandchildren can only have fond loving memories of him and my deepest sympathy goes out to them all.

Pat was one of the best and he will be greatly missed. To be taken at the age of 67 is a travesty, but like many others that I know in this trade I have only very fond memories of him.

God bless you Pat...



Brian Rice



LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

Badge Identifiers the Irish way!

I expect that most of the trade papers have been full of opinions of the benefits or pitfalls of our new green or yellow badge identifiers.

Driving around town, I have noticed how many cabs have placed them in the wrong positions and I can't help but wonder how long before they will be screaming how unfair it is that they have failed their overhaul, as they didn't follow the instructions and place them in the correct positions.

As for the start date at the beginning of March, it left me a bit disappointed as I believe that the old Public Carriage Office under control of the Met Police with the legends of those Examiners whom we loved, feared and hated, would have looked in their wicked, cunning and sometimes surprisingly funny sense of humour to have a more significant and memorable date to introduce them. I believe they would have probably opted for the 17th March and St Patricks Day. In that way we could all have been wearing green for the day!

Buying what you don't need

It starts at a place we've all been; you sit down with a few hours to spare to watch the TV, but no matter what package you have - be it Freeview, Sky or Cable - you flick through a choice of over 200 channels

to watch and there's nothing on any of them!

So I put on a DVD - the latest version of True Grit. A fan of the first film with John Wayne and brought up with Westerns on TV, I was looking forward to it. Mind you, isn't it strange that throughout the 60s there were many guns on TVs in war or western programmes, yet there was no rise in gun crime? Now they blame it on TV. But I digress...

About an hour or so into the film, the DVD player starts playing up and sticking, so watching the film has to be aborted. The next morning, one of my sons asked me where I was going as I left the house to go out to buy a new DVD player. They are only about £40 nowadays. That's when the doubts started with my son convincing me that there was no point and I would be better off buying a Blu-Ray player which start at around £80 and that it would be money well spent.

So off I trot to the local retail park to enter into the simple process of buying one. Once inside and at the mercy of a techno assistant, there are the choices involved with a Blu-Ray, including with or without 3D. Each time the price creeps up in increments of about £20! Did I know that I could watch the internet through an ethernet cable or even - for another £20 - I could get WiFi?

With the price now circa £150, far beyond what I first set out to spend or buy, I make a phone call to my son for a bit of advice to assist in clearing my head and to help me make the decision easier. But another spanner in the works as he advises me that if was going to spend that sort of money, I might as well buy a Games console as the Blu-Ray would be better quality - plus with a hard drive it gives the capability of playing games on it for the family!

Ok... so I go back to the assistant for his thoughts. Now if I buy the PS3 Slim, I can watch the BBCi player, 4OD, the ITV player and have the ability to play games (not that I do anyway) or the X box, which is compatible with Sky Go, which would be like having your own Sky Plus box with HD compatibility on both. The decision on what to spend £200 on is up to me!

I left the shop with nothing as it was all just too much for me; I still have not made a decision and will for the moment persevere with the 200 TV channels. There must be something on tomorrow...

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I know what you're thinking; what's a Californian lady from Seal Beach doing giving lessons to you wonderful Dial-a-Cab drivers about the forthcoming US Presidential elections, and how on God's green earth can it be linked to London's best radio circuit!

Well, the media are making a big deal over the current presidential primary elections (and caucuses) held in each US state and territory, the idea being to select a candidate to oppose current White House incumbent – the man so many put their faith in and the man who has given so little back – **Barack Obama**.

Well the link involves a long-time client of DaC – Bain & Co. Older drivers will remember them from their offices at Fitzhardinge Street, just off Manchester Square and what appeared to be their ravenous appetites as they spent small fortunes on take-away menus that drivers used to pick up, pay for and drop back to the company's hungry employees!

Then following a dispute with your then-Chairman over a Bain request to bring in another taxi company to work alongside DaC, the company just got up and moved completely to **ComCab**.

But back in 1984, Bain & Co became Bain Capital, a Boston-based financial services and asset management company. Its employee's appetite details are unknown to **Call Sign Online** and for the past few years Bain's have been using DaC again from their WC2 base.

And the Presidential link to DaC? Well Bain Capital was founded by Bain & Co partner and current presidential hi-flyer, **Mitt Romney**, together with two others and if that isn't a link, then I don't know what is! But I thought you might like to see another side of the candidate who in February won the Florida Republican

DaC's link to the US Presidency!



Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney has a link to DaC!

Presidential primary and Nevada caucus and hopefully will continue all the way to the White House.

In July 1996 Melissa, the 14-year-old daughter of Bain Capital partner Robert Gay, disappeared after attending a rave party in New York City. Three days later her distraught father still had no idea where she was. Mitt Romney took immediate action as soon as he heard what had happened. He closed down the entire firm and asked all 30 partners and employees to fly to New York to help find Gay's daughter. He set up a command centre at the LaGuardia Marriott and hired a private detective firm to assist with the search.

Mr Romney then established a toll-free number for any clues, coordinating the effort with the NYPD and went through his files to call everyone Bain had done business with in New York, asking them to help find his friend's missing daughter.

Mitt's accountants at **Price Waterhouse Cooper** put up posters on lamp posts, while cashiers at a pharmacy owned by Bain put fliers in the bag of every shopper. Romney and the other Bain employees scoured every part of

New York and talked with everyone they could – prostitutes, drug addicts and anyone that might have been able to help find the missing girl.

Their hunt made the evening news, which featured photos of the girl and the Bain employees searching for her. As a result, a teenage boy phoned in to ask if there was a reward and then hung up abruptly. But NYPD traced the call to a house in New Jersey and found the girl in the basement, shivering and experiencing withdrawal symptoms from a massive ecstasy overdose. Doctors later said the girl might not have survived another day.

The former partner credits Mitt Romney with saving his daughter's life and said at the time:

"It was the most amazing thing and I'll never forget it till the day I die."

So here's my epiphany: Mitt Romney simply can't help himself. He sees a problem and his mind immediately sets to work on solving it, sometimes consciously and sometimes not-so-consciously. He doesn't do it for self-aggrandisement or personal gain. He does it because that's just how he's wired.

When Mitt Romney was asked by his old employer to go back to Bain & Co as CEO to rescue the firm from serious financial problems, he left Bain Capital to work there for a salary of just one dollar! He also went to the rescue of the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics when sponsors began pulling out following allegations of corruption at the Games. Mitt Romney picked up the outstanding \$379million shortfall. And as Governor of Massachusetts, he accepted no salary.

Character counts and Mitt Romney has it by the shedload! And what a link to Dial-a-Cab...!

**Josie Allinson
Call Sign Online**

All change at Padders...

With Eastbourne Terrace shut for the next two years due to the new Crossrail station being built, a smart new Paddington taxi rank has opened with access for taxis from Bishop's Bridge Road using the new signal junction opposite Sheldon Square. A small feeder rank will remain on Bishop's Bridge Road with an automated call forward system being introduced to help entry to the new rank. Set down is also within the new taxi facility. Westminster is proposing a larger feeder rank within the Harrow Road gyratory system to cater for an extra 50 taxis.

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On Friday 10 February along with journalists from other magazines, *Call Sign* was invited to tour the Olympic site in Hackney. We arrived at 2.30 on a cold but sunny afternoon and after passing through the security desk, were shepherded onto a coach with a guide who was to point out the many buildings - although the guide soon broke the microphone and we had to try to hear above the ultra-noisy diesel engine and constant bumping of the speed humps.

As we toured the complex watching builders trying to complete their tasks before this summer's event, I was amazed at the size of the buildings. Firstly we had to pass through the security cordon and have the coach checked by a sniffer dog; due to the freezing cold weather that afternoon, as soon as the dog had completed his task he jumped up into the handler's arms to keep warm!

The first building we came across was the main Olympic stadium. We were told that this had been more or less completed and was now having its cosmetic makeover. After passing this massive structure we came to the Anish Kapoor designed 'Orbit' - Britain's tallest sculpture at 114 metres high, which gives a view across the entire park and London's skyline.

We continued past the Aquatics Centre and Water Polo arena, the shame being that we were not allowed inside any of these buildings, so I can only report on what the outside of the buildings look like, which many people can see as they pass on the roads that run parallel with the complex. The only difference was that we could see the immense size whilst looking out of the coach windows. We then passed the basketball arena, Velodrome and BMX track.

We saw the massive media centre, being told that it has no windows; I gather this is to stop reporters being distracted by any movement

Two years ago this mag was invited to tour the Olympic site. Now with the Games almost here, we were asked back. We sent Board member Tom Whitbread to take a look...

CALL SIGN AT THE OLYMPICS



Anish Kapoor's 'Orbit' against the backdrop of the Olympic Stadium

outside - either that or to stop any shot putters losing track of direction and smashing the glass! We saw the only warehouse left on the complex from the original Hackney industrial sites; it has now been renovated and will be used during the Games. We were shown apartment blocks where athletes will be residing and which will later be converted to homes for local residents. The tour continued showing us landscaped gardens, which included the River Lee and the canals and the use of recycled bricks from the old warehouses.

Then it was back to the start where we were asked if there are any questions. I enquired why we hadn't used an electric coach, which would have been environmentally friendly and we

could then have heard the tour guide!

We were then told by LTPH Director **John Mason** that they were looking into ways with which to work with **Dial-a-Cab** and other radio circuits (plus private hire) to give instant messages regarding the state of traffic and opening of any roads drivers can use during the games.

It was an interesting afternoon, but could have been much better had journalists been allowed off the coach and seen inside some of these attractions. It would also have helped make a better and more informative article...

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board member

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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW A

*What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by **Call Sign** Editor Alan Fisher. It is grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the report as compact as possible. A*

The low attendance was caused by the heavy snowfalls of the previous evening with several drivers sending texts to ***Call Sign*** saying they were stuck at home. I had to drive my little red car to work, which meant I had to leave my trusty old his Brownie in addition to taking notes! So if you have a spare car, please let me know so I can swap!

2010 Minutes

Chairman's Report

Auditor's report

Reappoint Chantrey Vellacott

Any Other Business

Ray Sorene (A53):

Ray was first up and asked about getting signatures on credit card trips pointing out that on a large percentage of these trips, either there was no signature on the card or it was indecipherable. **Brian Rice** replied that the problem was one of the reasons that the new terminals would be installed with a *chip and pin* system. It will also take *contactless* cards. Brian added that he had



Mike Tovey walks in with his Timberlands covered in snow

At that moment, Mike Tovey walked in with the Chairman joking that he would be pleased to know that Chantrey Vellacott had been re-elected, but that he wasn't sure what would have happened had the members seen the light brown Timberland boots he was wearing with his suit! Continuing with his response to Ray Sorene, Brian said that drivers should still get a signature regardless of the card because that would avoid problems re payment from the bank.

Neil Brewer (E16):

Neil brought up a problem that a colleague of his had told him about. He had tried to book a cash trip but claimed to have been told we didn't accept them unless it came from an account client. Brian said that it wasn't DaC policy and he couldn't understand why his friend should have had a problem.



Martin Freeborn (C67):

Martin asked for an update on the Westminster *TaxiCard* account as he'd heard that Westminster were cutting back on them. Brian responded that they had extended the account until October at which time it will probably go out to tender. He added his belief was that the card is now also means-tested and that those who could afford to pay for their own taxis are no longer being provided with a card. The Chairman added that it was out of Dial-a-Cab's hands.



Colin Jenkins (Y22):

Colin suggested that there were too many terminal messages regarding traffic conditions, referring to them as “dangerous and distracting.” He went on to suggest that some drivers were even phoning the call centre with traffic info that they “insisted” should be put out. He asked that the Board stop them completely and call for a terminal vote on whether drivers still want them. Brian said that if he asked a section of drivers, he’d get a some-do and some-don’t



response. He also felt that traffic was not a problem for the drivers but suggested that we should be able to get off the M25. He also said that Keith was up to dispatchers and put out the call. Keith took the mic and a

John Rubini (F55):

John asked about back-up zones and gave an example. He said his home zone was N50 (Enfield) and asked why he gets offered jobs in N2 but never in E50N (Essex). He said that there were four zones between his and N2, yet he was in the next one to E50 but was never offered anything there. Brian responded to back-up zones but that it would be correct and that if so,

John then moved on and said “cahoots” with Addison Lee, a “cahoots” with that situation. He said, “I’m not going to be involved in this.” The Chairman gave a résumé of the complicated scenario, Brian said that Addison Lee had taken over the courier side while the courier side went to Addison Lee. It had been the subject of a meeting with the problems they had previously had (the Health account) then took the courier side to Addison Lee. CitySprint owned Westside, CitySprint bought out Burgundy Cars some time ago, then another MBO of Westside, CitySprint Chairman of CitySprint moved to Addison Lee. CitySprint’s courier side, while the courier side, Patrick Gallagher. He is the Chairman of CitySprint. John Griffin. Brian said that he had met John Griffin’s two sons, John Griffin’s business and he had been told that the courier platform, which had previously been used by (Professional IT) as being total, the courier side had no cars or taxis and used the courier side. Customers could have whoever they wanted – put on. Clifford Chance were the legal firm. Oscar. Brian said that fortunately, the courier taxi radio circuits would go on. Brian said that he had a choice of cars only. What was the situation? AL had bought Oscar and so on. Brian said that he was being independent.

Brian then gave a view as to what he thought ought to be. He suggested that it was a matter of four between the three taxi companies (RTG and ComCab had been merged into Concierge) with a choice of three companies, or they could have AL work in the taxi companies' that contrary to what some loved AL and that there was support in the quarters towards them. He even mentioned accounts who had banned AL.

ABOUT THE 2011 DAC AGM

historical surroundings of the Honourable Artillery Barracks on City Road.

is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. Some paragraph approximate attendance taken by **Call Sign** was 30, not including the 7-man BoM.

ng they couldn't get off their driveways. Even this mag's photographer, **Alan Green (E52)**, couldn't make it and the Editor had to use our point was missed out, you will know why!

fic reports could be helpful to put out no reports outside of with Cain could leave decisions only messages that were relegated with that point.



that each zone has up to eight d be looked at to see whether it could be changed.

id that by default, DaC were in dding that he had "real probasked Brian what was happenme of the situation. In a rather gave a brief rundown saying over Lewis Day's car business o CitySprint. Lewis Day (who anagement buy-out following ously had with their National e medical side from Addison One cars, who in turn had me time previously. There was stOne from Burgundy. The d away from WestOne Cars to e the MD was someone called first cousin of Addison Lee's then went on to say that he ons who ran most of the AL that AL had bought the *Oscar* ly been touted by its makers ly independent. In reality they that as a selling point in that er they wanted - cars or taxis e the first corporate to go onto ely for DaC, none of the three into the platform so any users t had now happened was that could no longer advertise it as

to what the future could turn t could be a straight choice of radio circuits and their plat- both have their versions of the client's preferred car com- Addison Lee - and that could favour. Brian went on to add believed, not every customer bstantial animosity from some en spoke of two of our current cars from picking up at their

premises. He said that no one could know what would happen when the Lewis Day branded cars were rebranded with the Addison Lee name, but said that AL's aim was to provide cars to clients that wanted them and Galaxies to those that requested taxis. One thing AL did have lots of was money! Brian said that the two Griffin boys had said that in addition to buying Lewis Day, they had also bought a local golf course! He joked about whether those taxi drivers that played there would still do so if they knew who the owners were!

Returning to John's point, he said that no one liked the situation and that Brian, like John, was "old school" and that we still saw them as minicabs. But he also said that we were in the service industry and that sometimes you had to let your head rule your heart and go with what the customer actually wants. And in order to get our taxi work, we sometimes have to give a bit.

Brian jumped to the next question before it was asked! He said that suggestions DaC put taxi work into cars was "absolute rubbish!" He said that if it wasn't for the Concierge platform in some of our customer's premises, we might not be getting any taxi work at all. He went on to explain about some of the benefits that DaC offer clients and which help to make us almost indispensable.

John came back and reiterated about his historical dislike of Addison Lee and Brian gave an account of their almost dictatorial working practices regarding drivers and added that in a way, the takeover of Lewis Day could work in our favour as they were extremely cheap whereas AL will undoubtedly increase prices.

John also raised the point of cash and credit card trips, but by then the editor's typing finger was getting sore and he gave it a 60 second rest!

Laurence Kelvin (W88):

Laurence asked about the new terminals and queried whether contactless cards were the same as Oyster cards? Brian said there was a similarity and explained what contactless was and also described what the card looked like. Laurence didn't think he had seen one, so the editor took



(another) rest from typing and taking photos and showed him his card! Laurence also disagreed with Colin Jenkins in that he found traffic messages to be very useful, giving an example of horrendous traffic hold-ups along New Kings Road the previous evening and A40 shut. "Thank goodness for our traffic reports," he said as he stepped down.

Adrian Landau (T14):

Adrian asked why DaC had been advertising for new drivers. Brian said that when conditions became very quiet, we had allowed the numbers to slip down but that things were a bit better now and coverage at times had suffered. We needed to bring it up to an agreeable level adding that if service struggled, customers suffered and may then not rely on us so much. As a result our income would slide and it

becomes difficult to stop that. Brian also made the point that drivers subscriptions bring in finance to the Society.

Ray Sorene (A53):

Ray made a second trip to address members and gave examples of how terminal traffic messages had saved his passengers huge amounts of time and how grateful they had been. Naturally, Ray was very much in favour of keeping them. Brian cracked a joke at Colin Jenkins saying that he was getting outnumbered! The editor's finger was by now going a dark shade of mauve!



Neil Brewer (E16):

Neil also made a return visit to the lectern and said he now realised re his original question about not picking up cash clients, that we did not take bookings from wine bars and having spoken to dispatcher John Connor, who was one of the 30 drivers present, he now understood why his colleague's request for a cab had been refused.

Alan Fisher (F07):

Possibly just to give his finger a rest, Alan Fisher then went to the lectern. His first problem was who could take HIS photo! He went on to ask Mike Tovey what advice he would give to Brian Rice should Brian ask whether he thought buying Radio Taxis was a good idea? Alan added



that as RTG's market capital was just £223,000, we could afford to buy it fairly easily and double the fleet size while at the same time increasing our market share of accounts. Mike gave an overview of the situation and said that whilst you should never say never and it would be worth considering, the question should be whether there was any advantage to be gained from any such deal. Alan reiterated his point about doubling our fleet size and account base to make us competitive to Addison Lee. Mike said that he could see the logic but that we would really have to look closely at why we would attempt such a move and that there was always the possibility that we could become infected with their problems. He added that we should give ourselves a huge pat on the back at the way we have managed our business through recent quiet times and how we have re-equipped the fleet with a very low amount of risk, whereas borrowing to re-equip was one of RTG's initial problems.

Brian Rice then came in and said that he agreed with Mike's synopsis of the situation before comparing the two capital values, putting ours at £13.2million. Why would we want to put that at risk, Brian said adding that we would

continued on page 20

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2011 DAC AGM

continued from page 19

be paying for all our new equipment and that even after that, we would still be in a very healthy position because we had always looked after our money and mentioned that we currently had in excess of £7million in the bank. Looking at any takeover at present would be a very risky business he added, but also reminded everyone that we were talking about our fellow taxi drivers and we shouldn't be looking at destroying another circuit because when it came to it, we were all taxi drivers "...and I personally wouldn't want to see any harm coming to those drivers."

A driver asked from the floor whether it was true that RTG had lost the UBS account and Brian confirmed it, adding that we had also tendered for the account but that ComCab had won it. The Chairman added that our tender was very competitive with an extremely low service charge, but part of the winning tender included no driver gratuity. Brian said that he still believes that price denotes service and that if you don't pay the rate, then when it gets busy you won't get the service. He also spoke about a system in someone else's tender that suggested arriving at a customer's address with a dead clock, then starting it and adding £2 at the end. Besides probably costing the client more rather than less, Brian considered that it would be illegal as you were charging more than the metered fare.

Gerry Allen (E19):

Gerry spoke about the "reverse" run-ins that Brian had just spoken about and Brian confirmed that if a fixed price went over what the meter showed, it classified as being illegal. In ending, Brian congratulated Gerry on his Marshalling at both House of Commons and Lords and told the DaC driver that both Houses had spoken very highly of him. Gerry got as much of a round of applause as it's possible to get in a large hall able to hold around 200 drivers but "filled" with just 30 of us - including one whose finger was changing from mauve to an orangey shade of blue! But brave soul that he is, the editor continued with only the occasional painful wince!



Roy Hayden (L38):

Roy asked about a headline in the *Evening Standard* that inferred a 22% fare increase during the summer Olympics was still "on the cards." Brian told of an earlier meeting at Palestra with John Mason where the Chairman was told that there would be a 5.3% fare increase, which included an extra 20p flag drop. Any suggestion of a further increase for the Games was a non-starter and not even discussed. Brian believed that there are some out there who had tried to make political capital by talking of "greedy cab drivers," but again said that the suggestion was never going to be taken seriously.



Roy then brought in a non-DaC topic when asking whether the new green and yellow identifying stickers was a form of *divide and conquer* among taxi drivers, saying that one day we may need those 3600 suburban drivers. Brian gave a personal view that he wasn't against the stickers although he added that the other two circuits might not agree as they both had suburban drivers in their fleets. Brian's view was that if one of our drivers saw a yellow badge driving down Kings Road with a passen-

ger, they would take little notice. However, it would be different if that cab had its 'for hire' sign on. He said that in his view, when yellow badges were introduced in the 1930s, they should have had identifiers straight away. He added that he felt certain that there were some yellow badges that either worked in town or were working outside of their own sector and it shouldn't be allowed as they did not have the knowledge that we did in London or of another zone. Roy then quoted two instances from *Call Sign*, one where the driver had obviously used a satnav with a second driver who had been rude to Allen Togwell. "They were both green badges," Roy said.

Showing much knowledge on the suburban scene, Roy went on to talk about how attempts were being made to get yellow badges away from the E14 'Island' and Greenwich suburban drivers away from London City Airport. He then spoke about the east London drivers who used to cover O2 work in the evening and that they wouldn't be able to do it anymore because it wasn't their sector. He reiterated that in his view we were heading towards a *divide and conquer* mentality feeling that suburban drivers should be able to work in any suburban sector. Brian disagreed saying that drivers should only be allowed to work in the sector that they were licensed for. Roy went on to say that he was concerned John Griffin would step in as we divided and Brian actually said that he wouldn't be surprised to hear that some yellow badge drivers might give up their licence and start work for AL because they had been taking green badge work and without that, they would suddenly find their takings going down. He also thought that yellow badge areas were reaching saturation point but that if they were forced to stick to their own sectors, then the situation could improve. He said he realised that some people were trying to discredit both **John Mason** and **Helen Chapman** at LTPH, but Brian thought they were doing a good job under difficult circumstances. He added that some groups thought there was a secret agenda at Palestra, but Brian disagreed and thought they really were trying to update the trade and gave some examples of that.

John Rubini (F55):

John returned to the lectern and asked what arrangements we had with minicab companies. He asked who was on Concierge. Brian gave a list of car companies but added that these were selected by clients and were nothing to do with us. John asked what effect Concierge was having on us and Brian said that most of our work on Concierge was holding up well except for one city account, whose use of cars had gone up. John asked about one large account that was on the verge of moving to the Island and whether that would make any difference to their usage. Brian didn't think it would other than some of their fixed price trips that returned into town would have to be increased.

Divyesh Ruparelia (V59):

Divyesh was last up. He asked why we couldn't do away with our gratuity to improve our competitiveness? Brian repeated his view that our service could drop if gratuities were dropped. He added that some accounts now had a capped gratuity of £2.50 but that if he were to ask drivers whether they wanted to give it up altogether, driver's views would be split down the middle.



The meeting ended at 12.30 with Brian thanking all those who had made the effort to get to the HAC in such atrocious conditions.

Alan Fisher

Whose typing finger is now going for a long soak!

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



Hello ladies & gents,

Arrivals

Over the past few weeks it has become increasingly apparent that some of you are still forgetting to press your **Arrival** button (Code 21) when physically outside of a particular location or pick-up address. None more so than very recently at a large law firm in the City, which subsequently led to them suspending their account with Dial-a-Cab.

Although the meter amounts were correct and within the limits, on a number of occasions because the **Arrival** and **PoB** were captured at the same time, it showed up as an overcharge

on the normal run-in on the customer's invoice. Rightly so, they queried the amounts and after meeting with the head of procurement, we were able to fully explain that this was a genuine oversight on the trips in question and fortunately they were understanding on this occasion and will again continue to use our services.

It is imperative that you press the arrival only when you are physically outside of the pick-up and not when you are some distance away. Please remember that unless notified to the contrary, the allowed maximum run-in is £4.20 on all normal account trips (with the exception of Taxi-Card journeys). The maximum amount showing on the meter must not exceed this amount at booked time or on the actual arrival for an ASAP trip. We are all human and can misjudge something as difficult as London's traffic, so if you have misjudged the run-in, then the meter must be reset accordingly if you arrive before the booked time or if you exceed the allowed amount on a straight-away journey.

E14 / EC5

Incorrectly booking into the popular E14 and EC5 zones is again raising its ugly head! A small minority of you seem intent on ignoring regular warning messages that these zones -

amongst others - are constantly being monitored. On this particular occasion, I don't even feel it is necessary to remind you all of the booking-in procedures, because they are now so well known. But I will remind those to whom it applies to that you will be brought to task and there are really no valid excuses, because in this instance you will be caught *banged to rights* and dealt with in the correct and proper manner. I have always said that our procedures are in place to make it a fair and even playing field for all of us. And this will always be the case.

JPM on the move...

Finally, over the next six months JPMorgan will gradually be re-locating their staff from 10 Aldermanbury to Canary Wharf and into the **Lehman Brothers** building. It is a move that has already started and which should be completed by late September. As the year progresses, work out of JPM at Canary Wharf should steadily increase and you will be updated on their progress on a regular basis.

Drive safely and be very lucky...

Allan Evans

DaC Compliance Officer

VITO YEAR-END SALES INCREASE

But some are recalled with engine problems...

Vito distributors, **Eco City Vehicles**, have said that despite continued difficult conditions in the automotive sector, the group saw slightly improved vehicle revenues during the second half of 2011 and closed the year fairly strongly.

A KPM spokesperson said: "Demand for the new Euro 5 Mercedes Vito gained momentum as the taxi trade faced the onset of new age limits and more stringent EU vehicle emission legislation from 2012. The Vito Euro 5 complies with the new EU emission standards, as well as providing other benefits such as improved fuel efficiency, comfort and six seater capacity."

Eco City Vehicles claims to have increased its market share of new London taxi sales to 23% for 2011 as a whole, up 2% compared to the first six month period last year. Added to that, the latest three month's Vito sales saw the Mercedes vehicle's market share increase further to an estimated figure exceeding 30%.

During 2011, ECV was said to have been impacted by higher-than-expected warranty costs incurred by **One80 Ltd**, its intellectual property subsidiary.

As a result, EBITDA for the second half is expected to be broadly neutral, compared

with an EBITDA positive result previously expected by ECV. The warranty issue has since been addressed and is expected to have little impact in 2012.

The cash position remains tight due to the challenging conditions in 2011 and ECV is reviewing its funding arrangements with the full support of its bank and the KPM Discretionary Pension Scheme. First announced in June 2010, a loan facility is provided by the Pension Scheme with beneficiaries being the executive director shareholders of the group and three founders of KPM - Keith (Marder), Peter (DaCosta) and Michael (Troullis). The pension scheme has so far provided ECV a long term loan of £1 million with a further announcement due shortly.

Mercedes Benz have also recalled some Vitos due to the vehicle's engine lubrication being affected during the start up when the taxi is parked on a slope with a low engine temperature. On these taxis, new software has to be added to the engine's electronic control unit. The procedure is said to be precautionary and will cause the engine to momentarily speed up when switched on and where the engine oil temperature is low.



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With the Mayoral elections looming in May, candidates will be fishing for votes and possibly making promises in order to win favour with the electorate! And there cannot be a more hotly contested fight than that between the candidates for the prestigious title of Mayor of London.

So to give the candidates some food for thought and win over the hearts of taxi drivers throughout the metropolis, *Call Sign* sought some suggestions from *Dial-a-Cab* drivers as to what they would like implemented that could improve life in the capital...

Bob Jones (H74):

"Boris said in his previous manifesto that he promised to get rid of the bendy buses and he has done just that. For a politician to keep his word is great! But if there's one thing he could do to win my vote, it would be to make cyclists pay for their own cycle lanes and facilities instead of costs coming out of general road tax users coffers. That would get my 'X' in his box!"



Tony Lewis (F42):

"Bendy buses going are great, but I'd also like to see a new Mayor get rid of pedicabs from the streets. They park outside Hamleys and theatres, block bus lanes and roadways so that taxis can't pick up or set down. Then when they are on the move, they go so slowly that they hold up everything behind them. Restrict them to running around Hyde Park, like they do in Central Park, New York City. Here, they are just a dangerous menace!"



Robert Donald (O47):

"I think all cyclists, especially the 'Boris Bikes' brigade, should undergo a cycling proficiency test, carry third party insurance and clearly display that fact on their bike before being let loose onto the streets. The Barclays biking scheme should hold a registration database of responsible, certificated hirers before the bikes can be accessed from the mooring harnesses. I saw two cyclists coming towards me in Bond Street, obviously peddling in the wrong direction against the flow of traffic and when I pointed out that it was dangerous for them as well as other road users, they kindly offered to re-arrange my teeth! I graciously declined their offer by driving off in a cloud of smoke! Anyway, I'll be voting for Boris because I do not trust Ken, I think he is a 'meddler' and I have no confidence in him at all."



Ian MacDonald (C64):

"The next Mayor must keep bearing down on touting in the interests of public safety. And while we're on a public safety theme, if the Mayor were able to control pedicabs via the police on the grounds of causing an obstruction - as they do - that would be most gratifying."



Ronnie Marlow (L81):

"I would like the winning candidate to insist that the boroughs - especially Westminster - be more lenient towards we taxi drivers with regard to PCNs and parking enforcement in general. If the passenger takes 2 or 3 minutes to come out to the cab, or they are slow to alight, that seems to be a perfect opportunity for some *jobsworth* to send a ticket in the post or slap one on the windscreen! If you can prove you were waiting with good reason, the ticket should be scrubbed without further ado. End of story!"



Bernie Cochrane (V92):

"I'd vote for any candidate promising to remove pedicabs from the streets of London. They are a danger to everyone including taxis, other road users and pedestrians alike - simple!"



Tony Osborn (S45):

"Access to the Olympic Route Network (ORN) lanes would have been so beneficial to the taxi trade and its' passengers, especially those actually attending Olympic events. I do not want to have to charge an excess amount of money because I am stuck in traffic or forced to use a circuitous route. It would not be fair to the public and particularly so if they had no interest in the Games but got caught up in traffic through no fault of their own. A promise to do that could win Boris the taxi trade at election time."



London Mayoral elections

Who's best for taxi trade?

Robert Moss (D08):

"I would like to see the Mayor cancel PH satellite offices because they are so hard to police and massively open to abuse. As an added incentive for my vote, I would like to see fewer traffic lights to assist traffic flow and finally, the Mayor should force all pedal cyclists to wear safety helmets!"



Keith Reading (W76):

"Please Mr Mayor, stop widening the pavements and therefore restricting the roadways under the guise of 'pedestrian enhancement' schemes that actually reduce traffic flow and therefore have a negative effect on air quality as we all sit in almost stationary traffic. This is especially true of those endless road works all over London where a big deep hole is dug up and nothing seems to happen for ages. A Mayor should bang heads together of those utility planners in order to get the job finished."



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

When it comes to the battle of the apps, one company seems to have left the multitude of taxi competitor apps standing. By some clever advertising, **Hailo** have established themselves as a clear number one, with **GetTaxi** stuttering some way behind in second place. The rest have apparently been run out of the appin' arena!

So how will GetTaxi get back into the race? Well looking at their advertising, it looks as though they have decided that the only way to save themselves from dropping even further back is to depart from their original aim of "taking work back from minicabs."

Call Sign has seen flyers they are sending out to companies advertising their wares. There's not much about their original aim to push the merits of using licensed taxis against minicabs, but substantial mention is made of how much "cheaper" they are than other taxi companies!

Mind you, when they say "they" are cheaper, what they actually mean is that the drivers are getting less – something they may regret as the Queen's Jubilee and the Olympics come round.

GetTaxi: "We want to take work back from minicabs!!!"

REALLY??



Just who are GetTaxi targeting?

GetTaxi's boast of no run-ins and just 5% gratuity – which they refer to as the lowest in the market – and no waiting time charges, don't seem to give much to the driver. But even if the drivers do go a bit short, GetTaxi certainly won't because they as a company are happy to charge a 15% admin fee – which rates towards the high end of the market.

Am I mistaken and in reality they are not actually targeting taxi companies and I

have just misread their flyer? If I am, then what do these two sentences mean?

"The smartest and fastest way of booking a black taxi enabling any user to view the live position of the cab. Ideal for call centre staff and operations, which will save time having to call Dial-a-Cab and sit on hold."

And perhaps they could explain reports that they are going into DaC account clients saying they would be happy to be a part of the Oscar platform – a platform owned by Addison Lee? Even though their Sales Manager and at least one other high profile manager have now been sacked, it's no wonder Mr Griffin is doing so well. He doesn't need to defeat the taxi trade, he and his two sons just have to sit and watch as we destroy ourselves!

Alan Fisher

Spare DaC taxis...

In last month's **Call Sign**, Compliance Officer **Allan Evans** wrote about taxi establishments where **Dial-a-Cab** taxis are available for use while your cab is off the road. A number of drivers have asked for the piece to be repeated, so **Call Sign** will publish the list periodically.

There are currently two London-based garages – in addition to KPM – that have a **Dial-a-Cab** terminal fitted to at least one of their courtesy taxis exclusively for the use of DaC drivers whilst in overhaul or repair. 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

For any overhauls/repairs, try either:
Cricklewood Carriers:
0208 452 5461
Justcabs (formerly L&P):--
0207 739 0210

Howard Kott of Justcabs is also happy to rent out the DaC taxi when it isn't being used as a loan cab...



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**The question is: Can you afford NOT to be in it...?
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Subservience... or is it service?

Going to the USA nowadays is no longer unusual – even so far as “popping” over to New York for a shopping weekend! As I’m not American, I can only guess that when the same thing happens in reverse, then the Americans end up far more worn out than our equivalent tourists going over there.

Why? Well whilst we most certainly are not a rude nation, but when you experience the American version of hospitality and service it becomes quite apparent that service and courtesy is one of the most important factors to them and when passed along to you, it helps take away that rushing-around feeling.

Some may consider it to be subservient to offer a good morning, a can I help you, perhaps a let me help you with your bags or even the oldest of them all yet one that’s still around – a good old ‘have a nice day’! Ok, you could give some taxi passengers a free ride and they would still be grumpy, but most are happy just to receive some old-fashioned courtesy. It makes the customer feel appreciated – and why not? Being polite costs absolutely nothing.

As cab drivers, we are in the people business and a kind word can make all the difference in customers having a pleasant journey and also feeling valued, rather than a journey soured by indifference. Driving in London is frustrating enough; all I am advocating is that you can make it as stress-free as possible.

Suffice to say there are many cab drivers who realise that being courteous does help with better customer relations – and no, I wasn’t suggesting that you offer free rides to see if it gets the passenger to crack a smile! Creating an impression that all taxi drivers are polite and courteous may not win us back every passenger we have lost, but neither will it do us any harm!

Allen Togwell’s recent story about being refused a non-radio taxi back to the office after hailing it in the Euston Road for “daring” to suggest the best way into East Road is a perfect example. He was told to go forth and multiply! Even if that driver knew everything, would it have harmed him to just say yes sir? But nope! Obviously no one tells that driver what to do in his taxi. AT always looks ultra-smart and could have been the head of a corporate company for all that driver knew and the end result could have been him issuing instructions to his office for staff to phone for minicabs in future as it no longer felt safe in a London taxi. Couldn’t happen? Ask our Sales Department how easy it has become to lose accounts. As I said, I’m not asking you to give free rides... just be nice!

Remember when...

It’s a sad fact that the older you get, the more you remember about twenty years ago rather than what you did yesterday.

Sitting for a rather prolonged time on a rank recently, I ended up in conversation with one of our former drivers who was now in semi-retirement, going out to work for the odd day here and there – usually depending on how

Mike Son’s bits and pieces...



much his wife had spent the previous week!

The conversation got around to the London and **Dial-a-Cab** of old. We both agreed about how much things had changed, yet when you drive around town you remember it as it is now. You have to stop everything to think back how it was. And the two of us had the time because no passengers were coming anywhere near to that Docklands rank.

We started off with Docklands itself. Looking around, you could not help but feel impressed at the huge – and fairly attractive – skyscrapers surrounding you. But go back thirty years and never mind an airport, the only time you got a trip to the Island was either if you worked the Mile End Station rank or if a navy needed to get back to their ship which was moored at West India Docks. Occasionally it would be a Fred Olson ship and at even rarer times it might have been a banana boat that was going back to the West Indies to pick up another batch, but with an empty boat it would sometimes take back a few passengers at a knock-down price. You could drive right up to the ship. Security hardly existed!

After some 15 minutes, we got back into our cabs to move up one place with the point cab

either getting a radio job or the driver had just got fed up waiting. We then got out and reminded ourselves of those old days again.

Among the topics brought up for remembering was when Drummonds Bank of Scotland on the corner of Trafalgar Square and The Mall was the UK’s first drive-through bank – a bit like a drive-through McDonalds. We’re still waiting for the second one! Then there was the toilet in Hays Mews, Mayfair! Imagine that. A 24/7 toilet in one of Mayfair’s poshest streets! Or how about when Barkers in Kensington contained just three super stores – Barkers, Pontins and Derry & Toms. Now it’s a glorified fruit and veg shop! Then there was movie superstar Ava Gardner who would phone up daily from her Knightsbridge apartment for a driver to take her pooch for a walk in Hyde Park, followed later by Adele Rootstein, who not only phoned for a dog walker, but who also kept several pairs of different sized boots in case it got wet!

We used to smile at Doctor Voller who phoned us seven days every week to be taken from Prince of Wales drive to the Phene Arms on the north side of Albert Bridge. That was twice every morning and again in the evening. He never went anywhere else until an unknown incident forced him to move pubs to the Kings Head and Eight Bells on Cheyne Walk!

We spoke of today’s restaurants and how if they keep the same name for more than two years, are deemed to be successful and then we remembered establishments such as Captain Cunningham’s in Curzon Street. You learned it in the Knowledge knowing that 20 years on and it would still be there. Well not now!

By the time Gamages and Bourne & Hollingsworth came up, I had reached the point and off I went. Within five minutes I had to ask the passenger where they were going as I had forgotten!

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects





Twitter - @Funky_Ice

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Alex Wilkey (W83) has been on Dial-a-Cab for seven years, but for far longer than that he has continued his love as a boxing trainer with professional fighters at the established TKO Gym in Canning Town.

Alex has now taken on his first lady fighter in Greek female boxer **Areti Mastrodouka**. She has turned professional and is looking to make a difference in the female fight game. With her pro debut booked in at the historical **York Hall** alongside some other experienced fighters on Sunday 4th March, Areti can begin her quest for success.

After 10 years successfully plying her trade in the amateur ranks, Areti has decided to quit her homeland of Greece for the London boxing scene in order to fulfil her boxing dreams. Joining the team at the TKO gym in Canning Town, the 35 year old - nicknamed *The Master* - has successfully had her professional licence granted by the British Boxing Board of Control and is looking to make an instant impact in the UK.

Fighting in the 56 kilogram weight division, Areti is determined to carry her list of achievements in the amateur ranks into the pro game and is hoping that Alex can take her onto achieve much more in the sport. In 30 fights *The Master* has 25 wins to her name, with a silver medal at Lightweight in the World Championships in Turkey in 2002 being her finest achievement to date. A 3rd place finish for the Athens fighter followed the next year at the European Championships. Her pedigree in Greece's amateur scene is first class with no losses on home soil, where she has taken the title of Greek Champion on 5 occasions. This sets her in good stead to enter the pro ranks in the UK, as there is no professional structure for female fighters in Greece.

Areti told **Call Sign**: "I've had a good amateur career but now I want to make the next step and fight the best fighters to push myself to the highest level."

Back in her native Greece, Areti has also been sharing her knowledge and skills with others by coaching in between her own training regime. She also has a background in kickboxing and finds it very beneficial, adding that she enjoys being in the gym whether for training or teaching. She says she is delighted to have joined the established TKO gym in Canning Town, which has been used by various world class fighters since its opening in 2006. Areti is not only being looked after by TKO trainer Alex Wilkey, she also has the experience of manager **Johnny Eames** on her side too. Johnny has trained the likes of **Graham Earl** and **Kevin Lear**.

Alex told **Call Sign**: "With the training sessions we've had so far, I think Areti has the ability to win titles as a professional. Her attitude has been good and she is giving up a lot to come and train and fight in the UK. We've been working on changing her style slightly to suit the professional game more."

Areti Mastrodouka should be one to look out for in the coming months and has expressed her delight at joining the TKO setup. She said that as soon as she visited the gym and met

DaC driver and boxing trainer Alex Wilkey...

Taking on new fighters – and Areti!



Alex and the lady boxer who wants to be world champion!

Alex, Johnny and the rest of the team there, that it was the right choice to make.

"They have a great setup there," she said. "The training sessions I've had with Alex have gone well so far. My aim is to become world champion."

Areti is hoping that the Greek community will be offering their support towards her mission in England.

Also boxing on the night will be another of

Alex' fighters making his pro debut in **Juri Varuskins**, with **Danny Connor** hoping to gain another victory. So it's sure to be a great day of boxing down at the York Hall on Sunday 4th March with boxing commencing at 3pm.

If you would like to be at the event, ticket prices are £35. If you are on Dial-a-Cab, then there is a £5 discount with tickets coming your way at £30. Just contact Alex Wilkey on 07944 791 360...

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Five Great Android Games

If you read my column regularly, you'll know that when it comes to gaming, my platforms of choice are PC and iPad/iPhone. I'm not really a console gamer and for me there is no better mobile device for gaming than those built on Apple's iOS - iPad and iPhone. However, I'm aware that the Android market, although fractured, is beginning to catch up with the App Store in the gaming arena. This is partly due to faster technology available in devices such as the Samsung Galaxy tab, but also because more game developers are targeting both iOS and Android platforms.

So, although I'm neither an Android fan or an owner of an Android device, I borrowed one and tried out some of the games that are available so I could give those of you who play games on Android a list of what I consider to be the top five. You can find all these games on the Android Market at <https://market.android.com>.

If you're an iPhone or iPad user, fear not because all of these are also available on the App Store at <http://itunes.apple.com/gb/genre/ios-games/>.

#5 – Inertia: Escape Velocity (£2.54): Gravity is Going Down! You are Hermes, a high-tech scavenger who can turn his personal gravity on and off at will. Utilize your power to control *Inertia* to leap, hover, bounce, float and zoom through intriguing challenges and deadly obstacles in this beautiful 3D platform game. This is an interesting little game, which looked really nice on Android and was surprisingly comfortable to play. Have a look at the videos on the Android Market and see what you think.

#4 – Sonic CD (£3.23): If you're an old school gamer who remembers when Sonic the Hedgehog was the biggest game going, you'll probably remember Sonic CD. Your kids likely won't, but they should know of Sonic from the more recent Nintendo games. Either way, the speedy blue hedgehog is one of the most famous gaming characters and this rendition of the game is brought back to life in full retro magnificence for both iOS and Android. Both platforms look identical, so playing Sonic CD on your Android or iPhone will no doubt bring back memories of the glory days of gaming. I must admit I enjoyed playing it again and my son (9 years old) actually enjoyed the gameplay more than the modern Sonic games. The 80s and 90s really were the golden age of console gaming, so it's nice to be able to enjoy this classic again with a whole new generation.

#3 – EDGE Extended (£1.92): This is a great little indie game I originally played on iPad, after completing its prequel, EDGE on PC. EDGE Extended is an improvement on the original. Essentially, it is a slightly old-school 3D isometric platform game where you control a cube through numerous levels. You have to complete the puzzles to get to the end of each level (and there are tons of levels and bonus levels), with each one becoming increasingly more difficult. I tried this out on Android and found it to be exactly the same quality and fun. What's unexpected about this game is the

For those Dial-a-Cab drivers who say I never review Android games, complain no more!

GAMING: What's worth playing?



background music to each level. The music is so well composed and clearly picked for each level that the game becomes very immersive, resulting in the sudden realisation that you've been playing for an hour without noticing it. For a casual game, that's quite an achievement; the average casual gamer will spend no more than 15-20 minutes on one game in one sitting.

#2 – Anomaly Warzone Earth HD (£2.49): There are many tower defence games available on all platforms, which makes it nearly impossible for any new games in the same genre to stand out. However, the makers of Anomaly Warzone Earth (originally for PC), managed to reinvent the genre by changing the way we play tower defence games. The classic format of the genre involves you building towers of increasing strength to hold back a relentless horde of marching enemies. This game turns the genre on its head by making you the horde (more accurately, the British Special Services). Aliens have invaded earth and have set up a number of towers and defence systems in various cities. You are the commander of an elite squad and you have to find a way through these

defences and survive to the other side, destroying alien technology along the way.

Sporting addictive gameplay, top-notch visuals and audio, this game brings hours of entertainment. Originally, I played the game to completion (and replayed all the levels on hard core to get the top awards!) on my iPad. Playing this on an Android phone was exactly the same experience (bar the smaller screen), so I recommend it. Even if you don't like the tower defence style of games, it's worth trying out this game as I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

#1 – Carcassonne (£3.49): You may recall a few months ago when I listed the top 5 iPhone games, my number one choice was Carcassonne. Now it is available on Android which is great news because it's such an excellent game. Carcassonne is based on the German-style strategy board game of the same name. 2-5 players build a medieval landscape, tile by tile and claim landmarks with your followers to score points. I have the original board game and it's very addictive and I also enjoy playing the iPad version against friends and family. Its replay value, beautiful graphics and multiplayer capabilities is what you'd expect in a game within the higher price range and it's suitable for kids as well as adults. Having tried the Android version out, I'm pleased to see that it is of the same high quality as the iPhone/iPad editions. So if you have an Android device, get this game now!

Well, that's the best of all the games I've tried out on Android and I hope that with the variety of genres I've mentioned, there's something there for everyone.

Jon Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

Visiting Gordon Poluck...

Long term **Dial-a-Cab** subscribers will remember **Gordon Poluck (ex-R 34)** from his years as a DaC driver, Board member and by the many that over the years attended social functions where Gordon was the red-jacketed Master of Ceremonies, a role for which he was well known and respected. Gordon also served for many years as a councillor for the borough of Croydon.

He is now in a Jewish Care residential home. Speaking to **Call Sign**, Gordon's wife Shirley told us that he would be delighted to see his **Dial-a-Cab** friends.

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



Gordon was an excellent toastmaster in addition to driving a taxi

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



Any old rockers out there???

Remember when a giant pig flew over **Battersea Power Station** to promote **Pink Floyd's Animals** album 30 years ago? You may have seen it fly again recently for the launch of the re-mastered CDs. I recently noted the latest plan for one of London's most iconic sights - and there have been a few down the years!

Prominent architect **Sir Terry Farrell** wants to demolish the side walls of the Grade II listed building, replacing them with a colonnade that opens up into a park in the building's central space. Much of the building's signature

details, including the chimneys, turbine halls and the control rooms would be retained. You might know some of Farrell's work - **Embankment Place** and the **MI6** building for example.

However, Sir Terry's plan is only one of many and not all are so reverent towards the iconic building. A report earlier this month concluded that nearly £500 million could be shaved off any redevelopment project if the chimneys, already in a terrible state, were demolished entirely. The most recent attempt at revamping the area failed last year after the company behind it fell into financial difficulty. **Chelsea Football Club** is also known to be interested in building a new football stadium on the site.

So why not compromise? *The Blues* could move into the re-vamped Power Station, keep the chimneys which they can use for goal posts and then with a bit of luck **Fernando Torres** might have an easier target to aim for!

Where's Woody?

Do you know where Woody is and which current Lord lived there? Answer elsewhere in this issue...

A bientot...



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

Baku TX4 order completed

The last shipment of 500 *London Taxi Company* TX4 taxis has set sail from Shanghai and is due to arrive in Baku early March.

Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, is now operating *The London Taxi Service* with 500 purple TX4s transforming the face of its transport network system and these remaining 500 taxis will complete the order for 1000 vehicles placed in 2011 – the largest taxi order in the company's history.

Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director for The London Taxi Company told *Call Sign*:

"Baku has set high standards for its transport network system and London Taxis fit in perfectly. The London Taxi Service offers a fully trained driver in an easily recognisable vehicle with a meter so there is a transparent and consistent pricing structure for all types of passengers, something that has never been offered in Baku before."

From 1 May, the use of Russian-made cars as taxis will be banned and only London-style cabs and non-Russian white cars will be able to operate as taxis in Baku.



Part of the Baku order waiting to be loaded up

DRIVERS E-STATEMENTS



Following this issue's **Chairman's Report**, this is a call to all Members and Journeymen to receive their Statements by email. Nearly all of those that used Swiss Post have sent their details to us so they can continue to receive electronic statements. Unfortunately, there were a few of you that found the Swiss Post method of accessing and saving their statements very tedious and did not remain using the service. There is now NO excuse. Send us your details and you will receive a PDF copy of your statement straight to your email address. Filing could not be easier.

I would be grateful if you could send an email to driverservices@dialacab.co.uk inserting your badge number and call sign in the subject field. This should only take a few minutes of your time, but the information is vital to ensure you receive your E-Statement.

For those of you who access their statements through Swiss Post, this service will cease on the

31st March 2012. However, you will still be able to access past statements from Swiss Post in the normal way until 30th June 2012.

Our thanks for your cooperation in this matter...

Warren Smith
DaC Financial Controller

The last issue of **Call Sign** wrote of what will be a remarkable attempt by **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Dick Francis (T15)** to cycle to all of Europe's main war grave cemeteries. Dick now tells us what he hopes to achieve and how anyone who would like to help him raise funds for **Help for Heroes**, can do so.

"This is something I have been planning for some time and because *Help for Heroes* is such a deserving charity, I am determined to achieve this ride. I will be going from **Portsmouth**, where we sail on 20th May to **Le Havre**. Then it's on the bike to **Dieppe** and **Amiens**. From there I'll be cycling to **Arras**, **Ypres** (where I will lay a wreath at the Menin Gate on behalf of **Dial-a-Cab**) and **Passchendaele** before returning via **Calais**.

The complete trip is around 350 miles and I plan to complete it in five days. There should probably be at least 100 cyclists of all abilities going on the ride and the plan is to lay wreaths at all of those famous WW1 battlegrounds, including one wreath from everyone at **Dial-a-Cab**.

We hope to raise as much funds for *Help for Heroes* as we can and probable recipients will



ORN "open at off peak times"

Following fears of major traffic disruption during the Olympics, TfL together with Olympic Games organisers have said they will open the Olympic Route Network lanes during off-peak times.

Originally intended for the 80,000 athletes, officials, sponsors and journalists, TfL now say that a 31-mile section of ORN will be open to taxis and cars if congestion becomes too great – although they emphasise that it will only happen during Olympic off-peak times.

The decision follows huge protests from driving groups including the LTDA and comes after the disclosure that some 11million spectators are expected to attend the Olympics and Paralympics during its seven weeks. Estimates claim there could be as many as 3million additional journeys on the day of the 100meters final.

However, the 31 miles represents less than one third of the complete Olympic Route Network. That will operate from two days before the Games until they end. The 109-mile ORN connects key venues, accommodation and transport hubs across London and is contracted as being non-negotiable prior to bidding for the Games.

TfL told **Call Sign** that some special measures will be needed during the Olympics. These include changes to traffic signal timings, suspension of some pedestrian crossings and the closure of numerous roads to the general traffic.

An article on page 8 concerns the legitimacy of the ORN and asks if money can buy access?

Dennis Latchett
Call Sign Online

Dick Francis ready to go!



Dick will be cycling to all the WW1 war graves in Europe in aid of **Help for Heroes**

and I raised £650 in 8 hours. I'm also at **The Griffin** pub close to **Brentford Football Club** on 10th March when the *Bees* play host to **Sheffield United**.

I now train 3 times a week as at the age of 60, the occasional bike ride won't help me too much! **Call Sign** readers may remember me cycling to Paris 5 years ago in aid of **Great Ormond Street Hospital**. It really is a great way to get in shape – but you do need to train. If any DaC drivers fancy getting fit, we do a Sunday morning cycle round Richmond Park and all drivers are welcome to come along.

Also, any driver who would like to help sponsor me, please email or phone me. Any amounts would be welcomed. I have rear windscreen stickers and wristbands for sale. All proceeds go to *Help for Heroes*...

Dick Francis (T15): Tel 07976 444 313 or email dickfrancisuk2001@yahoo.co.uk.

be guys returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who all need our support. I did one collection at the Heathrow feeder park in February in temperatures of -4degrees and I even thought at one point that I might have developed frostbite on the part of me that sits on the saddle! But those magnificent taxi drivers dug deep

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Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

POTTER'S WHEEL

Taxi driver's etiquette?

I often hear stories from drivers about taxi driving etiquette when plying the streets, although as we all know there is no golden rule. I remember many years ago in **Call Sign**, this mag's IT wizard **Vince Chin** mentioning that there was a bye law requiring taxi drivers to let other drivers out of side roads so that they could make progress! That was probably a driver with a passenger on board letting out a driver who had his/her light on and is a totally different thing.

When things are quiet, etiquette becomes more important if we want to maintain a level of harmony. None of us want a day that's more difficult to deal with than it has to be.

I'm not sure whether it's a new breed of driver or just new drivers in general, but since the recession began biting the number of cases where I have been accused of pushing in front of or taking someone else's job, has increased. But I am with the majority of drivers who take great care to do the right thing, but apparently I am not the only one to be suffering.

Maybe it's a different interpretation of the rules, or probably as I suspect just over-zealous drivers who don't know the rules and quickly apportion blame to others rather than want to accept they were not paying attention. It wasn't long ago that doing a u-turn and picking up on the other side of the road was looked upon as being discourteous, but that seems to be an acceptable act these days. Then again, if you pulled onto a rank to set down a passenger and there was no one immediately behind you, staying on was acceptable. Nowadays, if a driver pulls up behind you as your punter is paying you off, even if it has been a minute, they expect you to pull off. (*Quite right ...Ed*)

Has the recession created a more aggressive taxi driver? Have work levels created a new dog eat dog competitor? Are some drivers under so much pressure through mortgages and loans that their morals have gone out the window? Well I hope not, but I for one don't like to see drivers who have done nothing wrong being boxed in by other drivers, or get

sworn or shouted at by fellow drivers who should be a little less suspicious. We are, after all, taxi drivers not police officers and I think that any kind of aggressive altercation between drivers should be avoided, especially in front of the public.

I have even seen two drivers grabbing each other round the throat in full view of passengers because one picked up too close to the rank in Berkeley Square. It looks terrible and what does it do for our image?

Cruciatly important!

I'm not usually one to get too involved in party politics, but having recently needed an operation on the anterior cruciate ligament in my left knee joint, I have nothing but praise for the NHS. At the end of 1996, the Conservatives had run the NHS down with waiting lists at their longest and hospitals in their worst state. So let's give Labour some credit in that I waited the minimum time for my operation and was treated in the brand new Tunbridge Wells Hospital in Pembury. The whole process from seeing my own GP through to the consultant, specialist, operation and recovery has been wonderful and I can't thank the NHS staff enough. I hear that the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony will have nurses involved as a tribute and rightly so. And hopefully I am now on track to ride the British Heart Foundation London-Brighton bike ride again this year. I must remember that demonstrating to my children how to do a front somersault into a pool may not be the best thing to do at 46!

Finally a quick thank you to everyone at DaC and to Nuala for the get well card that arrived a few days after the operation and at about the same time that the children were getting bored with me being sick, having already lost interest in bombing around the house on my crutches! When you have children, you simply haven't got time to be sick!

Richard Potter (T51)

Got a TX2 that's difficult to start from cold, has a lack of power and high fuel consumption? Does it expel clouds of black smoke as you accelerate away? You may have a choked-up EGR Valve. Read on to see what it is...

All blocked up!

The Ford engine, as fitted in the TX2, raises all sorts of emotive issues amongst drivers. One such topic is the **Exhaust Gas Recirculation Valve** - known as the EGR - that sits on the top of the engine amongst other pipes and wiring. Tiddly though the valve physically is, its good health - or lack of it - has a direct bearing on the performance and fuel economy of the engine. Funny how mention of the two words - fuel economy - seems to grab taxi driver's attention!

Call Sign has had several enquiries of late from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers regarding this unit, so we sent an eager young **Call Sign Online** hack - keen to prove his mettle and impress the Editor - to investigate...

The Valve works by re-directing partially burned exhaust gases back into the engine to be burned up yet again as the engine runs, so as to further reduce the emissions that do finally find their way down through the exhaust system and out into the air that we breathe.

However, by the very nature of its job and dealing with only partially burned fuel mixture, it tends to get clogged up with a sticky, black tar-like substance that builds up over time. That process steadily reducing its effectiveness as the Valves' internal parts block up, seriously restricting the air flow to the engine - not unlike the arteries of the human body slowly building up fat deposits within, reducing the blood flow and possibly resulting in heart problems. The results are the same, mega obstruction!

People exercise regularly to keep fit, but the EGR Valve only comes into play below 2000 revs and bubbling along in traffic as most of the taxi engine work cycle involves, so a gradual build-up of deposits is bound to follow...

Typical symptoms *could* include difficult starting from cold, a lack of power and that high fuel consumption referred to earlier. Leaving clouds of black smoke from the rear end of the cab as you accelerate smartly away, putting the engine under load is another possibility of a choked up EGR Valve. In extreme cases, the Valve can become so blocked that it causes the collapse of the air filter as the engine struggles to suck in the air/fuel mixture simply in order to run.

The answer? Well you can have the EGR Valve cleaned out thoroughly on a regular basis, possibly as part of the usual maintenance service routine to ensure optimum performance. Also, it is recommended to occasionally give the cab a good high-speed run when the opportunity permits, if you are lucky enough to get an airport job for example, or maybe just a longer 'thrash' where you can keep going steadily at higher speeds without having to slow down too often due to traffic conditions. Of course, we don't need to remind you about keeping within the legal speed limits, but **Call Sign** has been informed that a 'good run' clears out the nasty stuff from the exhaust system, as well as benefitting the EGR Valve itself.

If systematically cleaned along with the routine servicing schedule, the Valve usually continues to function well and does not normally need replacing, which could otherwise be an expensive job. These tips are also relevant to the TX4.

Many thanks to Tony and Jamie at cab parts dealers JVBright at South Bank Service Station, Gt. Suffolk Street SE1 Tel: 020 7803 0803 for their help and advice...



A blocked EGR valve can lead to lack of power and poor fuel economy among other things

**Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online**

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There surely can't be any bad drivers on **Dial-a-Cab**, can there? Are you a self-confessed bad driver or more likely you're fine, even though your friends refuse to get into your car or cab?

Ok, you're good and can't understand why you have speeding fines coming out of your ears and that in reality you have so many points on your licence, you can't afford any more!

Most other drivers would suffer from road rage after being "picked on" as you obviously are, but you don't - although you sincerely believe that every other driver except you should get off the road!

But of course, it is more likely that it's your partner who scares you silly when you are in a car with them? It's because they speed along the motorway or drive too close to car in front, isn't it? Perhaps they slam on the brakes or refuse to slow down going round corners?

If the answer is yes, then help is at hand!

Channel 5's **Dangerous Drivers School** is back and continuing its mission to make our roads safer! So if you (of course not) or someone you know (aaahhh possibly) needs to kill speed, gain confidence or banish bad habits,

Do you know a terrible driver?

Then Channel 5 wants to hear from you!



Call Channel 5 if you know of someone who the programme could help

then get in touch with Channel 5 now! Mind you, if it should be you, then we promise not to tell anyone!

For more information call 0141 342 2055 or email casting@matchlight.co.uk. No! Don't apply while you're driving!!!

Chinese TX4 "is too posh!"

After several years of non-stop success in getting the world to accept the London TX4, the taxi's new export home in the **Geely/LTI** Chinese factory is apparently hitting problems with passengers in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Out of the fifty drivers with the renamed **Englon TX4**, 30 have handed back their vehicles to the **Hangzhou Foreign Tourism Taxi Company** claiming that business is slow and that far from making far more money than they used to with their old cars, the reverse has happened because many passengers are ignoring the new cab.

A spokesperson for the taxi company said that the driver's biggest moan wasn't about the taxi itself, which the drivers all seem to love, but about the perception passengers have about the Englon TX4.

"Passengers in Hangzhou do not seem to realise these vehicles are taxis, believing they are too posh for that job. Those that do realise then assume they are more expensive to hire!"

A driver added: "Business has been very poor and I sometimes feel like I've been driving an invisible car all day long, just ignored by most of the passengers on the road - even if they are desperately in need of a taxi. Many of the old illegal cabs are doing better than I am!"

According to an article in the *China People's Daily*, drivers had expected to make a windfall from the fancy eye-catching black cab when they applied for them last August. Getting a taxi is akin to winning the lottery in Hangzhou, home to more than 8.7 million people but only 8,000 taxis. However, the Hangzhou Taxi Company spokesperson also said that the situation was improving and that far from giving up on the iconic London-style taxis, they were considering running even more of them but improving the promotional advertising.

Conversely to London, Geely Marketing Director **Yang Xueliang** told another Chinese newspaper, the *Oriental Morning Post*, that he

believed the reason for the Englon TX4's lack of business on the streets of Hangzhou was because in Beijing and Guangzhou, vehicles of the TX4 kind are largely used as long-distance chartered taxis for companies.

That opinion was shared by Hangzhou taxi driver **Huang Fu**, who plans to apply to drive the Englon TX4. He said he had built up a large number of high-end business clientele who were happy to travel in a more spacious and comfortable cab such as the TX4.

The Hangzhou Taxi Co spokesperson added that they were confident that eventually passengers would be happy to use the Englon TX4 and that rather than being too posh, they were just excellent taxis...



TX4s mix with cars at the Hangzhou Taxi Co. Pic courtesy China Daily/Wang Haoxing



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Covering Essex & The Surrounding Counties

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

When Dial-a-Cab driver Tony Arnold (F03) drove his then-TX2 from Beijing to London in 2002, Call Sign – along with Chinese television - followed every step of his amazing journey.

When he later went to Africa and drove a TX2 in the Nigerian capital of Abuja to help train the local cabbies, we were there and almost felt the pain when his taxi aircon packed up in 125°F of sweaty heat!

Again, three years on in Australia *Call Sign* was there when he attempted to teach Melbourne taxi drivers how real cabbies operate! Of course, when we say we were there in all those countries, we mean in spirit. But for Tony's latest project, we're not sure whether we should even have been with him in spirit!

In 2010, Tony told us that he had signed up for a part in a porn flick called *Solito* in which he plays the part of a London taxi driver (ok, that might not have been too difficult) who picks up a passenger with a sex problem. Enrique had left London 25 years earlier to return to his home in Spain, but had now returned to London to get an answer to the problem that involves him and a small number of other males around the world. And no, we're not going to describe what the problem was! *Call Sign* is a family magazine!

Tony had around 25 lines to learn – none of which included the phrase “where to guv?” Now, some two years on at a time when Tony had almost forgotten he was involved, *Solito* has won a world-wide release and turned Tony



Tony in China in 2002. Ten years on and it's a porn movie

the taxi traveller into Tony the porn star!

Solito deals in a semi-humorous way with the serious problem of pornography and its effect on society. Enrique has a sexual problem that he believes he picked up through watching porn movies and decides to attempt to collectively sue the porn companies with the help of a London feminist lawyer and anyone else with a similar problem.

Fortunately, Tony doesn't have the particular problem. More pertinently, neither does Tony's

taxi have his DaC logo showing!

“The film company would have been happy for it to be shown and reminded me that there was no such thing as bad publicity, but in this case I wasn't too sure and declined showing it ... the logo that is,” he added quickly!

So what's next for Tony?

“I'm considering a full frontal in a Euro VTX4 for another film company, which will reveal the other side of my seedy life. It's either that or back to Africa!”

BANK OF ENGLAND MUSEUM EVENTS

A new programme of free special events, exhibitions and displays will take place this year at the **Bank of England Museum** in Threadneedle Street. The Museum tells the story of the Bank, from its foundation in 1694 to its role today as the UK's central bank. Its galleries feature Roman and modern gold bars, the country's oldest paper money and many star objects from the Bank's collections of silver, banknotes, paintings, coins, photos and historic documents etc. Interactive displays explain the Bank's roles of keeping inflation low, issuing banknotes, working to keep the financial system stable and explore the intricate designs and security features contained within banknotes. The Museum also features a full-size reconstruction of Sir John Soane's 1793 Bank Stock Office on its original site.

Secure by Design – The Boulton and Watt £50 note (until 23 March)

To mark the introduction of the new £50 note, the BoE Museum presents an exhibition exploring the design of the note and its security features. The exhibition examines the historic characters depicted on the note – Matthew Boulton and James Watt – and their part in Britain's Industrial Revolution. It traces the evolution of the £50 note from its introduction in 1725, including early forgeries where forgers would attempt to increase the value of a note by altering the amount in words and figures, in some cases adding a zero to a £5 note to make it a fifty. The exhibition features the earliest known Bank of England £50 note from 1732 and a powerful microscope camera, which visitors can use to examine the intricate design details and security features of the new note, including the new motion thread, holograms and fluorescing inks.

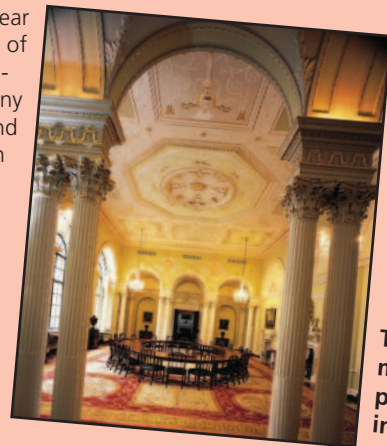
Royal Connection – a celebration of the Diamond Jubilee (28 March – 8 June)

The link between the monarch and the Bank goes back to the earliest days of the institution in 1694. This display will highlight the many connections, notably drawing on the wealth of the Bank's collections to trace the development of the Royal portrait on banknotes.

There is no charge for admission to the Museum or for any event. Enter via Bartholomew Lane.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 10am – 5pm (last entry 4.45pm). Closed Public and Bank Holidays except for certain special events.

More information at www.bankofengland.co.uk/museum or museum@bankofengland.co.uk
Tel 020 7601 5545 or Twitter: <http://twitter.com/bankofengland>. An audio-described tour led by a Museum Guide, is available for blind and partially sighted visitors...



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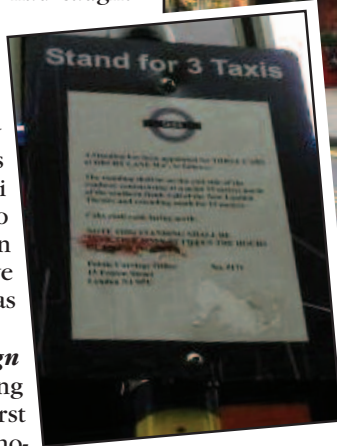
Tiger Tyres
472 Hackney Road, E2
0207 729 5237

Jon Robinson (E88) has been with **Dial-a-Cab** since November 1994 and told **Call Sign** that he likes the size of the fleet and the size of Dial-a-Cab House. He also likes the size of the TX as against other forms of taxi. So you could say that one of Jon's philosophies is the simple one - that size matters!

"I wouldn't like to go too deeply into the subject," a totally unembarrassed Jon told this magazine, "but size obviously does matter. And it most certainly matters when it comes to taxi ranks!"

Call Sign briefly thought it had caught Jon's drift and assumed this was to be another story not suitable for publication! That was until Jon uttered the mention about taxi ranks. Surely Sandra and her strange habits from the London Street taxi shelter had retired years ago along with that long-forgotten eatery, so that wasn't it. So we asked Jon just what he was going on about.

"I just wondered if **Call Sign** might find this interesting because it must be London's first mini cab rank! I took these photos in Drury Lane last week. They show a marked out rank for three taxis, except that you can see by me parking in the middle that there is nowhere near



enough room for another two cabs. You might just get another one on there. So that makes it a mini cab rank in the true sense!"

Jon added that he'd heard the LTDA had to pay Camden Council to mark out a 4-



Jon's cab on the Drury Lane taxi rank - is there room for another two cabs? inset: Stand notice for 3 cabs

cab rank outside the toilets at Lincolns Inn Fields, yet that very same council could find the money to shorten this rank by filling it in with paving stones.

He ended by reiterating that size mattered before asking: "And out of curiosity, whatever did happen to crazy Sandra!!!"

British war veterans and London taxis in Holland...

WAGENINGEN FREEDOM PARADE

Call Sign readers will remember an article in the *January* issue from the *London Vintage Taxi Association's* **Hans Dooren**, who made an amazingly kind offer to any readers who had lost friends or family during the war and who were buried anywhere in Holland. His offer was to visit the grave on behalf of the **Dial-a-Cab** driver and if the driver wanted, then Hans would take a photo of the grave to forward on to the family (*Tracing relatives from Venray war graves*).

Hans has now sent us a report from the Dutch university town of Wageningen where on **5 May** 180 British war veterans will participate in a Freedom Parade. On the day before the parade, they will also participate in a Remembrance Service at the Grebbeberg at Rhenen (Dutch war cemetery). The veterans will be going over to The Netherlands in up to 100 London taxis and reside in a hotel at the Papendal sports centre near Oosterbeek. While there, the vets will undertake several trips to places of importance from *Operation Market Garden* in September 1944 (also written about in the *January* issue).

The organisation taking care of the arrival of the British veterans is of course *The London Taxi Drivers Benevolent Association for War Disabled*. This organisation has existed since 1948. The original aim was to assist war invalids but over the years it has also included visiting war areas with veterans. That was the way many British war veterans paid a visit to Dunkirk and the landing beaches at Normandy several year ago.

The liaison between taxis and the veterans dates from WW2. At that time and during the air attacks on London, taxi drivers played an important role carrying wounded men and soldiers. Some cabs were even transformed into fire engines.

Our thanks to De Gelderlander for the information and to Hans Dooren for translating it for Call Sign...



Taxis were important during the war

Where's Woody?

The answer to *Where's Woody* in this issue's **Call Sign en la Belle France** is Whitehall opposite Admiralty House. Contrary to popular belief, it was here and not Admiralty Arch where **John Prescott** as Deputy PM had his grace and favour flat. You may also recall that it was here that he moved the furniture around with the help of a secretary - but forgot to lock the door! He, also at taxpayer's expense, got through 3 wooden toilet seats. John Wayne would have called him a low down bum!

Bob Woodford

Last month's *Call Sign* published a survey with the views of nine **Dial-a-Cab** drivers on the tweet from Shadow Health Minister **Diane Abbott MP** in which she said she felt dubious of black people who say they had never experienced racism. She then added a line that was obviously aimed at black people: "Ever tried hailing a taxi?"

Two of the DaC drivers surveyed were black and their comments showed that Ms Abbott wasn't totally wrong, however many took her tweet as an insult because it had been a generalisation that painted all taxi drivers as racists. One DaC driver has even complained to his local MP.

But Ms Abbott has how apologised for any offence caused by her comments. She says she did not mean to generalise when she tweeted that white people loved playing divide and rule.

It had originally been a response to criticism of media use of "black community leaders" following the **Stephen Lawrence** murder trial, but Labour leader **Ed Miliband** had told Ms Abbott her remarks were "unacceptable."

Diane Abbott was the first black woman to be elected as an MP and is also well-known as a political commentator on **Andrew Neil's This Week**, alongside former Tory MP **Michael Portillo**. Following the storm over her tweet, she then sent a further tweet saying that her remark had been taken out of context.

Following last month's Call Sign survey on whether taxi drivers refuse black passengers...

DIANE ABBOTT APOLOGISES



DaC driver David Baker complained to his local MP about Diane Abbott's tweet on taxi drivers being racists

In a later statement, Ms Abbott apologised for any offence caused and added: "I understand people have interpreted my comments as making generalisations about white people. I do not

believe in doing that."

DaC driver **David Baker (D22)** complained to his local MP **Clive Efford** about Diane Abbott's generalisations of taxi drivers. Mr Efford, who is a former green badge licence holder, told David:

I am pleased that Diane has apologised for the tweet. Quite soon after she explained that she understood people had interpreted her comments as making generalisations about white people, she said: "I do not believe in doing that. I apologise for any offence caused."

As you say, Diane is a capable and engaging politician and I really believe she did not mean what she said and the way it was put. I think there is a lesson for all of us potentially in the public eye to be careful about the way that we use modern mass communication services such as Twitter. We can get carried away with the conversation and forget that the messages can be spread to millions of people in an incredibly short time...

So far as *Call Sign* is concerned, the matter is now closed...

Russell Bamber poses the question...

Are Westminster PCNs deliberately incorrect?

Dial-a-Cab driver **Russell Bamber (N27)** has been with the Society for around nine years, so he has seen the proliferation of *Parking Charge Notices* – especially in the Westminster area.

But over the past few months, *Call Sign* has spoken to several drivers who have all claimed the same thing – that they believed Westminster were deliberately making errors in their initial PCNs, so that they could be rescinded

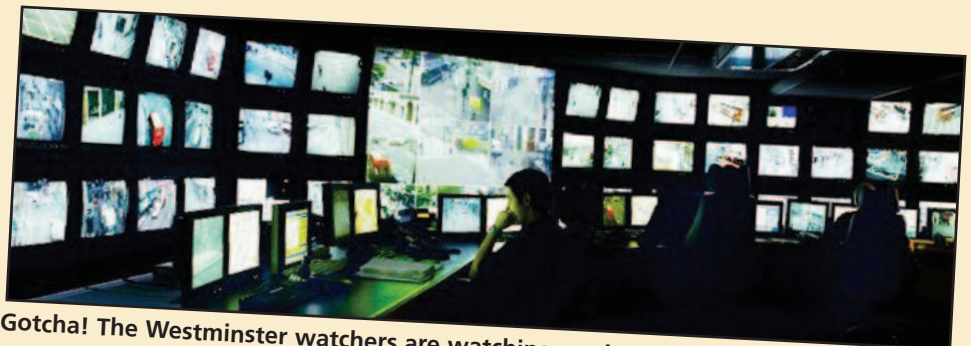
without the need for council employees having to attend any appeal. Why? Well as most drivers seem to pay the PCN directly without appealing, the council would still be getting a substantial amount of fines but without the cost of attending or gathering a 'packet' of evidence together. DaC appeal virtually every ticket and have seen the total fines bill literally plummet. Is that the answer?

Russell told *Call Sign*: I received the PCN at the end of November for allegedly parking in Bourne Street SW1 and appealed to the council. He said the PCN claimed the offence occurred in Bourne Street, whereas on the website it put the cctv camera as being at Pimlico Road / Bloomfield Terrace West. But there is no Bloomfield Terrace West - or north, south or west! Surely enough to get the PCN cancelled? On top of that Russell also said that he had a disabled parking badge that he placed in the windscreen whilst he went to the toilet – having previously spent some considerable time looking for a legitimate parking space, much of which had now been taken up as space for Boris Bikes. He also enquired as to whether the cctv device was static or mobile, pointing out that if static, it would not have been possible to see his taxi properly, but that if mobile then the Smart car would have had itself been illegally parked in order to catch Russell. He enquired if that was now Westminster policy?

Westminster rejected his appeal but made no mention of the incorrect positions given – even though they could not both be correct. The council only referred to the ineligibility of his parking badge in the Westminster area. They also went on about Russell's being parked on a single yellow line – no mention of him needing a toilet.

Russell again refused to pay the £130 (£65 if paid within 28 days) and lodged a notice of appeal to the arbitrator. One week before the given date, Westminster cancelled the PCN giving no reason.

Many drivers have had their PCNs pulled at the last minute if giving notification of appealing to the arbitration service, but it is only recently that several have mentioned no excuse being given and they were left wondering whether Westminster are just handing out as many PCNs as possible hoping that drivers will just pay up and that those who appeal to the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (PATAS), are just written off? If you read the story on page 7, then perhaps it all makes sense???



Gotcha! The Westminster watchers are watching you!

Mailshot

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

Short, sweet and not beneficial!

Dear Alan

At present the Government is trying to cap benefits at £26,000 - equivalent to £35,000 before tax. Running costs for a taxi are approximately *£15,000 per annum, so in order to net £26,000 takings would need to be £50,000 per annum. Even then, the taxi driver would be worse off as he / she would be expected to pay council tax, medical prescriptions and eye tests etc etc. It doesn't sound very fair to me!

**Running costs of £15,000 in my estimate are as follows: Insurance £1000, depreciation £2000, interest £1000, road tax / accountant / plate / meter £1500, AA / maintenance £3000 and fuel £6500. Total £15,000...*

Mike Lyons (Y52)

Good point Mike. Benefits are certainly something we don't get much of as part of the Mayor's transport system. If we were, your £6,500 fuel total would be slashed and the words 'fifteen years' wouldn't be so hard to listen to ...Ed

And speaking of Mike Lyons - and his PCNs!

Hi Alan

I am prompted to write concerning two PCNs received by fellow drivers, as I received one of each in the same places! The first was the case of **Mike Lyons (Y52)** in *January's Call Sign*. If Mike received his PCN on 08/12/2011 at approx 15:40hrs, I have some news for him. I received my PCN (via a smart car) that stated I had stopped in a restricted road. After viewing the video evidence and revisiting the site (just past the zebra by the toilet in the Strand) I decided to appeal on two grounds. The grounds for the appeal were that the road marking is a single yellow line and as I have a PLG (Private Light Goods) licence, as all taxi drivers do, I am entitled to load for 20 minutes. Ok, I made no mention of using the nearby facilities - which I did before going on to 'unload' some goods at a nearby watchmaker! I stated that there were no signs on either side of the road from the crossing to the beginning of the church access road, therefore in my opinion I was entitled to load/unload on that stretch of road. The reply to that argument was that there is signage at several places within the city stating unloading / loading times. However they still cancelled the PCN. Had they not done so I would have taken it to the adjudicator. The second part of my appeal - and possibly of interest to Mike - was as I explained to the council, that the driver of the 'smart car' taking photos was himself illegally parked having removed a barrier which was in place to protect workforce digging up

a road. The driver then placed a barrier on the outside of his vehicle. I asked if the driver was to be prosecuted for endangering the workforce and if so could they please forward me the court date so that I could attend to give evidence against them. The PCN was cancelled.

If useful to Mike or any other DaC driver, then you should write back to Westminster stating these facts and quoting my **PCN ref: WM71745335**. I will of course be available to be a witness for Mike should he require me as to the legality or otherwise of the PCN.

Number two PCN was at the council's money box machine - also known as the Piccadilly / Berkeley Street yellow box junction.

I challenged this one on the grounds that the PCN was issued for stopping in a box junction. The case went to the adjudicator. I told him that the exit to the junction was not always easy to see or judge and once I found myself there I realised that I should keep moving, which I did with judicious use of the rear brake, creeping forward at approx 1cm per second. I explained that if the video was watched in conjunction with the millisecond counter - which it should have been - then my explanation would be verified and as I had not stopped, the offence did not occur. I was not charged with entering a box junction when the exit was blocked and the PCN was revoked in my favour.

I really am fed up to the back teeth with these councils taking our hard earned money for ridiculous PCN's. I'd love to know how many buses get them for stopping in box junctions! I also wonder whether there is not some way that we as self-employed single traders can charge the council for our loss of time spent arguing these cases - especially if we win. I would like to bill them £60 per letter and increase the charge to £100 if not paid within 14 days, than set the bailiffs on them to recover the costs!

Stephen Hassan (P95)

While adjudicators will not accept us as commercial vehicles, they will accept that we make commercial deliveries and therefore come under the 20 minute waiting rule on single and double yellow lines - providing there are no special timed restrictions as in no stopping at any time etc. As for the 1cm per second movement, that is perfectly legal providing you don't eventually run out of road space! ...Ed

Monty's Fairway please...

Alan,

Just a quick not to see if you can help me out. I have just been reading the article in the *January Call Sign* regarding **Monty Dobrin (B56)** and his impending retirement. I had spoken to Monty towards the back end of last year regarding his Fairway and we had talked about him passing it over to me for preservation after its working days are over this month. I'd said to him that I'd be back in touch, but unfortunately I've managed to misplace his telephone number. I wonder if you'd be able to pass a message somehow to him via the radio circuit so that he may be able to get

in touch with me again.

If you could do this then I would certainly appreciate it, so thanks in anticipation...

Ross Campbell

London Taxi Enthusiast and LVTA member, Liverpool.

Sorry Ross, but read the next letter ...Ed

It's goodbye from him...

Dear Brian

Many thanks for your kind letter concerning my retirement and for your good wishes. I must admit to feeling very sad on Friday 13 January when I went to the fitting bay to have my terminal stripped out after having been with Dial-a-Cab for almost 40 years. DaC has been a big part of my taxi driving life since I started in 1958 and I have enjoyed every moment of being a member of London's best radio circuit.

I have sold my taxi to an American serviceman who repairs US planes at their Mildenhall base in Suffolk. When his service over here ends, he is going to take the taxi back home to the States with him and it is nice to know that it won't just be scrapped.

I would like to wish you and everybody at DaC the best of luck for the future.

Monty Dobrin (Ex-B56)

There was an article from Monty in the January issue regarding his forthcoming retirement and the hope that his Fairway would find a loving owner. Our thanks to Brian Rice for sharing this letter with Call Sign ...Ed

Westminster TaxiCard - sign of the times???

Dear Sir

Due to their financial cutbacks, Westminster's Transport Department will not be renewing my TaxiCard despite my being 88 years old and completely blind. So I am writing to thank Dial-a-Cab for all the wonderful service I have had from you over the years. My regular weekly return journey from Waitrose in the Kings Road to my flat in the Westminster Alms houses has been full of interesting conversation with your drivers and I shall miss it very much.

Please convey my gratitude and best wishes to your staff and all your taxi drivers.

Mrs H.P. Raines

London SW1

Sorry to hear about the loss of your TaxiCard Mrs Raines. It sounds very harsh and if it was up to Dial-a-Cab, you would undoubtedly still have it. But sadly it is out of their hands ...Ed



Mailshot

Continued from page 32

Phone networks

Hi Alan

I noticed last Sunday that my 3G via O2 was down for a few hours. That was no big deal for me, but what is Dial-a-Cab's plan for a back-up if I've heard right that we will be going on the O2 network?

I work the Brunswick account a lot and have noticed a few AL cars parked outside recently. It will be a shame if that one goes, but I don't think they will be too happy if the driver's SatNav sends them down the Strand!

Steve Bryant (Y41)

Brian Rice responds: Under normal circumstances if the public network goes down, it is normally localised to particular cells and rarely does the whole system go down.

Regarding data transmission - which is what we will be doing - if a localised cell malfunctions, then the taxis in that area will not receive a signal, consequently our system will search the back-up zones as it does now when trips are unmatched in certain zones.

However, if the whole O2 system was to go down simultaneously, then we would not be able to distribute work, neither would the other two radio taxi circuits - or indeed most of the Private Hire in London!

Steve, I see where you are coming from and it is a compromise. With the O2 Public Network, at least under normal circumstances, we will be able to transmit nationwide and the last time everything went down, I believe, was when the authorities demanded everything be closed immediately after 7/7 and that was seven years ago.

Power Pill

Alan

Re the Michael Lewis (Y37) letter in December's *Call Sign* (where are my Power Pills), I have located someone in New Zealand who has issued me with the Alpha Power Pill. I ordered and received the Power Pills within 7 days. My contact's name is Bruce Harrington and his email address is as follows: bharrington@xtra.co.nz

Micky Smith (S74)

Thanks Mickey. This is the third person I have found who distributes the pills. The first two suddenly stopped, so I cannot in all honesty say that this contact will be better. But if you are happy to take the chance, then Mickey certainly seems happy because forgetting problems in obtaining them, the pills do undoubtedly work in cutting down smoke and giving more mileage per gallon ...Ed

Mad Hatters at the Grosvenor House

Hi Alan

Just a brief note to thank you and Alan Green on behalf of the Fund for the lovely centre-fold in the February *Call Sign*. There has been lots of feedback through the website and all agree that this year's party was certainly one of the best! More info about the charity can be found at www.ltfuc.org.uk.

On a personal note, I was very interested in the *Flashback* story from Bernie Pressman in the same issue. I don't think it was my first job after getting my *Bill*, but I do recall very clearly on that first evening being asked for Biddy Mulligans in Kilburn. My response was: "I'm very sorry, but I don't know your friend so can you tell me where he lives?"

David S. Lessman (D19)

This year's Mad Hatters was undoubtedly the best one ever. With 600+ children and several hundred adult carers, it must have taken such a lot of planning and the LTFUC committee should be congratulated. Raymond Levy should undoubtedly be promoted from the charity's PR department and given the new title of Hon Impresario!

As for Flashback, although the late Bernie Pressman's story came from 1998, if any drivers have an entertaining story about either their first job or just one that was out of the ordinary, then let Call Sign have it and share it with all our other drivers ...Ed

Setting down in bus lanes?

I am concerned about setting down and picking up in the eastbound bus lane along Fleet Street. Are we allowed to do both when we are banned from the lane?

Sid Nathan (K88)

You are ok to do both provided you don't continue along the bus lane afterwards. The only bus lane that doesn't allow taxis in and does not allow them to set down or pick up either is the one outside Kings Cross Station in Euston Road ...Ed

Do apps 'appen when it rains?

Dear Brian

Congratulations on another AGM. You mentioned apps for getting taxis at the meeting and when I got home I read an article on them in *The Spectator*. I wonder what you think?

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Brian Rice responds: Hi Laurence, it sounds good! Let's see how good they are when it's raining or traffic is heavy. Will drivers run for nothing as is expected? Also will they wait for nothing? In addition the App doesn't know if the

taxi has a trip in or not, consequently the driver could be working with a trip and also be offered more work, which he could accept whilst other taxis are empty. Let's see how they get on...

Leonard Alan

Harrington 1936 – 2012

I am attaching a letter written by our Hon Chair, Susan Angel as a tribute to the late Lennie Harrington who was a great supporter of our charity and loved so much by us all.

Raymond Levy
LTFUC PR

Dear Lennie

I got the sad news today to say that you had passed away. Of course I cried, then I started to think about how much we respected and thought about you, the laughs and the good times. How nothing was too much trouble. How many years did you drive for this charity? Yes I know it was 47 years, a long time. Each time you were contacted with the details of an outing or event, the answer you gave was: "We are delighted to attend, just give me the details," and you and your Maggie would turn up - smile on faces.

I'll never forget your smile. And you always had a kind word to say and supported The Underprivileged Children wholeheartedly. There were the laughs too; how you managed to turn left at the Fortune of War roundabout on the Southend outing and still managed to get there before us was a mystery. When we asked, you shrugged your shoulders, smiled, then laughed.

I could on and on but just say on behalf of the President, trustees, myself, but mostly the many, many children whose lives you have enriched... a BIG THANK YOU.

It's been a privilege and a pleasure and you will be sorely missed and never forgotten. You were a true gentleman of the road.

Good night, God bless, sweet dreams...

Susan

Complaint?

Dear Sir

As a regular reader of your periodical, I would like to complain about the lack of any foreign news as all you seem to concentrate on is either London or Dial-a-Cab. I live in Ukraine and I would like to know what is happening here as no one tells us anything! I'm not suggesting you fill your otherwise excellent periodical with just news from Ukraine, but just occasionally a few pages perhaps?

Yuri Selkoff

Kiev

Come on Yuri, you can tell Uncle Alan... you're winding me up? Right?...Ed



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