

November 2012



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*DaC provides the transport  
at St Pauls wedding*



*What's  
so  
funny  
about*

*National  
Customer  
Service Week?*





# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Last visited 3 years ago, department stores opening times. If Sunday hours show open times of 6 ½ hours, then the first half hour will be for browsing only. In general, all stores now have longer opening times than 3 years ago. At the time of compilation, Christmas times were not available. When they are, check out [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) for any updates...

<b>Apple Store</b> 235 Regent St Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 09:00 21:00 Tue 09:00 21:00 We 09:00 21:00 Thu 09:00 21:00 Fri 09:00 21:00 Sat 09:00 21:00	<b>BHS</b> 252 Oxford Street Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 09:30 20:00 Tue 09:30 20:00 We 09:30 20:00 Thu 09:30 20:00 Fri 09:30 20:00 Sat 09:30 20:00	<b>Brent Cross</b> Shopping Centre Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 10:00 20:00 Tue 10:00 20:00 We 10:00 20:00 Thu 10:00 20:00 Fri 10:00 20:00 Sat 09:00 20:00	<b>Debenhams</b> Westfield W12 Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 10:00 22:00 Tue 10:00 22:00 Wed 10:00 22:00 Thu 10:00 22:00 Fri 10:00 22:00 Sat 10:00 22:00	<b>Debenhams</b> Oxford St Sun 11:30 18:30 Mon 09:30 21:00 Tue 09:30 21:00 Wed 09:30 21:00 Thu 09:30 21:00 Fri 09:30 21:00 Sat 09:30 21:00
<b>Disney Store</b> Regent St. Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 09:00 21:00 Tue 09:00 21:00 We 09:00 21:00 Thu 09:00 21:00 Fri 09:00 21:00 Sat 09:00 21:00	<b>Hamleys</b> Regent St. Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 10:00 21:00 Tue 10:00 21:00 Wed 10:00 21:00 Thu 10:00 21:00 Fri 10:00 21:00 Sat 09:30 21:00	<b>Harvey Nichols</b> Sun 11:30 18:00 Mon 10:00 20:00 Tue 10:00 20:00 Wed 10:00 20:00 Thu 10:00 21:00 Fri 10:00 21:00 Sat 10:00 21:00	<b>Harrods</b> Brompton Rd. Sun 11:30 18:00 Mon 10:00 20:00 Tue 10:00 20:00 Wed 10:00 20:00 Thu 10:00 20:00 Fri 10:00 20:00 Sat 10:00 20:00	<b>House of Fraser</b> City 68 King William St Sun Closed Mon 10:00 19:00 Tue 10:00 19:00 We 10:00 19:00 Thu 10:00 20:00 Fri 10:00 19:00 Sat 10:00 18:00
<b>House of Fraser</b> 318 Oxford St Sun 11:30 18:30 Mon 09:30 21:30 Tue 09:30 21:30 We 09:30 21:30 Thu 09:30 21:30 Fri 09:30 21:30 Sat 09:00 21:30	<b>House of Fraser</b> 101 Victoria St Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 09:30 19:00 Tue 09:30 19:00 We 09:30 19:00 Thu 09:30 20:00 Fri 09:30 19:00 Sat 10:00 19:00	<b>John Lewis</b> Oxford St. Sun 11:30 18:00 Mon 09:30 20:00 Tue 09:30 20:00 Wed 09:30 20:00 Thu 09:30 21:00 Fri 09:30 20:00 Sat 09:30 20:00	<b>Liberties</b> Regent St Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 10:00 20:00 Tue 10:00 20:00 We 10:00 20:00 Thu 10:00 20:00 Fri 10:00 20:00 Sat 10:00 20:00	<b>M&amp;S Pantheon</b> 173 Oxford St Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 08:00 21:00 Tue 08:00 21:00 Wed 08:00 21:00 Thu 08:00 21:00 Fri 08:00 21:00 Sat 09:00 21:00
<b>M&amp;S</b> 85 Kings Rd Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 08:00 21:00 Tue 08:00 21:00 Wed 08:00 21:00 Thu 08:00 21:00 Fri 08:00 21:00 Sat 08:00 21:00	<b>M&amp;S</b> Ken. High St. Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 09:00 20:00 Tue 09:00 20:00 Wed 09:00 20:00 Thu 09:00 20:00 Fri 09:00 20:00 Sat 09:00 20:00	<b>M&amp;S</b> Marble Arch Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 08:00 21:00 Tue 08:00 21:00 Wed 08:00 21:00 Thu 08:00 21:00 Fri 08:00 21:00 Sat 08:00 21:00	<b>New Look</b> 500 Oxford Street Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 10:00 21:00 Tue 10:00 21:00 Wed 10:00 21:00 Thu 10:00 21:00 Fri 10:00 21:00 Sat 10:00 20:00	<b>Peter Jones</b> Sloane Square Sun 11:00 17:00 Mon 09:30 19:00 Tue 09:30 19:00 Wed 09:30 20:00 Thu 09:30 19:00 Fri 09:30 19:00 Sat 09:30 19:00
<b>Primark (W)</b> 499 Oxford St Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 08:30 22:00 Tue 08:30 22:00 We 08:30 22:00 Thu 08:30 22:00 Fri 08:30 22:00 Sat 08:30 21:00	<b>Primark (E)</b> 14 Oxford St Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 08:00 22:00 Tue 08:00 22:00 We 08:00 22:00 Thu 08:00 22:00 Fri 08:00 22:00 Sat 08:00 21:00	<b>Selfridges</b> Sun 11:30 18:00 Mon 09:30 21:00 Tue 09:30 21:00 Wed 09:30 21:00 Thu 09:30 21:00 Fri 09:30 21:00 Sat 09:30 21:00	<b>Westfield</b> W12 General hours Sun 12:00 22:00 Mon 10:00 21:00 Tue 10:00 22:00 Wed 10:00 22:00 Thu 10:00 22:00 Fri 10:00 22:00 Sat 09:00 22:00	<b>Westfield</b> Stratford General Hours Sun 12:00 18:00 Mon 10:00 21:00 Tue 10:00 21:00 We 10:00 21:00 Thu 10:00 21:00 Fri 10:00 21:00 Sat 09:00 21:00

Don't forget to visit [www.myfav.co.uk](http://www.myfav.co.uk) and either register or click 'LOCKED' and enter the unlock code of 'taxi' to see a grid of over 65 icons that link to useful information and taxi trade related websites or try [www.nashsnumbers.co.uk](http://www.nashsnumbers.co.uk) for a ready made link.



# from the editor's desk

## Editor's problem...

I have a problem. I like to think that in my fifteen years in the Editor's hot seat, *Call Sign* has become more of an interesting magazine and that I have kept the promise made in my first issue (June 1997) that no longer would there be six identical Board reports – as there always had been before in each issue – which just tended to ask drivers to please cover the work!

There are now just five BMs in addition to the Chairman. As the Complaints Officer, **Allan Evans** writes in every issue (in case he complains about me!), but the other four write in every *other* issue unless – as I also said in 1997 – they have something specific they want to write about. And as I wrote back then, the Chairman is also in each issue.

So what is the point of the above? Well it involves me and not the Board. Contrary to what some believe, I do not attend Board meetings and in fact I have *never* been to one. Neither do I get a phone call at the end of any meeting telling me what was discussed. Neither am I given any personal information about drivers! Yes, I often know stuff before drivers do, but the bottom line is that I am not – and never will be – a Board member. Neither do I do what I said wouldn't happen back in '97. I don't tell drivers – and let's face it, that's what I am because that's how I earn my living – to cover the work. And yet, that is what I am *almost* about to do. I say almost, because as I've said, I'm not a Board member and neither do I have even the minutest bit of authority more than any driver out there.

It started with a terminal message from **Brian Rice**, who told DaC drivers that one of our clients in EC4 was going to start using GetTaxi, not just because of the cost but also because of the coverage. This was at a time when the Olympics were about to start, with business and tourism in London dropping to just below the status of stone dead! Several drivers wrote in – although just one (Jeffrey Petit L77) wanted his letter published. He referred to some drivers as having a *Kamikaze* mindset, before suggesting that perhaps this Society should look at some changes that he thought could increase our competitiveness. Jeffrey mentioned gratuities, incentives, masking destinations and fixed prices. The Chairman responded by saying that even though it was obviously quiet out, DaC had to spend £6000 in premiums that month to help cover account work. I then asked drivers what they thought of Jeffrey's suggestions, but not one driver responded. Yet when it was revealed that this client was going to move over to GetTaxi, my phone didn't stop ringing for a week and every time I stopped when on a rank or at a radio pick-up, there was only one topic of conversation – losing an account to GetTaxi.

The follow-up was that Brian Rice visited the account and they began using us again. How much they used GetTaxi I do not know, but that decision was theirs. The important part was that they were using us either solely or at least partly. After all, they had been annoyed that coverage wasn't good when they knew it was quiet out. So forward (almost) to the present day and in particular Wednesday 26 September. Things had picked up and although we were hardly rushed off our feet, it was noticeably busier and I, in just five hours, had completed 7 account rides in addition to street work. Sometime during the evening, the dispatcher put out a message to please cover two jobs in EC4 – yes, both were from the above account. A few minutes later, the same message went out again but with an extra few words tagged on about the client needing the cabs with the dispatcher almost begging for two drivers to cover the trips. Several minutes later, a third message came on informing us that the client had cancelled both taxis!



So where does that leave me and all those drivers who berated me as though it was my fault that the EC4 account were using GetTaxi? And when it came to it, how many cared enough to put themselves out to cover the two trips? I was in SW10 running to cover an account trip at **The Harbour** gym in Townmead Road SW6 because no one wanted to go to SW18 from there. It actually went just over the bridge and I got just the minimum £8 from it, so yes, it probably cost me money to cover it. But the passenger thanked me profusely and said how wonderful DaC was. He wouldn't have known that the trip came from the *bids*! Don't get me wrong, I didn't want to run all that way and rejected the trip when it was first offered to me in SW10, as the back-up zone to SW6. Sadly for me, something inside wouldn't allow me to do the same when it came round again. I also know there are other drivers who, had they been where I was, would have done exactly the same thing as me. But sadly for DaC, of all the cabs booked into City zones when the first two messages went out, not one was even prepared to offer a time. And we all moaned when they went to another supplier the first time. I don't know if they still use us because I haven't asked, but I just wonder whether anyone out there is prepared to comment...

## And another problem...

Several drivers phoned me last month pointing out that the heading of the first letter in the October *Mailsbot* bore no resemblance to the text below it. The problem is that there *was* a letter re Vito steering and it seemed to have just vanished. In reality, for personal reasons the driver had changed his mind and asked for it to not be published. So I took it out – but forgot to remove the heading!

The actual published letter under the Vito heading came from retired subscriber **Terry Farmer (exT55J)** who asked about any drivers who had interesting occupations prior to doing the Knowledge and mentioned doing his own KoL with a member of **The Foundations** pop group of the 1960s, but he couldn't remember the driver's name. Well Terry, it was **Ken Hardy (G36)** and no, he hasn't built up any buttercups since then! Neither does he know of any problems involving Vito steering! But he was delighted to share a few of his memories with *Call Sign*. If there are any other drivers out there who have any pre-taxi memories that you'd like to share with our readers, just let me know and send it in with a photo. Any FA cup finalists, former MPs or butlers to the Queen out there? I know we have at least one FA cup finalist who played for **QPR** against **Spurs** in 1982, but I'm not sure if he wants to reveal himself. And of course **Tom Whitbread** was Chauffeur to **HM Queen Mother**. Any volunteers to take up Terry Farmer's challenge?

## And a Hailo problem...

Hardly surprising that as work levels have picked up, Hailo are having trouble in covering trips. As *Call Sign* said in previous issues, we didn't blame drivers that used Hailo, whose only concern during the dire period containing both Olympics was to take some money. However, they were working on rates that were more in line with those of minicabs than licensed taxis with drivers who are far better at the job than any car drivers – even those with the most sophisticated of satnavs.

But with no run-in, free waiting time and then to pay 10% for the privilege, it was no surprise to find that as it got busier, Hailo's coverage would suffer. They even offered a £10 minimum that they would pay from their own pockets in order to get trips covered with the extra coming on one weekend. Drivers were told not to tell their passengers. Now rumours suggest they have a problem with credit cards.

Will they bounce back? Well if the trade goes flat again, yes, they probably will because that's what they rely on. After all, if it was busy then you'd have to be outside the door to even be tempted.

## PCN problem

You may remember I said in a recent Editorial that **Transport for London** had presented me with a PCN for daring to turn right from Park Lane into Upper Brook Street during the Olympics. In reality, TfL passengers using the Mayor's taxi fleet were expected to go all the way up to Marble Arch, through all the traffic on the roundabout and then back down the side to reach their destination on the east side of the duel carriageway. I said that TfL were whistling in the dark if they thought I would pay it, especially as they didn't even name the right turn at Park Lane.

I also mentioned it to Dial-a-Cab's PCN expert, **Barrie Segal**, and he took it up. Within weeks I received a letter from TfL saying that "as a gesture of goodwill" they would cancel the ticket. Personally I think they gave up when they saw Barrie's name attached to an appeal!

According to Barrie, TfL have now said that PCN's issued during the Olympics would be cancelled if there had been no previous warnings issued during that period. Who said that TfL have no heart? Oh yes... everyone! But at least they aren't stupid and know not to get involved with our Mr Segal!

## Manganese administration

You have to feel sorry for Manganese Bronze. The LTC's parent company discovers a fault with new TX4 steering boxes exactly four years after solving the problem of the eight TX4s that caught fire. Now 316 TX4s in London have to come off the road until a steering investigation is completed and that has sent Manganese over the edge into administration. Hopefully administrators will sort the company out, but it seems that it was 20% shareholder Geely's refusal to unconditionally loan £15million to Manganese that has caused the problem. I think that many London taxi drivers would feel justifiably annoyed if Geely now ended up buying the remaining 80% of the company that they don't already own, at a knock-down price.

Almost as sad was hearing Peter DaCosta telling the press after the steering box recall that he hoped to take advantage of their problem – not for drivers, but for his shareholders! The thought of how much a Vito would cost without competition when it is up to £42k with it, is almost unbearable to contemplate.

**Alan Fisher**  
Callsignmag@aol.com

# reflections of the chairman

## Dial-a-Cab App

I wrote briefly last month regarding our App and there is some more inside this issue from Allan Evans. I have to say that we are happy with its functionality and have now submitted it to both App stores for their approval. It has to be approved before it can become available to the public. Should everything proceed according to plan and it is accepted, we then intend to launch the App on 1st December.

We have decided to charge a straight 10% to the passenger with a £2 minimum charge; the charges for Credit Card transactions will all be identical in the future, so no matter whether you receive the booking via the radio or off the street, the charge will be 10% or a minimum of £2.

**The £2 booking fee will no longer apply to Credit Card transactions taken off the radio, only to cash bookings.**

As I stated last month, this App will only be as good as your coverage. If you don't cover the work then the public will just delete it, so in an attempt to obtain the good coverage with the App that I know you are capable of, we have decided to despatch all trips *As Directed*.

Incidentally, with the **Dial-a-Cab** App, the customer will be able to make a pre-booking and of course the whole Application was built in-house by our IT department. But the ball is now in your court!

## Krav Maga

What's that, you ask? Well that's exactly what I said when I first heard the name. It appears that *Krav* means combat and *Maga* means contact and it is a form of self-defence that was first introduced by the Israeli army. I hasten to add that it isn't any attacking Martial Art, but a form of self-defence.

Dial-a-Cab is very fortunate that we have a member, **Ricky Manetta (N16)**, who actually teaches Krav Maga and he has agreed to take a course to teach our members.

There is more about this programme elsewhere in *Call Sign*, but I thought it so worthwhile that I wanted to mention it. The intention is for the class to commence in January and it will be for thirty members on a first come first served basis. Dial-a-Cab will pay the class fees for our members.

However, I would urge you to only submit your name if you are committed to staying the whole course, which I understand will be for eight weeks. There are full details elsewhere in the magazine, so no more having sand kicked in your face – or am I the only one who remembers Charles Atlas?

## Fare increase, credit cards and printers

I recently attended a meeting at LTPH where all matters were discussed from Credit Cards possibly becoming mandatory, to the fare increase for 2013.

What I did find quite amusing was that from January 2013, it would appear that a printer will no longer be mandatory in London Taxis. If you want one you can have



one, but they will not be mandatory any more. Can you remember all the problems when the old PCO, under the direction of the then Mayor, insisted that we had to have printers in taxis?

I believe TfL are under some pressure for all taxis to be in a position to take credit cards, however I was under the distinct impression that LTPH would not make the taking of credit cards mandatory, but of course would urge all taxi drivers to be in a position to accept payment by credit card.

What I do believe is that all taxis should be in a position to accept credit cards, but it has to be **Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard** (aka PCI Compliant). Otherwise the public could lose confidence in the London Taxi industry's ability to take a credit card securely. It would only need a few cards to be cloned after using them in a London taxi, for our reputation to be tarnished for a long period of time.

Although the tariff increase for next year has not been finalised, it looks very much like the increase could be between 1 and 2%.

## Suburban Workshop

I recently attended a meeting at LTPH where they were discussing the situation regarding yellow badges in suburban areas. There is no question that they are having a tough time, because as we all know if it's tough in town then it is probably even worse in the suburbs. Obviously a lot of this current downturn in work is due to the economic climate, but I can't help feeling that much of it is also down to the yellow and green identifiers that have been introduced.

I know the overwhelming majority of suburban drivers abide by the rules and only ply for hire in their own sectors, but there is no doubt there were some that did not abide by the same rules. Those very drivers are now being forced back into their own sectors due to the identifiers, which in turn makes business even quieter for the whole sector.

Whilst on the subject of identifiers, it would appear that LTPH have issued 104 written warnings (Yellow and Green) for drivers not displaying their identifier and 8 drivers have been suspended for a month, while a further 73 complaints have been made regarding not displaying identifiers.

25 arrests have been made by police for suspected forged identifiers and of those, 16 of the arrests were suburban drivers displaying forged Green Badge identifiers while another 9 arrests were made for unlicensed drivers using forged identifiers. The above does not refer to suburban drivers working out of sector, but the failure to display an identifier or indeed for displaying a forged identifier – amazing isn't it?

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

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

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# Manganese administration

The trade was stunned when on Friday 22 October **Manganese Bronze**, manufacturers of the TX4, announced it was going into administration under Pricewaterhouse Coopers. The company was in the middle of a recall for 316 new TX4s in London and another 100 out of town. According to MB CEO **John Russell**, that process will go ahead and they have almost solved the problem – which involved a very small Chinese part inside an otherwise very good steering box.

He added that once the cabs had been fixed, they could begin selling the vehicle again and he hoped that things could slowly begin the journey back to normality.

Manganese is 20% owned by China's Geely and they went to them for a £15million loan to tide them over, however the Manganese Board decided that the terms and the size of the loan itself were too heavy a price to take on board.

Manganese Bronze, which has been making taxis since 1948, can trace its roots back to the 19th century as a maker of ship propellers. At the Olympics closing ceremony, they had a spectacular piece of PR when the Spice Girls used the TX4s as a dance floor! Sadly that didn't last when they reported half-year losses of £3.6 million.

Mr Russell had already said that the group needed several million pounds a month to stay afloat.

Manganese said on Monday it remained hopeful that "its global reputation will provide the platform for a successful business in the future".

Manganese shares – which were suspended at 10p valuing the company at just £3m – have fallen by around 70% in the past year and it was only five years ago that **Call Sign** was reporting that the company's shares were hitting the heights at over £8 each!

Manganese employs around 300 workers whose jobs are at risk unless the company can turn the situation around.

## Taxis at Finsbury Park Station

Transport for London has been advised that despite previous advice being issued and local police speaking to taxi drivers, a small number of drivers have continued to commit offences at Finsbury Park Station and put other road users, cyclists and pedestrians at risk. The offences are primarily focussed around the loading bay outside Costa Coffee and include:

- \* Obstructing the cycle lane, forcing cyclists into the lane used by buses entering the station.
- \* Parking on double red lines.
- \* Double parking next to the loading bay, forcing cyclists across the two lanes used by buses.
- \* Reversing the wrong way out of the station onto Seven Sisters Road.
- \* Driving the wrong way out of the station onto Seven Sisters Road.



Double parked taxis will get PCNs

Finsbury Park Station is a busy interchange with buses, taxis and cyclists all passing through the station plus pedestrians crossing at the entrance to the station. These offences put taxis, buses, cyclists and pedestrians at risk.

**Police have advised TfL that Penalty Charge Notices will be issued to taxi drivers who continue to obstruct the cycle lane, obstruct buses or commit any other offences in or around the station.**

## Taxi receipts no longer compulsory

With effect from 1 January 2013, taxis will no longer be required to have electronic taxi meter receipt printers installed as a condition of the cab licence. In 2003, as part of a review of the *Conditions of Fitness*, Transport for London took the decision to require all London taxis to install taximeters which had the facility to issue printed receipts.

TfL is committed to evaluating the impact and relevance of licensing policies and to support changes that reflect the demand of the taxi industry, with a view to achieving efficiency whilst also reducing any likely costs impact.

TfL Taxi and Private Hire received a number of representations from individual drivers and driver trade associations questioning the continued effectiveness and relevance of the mandatory electronic meter receipt policy. Having reviewed this policy and the cost it imposes on drivers, TfL considers that requiring all drivers to have receipt printers installed as a mandatory requirement is no longer appropriate.

Although TfL is removing the mandatory requirement for this type of equipment, the requirement that drivers must provide a fare receipt on demand by a passenger remains. However, drivers will now have a choice of how they meet this requirement, which could be through issuing paper receipts or if they prefer, still using an operational taximeter printer installed in their taxi. For credit and debit card transactions, it is still a legislative requirement that a printed receipt is provided to the passenger and this obligation remains operating.

DaC drivers are unaffected as they already have a printer included with their terminal...



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# Jery's World



Hey Boris, we hear you're after the top job - so you're gonna stand against Brian Rice at the AGM!!!

## Divyesh to trek up Mount Kilimanjaro

### Dial-a-Cab driver Divyesh

**Ruparelia (V59)** is going to find January tougher than most. Not for him the worry of whether there is any work at St Pancras, nope, Divyesh will be trekking up Africa's highest peak - Mount Kilimanjaro - in aid of various charities including some in the taxi trade! He will be going via the *Lemosho* route, which will take him around 8 days.



Divyesh will be leaving London on 2 January as part of his celebrations at reaching the age of fifty. Others may go for a huge party, but Divyesh will be raising money for charity instead.

The whole cost of the trip has been paid for by the DaC driver as a birthday gift to himself so everything he raises will be donated – except for the 5% that *JustGiving* charge. The charities are **Great Ormond Street Hospital, Help for Heroes** and the WCHCD's **Magical Taxi Tour**.

Divyesh told **Call Sign**: "I don't have the choice to divide the money amongst the charities, so it has to be up to the giver to decide what charity their money goes to. GOSH is **1**, Help For Heroes is **2** and the Magical Taxi Tour is number **3**.

"I would also like to raise money for **Dial-a-Dream**, but as they are a very small charity run by **Tom Whitbread** and **Bob Heath**, they cannot (quite rightly) afford to give £20 per month to *JustGiving*. So if any members would like to donate to them, then they can give direct to the charity by paying into **Barclays 20-52-74 40322202**."

Anyone wishing to donate to the other three can do so via *JustGiving* at: [justgiving.com/teams/divyeshmidlifecrisistrekupthekilimanjaro](http://justgiving.com/teams/divyeshmidlifecrisistrekupthekilimanjaro)

As a final word, Divyesh asks that if any DaC member has done the climb, please feel free to give him some advice!

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so you can earn.**

"Yes, I'm very lucky indeed," DaC driver **Terry Hardie (O23)** told *Call Sign*, referring to his too close encounter with the Grim Reaper.

"It could so easily have been an entirely different outcome, but thankfully here I am talking to *Call Sign*," Terry said grinning broadly with a form of relief! Without further prompting, he continued his story...

"It was back in June at around 7.15 in the evening. I had just set down a job in south London and decided that was enough for the day, so I began making my way home to the east and headed north through the Rotherhithe Tunnel. The traffic was moving steadily through it at around 20 mph as I approached that nasty bend in the road. Suddenly a 4x4 car came whizzing round it and onto my side of the carriageway. The driver had obviously lost control at a very high speed for the tunnel and was on just *two* of its four wheels! The speed of the 4x4 was later estimated at 45/50 mph.

"I recall seeing the car drop back onto all four tyres and these four eyes staring out at me before feeling an almighty impact directly into the front of my one year old TX4. Simultaneously, I heard a lot of crashing noises as the car then collided into the side of the cab as well, that noise compounded by the echo of the Tunnel," he continued.

"The impact threw me forward out of my seat and I hit my head on the hinge that protrudes from the edge of the sun visor, while my shoulder carried on going into the - by now - already shattered cab windshield. For that brief moment you begin to wonder if this was it!

"I really didn't know what was happening and felt totally confused with shock. Although I could barely think, I realised that I was able to move and that I had to get out. I tried opening

**A Dial-a-Cab driver recalls how lucky he felt at being alive after his taxi was...**

## Hit head-on in Rotherhithe Tunnel!



**Happy to just be alive!**

my door but the damage was too great. However, I somehow managed to crawl over the central console to exit via the luggage door

before stumbling out into the tunnel roadway. Don't ask me how I did it!

"Witnesses later told me that the 4x4 had crashed into my cab head-on, spun around with the force of the momentum and then bounced down the entire off-side of the cab, which explains why I couldn't open my door!

"The police and ambulance services arrived and the Tunnel was closed for almost two hours as the medics tended our wounds and the police took statement details. They also organised the vehicles to be towed out of the way. I had a lump on my head the size of a golf ball and other

aches and pains too numerous to mention. I ended up being off work for several weeks," Terry said before adding how much more preferable that was to the alternative!

"The car driver admitted liability, saying she was late for an appointment. I believe the police have charged her with 'undue care and attention' and I wonder if her passenger - who was also injured in the incident - will ever want to travel with her again!" Terry's smile returned at the thought.

"The damage to my 30,000 mile cab was extensive indeed, requiring a new chassis, radiator grille, bonnet, windshield, off-side front wing, both right/hand door panels and off-side rear wing. In all, I understand the repairs came to around £17,000 and it was touch and go whether the cab might even be written off. I know I nearly was and given the choice, I'd rather it was the cab!"












Finishing his story, Terry asked *Call Sign* to offer two *thank-yous* on his behalf.

"I'd like to thank **Cab-Aid** for their help, but I'd like to offer a special ultra-big thank you to the **London Taxi Company** for the strength of their TX4," Terry said appreciatively, "it may well have saved my life!"

**Alan Green,**  
Call Sign Online

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Dial-a-Cab driver **Bill Kibble (K86)** has been on the circuit since 1995, but told *Call Sign* that this incident was a new one on him.

"Yes, I was just astonished," he repeated, "I know our expectation of the giddy heights that minicabs reach has never really gone much above floor level, but this was ridiculous."

Bill was talking about the minicab in front of him as they tried to get through the congestion of Mount Street W1. As usual, with vehicles parked on both sides of the street, it left just one lane free and no one was giving way. However, the minicab got himself into a position where he had blocked traffic coming from the other way.

"There was no way that we were going to get through, so I stopped but was amazed to see the minicab carry on forward when he had no chance of progressing any further," Bill continued with a story that *Call Sign* had heard many times before and wouldn't normally print as we see it virtually every day. But this time it was a bit different.

"The minicab couldn't get any further as a van was coming towards us. I had waited, assuming the minicab would do the same, but he continued and was now stuck. I waited for a few minutes and had left a space for him to reverse into. As time went on, the minicab wouldn't move so eventually I got out and went up to the PH car.

"The reason he wasn't moving was because

## The minicab driver who wasn't backward!



**The minicab driver pushes his car into the space left by Bill as he had no reverse gear!**

"That made my mind up and I told him to get his passengers to push. After all, they were obviously using a minicab believing that they were saving money! So I left him to it and eventually he pushed it himself with the two passengers remaining on the

back seat!

"After he reversed and the traffic began moving again, I asked him how he could possibly work with no reverse, but he just shrugged his shoulders and continued on his way in a forwardly direction! Well at least no one could ever call him backwards!"

**Michael Toomey  
Call Sign Online**

## LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

### We pay to give our money away

During the run up to Xmas, we adopt the same routine of trying to earn and spend at the same rate. It's the time when we cash in our different forms of Christmas clubs or similar. Throughout this period, it's incredible how we give money away.

I am of an age where I remember that as part of our saving routine throughout the year, we'd take our coppers to school in a matchbox to purchase a saving stamp that would generally be used at Christmas time to buy presents. God forbid that our children be even allowed to carry - or even look at - a matchbox as they are now stored out of sight in your local supermarket. I wonder if that is to stop them from smoking or becoming arsonists!

Nowadays many use a bottle or jar in which to throw whatever loose change we have and then boast that it's so heavy that we can't even lift it! Worse still - and imagine telling your grandparents this - there is so much money in it that you can't be bothered to count it! Instead we put the coins into carrier bags and take them to a machine in the supermarket that counts it for us - looking around smugly as the machine makes a racket that sounds as though you've just got 3 bells up on a one-arm bandit. Unfortunately this bandit doesn't even have an arm, and we actually have to pay the machine to count it at a current colossal going rate of 7p in the pound. I don't believe there is a savings account with any bank that would get such a return for our savings. Well, the DaC Credit Union perhaps!

Standing in a Post Office queue, you see people losing around 20p in the pound to have their currency changed back to sterling even though there is a *no commission* charge on the initial purchase. Surely we are not stupid

### With Tom Quigley (Y33)



enough to believe that whoever we bought the currency from does it for free? Yet we stand there and pay them to take our money off our hands!

We all have some money sitting in accounts in banks or building societies lying dormant, collecting virtually zero interest. Yet you can be sure that as soon as you want to do something out of the ordinary and want to pay a cheque out of the account for a nephew or niece's gift, there will be some fee circa £25 for the time involved in putting the piece of paper through a machine as you stand and watch.

Or perhaps the annual routine of posting Christmas cards; bunging a first class stamp on a card and posting it to a friend, neighbour or relative who you see and talk to several times a week. But we cannot be seen to appear mean at this time of year, so we go along with the whole charade. So in the Xmas run up this year, just enjoy giving your money away. It's not humbug, it's tradition...!

### The visits

Unfortunately my mother, who is 83, has not been too well recently and while in hospital underwent an operation that was tough and go, but gratefully she has recovered.

With a family tree of seven children, seventeen grandchildren and a rising number of over thirty great grandchildren not including other relatives, the highlight of the period was visiting times with the family all descending from different parts of the country. It was guaranteed that mum would not get any rest; she would however moan and revel at the same time at all the attention.

There were moments when it was like a scene from a Mike Leigh or Jack Rosenthal play. Allowing just two visitors at a time brought out the organisational skills of my sisters with regular text updates and schedule visiting rotas to be adhered to! When this was not carried out and someone turned up unexpectedly, it just added to the merriment! When my sister brought along a family photo from her first communion some 45 years ago, the usual arguments surfaced about how the newer generation looked like the old generation, with the younger ones now struck in fear that they could turn out like their overweight balding uncles!

But the highlight for me was when two of my - shall we say well fed - brothers were arguing about who had the most chins and who was the heaviest, although neither would ask for scales to back up their argument! My Mum, coming out of one of her sleeping periods, turned round and in her full Irish accent, with colourful language thrown in, told them both to shut up. Then we all knew that she was on the mend...

**Tom Quigley (Y33)**



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**Butlins Holidays, as part of their support for the the charity Carers Trust: The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, held their annual golf day at Berkhamsted Golf Club recently and once again Call Sign was invited to enter a four-man team.**

**It was led by Dial-a-Cab Board member Keith Cain, who was joined by drivers Simon Wallis (M11), Terry Felvus (M86) and Ray Scott (T34).**

After breakfast had been served, a two tee start saw the teams get away very swiftly on a very pleasant day with a very well presented golf course. However, it is one that demands accuracy off the tee and is punishing should you be off-target. There are no bunkers on the course, but there are plenty of large mounds to catch you out.

The day consisted of an individual Stapleford competition and a team game where the best three scores counted. **Ray Scott** did exceptionally well, playing to just below his handicap with a score of 37 points. The total DaC team score was 117 and found them finishing in seventh place. The team felt that Ray's score stood a very good chance of being in the top three, but there was a winning score of 46 points from a player with a handicap of 24 who insisted as he was presented with his trophy that this was only the third time he had ever played golf!

With **Carlsberg** sponsoring the midway lager stop and with a delicious three course meal in the evening followed by a prize giving

# DaC at Butlins Golf



**DaC's golf team (L - R): Keith Cain, Simon Wallis, Terry Fulvus and Ray Scott**

This year alone the teams have surpassed their annual target and have raised almost £50,000, and with 3 months of the year still to come! It's an outstanding achievement.

This year Butlins has put in place a new ground break-

ing initiative to support young adult carers

who, because of their caring role, have missed out on the opportunities most young people take for granted – education, socialisation with friends, travel etc. Working with our operations managers, Butlins has established a work placement scheme that enables young adult carers aged 18-25 to gain work experience and have taster sessions in a host of roles that are tailored to their specific needs. The intention of the scheme is to offer support, build confidence and help young adult carers to achieve their full potential. We have two young adult carers on the scheme at the moment, which is fantastic and we hope to have more on board very soon."

and raffle, it represented a great day out. Corporate fund raising manager for *Carer's Trust*, **Trish Brown**, told *Call Sign*: "It was great to see the boys from Team Dial-a-Cab and our thanks to you all for supporting Butlins Golf Day. I can't tell you how much we all appreciate, for the fourth year running, you taking the time to come along, play some golf and help raise funds for Carers Trust. All of the money raised by Butlins is unrestricted, which means we are able to respond to crisis situations for carers and also to provide financial support to areas of most urgent need.

This is the fifth year we have been lucky enough to have the support of Butlins and in that time they have raised almost £250,000.

## Please...no idling say TfL

A campaign to encourage drivers to switch off their engines when stationary to reduce unnecessary emissions has been launched in London. This is the second phase of **Transport for London's** 'no-idling' campaign, which is targeted at vehicles when parked, waiting or loading at the roadside – something that obviously could apply to licensed radio taxi companies such as **Dial-a-Cab**.

The campaign highlights the impact of pollution on health and how small changes can make a big difference. Reducing pollution levels can both prevent and alleviate illnesses such as asthma and heart and lung conditions.

According to TfL, switching off a vehicle's engine when stationary for more than one minute not only reduces the amount of harmful pollutants such as particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) emitted, but also reduces fuel consumption. Surveys taken before and after the first phase of the campaign (delivered in January 2012) on central London roads with high levels of pollution estimated an average drop of five per cent in unnecessary engine idling across all vehicles.

Research suggests engine idling to be a significant contributor to pollution in London. TfL estimates that 59 per cent of drivers parking or loading at the side of the road in central London leave their engines idling unnecessarily. Modelling has shown that if all drivers in central London switched off their engines, rather than leaving them idling unnecessarily for one minute each day, this could reduce PM<sub>10</sub> emissions by around 290g per day or at least 90kg per year. This is the equivalent of a medium sized diesel car making 62 trips around the world, the equivalent of travelling 2.5 million kilometres!

The *no-idling* campaign is part of a wider package of measures the Mayor is introducing to improve air quality by cleaning up emissions from taxis, buses, lorries and encouraging cleaner cars.

Mayor Boris Johnson said: "I am introducing a range of robust measures to tackle pollution. Drivers can play their part by taking time to switch off when stationary. This can save money off costly fuel bills as well as make our city a cleaner place to live and work."

TfL added that it was a common myth regarding engine idling that switching a vehicle's engine on and off would wear it out and that it would also use more fuel. They added that ignitions in modern cars have eliminated that problem and research showed that turning off an engine and restarting it after a minute uses less fuel and causes less pollution. Switching the engine on and off, according to TfL, does not cause any damage to the vehicle and they undertook testing and research when developing the campaign at Millbrook Proving Ground. That showed, again according to TfL, that vehicle engines may be restarted repeatedly many times over without a discernible effect on the performance of the vehicle's battery. The vehicles tested were able to withstand repeatedly being switched on and off over a hundred times in an hour with no loss of performance observed. That level of activity would far exceed real-life scenarios.

**Call Sign would like to add that while the advice given sounds logical, in our view older taxis should get independent advice re the constant starting and stopping of their cabs.**

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So **Mike Son** found it hard to believe that there are some people who still can't believe he had to sail out to a boat in order to get paid in the October *Call Sign*! He certainly was not the first to go to such lengths. I remember reading of a similar account, set during World War Two and described by **Bill Eales** in his self-published book. Even further back is the story of **James Harman Crisp** and if Mike Son had known what happened to him, he would have stayed firmly on *terra firma* and waited for the fare to come to him...

It was way back in 1852 and a cold night in January when James Crisp set a fare down in his Hansom cab at the Adelphi theatre. Almost immediately he was hired again, this time the passenger wanted to go to **Ben Caunt's**, a public house in nearby St Martin's Lane. A short ride, but as the minimum fare was 8d (approx 3p) in a Hansom it was no doubt seen as a good quick job.

It turned out to be better than that as the passenger said he would be required all night. When he pulled up outside the infamous drinking establishment, the passenger - a sailor named **Southwell** - told him to wait. And he waited and waited in the freezing cold. Several times Crisp went into the pub and asked to be paid off, but was told to keep waiting. Even the landlord, Ben Caunt, formerly a pugilist, felt for the cabman and gave him a drink to keep the chill out. Southwell was getting quite drunk; he had stood a mug of beer with a man

The first story in an occasional series from DaC driver Sean Farrell (B39)

## The Brethren of the Whip

### The story of Hansom cab driver, James Crisp...

named Joyce for being the first to strike him on the nose in presumably a game like slapsies.

Joyce intimated to Crisp that the passenger was going to bilk him. Again Crisp asked to be paid off: "Perhaps you will be good enough to pay me before your friend Caunt," he said. Southwell then asked to be taken to Cotterell's Wharf at Blackfriars, where he would be paid. Fortunately for Crisp, William Joyce agreed to go with and back him up in case there was any trouble.

When they arrived at the wharf, Crisp had to leave his cab in the care of a stranger whilst all three entered the yard and walked across a plank over the river to a barge. They walked along the barge and then climbed a ladder from there onto Southwell's boat, *The Petrel*, a brig out of Great Yarmouth. Once in the boat, Southwell became quite jocular and invited all to have something to eat.

It was now midnight. Crisp declined and asked to be paid, he was now demanding 6s 8d (approx 33p). But still Southwell prevaricated; he picked up a ham bone and hit Crisp across the face with it, though not hard, and Crisp took this as a bit of fun. Less funny was when Southwell produced a knife, lunged at the great coat Crisp was wearing and managed to stab the ship's cat which was sitting behind him. Realising that it might be safer to come back in the morning, both Crisp and Joyce began to leave the ship. At that moment, the Captain and his wife came on board and demanded to know what the two strangers were doing on his vessel? They explained, but the captain was no less sympathetic to their cause and fearing what had happened to the cat might be their eventual fate, they made a hasty retreat.

Joyce made his way down the ladder first and into the barge at the bottom and Crisp began following him down. Southwell was not quite finished with the Hansom cab driver and he grabbed hold of the ladder and twisted it, causing Crisp to lose his balance and fall into

the river. They waited for him to come up - and they waited. Soon their cries of laughter became resonant with panic as they realised the cabman was not coming up. Joyce fell to the edge of the barge and plunged his hand as far as he could trying to feel for the driver. After a minute of fishing around he found him and pulled him up by his hair, but Crisp's great coat, so beloved by cabmen for keeping out the winter chill, was by now saturated and so heavy that he could not be pulled out of the water. Eventually the captain and a cabin boy came to Crisp's aid and assisted in pulling the all but lifeless body of the cab driver out of the water. Joyce believed that Crisp had been under water for a minute and a half and it was midnight on January 2nd, the height of winter. Crisp survived the ordeal. He was in bed for four days but off work for several months.

At an early remand hearing, he informed the magistrate that he was not working and was awarded 2s 6d (12p) from the poor box. At a later hearing, Crisp's saviour, William Joyce, informed the court that he believed Crisp had been paid £5 compensation in order to drop the charges of assault and that he himself was given a sovereign (£1) by the captain of the brig not to testify and therefore had to be summonsed himself. The captain was re-examined and warned that he could face trial for perjury. Undeterred by Crisp not wanting to proceed with the assault charges, though he still wanted charges brought for being bilked of 8s 6d (approx 42p), the city authorities continued with the prosecution.

At the Old Bailey, Southwell was described as a "most kind hearted man" not known to drink by the now discredited captain. He was found guilty of assault and imprisoned for one month with hard labour. And yes, the cat survived its ordeal and was said to be fine - rather better than James Harman Crisp...

Sean Farrell (B39)

## LTFUC AGM

*The Annual General Meeting of  
the London Taxidriers' Fund  
for Underprivileged Children  
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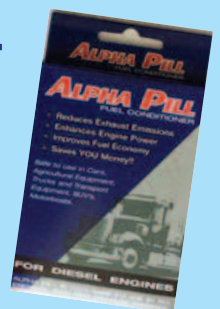
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The name of **Jimmy Savile** used to be held in high esteem within the London taxi trade. In fact, for several years during the 1980s, he had an account with **Dial-a-Cab** and would often be taken to or from his account address at **Park Crescent**, off Marylebone Road.

I picked him up twice from that address and once going back there. I remember that on two out of the three occasions, he had some young dolly birds with him. However, I have to say that on neither of those two trips did I even briefly consider that the girls might be underage, only how on earth they fancied someone who at that time was not only in his fifties, but who when seen close up, actually looked it! Other drivers made similar comments at the time, but none out of concern because no one even suspected that good old **Mr Jim'll Fix It** could have been anything other than a gentleman put on this earth to help people and who would certainly never have done anything wrong.

He was always very friendly, making jokes about having to use DaC in case it rained so he wouldn't make his Rolls Royce dirty! He would also joke about what his mum (he called her **The Duchess**) would say about him going out with women! The girls in the cab with him were hardly women, but undoubtedly good looking teenage girls. The only complaint was the smell of cigar smoke left behind when he got out. Otherwise it was good old Jim. He was one of the boys!

Then when he died last year, **Bill Tyzack BEM (C06)** – who is also the **LTFUC Hon President** – went into print in **Call Sign** praising the undoubted help that Jimmy Savile had given to the **Underprivileged Children's Fund**. And Bill was right; Jim went on several trips to Southend and helped to raise much-needed funds. No one knew then what we seem to know now, but fortunately by the very nature of the way the **LTFUC** trips are securely organ-

# Jimmy Savile and the taxi trade



The photo is over 40 years old but we have still decided to hide the children's identities. Incidentally, one of the two bears was **Tom Whitbread**..

ised, the children were safe.

Said with humour at the time, Bill also wrote:

"The second time Jimmy went on the Southend trip, I asked our Hon Secretary to make arrangements for him to again sleep overnight at the retirement home and when I asked Jim if he had been in to confirm the arrangements, he told me he'd seen the Matron and they were putting him up the night before the outing. In passing, I mentioned that she was a nice lady with

blonde hair, but he quickly said that she had black hair and was looking forward to his visit! Bells began ringing and we soon realised that he was booked into the nurse's home on the wrong side of Beaumont Square!"

We all thought we knew good old Jimmy. We didn't know him at all and this trade probably had a lucky escape...

**Alan Fisher**  
Call Sign Online

## WHY IS UBER SHUTTING DOWN???

### Is there a connection to credit card acceptance?

**Call Sign** rarely looks at the cab situation in other countries unless it's tied into the UK in some way – using London taxis for example. But a strange situation has developed in **New York** and the biggest question has to be why?

**Uber** began their App service to New Yorkers around 6 weeks ago and while some said that it had quietened down since the launch – which they did against the wishes of the **Taxi and Limousine Commission** – nevertheless **Uber** are an experienced company who would have been prepared for a much longer bedding-in period.

According to **Uber CEO Travis Kalanick**, taxi drivers were returning the phones that **Uber** gives them when they signed up. He also claimed that some drivers were not up to **Uber's** standard and had been asked to return their phones. However, drivers were giving a somewhat different story. One, who didn't want to be identified, said:

"**Uber called us in saying we needed to come and get paid and that we would get a bonus for the inconvenience of having to show up in person. But when we got there, Uber took the phones back and said that the taxi service App was no longer available in New York.**"

**Uber**, apparently, have been trying to get the **Yellow taxi** drivers to sign up to operate black car services (their private hire), which have to be pre-booked whereas the **Yellow cabbies** could be hailed in the street and accept a credit card via the **Uber** smartphones. Credit card acceptance is compulsory in **New York**.

When **Uber** launched their taxi App service, there were good reviews from customers and drivers alike, yet suddenly the App is ok for pre-booked PH but not taxis that just pick up. Is it something to do with credit cards and personal smart phones? And will it affect the London Apps?

A statement from **LTPH** would be welcome...



Photo courtesy The Verge

**Ron Yarborough**  
Call Sign Online

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# Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

I read with interest **Michael Lyons (Y52)** article on dress code in the *October Call Sign*. As expected, my name was mentioned together with a comment - a valid one I might add - that it doesn't help my cause if every article I write on the subject includes a photo of me suited and booted, instead of me being in casual clothes that I would consider appropriate to wear behind the wheel. For the record, I never submit photos of myself with my articles, only the hard copy. Photos are the editor's responsibility and his choice very much depends on how benevolent he feels - in my case it's usually the most unflattering mug shots imaginable!

Incidentally, the whole Board wear a suit; it's how we present ourselves in the office. Also as a matter of interest, the style of clothes I invariably wore behind the wheel of a cab was a jacket, trousers, shirt and tie. As for wearing casual clothes in general, I have over thirty different polo shirts and dozens of short-sleeved shirts given to me as gifts that I have never worn because psychologically I just don't feel comfortable wearing short-sleeved garments in public. I have never considered myself to have the physique to wear casual clothes. When I was a teenager, it was the era when girls were only attracted to guys with bodies like *Charles Atlas*, which was quite a contrast to me with arms and legs like bits of string! And such was the effect this had on me that throughout my entire life, I have never worn bathing trunks and sunbathed on a beach.

**I don't know why, but one of life's peculiarities is to mock and ridicule people who are slight in build, or in other words *skinny*, but never those who are grossly overweight. Which is what I should really be when I consider the amount of food I eat, including biscuits, chocolate and cakes etc, yet I don't put on an ounce. However I'm pleased to say that having now reached the senior years, my attitude has changed a little and I occasionally venture onto a beach wearing tailored shorts and a short sleeve shirt.**

One last point to Mr Lyons; in all the years I have carped on about the cab trade needing to raise its image to compete with PH, I have never advocated that cab drivers should wear a suit, because that style of dress would be impractical. However there is a big difference between wearing a suit and the public's perception of cab drivers looking like tramps. Personally a simple outfit of the following would be appropriate for our members to wear:

**A white open necked shirt for the summer, or white polo neck for the winter. A navy v-neck jumper carrying the Dial-a-Cab legend, navy Chino's and a pair of soft tan loafers, plus a rain jacket sporting the Dial-a-Cab Legend. It's smart, it's comfortable, it's practical and it would not cost a fortune. Such an outfit isn't in itself unique, but it would be if the public and all of our clients saw every Dial-a-Cab member wearing it.**

## Problems in hearing

In all the years I have been on the Board, it's been an accepted policy that the BoM do not endorse products for our members, be it a tan-



gible or non-tangible product. One reason for this policy was to avoid liability should there be a problem with a product and also to prevent the Board or a Board member having a vested interest in a product. But under the circumstances, I feel an exception can be made in this instance as it involves health issues and the prevention of getting nicked whilst driving.

It's said that there are more cab drivers over the age of 70 than there are under the age of 30. This being so and considering the environment in which cab drivers work, there are probably more than a few whose hearing has been affected by the constant noise of London's traffic. I've had a hearing impairment since birth and there were two incidences that I experienced recently concerning hearing that I feel might be of interest to some of you.

I was on the M20 a few weeks ago when I had a puncture. I pulled onto the hard shoulder, exited the vehicle as per safety regulations and set about contacting the RAC. I didn't know at the time that it would have been illegal for me to change the wheel myself, the reason I contacted the RAC was simply because I don't have the muscle power to undo the ridiculously tight lugnuts with the silly little wrench that came with my vehicle. So I am standing on the hard shoulder in the howling wind with my mobile pressed close to my ear trying to explain to the RAC where on the M20 I had broken down, but because of the constant noise of cars, motor bikes, juggernauts etc bombing past, I could not hear a word the RAC were saying. Eventually after much yelling on my part, sufficient details were relayed and the RAC eventually arrived. Later that day, I decided to make enquiries about obtaining a mobile phone that catered specifically for the hard of hearing and the obvious people to contact was of course the RNID (*Royal National Institute For The Deaf*). As a point of interest, in June 2011 the RNID changed their name to **Action on Hearing Loss**. This rebrand coincided with the charities 100th anniversary and for the benefit of those who like trivia, the charity was founded by a gentleman called **Leo Bonn**; they have more than 1,000 staff, 1,092 volunteers and more than 20,000 members who support their work across the UK.

This wasn't the first time I had contacted Action on Hearing Loss, in fact I had done so only a few months previously when I wanted to buy a telephone for my home. I wear a hearing aid most of the time but needed a telephone that I could have a conversation on without

wearing my hearing aid, for example when just coming out of a shower. The staff at Action for Hearing Loss, when I enquired about such a phone were extremely helpful and suggested I try their **Maybelle 650** for 28 days and if I wasn't satisfied, I could return it and get a full refund.

I went online to their website at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/) to view the model, ordered it and it was delivered within a few days. And it is absolutely brilliant! I would recommend it to any of our members or their families who have hearing difficulties. And needless to say, I received the same help when enquiring about a new mobile phone. I'm not a cell phone geek; I wasn't looking for one with all the whistles and bells and could knit socks. I use a cell phone only when it's absolutely necessary, and when on the road exactly as I would use a phone box - when they existed! Ring a number, put fourpence in the slot and if I hear a voice, I press button A and if I don't hear anything, I press button B and get me fourpence back. To save anyone writing in, yes, that was a joke for older members!

But seriously, how people spend their lives on a mobile that has a million Apps and with an attachment that looks like a lighter stuck permanently in their ear, I'll never know. Anyway, there were a couple of requirements I needed for the new mobile and they were that it should have a **Bluetooth** for when I am driving and it should be any colour other than black, because I was forever mislaying the damn thing when it was laying on something that was also black.

On speaking with Action for Hearing Loss, they were again extremely helpful and recommended a mobile phone to suit my purpose with the same agreement of money back after 28 days if it was not suitable. The cell phone I selected is white and the sound volume is so good in the noisiest of environments that I can hear clearly even without wearing my hearing aid. It has lots of extras to aid those with a hearing impairment including in the event of an accident and of course it has Bluetooth.

That brings me onto another product that a number of our members with good hearing or otherwise would do well to take note of, especially those that continue to flaunt the law by using their hand held mobile while driving. This product is a **Bluetooth Multipoint Speakerphone**.

In my previous vehicle, I had a hands free cell phone system that cost over £250 to install and involved yards of wires going all over the place. When I bought my next car, a small *Hyundai i10*, I was hoping to transfer the hands free system but it wasn't possible. By chance I heard about the Multipoint Speakerphone and discovered they were available from a number of outlets, including **Amazon**, for just £18. It's a flat 5"x 2" attachment that clips onto the visor, no wires and the sound from and to a mobile is excellent. It's an unbelievable piece of equipment and for the price there is absolutely no excuse in taking a chance of getting nicked for using a mobile in your hand whilst driving.

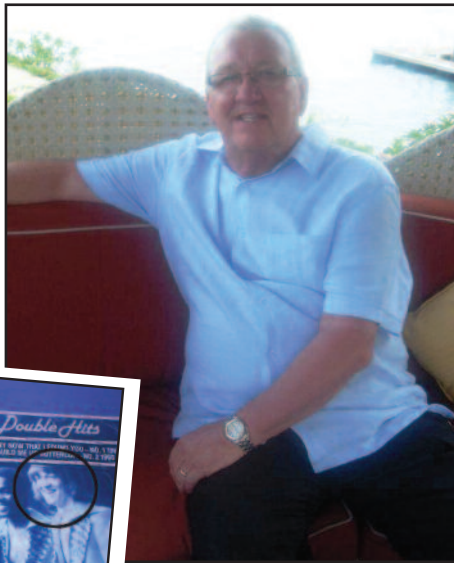
**Allen Togwell  
DaC Marketing**

In the last issue of *Call Sign*, retired *Dial-a-Cab* driver **Terry Farmer (exT55J)** wrote asking whether we had any drivers who were sportsmen or musicians etc before undertaking the Knowledge, as it could make an interesting item for drivers to read about. Terry remembered being on the KoL with a musician from sixties hit pop group, **The Foundations**. Within days of publication, DaC driver **Ken Hardy (G36)** wrote to say that he had been a keyboard player with the group and also went on the Knowledge around 40 years ago!

For those who might not have been around in that amazing period known as the swinging sixties that saw the birth of groups such as **The Beatles** and **Rolling Stones**, The Foundations – while perhaps not in the league as those two – were right up there with the biggest UK groups of the time between 1967 and 1970. Their two biggest hits were **Baby now that I've found you**, which made number one in November 1967 and **Build me up Buttercup**, which reached number four in January 1969.

To show how different times were back then, The Foundations were the first multi-racial pop group and included West Indian and Sri Lankan members. Also, *Buttercup* was written by **Tony Macaulay** and **Mike D'Abo** – who at the time was the lead singer with **Manfred Mann**!

Ken told *Call Sign*: "I wasn't with The Foundations that long. The group's manage-



**Ken now. Inset pic Ken (circled) on Foundations EP cover**

ment needed a keyboard player to promote a song they hoped would be used for the Eurovision Song Contest and I got the job!

# Built on a Foundation!

Unfortunately for the band, **Lynsey de Paul** and **Mike Moran** beat us to it with a song called **Rock Bottom** in a BBC show called **A Song for Europe**.

"The last gig I did with the band was on the BBC's **Crackerjack** show and I remember feeling rather disappointed at not getting a famous Crackerjack pencil! I could have used it now for writing down details of my next DaC job!"

**November 1967 hit parade** (courtesy Warner)

- 1 Baby now that I've found you – Foundations
- 2 Massachusetts – Bee Gees
3. Zabadak – Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich
4. Autumn Almanac – Kinks
5. The last Waltz – Englebert Humperdinck

**January 1969 hit parade** (courtesy Warner)

1. Ob la di, ob la da – Marmalade
2. Lily the Pink - Scaffold
3. Albatross – Fleetwood Mac
4. Build me up Buttercup - Foundations
5. I'm the urban Spaceman – Bonzo Dog doo-Dah Band

## LTFUC AND THE PEARLIES

The **London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** recently had the pleasure of being invited to attend the traditional annual **London Pearly Kings and Queens Costermongers' Harvest Festival Parade** held at the Guildhall. I went along, together with the Fund's Hon. Chair, **Susan Angel** and committee member **Steven Bell**, together with our wives Maureen and Wendy to witness this colourful and spectacular event.

Scores of Pearly Kings & Queens from all corners of London gathered for the festival, more than 130 years on from when road sweeper **Henry Croft** covered his finest *whistle and flute* – that's his suit - in shiny white buttons in aid of the City's poor. Modern day Pearlies continue his mission and do much great charity work.

Following some brilliant entertainment, which was greatly appreciated by the huge crowd gathered in the Guildhall yard, our three taxis joined the long procession led by the Pearlies around the City to attend the St Mary-le-Bow church where the pealing of the Cockney Bow Bells welcomed the congregation for a thanksgiving service. It was highly evident from the large crowds lining the streets that spirits were still running high following the Jubilee and the Olympics!

Steven and Wendy Bell made a brilliant job of converting his taxi into a large brown furry rabbit, which delighted the many children and adults who couldn't resist stroking its fur. One Policeman even fed it with a carrot! Even taxi rabbits must get hungry!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who came over to see us and we are deeply grateful for their kind donations. Finally, well done to the Pearly Queen of the Old Kent Road, **Doreen Golding**, for organising such a brilliant event. Her late husband Larry, would have been very proud of her and thrilled to see so many people in attendance. We would also like to thank all the wonderful Pearlies who help so many charities in London and the Greater London Area and for all the help they give the LTFUC.



**Sue Angel smiles while the policeman tries to feed the taxi rabbit! Someone should have told him...**



# Self Defence Classes for DaC Drivers

*And they're free if you are on Dial-a-Cab!*

Some of you may have seen the article on self-defence expert Ricky Manetta (N16) in the May 2009 issue of Call Sign, where he spoke of starting a day class teaching Krav maga, the self defence system used by Israeli special forces.

Soon after the article appeared, Editor Alan Fisher was approached by Steve McNamara of the LTDA to say that if Ricky agreed, the LTDA would be happy to sponsor the lessons as the organisation felt they could be useful to taxi drivers, although they would have to be LTDA members.

Now Dial-a-Cab is sponsoring Ricky's self-defence classes for *our* drivers. Each course will last for 8 weeks and take up to 30 DaC drivers. It will cost drivers nothing, but if you feel you would like to take part, then please don't just come along once to see if you like it because you could cost someone else a place on the course. It is a complete course and not one for an occasional visit.

If more than 30 drivers put their names down, they will be on a first-come, first-served basis and those failing to get on will go to the top of the list for the second course.

They will take place at the John Orwell Sports Centre, Tench Street, Wapping each Wednesday from 2 - 3.30pm. Parking is available.

The classes are very mixed, taking drivers in their 20s right into their 60s. They come tall, small, fat and thin because it's the techniques that work and not the size of those performing them.



DaC are sponsoring Ricky Manetta's self-defence course

Classes consist of warm-up and stretching exercises, then a quick run over previous lessons. That's followed by learning a new technique and some drills, so everything you learn becomes an instinct and not a thought. In a real life situation, by the time you've had the thought, the instinct has already dealt with it.

Two DaC drivers on a previous course told *Call Sign* that they really enjoyed and benefitted from them. Mickey Tarr (R02) was 6' 2" and 16 stone, so we asked why he would need to do the classes? He explained: "As I get older, I'm not as confident as I used to be and cab driving is so unpredictable. Ricky was absolutely brilliant and gives you that confidence back by giving you the knowledge to deal with any situation, not just the physical - and it's done in a fun atmosphere."

Steve Politz (N57) told us that the classes were brilliant. "I can't say enough about them, I was just addicted!" He added that for him the main thing was the confidence he gained through the self-defence and aggression avoidance techniques. This taught him how to react in situations and not to panic.

If you are interested, email Shelagh Adkins on shelagha@dialacab.co.uk or call on 0207 553 7200. If you want to speak to Ricky about the course, call him on 07950 267 574. He won't be taking names but is happy to tell you anything you need to know about the Dial-a-Cab courses.

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Winner 2010

Winner 2011

Elaine Cochrane, wife of Dial-a-Cab driver **Bernie Cochrane (V92)**, in a pairing with long standing golf playing partner **Tina Hollyoake**, has won golf's LGU Peugeot Coronation Foursomes Grand Final.

Hertfordshire golfing duo Elaine and Tina, representing the **Manor of Groves Golf and Country Club**, came through from an entry of over 30,000 golfers at club level to win the Final on a wet and very windy day played over the Eden Course at **St Andrews** on Monday 24 September.

Tina, who plays off a 17 handicap and Elaine (15) topped the field of 16 pairs that qualified by winning their regional finals throughout the UK and Ireland, with a total of 33points. It was a tight finish with Tina and Elaine winning on a card countback from another pair, Diane Melling and Jean Sidebottom from the Shaw Hill Hotel Golf Club in Lancashire, who also totalled 33points. The winners score included 3 birdies - one on the front 9 and two on the back 9. The two birdies on the inward half went towards a back 9 total of 20points - 3 more than their opponents who had halves of 16 and 17points.

Two pairs finished with 31 points to their credit. The third place prize, by virtue of having a better inward half, went to the Irish pairing of Fiona Carroll and Mary Ryan from Galway Bay. Also on the 31points mark were Emma Bullock and Sarah Clapp from Worthing.

Elaine and Tina's prizes included a tro-

## DaC driver's wife is a golf champ!



Elaine (L) and Tina get their Cups from Peugeot's Sam Meacock

phy and gift vouchers, plus an all-expenses paid return trip to St Andrews next August to play in the Ladies British Open Pro Am, which is held on the world famous Old Course at St Andrews.

Elaine is no stranger to Dial-a-Cab, having played in one of our last charity golf days at Sundridge Park, where – perhaps unsurprisingly - she came in with the highest Stableford score on the day...

After Call Sign criticises them for paying hotels to get airports...

## GetTaxi backs down on hotel payments!



Two months ago, **Call Sign** criticised **GetTaxi** for a secret text they had sent to their drivers telling them that they were going to "buy" hotel work that went to Heathrow Airport. They claimed that the passenger would actually be paying the extra without knowing it, but this magazine's view was that if that were the case, why not just knock £10 – the amount going to the hotel - off the cost of the fare?

The text had found its way to us via several unhappy GetTaxi drivers in late August. Some of **Dial-a-Cab's** older drivers will remember the fights this trade had against paying money to hotel porters in exchange for airport rides. GetTaxi threw that to the wall when the text went out. It read:

**Great news, GetTaxi is now picking up airport work from hotels in town! Airport work from hotels are fixed prices. GetTaxi will collect £11 incl £1 cash job fee from you for each hotel airport job, eg SW3 - LHR T5: £64, leaving you with £53. This is unfortunately necessary to ensure hotels use us, not PHV!**

Now GetTaxi are claiming that the text was sent out by "... a former employee and that it conveyed exactly the opposite of what they were looking to do."

They added in the October email that after a number of consultations with their drivers, they had decided to shelve this scheme until confident they had found "the best way of implementing it."

Well, it seems strange that it has taken them three months to cancel a text that we saw in August and which they finally acknowledged in an October email! Then that it was sent by that "former employee and that it conveyed exactly the opposite of what they were looking to do." Yet now they are saying that they want a better way of implementing it! Someone needs to get their story right...

### DVLA Group 2 Medical Standards

## CHANGES IN STANDARD OF VISUAL ACUITY

**Earlier this year the DVLA revised the visual acuity standard for holders of Group 2 licences. The new standard is as follows:**

A visual acuity, using corrective lenses if necessary, of at least 6/7.5 in the better eye and at least 6/12 in the other eye. The uncorrected visual acuity in each eye must be at least 3/60. Where glasses are worn to meet the minimum standards, they should have a corrective power of less than or equal to +8 dioptres.

**It is also necessary for all drivers of Group 2 vehicles to be able to meet the prescribed and relevant Group 1 visual acuity requirements.**

In assessing whether an applicant for a taxi or PHV driver's licence is medically fit, TfL has regard to the medical standard that would apply in relation to a DVLA Group 2 licence. Therefore any applicant applying for a taxi or PHV driver's licence after **31 October 2012** will be required to meet the new Group 2 standard. Drivers who were originally licensed under lower standards are allowed to retain these entitlements under 'grandfather rights'. The standard applied is determined by the date a PHV driver was first licensed or when a taxi driver was accepted onto the *Knowledge of London*. Retaining this entitlement is dependent on:

- \* The driver remaining continuously licensed since he or she was first licensed.
- \* There being no significant deterioration in any other aspects of the driver's vision.
- \* The driver not having been involved in an accident in the preceding 10 years, in which their eyesight might have been a factor.
- \* The driver meeting all of the current Group 1 acuity standards.

The Group 2 standards are set out in full in the DVLA publication 'At a Glance Guide to the Current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive' that can be found at [www.dft.gov.uk/dvla](http://www.dft.gov.uk/dvla).

**John Mason, Director London Taxi and Private Hire**





Nuala and Editor Alan Fisher at DaC's 50th anniversary ball in 2003. Alan must have had something in his eye!

# Goodbye Nuala

After many years with **Dial-a-Cab**, Nuala **Glavin's** smiling face in the ground floor **Driver Services** office left for the final time at the end of September.

"I have always loved this company," Nuala told *Call Sign* on her last day, "and I will miss all those drivers whom I've got to know so well. I'll also miss Brian, Warren and the Board in addition to the staff who all help to make Dial-a-Cab House such a lovely place to work."

Nuala also worked closely with DaC's PCN expert **Barrie Segal** and

Nuala's replacement, former **Contact Centre CSR Jacqui Franklin**, will continue that relationship.

Jacqui told this magazine: "Nuala has had a 20+ year start on me, but I'll do my best to keep Driver Services running every bit as smoothly as it has in the past."

During her time at DaC, *Call Sign* has reported on both Nuala's marriages, her time attempting the Knowledge and *that* dress at DaC's 50th anniversary ball! Now we wish her well for the future...

*Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the*

## POTTERS WHEEL

### Change...

In this world of change, we tend to take things for granted until all of a sudden they're gone. Then we complain that things aren't what they used to be, but don't necessarily want them back as we embrace new technology. Imagine being a businessperson trying to advance and guess what the public mood is? But sometimes the public don't get what the public wants and *vice versa*.

A few years ago, if you passed The Parkway cinema in Camden, you wouldn't see a film - just the windows boarded up and covered with billposters advertising who was playing at the Dublin Castle. This was an image that could be seen in most High Streets with picture houses shutting by the 100s as people flocked to video stores to rent films and take them home to watch on their new video players. After most of the big companies sold their properties to developers and sold out for good, suddenly there was a sea change. The public realised that sitting at home watching movies wasn't as good as going out to the pictures and remarkably things turned completely round in a way that no one could have predicted. Today, once again, you have a thriving cinema industry and even though the 'pick and mix' can be more expensive than the tickets, people just want a good night out.

If you get up with the larks, another once-declining industry making a comeback is the old milkman. Slowly, a company called **Milk and More** is fighting back, delivering many items of food as well as milk to people's doorsteps. I imagine that if you are elderly or rely on people's help to survive, this service is a godsend. I tend to buy my milk in bulk when doing the weekly shop, not because of the price but I always found that milk from the milkman was quite old and began to separate. Even when you shook it up it still left lumps, which the kids wouldn't drink. Supermarket milk is much fresher and tastier and if the milkman can match that freshness, I may well return to putting out a note every day and putting rubber covers on the top to stop the birds from stealing the cream!

Another old service, which is being reintroduced, is the fuel attendant. My local **Shell** service station has an attendant at peak times to save you from getting your hands dirty. I haven't enjoyed such a service since the days of the **Waverton Street** garage. Personally, I think these small things do mean a lot to people and they enjoy the personal touch, however we've all become used to roughing it. People tend



to try hard to help themselves, rather than relaxing and letting others do it for them.

### Entering a taxi...

During the Paralympics, I accepted a radio job and when I got to the pick-up, the lady and gentleman began telling me the best way for them to get into the taxi. The man picked the lady out of her wheelchair and tried to carry her into the back of the cab, seriously bending his back and nearly dropping the lady onto the ground. They didn't realise I had a ramp! So I showed them the best way to approach such a manoeuvre for future use.

They were amazed that I was so organised, but to me it was the normal thing to do, using the ramp and swivel seat etc. The public are very unaware of how wheelchair friendly our taxis and if they were, we could perhaps generate more work.

### Our man at TfL

**Bob Oddy** is our man on the TfL Board. You also probably remember **Ken Livingstone** as the then Labour leader of the GLC, threatening to put up taxes and goading **Mrs Thatcher** with a huge poster on the walls of the GLC building opposite the House of Commons. As a reaction to this, Maggie disbanded the GLC altogether, whilst giving all the power to the boroughs.

When **Tony Blair** decided to give a governing body back to the London public, it was a chance to rewrite some of the old job descriptions and readdress power. And Ken Livingstone did just that when forming a TfL board. So what can Bob Oddy do? Well, if you read his job description, not much more than walking around on tip toes. The TfL Board is made up of hand-picked (by the Mayor) members who have a certain amount of knowledge of the position they have taken up.

Members are invited to join for a 4 year term, where on expiry they are again invited to rejoin providing they have behaved themselves. If they don't, they can be fired without notice. They are not allowed to vote on matters that directly concern them and not allowed to represent anyone, especially those groups of which they have knowledge. They are there solely there to advise the Mayor on such issues when required. I don't think it's a case of what Bob Oddy does, it's a case of what is he allowed to do - and that's probably not too much.

**Richard Potter (T51)**



**John Dixon (B67) at Disney with some of the family helpers**

This year's **Magical Taxi Tour**, organised by **The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**, left Canary Wharf on Friday 12th October in a fleet of almost 100 taxis filled with excited children and helpers. They'd had breakfast (cooked by Ampersand) and received some spending money from Mark Brown, GM at the Brewery Road taxi dealership. The Marriott Hotel at East India Quay provided packed lunches for the journey and the kids had all collected their goody bags.

There are numerous people involved in making The Magical Taxi Tour a reality; the funding needed to give these children with life threatening illnesses the trip of a lifetime increases year on year and it's thanks to this generosity and hard work by the Disney Organising Committee that this is the 19th trip. It is also made possible by drivers donating theirs and their vehicles time freely. Many Dial-a-Cab drivers are involved, both on the committee and as drivers.

The convoy was accompanied by police outriders from the UK and France, as well as doctors and nurses from various hospitals where the children are treated, ambulance crews, the AA and the all-important tuck wagon bearing snacks and drinks.

For some of these children, the sight of the Lord Mayor resplendent in his robes was something they had never seen before. He arrived with his wife, Aldermen and Sheriffs of the City of London. Together with the trip sponsors, they had made time in their diaries to join the send-off and wish the convoy a great weekend. The Band of the Household Cavalry gave a rousing performance during breakfast and then took up their places near the front of the convoy to provide a fanfare for departure. The noise levels on the Wharf were certainly more than normal as the taxi drivers sounded their horns with many people lining the streets and cheering as the convoy left.

Then it was off to Dover to board a P&O ferry for the sail across to Calais. P&O are always generous in their support of the annual tour and the Committee are grateful for that. Once in Calais the convoy got ready for the journey down to Disneyland Paris. The usual fuel stop was made at the service area where refreshments and face painting had been organised. Then it was time to set off on the final leg of the journey. The convoy arrived at their hotel for a meal and some sleep ready for the big day!

Disneyland Paris time again and it's...

# D&C at the Magical Taxi Tour



**(Top) Phil Davis (F10) organises the cabs as they leave Canary Wharf  
Divyesh Ruparelia (V59) having dinner at the hotel with two young ladies**

Next morning the Taxi drivers and families made their way into the **Magical Kingdom** and the rides. Sadly the heavens opened, but the magic continued as the children ignored the rain and enjoyed the park. They were joined during the day by Liz Wootton, Lady Mayoress and wife of Alderman David Wootton, who wanted to experience the event for herself. She arrived by train and was met by WCHCD Master, **Brenda Bartlett**.

After a great – if wet - time at the theme park, it was back to the Newport Bay Hotel for a Gala Dinner with many of the kids dressed either in Disney costumes or party attire. Soon it was time for the real Disney characters to join the party and they were kept very busy signing autographs etc.

The following morning it was time to depart on the return journey. The children

(and some adults!) got the chance to sit on police bikes and in police cars. Then it was goodbye to France and Disney.

More information on the trip can be found at [www.magicaltaxitour.com](http://www.magicaltaxitour.com).

**Sandie Goodwin**

## Call Sign

**November 2012**

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# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012



All members will receive an individual notice of the Annual General Meeting 2012 advising that the meeting will be held at:

**The HAC, Armoury House, City Road, London EC1Y 2BQ on Sunday, 3rd February 2013 at 11:00hrs.**

The meeting this year will consider an agenda including the Election of Officers and any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions.

Proposed Rule Changes, Propositions and nominations for the Board, must be received at **Dial-a-Cab House** on or before 09:00hrs on Monday 12th November 2012 and be received in accordance with Society Rules.

Any member putting forward a Rule Change, Proposition or nomination for the Board and wishing to give a brief explanation to support their submission in the *January Call Sign*, may do so by emailing it to the Editor with a maximum 250 words by midday on Friday 7th December 2012.

**Howard Pears**  
Company Secretary

## Alec Wilkey trio triumphant!

There was triple success for **Dial-a-Cab** driver and boxing trainer **Alec Wilkey (W83)**, together with the **TKO Gym** in Canning Town, when **Areti Mastrodouka**, **Eren Arif** and **Brett O'Callaghan** were all successful in their latest appearances inside the ropes in an exciting *Left Jab Promotions* bill at **York Hall**. The three fighters all improved their records, with Arif taking a wide points victory in his debut professional fight. With another of Alec's fighters, **Danny Connor**, recently capturing the **Southern Area title**, 'Team Wilkey' looks to be gathering momentum!

Female boxer **Areti Mastrodouka** scored a resounding first round TKO victory against **Gabriella Vicze** in a short affair that lasted just 91 seconds. Areti measured up her opponent, began getting body shots in and then switched to the head. *The Master* planted her feet and landed a few straight left hands and it was this shot that sent her opponent to the canvas, giving the undefeated Mastrodouka her third win and second TKO victory. She is now lined up for a rematch with **Kristine Shergold** who she beat back in March, but this time the Masters title will be on the line at *Left Jab Promotion's Matinee Idols* show on **Sunday 18th November**. If Areti wins, a world title shot will have to follow.

Debutant **Eren Arif** was impressive in his first professional bout, scheduled for 4 rounds against journeyman **Johnny Greaves** - who was fighting in his 91st pro bout! After a good amateur career fighting for **Fisher ABC**, Arif got his first win in style with his fans cheering him on from the stands. It looked as if Arif was going to have too much for Greaves in the first as he piled on the pressure putting 3 and 4 punches together in explosive bursts, but Greaves used his experience and ring craft and kept Arif on his toes. In the second round Arif continued to force Greaves back with eye catching right hands and hooks to the body, but Greaves gestured and showboated to show Arif he was no pushover. In the third, Arif continued his good work with punch variation, throwing hooks, upper cuts and straight shots. Then again in the fourth, it was the man from South London who applied the pressure and landed the scoring shots. At the end of the bout, it was Arif's arm that was raised after winning all four rounds with a score of 36-40. But credit has to go to Greaves, who made the fight an exciting and tough first one for Arif. He is looking to keep busy and is scheduled to fight again on the *Matinee Idols* show, with his opponent to be announced later.

**Brett O'Callaghan** was making his 4th appearance as a pro against **Duncan Cottier** and again took a comfortable points decision to get his 4th win. Brett stood strong behind an established and effective jab and it was the unbeaten man from North London who took control of the action, varying his attack from head to body. Cottier was keen to show he was no pushover, but didn't have the skills to make any lasting effect on the younger man. At just 20 years of age, Brett boxed well beyond his years as he put punches together and backed Cottier up in the second round, catching him with a good left hook. The third and fourth rounds saw much of the same with O'Callaghan dictating the exchanges and using his reach to his advantage. It was no surprise when his arm was raised at the end of the bout. O'Callaghan will continue his boxing journey in 2013.

Cruiserweight **Menay Edwards**, trained by **Derek Grainger**, suffered a tight points loss to **Neil Dawson** in an exciting bout where both fighters hit the canvas, but it was Dawson who just edged it.

*Left Jab Promotions* next show on **Sunday 18th November** will feature Arif, Mastrodouka and some new faces to the pro game. Trainer **Alec Wilkey** and manager **Jonny Eames** have taken on **Tommy Williams**, who fought for **Fitzroy Lodge** as an amateur and who will have his first pro bout, as does **Tommy 'Da Gun' Martin** from **St Neots**. Also from the **TKO gym camp** is lightweight **Francis Maina Gicheha**, who has just joined the **TKO team**.

**Sunday 18th November** is sure to be an exciting afternoon of boxing. Tickets are priced at £35 and to purchase them just call **Alec Wilkey on 07944 791 360**.

**December 8th** sees the highly anticipated rematch between Southern Area Champion **Danny Connor** and **Chris Evangelou**. Connor won the vacant title against Evangelou when he outpointed him in an outstanding bout at **Alexandra Palace** in September and if that first fight is anything to go by, it is sure to be a high quality contest. The two fighters will do it again at the same venue on the undercard of **Darren Barker's** UK return and the **Lee Purdy v Carson Jones** bout. Tickets are priced at £40 or £60 for ringside. Call Alec on 07944 791 360 for Ally Pally tickets or more info.

**David Wilkey**



Alec Wilkey, Brett O'Callaghan, Areti Mastrodouka, Eren Arif, Jonny Eames, Derek Grainger and Menay Edwards

You may have seen in this month's *Mailshot*, my reply to **Ray Sorene (A53)** who felt that one of our *Customer Service Representatives* had not focussed sufficiently on obtaining enough details from a caller to make the pick-up easier for the driver.

I have been working constantly over the past two and half years with both our in-house trainers, **Daren Morley** and **Christina Simms**, to ensure that **Dial-a-Cab** offers the best customer service of any taxi or private hire contact centre. Chris originally devised a series of training sessions for existing employees, covering many aspects of the job of a telephonist – not only soft skills such as having a good telephone manner, but also the technical side. There was an emphasis on obtaining the correct information when taking a booking and on repeating the details back to the client before dispatching the trip, thereby reducing the chance of a costly mistake being made. This initiative involved every member of the Contact Centre team being put through a number of different sessions in our Training Room and having their skills developed.

Twelve months later, Chris and I met with each employee to review how they were performing and how often they were applying the new skills they had learned. Sadly, this exercise highlighted that a small minority had slipped back into their old ways and I had no option but to warn underachievers that they faced disciplinary action if they didn't improve.

We have Managers and Team Leaders in the Contact Centre who monitor their respective teams with regard as to how they perform their duties. At monthly one-to-one meetings, every member of the team is given feedback on their overall performance, including the number of calls they have handled, both in - and outbound. They are shown the length of time they have been unavailable to accept or make the next call, which is measured as a percentage of the total amount of time the employee has been signed on to the telephone system. Any mistakes made are also discussed, with a view to understanding their cause and trying to prevent a recurrence. Team members are also spoken to about their attendance / timekeeping and last but not least, the level of customer service they have delivered.

I'm naturally pleased to say that the overwhelming majority receive largely positive feedback in their one-to-one meetings. Should we find that an employee has under-achieved, they typically receive additional coaching from a senior member of staff, and it has not been uncommon for Chris or Daren to run extra one-on-one training sessions to help individuals attain and maintain the high standards of performance we require and expect of them.

Sometimes, however, despite all the training, guidance and support I have mentioned, I regrettably have to take disciplinary action, resulting in formal warnings being issued and where necessary, employees being dismissed when for reasons perhaps best known to themselves, they are either not willing or perhaps able to do the job they are employed to do.

*Keith Cain looks at Dial-a-Cab's contact centre and...*

# National Customer Service Week



Christina makes some points

## National Customer Service Week

*The first week of October was 'National Customer Service Week' in the UK, so we felt this was an opportunity not to be missed to once again impress upon our Contact Centre team the critical importance of them delivering excellent customer service, particularly in the current economic climate.*

So we held a competition throughout the week, with a prize on offer for the telephonist judged to have given the very best customer service to a client. Individuals had to be nominated either by a superior, or one of their colleagues. Relevant calls were then reviewed and a finalist eventually chosen for each day of the week, leaving me to select a winner from the final seven. And I have to say that it was really a pleasure to listen to and judge the calls and it reinforced my belief that our team is the best in the business for delivering excellent customer service. All seven finalists were worthy of a prize, but there could only be one winner.

In the end, there were two calls that I found difficult to choose between. One of the two belonged to Hyacinth Inniss-Reid from our Evening shift. It was a fine example of how to put one's personality across on a call, rather than simply reading from a script like a robot. I commended Hyacinth for being a close runner-up, but, unfortunately for her she was just pipped to the post by Jemma Rushton of our Night shift.

Jemma had received a call from a client who had missed his last train home and was in some doubt as to whether we would be able to transport him all the way from Charing Cross to Tonbridge in Kent. Jemma showed great empathy for the gentleman's situation and gave an excellent explanation as to why our

driver, who had dropped him off at the station, had perhaps not been able to take him all the way home. She reassured the client throughout the call, not only that we would strive to get him a taxi, but also that we would keep him informed at regular intervals as to how we were doing. Then, after taking all the information and following the call structure correctly, Jemma noticed just before finishing the call that the trip had been accepted. There was a palpable sense of relief in the client's voice when she told him that a taxi was on its way.

I felt that instead of just winding up the call as we normally do – by advising that we would call if we had any problems or delays – Jemma remained focused on her screen to spot that a driver had accepted the trip. It was a call that demonstrated that Dial-a-Cab were helpful, considerate and friendly and a company to do business with.

Alas, Jemma has an aversion to having her photograph taken, which prevents me from showing you the moment I came in early one morning to present her with her well-deserved prize. Apparently, not even her own family have portraits of her, so to accompany these words, I have had to resort to shots of a recent training session I gate-crashed. As for Jemma, I'll have to settle for congratulating her in print with a public "well done Jemma!"

National Customer Service Week also saw the launch of a brand new training programme, once again crafted by Chris Simms but this time concentrating on what I have called the soft skills of customer service, as opposed to the procedural side of taking a booking. I really see this as the cherry on the cake of our customer service and should help to further differentiate ourselves from our competitors.

*continued on page 21*



As Christmas is just 7 weeks away, I thought I'd offer you my opinions on the best gifts you can get for the gamer, the gadget-freak and the hobbyist in your life...

### For the Gamer: Call of Duty: Black Ops 2

Well okay, I haven't actually tried this out yet! Call of Duty: Black Ops 2 comes out on November 13 and even though I've not played it yet, I have every confidence it'll be a smash. Put it this way: my copy is already on pre-order. The original Black Ops was an epic game with fantastic graphics and fun gameplay.

The new game will feature an action-packed story in the single-player mode, which is a sequel to the original Black Ops game. The story takes place across two separate arcs, one recounting events in the 1980s and the other following characters in the year 2025. Of course the main feature of the game will be the multiplayer aspect, allowing gamers to fight it out against others around the world, or team up with their friends.

I've seen quite a few videos on YouTube from Activision and Treyarch (publisher and maker of Black Ops and Black Ops2) as well as from early testers of the game. From what I've seen, the game engine delivers gorgeous graphics, exciting maps and a well-balanced gun system. This game is simply a must-have for any XBOX 360, PS3 or PC gamer over 18.

View trailer at [www.callofduty.com/blackops2](http://www.callofduty.com/blackops2) and see gameplay previews on YouTube.

### For the Gadget-freak: Google Nexus 7

At the time of writing, there is no sign as yet of the much-rumoured iPad Mini, but I'd be surprised if this didn't surface very soon. However, what is most definitely available right now is the 7 inch Google Nexus 7 mini-tablet. Whilst I don't own one (I'm an iPad 2 user), one of my colleagues in the Dial-a-Cab IT department has one and he was kind enough to let me have a play with it. I must say I was impressed. I'm not an Android fan, I love Linux but I've been disappointed by the fractured Android market. Consequently I didn't have

DaC's Network Administrator and avid computer games player, Jon Winterburn, looks at...

## JON'S XMAS STOCKING FILLERS



### Call of Duty: Black Ops 2

much faith in Google's Nexus 7. I think because it runs the much improved Jelly Bean operating system, this has attributed greatly to its speed and stability. If you are looking for a first tablet or just want to downsize to a tablet that is lightweight and affordable (around the £200 mark), then I would recommend the Nexus 7. It's very easy to use, fast and responsive. There are a lot of apps available for it on the Google Play store, many of which are the same as their iPad counterparts.

### For the Hobbyist: Warhammer

#### 40,000 - Dark Vengeance Starter Kit

Created in 1987, Warhammer 40k is a table-top miniature war game produced by UK firm Games Workshop and set in a dystopian science-fantasy universe. Now I know this might sound geeky or just for kids, but I assure you it isn't. I've toyed with the idea of learning to build and play Warhammer 40k for some years, but never got around to it. Now that my 10 year old son is interested in futuristic science fiction, we both found Warhammer 40k to be engaging and good fun.

Warhammer 40k is set in the 41st millennium and follows the evolution of mankind on earth from the first lunar landing in 1969 to inhabiting Mars in 2100, right up to the 41st millennium where there's nothing but endless wars across the

galaxy. There's much feature-rich lore to the story, including countless books and it is based upon those wars and you, the hobbyist, play the game.

Part hobby, part game, Warhammer 40k involves choosing your army from 16 available factions; buying and building (with glue) your army miniatures; painting miniatures and battlefield scenery; learning rules of combat and waging table-top battles against other players with up to 30 dice and your army codex to reference individual characters abilities (ballistic power, stamina, range etc).

This is a great hobby to get into for kids and adults alike, and is an excellent way of spending time with your kids doing something constructive. Yes, it is time-consuming, but this means your initial outlay provides many months or even years of enjoyment. The game itself has simple mechanics which are easy to learn, but difficult to master due to the large amount of additional rules (you don't need to use these at the start). The game is very strategic, so requires thought, calculated risks and good leadership. The background lore, combined with the painted miniatures, bring the battles to life in a way that even computer games, in my humble opinion, cannot.

If you are interested, pop into your local Games Workshop. The staff are always very friendly, let you play games in the shop, give you tips and tricks for painting and even have completely free initiation courses. They have just released the 6th edition of the rule book along with a complete 2-army starter kit (which I've built with my son) called Dark Vengeance. I highly recommend it!

The website is at [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com).

Well, I hope there was something useful in there for you, and I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Jon Winterburn**  
DaC Network Administrator

*continued from page 20*

## National Customer Service Week (continued)...

Chris had a busy month delivering this training to as many members of the Contact Centre team as she could, before finishing work at the end of October in anticipation of a very different type of delivery - that of her second child! You can see Chris in one of her training sessions, along with some of her less-camera-shy trainees, in the photo.

As an introduction to National Customer Service Week and the competition and training, I delivered a series of team briefings that enabled me to share with the Contact Centre how the Society performed during the financial year just ended, and the impact the Olympic Games had on those year-end results. I emphasised that we have a difficult time ahead of us and how difficult it is for us to compete with private hire companies on the basis of cost, but that we can win business if the service we give to our clients is unequalled.

Everyone that attended one of the briefings had an opportunity to comment on my presentation and ask questions. Time and again I was asked about the service our drivers give. Employees were keen to know why drivers complained of a lack of work when all too often in the Contact Centre they see a good job being rejected umpteen times in a row. I was also challenged as to why some drivers offer ridiculous delay times, or ask for a ring out when they are not outside the door.

As a driver myself, it was easy for me to answer all of these questions, but I have to confess I am not convinced they all followed the logic! Thinking in hindsight about the feedback I received, there was undoubtedly a sense of whether drivers understood how the quality of their service affected our ability to give a good service?

One contributor even put forward the idea of members spending some time in the Contact Centre to gain a better understanding of the job of a calltaker and the difficulties they often face in some of the scenarios put to me. I should add that these visits are something I have always encouraged and I am only too happy to arrange should any drivers be interested.

Meeting with employees from across all of our various shifts convinced me that by and large, our Contact Centre team are conscientious about how they do their job and do want to improve our service and enhance the reputation of the Society and its future success. With you, the drivers, playing your part, I am more than confident that we will get through this difficult period and emerge from it even stronger still.

If you are interested in learning more about how our Contact Centre works and perhaps listening in to a few calls, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

**Keith Cain**  
Contact Centre Manager, Drivers Operations Manager

**Jim Baptist (E6)** stood silently for a few seconds. Then out came the words that he apparently wanted **Dial-a-Cab's** in-house magazine to publish...

"Yes, I hate **Dial-a-Cab**," he said, "and you can put that in *Call Sign*!"

*Call Sign* had published many articles over the years and yes, some have been critical. But to hate DaC? That was another ball game entirely! But fortunately for this magazine's editor, who would have had to decide what to do about Jim's comments, within seconds a huge smile appeared on his face as he admitted to joking! Then he went on to explain what he was referring to...

"Drivers are complaining about the lack of work and yet I've managed 4 jobs this morning so far and it's only 10.30," he said twisting his free left hand to confirm the time on his wristwatch.

"Yes, admittedly the economy is weak and the competition tough, so you have to go that extra mile to retain our client base and keep the customers happy, and if that means running a little further to cover work, then so be it.

"The real problem is that most drivers won't remember the early 1990s when things were very tough indeed. So while I'm cer-

# "I Hate Dial-a-Cab!"



Fortunately for the Editor, Jim was joking!

tainly not making light of the present economic downturn, it won't last indefinitely and we have to push on, be flexible in our *modus operandi* and just get stuck in!

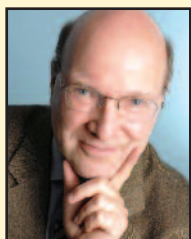
"I know some subscribers are saying things like there's not enough work on the radio and they are still paying subs, but the fact is

that with a minimum fare of £8.80 per trip, if you only cover just 1 job a day over the course of the month, that's well over what your subs will have cost and the rest is straight into the bank and you have all the other benefits of being on **Dial-a-Cab** ie traffic info, fixes on points if you get stuck and of course the map facility when you need it. Even now after all these years, it's still pretty good if you exclude the Island and I'm sure that it will be brilliant with the new terminals.

"I often wonder" Jim mused, "that if drivers complain about the lack of work through the system, just how many trip offers they actually reject before accepting something? These four trips I've done so far today have gone a long way towards paying my subs and it's pretty much downhill from now on, so you can see why I hate Dial-a-Cab!" Jim grinned mischievously as he realised how the editor had been let off the hook!

**Alan Green**  
Call Sign Online

## PCN request from Barrie Segal



Dial-a-Cab's PCN expert, Barrie Segal has an incredible record of getting Penalty Charge Notices cancelled. However, he is asking for some assistance from DaC drivers and asked if *Call Sign* could put a message out:

"Can I ask that all drivers please write the date of receipt on all Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs), Notices to Owner, Notices of Rejection Charge Certificates, Orders for Recovery and any other correspondence they receive relating to a PCN and then take photocopies before they send it to Jacqui Franklin in Drivers Services. This will help enormously, particularly where councils claim they never received an appeal or where they say they sent out a notice of rejection which they claim was ignored."

**Barrie Segal**

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

### Walking

Do you get enough exercise? Do you make time to get to the gym either before, during or after your shift? Has the need to work

longer hours meant that you are getting into the saddle earlier - and getting home later, making exercise an ever more difficult practice? Why not consider breaking up your shift with a nice healthy walk? But not just a stroll - make it more interesting!

Let me recommend [www.westminsterguides.org.uk](http://www.westminsterguides.org.uk) - you can find a subject to interest you, I'm sure.

Westminster Guides are really enthusiastic about their patch - I should know, I'm one of them.

A couple of my mates - who are also



Westminster Guides - have set themselves up with their own walks and you can check out their website at [www.trailsoft-heckcity.co.uk](http://www.trailsoft-heckcity.co.uk). You will find 'Big Steve' and 'Richard II' very entertaining!

### Magical Mystery Tour

I recently enjoyed my second Magical Taxi Tour to Disneyland in Paris.

Another great weekend - yes, very tiring - but very very rewarding! Scarlott was the 14-year old I had a duty of care for - she had suffered from a collapsed lung earlier in the year and had a 36 hour stint in intensive care. But despite being an asthmatic - and having to be dependent on medication and a nebuliser - she was determined to experience the fasted ride in the park.

The 'rock n' roller coaster' accelerates to 57 mph in 2.8 seconds After loading pas-

sengers, the carriage stops at the entrance to a tunnel - then after the countdown, the car is then shot into the tunnel through two inversions, one of which are roll overs - and one of which is a corkscrew on a winding track, twisting and turning - up and down!

Me? I just don't sit comfortably with fairground rides. This one was relentless! But when the child in your care wants to go up in the air - then sometimes you just have to grin and bear it!

I came off that ride a quivering wreck - and was promptly asked by Scarlott if we could have another ride! My large intestine is still in that carriage!

*A bientot...*

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



John Mason, the Director at London Taxi and Private Hire has issued a warning to taxi drivers about the area licencing identifiers. He told Call Sign:

"The *Cab Order* for the taxi driver licence area identifiers came into effect from 1 March 2012. This means that all taxi drivers must display valid **All London** (green) or **Suburban** (yellow) identifiers, depending on the area they are licensed to ply for hire in, whenever they are working. As has been previously notified, unless there are significant mitigating factors, drivers found working without displaying their area identifiers will face further action. This action will typically be:

**A written warning for a first offence; a period of suspension for a second offence and revocation of the licence for a third offence.**

To date, a total of 104 written warnings have been issued to drivers found by the TPH Compliance team not displaying both area identifiers while working. A further 8 drivers have so far had their licence suspended for a minimum period of one month.

In addition, further to reports received via the reporting tool at [www.tfl.gov.uk/cabenforcement](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cabenforcement), 73 letters have been sent to drivers advising that a report has been received and reminding them of their obligations to always display the area identifiers whilst working.

Since the area identifiers have been introduced, Tfl has been working closely with police to investigate and follow up instances of licensed and unlicensed drivers using forged area identifiers.

**To date, 25 arrests have been made by the police for suspected forged area identifier use. Of these, 16 arrests are for drivers that are licensed to work in Suburban areas but have used forged All London identifiers. The remaining 9 are unlicensed drivers using forged area identifiers. Investigations are also under way into a number of other cases.**

Tfl takes its obligations as the Licensing Authority very seriously and will not tolerate licensed drivers committing fraud in this way. Of the 16 arrests so far, 6 drivers have had their licences revoked and the remainder are subject to their fitness to remain licensed being reviewed. Furthermore, any driver who is studying the **Knowledge of London** to obtain the All London licence will no longer be able to complete these studies.

This is a reminder to all drivers that you must display the original identifiers that you were sent by Tfl at all times whilst working and must report to Tfl immediately if you need replacement identifiers. Please call 0845 602 7000 or email [TPH.Enquiries@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:TPH.Enquiries@tfl.gov.uk). Tfl will not accept under any circumstances, the use of forged, stolen or copied identifiers. Your identifiers are your responsibility. You risk losing your licence if you knowingly allow your identifiers to be borrowed or copied.

# Green and yellow identifiers warning



**DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO DISPLAY COPIED OR FORGED IDENTIFIERS. YOU WILL LOSE YOUR LICENCE WHEN CAUGHT!**

The scheme is not intended to be a scheme for taxi drivers to police each other and drivers should not approach or challenge other drivers who may not be displaying their identifiers. This is made clear in the guidance document that each driver received with his/her personal identifiers. Tfl has received a number of reports of Suburban taxi drivers being confronted or abused by All London drivers. Such behaviour is unacceptable and any driver found to be acting in this way risks having his or her fitness to be licensed reviewed.

**All drivers are reminded that Suburban drivers can legitimately ply for hire in parts of central London if:**

- \* The driver is licensed for one of the two extension areas – Merton and Sutton sector, which includes an extension to Clapham, Balham and Tooting station ranks, while the Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest sector includes the ranks at Stamford Hill and Manor House.

- \* The driver is plying for hire at a design-

ated 'island rank'. Island ranks are located in inner London boroughs but all drivers licensed for the specified suburban borough(s) are allowed to ply for hire on these ranks. There are currently six designated island ranks:

*Finsbury Park Bus Station – Haringey drivers  
Garratt Lane (Arndale), Wandsworth – Merton and Sutton drivers  
Garrett Lane (Sainsbury's), Wandsworth – Merton and Sutton drivers  
Mitcham Road (Tooting Bdw Station) – Merton and Sutton drivers without the Clapham extension  
Wimbledon Park Road (Southfields Station) – Merton and Sutton drivers  
High Street, Putney – Richmond upon Thames drivers*

You do have the opportunity to report any allegations of non-compliance via our website at the following address: [www.tfl.gov.uk/cabenforcement](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cabenforcement). Information reported will be collated and analysed and, where appropriate, used to determine the deployment of the TPH Compliance team as well as the Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Command Unit and City of London Police."

## Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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

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

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

### The cost?

*Just 1% per month on the outstanding balance (or APR of 12.7%).  
Loans can be paid back early AND there can be an annual dividend on your shares.*

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

**Call us on 020 7729 8171 or 020 7749 0585**

*Members of the Financial Ombudsman Service  
Member's funds protected up to limit set by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme  
DaC Credit Union Ltd, Peterley Business Centre, 472 Hackney Rd E2 9EQ  
Authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority  
Registration number 213263*

Since writing my last article, it seems to have kick-started others into having recollections of the years that have passed us by since Pentonville and Shirland Roads....

## Simplex or duplex?

I put my application in to the **Lords** radio taxi circuit in the early 1970s and just waited to be accepted or rejected. In those days you had to have sponsors, but how would I know anyone on the circuit when I was coming from the Civil Service side of the Metropolitan Police? But I found them.

At the time of completing my Knowledge, I was stationed at TDH - the Bow Traffic Division. It would be a change driving around in an FX taxi to what I had become accustomed to ie a large white Land Rover 110 with a blue light and two speakers on the roof, which made it look like Mickey Mouse's car!

The day before I was due to attend Highgate Road to have my Pye radio communications equipment fitted, a kindly lorry driver decided to back into the front of my taxi and smash the headlight and wing. So a battle worn taxi arrived for its installation, after which I was transported to Shirland Road for my training. That involved sitting next to a despatcher in the basement of 144 Shirland Road. My trainer was **Dennis Samuels (ex-F25)**, a man with more front than Selfridges! He stood about 5 foot 2 inches in his shoes and someone who was so quick witted, it was frightening - and that comes from me, someone who considers himself very quick at a comeback.

You had to sit next to the despatcher with a headset on and listen to both sides of the jobs being offered and accepted. **Lords** worked on a duplex system, which meant if the driver was still talking when the despatcher pushed the foot peddle down, all the others drivers could hear him. I say *him* as there were no women on the circuit at that time. On this system, the despatcher had to take all drivers for a job as the other drivers would hear him trying as he proceeded to give details. Radio Taxis (Southern) - or Mountview as it was known - used a Simplex system, which meant if the despatcher put his foot peddle down, it blanked out any driver trying to get in to gain a job.

Dennis had mastered the art of the foot peddle; his foot would go up and down faster than a fiddler's elbow! This was something he would train me to master in the coming years. As I sat beside him, I heard the stupid comments and abuse he got when a driver thought a job should have gone to him.

One driver was giving Dennis plenty of aggravation - they obviously had past history in annoying one another in their working lives. The driver then accepted a delivery ride from Dennis, who gave him the pickup address and said the man's name would be on the box - it was Locks and his initials were B O! That was the speed at which his brain functioned.

During this training session, I learned a good lesson; as this was a voice circuit, always speak clear and at a speed that can be understood. It was no good screaming and shouting because if you did that, the despatcher would just get annoyed and not go out of his way to help you.

If you had an emergency, the despatcher would cease despatching to get assistance to you as quickly as possible. What I used to do when

# THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF DIAL-A-CAB...

*Bits you may not know as remembered by Tom Whitbread!*



despatching was to keep my foot on the peddle so the other drivers could hear his location and the urgency in his voice, sometimes another taxi would be at his location before I had taken all the details and phoned 999.

**Dennis died many years ago, but his legend carries on with all the drivers who were fortunate enough to be able to have worked with him.**

Two hours saw the end of your training and you were then transported back to Highgate Road and hopefully able to use the equipment in the correct way. It wasn't till you had used the equipment for about 2 weeks that you gained confidence and expertise to join fully in all conversations over the air.

On Saturdays, it was the Ivor and Lou radio show. **Ivor Belkin (C97)** did the day shift with **Lou Gitlin** taking over for the evening shift. Ivor could talk the hind legs off a donkey in fact he still can and still does the Saturday shift! He is one of the oldest subscribers on Dial-a-Cab along with **Bill Tyzack (C06)**. Ivor is the type of person who falls into the category of why use six words when 24 will do! I do not know the exact number of years that Ivor has been despatching, but it's over forty.

## Getting the needle

Lou Gitlin was a very well read man, intelligent and I believe, the Master of many Freemason Lodges. But what stood out was his wit; he knew how to insult a driver and take the mickey out of anyone - without them even realising! Some even said thanks, thinking he had complimented them!

When I left home on Saturday evenings after becoming a Board Member, I would let him know when I reached Essex Road. This was so he knew he had someone he could call on in the event of an emergency - or even a toilet break. Inevitably he would say: "Gentlemen, we have no more worries now - the educated Tom Whitbread is on the road... PLANK!" He could say it knowing there was no way you would have a go back because knowing Lou, having a go would be taking your life and reputation into the realms of darkness with no return.

I used to sit with Lou in the canteen during his lunch period. As I said, he was well educated so we could sit there and resolve all of the country's problems. The other thing about Lou was his size, he was quite large, but you would never see him over-eating.

One thing I'll never forget was when he told

me he had a very serious illness. He was receiving treatment at the Middlesex Hospital in Mortimer Street. During his treatment, he parted some discrete information to the doctor: "*Doc, I can't get the popcorn.*" On hearing that, I started to smile because with Lou you just could not tell from his facial expression if he was having you on. Then he said the doctor offered him an injection he could give himself when he felt the urge for sex, the problem being it had to be injected into the penis. Naturally the doctor said that he couldn't let Lou do it without knowing how to do it correctly and not injure himself. So he sent Lou to a clinic to see a specific nurse. Lou presented himself at the clinic with much trepidation and found the very matter-of-fact NHS nurse, who then told Lou to drop his trousers and pants and she would give him a hypodermic needle to practise with. Lou's rather large tummy did not help when trying to find the member that was going to have a large needle plunged into it. He described it to me as being akin to extricating a wrinkle from its shell. He completed the task with a very sore member before being told by the very efficient nurse that he had done it correctly and that he could go home!

Lou left the hospital and stepped into the warm summer sunshine only to be confronted by young nubile women in their flimsy finery. It was then he realised that the injection the nurse had given him was not a placebo, but the actual potion he would be taking! As he felt some strange stirrings, he began to panic - he had gone to the hospital on the underground and was dressed in just a shirt and trousers. So it was into the nearest newsagent to buy the largest broadsheet they had. He then had to stand all the way on a Northern line train from Goodge Street to Edgware. During the journey, he kept the paper strategically placed for fear of being arrested!

As Lou finished his recollection of that afternoon's events to me, I was rolling around the canteen floor, chest void of air and aching, tears of laughter streaming down my cheeks. Lou was a terrific story teller - whether true or not. You couldn't always tell because of the twinkle he had in his eye. Sadly, Lou the joker died in 2010 and I know I will always miss him and his humour.

## Characters and animals...

When I was the night despatcher, there were a group of drivers who, if you broke down, were around like a flash to get you going again. Among them were **Steve Sharpe (F34)**, **Steve Shaller (R34)**, **Brian Gillette (ex-A71)** and a few others. But it wasn't always wonderful - I have seen drivers get their cabs fixed by this group and then take the next passenger in front of their helpers! However, liberty-takers were very few. Remember that these drivers never charged for their mechanical expertise and I've even known them to tow a taxi to the owner's garage if they could not fix it.

Brian Gillette answered to the nickname of *mumbles* due to drivers saying he would mumble when he covered despatcher's breaks. He also somewhat resembled Jesus, with his long hair, pallor complexion wispy beard and slim body. He was just like *Marmite* - you either loved him or

*continued on page 25*



**Jet Set Sports**, one of the key players in arranging corporate hospitality for the London Olympic Games 2012 has given high praise to the taxi trade for their invaluable contribution towards their transport operations during the Games. A **Knowledge Point** spokesperson told *Call Sign*:

"We were very proud that they chose Knowledge Point School to become their partner. They came to us because they had learned we were the company who could provide them with drivers who were fit and proper, vocationally competent and of the right calibre for their important clients.

Over a one year period, both we and Jet Set Sports interviewed over 300 knowledge trainees together with yellow and green badge drivers who had learned of the opportunity and wanted to participate. The partnership was a complete success with the majority of drivers not only being well paid, but also having the opportunity to attend both the Opening and Closing ceremonies as well as some of the major events. Knowledge Point School was delighted to be able to work alongside Jet Set Sports and be part of the 2012 Olympics, collaboration of which gave the oppor-

## Knowledge Point @Taxi Trade Promotions Ltd and... **THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPICS**



**The participants all did well**

tunity of a lifetime to all those that were involved."

**Michael Luzzo**, Operations Manager at Jet Set Sports, said:?

"Without a doubt, **Taxi Trade Promotions**, their talented management team and top notch drivers played an integral role in the overall success of Jet Set Sports' transport operations during the London 2012 Olympic Games. Working with highly trained drivers and integrating our

Olympic knowledge and experience into the curriculum was at the heart of the partnership that we formed and a key element in the overall success of our transportation operations. Recruiting and training drivers who were working towards securing their Green badge or actively studying The Knowledge to become Black Cab drivers was a key focus. Their topographical knowledge of London and ability to provide an outstanding experience to our guests at the Olympic Games were instrumental in the overall success of the recruitment and training of our drivers, providing core support in sourcing drivers and managing administration functions. Without the guidance of **Peter Osborne** and the skills of **Derek O'Reilly**, the success that was achieved would not have been possible. Our heartfelt thanks go out to **Malcolm Linskey** and his team at TTP, who were true partners in every sense of the word!"

*A number of DaC drivers took part.*

## **THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF DIAL-A-CAB...(CONTINUED)**

*continued from page 24*

hated him. He was also one of the *trackers*. I was responsible for this group and it was included in my Board duties.

The trackers task was to hunt down those few drivers who decided to disrupt the circuit by interfering with the signals – usually by holding down their radio button and making silly noises that would totally disrupt the despatcher while calling work. Why they did it, I'll never know. It was their own livelihood they were ruining, but they seemed to think they were being clever. But they were idiots.

As you will have seen in the last issue of *Call Sign* with **David Kupler's** (Y74) moving tribute to his mother **Mary**, a lot of drivers had members of their family working full or part-time for the Society. They would work on the phones, administration or in my case, when we could not get a night security person, my son stepped in for two weeks!

I remember David's mother, father and sister. His father was the original *Frank Spencer* with his working attire of navy blue beret and light beige mackintosh. I wonder if **Judd Kupler** ever picked up **Michael Crawford**, who was a regular account customer with Lords when starring at the **Palladium** or the **Victoria Palace**. Perhaps he even copied Judd's working clothes for his very popular **Some mothers do 'ave 'em** character!

In a list of larger than life characters in the history of Lords/Dial-a-Cab, there was one man who stood out throughout the cab trade – that was my very good friend, **Jack Taylor**. He could get away with murder – and often did! He was the type of man who'd walk into a room and everyone would know it was *our Jack*. Jack wasn't always so outgoing, he really began to shine when **Telly Savalas** portrayed New York cop **Kojak**. The similarity was uncanny to the point when people began calling him Kojak! Even if they phoned, they'd ask if Kojak was in the office and everyone would know who the caller was referring to!

Also, Jack's tireless work with his team on the **London Taxi Drivers Fund for Underprivileged Children** was remarkable. It



**Jack had the same sense of humour whether talking to a driver or the Queen!**

did not matter if Jack was the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer or just a committee member of the charity, he would over talk and take charge of any conversation!

At ODRTS, Jack would often come into the office early in the morning and ask if I'd like a break from despatching to grab a cup of tea – it wasn't a question, it was a command! But I would know that within four minutes, the whole circuit would be in uproar. He would give jobs – not through malice or cheating – to cabs who were not the nearest to the pick-up, yet within minutes the victim who thought the job should have been his would be back as Jack's best friend!

The moment we heard of Jack's death, the whole atmosphere in the office and with all the drivers on the fleet, was plunged into sadness. He was such an incredibly loved person. He would radiate humour and kindness, whether he was talking to the Queen – as he did – lords, ladies, heads of industry, financial wizards, the media or a young mistreated child. If you wanted people to donate money to a charity, forget **Terry Wogan** or other celebrities – you just sent in Jack Taylor!

I'm sure that **Dennis, Lou and Jack** are sitting in that great synagogue in the sky look-

**ing down smiling that after all these years, we still talk about them!**

These were some of the characters who gave their time and energy to help build up this Society to the size and wealth it has today. These men, like me, could have earned much more money out on the road, but they were from the early days and wanted the circuit to get better and never fail.

There have been many other characters – a word we do not seem to need these days. Maybe that was because data despatch eventually fragmented groups that used to meet and produce these people. Neither do you hear the verbal banter, regular callsigns or hear that certain drivers were sick and they would almost certainly then receive visits from fellow drivers. Nowadays we are numbers on a data sheet who travel around in metal boxes, producing balance sheet bottom lines!

I hope by my putting these words onto paper, it may remind you – or inform you if you are a new driver – about the camaraderie that existed during the 70s and 80s. Look out for more memories soon...

**Tom Whitbread**

# IT'S A BOY!

Three beautiful granddaughters, but now  
DaC's Sid Nathan can say...



Long-time **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Sid Nathan (K88)** sounded ecstatic when he phoned **Call Sign** to tell us his wonderful news – his fourth grandchild had been safely delivered, but after three granddaughters he and wife **Ivy** now had their first grandson!

"It would have made absolutely no difference to us had it been another girl,"

Sid told us, his voice bursting with excitement, "so long as the baby was born healthy. But having our first grandson is very exciting!"

The baby was born to son and daughter-in-law **Avney** and **Michal** on 8th October and weighed in at 7lbs. To all the Nathan family, congratulations and mazeltov...

At the European Taxi Fair 2012

## LONDON TAXIS TO REPRESENT ANTENNENTECHNIK

**Antennentechnik Bad Blankenburg GmbH** will be exhibiting and promoting their innovative range of combination antennas at the European Taxi Fair in Cologne on 9th and 10th November and have specifically requested a TX4 London Taxi to represent and demonstrate them on.

**AntennenSystem UK Ltd** was formed in 2011 to be the UK business partner and distributor for Antennentechnik ABB Bad Blankenburg GmbH, to service the growing UK automotive digital radio market as well as to promote ABB's innovative range of combination antennas aimed at the emergency services and mobile radio markets.

**In addition to antennas for many other applications, ABB are at the forefront of DAB antenna innovation.**

The London Taxi Company have been fitting antennas made by Antennentechnik to London Taxis supplied to the UK market for 6 years and highly recommend their products.

**Nigel Moore**, Business Development Manager for Antennentechnik and Director of AntennenSystem UK Ltd, said:

"Any vehicle can promote our products on an exhibition stand, but not any vehicle can attract the footfall like a London Taxi. The iconic London Taxi is the most recognised taxi in the world and I am sure it will get every visitor of the show onto our stand. Once on our stand, we can talk antennas!"

**Maria Holmes-Keeling**, International Marketing Manager for **The London Taxi Company** added:

"We are more than happy to represent Antennentechnik at the



The European Taxi Fair will be held in Cologne

Cologne Trade Fair. It will be a privilege to send a London Taxi to exhibit amongst all the other cream coloured saloon vehicles. I'm sure our platinum silver TX4 will do just the job for Nigel and his team."

## Bank Enhancement Consultation

The City of London are conducting a public consultation on the strategy developed to enhance the area around **Bank** and have asked the taxi (and private hire) trades if they would like to contribute. Responses should go to [bankarea@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:bankarea@cityoflondon.gov.uk).

The CoL said: *With more people using the Bank area, the City of London needs to ensure that the streets and spaces meet people's needs. As the provider of local government and policing services for the Square Mile, the City of London regularly consults with stakeholders and liaises with infrastructure providers to ensure that our streets are of the standard expected of a world class city.*

*Following last year's successful consultation where we asked local stakeholders what works well in the streets and spaces around Bank, what doesn't and what would make the area work better for you; we have developed an enhancement strategy for the area based on the most popular occurring themes and comments from the consultation. We would now like views from all users of the area, whether you walk, cycle, take the bus or drive through Bank, as to whether or not you feel the draft strategy targets the needs of the area, now and for the future.*

To take part, you can view the draft strategy at [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/areaconsultations](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/areaconsultations). And then email your comments on the strategy to: [bankarea@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:bankarea@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## AVAILABLE FOR RENT CLOSE TO DISNEY IN FLORIDA



2 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 4/5



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6 Bedroom 5 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 12



Pool and conservation view at 6 bedroom home.

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# COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



*Hello ladies and gents,*

**I would like to raise your awareness of the implementation of the Dial-a-Cab App for the iPhone and Android that begins on 1st December. Below this article there is another important procedure that also begins on 1st December – that being the return of the former EC5 rank back to four city postal zones. Please read that as well...**

## **The Dial a Cab Credit Card App**

As from 1st December, there will be **No** booking fee on all Credit Card bookings and the handling charge will be reduced to **10%**. Clients will now be able to order taxis on an ASAP basis or pre-book the taxis in advance either by phone, on-line, or by using the **Dial-a-Cab App** (free to download from the relevant App store for iPhones and Androids). There will soon be new updated partition stickers available from Roman Way and from

this office, so please display them in your taxis. The reduced handling charge will also apply to street hirings with credit cards.

**With your assistance, especially with coverage, it will certainly help to generate additional income for you all. The App works extremely well, but without your backing it will not be a success. Please help us to help you.**

The trips will appear on your terminals exactly the same way as they have always done, normal run-ins (up to £4.20) will be applicable (at your discretion) and to assist with coverage, the trips will be As Directed. They are authorised and processed in the usual way.

There will be no pre-booking charges at stations or theatres and scrubs will be paid in most cases. It will be widely publicised on the DaC website and the public network, but again I can't stress highly enough how vital it is that you give this your full support and backing.

## **Work on the Island**

Work on the Island is steadily increasing, both 'Rolling Ranks' are running very smoothly and it will certainly get busier as we approach the festive period. After 1am when the ranks finish, there seems to be a small number of call-signs that book into E14 and because some trips are then unmasked, they reject all A/D trips that they presume to be local rides. They then signal back to fellow members who in turn engage the temporary off button simultaneously, so the so-called local is not offered to them, but they maintain their queue positions.

Several minutes later, they all book back in to E14 hoping that the next offer is more acceptable. This is not in the true spirit of the Society and is unfair to the majority of our members that are *playing the game*. A nightly spread sheet is being compiled in the contact centre and it will then be very easy to find the guilty parties. You have been politely warned!

**The easiest solution is to make all trips on Canary Wharf A/D, but as a trusting person I would much prefer this small section of members to refrain from using the system in a totally unfair manner at the expense of the majority.**

## **DaC self-defence classes**

Finally, you will see in this edition of the magazine that the BoM are sponsoring the Krav Maga self-defence classes. They are initially for up to 30 members and will be run by **Ricky Manetta (N16)**. It will be an eight week course starting in January and speaking to Ricky, to get the most out of it, it is important that you are committed for the whole duration of the course.

In this day and age and especially in our particular profession, you can never take anything for granted and I am sure you will not only enjoy the course, but gain confidence and increased self-esteem - and that's straight from the horse's mouth, Ricky's that is!

*Be very lucky and drive safely...*

**Allan Evans**

**Allane@Dialacab.co.uk**

**Compliance Officer Allan Evans explains about an important change to an old friend...**

# CHANGES TO EC5



**I would like to explain about an important change involving the operating procedures and rules on EC5, which is scheduled to start on 1st December.**

Quite a number of you have requested that the Board of Management consider disbanding the current booking-in procedures on the EC5 rank and dispatching all trips in the regular City zones of EC1, EC2, EC3 and EC4 and relevant back-up zones. This seems a very fair suggestion and from 1st December for a trial period between the hours of 9pm and 6am, the City will operate as follows:-

**All trips will be offered from the actual pick up zones**

**All trips will be offered As Directed – NREJ**

Trips in the *Bid Zone* will appear in their actual postal zones eg EC1 will appear as EC1

When a trip is offered in the trip zone, it will be non-rejectable; once it is offered to a back-up zone, it then becomes rejectable but it will remain *As Directed*

If you are booked in a City zone on a Code 3, the system will still only offer you trips As Directed (NREJ) and only when you successfully bid for a trip in the normal manner, will it then unmask the destination and offer you journeys to your home zone or one of the backup zones.

**You will now be able to Soon to Clear (STC) into all City zones**

Please remember that you must be able to reach the furthest part of the zone that you are either *STC* or *Booking In* to within fifteen minutes. This rule has been in place for many years and will be strictly and realistically monitored and the time and distances will be judged by the dispatchers, but it will be up to all of you to work within the framework of the Society.

**Allan Evans**

**DaC Compliance Officer**

Anyone who uses the **RAF church rank / Law Courts** at the **Aldwych** will be aware that if they want to avail themselves of the toilet facilities, it will now cost them 50p even though there have been no improvements made to the facility to justify the new cost. Within weeks, some of the urinals had already been taped off and I suspect that the hot water supply will only be available on a very intermittent basis – never mind the loose or missing toilet seats! And for all that, **Westminster Council** expects 50p, so that using their loo just twice a day will cost you £1, or £5 per week or even £250 a year!

One thing that surprised me was the number of taxi drivers who appeared in looks to be well past their youth, somewhat unfit and even a little overweight who, when confronted with a barrier and 50p sign – be it in anger or just a rush of adrenalin – find any possible way of clambering over the obstacle! I was particularly impressed by one driver who made an Olympic-style leap over the barrier. Perhaps this is what the Mayor meant when he spoke of an *Olympic legacy* - although I doubt that Westminster would see it that way!

No doubt Westminster Council will soon alter the barrier so that even the fittest and most agile of taxi drivers will have to succumb to paying the fifty pence!

Let's face it, we've had a pretty terrible year with work being very slow due to the Olympics, escalating fuel prices and increases in the cost of new taxis, even though The London Taxi Company and KPM have introduced deals to help with the payments. However, as the Editor pointed out in his column in last month's *Call Sign*, the deals should be carefully looked at because the amounts drivers pay nowhere near resemble the actual cost. It reminds me of house prices that were becoming increasingly unaffordable, so the banks introduced various schemes to get round it by lending seven or eight times your salary, 125% or

Even with inflation, Mike Lyons (Y52) queries the growing cost of using the loo...



interest-only mortgages. The result of all those schemes was that house prices went up even more. So the possibility of owning your own home was reduced from being a possibility to becoming a totally unrealistic goal and if things carry on as they are, then the same situation will apply to buying your own taxi.

The last thing we needed was to be burdened with another £250 outlay for just having a wee! But, and I know it will be of little comfort to Dial-a-Cab drivers, I see that as a legitimate expense that we can claim for on our tax forms.

Most other forms of employment offer some type of free toilet facilities. It can be

office workers or bus drivers at the end of each run. In fact, most self-employed people will have some form of free toilet access of some kind – whereas we seem to be the exception with very limited access. In my book, that makes it a legitimate expense against tax.

After all, if we weren't driving our taxis, we would be in an environment where we would almost certainly have free access to a loo. So this year I will be adding £250 under expenses on my tax form.

Mike Lyons (Y52)

## ALPHA POWER PILL IS BACK!



If there is one question we get asked more than any other, it's whatever happened to the amazing **Alpha Power Pills**. These pills were among the most amazing things this magazine had ever tested, with numerous readers having used them and telling *Call Sign* how happy they were with them.

We began testing in 2005 and by 2007 it seemed that half the fleet were using them. The pills worked then just as they work now. The biggest problem was - and is - getting hold of them!

However, *Call Sign* has traced another supplier in **Steve Vale** and he has now supplied a number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers in addition to Chairman **Brian Rice**.

For those who have never used the pills, they help to clear carbon that builds up in the engine, with the result of better mpg. But far more importantly, they help to cut emissions and users of the pill can see the results in their wing mirror as the smoke from the exhaust begins to clear.

If you would like to order the amazing Alpha Pill, just go to [OnlyCabs.co.uk](http://OnlyCabs.co.uk) and click on the 'Order Page'. Or you can phone your order to Stephen Vale at Only Cabs on 020 3239 6101.

If you have a smartphone, you can go to the Alpha Pill ad inside this issue and you will see a QR code where you can scan directly to the website by putting the phone next to the code.

**SAINT GEORGE**  
**"Flagnets"®**  
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50p from every pack sold will be donated to the Worshipful Company of Hackney Cab Drivers

E-mail order to : [knowler.2007@btinternet.com](mailto:knowler.2007@btinternet.com)  
 Payment through a Paypal account



Have your kids told you that they now need an iPad or laptop in their room for homework! Yes? Well this could be an expensive holiday season for you!

There are many reputable shops offering cheap laptops and iPads etc – but only if you pay outright. It's when you want to pay off that it suddenly become expensive. We've seen £800 packages with 48 monthly payments of £24.28 that end up costing £1165 – an extra £365. That's just one example!

Now look at the **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union**. That £800 loan over 12 months at £72 would cost you just £53 extra in interest. Even over 36 months, you would pay nowhere near **PC World's** rate.

If DACCU loaned you £1000 over 36 months, that would cost you just £34 a month and a total of £195 in interest, probably around one third of the total interest the big electrical stores would charge you for not paying the whole amount up front.

The **Dial-a-Cab Credit Union** now has around 1000 members and enough funds to cover most loans. It costs you nothing to join and if you do not want to borrow money, contrary to rumour, you pay no fine and you can just continue saving – and saving is the only compulsory thing about DACCU. You have to save a set amount regularly. How much you save is entirely up to you, but the more you save, the more you can borrow! And of course your savings can be taken back whenever you want them or if you would like a loan, very often just a quick phone call will do it – no dressing up and begging the bank manager or looking for loans with shark companies where 1000+ per cent interest is normal!



# DAC CREDIT UNION AND XMAS SHOPPING



The DACCU is for drivers and staff of **Dial-a-Cab**, but anyone in your family can also become a member in their own right with all the loan benefits that it offers.

## Harp Credit Union

As with DACCU, the above also applies to the **Harp Credit Union**. That has all the same terms and conditions, except it is for **non-Dial-a-Cab** members or their families. If you remember from my previous articles, this CU was having problems and the **Financial Services Authority** asked DACCU to take it on because of our experience in making our credit union so successful. And so far so good; it has gone from a minus figure to a £25,000 surplus, so we must be doing something right! So come on down to Hackney Road and join either DACCU or the Harp Credit Unions. You know it makes sense.

## Tiger Tyres.

The other benefit you can find here at Hackney Road is the downstairs tyre service, **Tiger Tyres**. If you save with either the DaC or Harp Credit Unions, then you can have your new tyres fitted and pay for them from your CU account. Now that really makes financial sense. It doesn't have to be for your cab, they also supply any make of tyre for your car. Just make a simple phone call with the size and they will call you back with three quotes – budget, mid and top of the range tyres and then it's up to you. They can be ordered for next day delivery on condition they are in stock.

Now for all you *doubting Thomas's* out there with a "shall I or shan't I." Now that you've read this article, you don't have to go and hang yourself (my Biblical bit as it's Christmas-ish), so here's hoping to see lots of new faces very soon.

I'll finish with my usual rambling of be lucky... but be very careful out there.

**You can contact the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union on 020 7729 8171 or 020 7749 0585, Tiger Tyres on 0207 729 5237 or go to the office at Unit 14, Peterley Business Centre, 472 Hackney Road, E2...**

**John Riley (K38)  
Vice-President Dial-a-Cab and  
Harp Credit Unions**

## Tyres... if snow comes!

With the ultra-changeable weather of 2012, several **Dial-a-Cab** readers have asked *Call Sign* about snow tyres – one even mentioning snow chains! Well Michelin don't do those and Dunlop's are not really suitable for taxi use as they would have to be removed as soon as you reached anywhere the snow was very light. So we asked LTPH about snow tyres being fitted onto taxis and this was their advice...

"We have no objection to the fitting of tyres which are manufactured to perform in snowy and icy conditions. Generally there are two tyre options available:-

**Winter Tyres:** Full winter tyres are of a construction to offer performance at temperatures of minus 7°C and below.

**All Season Tyres:** All season tyres are constructed to offer performance at temperatures that are more suited to UK weather conditions, as they have the flexibility to perform across the different seasons and weather conditions.

The conditions attached to the fitting of either winter tyres or all season tyres are as follows:-

- \* The tyre specification must comply with the original vehicle manufacturer's prescribed tyre size designation, speed category and load category ratings.
- \* A complete set of the same four tyres must be fitted plus the spare wheel (where applicable).
- \* Seek the profession advice and guidance from the tyre supplier to ensure the most suitable tyre is purchased and the above conditions are met.

Nothing in the above statement implies that this office endorses or recommends these products and should any undesirable features become evident, we reserve the right to withdraw authority for the installation and use."



## Donating a taxi ride on Remembrance Day

Over the past few years, the licensed taxi trade has become involved in a lovely tradition on **Remembrance Sunday**, thanks to the help of a trade famed for its caring. Hopefully that tradition will continue this year on **Sunday 11 November**.

It involves transporting former members of our armed forces as a freebie and getting them to the Whitehall Cenotaph in time for the service. That could involve picking up someone at Waterloo Station or if you come into work from the suburbs during the morning and can get to Whitehall by around 9.30am and are happy to bring someone in with you, then that would be so appreciated.

**Mike Hughes** is co-ordinating the taxi side and would be happy to hear from any **Dial-a-Cab** driver who could help on and/or during the day. He has had a number of requests for pick-ups in suburban areas, so if drivers could let him know the direction they come in, that would be a great help.

**You can contact Mike Hughes on 07973 430 022 or [mike@mikehughes.demon.co.uk](mailto:mike@mikehughes.demon.co.uk)**



**Can you help out  
on Remembrance  
Sunday?**

# LONG DISTANCE TRIP!

When **Sophie** and **Jeremy** decided to tie the knot at the OBE Chapel in **St Paul's Cathedral**, they wanted the Bride's immediate wedding party to travel in London taxis from their hotel and decided that **Dial-a-Cab** would be the company of choice because as the cabs

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

## Kupkake's Korner



### AGM TIME

It's a matter of weeks till the AGM and your chance to make a change, take a look at the now and then to see what can be re-arranged.

We need the Board to think ahead no one must sit on their hands, new ideas to capture work new procedures and plans.

Let's start with dispatching; the rules are out of date, complacency is catching with apathy its' mate!

I propose that every trip offer dispatched in the primary zone, is As Directed when fired out - unless you're on going home.

Of course you may reject it but you'll lose your place for sure, 'cos when it goes into the back-up zone all is revealed - and more!

It won't take long for all to sus that looking for a clue, just won't be good enough we must do something new!

So simple, like a hole in one that's the way to show we're the best, our response times will improve 'cos we're better than all the rest...

Kopyrlght Kupkake 2012



The wedding party begin arriving at St Pauls in the DaC taxis

are owner driven, the chances were that they would be better looked after – and cleaner. There was just one tiny problem - the bride and groom lived in **Australia!**

Because the couple were originally from the UK, the idea of St Pauls and London taxis had an immediate appeal. They referred to it as their desired true London experience.

Jeremy corresponded with **Shelagh Adkins** at DaC House via email from Oz and Shelagh made all the necessary arrangements to ensure the taxis arrived on time and were in a clean condition for the bridal party. The only requests were that the taxis were black in colour and that the drivers wore a white top.

Getting married in St Paul's OBE chapel at St Paul's is a bit different in that you are in the crypt with guests getting to the chapel via the café and past the tombs of **Admiral Nelson** and the **Duke of Wellington**. But the taxis weren't different, in fact they were exactly what Sophie and Jeremy wanted – genuine black London taxis from Dial-a-Cab.

So well done to DaC drivers **Jackie Kott (Y88)**, **Larry Miller (S35)** and **Alan Green (E52)**, who gained much praise for their professionalism. And yes, the cabs were gleaming!

**Baghwat Singh**  
Call Sign Online

### *The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled*

## LTBAWD TAKE 40 TO THE DOGS!

On Thursday evening, the 11th October 2012, four committee members of **The London Taxi**

**Benevolent Association for War Disabled** welcomed forty patients and staff from **Headley Court**, for an evening at **Sittingbourne Dog Track**.

TBAWD Hon Chairman, **Dickie Hudd** told *Call Sign*:

"What a great night! Just to be in the company of these young men and women is a privilege, to see the way they are getting on with their lives in spite of their injuries, is a lesson to us all.

"The evening went really well, with food and drink - and for some lucky ones, hopefully a profitable evening.

"We'd like to thank all the staff at **Sittingbourne Dog Track** for their help at the event."

*Headley Court is a military hospital and rehabilitation centre for around 200 men and women from the services of all three armed forces.*



Some of temporary residents at Headley Court



There are probably a number of *Dial-a-Cab* drivers – and indeed members of staff too – whose daily lives contain a mixture of work and caring for a loved one, but with little time for anything else. That's how it often is for carers. The two examples below are not taxi drivers, but all carers will recognise their stories of being forced into a situation where their lives are taken over by having to care for someone...

**Brian's story: Balancing the demands of a working life with being a carer...**

"For the last five years, I've unexpectedly had to balance the demands of a working life with being a carer. I say unexpected because we don't normally expect an otherwise healthy child and a healthy, active professional partner to become ill. In my family's case, we've had to cope with the double shock of my daughter falling ill with *Crohn's Disease* at the age of 11 and my wife with various episodes of *Myalgic Encephalomyelitis* (ME). In neither case was there a cure available.

The impact on our family has been profound, but like most other families we have gradually found a way to adapt and continue to get the most we can from life. As a working carer, I have to not just address the needs of my family, but also fulfil work commitments - a difficult and often exhausting trick to pull off. Thankfully I am fortunate to work for an employer who is both sympathetic and flexible. Many carers - and in particular those who are still working - find it hard to talk openly about what's happening to them, perhaps fearful for their jobs or worried that in some way they are letting their family down by seeking help. This can be very isolating.

My employer told me about my local *Carer Centre*, who I contacted for advice and support. For the first time in a year, I felt as though someone was interested just in me and how I was doing. In my experience, professionals (and friends and family) usually focus on the sick or frail person and tend not to think so clearly about the carer and how they are doing. It's crucial for carers, whoever they are, to look after themselves. Working carers are so busy that they often overlook themselves and in trying to appear competent at work, underplay what is happening elsewhere."

In Brian's case, staff from one of the Carer Centres met with him and agreed an action plan. That included giving him up-to-date information on the support available. They also arranged for him to meet debt advisors when he became concerned at how he could reduce the debt that was building up around him. He was also given emotional support to help him through his journey as a carer.

Brian's workplace suddenly became a source of respite for him, giving him time to be himself - Brian the man and NOT Brian the carer.

**My Life: Mark Connolly - a 17 year old young carer...**

Mark Connolly is 17 years old and supports his parents in looking after his sister Charlene, who has *Cerebral Palsy* and *Autism* in addition to being deaf and registered blind. Although now aged 23, due to her severe learning disability Charlene functions at around 2 years old.

Mark's parents are the main carers for his sister and provide her with full-time care and support, although they receive a little time each

**As you can read inside this issue, *Dial-a-Cab* was once again at Butlins' golf day in aid of Carer's Trust: The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. Below are the stories from two carers who were placed into the situation through events beyond their control..**

## Being a Carer - whether you want to or not...



**The Princess Royal doesn't just lend her name to the Carer's Trust, she attends many events**

day where Charlene is supported by two staff from an agency who take her out. Caring for his sister has caused much stress for Mark and all the family.

For the past 10 years, Mark's father has suffered from severe depression and panic attacks. His mum is greatly stressed, often attending meetings with Social Work Services or the Council trying to sort out funding and support for Charlene. This takes up any spare time she would have had. She also needs to be there for her husband and to take care of Mark's little brother.

Mark feels angry and guilty at not being able to do more to support his parents because he sees their struggle every day, even though he does all he can. Mark is also aware that his parents feel guilty at not doing more to help him and it becomes a vicious circle.

Charlene needs two people to support her and very often Mark has to be that second person. He cannot make plans to go out with his friends as he needs to check in at home first to see if his parents need support. Mark finds it hard to concentrate on school work as his family are always on his mind.

When his friends are planning to go out, he often finds he doesn't get included. Over the years his friends tend to assume that Mark will be unable to go because he is supporting his family. Mark often feels left out and sometimes feels the support he gives his family is taking over his life and he just wants to shut himself away from the world and get away from it all. When he feels like that, the **young carers group** becomes a lifeline to Mark.

The young carers group gives Mark a home away from home; it allows him to get away

from his every day responsibilities and to enjoy himself. Being around friends who understand his caring role makes him feel at ease and for once, to feel included. The support workers at the project are always there to help him and lend a listening ear for any problems he has. It has also helped him throughout the years to become more confident in himself and more confident around others.

**The group offers him the opportunity to try new things and meet new people; it gives him the chance to forget – at least for a little while - about his caring role.**

Without the young carers project support, Mark doesn't think he could cope with everyday life. He told Carers Trust that they give him someone to talk to when times are tough. He feels that he can't talk to his parents about these pressures as it would only heap more stress on them and they have enough to cope with. He also feels that his teachers have never understood or tried to help him.

There are a lot of Young Carers out there who are under even more pressure than Mark and who need help and support. Many don't have a mum and dad to take away some of the pressures or they are the main carer for their parents. Without the young carers service, these young people have nowhere to go and no one to help them.

As Mark told us: "We all love our families and want to support them, but we also deserve to be kids first - and the young carers' project allow us to be just that...kids."

And that's why *Call Sign* has sent a team to represent *Dial-a-Cab* for the past four years at the Butlins' golf day in aid of Carer's Trust: The Princess Royal Trust for Carers..



"Yes, I know the **James Bond** films are celebrating 50 years, but while I have been driving a cab quite a long time I have a way to go yet to reach the half century," **John Moynihan (G15)** told *Call Sign* with a smile that 007 himself would have been proud of.

"But I do have a connection – albeit somewhat loosely perhaps – to his film creator in the form of **Barbara Broccoli OBE** as I am sometimes lucky enough to pick her up when she phones **Dial-a-Cab** for a taxi to take her from SW3 to her Bond offices," John continued.

"I live in the south west and often come into work through Chelsea and over time we have chatted during the journey into town. She and her half-brother, **Michael G Wilson**, are co-producers of the Bond series of films. Her father, **Albert (Cubby) Broccoli**, was the first producer of the Bond franchise and they subsequently took over the company. Who knows, I might even be invited to a Bond premier sometime! I could be *Call Sign's* spy – but not

## Fifty years of James Bond but... **THEY MISSED THE DAC CONNECTION!**



**John has a connection to James Bond!**

for SMERSH!

"I always dress neatly yet comfortably – so the 007 dinner suit stays in the wardrobe – because I do try to promote a professional image. I always check the rear carriage as passengers alight to ensure they haven't left anything, or if I do miss something such as a mobile phone etc I return it as soon as possible. It makes for good public relations.

"Recently, I was on a rank in the Mayfair area along with other cabs, when a black stretch

Limo slid to a halt alongside me. The rear window slowly lowered and the passenger asked if I knew Burlington Gardens, to which I naturally replied that I did and then turned back to continue my conversation with the cab driver in front of me. The Limo rider then asked again, adding that he was looking for a shop there, to which I replied: "*So, you want Abercrombie & Fitch, but that's not what you asked.*"

"They looked quite astonished and must have thought I was a mind reader! Anyway, I directed them to the store and they were obviously impressed by my intimate knowledge and psychic powers, to which I simply replied – gesturing with my hand towards the other taxis nearby – that we were the professionals!"

With that, John said farewell to *Call Sign* and drove off. But was that the 007 revolver we spotted in the front of his taxi as it glinted in the late Autumn sunshine? No, it was the last cheese and pickle sandwich in his silver lunchbox! No doubt even 007 gets hungry sometimes...!

**Alan Green**  
**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**

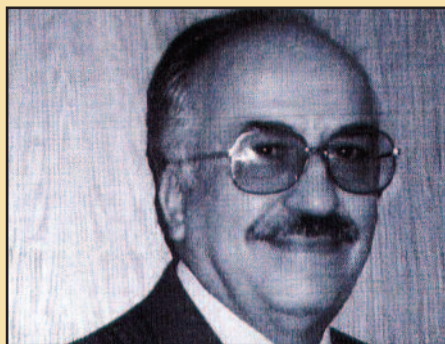
*This issue looks back to ODRTS News and Views, July 1978 and some info about insurance of the time. They certainly sound like a bargain!*

### **TREASURER'S REPORT by Aubrey Siteman**

#### **Insurance schemes**

As I recently reported to you, we have negotiated with our insurance brokers some excellent policies. These include **Sickness and Accident, Permanent Health, Pension Plans, Taxicab and your private car insurance** – plus anything else you may require.

Our brokers, who incidentally have



served us for 25 years, have gone to considerable trouble to comb the market to get us competitive premiums. They are, in fact, one of the biggest brokers in the business and I believe they have succeeded

in offering us policies second to none.

Take for instance the Sickness and Accident policy; for a premium of **£14 per annum**, you can be covered for £10 per week excluding the first seven days but up to 104 weeks and you can take multiples of this premium to suit your own requirements. The taxicab and private car insurances are offered at 15% discount on current rates.

Any questions you may have with regard to these policies and any others can be answered by our brokers. I would ask you all to support these policies as in all insurances the premiums are based on numbers.

**Aubrey Siteman (C07)**  
**ODRTS Treasurer**



## **What's on at the Science Museum**

### **Pain and where it is heading**

There are always many interesting exhibitions going on at London's Science Museum, including the amazing 3D IMAX theatre. But two caught the eye of *Call Sign*.

From **8 November 2012** until **8 November 2013**, you can visit **Pain Less: the future of pain relief**.

This is a new exhibition featured in the **Antenna – Science News gallery**. It investigates the future of pain relief, which saw the average Brit swallowing no less than 373 painkilling pills this year!

Yet we treat pain with drugs that haven't really changed for decades. Is there not a better way to control pain? This exhibition explores pain through the stories of extraordinary people who deal with it every day – from the patient who suffers with chronic pain in his missing limb, to the man who feels no pain at all.

It examines how scientists work to create the perfect pain relief.

Geneticists decode DNA to find out how pain works in the body. Neuroscientists examine brain activity to discover how emotion affects the pain we feel. Researchers ask: Do we really feel no pain during surgery under anaesthetic or do we simply not remember it? How might this affect us?

Pain Less will introduce you to the latest pain research, through personal stories, scientific discovery, fascinating objects, films and even games.

### **The BBC and 2LO**

On **Wednesday 14 November** and just for one day, the **BBC** will be celebrating the 90th anniversary of its first broadcast on 14th November 1922. To mark the historic moment, the Science Museum is displaying a portion of **2LO**, the transmitter which broadcast the first radio programmes. If you are a digital radio freak, this will remind you that it hasn't always been like that..



# Mailshot

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

## Sinatra, Bogart and the HoC!

Regrets, I have a few, but then again too few to mention. Not sure about that, but I was on the dog and bone to Allan Evans – no, not me telling him about my naval gazing – but suddenly popping into the conversation came the news that we had lost the House of Commons/Lords account. What followed can only be called the sound of silence – at least for around five seconds which classifies as an international world record for two cab drivers! Then it appeared in the *October Call Sign* and it looks like the Chairman's favourite account has really gone over the hills and far away!

To lose an account is always a bummer, but the House account was not any ordinary account, it was special. We know the reasons why we have all been close to politicians for a ride – ok perhaps not all of us with Edwina Currie – but the staff inside the walls of our hallowed palace had worked closely alongside the law shapers and debaters, not to mention observing the wheels of the nation grinding ever so slowly forward.

Being with folks in that position, albeit only for a relatively short time on the journey to their abodes far away to the land of fact, of knowing the price of a bottle of milk and a loaf of bread, did make us better cab drivers without even realising it. Maybe Brian did see something we didn't know we had been given, a few small nuts and bolts in our armour as we progressed through life's riches. I guess you could say that's why he's God's right hand man at DaC. As the song goes; I've lived a life not in a shy way. If only Frank had added: But did a little their way, he could have had a hit record with it. I do hope one day the House returns: Why? Because the more educated we are, the less chance there is of us being hoodwinked by the parasites that live off our backs, both in and outside the trade. And for once I don't mean Members of the House – after all, they did put a tool in our locker of life. In the words of Humphrey Bogart: "Here's looking at you kid!" Kid, you were special and we never knew it.

And by the way Al, you probably don't need me to tell you old fruit, that the *October Call Sign* had not just a fantastic cover, but really good content.

Gary Cox (O46)

Thanks Gary, I guess that money is more important than quality to those who pay the bill at the House and that is their prerogative. It could be they now discover that you can't always get home on a one pound coin and if it didn't affect us directly, I'd almost be interested in seeing how this minicab company copes. My

guess is that they won't ...Ed

## Who would have thought it...

How sad to read the Chairman's page in the *October Call Sign* that we have lost the House of Commons/Lords to a minicab company that no one has heard of and which has just 250 cars. It wouldn't have felt so bad had it been through service, but it looks as though they have just gone for a cheap price. But what it shows is that no account is safe anymore purely because of who we are and then to claim that minicabs are cheap as they don't know the way and use old bangers. We must under all circumstances provide the best service, because that's all we have. No minicab company can beat us on service when we put ourselves out. Perhaps the Chairman should reprint his piece on the HoC every month just to remind us of what can happen...

Sid Nathan (K88)

I don't think anyone needs reminding, Sid. Several drivers have already said how upset they were to see a queue of passengers waiting in the rain for cars where we used to pick up, with just one minicab there. The only chance Fairway and Kenwood have of coverage is if they get lots of notice as to when the cab are needed and it doesn't rain! I notice that the next evening there were a lot of our taxis back again ...Ed

## Golf thank-you

Hello Alan

Just to thank you for selecting me to represent *Call Sign/Dial-a-Cab* at the *Butlins* charity golf day at Berkhamsted. It was a wonderful day, nice weather, fantastic golf course, good company and excellent hospitality shown from the Berkhamsted golf club. We were also fortunate enough to be seated for dinner with the club captain along with representatives from the *Carers Trust* and *Butlins*.

Although I thought the four members of our team collectively produced a reasonable score of 112 points, it was some way short of what was needed to make the podium. But some success in the raffle for Keith and myself helped to make up for that! Once again many thanks...

Terry Felvus (M86)

In addition to Terry, *Call Sign* selected Ray Scott, Keith Cain and Simon Wallis to represent DaC ...Ed

## New driver numbers

Hi Alan

I have been receiving weekly tweets from TfL congratulating all the new drivers that have that day gained their licence. Do you happen to know how many drivers there are now? This must be the only industry that employs more people the less work there is...

Dave Ballard (N28)

Dave, whilst you are right that there are

more taxi drivers than there were this time last year – 353 more to be precise – how would you feel if you had undergone 3 or 4 years of the Knowledge only to be told that you can't have your badge as it isn't busy enough? I know what I'd feel like saying! I also drive a cab and have felt the pinch, but I have always believed that the 70,000 private hire vehicles are only here because for many years our numbers stagnated – and that was at a time when we were busy. Had we increased at a steady rate, that 70,000 would probably have been much less. I've taken a look back at *Call Sign* files between 2005 – the first year PH drivers were licensed – and 2009 to compare numbers. In those four years, taxi driver numbers went up by 137 from 24,700 to 24,857. At the same time, licensed minicab numbers went from 36,900 to 48,619 an increase of 11,719 vehicles! In the three years since then, taxi numbers have increased by a further 595 vehicles whilst minicabs have probably added around 20,000 to their numbers. As I said, Dave, you are right, but I hope you can see why I still feel worried ... Ed

## £1 subs or a gold watch?

Hi Alan

Very interesting article in the *August Call Sign* regarding the DaC long-service awards for staff members. I understand these awards are now an integral part of the office regime and occur twice yearly to recognise the longer serving members of staff. It does say something about Dial-a-Cab in an industry where large numbers of staff turnover is not only expected, but is the norm. I just feel it's a pity that the same recognition is not afforded to subscribers. I understand that staff and subscribers are different – one group being self-employed and one employed – but I'm betting that there are more long serving members as subscribers than employees?

In the same August edition on page 10, Keith Cain said: "You, the drivers, are the main workforce and the service you provide to our clients is not only of great significance, but forms a huge part of the wheel that turns and makes this Society what it has become today."

So why do longer serving members not get some form of recognition? I know that after 30 years (that's one third of the average lifespan) we get £1 subscriptions, but I have often wondered how the 30 years was arrived at. Standard industry practice is 25 years with a gold watch! I also acknowledge that this represents a loss of revenue for the



# Mailshot

## Continued from page 33

Society and it would also be interesting to find out how many are currently paying the £1 subs.

Perhaps this may be the time to re-think the rewards for subscribers; perhaps we could start off at say 20 years with a 10% yearly reduction in subs until the 30 years are reached, or perhaps after 25 years' service a 20% reduction is given for 5 years until the 30 year mark is reached, or even one or two free months per year?

Anyway it's just a thought and I would like to know what Board members think about re-thinking driver rewards. And before you ask, I have been on the circuit for over 32 years, but only 28 as a subscriber. So not long now!

**Alan Sullivan (F20)**

*You're not seeing double! Because there was not enough time to get a response last month, I have reprinted Alan's letter ...Ed*

**Brian Rice responds:** What you should realise Alan is that we like to show recognition for long serving staff as well as members. If we were to offer the same scenario for members, it would not be popular as they would rather be at work earning their living and not wish to lose time for no financial reward to attend a reception. I am sure members would sooner have a situation as now when they actually receive a reward for their years of service. We have had the current situation in place for the last sixteen years and anything can be tinkered with, but it seems to be accepted at the moment. Of course the BoM could withdraw the 30 years' service award at any time - just hope it's not in the next two years!

## Apartment addresses

*Alan*

To follow up the letter from **Alan Sullivan (F25)** regarding the new terminals; my cab is fifteen years old in February 2013 and I hope to get an extension to take it up to February 2014. But at the rate of 100 new terminals a month being fitted from a date we don't yet know, I think the only chance of me getting fitted is in the length of time I have been being on Dial-a-Cab! In that respect and after 44 years, I should be about number one!

Changing tack, has anyone had problems with incomplete addresses being sent out on terminals? As an example, a few weeks ago on a job from Abbotsbury Court there was no flat number given and I was told to park at the entrance and advise arrival. I explained that there were twelve entrances to the pick-up address, but that took 15 minutes to get to the customer. Then in the last week of September and a pick-up given as 7 Queens Club Gardens, I was again told to do an AA and that they would find me. Back comes the message: *Cannot contact, make own contact.* Do I ring bell seven at all 26

blocks? Needless to say the job was scrubbed after a ten minute waste of time. I think our operators should make sure they have every part of the address and not leave it to driver to sort out.

**Ray Sorene (A53)**

**Keith Cain replies:** I have investigated both trips Ray refers to in his letter - Oakwood Court, Abbotsbury Road and Queensgate Gardens. Ray will be interested to know that the trip from Oakwood Court had a 'T' attribute, which denotes it was a trip on behalf of a car company. The bookings for this account are all ordered online and not touched by any of our operators. The trip details appear on the screen exactly how they are entered by someone at the car company. When Ray informed us where he was parked, we contacted the car company immediately and the delay was them getting back to us to advise where the correct pick up address was.

The second trip Ray mentions was from one of our Concierge clients. Concierge has been designed as a profile based system. What we mean by profile based is that the personal details and addresses of the authorised user are set up on our data base by the user themselves when the account is first set up. This includes their home address. As they use us more often, they get the option to list their regular journeys as a 'favourite' trip. Having this information already set up makes the booking speedier, more efficient and personal. More importantly, it cuts down on possible mistakes that can happen should staff enter the wrong details. The client on this occasion, telephoned the contact centre to book two taxis - one from the office to take him home and this one, which was the return journey for 6am to take him back to work. The DaC operator confirmed with the caller his home address that had been set up by him and it was confirmed as correct. When Ray arrived seeking information from us as to which block he should pick up from, we did have trouble finding it out from the client because he was asleep. All the contact centre was getting was his answer machine and as is the norm in such situations, the regular message is sent asking the driver to make their own contact. While I accept that Ray would never have known which block the customer was residing at, he should have contacted the controller informing him of his predicament and he would have received instructions how to proceed. The client, then having been woken by us calling his phone, called back to cancel the trip because he was not ready to leave. There was no other reason why Ray's trip was cancelled.

Needless to say, since Ray's letter has been forwarded to me for a response, I have instructed the account manager regarding the pick-up address and she will be talking with either the gentleman

or his secretary to find out the name of the mansions where he resides and this will be entered onto his profile details as soon as we can get them. This will ensure we do not have a similar situation happening again.

We are not leaving the driver to sort things out, in fact we need this vital information about pick up addresses to ensure the details we hold on file are accurate. Ray's perception of our operators getting it wrong with these two trips could not have been further from the truth. I am a little surprised that Ray could not have called us to discuss this rather than write a letter to Call Sign. Dial-a-Cab is one big team and our service is measured from what is given by all of us. Therefore, as much as drivers rely on the contact centre, the contact centre and account managers rely on drivers to keep them updated of problems or situations. It's all about working together as a team...

## MB problems?

*Hi Alan*

I'm not sure if you are copied into the bulletins from Manganese Bronze. The account results make interesting reading and certainly raise the question about how long MB can keep trading showing year after year losses. In my opinion, the recent sales push by Mercedes show that they are trying to put the London Taxi Company out of business by offering sales deals that guarantee a totally unrealistic end of plan vehicle value which they are underpinning. Although the TX Hydrogen version is on its way, it is still at least 2-3 years away from serious production and will therefore probably be too late to save the company. The bad feeling left by unsettled warranty claims have not done LTC's reputation much good and has caused many previously loyal customers to jump ship over to Mercedes.

Having spoken to many in the trade, they feel that the Vito is not ideal for two main reasons: Firstly it is a converted van rather than a purpose built vehicle and secondly, because the Vito is widely used in the private hire trade, it blurs yet further the distinction in the travelling public's eyes between taxis and PH. LTC need to act quickly if they are to save the iconic London taxi as we know it. You would have thought they had learnt from previous mistakes such as the Land Rover engine back in the late 80's. They need to dump the VM engine for a more reliable unit, be it either Japanese or a Perkins unit. They also need to sort out the radiator problems and fit a cheaper basic unit and they need to sort out the niggling quality control





# Mailshot

## Continued from page 34

issues. That done and faith restored, I'm sure the trade will start buying the TX4 again and the purpose London cab as we know it will survive. If they fail, we will all be driving converted bread vans and MPVs and the difference between us and LPH will become even more of a blur. Please God let somebody up at LTC have the balls to admit the problems and get them sorted!

**Graham Waite (B35) Archivist London Vintage Taxi Association**  
Thanks for that Graham. You may well be right about drivers going to the Vito over the warrantee issue, I can't say as I wasn't involved in that side. My cab was called in, converted and I got it back. I was also the first owner of the Rover engine cab. I went into M&O and was told they had a new engine and that I could have either the new or old model. When they said the new one was a Rover – well you can guess what my answer was! And do you know something, Graham; it was the best cab I had ever driven up to that point. Compared to previous cabs, it was almost silent and passengers constantly commented on what a much better ride it gave (I always believed that the ride was similar, but that the new quietness made it feel better). The fact that you could have a conversation (there were no intercoms back then) made a huge difference. The downside was that it struggled going up Highgate Hill when fully loaded. I always look at my cabs as work tools and put that inconvenience up against the view that I went up Highgate Hill with four passengers on very few occasions and I was enjoying having so much less noise. But it was definitely an underpowered engine and once word got round, then values plummeted. I still loved it, but ended up selling it privately for a reasonable amount and began a love match with the Fairway!

The bottom line is that yes, I also hope they learn from past mistakes just as most people try to do, but does anyone out there believe for a single second that the manufacturers of the iconic London taxi would ever deliberately produce a vehicle that was unsuitable for the job we do? Take the Rover engine as a failure – regardless of my view of it – and then look at the Fairway. That was everything most drivers wanted. Most of the TX1s were very good and the TX4 in my view is by far the best taxi ever made. The TX2 in between the two was considered to be not in the same class, but again I had one with no problems. But some drivers did and it left a stain.

But my view is well known and yours is obviously in the same vein; The Vito is an overpriced vehicle that looks like a minicab because PH used it long before we did. As a vehicle, it's great – it just isn't a real taxi regardless of its 'for hire' sign. However, you cannot uninvent the wheel and the Vito is here and its £135 lease/buy plan was a very shrewd piece of marketing that has got them a large current share of the market. All that we can hope is that Manganese Bronze successfully recover from administration and that the TX4 returns to the selling fields to battle the Vito once again ...Ed

## NV200

Dear Alan.

This may be of interest to DaC drivers intending to purchase the new Nissan NV200 taxi when it finally goes up for sale. Will the DaC terminal be able to be fitted in this new vehicle and do you envisage any implications with regards to the warranty being affected by the installation?

**Clarence Ishmael (R54)**

Interesting question, Clarence, one I would normally pass over to someone who knows more than I on the subject. But on this occasion I doubt whether anyone knows anything yet. However, I would be astounded if Nissan didn't approach the radio circuits before releasing the vehicle to ask about radio fitting specifications. Under those circumstances and assuming the terminal was fitted by DaC technicians, then the warrantee would be unaffected ...Ed

## The Knowledge Foundation!

Hi Alan

I was pleasantly surprised to read the letter from **Terry Farmer (ex-T55J)** in the *October Call Sign*. He mentions doing the Knowledge about 40 years ago with someone who played in **The Foundations** band. Well Terry, if you're reading this, it was me! Unfortunately I don't remember you, but I guess you must have done the Knowledge at Levy's in York Way. It sounds as though you have retired now, so I hope that you and your family are well. My only question is where did those forty years go!

**Ken Hardy (G36)**

There is a piece on Ken and The Foundations inside this issue. If anyone else had a "famous" life before becoming a taxi driver, let us know ...Ed

## Alpha Power Pill

Dear Alan

Following our ongoing advertising, new orders are coming in every day or so as a direct result of the ad in *Call Sign*. But you may be interested in knowing that in addition to southern enquiries, I got a call from a new customer in Dorset and thinking that this was a bit far for him to commute while being a Dial-a-Cab driver, I discovered that he actually owns a 'Classic Cab' and that your article had been referenced in his magazine! So as you can see, your influence is far and wide.

**Steve Vale**

**Alpha Power Pill**

Many drivers are again using the Alpha Pill. Not only does it cut emissions, it also increases the distance you get from each litre of diesel ...Ed



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\*Based on a deposit of £2,000, then £134.57 per week (monthly equivalent £583.14 x 48 payments) with a guaranteed final value of £13,982.50 at the end of the agreement, subject to 30,000 miles per annum (120,000 miles total). Includes 4 year manufacturer backed vehicle warranty. Option to buy Service Plan from 99p per day. Other mileage options are available. Terms and conditions apply. Business Users only. Finance subject to status and approval through Black Horse Taxi Finance Preferences scheme. Not available with any other offer. We reserve the right to remove the offer without notice.

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