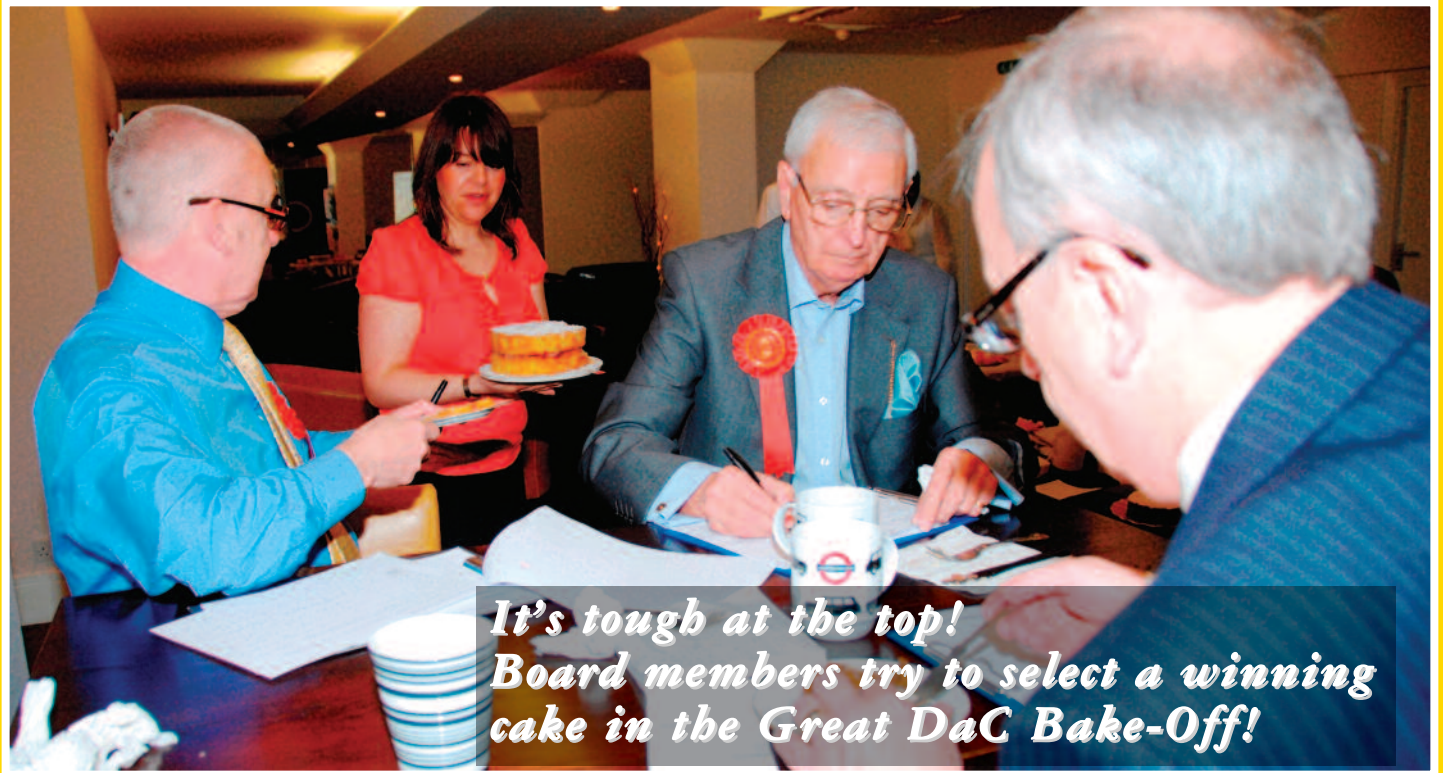


May 2012



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*It's tough at the top!  
Board members try to select a winning  
cake in the Great DaC Bake-Off!*



*See enclosed flyer for  
details of how Mark  
Brown of the London  
Taxi Company can  
save you £2k on a  
new Euro5 TX4!*





# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

**Heathrow departure terminals:** Last updated October 2009. Many changes but importantly, **Iberia** now departs from Terminal 5 thanks to a prompt from *Ray Sorene (A53)*. \* T = Terminal number (but pretty obvious really).

**Heathrow Terminals -** (correct as of 11/04/2012 from BAA website)

**\*\* British Airways** All BA flight depart Terminal 5 **except** those listed below. Contact No. 0844 493 0787

The following **British Airways** flights depart Terminal 3...

Bangkok	Budapest	Helsinki	Lisbon	Singapore	Vienna
Bucharest (Otopeni)	Gibraltar	Larnaca	Prague	Sydney	Warsaw

**\*\*\* United Airlines.** All United Airways depart Terminal 1 **except** those listed below. Contact No. 0845 844 4777

The following **United Airlines** Flights depart Terminal 4

Houston	New York (Newark)				
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## Heathrow Terminals by Airline excluding BA & United Airlines.

Airline	T *	Code	Telephone	Airline	T*	Code	Telephone
Aegean Airlines	1	A3	0871 200 0040	Iberia	5	IB	0870 609 0500
Aer Lingus	1	EI	0871 718 5000	Icelandair	1	FI	0870 787 4020
Aeroflot	4	SU	020 7355 2233	Iran Air	3	IR	020 7409 0971
Air Algerie	4	AH	020 7486 8068	Japan Airlines	3	JL	0844 856 9700
Air Astana	4	KC	01293 596 622	JAT Airways	4	JU	020 8976 6000
Air Canada	3	AC	0871 220 1111	Jet Airways	4	9W	0808 101 1199
Air China	3	CA	020 7744 0800	Kenya Airways	4	KQ	020 8283 1818
Air France	4	AF	0871 663 3777	Kingfisher Airlines	4	IT	0800 047 0810
Air India	4	AI	020 8560 9996	KLM Royal Dutch A'lines	4	KL	0871 231 0000
Air Malta	4	KM	0906 103 0012	Korean Air	4	KE	0800 413 0000
Air Mauritius	4	MK	020 8834 5800	Kuwait Airways	4	KU	020 7412 0007
Air New Zealand	1	NZ	0800 028 4149	Libyan Arab Airlines	4	LN	020 88972700
Air Seychelles	4	HM	01293 596 655	LOT Polish Airlines	1	LO	0845 601 0949
Air Transat	4	TS	020 7616 9187	Lufthansa	1	LH	0871 945 9747
Alitalia	4	AZ	0871 424 1424	Malaysia Airlines System	4	MH	0871 423 9090
All Nippon Airways	3	NH	020 8762 8977	MEA Middle East Airlines	3	ME	020 7467 8010
American Airlines	3	AA	0844 499 7300	Oman Air	3	WY	0870 770 7319
Arik Air	4	W3	0844 482 2324	Pakistan Int'l Airlines	3	PK	020 7287 3342
Asiana Airlines	1	OZ	020 7304 9900	Qantas	3	QF	0845 774 7767
Austrian Airlines	1	OS	0970 124 2625	Qatar Airways	4	QR	0870 389 8090
Azerbaijan Airlines	4	J2	0870 760 5757	Royal Air Maroc	4	AT	020 730 758 00
Biman Bangladesh A'lines	4	BG	020 7629 0252	Royal Brunei Airlines	4	BI	020 7584 6660
Blue1 (SAS Group)	3	KF	0871 226 7760	Royal Jordanian	3	RJ	0871 911 2112
bmi	1	BD	0844 848 4888	SAS	3	SK	020 8990 7000
British Airways	**	BA	0844 493 0787	Saudi Arabian Airlines	4	SV	0871 200 4433
brussels airlines	1	SN	+32 27 23 23 45	Singapore Airlines	3	SQ	0844 800 2380
Bulgaria Air	4	FB	020 7631 1263	South African Airways	1	SA	0844 375 9681
Cathay Pacific Airways	3	CX	020 8834 8888	Sri Lankan Airlines	4	UL	020 8538 2000
China Airlines	4	CI	020 8587 3688	Swiss International A'lines	1	LX	0845 601 0956
China Eastern Airlines	4	MU	020 7935 2676	Syrianair	4	RB	020 7299 9060
Continental Airlines	4	CO	0845 607 6760	TAM	1	JJ	020 8741 2005
Croatia Airlines	1	OU	0844 371 0310	TAP Air Portugal	1	TP	0845 601 0932
Cyprus Airways	1	CY	020 8359 1333	Tarom	4	RO	020 7224 3693
Delta	4	DL	0845 600 0950	Thai Airways International	3	TG	0844 561 0911
Egypt Air	3	MS	0844 822 1110	Transaero	1	UN	007 495 788 8080
El Al Israel Airlines	1	LY	020 7121 1400	Tunisair	4	TU	020 7734 7644
Emirates	3	EK	0844 800 2777	Turkish Airlines	3	TK	0844 800 6666
Ethiopian Airlines	3	ET	020 8987 7000	Turkmenistan Airlines	3	T5	020 8577 2211
Etihad Airways	4	EY	020 3450 7300	United Airlines	***	UA	0845 844 4777
Eva Air	3	BR	020 7380 8300	US Airways	1	US	0845 600 3300
Finnair	3	AY	0870 241 4411	Uzbekistan Airways	4	HY	020 7034 2090
Germanwings	1	4U	0906 294 1918	Virgin Atlantic Airways	3	VS	0844 874 7747
Gulf Air	4	GF	020 8976 5100	Vueling	3	VY	

For **What's On** you need to access the **MyFav** website where all the useful information is now stored. Just launch [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) and click **Register**. Use the unlock code - **taxi** - and when you 'log on' the locked page will change to **TAXI**, where you will find lots of taxi related icons that when clicked will launch your useful page. You can win £100 just for recommending this site...

# from the editor's desk

Here we are again at the May issue of *Call Sign* and my favourite one. Why? Well, mainly because *Call Sign* publishes 11 issues a year and June is the one that doesn't appear! And THAT means for the next four weeks I can sleep as long as I want without having to worry about schedules. However, that doesn't mean that you should stop sending me your always-interesting stories. This office is always open; it just works much slower through the month of May with no issue to plan! But we'll be back on 1 July...

## And in a packed programme...

Apologies to the 'Two Ronnies' for nicking their catchphrase, but there's quite a lot to read inside this issue. The story that still won't go away concerns yellow badges picking up in green badge areas with one **Dial-a-Cab** driver having sat for some considerable time in Putney on Boat Race day watching and recording taxis with yellow identifiers - some with no identifiers at all - just picking up anywhere they wanted.

Yes, I am fully aware that Putney Station at the top of the hill is an *Island* rank and as such is workable by both yellow and green badges, but the area around Lower Richmond Road and all along the riverside isn't. *Call Sign* has broken one of its own rules by allowing the driver to remain anonymous because he has given us his name and call sign. He has also passed on all the cab information he took on that day together with his personal details to **John Mason** and **Helen Chapman** at **London Taxis and Private Hire**. Do we feel sorry for any yellow badge driver caught touting - because that's what it is? The short answer is no, because green badge drivers spend a long, long time doing the Knowledge, whereas the yellow badge licence is substantially easier - which is why many do it. It's no use anyone telling me that there was lots of work there and that if the suburban drivers didn't take it then the minicabs would, because that is rubbish. If you have ever driven along Lower Richmond Road towards Putney, then you'll know that eventually you will see another empty cab in front of you. The road is very well serviced and yellow badge drivers do not do it just to help us. It is nothing short of greed and they have no more right to pick up those passengers than a minicab tout would.

A week after the Boat Race, *Call Sign* did its own little survey; it was on Friday 13 April at around 9pm - a quiet time of evening and a day when the children were still on holiday. We looked at the rank outside Putney Station and counted nine taxis stretched out along it. Five had yellow identifiers while we guessed that the other four were also that colour, but just had empty plastic sleeves. Is that not a large proportion not to display identifiers? So we took a 20 minute trip out to Twickenham Station and found around one in five with no identification disc. Are yellow IDs printed on inferior cardboard that fades into nothing?

Read the article inside this issue and let *Call Sign* know if you think the writer was being too hard.

## Mayoral elections

I love the build-up to the Mayoral elections because for those few brief weeks we are no longer taxi drivers, but suddenly represent votes! During that time, we are showered with possibilities of what the candidates **hope** they can do for



us. So far as the trade press are concerned, we suddenly are given whatever we want when it comes to contact!

It could be - and being kind, it hopefully is - that the candidates genuinely want to help what is still undoubtedly the finest taxi service in the world. LTPH can say what they like, but when tourists hear about London taxis they don't think of any of the private hire firms who think they become good just by becoming big. They think of London licensed taxi drivers - better known around the world as black cab drivers.

I don't know who will win the Mayoral election, especially this one with its sad - if sometimes amusing - childish behaviour from the main contenders, but I shall be interested in seeing what we actually get afterwards! Will roadworks vanish? Will minicab touting become a thing of the past? Will Pedicabs suddenly vaporise? Will the cost of a new Euro 5 TX4 drop by around £6000 as VAT is suddenly abolished on new taxis because they are 100% wheelchair accessible? Well, you never know!

What I do know is that despite some of the appalling behaviour in the debates, we must never forget that the right to vote is something that should be treasured. As such, we should all get out on 3 May to cast a vote for your favourite candidate. If you still need help, many of the main candidates give you some reminders inside this issue.

## Discounted TX4s

If the Chancellor of the Exchequer disagrees with any newly elected Mayor's desire to have VAT abolished on new taxis and we don't get the VAT back after he/she is elected, then there is one offer that will be honoured!

Inside this issue, you will find a flyer from the **London Taxi Company** aimed at **Dial-a-Cab** drivers whose taxis are approaching the 15-year age limit. So if your sherbet is over 14 years old, take a minute or two and read the flyer. The London Taxi Company's offer is currently aimed at DaC drivers and is offering you a straight £2000 for your old taxi if it is 14 or more years old - and I suspect that whilst it may be worth much more to you, in the real world a cab approaching the 15-year limit is virtually worthless.

There is also a special offer if you want to buy one of their second hand cabs. So don't just discard the flyer, because if your cab has sadly reached the end of the road then an extra £2000 towards your deposit can be a big help. And if the Chancellor agrees with any newly elected London

Mayor to abolish VAT on taxis...mind you, perhaps we should stay in the real world!

## Griffin's war???

Well he's at it again! The Chairman of London's largest minicab firm, **John Griffin**, recently told his drivers that **Addison Lee** has gained a *judicial review*, which he says will be heard before the end of 2012. In the meantime, the man who believes he is above the law told his drivers that they should go ahead and use all the bus lanes that we do.

Mr Griffin really believes that his ragtag group of drivers - who admittedly always look smart - are real taxi drivers! But unfortunately for him, many of them have two distinct disadvantages - their lack of a good grasp of the English language and an inability to find their way round without the help of a satnav. And let's face it, John Griffin isn't famous for the care and concern of his workers - the huge turnover of his drivers shows that - his decision is purely a business one.

If he wins his judicial review, it will mean the end of bus/taxi lanes because every minicab with a LTPH licence will have to be allowed in. What will then happen is that they will revert to bus only lanes. That won't bother John Griffin, because so long as we do not have any time advantage over his fleet, then he will be happy. This isn't the first time he has told his drivers to disobey the law. Most drivers will remember August 2009 when the same Mr Griffin "informed" his drivers that they were allowed to use the M4 bus/taxi lane. Of course they weren't, but in the end the lane returned to the *status quo* of allowing everyone in it rather than the Highways Agency getting into legal battles with the man who has so much money that he and his sons recently bought themselves their own golf course while their drivers work ultra-long hours in order to make a living.

So what's the answer? Easy! We cannot take away anyone's right to a judicial review, but LTPH/TfL should and must take away the Operator's licence of a man who believes that he and not the Mayor, runs the two trades.

In a way, it is equally the fault of LTPH/TfL because of the way they have tried to equalise the two sides of this business. Whilst most people realise that we both take people from A to B, we are as different as a registered doctor and someone who tells you to take some paracetamol for a headache after reading it in a manual. Without the manual, he is lost.

Without his licence John Griffin will be the Chairman of an unauthorised group of drivers, but until he realises that he is not above the law then I see no other answer. With the Olympics around the corner, we could be looking at an all-out war and I guarantee TfL that real taxi drivers - and indeed all the guys currently slogging their guts out on the Knowledge of London - will not sit idly by and watch this trade - our trade - get sold down the river. TfL are to be congratulated on their speedy response, but it won't frighten Griffin because the man who now refers to his fleet as taxis rather than minicabs - as he used to - truly believes that he is untouchable. Time will tell...

*To those of you who are going away, have a great time. To those who are staying behind and working, I hope it's tearing busy. But I'll see you all again on 1 July...*

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com



# reflections of the chairman

## Dial-a-Cab and Apps...

I, along with other Board Members, have received complaints from members regarding some of our drivers subscribing to the ever growing band of Apps providers for licensed taxis. They are demanding that these members should not be allowed on **Dial-a-Cab** as their behaviour is counterproductive to this Society and that they should be given the choice of one or the other.

I can understand their frustration; however what they are suggesting would be almost impossible for us to police. It would also make us appear churlish and resentful of the all the new Apps that are out there. After all, members could have numerous Apps on their phone and we would be totally oblivious of the fact. At the moment, the only stipulation we make is that we will not allow a permanent fitting in the cab from any organisation that is in direct competition with Dial-a-Cab and that will apply to any hardware that is fitted to the vehicle.

All these Apps boast they are endeavouring to take work back from minicabs and that should be commended, however they are doing it at the driver's expense. The driver is expected to run to the pick-up for nothing, then wait five minutes before engaging the meter and will then be expected to give 10% of the fare to the App provider.

I have been in this trade a long time and I know the above will prevail when business is quiet, but when it gets busier - and it will - or the traffic is extra heavy or God forbid we should have some rain, then their service will be doomed as drivers will just not offer a service for nothing when it is busy and, of course, that is when the customer wants the service. After all, they can hail a taxi easily enough on the street when it's quiet.

Finally on this topic, there is one part I am not quite sure about. Many cars today have a SatNav fitted as standard equipment, pretty much the same as our radio circuit terminals are fitted and they can be operated whilst the vehicle is in



motion. But I have always been under the impression that it is an offence to use a mobile phone whilst a vehicle is in motion, unless of course it is hands free. So I am confused as how drivers receive trips on an App whilst the vehicle is in motion. He must receive it as some sort of text and if he does, he must be capable of reading the details whilst the mobile phone is mounted on the dashboard or windscreen. Alternatively, the driver should stop and pull to the side of the road to read the details and execute a function every time he receives or sends a message, otherwise it is illegal!

If I have it wrong as to how the system works, then good! If I have it right, then it is just a matter of time before there is a major incident involving a taxi - and none of us want that!

## Mr Griffin and Addison Lee...

You will all have heard about Mr Griffin of Addison Lee instructing his drivers to drive in bus lanes. There will probably be more about this in *Call Sign*, but I think it pertinent that I should mention it. I believe on this occasion, Mr Griffin has gone too far and has really antagonised the authorities, but what does he expect when you instruct a

group of people to break the law?

I know you were all outraged by his behaviour and I know some of us in the trade contacted LTPH and higher, to complain about the situation. What Mr Griffin should remember is that his minicabs are Private Hire and that taxis are Public Hire. We need to be able to use bus lanes so we can pick up and set down on the kerbside. Also, minicabs charge a fixed fare whereas taxis charge a metered fare based on time and distance, so we need to take the fastest/quickest route, which includes using bus lanes.

I really believe Mr Griffin has opened a can of worms for himself as people are now asking why he has donated £250k to the Tories since December 2008 and also a non-cash donation of £4,045.58p. I can only assume that second figure is for minicab rides that were not charged, however, that is only an assumption on my part as the figure is not itemised.

I know Mr Griffin has done well, but he now appears to believe that he is above the law and probably thinks that way because the authorities were not harsh enough in the past. If you remember, he instructed his drivers to use the red carpet coming in from Heathrow Airport and the result was that the authorities disbanded the bus/taxi lane and scrubbed his 200 fines and 130 summonses. Mr Griffin is not a stupid man; he knows that 65,000 minicabs together with 25,000 taxis will not be allowed to use bus lanes. I believe he now thinks the easy way out for the authorities is to also ban taxis, so that neither can use bus lanes. If that is the case, then he knows that taxis will experience even more delays due to congestion and in turn, because of the time factor, make the taxi fare more expensive - which is exactly what he wants!

I am delighted that LTPH and TfL threatened to prosecute his drivers and remove his Operators Licence. I just hope that scenario still prevails when you read this piece...

**Brian Rice**  
Chairman

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## Spare DaC taxis

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

**For any non-fault accidents try either:**

Chief Taxis: -----0800 055 6221

Cab Aid: -----0800 028 3253

**Overhauls or accident repairs:**

Cricklewood Carriers: ----- 0208 452 5461

KPM: ----- 0207 375 1179

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

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

# FUEL SURCHARGE???

With the recent hikes in fuel charges, the question Call Sign has been asked more than any other is at what level a fuel surcharge is added to the fare? So we are reproducing parts of the TfL press release that was agreed in February. To save anyone asking, no, the garage in Sloane Avenue isn't the barometer used to calculate any surcharge...!

Since July 2008, special provisions have been in place to allow an *extra* to be added to taxi fares if London average diesel costs reached a threshold level, in order to compensate drivers for significant mid-year rises in fuel costs. This arrangement was continued by the Board in February 2011, with a 40 pence extra if London retail diesel fuel prices (as measured by the *Arval* index) reached the threshold level of 159.7 pence per litre between 2 April 2011 and 1 January 2012.

The proposed extension of the fuel charge extra during 2012/13 was included as part of

the consultation.

The general response to extending this arrangement was positive, although the taxi radio circuits were against a fuel charge extra being introduced if taxi fares were increased by 5.2 per cent, as they felt this would be unfair on passengers. Two of the main drivers' associations considered that the extra charge should be reduced to 20 pence and the threshold reduced accordingly. However, it is considered that this provision should only be implemented for a significant increase in fuel costs and it is proposed that the 40 pence

increment be retained as this provides an appropriate degree of stability for customers while compensating drivers if fuel costs increase significantly.

**The Board is therefore asked to approve the introduction of a 40 pence extra to be charged if London retail diesel fuel prices (as measured by the *Arval* index) reach the threshold level of 179.7 pence per litre between 14 April 2012 and 6 April 2013.**

Once in place, the extra fuel charge would remain in force until 6 April 2013 (the annual tariff revision) even if fuel prices subsequently fell.

## Hammersmith flyover progress

Garrett Emmerson, Chief Operating Officer for Surface Transport at TfL has told *Call Sign*: "We are approaching a critical phase in our race to reopen the Hammersmith Flyover as quickly as possible and it required the recent overnight and weekend closures so as to ensure that the works were carried out safely and correctly."

"I would once again like to apologise for any inconvenience that this work is causing and reassure everyone affected that we are continuing to work around the clock to complete the vital works as quickly as possible."

Work to strengthen the five weakest spans of the 16 span structure will be completed in June 2012, well ahead of the London 2012 Games. This will ensure that the flyover can carry full traffic loading during the Games and hopefully for many decades to come.

However, following the Games, TfL will return to the structure to strengthen the remaining spans but that work will not require further weight restrictions to be imposed and TfL hope to complete it with off peak lane closures and minimal closures to the flyover, causing limited traffic disruption.



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# Jery's World



"When they promised we could use the Olympic lanes before the Mayoral election, I thought they meant the ones OUTSIDE the arena!"

## Triumph - Gary was right!

In the September Call Sign, Gary Cox (O46) wrote an article on what he thought would be the re-emergence of the Triumph name to the world of motorbikes. He praised John Bloor as the man who had rescued Triumph from the scrapheap in 1984 after the original manufacturer, Triumph Engineering, went into receivership. But in Gary's view, Mr Bloor was about to turn it into a British success story with his new Triumph.

That was September. Now Triumph have unveiled their new bike, the Triumph Explorer, to rave reviews throughout the biking world and in direct competition with BMWs endurance bike, the r1200gs. The Explorer was designed by a Northumbrian-based company, Xenophya, catapulting them onto the world stage of design. Now and perhaps as a sign of acceptance, Lord Digby Jones has joined the Triumph board. Triumph have now started up a bike factory to produce small bikes for the Indian market - the cheapest but largest market in the world and one that will unlock the Indonesian and Chinese markets.

North City Triumph who went from a small shop in Chigwell in anticipation of the success of future models, to much larger premises in Romford told Call Sign: "We also kept running out of our Triumph clothing range because it's so good, but at last have managed to get on top of the problem. Apparently we no longer just sell Triumph bikes!"

Spanish based dealerships are complaining that the Euro is too strong, but Spanish businessmen returning home after working in the British markets are now buying retro Triumph Bonneville's - named after the famous salt flats where Triumph test out the bike's top speeds. All in all, it represents a huge success for Britain.

**Thrilled with his prediction skills, Gary finished by saying: "Brian Rice told me when I caught up with him in a posh café that the first Knowledge student he sees doing the knowledge on a Triumph bike will get 3 months free subs on Dial-a-Cab, because it's great for British manufacturing!"**

When we told the Chairman about Gary's claim, he told us: "Well done Gary for your spot-on forecast in our magazine, you would make a good Commodities Broker! I know your last sentence was meant as a joke regarding the posh café and three months free subs for the first person to do the KoL on a Triumph Explorer - but why not!"



Gary forecasted in Call Sign the re-emergence of Triumph



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## Crashes? My DaC taxi must be magnetised

"Yes, my taxi does seem to have attracted a few more incidents than you'd normally expect over the years," Dial-a-Cab driver **John Kiely** (V76) admitted to *Call Sign*.

"Thankfully none of them have been of my own doing; it's just that other people seem unable to resist colliding with my cab!" He grinned and said with a sarcastic smile that he had even considered there might be a super-strength magnet hidden away within his cabs' darkest depths dragging other metal vehicles into his taxi!

Thinking back, he told us of just two of several examples of his magnetisation: "I recall one collision where I was flagged down in Fitzmaurice Place, Mayfair, and as I pulled into the kerb, a linen laundry delivery van decided to exit from a service bay at some speed without any signal or looking to see if his exit was clear - which it wasn't because I was there! So there we were in a 'V' formation with his front end firmly against the nearside rear wing and corner bumper of my cab. He tried to drive off but couldn't and also declined to offer his driving licence or insurance details. So I quietly suggested to the driver that he had just 5 seconds to provide those details before I called for the police - slowly removing the mobile from my pocket to show him I was not kidding. I was blocking him in by the way the cab was positioned on the road, so he wasn't going anywhere soon. He got the message at that point and came up with the goods, but I thought it was all a bit dodgy and duly reported it all back



**John Kiely - My taxi must have magnets on!**

to my insurers. I was also quietly relieved when my passenger offered his details as a witness to the event. I then took the cab into my garage for the repairs to be done."

Continuing with his tale, John said that over a period of time there had been correspondence between his insurers and various legal agencies from the third party. He received letters asking him to sign various documents, but because it seemed every letter he received was from a different agency asking for the same details he had originally given anyway, he began getting confused as to who was who and to whom he had talking to on any phone calls he received.

John decided that he would not sign or answer any more paperwork, taking the view that somewhere along the line, those details that he had supplied had been misplaced.

John said: "Eventually I had a phone call from yet another company admitting that their records had been lost. I was very evasive in my answers as in my opinion there were just too many lawyers involved. Then surprisingly, I finally received a cheque for £300.00 in settlement of my claim and a request to complete a questionnaire with regard to the particular company's service levels!"

"Service levels? They had to be joking. It took four years - yes, four long years - to settle a simple claim because of the incompetence of some jobsworth and they now wanted me to fill out another form!" John roared with laughter at the thought.












"On another occasion not long before, I was in Gresham Street in the City when the lorry in front of me jumped the traffic lights at Guildhall, realised what he had done and decided to reverse into the front of my cab! The lorry driver walked back towards me shouting why I had done that? He was suggesting that I had driven into the back of his truck. Luckily, a passing pedestrian had seen the whole thing and offered to be my witness, handing me his business card with his contact details and the case was eventually resolved! I could go on with the rest of them, but I think you get the picture!

"As a kid, I loved playing with magnets...I have my doubts now!"

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# GRIFFIN DECLARES WAR!

It was mid-April when news gradually filtered into the trade of a letter that Addison Lee boss, John Griffin, had sent to all his drivers. The letter, signed by the AL Chairman, read:

**Dear Driver,**

*The directors of Addison Lee plc believes that the current bus lane regulations, which allow London black cabs to use the bus lanes but prohibit private hire from doing so, is illegal as it discriminates against private hire operators and drivers who offer a competing taxi service. We also believe that it denies the public freedom of choice as journey times in the bus lanes are much quicker than those outside the lanes. Our legal advice in this matter is that bus lane regulations are currently being misinterpreted to exclude PHV's from bus lanes. Such misinterpretation is unlawful in the following respects.*

***It is in breach of European rules relating to the freedom of establishment and freedom to supply services, it infringes the general EU principal of equal treatment, it infringes the English common law principles of equality before the law and it denies free and fair competition in providing an unfair advantage to one group of commercial operators over others.***

*Addison Lee has sought and been granted a judicial review on this issue which is due to be heard by the end of the year. In the meantime Addison Lee believes that we cannot allow our customers to continue to be victims of this unfair discriminatory treatment.*

*As Chairman I can advise you that a lawful interpretation of the bus lane regulations entitles Addison Lee drivers with private hire identifiers to use all bus lanes in the same way as our competitors. Accordingly you are fully entitled to use the bus lanes.*

*We can confirm that entry into the bus lanes is not an endorsable offence and that we will indemnify all Addison Lee drivers from any fines or other liabilities that may result from using the bus lanes as a result of this advice.*

*Should any conflict arise between yourself and any black taxi operator please be patient, make a note of any details and use your camera where possible.*

**John Griffin**  
Chairman, Addison Lee PLC

**Call Sign** immediately called LTPH who told us that they were consulting with their solicitors. Twenty four hours later they came out with all guns blazing and threatened to prosecute and withdraw licenses from any private hire drivers that used the bus lanes. While John Griffin offered to pay any fines, TfL now spoke about revocation of licenses, which moved the ball to a much bigger pitch.

Director of Taxis and Private Hire, **John Mason** wrote: "Under current regulations, driving a PH vehicle in a bus lane during hours when the bus lane is operative (and other than to pick up and set down passengers) is a

criminal offence for which PHV drivers may be personally prosecuted."

He ended by saying: "Drivers who repeatedly contravene traffic regulations, including by intentionally driving in bus lanes, may be considered unfit to hold a PHV driver's licence and operators who encourage such conduct may be considered unfit to hold a PHV operator's licence."

*In a statement, TfL said:*

**"As regulatory authority for taxis and PHVs in London, TfL considers the decision to issue this letter inciting drivers to break the law is irresponsible. It has called upon them to rescind it. It is urgently considering legal and regulatory action against Addison Lee and will revoke their licence to operate if necessary."**

*Addison Lee has brought legal proceedings arguing that current regulations are in breach of European Union law. TfL is contesting those proceedings, which have not been determined and there has been no order by the court suspending the regulations. The legal process is continuing.*

MD of Surface Transport at LTI, **Leon Daniels**, told **Call Sign**: "The letter from the management of Addison Lee is utterly irresponsible. By issuing it, Addison Lee risk regulatory action against themselves and leave their staff liable to criminal prosecution. We have asked them to withdraw their letter immediately and also writing to all Addison Lee drivers reminding them that repeated breaches of traffic regulations could see their licence to operate withdrawn."

"London's bus lanes are in place to ensure the efficient operation of the bus network, which carries more than six million passengers a day. Allowing tens of thousands of Private Hire Vehicles to drive in bus lanes would seriously disrupt the bus network and our passengers' ability to get around the capital."

By the following morning, just one Addison Lee car was spotted in a bus and taxi lane. The passenger? John Griffin!

## France: Breathalysers must be carried

If you are planning to either cycle or drive through France, then be prepared for new laws that are scheduled to come into force on July 1 and which require riders or drivers to carry a disposable breathalyser with them.

Should you be stopped by les gendarmes and found not to have the cheap ur that are sold for around 2euros, then you will face an automatic 11euro fine.

The French legal alcohol limit is tougher than the UK's at 50mg per 100ml of blood. Ours is 80mgs.



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# Mayor: We'll keep traffic moving!

London will be the first city in the UK to make utility companies pay for the amount of time they dig up the busiest roads, incentivising them to complete works at the least disruptive times, Mayor Boris Johnson has announced.

The scheme had been successfully lobbied for by the Mayor and has now been formally approved by the Department for Transport to begin in June 2012. This will allow TfL to charge utility firms up to £2,500 a day for working in congested areas or at busy times. It will cover around 330km (57%) of the TfL road network (red routes) and covers areas most susceptible to major disruption from roadworks. The new scheme will also apply to any TfL works carried out on its road network, further ensuring that works are delivered with minimal disruption.

By encouraging utility companies and highway authorities to carry out their work overnight or during off-peak hours, road users - including taxi and bus passengers - will benefit from more reliable journey times and less disruption. Any additional revenue raised by the scheme once operating costs have been recovered, will be put towards measures that could reduce disruption from roadworks and which



will be jointly overseen by TfL and the major utility companies. Specifically, this will be used to research new innovations such as quick curing materials and improved plating technology, which would allow excavations to be temporarily covered and roads to return to normal use more quickly.

Boris Johnson told *Call Sign*: "This is a real victory for all London road users, helping us to further tackle the scourge of shoddy and badly managed roadworks. Lane rental is a win-win as it will not only help traffic pump smoothly

around the vital arteries of our road system, but give us for the first time the chance to penalise disruptive works where it hurts - in the wallet - using the revenues to fund further innovative ways to keep London's taxis and general traffic moving."

So far this year, the Mayor's campaign has led to almost 4,000 fewer roadworks on TfL roads between last April and the end of 2011 - a fall of 13% over the same period in 2010. By the end of this financial year, serious and severe disruption caused by roadworks on London's red routes is expected to be down by almost 40% since permitting was introduced in January 2010.

The Mayor added that since being Mayor, he had cracked down on minicab touts and more recently there had been a purge on dangerous pedicabs. He said that over the past year, there had been over 1300 arrests for cab related offences including touting.

He ended by saying that he had halved the size of the Olympic Road Network, which was now down from its original size of 140kms to 70kms but added that there was still more he had to do...

## Brian Paddick: "Green loans for taxi drivers!"

Lib-Dem London Mayoral candidate and former deputy assistant commissioner for the Metropolitan Police, **Brian Paddick**, has revealed plans for a *Green* loan scheme to help drivers whose cabs are approaching the 15-year limit upgrade to zero-emission vehicles. Mr Paddick claimed that the current Mayor had failed on his projected £1m clean taxi fund of two years ago with Boris Johnson now saying that technology had not progressed far enough to enable mass deployment of the scheme.

Mr Paddick spoke of a series of green transport policies he would bring in if elected as Mayor on May 3, including offering to help London taxi drivers upgrade to electric vehicles and that he would achieve that by setting up a subsidy scheme to reduce the upfront capital cost, although he did add that finer details would need to be sorted out. Mr Paddick said that his idea would be based on the government's upcoming **Green Deal** loan scheme. That allows property owners to install energy efficiency measures at no upfront cost and then repaying the loan through their energy bill. According to Brian Paddick, estimated savings on bills always exceed repayments to cover the initial costs. The Mayoral hopeful said that the scheme could easily be adapted to taxis.

Mr Paddick added: "We should look at a scheme for taxi drivers whereby they can be funded upfront to replace their taxis with electric cabs and then pay back the cost of the loan over the lifetime of the taxi from savings made by using electricity rather than diesel."

He continued: "We have to look at the overall total cost to society of the issues of reducing the capital's PM10 levels and then make the argument to government that part of the cost of helping taxi drivers to change their vehicles will come back because of lower running costs."

He said that Lib-Dems would invest £55million on electric charging points for London and that although he knew the upgrade programme would require additional subsidies, he said that health improvements through lower PM10s and subsequent savings to the National Health Service would help pay for it.

**Mr Paddick has said that if elected, he would allow taxi drivers into the Olympic routes and also press for more parking and toilet facilities...**



## LTPH on Twitter!

As part of their commitment to look into innovative ways to improve communication with the trade, LTPH have recently set up their own Twitter account so they can get relevant information to licensed taxi drivers and operators.

'Tweets' will contain news and updates such as important information on taxi rank suspensions, train services being cancelled and details of forthcoming TPH consultations. Initially LTPH expect there to be around 2-3 tweets per day. In addition, they will be providing drivers with real time information during the Olympics and Paralympics Games, such as highlighting times of events and where there will be a significant demand for taxis.

Join them by visiting Twitter and follow the signing up instructions for an account. Then search for the Taxi & Private Hire account by typing in **@TfLTfLPH** in the search bar. Click 'Follow' to become a member and you will then begin to receive 'tweets' from them and join the several hundred who already follow them..

The TPH twitter account will provide information only and will not respond to tweets from followers. Any questions should be directed in the normal manner via [TPH.Enquiries@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:TPH.Enquiries@tfl.gov.uk). LTPH hope that you will support them with their new communication channel and help spread the word.



You have long been known as very pro-bus. Boris Johnson has cut back on some bus numbers because they were clogging up main roads just by sheer numbers. Would you bring back the buses that were taken out of service or are you happy with numbers as they are?

**KL:** *I hope I am known as pro-taxi too! Actually the impact of the Tory Mayor's policies has been to increase the number of buses on routes where he took away the bendy-buses. He had to, because the bendies could take so many more passengers. But now they have gone, I am not planning on bringing them back.*

You recently spoke of priority measures to help buses avoid the worst of the traffic jams. Does that include taxis?

**KL:** *Yes – because what I was talking about was more bus/taxi lanes and more priority for vehicles that use these lanes at traffic lights.*

Boris has his scheme to make utilities pay if they take too long in digging up a road. Do you have any plans to speed up road-works?

**KL:** *Boris Johnson has taken four years to implement the lane rental scheme that I started negotiating with government when I was Mayor. I will certainly be more energetic in making use of it.*

One other thing I will do to speed up taxi trips is to move to ban pedicabs, which are dangerous to their passengers and pedestrians alike. During my last term I was well under-way to obtaining a legal ruling. Mayor Johnson abandoned this approach. If elected I will instruct City Hall lawyers to start the process again.

Taxi driver's cabs over 15 years old are coming off the road. Do you have any thoughts as to how you can help these drivers should you win the election?

**KL:** *Drivers need to be able to recover the cost of buying their vehicle through fares. That*

# Call Sign Speaks to Ken Livingstone

*This issue of Call Sign has tried to give you the views of the main candidates for the Mayoral elections on 3 May. This page asks a few questions of the previous Mayor, Ken Livingstone...*



*means Londoners have to have money in their pockets to be able to afford a cab. My key election pledges are all about making Londoners better off – through a £30 a week London-wide Education Maintenance Allowance to help 16-19 year olds stay in education, a new lettings agency to cut rents, bulk buying electricity to cut household energy bills, supporting child-care costs and cutting bus and Tube fares. Taxi drivers and their families will benefit twice – first through more money in their pockets and purses, and second through other Londoners having more cash to spend on cabs.*

**Whilst any decision comes from the Chancellor, what is your view on taxi drivers having to pay VAT on a new cab even**

**though the vehicle costs extra because it caters specially for the disabled? If you agree that they should at least be partially VAT free, would you recommend that to the Chancellor if you win the election?**

**KL:** *Part of the role of the mayor is certainly to lobby the government on behalf of Londoners. I would be happy to discuss this with the trade if I am elected Mayor.*

**What is your view on Addison Lee Chairman, John Griffin's instruction to his drivers to use bus/taxi lanes?**

**KL:** *Addison Lee Chairman, John Griffin's, instruction to his drivers to flout bus lane rules is incitement to break the law and create anarchy on the roads. He should be prosecuted and Addison Lee's suitability to operate as a licenced private hire firm must be reviewed. Addison Lee is a major donor to the Conservative Party – giving £25,000 in to Boris Johnson's campaign in 2008 and at least a further £250,000 to the Tories since. The Tories should declare if they have received any donations from Addison Lee for the 2012 mayoral election and, if so, when they will be returning them.*

*Taxis are allowed in bus lanes because they are licensed to pick up and drop off passengers when they are hailed in the street and so need access to the kerb. Minicabs are only licensed if trips are pre-booked and so do not need the same access. I will not support minicabs having access to bus lanes.*

## Jenny Jones: Taxi drivers vote Green!

Dear **Call Sign** readers, at the Green Party we believe black cabs play a crucial role in helping Londoners and visitors get around. We are worried about plans such as those to exclude taxis from the special Olympics lanes and generally reduce taxi ranks at this time of high demand. We believe that the capital's transport policy should not be putting black cabs out of business and we think London needs a Mayor who will get to grips with vital issues like touts, congestion, emissions and the safety of all road users – including cyclists, pedestrians and cabbies themselves.

But as well as safety, the health of Londoners needs to be a main focus of the plan for transport. As things stand, over 4,000 people in the capital die prematurely as a result of air pollution every year. Taxis are the biggest contributor towards this pollution, generating nearly a third of the particulates that cause damage to our hearts, lungs and respiratory system. It harms the drivers, their customers and many other Londoners. If taxis are to continue to play a major role in helping Londoners and visitors get around town, we must help the trade ensure that its vehicles pollute less.

A whole series of mistakes has been made in handling London's air pollution problem. The biggest let-down is that innovation has been blocked, partly because of the rigid adoption of the *Conditions of Fitness*, which favour a monopoly provider. More fuel-efficient alternatives (with less CO2 emissions) to the TX series have been consistently blocked because of the PCO clinging to the turning circle. The infrastructure for gas fuels, like LPG, has not been supported. TfL have shown little willingness to support drivers who for several years have wanted to reduce pollution by switching fuels, rather than buying a new vehicle. Instead, cabbies have been required to fit clean up devices that seem to have delivered unimpressive results. The promise of an electric vehicle in the future has taken the place of a simple-to fit hybrid device in the here and now. Given that the cabs in inner London spend the majority of their time stationary, this could potentially have been a cheap and very cost effective way of cutting pollution dramatically. The Mayor has generated great headlines for himself since 2010 for his £1m fund to help cab drivers switch to low emission vehicles. This fund was even mentioned in the November consultation document on the introduction of the 15 year age limit ban as a way of helping cabbies to upgrade cabs. We now know that the Mayor's £1m pot of money never existed and was a complete fiction.

The Green Party believes that this is unacceptable and TfL should support making cabs low emission in order to make our air safer to breathe. Supporting hybrid and resisting deregulation are two key ways in which a Green City Hall can help the taxi trade to flourish.



*Y INTERACT* is a US company that works on matters concerning today's changing communications universe – and nothing is changing more than the world involving Apps. Although their latest creation doesn't yet involve the London taxi industry, you can be certain that it – or something similar – soon will. After all, *Hailo* has arrived in New York, so nothing will stop the reverse happening over here

The new App – **Report a Taxi** – is currently working in New York and allows taxi passengers to instantly report their driver via a smartphone App by just entering the cabbie's medallion number and then selecting from a list of "common complaints." The passenger then fills out the data, time and location of the problem trip, pushes a button and their complaint instantly wings its way to the NY version of our LTPH – the *Taxi and Limousine Commission*. There is no need to inform the driver they are being reported. And of course **Call Sign** doesn't need to remind readers that getting a London taxi driver's licence number has never been easier! They even know the colour!

Of the 814 passengers who used the NY App between December and March, the number one gripe involved refusing to take customers to their destinations, with a close second being that of the driver talking on their mobile phone. Drivers being "disrespectful" or not allowing the passenger to pay by credit card followed closely behind.

*Y INTERACT* say they hope the App helps to

# Apps: It was just a matter of time!

New York passengers can now report their driver by App...

How long before this App hits London

iPhone than to the road. There is no mention of protecting the driver against passengers making up complaints after a bad day in the office or possibly out of boredom.

More importantly, we wonder not who will create the first App specifically to report a London taxi driver, but when it will be announced...

*Baghwat Singh  
Call Sign Online*

empower and protect passengers across New York and that Report a Taxi would also "bring justice" to anyone that has been refused a ride or had a driver that paid more attention to their

driver, but when it will be announced...

**UKIP Mayoral candidate says...**

## KEN AND BORIS DON'T CARE ABOUT TAXIS!!!

As the Mayoral election heats up, UKIP candidate **Lawrence Webb** has put his finger up at the two neck and neck favourites to win the position – current Mayor **Boris Johnson** and former incumbent **Ken Livingstone**. Mr Webb claims that the policies of Ken and Boris show they "don't care about London's taxi trade."

Mr Webb calls the taxi business "iconic" and says tourists associate us as being part of the London scene, but adds that our industry is under threat following last November's decision that all new taxis had had to be fitted with a *Diesel Particulate Filter*.

He continued: "Instead of an all new engine, this filter is simply being retro-fitted to the existing model. Whilst we all want to breathe cleaner air, these filters are not the answer especially as they add an extra £3000 or so to the cost of a new taxi. In many ways, this is nothing more than a tax levied at a sector that can ill-afford it at a time when fuels costs are going through the roof."

"But it is not just the additional cost that these filters bring," says Mr Webb, "they just do not work in an urban environment and can often result in costly repairs, not only in having the filters re-generated, but also to the engine itself if the filters are allowed to clog, which then causes back-pressure."

He threw in the possibility of a VAT-free taxi as we drive the only public transport that is fully wheelchair accessible. That would put the cost of a new TX4i down to around £28,000.

Mr Webb claims that Ken Livingstone despises all that is British and particularly those things that are uniquely so – with the UKIP candidate obviously placing taxis into that category. He asks why Mr Livingstone "...massively increased the number of private-hire vehicles in London while Boris has presided over ever-greater encroachment of these operators into the areas that were once (and legally still should be) the

preserve of the black cab?"

He said that traditional taxi ranks were being removed, while satellite offices were springing up everywhere with clipboard Johnnies working alongside ranks of minicabs illegally plying for hire. He ended by accusing Messrs Johnson and Livingstone of arguing about "...whose train set will run faster than the others while trying to distract us with their various vanity projects," and that London's cabbies knew exactly what was going on.



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## Outer zones again...

During these quieter times, more and more drivers are not following the correct booking-in procedures for outer zones. Without wishing to sound like a broken record, all outer zones are physical zones, which clearly mean a driver must be within the zone to book in.

Drivers who have been caught are using the excuse that so long as the driver can get to the pick-up in an outer zone within 15 minutes, then it's ok. Unfortunately that is not the case. A physical zone means the driver must be within the zone to book in. Those drivers that have been caught have not only been monitored by the controller, but also by other drivers who have been deprived of receiving the trip offer. Please ensure you book in correctly at all times; no one enjoys putting drivers on complaint, but if that is the only deterrent that works then it will be done.

## Procedure changes

The changes we made recently to our procedures have been very successful and while a few drivers have voiced their opinion of dislike for one of the changes, the vast majority of calls that have been received have been very positive. By the time you receive this issue of **Call Sign**, you will also have been advised that the Board has reviewed the going home facility and made the decision to reduce the number of account rides that need to be taken from 5 to 3 before the code 21 can be switched on. The

# Contact Centre Chat

With Keith Cain



time parameters for the going home facility have not been altered.

## Credit cards and the new terminals

In the last edition of the magazine, we informed you of the new terminals and the credit card PEDS we will be fitting. One part of the development of the PED we are very happy with is the security we have built in so that the driver does not have to leave the front of the

vehicle to get the passenger to operate it. We are still working on the procedures and how we can deal with a scrub for a driver if the trip is accepted from the terminal.

Initially, we are looking to put a minimum deposit against the card as soon as it's taken. This will ensure a payment is taken should the passenger cancel the cab or fail to make contact with the driver. As I said, this is still a work in progress and members will be fully informed before we start fitting the PEDS as to what the procedure will be.

The terminals are currently in the final stages of testing and at the moment everything looks very good. The functionality of the new terminal will not have changed, so there is no need for any additional training for members – although it will be available should anyone feel unsure.

We recently experienced some rain during the daylight hours and oh how the clients altered their policies to use our service. It really is amazing how our business is affected by not just the state of the world economy, but also the British weather!

**Keith Cain**

**Contact Centre Manager**

**Driver's Operations Manager**

# Open door at the Bank of England

To save **Dial-a-Cab** drivers and their families asking, no, this isn't an invitation to go to the **Bank of England** and to help yourselves! It is a repeat of a very popular tour that also took place last year and which many drivers asked to be repeated as they were away on holiday.

The tours take place on two Saturdays in June and again over a weekend in September. On all dates, the Bank of England will invite visitors into the famous Threadneedle Street building for a close look behind the scenes and visit rooms in which some of the UK's key monetary and financial stability decisions are taken.

Among the highlights of the visit will be the Garden Court at the heart of the Bank, where mulberry trees reflect the origins of paper money, the Court Room which houses a wind-dial originally installed so that the Bank's directors could forecast the arrival of merchant shipping in the Port of London and the Committee Room, where the Monetary Policy Committee meets to make its monthly decisions – currently to keep the bank rate at 0.5%.

On **Saturdays 23 & 30 June** between 9.30am - 5pm (last entry 4pm) the Bank and its Museum will be open to visitors for thirty-minute behind-the-scenes tours, taking in the Front Hall, Garden Court, the Monetary Policy Committee's meeting room and the Court Room.

Then on **Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 September** (same times) there will be two further tours. No booking is required but go early to avoid the queue.

The Bank of England has occupied a building in Threadneedle Street since 1734. In 1788, Sir John Soane was appointed as 'Architect and Surveyor' to the Bank. Soane extended the Bank's original building until 1828, when it finally covered the whole 3.5 acres of the present site and was enclosed with the windowless wall that still stands today.

The Museum's new exhibition, *Gold and the Bank of England*, which begins its run on 22 June and examines the part gold has played in the Bank's long history, will be open on each of the tour dates.

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

Go to [www.bankofengland.co.uk/museum](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/museum) or [museum@bankofengland.co.uk](mailto:museum@bankofengland.co.uk).

Or phone 020 7601 5545 or Twitter on <http://twitter.com/bankofengland> for more info...



## LTFUC OUTING TO SOUTHEND-ON-SEA TUESDAY 26TH JUNE 2012



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The Hon President, Hon Chair and Committee would be very grateful if you could join us and we look forward to seeing you on the day

*"None Walks so Tall as he who Stoops to help a Child"*



# CELEBRATION TIME FOR VIKING TAXI METERS!



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In addition, the first 50 Dial-a-Cab members who take this deal will receive an additional 10% discount!

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## LTDA'S TAXI TO THE RUNWAY CAMPAIGN

*London Taxi Company giving free receipt pads in support*



The **London Taxi Company** at Brewery Road N7 is jumping onto the **LTDA** bandwagon to lend support to its current campaign - **Taxi to the Runway** - which promotes licensed taxi usage over other forms of public transport direct to the airport.

London Taxi Company Sales Director, **Rob Laidler**, said: "This is a fantastic campaign and we are really pleased to be able to support it in any way that we can. This is absolutely the type of consumer marketing that we should be pulling together as an industry to do and we commend the LTDA for leading the way."

To support the campaign, The London Taxi Company will install rear-screen advertising banners on all of their demonstrator and courtesy vehicles.

Any driver purchasing a new or used vehicle from Brewery Road who wishes to support the initiative, can also have the advertising placed on their vehicle free of charge, prior to delivery.

The London Taxi Company has also printed thousands of receipt pads promoting the **Taxi to the Runway** message to give away free to drivers. To get yours, just pop into Brewery Road and ask at reception.

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Quite clearly, the friendship and comradeship we always had within our trade is at the lowest ebb I have experienced in my 30 years. As the work dries up and it gets harder to scrape a living, things will get that much more fractious. Some recent examples occur to me.

I have broken down a few times within the past year - on one occasion for a 3 - 4 hour period awaiting RAC or AA recovery. On these occasions my taxi was obviously rendered useless and disabled in busy thoroughfares. The bonnet was up, hazard lights flashing and 100s - yes 100s - of cabs passing me by with not one bothering to ask what the problem was, even to enquire whether I perhaps just needed a jump start. Not one single offer of help. Absolutely nothing.

On two of those occasions, several messages were sent through the DaC terminals requesting help of some sort. Not one driver responded to either of those occasions.

I was always taught to drive respectfully and most importantly, always with the professional dedication that our public expect and more specifically that our masters at TfL expect. We have to maintain standards? That's a joke now as some of our fellow drivers in their high-powered Ferrari-type Vitos and TX4s cut up the inside in flowing traffic and then pull out in front of us, do U-turns in busy High Streets just to get in front and trap one of those elusive jobs that will - mark my words - dwindle before our very eyes.

We have become selfish while I have become cynical - a 55 year old thug who no longer gives diddysquat about my fellow driver. We book into false positions that quite clearly and flagrantly break **Dial-a-Cab's** rules. We are in danger of losing those long jobs that still pay high dividends, so much so that some drivers hang up for them to make sure only they get them. After all, what driver in his right mind would book into E99 for 4/5 hours waiting? Isn't the idea to go out to work? You know, where you take your chances that someone might stick their hand up to call a taxi. But no, rather than wait some would rather deceive their fellow drivers by hanging up. Among them are so-called cabbies who work the hotels - particularly around the Gloucester Road area and who I am told bung the doormen £20! Are you out of your minds? How much are you charging the punters? No, no the drivers say, they provide a service even if that involves screwing all the other drivers that try to earn a legal and honest living.

Or how about this... Go and buy a Vito and drive a van with windows for £42K. Great, it carries 6 people and it's nice and smooth. But it's a van you silly people and not only that, but 70% of private hire drivers are in similar types of vehicles. We are just playing into PH's *final solution*... we don't need taxis and we don't need to know the streets of London because we have satnavs. Taxis will soon become a tourist attraction, just like the red telephone box and the old red bus that once had a conductor who would engage in conversation with you rather than be whisked from the job centre.

**Tony Arnold has appeared in Call Sign many times over the years, mainly in the role of helping drivers in other countries become good cabbies. Controversy hasn't been his thing...until now!**



On one of Tony's many trips - this one was Beijing's Tiannaman Square

And I don't need to speak English cos I'm driving a bus that costs in excess of £400K and in which I can basically just operate a few buttons and it moves forward!

I have been very fortunate to travel and work in 34 different countries over the past 10 years and proud to have been a sort of leading light in this once great job, being able to spread the word and show what the words 'black taxi' means and has achieved in its 400 year history. How? Simple really, it was by being - above all else - courteous, polite, knowledgeable, professional and very proud to drive the most recognised vehicle in the world.

Please don't blow it all away, let's stop being stupid and be like we were not that

long ago when we cared about each other. Private Hire is no longer - and never has been - a sleeping giant. It is here to take our very work ethic from under our noses...

**Tony Arnold (F03)**

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**Call Sign**  
**May 2012**

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## Washday...

These days it's never been easier to keep your taxi clean and tidy with the number of hand car washes quadrupling over the past few years and yet another seeming to appear on every corner. However, I have stopped getting my cab washed in town but instead get it washed nearer home because the general quality and cleanliness of the wash itself has got much worse. You'd think hand car washes would pride themselves on the standard of their wash, but I fear that standards are dropping.

One of the main reasons for this is that the washers don't rinse out the woollen mitts on a regular basis, leaving them full of dirt that they then spread over the cab. Sometimes, when they wipe over the windscreen, you can see the dirt in the foam and afterwards you can see scratching in the paintwork. The whole idea of getting your cab hand-washed rather than put through an automatic washer is that it is gentler on the paintwork and should last longer. Washing with a heavily soiled mitt just defeats the object. So until people tell me otherwise, I am staying out of town.

## For a change...

If you work during the weekend, one of the biggest headaches you can have is running out of change. Personally, I find that foreigners are much better at trying to give you the right money or giving you notes closer to the fare. Someone once told me that English people find it too much hassle when it comes to change and instead are quite happy to give you a £20 note for an £11.60 ride. Get 4 of those on the bounce and you're in trouble. If you do get stuck for change, try parking on the rank at the bottom of Wardour and Coventry Streets and go into one of those amusement arcades. I've done this a number of times and when they see the taxi they are usually quite understanding.

Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

# POTTERS WHEEL



## Closing 8 fire stations to save £4million???

As you probably know, I worked as a Firefighter with Kent Fire and Rescue Service for 10 years and after reporting in the last issue that Wandsworth Parks Police has been disbanded, on 2nd April my local fire station at Seal near Sevenoaks was closed for good with the station having served the community since 1886 - some 126 years. Now due to the latest Tory cut-backs, it has closed its station doors for the last time. I am not going to get political, but KFRS has shut 8 stations around the county in order to save what is really the small amount of £4million. I really can't understand closing frontline services.

Seal Fire Station holds many memories for me, some bad, some very sad but also some very funny. I've always been a full-time London taxi driver, but working at Seal meant that I was a Retained Fire-fighter, just like a fully trained firemen who sleeps on station, except that I

responded from home via an alerter or pager. This would go off at any time of night or day, whether you were in bed or in the shower, come rain or snow.

One thing you learned quickly about the job was that you had to be able to laugh at yourself and take a joke. As a general rule, you weren't allowed to take yourself too seriously as work with colleagues quickly exploiting any chink in your armour. One school day morning at about 8.30, the alerter went off when I was in the shower. I dried off, threw some clothes on, jumped in the taxi and headed for the fire station. As I drove into the fire station yard, there were a number of schoolboys standing on the corner watching and waiting for the pump to turn out. As I was delayed, the fire engine was sitting there in the station with engine running and blue lights flashing waiting to go. In those days I was about two stone heavier and the entry door to the station was at the side with some steps up. As I ran across the yard, I heard one of the boys shout: "Hurry up fatty or they'll go without you!" Is that right I thought! I'll show them who's a fatty as I tried to take the steps in one go. But instead of looking cool with an excellent leap up and through, I tripped on the top step and fell in through the door and heard a loud roar of laughter from the 'erberts outside.

Now bear in mind that the other five firemen hadn't a clue what had happened, I got my firegear and jumped on the pump. It turned right and passed the boys who were pointing and laughing. My Sub Officer, who was sitting in front, turned around to me and said: "What are they laughing at?" My response, "Err, well, err... don't know sir..."

Richard Potter (T51)

## IT'S AYE AYE LTI...

The company formerly known as LTI - The London Taxi Company - has been gaining a reputation of late for taking on highly skilled ex-military staff with former Royal Logistics Corps warrant officer, Jon Harmon being their latest recruit.

According to the HR manager of Forces Recruitment Services - an organisation that places ex-military personnel into UK companies - Graham Jones, ex-forces personnel are ideally suited to the highly efficient taxi manufacturing operation in Coventry as they are well trained and disciplined with many transferable skills. Jon was "discovered" by Paul Lewis, a regional director of Forces Recruitment and an ex-army man himself, having served for 22 years before retiring from the Adjutant General's Corps, which specialises in all administrative matters.

He told **Call Sign**: "The military contains a diverse breadth of skills and professions. Military personnel, whatever their rank, are highly trained and disciplined. They are used to working as part of a team, working in challenging environments and work well under pressure; they are also able to work alone and are a huge asset to British companies at any level and in any industry."

As for Jon Harmon, who lives not far from the London Taxi Company factory in Coventry, he told this magazine: "I was recommended to Forces Recruitment Services by a friend. The transition to civilian work can be traumatic and top of the list is always getting a job. It can be a frustrating time and you can easily feel dejected. The recruitment consultants at Forces Recruitment Services are ex-military and can translate our experiences into the civilian world's needs. They held my hand and gave me every help, guidance and assistance."

Forces Recruitment Services has just been short listed for a major recruitment award. If you know of any ex-forces personnel who would like to register, they can find more information by contacting the agency direct.

Go to [www.forcesrecruitment.co.uk](http://www.forcesrecruitment.co.uk) or talk to Paul Lewis on 02476 100 660.



Getting a job when leaving the forces isn't always easy

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# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



## Hello ladies & gents,

Since the last edition of *Call Sign* which had a very detailed article on the new terminal by DaC's Director of IT, **John Bankes**, a number of drivers have contacted me, being a little concerned that the new equipment may be more difficult to operate. So please be rest assured that the operating system from your end will not change, functionality will mirror the existing terminal and although the terminal will look a lot more state-of-the-art and have a much more modern feel to it, there is no need to worry about retraining.

As John mentioned, it will run on *Windows 7* and the system will be faster and more reliable.

The *Chip and Pin* card reader (PED) will operate differently from the existing reader, but again it will be very easy for you to use and because it is mounted in the driver's compartment, it will be much safer and more secure for you to operate - something that was a major consideration for us. There will be more details published in future issues of the magazine.

Again, as John stated, the *Cabbie's Mate A-Z* and *SatNav* will be fully integrated into the new system and there is a very good video demo on their website at [www.navigation-master.com](http://www.navigation-master.com) should you have any worries on the ease of operation. It is very straightforward and will certainly enhance the new system and be an exciting move forward.

## Taximeters and the new system...

As you are aware, the Society will be supporting only those meters that conform to the electronic and software protocols and are totally compatible with the new **Dial-a-Cab** system. We have contacted all the relevant companies and given them space in this month's edition to offer our members any special deals if and when current contracts come to an end. So far, we are still to receive info from a number of

meter companies that we have been in touch with, but hope that the ads we have received and published will help you decide what your best available option is.

## Apps

I know the Chairman has gone into great detail regarding the many taxi Apps that are being offered to you at this moment in time, so I will only say that any fixed data head or dash/window mounted units such as the *GetTaxi* system will, for obvious reasons, be viewed as direct competition and Dial-a-Cab we will not agree to their equipment being fitted alongside ours.

I am sure you agree that from a business point of view, it is a no-brainer and I am certain that all other major circuits will treat it in exactly the same way. I would certainly not want any one of you to jeopardise your membership with our Society without being sure in your own minds that you were doing the right thing - I am always available to help or advise...

**Allan Evans**  
DaC Compliance Officer  
[Allane@Dialacab.co.uk](mailto:Allane@Dialacab.co.uk)

## Addison Lee political donations



Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Brian Rice** has mentioned in his monthly report about political donations made by **Addison Lee**, so to allow *Call Sign* readers to understand what the donations are, we are publishing figures from the **Electoral Commission** website which accesses donations to political organisations. **All the donations from Addison Lee were made to the Conservative Party...**

<b>10 December 2008...</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
<b>21 April 2008....</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
<b>9 April 2010...</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
<b>13 April 2010...</b>	<b>£4,045.58</b>
<b>19 September 2011...</b>	<b>£100,000</b>

**The amount of £4045.58 was filed under non-cash donations and could refer to anything including, but not automatically, free cab rides. The total for the above Addison Lee donations since December 2008 is £254,045.58**

In addition and following a *Freedom of Information* request, it was revealed that a private meeting was set up last year between then-Transport Secretary Philip Hammond and AL Chairman John Griffin. At the meeting, Mr Griffin

raised the question of bus lane access and suggested that HMG should outsource chauffeur services for ministers to private companies.

Minutes of the meeting sparked opposition calls for the government to explain whether the donations and the meeting were linked.

Shadow transport secretary, Maria Eagle, said:

"The public have a right to know if ministers gave preferential treatment to John Griffin and other 'premier league' donors who sought to use access to ministers to advance their own interests."

## Climatecars enter AL row

Climatecars MD, Nicko Williamson, has entered the battle over whether PH drivers should be allowed to join taxis in bus lanes but says Addison Lee shouldn't be allowed to use them! But he says his fleet of low emission cars should have access! He has asked TfL to develop a two tier licensing system for PH to recognise the difference between the different types of PH cars.

"Operators who pass the criteria for the higher tier to certain predetermined standards, should be able to use the bus lanes. This could be linked to vehicle quality, driver experience and CO2 emissions."

However, the MD of greentomatocars, Jonny Goldstone, says that Climatecars' proposal was unfeasible. Meanwhile Pimlico Plumbers now say they too should have access. Sounds like all-out war to us!

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Just as *Call Sign's* April issue was being put to bed, many Dial-a-Cab staff were heading full tilt into a fundraising **cake bake-off** in aid of **Sport Relief**, organised by DaC Trainer **Christina Simms** and her *Human Resource* colleagues.

The idea was for staff members to bake an item of their choice - biscuits or cake - which would then be sold to other members of staff, helping to fill empty tums while raising vital funds for the charity at the same time.

"We decided to introduce an element of competition by asking a trio of judges from the DaC Board to find the top three bakers," Christine told *Call Sign* with rather a mischievous glint in her eye! "We gave each entry a number rather than name to maintain the baker's anonymity from the judges, so that every entry stood purely on its own merits. My colleagues and I in HR knew who had baked what, but that was classified information right up until the judging panel had concluded their deliberations and the winners were announced later that morning."

Head Judge **Keith Cain** added, while wiping the remains of a sticky toffee muffin from his lips:

"The standard of all the entries was extremely high, which made for some tough decisions for the judging panel. Together with **Allan Evans** and **Allen Togwell**, we munched our way through some delicious and creative bakes and after several re-tastes, finally settled on the top three entries. But we must congratulate all the entrants for their high level of creativity and enthusiasm for the project, not to mention them being so generous with their time in aid of such a worthwhile cause."

First prize went to **Antoinette Gardner** from Admin with her carrot cake entry. She won an extra day's leave, a bottle of



Champers + other goodies. Second was **Louise Taylor** from Despatch with her Victoria sponge cake, whilst close by in third place came **Tino Mangwiza** from the Contact Centre who baked a banana and cinnamon cake. They both won a goody bag.

When *Call Sign* spoke to Antoinette after the winners had been announced, she told us she'd done it for the charity, but had not really expected to win!

"I was pushed for time the evening I baked it," said Antoinette, "and while I took care over it, I didn't really think anything of it. I just took it into the office, popped it in the fridge and entered it!"

Paraphrasing her French namesake from the past, Antoinette grinned as she proclaimed with a twinkle: "If they have not got bread... let them eat cake!"

Her winning pastry was soon consumed by staff members, leaving *Call Sign's* photograph-

In aid of Sport Relief, it's...

# THE GREAT DIAL-A-CAB BAKE OFF!



It didn't win but said it all!

Inset pic: Antoinette Gardner was judged to be the winner



Dee, Daren and Christina with some of the staff who entered the bake-off

er with little chance of snapping the winning cake itself and absolutely no chance of a crafty bite!

**John Rogers**, Dial-a-Cab's Director of HR, later confirmed that the fund-raising effort had realised £350 from cake sales, all of which has been donated to Sport Relief as the charity's total pushes ever-closer to an incredible

£53million.

Well done to all the wonderful bakers and generous buyers, plus a special thank you to the three judges for jeopardising their waistlines so selflessly in aid of a good cause...

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**Jon Trevor (W94)** has appeared in *Call Sign* many times since his arrival at **Dial-a-Cab** in 1997. Usually those appearances involve his participation in a triathlon – at his peak he was one of the top triathletes in the UK – although more recently he did 1000 push-ups to help raise funds for a former DaC driver who was having severe medical and financial problems.

**But this time is different. He wrote to *Mailsbot* to ask a question:**

“I have recently left the LCDC but would like to join another trade organisation as I believe that we should all belong to something. Could you give me any advice on who to join?”

So we asked the LTDA, Unite and RMT to tell Jon what they offered in return for his membership. They appear purely in alphabetical order...

### THE LTDA from General Secretary, Steve McNamara...

“Why should you join the LTDA? The obvious answer might be because 9000 other drivers can't be wrong! But the correct answer is not because we are the biggest and ten times larger than any other trade organisation, but because we are the best at what we do. And what we do is protect and represent working cab drivers at all levels with a range of membership benefits that are unequalled anywhere.

In recent years, with the advent of CCTV and the growth of our 'Big Brother' society, there has been a massive increase in the number of Penalty Charge Notices being issued and the number of taxi drivers being prosecuted for alleged motoring and other offences has gone through the roof. The LTDA is the *only* trade association that employs its own in-house solicitors and barristers who specialise in both Hackney Carriage and Criminal law, and unlike other trade groups our legal protection has NO small print. If you are a member and your badge is under threat, we cover you - no ifs and no buts. Our 'Badgesafe' is different to most other schemes because it is not run by an insurance company which restricts cover for certain offences. For example, not providing cover when you are driving your car, or when you don't have a passenger in the cab at the time of the alleged offence. There simply are no catches with the LTDA scheme – if you are a member you're covered!

Accidents and illness can, and do occur. LTDA members have the opportunity to benefit by upgrading to the Association's exclusive protection scheme which provides income when a member is unfit or unable to work.

The LTDA, along with Unite and LCDC are the only groups recognised by the Mayor, the PCO and TfL and we are consulted and informed on all issues that relate to the trade, we don't always get our own way but we do influence policy and our increasing membership ensures that the trade's voice is heard.”

**RMT from former cab section Chairman, Eddie Lambert (V37)...**  
Thinking on how to approach Jon Trevor's

*Jon Trevor asks Call Sign...*

# Who should I join???



**Jon wants to know what the various trade organisations can offer him**

question, it struck me that I could do it in one of two ways. Outline the benefits of being a member of the RMT or disparage the other driver groups in general and London in particular. Having been a member of all the other groups at one time or another I guess I could follow the second option but I do believe that it is better for each driver to be in something rather than nothing and so I will not follow that route, other than to say straight off that though the RMT is a Trade Union, it is not affiliated to the Labour Party and does not fund the Labour Party. Members do pay a political levy (opt out is an option) but this is used by the union for its own political ends. This means that when it gets political it's for the member's benefit and not at the request of or direction of others.

The main reason any driver should be a member of anything comes back to an old adage told to me whilst doing the Knowledge: *It takes years to get your badge and seconds to lose it.* True then and even more so now with modern electronic equipment spying 24/7 on the roads. Legal protection should be the first thing any driver setting out on the roads to earn a living makes a decision on. No good coming running to a trade organisation after the event. None of them are registered charities and will not and should not use their member's resources to defend those that cannot be bothered before the event. The RMT provide a 24 hour criminal helpline which, should you be arrested for anything, then a solicitor is a call away and if necessary will attend the police station you are held at. There is also a legal helpline for other matters, whether they be trade related or not, which is available to members from 8am to 8pm. Legal representation in court is also covered if necessary. We use solicitors who are experienced in Hackney Carriage Law as well as Thompsons, the national specialists in Employment and Civil liberties law. As they

never work for the prosecution, there is no conflict of interests. Should you lose a traffic related case and have joined the 'Fines Pool' costing £5 a year, then the fine will be paid as well. Many fines also paid without court appearance (details on a leaflet).

Possibly of more interest to some is the option of attending 10 branch meetings a year (more if the situation needs it) to have a say on branch policy and what decisions are made by the branch on things that affect the trade. Despite noises made by others that we are not recognised by TfL and LTPH, we have input with both and their political masters and our voice is heard loud and clear.

We are also the only trade union that does not recruit Private Hire drivers, so we have no internal conflicts of interest.

### Unite (Cab Section) from Advisory Committee member, Peter Bond (L67)...

Unite is one of the most influential trade unions in the country and the Cab Section, which was formed in 1874, has a long history of leading actions to defend and improve the conditions of cab drivers. Unite's Cab Section is the only truly national organisation for cab drivers. The future of the trade has never been secure and Unite is fighting for the benefits of drivers and their passengers.

**Basic Membership:** £13.96 per month. Benefits: Free legal advice for you and your family on Unite *CareXpress* helpline. Free Will Service for you and your spouse. Only £333.12 incl VAT for Martin Cordell's comprehensive accountancy service.

Experienced representation/advice at all levels - LTPH, TfL, police, all Government departments, local councils, airports, stations, European Commission - dealing with fares, vehicle design, ranks, bus lanes, complaints from the public, Carriage Officers (a daunting prospect without support) etc.

Access to regular branch meetings run by working Cab Drivers elected by members.

**Or with Driver Care:** £17.42 per month. Additional Benefits;

£7000 for loss of licence due to injury, disability, illness, poor eyesight or assault.

£5000 for death or permanent disability due to an accident at work.

£1000 following an assault at work.

Financial support for legal costs incurred whilst working as a Licensed Taxi Driver including some traffic offences. Payment of certain PCN's whilst working, within reason, not parking or zigzag fines.

**All the above for less than 60p a day!**

The bottom line is, as Alan often writes, even if for only selfish reasons, when the 'proverbial' hits the fan you don't want be out there on your own! And yes we do have a political edge that the others don't – something we're proud of.





On a cold and wet Sunday afternoon in March, my wife and I decided to take my grandson out for a meal of his choice. That was a barbecue-type meal which Harvester restaurants are famous for, so we set off for **The Chingford** at 175 New Road, Chingford. After parking, my wife went in to enquire how long the wait would be? They said 30 minutes, so we decided to wait.

We went into the pub and ordered some drinks while waiting. Both my wife and grandson decided that the rain had influenced their bladder and that it needed emptying. So they went off to the toilets with both commenting on the cleanliness of the facilities. In my mind, if the toilets are clean then the rest of the restaurant usually follows the trend.

After some 20 minutes, a friendly young lady came to escort the three of us to our table and gave us menus. Within a few minutes another very pleasant waiter, *Simon*, asked if we needed any help or whether we were ready to order our meals. He was to change a miserable afternoon caused by the depressing weather into a pleasure for us, having braved the elements for a meal!

**Eating out reasonably with Tom Whitbread. This time it's a Harvester restaurant...**

## Harvest the pleasures?

The first thing that I noticed about Simon was the way he connected to children in the restaurant; parents can find trying to keep children happy an horrific part of a meal. Simon treated the children as though they were little adults, he didn't try talk down to them but assisted and explained the menu so they could make their own choices. He was then their best friend!

Whilst my grandson and I waited for our hot starters, my wife went to the *salad bar* to get her healthy starter. On her return, my wife commented on how fresh and crisp the salad seemed to be with a good variety. My grandson, assisted by Simon, had chosen the *Harvester classic* starter which is designed for two to share. So I joined him. The starter arrived within minutes and had a fine variety; it was hot and very tasty. During the time we were eating the starter, Simon returned to the table to ask if everything was up to our satisfaction and if it wasn't, then to call him immediately.

For our main course, my wife had chosen the *steak* with a side order of *jacket potato* and *vegetables*. Both my grandson and I ordered the *spit roast chicken* with *boneless barbecue ribs* accompanied by *buttered peas* and *seasoned fries*. These arrived within a good time to allow us to have digested our starters.

As most readers know, I am never one to hide any complaint or not inform of any pitfalls that occur to me in restaurants, shops, theatres or other establishments that I frequent. So as you read this review, you may be shocked that

I am giving praise to a person who is supplying a service to me, the customer! But I do know that if somebody deserves a good report I will always make sure that you know about it. As you know I spent many years as a waiter, both silver service and normal service, so I have an insight into the problems of difficult diners.

During the time I was eating, I was watching Simon and his method of inspiring the rest of the staff to make all other diners have a pleasurable experience while eating in this establishment. It is a very long time since I've seen one person - whether male or female - inspire other staff in such a way, this gave diners the reason to volunteer so many flattering remarks as they paid their bills and left the restaurant.

This may not be termed a high-class restaurant, but it is certainly one that I would thoroughly recommend. The experience was so enjoyable that I finished my meal by having a *strawberry shortbread sundae*, much to my wife's disgust due to my expanding waistline! This was followed by a cappuccino coffee.

If you decide to follow my advice and make a visit to this restaurant and you spot Simon moving rapidly around the restaurant trying to make the diners time more pleasant and giving his staff the same incentive, just tell him that his service did not go unnoticed by a certain patron, as you had read about him in **Call Sign**!

**Tom Whitbread**  
DaC Board member

**London's Transport Commissioner, Peter Hendy, has told an American newspaper that he gives up trying to please London's taxi drivers with regard to the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games!**

According to the highly respected **Wall Street Journal**, Mr Hendy showed little sympathy for our trade and that his face even darkened (with rage?) when the interviewer brought up mention of the world famous London taxis! He was quoted in the paper as saying:

**"I have given up with some of the taxi drivers now. I tell them that if they want to go on holiday for three months, then go on holiday and let their mates make all the money."**

**"London is going to be absolutely full of people bursting with money, full of people coming here to have a good time. And if the taxi drivers decide to go on holiday, there will just be more work for the ones that are left!"**

Mr Hendy also has advice for Londoners in general. They can save some rush-hour misery by delaying their return home and taking a detour via the pub to sink a pint first! That could help spread the much heavier expected rush hour during the tenure of the Games. Mr Hendy steers clear of what the latecomers should tell their better halves when getting home to a burnt dinner!

But with a twinkle in his eye, Mr Hendy added: "Going for a beer cures almost everything."

**Peter Hendy and London's black cab drivers...**

# I GIVE UP!



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Cardiff City supporter, Welsh rugby fanatic, keen fisherman and **Dial-a-Cab** Roman Way depot technician, **Steve Thomas** has told *Call Sign* of a recent incident while going to the Millennium Stadium to see his team play **Bob Woodford's** beloved **Millwall FC**. While sorting out a DaC driver's terminal, Steve told us his tale...

"My pal and I came out of Cardiff railway station around 9am on the Saturday of the match so that we could have breakfast before the place got busy with crowds preparing for the lunchtime kick-off," Steve said.

"As we stepped out of the station, about 30 or so yards away from us a man in his mid-20s was staggering along the street, obviously the worse for wear after a steady night's drinking in one or more of Cardiff's numerous hospitality venues. Suddenly he threw the empty beer bottle he had been waving in his hand, to the ground. It was the noise of the glass smashing on the paving stones that drew our attention to this obnoxious individual, with such loutish behaviour so early in the morning. With that I said to my friend that if he came towards us, we would give him a miss as he looked like trouble."

Many years ago, *Call Sign* reported on how Steve had chased a mugger, caught him and did something to the mugger's former good looks that would be considered definitely un-PC in today's liberal society, so there was no way that the duo were afraid. They just did not want any trouble.

"Sure enough," Steve went on, "as the yob was generally creating an unpleasant atmosphere around him with his unsocial antics, an elderly gentleman came walking around the corner from an adjacent street, quietly going about his own business. The yob then staggered towards the pensioner

**Steve Thomas, depot technician at DaC's Roman Way tells Call sign about...**

## The Cyclist, the paintpot and the drunk!



When Steve isn't at football or rugby, he likes to do a bit of quiet fishing!

shouting loudly: "Who you looking at granddad," using a very threatening tone. It was then I decided if he came near us, I was going to knock him out cold with one punch to prevent him offending anyone else. Yes, of course I checked if there were security cameras in the area," Steve confided to *Call Sign*, grinning broadly!

"As the drunk wobbled unsteadily out into the roadway, a cyclist was making his way along the road balancing a large pot of white paint in one hand, while steering his cycle with the other," Steve explained still smiling at the memory.

"The drunk then decided to challenge the pedal cyclist to change direction or run him over by screaming 'come on then, come on then!' He was also waving his arms around menacingly in mid-air. The cyclist continued on his chosen line, undeterred by the idiot standing directly in his path," Steve continued, his own arms flailing around like windmill sails.

"The two protagonists bore down on each other, the gap between them getting smaller as they closed in on each other like duellists. Neither seemed prepared to give way to the other. Finally, when the drunk was within arms' length, the cyclist - without deviating from his course - raised the arm holding the paintpot and took a well-directed swing at the drunk, hitting him squarely across the head, knocking him sideways to the ground - but also splattering him with brilliant white gloss! He then finished the job by throwing the remains of the now exploded open tin at the drunk lying stunned in the kerbside. All that without hesitating on his bike for a moment," said Steve still grinning broadly.

"Well, he certainly saved me doing the job, the obnoxious idiot!"

With that, Steve continued fitting the radio. The match result? 0 - 0!

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## Fever taxi spares at the Liver

Fever Cab Spares have been around for many years with the man behind it, **Ilyas Karim**, having been seen so often on the old **Dial-a-Cab** Finsbury Square rank in his mobile cab shop, that many must have thought he was actually a driver!

But no, Ilyas is the man who has for all those years provided licensed taxi drivers with the spare parts that you couldn't get anywhere else because those establishments inconveniently closed at around 5pm. Ilyas has been seen at all times through the evening and even into the night.

Now he has taken his taxi spares business one step further and joined up with **Dave Williams**, whose dry cleaning and key cutting service is based next to the **Liverpool Street taxi rank** at number 28. If you need something fairly easy such as a bulb, badge holder, account book, new leather bag etc, then the chances are that Dave will have it at 28 Liverpool Street providing it's between 7am and 6pm on Tuesday to Thursday or till 11pm on Monday and Friday.

If the part is one that isn't usually stocked, then just phone Ilyas on **07984 473 111** and he will get the part for you and it will be in Dave's shop by the next day. That's what we call service...



I am still in a state of disbelief as to what I witnessed on Saturday 7th April – the day of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race.

During the course of my shift, I had a job in the early evening going down to Putney - Lower Richmond Road to be precise. I was pleased to see so many people still around, obviously left over from watching the race earlier in the day and I knew I wouldn't have a problem picking up again once I dropped my job.

As I pulled up and as luck would have it, I saw a young couple on the other side of the road indicating that they would like a taxi, but

It is unusual for Call Sign to publish a controversial unsigned article, but we know the DaC driver's name and call sign. It has also been sent to LTPH complete with full details of the drivers concerned...

## YELLOW BADGES PICKING UP IN GREEN AREAS



whilst I was clearing my previous job, a taxi with his *For Hire* light on was coming the other way and pulled up next to the couple. To my amazement, he had a yellow identifier in his windscreen but then proceeded to take the job and disappear in a cloud of black smoke. I tried to turn my cab round, but there was a steady line of traffic flowing against me coming from the west.

Whilst waiting to U-turn, I noticed in this steady line of traffic two cabs pass me with their *For Hire* lights on but with no identifiers in either front or rear windows, just the empty sleeves that hold them on. I managed to complete my U-turn behind the second cab and within 100 yards we both got flagged down with us both reaching the corner of Putney Bridge and Lower Richmond Road together when the traffic lights were at red.

I pulled alongside this taxi only to see the driver inputting information into his satnav and it crossed my mind that he perhaps was not an All London licenced green badge driver. However, I remembered reading in *Call Sign* that TfL did not want drivers to confront each other, so I just noted his details.

My interest in what was going on in Putney had been heightened, so I then drove back to Lower Richmond Road and parked up on the corner of Waterman Street to watch. To my bewilderment that evening - and some several hours after the boat race had finished - I watched taxi after taxi, some with no identifiers, some with just the front yellow identifier and some with both yellow identifiers, they were driving up and down with their *For Hire* lights on. Some taxis had already been hired with passengers in, but had no identifiers.

I also noted taxis taking hirings with yellow identifiers and without identifiers. Whilst sitting there noting all these details, number plates, times and locations etc, it went through my mind about whether I had made a mistake or was I just going mad? Were these drivers allowed to pick up on Lower Richmond Road, and although I was 99.99% positive that yellow badge drivers were not allowed to pick up from Lower Richmond Road, when you see so many of

them blatantly doing it right in front of you, you begin to doubt yourself. But that still doesn't explain why so many cabs are driving round with their *For Hire* lights on and their identifiers missing!

After I had filled up two sheets of my note pad with all these taxi's details, I then turned my *For Hire* light back on and within a few yards got flagged down to head towards Petersham. Upon dropping my fare off, I suddenly saw in front of me *Knowledge of London* examiner, **Mr Thomas!** Well if anyone was going to know whether a yellow badge driver was allowed to pick up on Lower Richmond Road, then he would!

I got out of my taxi and went over to his cab to ask him. And just as I had thought, yellow badge drivers are not allowed to take hirings from Lower Richmond Road. The one exception in Putney where a yellow badge Richmond-upon-Thames driver may take a hiring from is the Island rank outside Putney Station on Putney High Street.

Obviously, these identifiers only came into force on 1st March 2012. Are they working well? Well your guess is as good as mine but I really wish the cab enforcement team had been there earlier in the day to curtail this activity and all those people looking for a cab could have got into legal taxis.

But as you drive around the city and west end, how many taxis do you see without their identifiers or maybe just the rear one missing? Not many I bet. But if you drive further out from central London towards the suburbs and then take a look, it's more than you think and I can only wonder why.

As a professional driver, I understand the importance of not confronting suspected illegal touts but I feel the issue of illegal toutting has not been resolved with the issuing of taxi identifiers and we should not draw a line under this issue because as I witnessed on that Saturday, it appears to be thriving in Putney!

I just wonder how much more illegal activity was going on further up the river, because I only observed a few hundred yards of Lower Richmond Road and obviously the boat race covers a distance of over 4 miles.

**All the details I have taken of these cabs will now be passed onto TfL and I shall keep you all informed of the outcome.**

**Name and badge number provided to Call Sign and to the authorities.**

*Editor's note: It is not Call Sign's desire to launch a witch hunt against yellow badge drivers – the majority of whom do an excellent job in their allotted areas. However, they have no more right to pick up street hails in green badge areas than minicab touts do and as such, we will not look the other way just because they drive the same vehicles as us...*

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### Who's for Mayor???

Who is gonna be selected,  
and do we really care?

Will our trade still be protected,  
by whoever becomes the Mayor?

We've got no *dead cert* choices,  
none ever keep their word.  
When it comes down to OUR voices,  
each one's fighting to be heard!

There's one who's had the power  
with his strange reptilian stare.  
And the man of the hour  
with his blond, windswept hair.

There's the *Save the Planet* candidate  
who wants us to be Green.  
But the ex-copper's mandate,  
still I haven't seen.

As for the other contenders,  
who knows what plans they store?  
Each wants control of London,  
our trade, our lives and more!

So do we NEED a Mayor in London?  
Me, I've got my doubts.  
Before you cast your vote,  
ask what is a mayor about?

A leader of the Capital?  
A symbol of our might?  
A representative of the people?  
Or an enemy we must fight...?

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Divyesh (right) receives his Freedom of the City

## DIVYESH GETS HIS WCHCD FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Divyesh Ruparelia (V59) has been on **Dial-a-Cab** since 2004 and was the first driver to test out **Power Pill for Call Sign** in the days when he drove a Metrocab.

Nowadays he drives a Vito and this time his entry into the mag is somewhat of a higher brow nature, when at the end of March Divyesh received his City Freedom having become a Freeman of the WCHCD last year.

He told **Call Sign**: "This was a very proud moment for me, having come to Britain in 1982 from Tanzania and now, after almost 30 years to be involved in one of the oldest surviving traditional civil ceremonies, was quiet touching.

"But more importantly, it now allows me the

opportunity to take the Livery which is highly encouraged by the WCHCD. This is so that you can become eligible to serve the Company at committee and court level - not forgetting the entitlement to vote in the annual election of The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs!"

There was a time when becoming a Freeman would give you the right to take your sheep over London Bridge without paying the toll. Of course there's no toll nowadays but as Divyesh so eloquently put it, there are times when it would still be quicker to walk over the bridge!

Well done Divyesh; could we be looking at the first Lord Mayor of London from Tanzania - not to mention Dial-a-Cab!

Following a £2.3million upgrade...

## HORNIMAN GARDENS RE-OPEN

On Thursday 31 May, the **Horniman Museum and Gardens** – a long-time favourite of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers and their families - will reopen its 16.5 acre gardens to the public after a major £2.3million redevelopment. The project, masterminded by landscape architects *Land Use Consultants*, has taken 16 months to complete and marks an important point in the history of the gardens, which were first opened to the public by Horniman Museum founder Frederick Horniman in 1895. Funding from the *Heritage Lottery Fund* and *Big Lottery* through the *Parks for People* scheme has now allowed all major areas of the Gardens to be improved.

The most significant new development is the introduction of a **Gardens Pavilion** designed by *Walters and Cohen*, which will host school groups, conferences, lectures and public performances. The contemporary timber building features floor to ceiling windows, a living roof and a spectacular outdoor terrace with views of the London skyline. The building, situated in the heart of the Gardens, will build on the Horniman's educational reputation, giving students close up experience of animals and nature. The **Gardens Pavilion** is heated by a ground source pump allowing the Horniman to reduce both its carbon footprint and utility costs.

**The Horniman will develop many more diverse wildlife activities and scientific sessions including pond dipping, fungi walks, mini beast hunts and landscape painting using the Pavilion and the adjoining nature trail.**

The newly developed **Animal Walk** will be home to alpacas, goats, sheep, chickens, rabbits and ferrets which will be introduced gradually to the space and visitors will see how people live alongside domesticated animals and how our relationship with animals has changed.

Across the terrace sits the bandstand, designed by Charles Harrison

Townsend - architect of the Horniman's landmark 1901 clock tower. The bandstand has been given a new lease of life with oak floorboards and the restoration of the original weather vane. The impressive views from the bandstand, which for decades have been masked behind screens, have now been restored, with new glass panels evoking its heyday a century ago and allowing the London skyline to once again become a dramatic, living backdrop to both professional and community music performances. In addition, there is the **Sound Garden** - a brand new musical play area inspired by instruments from around the world. There is also the **Sunken Garden**, which now features a reflection pool surrounded with a palette of plants and flowers used to make dye. Built in 1936, the outer beds are now a showcase for dozens of dye plants grouped according to the colour they produce.

The **Food Garden** celebrates plants from all over the world which thrive in the south London soil and climate and will include tips for growing crops. The **Materials Garden** includes plants used to make a whole range of products, such as the giant reed whose bamboo-like



Part of the Pavillion and animal enclosure

stems are used to make oboe, clarinet and saxophone reeds. The Garden also features plants used to treat illnesses in different parts of the world, as traditional remedies or in the make-up of modern medicines.

There is much to see at the Horniman Museum & Gardens at 100 London Road, Forest Hill, SE23 3PQ. Admission is free (the Aquarium has an admission charge). It opens from 10.30am -5.30pm daily and the Museum and Gardens are both wheelchair and pushchair friendly.

More info on 020 8699 1872...



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Last month's *Call Sign* told of the sensational development at **Wembley Football Club** where it was announced that no less than **Budweiser** are now sponsoring the team - in addition to the **FA Cup** which they are sponsoring as part of a three year deal. **Dial-a-Cab** driver and Wembley FC goalkeeper **Lee Pearce (J71)** told this magazine that while *Call Sign's* sponsorship a few years back was very welcome, Budweiser is a whole new can (sic)!

"Believe me, the help that both *Call Sign* and DaC offered the club several years ago was really appreciated, but Budweiser intend pouring money in from the grass roots upwards. But even I was shocked when Budweiser announced that no less that Terry Venables had been brought to the club as technical advisor to the club's coaches!"

*El Tel*, as he became known while managing **Barcelona**, has also managed **Brian Rice's** QPR and **Alan Fisher's** Tottenham in addition to Crystal Palace and Leeds United. He successfully managed the England national team, whom he later led to the 1996 European Championship semi-finals.

Now aged 69, Terry has returned to football by joining Wembley in the premier division of the *Combined Counties League*.

Speaking to *Call Sign*, *El Tel* said: "To be honest, my title is a bit up in the air. You can call me the club's technical advisor, but I prefer to think of myself as a mentor to the team and coaches. And there may be a few surprises to come!"

Long time Wembley captain, **Ian Bates**, said: "This is a tremendous opportunity for Wembley. To have a football legend like Terry Venables mentor not just me, but the whole club is a dream come true. I believe that our passion combined with his expertise will propel the club to new levels. His arrival has brought extra magic to this already fantastic experience for the club and we're looking forward to the journey."

Last word goes to DaC's Lee Pearce: "When I returned to Wembley this season, I had no idea about what was about to happen, but boy am I pleased I did come back. This is one journey I could never have dreamed of doing - even in a Dial-a-Cab taxi!"



# LEE'S WEMBLEY HEAD FOR THE BIG TIME!

*With Terry Venables the first big signing!*



Terry Venables arrives at Wembley

Inset pic: Lee pulls up in the club's car park as a taxi driver



Lee makes another save as Wembley goalkeeper as they beat Croydon 5-1

In the meantime, Wembley continued on their winning ways with a 5 - 1 demolition of Croydon FC.

*Call Sign* would also like to congratulate Lee and Becky on the birth of their new daughter...

Ron Yarborough  
Call Sign Online

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# LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

with Tom Quigley (Y33)

## A load of mugs?

Having left behind the crowded 3-bed council flat in Clapton where I grew up with my parents and 3 brothers and 3 sisters and now residing in the suburbs of Chingford with my wife and two sons, it seems that what my parents would have classed as spacious living is still not enough space for us. Despite modern furniture being smaller and not so grand, believe it or not, somehow my parents managed to fit a piano into our flat along with an aviary on the balcony next to the coal bunker!

I don't even think that any one of us had any musical talent, though I must admit my late father loved on a Sunday morning to "show off" by reciting a full mass - including requiems and hymns in Latin! He could also hold a tune at the usual birthday or family celebrations and gatherings, which seemed to be every other weekend and always ending up with a song, maybe a row - and on a good night, both!

There is no doubt that we never had the clothes we have now, even the pairs of shoes I personally have would have deemed to be extravagant to the point of the Rothschild's back then.

Look at our kitchen with all its modern appliances, devices and gadgets needed to make sure we get through the day. There's the fridge / freezer, washing machine, dishwasher, tumble dryer, electric kettle, toaster, blenders, George

Foreman grills (plural), juicer, microwave, food processor, sandwich maker, ice cream and bread makers and even then I'm sure I have probably left some other gadgets out, but I couldn't see the back of the cupboards for the number of cans - no doubt in case we get cut off from the 24 hour shops!

But talking of cupboards; when the fresh batch of Easter Eggs in mugs come from family members for my young 26 and 28 year old sons, I decided to have a count up of the number of mugs (me aside) that were in our household - despite only four adults and the occasional visits from girlfriends and nans etc - I counted a staggering 44 mugs! There were the Easter egg ones from yesteryear, the everyday ones on the mug tree (another gadget), holiday memorabilia ones and mugs reserved for DIY and builders uses. I didn't even bother counting the special tea service brought out and fully laid on the Xmas table - even though it isn't used as we drink Champagne on that day!

We moan about the size of modern houses and the lack of space; but on reflection it could be that where the modern family generally have fewer children, we now have more stuff.

Got to go... now which coat should it be???

## Hospital food: Good or bad for the patient?

I was on a recent visit to see a friend in hospital, sitting making small talk as one does and asking the usual stupid questions

like how are you? Obviously he isn't well or he wouldn't be there! But you have to ask, even knowing he is sick of everyone asking the same question and him having to reply.

But like all friends and relatives, the big question is what to bring him in as the rules on foods and fruit etc are different for individual hospitals. It seems that the whole debate about hospital food being good or bad is an urban myth (just as is school dinners). It's more than likely that the hospital patient is a fussy eater, obviously unwell and not feeling hungry or on a special diet.

Every family I observed had a whole range of foodstuff in bags, fizzy drinks (surely not a dietary must) and from what I saw, the food was not even for the patient! I watched several families pull a range of plates and food, serving it up as though it was the annual picnic whilst sitting around the bed and the patient being still asleep!

It is not right and an extra strain on nursing staff, other patients and cleaners that this practice is allowed to go on with food-stuffs being dropped on beds and floors.

It should be mandatory that only food-stuff for the patient is consumed on the ward. It's a hospital... not a restaurant.

Tom Quigley (Y33)

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I don't have to tell you how hard it is out there; as you know, I also drive a taxi and like you I am certainly finding it difficult. Of course you can be lucky and get the occasional decent trip - perhaps out west to LAP - but relying on luck doesn't pay the bills.

Naturally members who see me when I am working on my cab and perhaps sitting on a rank, often come over and complain about the lack of work and ask what are DaC's Board members doing about marketing the company and sometimes even throw in the occasional derogatory remark. However, most of those do tend to come from a tiny minority.

There is relentless competition in attracting our work from the owners of anything that has wheels and the new interactive technologies such as mobile phone Applications, which I'm sure involve large investments from venture capitalists. I hear that Hailo recently borrowed around £12million. Drivers with friends and relatives on other radio circuits also say that they are finding it extremely difficult in the current climate.

So here's the thing; even when the radio work we have all regarded as lucrative and plentiful in the past is being lost, we must still make the effort to keep our service levels to a maximum. Although the Board has a responsibility to you to provide work, as shareholders we must also look to ourselves as members and owners of the Society to see what we can do to help.

In my opinion, marketing any organisation as an exemplary service is paramount. Working together as both management and members is extremely important. So what can drivers do?

In our Driver's Reception there are stacks of **Dial-a-Cab** business cards; every time you get paid by cash or a credit card street hail trip, please give a card to the passenger.

Some of the Sales team at Dial-a-Cab House are becoming even more proactive and visiting existing clients, showing our customers how easy it is to use the new online booking system and also listening to clients should there be any problems with our service, relaying those issues back to their relative account manager.

**These measures are proving to be suc-**

# Mike Son's bits and pieces...



**Successful in allowing the customer to feel they are part of a team of individuals at DaC who have not only the best interest in maintaining good service, but where possible to help them save costs. In other words, to DaC they are not just a name and an account number on an invoice.**

Having new in-house constructed technologies such as an easy-to-use profile based online booking system, new driver terminals with satellite-navigation, chip and pin and new invoicing designed software will benefit both the driver and more importantly the customer; marketing will be an ever increasing strategy promoting our Society.

**In my opinion no other taxi company or for that matter minicab firm has such a professional dedicated team.**

Nonetheless, if the business and private sectors are unaware of what Dial-a-Cab can offer, what is the point of all the investment of time and money having cabs with the unique Dial-a-

Cab logo? It has to be complimented by good marketing strategies. Therefore the Board will be looking at various further cost effective methods in promoting the services we provide.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the meantime please pop into Driver Reception and pick up both the business cards and receipt pads.

## Remember when...

My thanks to the drivers that contacted the Editor to say how much they enjoyed my look back at 'yesterday'. As you get older, you do seem to remember more about what happened twenty years ago than you do about last week.

Several drivers mentioned that they also remembered taking passengers to the West India Docks to see whether there was room on the banana boat that had come to London stacked high with the yellow fruit, but had to return to the West Indies empty. So, if the passengers were happy to go the sunshine islands in uncomfortable conditions, the fares on the banana boat were ultra-cheap. However, never mind no swimming pool, some passengers even slept on the deck! Security? What was that!

There were also stories about Bourne & Hollingsworth and trying to fit weird shaped items of furniture into the cab while parked in Oxford Street with no trace of any traffic wardens, while another driver told of a radio job that involved waiting at Charing Cross station for almost 7 hours!

My thanks to all who gave their stories...

**Mike Son**  
**DaC Special Projects**

## DaC cab available

**Dial-a-Cab** drivers often ask if anyone knows of a DaC cab available while their one is in overhaul. Well, DaC subscriber and proprietor of **Just Cabs in Dunbridge Street, Howard Kott (B74)**, has a spare TX4 taxi on DaC that is very often available for rent.

**If you aren't sure where you've heard his name before, Howard is a three-time winner of the Taxi Driver of the Year competition!**

Although Just Taxis carry out all manner of taxi running repairs, servicing, overhauls and bodywork, Howard is happy to rent the cab out even if you are having your work carried out elsewhere. Just call Howard on 0207 739 0210...



**Howard Kott**

## Annual Taxi Fares and Tariff Review 2012

Following the annual consultation and review of taxi fares, on 2 February 2012 the Transport for London (TfL) Board approved a 5.3% increase to taxi fares. The increase was calculated using the Cost Index agreed through consultation with taxi trade representatives and combines changes in the costs of operating a taxi in London with national earnings to produce a change in average fares.

*The TfL Board also approved:*

- \* A 20p increase to the 'flagfall' taking this from £2.20 to £2.40
  - \* A 40p additional charge which will be implemented only if London retail diesel prices (as measured by the Arval index) reach 179.7p/litre
  - \* Increases to certain fares for the existing fixed-fare taxi schemes
  - \* Additional fixed-fare schemes for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Although there was a suggestion to introduce an additional charge or premium for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, this was not approved by the TfL Board and normal fares and tariff rates will apply during the Games. The TfL Board also approved the implementation of a scheme which will allow certain taxi companies to charge pre-agreed fares for pre-booked taxi journeys. The criteria that companies must meet and the circumstances when these fares could be charged are being finalised and once completed a separate notice will be issued confirming the details.

The new taxi fares and tariffs come into effect from Saturday 14 April 2012.

**John Mason**  
**Director LTPH**



*Roll up, roll up, I have an important announcement to make. Buy a ticket now for the magic roundabout and you could become a winner and be transported to Never Neverland where everything is free! Life today is a bit like a magic roundabout, you never quite know how it will end up...*

In reality, it's the same old faces running the show, with the same old promises. A case in point is the Mayoral election in May. You wheel in the two front runners in the race, take the dust sheet off and place a glass of best *Bollinger* in Boris's hand and a *Chilean* red in Ken's. After a few sips, they are up and running and can talk the talk whilst doing the Lambeth Walk!

Some of the spin going out on all this is that Boris is a toff and doesn't understand real-life working people, whereas Ken is your grass

# Election ahoy!

## Are we moving to Never Neverland???

roots ordinary bloke who understands how tough life is for Londoners, so has vowed to cut fares by 7%. So Boris responds that slashing fares by this much is not achievable as London needs capital investment to safeguard its future and improve its services.

Ken has not exactly endeared himself to London's taxi drivers by implementing two overhauls on their taxis while he was in office. Boris removed the two overhauls saying it was too much red tape for drivers. So we'll have an overhaul and a MOT instead! However, both say they are supporters of the black cab and that it is the finest taxi service in the world.

**The Olympics this year is a great opportunity for London, which hopefully kick-starts the economy for us all and helps regenerate a deprived part of London.**

As a London taxi driver, we are sometimes asked whether an area is safe and a nice place to live in. No doubt that could be asked by people travelling to the Olympic stadium in Stratford. The security for the Games will be paramount and so the answer would be a resounding yes, it is safe! However, Stratford in the borough of Newham is in the top ten of

London's worst crime areas. Newham has over a dozen known gangs and the Metropolitan Police have used dispersal zones to combat street gangs/crime. It also has the highest rate for child poverty in London, allied with the highest birth rate in the UK!

If any or all of this frightens the living day-lights out of people, then it would be best for them to weigh anchor in somewhere like Richmond-Upon-Thames, which has royal approval and is one of London's most genteel boroughs, with a low crime rate to match. Voting for political parties today is at an all-time low. People are fed up with the large amounts of money that they and their entourage enjoy, whilst strumming out the same old hackneyed tunes that they think the electorate will lap up like manna from heaven whilst in this financial wilderness.

Politics has become like sport, huge amounts of money for not much in return. Is this why today we are in such *Dire Straits* ie "Money for nothing and get your chicks for free, just play that old guitar on your hands and knee!"

**David Heath (Ex-W27)**

# Taxi driver guilty of rape...

In a very rare case, a licensed London taxi driver has been found guilty of raping his passenger. Edward Chapman was sentenced to seven years behind bars and told he will remain on the sex offenders' register for the rest of his life.

The court was told that a woman had been out with friends when she hailed Chapman's taxi in the early hours. She said she felt unwell and asked to be taken home to Finchley. Almost outside her front door, the driver raped his passenger.

CCTV evidence was found after an investigation by Barnet's Sapphire Unit, which investigates serious sexual crime and which recognised the taxi's distinctive livery. Judge Nicholas Browne sentencing Chapman, made the point: "Black cab drivers have rightly earned a very high reputation as the most reliable drivers round the streets of London. By your conviction, you have damaged the reputation of black cab drivers generally. This rape involves a gross breach of trust by a professional driver to his passenger, taking advantage of a vulnerable passenger. The victim is still affected by her ordeal at your hands. But what emerged about her character was her calmness, her quiet dignity and her quest for justice, which has been achieved."

**Call Sign** had to think twice about reporting the rape because it brings shame on our world renowned profession. However, this is just the third case we know of going back over many years and keeping it secret would just have rebounded as news of the rape hit the public domain. Yes, that is three cases too many, but compared to minicabs it is most definitely the exception rather than the rule. Licensed taxis carry approximately 1/4 million taxi passengers every single day of the week. This was a deplorable incident but our passengers can be confident that there are no safer taxis anywhere in the world.



**Edward Chapman**

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Daniel Heaven (001) wasn't a very happy bunny when *Call Sign* spoke to him recently.

"Actually, I'm fuming mad and disgusted that a fellow taxi driver should have done such damage to another driver's cab and simply driven off without acknowledging any responsibility for it," Daniel told us, pointing to the creases that ran the length of the nearside doors and rear wing of his cab.

"Is there no respect for other people's property anymore," Daniel asked almost rhetorically?

"I have another driver on the cab when I am not using it," he continued "and it was he who parked up in **Great Suffolk Street taxi centre** to buy something in **JVBright's** shop before nipping into the café for a takeaway sandwich and cup of tea. When he came back to the cab just a few minutes later, the foul deed had been done! It looks like some idiot had tried to squeeze into a parking space that was clearly not wide enough, scraped the side of my cab and driven off a bit smartish!"

"There are security cameras around the site and I've checked with JVBright's, but they did not see or hear anything, but maybe another driver did - and that is the point of my appeal," Daniel said.

"All information will be treated in the strictest confidence, of course. I would just like

*Fellow taxi driver scrapes half of Daniel's cab...*

## THEN DRIVES OFF!



Daniel points out the damage which covers both doors and the rear wing

nected to this incident or if you have any information, Daniel would dearly like to hear from you on **07525 538 983**. You don't even need to leave your name if you don't want to. Whoever hit Daniel's cab must have realised what he/she had done and that's what has upset Daniel. He knows that accidents happen,

but running off after doing that to a fellow taxi driver is what upset Daniel far more than the accident itself. If you can help, give Daniel a call...

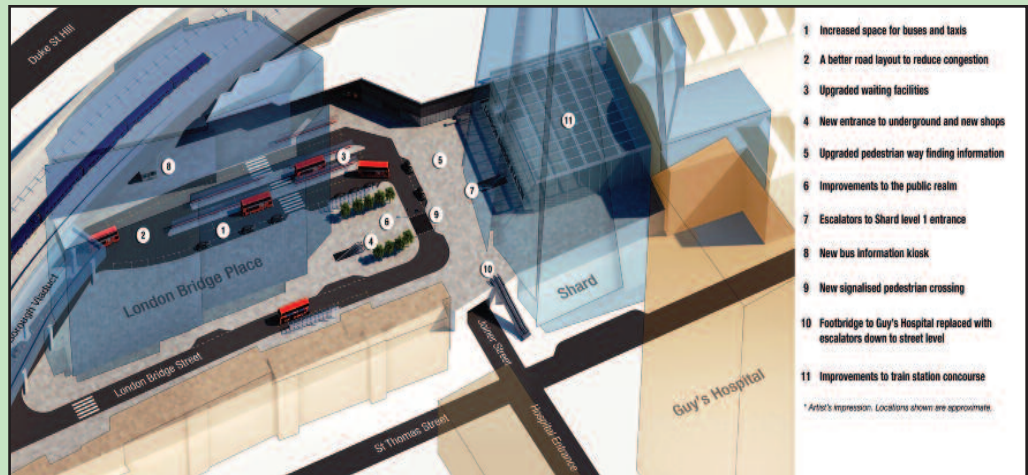
to get the matter sorted. I now have to get the cab repaired, losing time while it's off the road, of course."

If you were in the Great Suffolk Street Taxi Centre around 1.30pm on the Wednesday afternoon of 28th March and saw anything con-

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## London Bridge Taxi Rank

Although it began on Monday 16 April, some of you may not have yet been into London Bridge since that date to see taxis ranking in their new position (see image and also available on the TfL website). The head of the rank will have a new taxi shelter where passengers will be able to wait for a taxi. There will be three set down bays to use directly outside the entrance to London Bridge Station. This will also allow access for dropping-off disabled passengers



## Call Over now available at DaC



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

We have spoken to Editor **Frankie Peet** and DaC is now on the list of places where the monthly mag is left. If you have a son, daughter or even a neighbour who is doing the KoL then keep a look out for *CallOver* in Driver Reception and pass a copy along to them.

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

**Baghwat Singh**  
Call Sign Online

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

# DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

Following last month's article on Bonnie Martyn's controversial departure to Bermuda in 1957 to set up Bermuda radio taxis, Call Sign found this letter written in 1958, so this month's Flashback returns to the January 1958 ODRTS Newsletter. Does anyone know Mr Calcott...?

## LETTERS

I learn from the October Newsletter that our Chairman, Bonnie Martyn, is resigning and going abroad 'with deep reluctance'. Under these circumstances, I feel compelled to write and express my deep regard for him and to thank him for his untiring work and effort that he so generously gave to the London taxi trade. I must confess that I have often wondered how he had so much patience and energy to do all the things that he has so admirably done for us all in the radio world.

I realise only too well what a task he undertook, having myself been associated with the

cab trade for 30-odd years since I began in 1925 and I venture to tell you, old boy, that without your guidance and good counsel, the ODRTS Ltd would in my humble opinion have been a complete and utter flop.

I don't doubt that the anxiety, worry and forthright insults that he has secured and born would have broken the hearts of many a man made of less stuff. However, there are many of us on the circuit who hold Bonnie Martyn in high esteem and readily appreciate all he has done for us, if that is a comfort to him as I am sure it must be.

I would personally like to wish him good luck, good fortune, good health and may God bless him.

Sincerely yours,  
R.W.Calcott, Black 17

Newsletter Editor says: The elected ODRTS Chairman, Bonnie Martyn, has resigned from ODRTS for at least 12 months having been approached to go to Bermuda to introduce a taxi company with two-way radio over there. His drive and initiative were recognised in 1953 when ODRTS was founded and he was made Chairman. Many foreign visitors have visited our London operation and

Bonnie has been able to advise many prospective users. However, some are disappointed that he has so suddenly left our Society.

Mr and Mrs Martyn left for Bermuda via New York on the Queen Mary on December 28th.



*Throughout the whole taxi trade interest is focussed on*

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

## CALL SIGN EN LA BELLE FRANCE

### Goodbye Barry...

*As a lifelong Millwall fan, I was saddened by the passing of our club's all-time appearance holder Barry Kitchener. He played an incredible 602 games for the Lions, mainly at centre-half and mostly as Captain.*



He was a giant of a man who epitomised the spirit of Millwall Football club, spanning 3 decades from his first game in 1967 to his last in 1982. His leadership and loyalty was loved on the terraces and he was quite rightly labelled a legend.

On the several occasions I spoke to him in retirement, he just seemed like a genuinely nice guy who simply wanted to talk about Millwall, past, present and future. Throat cancer cut this huge oak down at just 64 years of age.

It was my dad who took me to my first game at the old Den at the age of 8 in 1964 - I sat up on his shoulders on the half way line. I was hooked. The roar of the crowd got to me. Before the old Surrey Docks closed down in the 1970s, we used to attract much bigger gates and the workers from the Millwall, Royal and Surrey Docks would stand on separate terraces



Millwall legend Barry Kitchener

and try to out-shout each other.

Kitch was a hard, but always fair player. I recall one game against **Birmingham City** when he hit their wide player **Trevor Hockey** so hard that the momentum took him up into the air and over the wall at the Cold Blow Lane end of the ground! Kitch ran back to his central position, while our left back - another uncompromising defender called **Harry Cripps** - went over the wall and with one hand on Hockey's beard and another on his nuts, threw him back onto the pitch! Those were the days... real football!

Kitch once told me a story about the time

when his manager - the late **Benny Fenton** - at the Club's Christmas Party one year went around and finished up the players drinks as he was so concerned about the team performing well against Crystal Palace the next day! Fenton hit a curb driving towards the Blackwall Tunnel on his way home to Chingford, was spotted by the police and got nicked for being over the limit! Those were the days... real football!

Another story, and this one I witnessed for myself, was the time of an away game at **Coventry City**. The players had travelled up on the train with the fans and had to walk with them to the stadium after the train had been severely delayed. The manager, **Gordon Jago**, was going spare when most of the players vanished and he discovered his team had dived into the bookies en route! We all saw him shouting through the door of the bookies: "Kitch, get your f\*\*\*ing team out of here now! If we get to Highfield Road a minute after 2 o'clock, the club will be fined and the Chairman will take it out of my f\*\*\*ing wages!"

Yes, those were the days... real football!  
**Rest in peace, Kitch...**

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



**Call Sign** is a magazine for readers associated with **Dial-a-Cab**. We were also the first taxi magazine to embrace modern technology when in early 1998, thanks to our internet guru **Vince Chin**, we decided to put every issue online. The idea was to aim it at taxi drivers worldwide who had no magazines and were out there somewhere on their own. We began getting emails thanking us and nowadays we have over 9000 regular on-line readers!

But not all of them are taxi drivers and we get emails from all walks of life – but recently, and for the first time, we got one from a **London bus driver** and member of the **London Vintage Taxi Association**, **Barry Elson** – and although you might suspect he would be having a go at us, it was quite the contrary. He wrote:

*“Call Sign Online provides really good reading. But one of the pages that fascinates me most is **Nash's Numbers** and I commend **Alan Nash** for the effort that must go into providing all his information. It amazes me just how much info he seems to provide. What with train times, theatre events, airport arrivals and working out a fare table, he certainly seems to put some effort into aiding the working DaC cabby. Perhaps we should have him do our Olympics bus timetables as well, then we might have a chance of actually being on time – as I'm sure all you taxi drivers are really looking forward to the traffic problems as much as we are!”*

*So for those who have been driving a taxi for 30 years or over and remember when London Transport tried stealing our work by putting specialised buses out there – remember the theatre-linker and the Shoplinker? Barry was involved with Shoplinker and has written about some of those memories just for Call Sign. Perhaps it helps explain why London Transport was eventually broken up...!*

“I started bus work in 1967 at Dalston Garage on the 11 route and in 1975 transferred to Stamford Hill and the 253. I have also been at Leyton, Walthamstow, Stockwell and Barking garages before returning back to Leyton garage in 2000 and I'm still here. I have been the **Unite** Branch Secretary for the past 10 years.

So do you taxi drivers at **Dial-a-Cab** remember the **Shoplinker** bus that was painted yellow and red and circled the west end in 1979? Well, my claim to fame in life is that I am the only living crew member from those days, all the others have snuffed it – which makes the re-union's a bit dull!

The **Shoplinker** ran for the six months of summer during 1979 and was a circular route from Marble Arch – Notting Hill Gate – South Kensington – Hyde Park Corner – Regent Street – Oxford Street and back to Marble Arch. It operated in both directions and was really just an advertising gimmick. All the big names like **Burberry's** and **Harrods** etc paid money to **LT** to run the thing, supposedly to cater for the hordes of passengers who were going to be attracted to this wonderful service just for them! As it happened, the **BEA** contract that ran grey-painted **Routemasters** towing luggage trailers from Heathrow to Central London had just come to its conclusion, so there were a bunch of drivers looking for re-location and **LT** plunked them all on this new **Shoplinker** service. They were just a couple of crew short for full complement, so my conductress and I volunteered to switch over to Stockwell, where it was based. The average age of the ex-**BEA** crews was 64 and I was just 31, that's why I am the only one left! They painted our **Routemasters** red at the bottom and yellow from just under half way up

## THE VIEW FROM A BUS...



and kitted them out with 8 track stereo systems with a dozen or so internal speakers. The tapes were meant to play soft music and plug adverts all day, but I managed to tweak the volume level and replace my 8 track cassette with ones by **Status Quo** or **Led Zepplin** and whichever one it was, it transformed my sedate carriage into a 'mobile bloody disco' or at least that's what the Inspector said when he nicked me for tampering with the executive's equipment!

### Problems beginning...

**Problem No1:** Fares at that time for conventional buses in central London started at 8p, which would take you from the Arch to Notting Hill Gate before it went up to 12p and so on. Fares on the **Shoplinker** began at 30p – even for just 1 stop! We were never exactly busy to say the least.

**Problem No2:** The powers that set all this in motion failed to notice that nearly all of the ex-**BEA** drivers and conductors had been allocated their summer holidays at the same time, so come July there was no one left to drive the ruddy bus!

Now at this point, if you're still reading all this, **LT** was left with the proverbial egg on the face because they had decreed at the start that no ordinary bus crew was allowed to work on **Shoplinker**. It was effectively closed shop stuff imposed by management, which meant that the 100 or so drivers who were resting on any given day but worked on say the number 2 route, couldn't be used to cover the shortfall on **Shoplinker**.

Oh yes, it gets better! What we then had was the following true scenario: I sign on at Stockwell during this July fiasco and have to do 3 round trips on 3 separate buses with two 40 minute

breaks between them, that's what my duty card says. My first bus should already be at Marble Arch waiting for me, but it ain't 'cos there was no driver! He was on holiday! So I have to dig it out at the garage and drive it up there myself, which is good for me because now I get a 45 minute overtime docket.

When I arrive at the Arch, I don't have the time left to make the trip, because the travelling time was based on getting myself up to the Arch by tube, then finding and driving the bus took much longer. Now the driver who should take the bus over from me (are you still with this?) is on holiday, so my instruction is to merely take the bus straight back to the garage with no passenger work actually being done.....well goody goody, 'cos I just got me another 45 minute overtime docket!

Now I need bus number two, which should be at Marble Arch. But NO! It's in the garage 'cos the driver is on holiday and its due out NOW! Errr, ok, but I'm compelled to have a 40 minute break, ain't done no work but have to have a rest. Forty minutes later and there's no point in going out son, you can't do the trip – not enough time so have a cuppa before you start your next 40 minute meal relief.

Ok, meal reliefs and breaks all done, now it's time for bus number three...and guess where that one is? Yup, sitting in the garage! Same scenario, run it up, no trip, run it back, two 45 minute overtime dockets. So let's recap: 8hr 40mins paid duty – actual work done nil – passengers carried nil – fares taken nil – extra pay is 3hours at overtime rate and then sent home an hour early because there wasn't time to do a trip because everyone else is on holiday!

Six months after it started, the plug was pulled. Can't think why and I really don't think that taxis suffered too much!”

*Happy days...*

**Barry Elson**

**London Vintage Taxi Association member and London bus driver**

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# AL in bus lanes

On the first day following Addison Lee chairman John Griffin's edict that his drivers "could use bus and taxi lanes" and that he would pick up any fines, **Call Sign** spotted just one car trying it on - and that was on the television news with Mr Griffin himself as the passenger along with the TV crew!

On the second day, a few more were spotted and **Call Sign** were sent photos from drivers who had snapped them. According to LTPH/TfL, the drivers will not just receive fines, but could be putting their licenses at risk.

To make life easier for the authorities, we are publishing two of the photos - both taken in the Farringdon Road bus lane within operational times.



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# DIESEL COSTS SINCE 1996

*Every year in the May Call Sign we look back through our files at the cost of diesel since 1996*

1 <sup>st</sup> June 1996	- 51.9p per litre -	£2.36 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 1997	- 54.9p per litre -	£2.50 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 1998	- 65.9p per litre -	£3.00 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 1999	- 72.9p per litre -	£3.72 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2001	- 77.9p per litre -	£3.54 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2002	- 75.9p per litre -	£3.45 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2003	- 77.5p per litre -	£3.52 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2004	- 89.0p per litre -	£4.05 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2005	- 89.7p per litre -	£4.08 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2006	- 96.9p per litre -	£4.41 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2007	- 97.9p per litre -	£4.45 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2008	- 128.9p per litre -	£5.86 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2009	- 101.9p per litre -	£4.61 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2010	- 121.9p per litre -	£5.51 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> April 2011	- 140.9p per litre -	£6.37 per gallon
1 <sup>st</sup> April 2012	- 151.9p per litre -	£6.87 per gallon

*The 151.9 was at Esso, Edgware Road and in the view of this magazine, was taking advantage of the recent panic situation. It later went back to 146.9p per litre and we believe that garage should be avoided.*

Should the diesel price reach 179.7 pence per litre between 14 April 2012 and 6 April 2013, TfL will bring in a 40p per trip extra charge...

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At a time when garages were charging between 145p and 148p per litre, ESSO at Edgware Road were cashing in at 151.9

You may not need us now, but cut us out for when you do!

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# Mailshot

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

## Vito rear steering

*Dear Alan*

Re my Vito, it has been almost a year now and I must say that overall I would not go back to a traditional cab until there is another engine like the *Nissan*. But you can't buy perfection; I've not had much go wrong with mine apart from the rear steer - it has worked for no more than three months at most and that after spending many days in the garage having upgrades that only give you a reprieve from the warning lights flashing and the alarm buzzing. It's totally intermittent so you get the odd few hours where it's ok, so it is not easy to pin the fault down. Over the last few days I've spoken to many Vito drivers and they all have the same problem on both the Euro 4 and 5 models. All had the 9-hour upgrade, which was a complete waste of time.

I'm not sure if Mercedes are aware how many of us are driving with this problem, but I will be letting them know and hope that other drivers will as well. I'm surprised there isn't more press about this, but I can see it coming to a head very soon.

**Steve Bryant (Y41)**

**I spoke to DaC driver Colin Salmon (N81) - who bought the first Euro 5 model - and he assures me that he has had no problem with his rear steering; others with the newer model say they have. So I guess you pays your money etc... Ed**

## King's supper to a Queen's box!

*Hi Alan*

I recently took advantage of the generous offer from the *Salieri* restaurant in *Call Sign*. Starter and main course, bottle of decent Merlot, two coffees, left £6 tip - 25% discount! Shook hands with the owner, nice chap with a beaming smile. Can't be bad! I then sprinted to the main event at the Wyndham Theatre - our **Tom Whitbread** freebies to **Jackie Mason** and *Fearless*.

Five minutes to have a leak and find seats in the Royal Circle. I asked an usher where the rest rooms were - a polite Americanism meaning bog - but was met with incomprehension so I changed it to loo. She gave a monologue of directions that led us out through many doors then into the street. We tried again taking the main entrance, found toilets near the foyer and then ran hell for leather up the stairs. I asked the same usher for the Royal Circle, she hesitated then gave an odd smile, pulled back a concertina door and escorted us into the Royal Box! We sat rigid not knowing whether to scarper or give the regal smile! Jackie Mason was already going through his spiel, concentrating his

delivery on the front expensive seats while giving us periodic glances to affirm our importance.

At the interval, we sat glued to our seats waiting for someone to eject us whilst observing the bejeweled daughters of elderly men and bejeweled elderly men with their daughters.

A most satisfactory evening; splendid meal and entertained by the doyen of stand-up comedians. And all for twenty quid! The taxi driver's lot is not always drudgery in these austere times...

**Stephen Berndes (R14)**

**Thanks for the letter Stephen. I'm not sure what hold Tom has over the theatres, but they seem to queue up to give him first option for DaC drivers! As for the Salieri, I have spoken to proprietor Sonmez Sami on a number of occasions and he is always delighted to see Dial-a-Cab drivers there. Not only does the Salieri give us a genuine 25% discount, but the food is also always excellent. All they ask in return is that if you enjoyed your evening at the Salieri, then you recommend them to passengers looking for somewhere nice to eat around the Covent Garden area. Of course, they will not get any discount, but this restaurant's Mediterranean menu is very fairly priced and you can be certain that your passengers will have an enjoyable meal in a lovely restaurant with ultra-helpful staff ...Ed**

## Westminster goodbye...

I was very sorry to see that we had to part company on 1st April. Throughout my TaxiCard experience I have been blessed with your kind and efficient telephone operators, together with the very professional and caring taxi drivers who have transported me to my various and numerous medical appointments. Many thanks. I salute you all...

**John Grief**

**London SW1**

Nice of you to write, Mr Grief, I'm sure ComCab will attempt to provide a similarly good service although it may be difficult for them due to the financial constraints that have been imposed. It certainly is no fault of ComCab, but it would have been nice had someone from Westminster contacted DaC. I think I can safely say that their late Transport Contracts Manager, Michael Dwemoh, would have been appalled at what to me appears to be a gross lack of manners by the council. I'm just pleased that DaC maintained its dignity as it was fairly obvious that the letter Westminster sent out to those using the card bent the

truth in its inference that the closure was down to our service. Had that been the case, most accounts would have asked for a meeting and if still unhappy, put the account out to tender. Westminster did neither! So yes, I am pleased that DaC maintained its dignity at what was obviously a *fait accompli*. I, on the other hand, have the freedom to say what I think about Westminster. Sadly, my language could cause problems so I won't! But to Mr Grief and the many other Westminster TaxiCard users who have either written to *Call Sign* or phoned Carol Carpenter to say how happy they were with the service, I thank you. It is just a pity that the account operators don't have the same manners ...Ed

*Hello Al*

I was very surprised when one of my Westminster TaxiCard passengers told me that they were moving to ComCab and now I have heard this officially. Do we know why ComCab won the contract? Was it something we did wrong or they did right!

And what am I going to do with myself now that this work has gone? Maybe I should go and play tennis over in Regents Park with all this spare time I am going to have!

**Francis Robinson (G18)**

**Brian Rice responds:** Hi Francis, DaC received a letter from Westminster saying they would be joining the 'All London' scheme as from 1st April. Unusually, the account never went to tender with Westminster apparently having no intention for any organisation to tender for their business and obviously wanting to merge it in with all the other London Boroughs - which they did. ComCab service the 'All London' scheme and will now also service Westminster in with their scheme. However, there is one major change in that all the Boroughs, including Westminster, will not be paying for a run-in for the taxi in order to service their residents. I believe this will lead to a deterioration in service for the residents. I know how difficult it was on occasion to cover some of their work and it will only become more difficult in the future. Some suburban drivers rely on TaxiCard work, I am not so sure that the 'All London' green badge driver is in the same predicament, consequently I am convinced the service given by taxis to the inner London Boroughs will only deteriorate in the future without a run-in.

However, there could be something on the agenda for the future that we are



# Mailshot

## Continued from page 33

not aware of because I know there is not an organisation that can surpass the service we gave them. Francis, you can rest assured the only reason Westminster have merged with the 'All London' scheme is as a cost cutting exercise and nothing more.

## A bum ad???

Hi Alan

I have just read my copy of the *April Call Sign* and the advert for **Cricklewood Carriers** on page 15 (I did notice this in a previous issue, but thought it might be a one-off so I didn't say anything). If you read the wording across the picture, it isn't very appropriate and I find this very offensive. Perhaps they should advertise without the picture?

Natalie Ezekiel

DaC Sales Executive

Natalie's was one of three similar complaints this magazine received following the April issue and I plead guilty to ignorance because I never even noticed the small picture. However, once it was pointed out to me I immediately phoned Cricklewood Carriers and asked them to take the photo out. This from an Editor whose long established policy is not to advertise lap dancing clubs with photos of the girls! If anyone was offended, then I apologise ...Ed

## But...

Dear Alan

I liked the toochas picture on page 15 of the *April Call Sign* and wondered whether you could send me a blow-up of it - but only so long as it isn't yours!

David Marks (R22)

There's no accounting for taste! ...Ed

## Tweetalondoncab

Dear Alan

I am not a DaC subscriber but have read your publication with interest for some time and wanted to introduce myself so that you are aware exactly what *Tweetalondoncab* is and to know that we are committed to retaining control of our trade, despite the attentions of business-based disruptors from elsewhere using smart phone booking applications.

By way of an introduction, I am heading up the management team at TLC, which you may or may not know is a "not for profit" driver collective which first started as a twitter.com taxi booking service but which has recently launched a smartphone booking app, offering ASAP cash rides, much like *Hailo* but without their "for profit" business ethos or the eye watering amounts of venture capital they have raised. In fact, TLC's hopes and aspirations would not be so very different from the **ODRTS** although on a much less grand scale.

We TLC are becoming increasingly wary of these corporate app businesses who are inserting themselves between drivers and customers under the banner of *win back the work!* That is fine but if one of these entities disrupts the London taxi market to the extent they win a significant customer base, what control does anybody within the trade have over that business and what cost will drivers pay once it's work from their app at their price or no work at all? At that point they own the customers with no taxi driver having any say whatsoever? At least one has a short term exit strategy following the activation of which, profits will be taken and the business will be sold off to the highest bidder (whoever that may be) leaving the drivers who have built the businesses who knows where?

Winning back work from Addison Lee etc is admirable, but not if the cost is so high as to be out of the frying pan and into the fire? I would urge you not to underestimate the threat here and would be happy to talk if you ever wanted to find out more about us.

Lee Patterson

@tweetalondoncab/TLCtaxiapp

Former DaC driver Richard Cudlip was instrumental in the beginnings of TLC and readers may remember my objections at the time. They weren't at the system itself, but purely when TLC/DaC drivers took DaC terminal messages - a system our drivers pay for - and put them out over TLC. My real objection happened when a TLC driver took a job at the rear of the Savoy after a DaC driver put it out that the person was waiting. However, I now accept that we are on the same side as regards fighting the opposition. My view re our work messages going out to those who are not on DaC haven't changed though ...Ed

## Excellent!

I have just finished reading the *April Call Sign* and I have to say it was the best issue ever! It ended up taking me over five hours because page after page turned out to be so interesting. Information on the new terminals was fascinating and I am looking forward to getting mine. Then there was the excellent piece by Philip Benjamin (K20) on his yellow box problems, plus the article that turned PCNs almost into something humorous for a change. Even the Board member reports were interesting! It just continued in that vein for page after page and I just can't believe it is sent out free of charge. All the other trade papers are the same and often carry the same stories. Thankfully we have *Call Sign*.

Thank you Alan...

Sid Nathan (K88)

But did you like it? ...Ed

## Gordon Poluck

I read the *Call Sign* piece on **Gordon Poluck (ex-R34)** and as my mother is in the same home, I went and had a chat with him. He sounded just like he always has and was still very interested in how the cab trade was progressing. He told me that he'd love to see any of his old friends. The home is Rubens House, 184 Ballards Lane, Finchley.

Max Arnold (D66)

As Max says, Gordon would be delighted to see any of his old friends and acquaintances from Dial-a-Cab ...Ed

## Leaving LCDC

Dear Al

I have recently left the LCDC, but would like to join another trade organisation as I believe that we should all belong to something. Could you give me any advice on who to join?

Jon Trevor (W94)

It isn't a secret that I am a long-standing member of the LTDA; however I have asked representatives of Unite, the RMT and the LTDA to write for *Call Sign* on why Jon should join their organisation. I too am a strong believer that we should all belong to something; after all, we cannot fight the ever-growing opposition on our own. The article is elsewhere inside this issue ...Ed

## Addy's biggest account yet?

Dear Al

It would appear that Addison Lee have won another prestigious - perhaps the most prestigious - new account. How do I know this? Well, as I sat at the lights at Brent Street and the North Circular, one of their vehicles pulled up next to me. The horn sounded and the window came down. I wound mine down and an African driver leaned towards me and said: "You know that Jesus loves you."

"Are you sure about this," I replied. "Yes," he said, "he told me to tell you. Salaam." And then he was gone. What I want to know is where did he pick him up and did we tender for the account?

Geoff Levene (W32)

Just last week at Kings X after 20 minutes ranking, the driver of the cab behind came up to me and said God help us. Just then I got a radio job to Brentford. Your driver is an amateur! ...Ed





# Mailshot

Continued from page 34

## Yellow to the core!

Sir

In common with lots of drivers, I felt that the identifiers were another load of nonsense from TfL, but I am not so sure after a tale from a fellow driver at my garage.

This chap works days and for many years has used the *All Nations* shelter in Kensington. One of the regular faces at the shelter had not been seen for some weeks and concern was growing as to his welfare. Following lots of speculation, it was discovered that he was a suburban driver from Kingston who for six years had been working in town - having more front than Blackpool! So I have to concede that the identifiers are not such a bad idea after all.

*Yours shaken and angry...*

**Joseph Batty (W90)**

**Read the article inside this issue called *Yellow badges picking up in green areas* ...Ed**

## A result?

Dear Alan

We all like a result verses the Westminster PCNs, well I have had one this week. I went for a pee opposite the toilets in Warwick Avenue at around 11.14am, parked in a resident's bay and did not see a warden. So I thought it was safe. However, on return saw him taking photos so called out and returned. He did not speak but walked back across the road, so I left thinking he had not printed the ticket. A month later I got a bill for £130 having NOT paid the ticket! I appealed saying I could not pay (I would have as I was in the wrong) what I had not been given or put onto the windscreen, only to be told that he had processed and handed it to me and noted the same on the PCN. His notes sent did not say he handed it to me, just that I came back, called him "you dogs" and left!

I asked for a hearing and was told my appeal was upheld due to incorrect times on his report and that I was believed when I asked why I would NOT pay as I was in the wrong. I am now informed that wardens can hand, post or place on your windscreen to be legal and that the wardens do not like it as they are getting too many problems with drivers.

Changing tack, I along with many other drivers are so sorry that we lost the TaxiCard account. It was good bread and butter work. I understand we did not have a choice in the matter and that ComCab do it with no run-ins! Can you tell us if the new terminal will have an APP like Hailo on it as this seems to be the way forward against the private hire mob!

**Martin Freeborn (C67)**

**You are right Martin, the account never went out to tender - which is usually the norm for big accounts approaching the end of a transport account. Would we**

**have tendered for the account with no run-ins? There is no point pretending that we would cover locals with no run-in or worthwhile minimum. Sadly, the only people to suffer will be the TaxiCard holders because they are not 'bread and butter' work; they are real people with real disability problems.**

**DaC will soon have an iPhone App available and Director of IT, John Banks, will write about it in *Call Sign* as soon as it is ready to go - but I cannot understand why a radio taxi company that takes cash work already would want an App that does the same thing and where the driver would have to end up subsidising it. But well done re the PCN Martin. We should never give 'them' an inch ...Ed**

## Statements

Hi Alan,

A few years ago I used to get a paper statement every Tuesday or Wednesday and got my credits paid into the bank every Friday. This worked great for me and helped with cash flow. Then I, along with every other driver, was offered the chance of having my statement delivered online and was told that it should arrive in my email earlier. The payment stayed the same (on Friday). This was convenient for me, so I started printing my own statement and saving the PDF to disk. Following this, the statement/payment became fortnightly, arriving on the Tuesday prior to the payment. Recently the statement has started arriving on various days from Tuesday to Thursday prior to the fortnightly payment. Can you please tell me how this is better for me? I now get a fortnightly statement which I print myself, DaC no longer has to print my statement and send an envelope to me. I understand that DaC has now taken the production and delivery of online statements back in-house. Why is it that we can't go back to weekly statements/payments? Surely this could be written into the software...

**Mick Davis (M14)**

**DaC Financial Controller, Warren Smith, responds: Dear Mr Davis, the intention of the Management over three and a half years ago was to implement a streamlined and more efficient way to produce a driver payment run that was fair and equitable to all drivers, as well as reducing the amount of resource in the admin and IT departments. At that point, we had a weekly run, two alternate fortnightly runs and two monthly runs and a "four weekly" run. So there was not one week when driver payments weren't run, at least two runs some weeks and three some others. Unfortunately, this was very labour intensive so we had to choose to make a**

**single payment run where all drivers would be paid at the same time. We could have easily said that we will make one monthly payment, but in fairness a fortnightly payment was the best compromise for drivers and staff. If as you suggest, we go back to weekly payments then you are doubling costs at a stroke, when the ultimate goal of this exercise was to keep costs down. I am sorry that you haven't been getting your statements on time, but we will endeavour to rectify this as soon as possible...**

## Dark forces watching?

There are dark forces out there who will try to grind Dial-a-Cab down, to sell us off cheap and make a quick buck. But who could blame them if they were not going to be in the cab trade in five years time? So you lot out there need to get your act together and start acting professionally - and accordingly this will go straight over the head of the prats in flip flops and vest and to be honest I don't care, because those people are yesterday's chip paper and an enemy of our future.

Mr Chairman, if there has to be blood on the carpet, then so be it, but I am not going down like the printers or the coal miners. This business will be grown by us - or someone else. Yes, we should have a top of the range limo service and parcel service because if we don't, then the enemy will. Plus if it means we, the members, can earn money on the backs of others, then why not? In other words, tidy up our minds and our bodies and let's do it. I will work with you, Mr Chairman, because you're currently the best on the market. But to Mr Togwell, don't bother shouting at the prat in the vest, he's not at home - nor am I - but I am on the streets.

**Gary Cox (O46)**

**Brian Rice replies: Another interesting letter Gary. I believe you are saying we should give an excellent service and smarten ourselves up, something most members would agree with! I also think you are saying we should diversify, some would agree with you while others perhaps would not. However, what I do know is if you do endeavour to diversify then some (mostly outside Dial-a-Cab) will accuse me of putting taxi work in other vehicles, which would not be the case as the client would already have determined their mode of transport. I believe you understand that. Finally, thank you for the compliment and keep doing whatever you are doing ie giving a good service. You can do no more!**



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