

September 2012



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*Karen motorcycles
round Europe to
help the MSS*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

After a terrible time workwise during the Olympics, we need to know where the work may be this month and try and make up for August. This is a table of some "What's on" in September, but see the bottom of page for more info...

"What's On September 2012" (Compact list: See base of page for how to get more)

Venue	Event	Finish	Day	Date
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 66: Cameron Carpenter 16:00		Sat	01/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 67: Mendelssohn		Sat	01/09/2012
Tottenham	v Norwich	16:45	Sat	01/09/2012
West Ham	v Fulham 12:45 KO	14:30	Sat	01/09/2012
Lords	England v S.Africa		Sun	02/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 66: Cameron Carpenter 16:00		Sun	02/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 69: Messiaen / Mahler		Sun	02/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 70: Desert Island Discs 70th-Anniversary		Mon	03/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Proms Chamber Music 8: Debussy 13:00		Mon	03/09/2012
Oval	LVCC v Notts 10:30		Tue	04/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 71: Brahms / Beethoven		Tue	04/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 72: John Adams: Nixon in China		Wed	05/09/2012
Shepherds Bush Empire	Joss Stone		Wed	05/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 73: Beethoven / Bruckner		Thu	06/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 74: Staff Benda Bilili and Baloji 22:15		Thu	06/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 75: Haydn / R. Strauss		Fri	07/09/2012
Shepherds Bush Empire	Dave Stewart		Fri	07/09/2012
Wembley Arena	Noel Gallagher		Fri	07/09/2012
Hyde Park	Proms in the Park 17:15		Sat	08/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 76: Last Night of the Proms		Sat	08/09/2012
South Bank	Mayor's Thames Festival		Sat	08/09/2012
Hyde Park	Radio 2 Lives in Park 15:30		Sun	09/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Songs of Praise - The Big Sing		Sun	09/09/2012
South Bank	Mayor's Thames Festival/ Pyrotechnic Event		Sun	09/09/2012
Road Closures	Paralympic Marathon		Sun	09/09/2012
Road Closures	Athletes Parade		Mon	10/09/2012
Charlton	v Crystal Palace 19:45 KO	21:30	Fri	14/09/2012
Arsenal	v Southampton	16:45	Sat	15/09/2012
Fulham	v WBA	16:45	Sat	15/09/2012
O2 Arena	The Voice UK Live, Tyler James, Vince Kidd		Sat	15/09/2012
QPR	v Chelsea	16:45	Sat	15/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	The Sunflower Jam Superjam		Sun	16/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Mick Hucknall sings American Soul		Tue	18/09/2012
O2 Arena	Jesus Christ Superstar		Fri	21/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain		Fri	21/09/2012
Chelsea	v Stoke	16:45	Sat	22/09/2012
O2 Arena	Jesus Christ Superstar		Sat	22/09/2012
O2 Arena	Jesus Christ Superstar		Sun	23/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Theatretrain presents Licence to Thrill		Sun	23/09/2012
Tottenham	v QPR 16:00	17:45	Sun	23/09/2012
O2 Arena	Michael McIntyre		Wed	26/09/2012
Hammersmith Apollo	Ultravox		Thu	27/09/2012
O2 Arena	Michael McIntyre		Thu	27/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	Beach Boys - 50th Anniversary Tour 2012		Thu	27/09/2012
O2 Arena	Michael McIntyre		Fri	28/09/2012
Olympia Grand Hall	Home Improvement Show		Fri	28/09/2012
Wembley Arena	Beach Boys - 50th Anniversary Tour 2012		Fri	28/09/2012
Arsenal	v Chelsea 12:45 KO	14:30	Sat	29/09/2012
Fulham	v Man. City	16:45	Sat	29/09/2012
O2 Arena	Michael McIntyre		Sat	29/09/2012
Olympia Grand Hall	Home Improvement Show		Sat	29/09/2012
Royal Albert Hall	George Michael - Symphonica: Orchestral Tour		Sat	29/09/2012
O2 Arena	Michael McIntyre		Sun	30/09/2012
Olympia Grand Hall	Home Improvement Show		Sun	30/09/2012

Only 54 events listed above, but for a comprehensive list of over 350 events including the Paralympics, visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk and click the "MyFav Taxi" button, which will load the MyFav Taxi page with over 70 iconic link buttons to useful taxi related information including the "What's On in September" button.

from the editor's desk

Looking back at the Olympics...

Well that's it for another 84 years – the main part of the Olympics are over and our hopes for some extra July and August work courtesy of the Games must have fallen on deaf ears! The *Olympic Route Networks* proved to be successful because they killed London's business and leisure outlets stone dead, with most folk deciding to take note of the Mayor and keep well away from the capital. By the time **David Cameron** had backtracked telling the world that London was, after all, open for business, it was too late!

But against all that, the Games themselves were absolutely brilliant and probably deserved the title many have placed on them as the best Olympics ever. And the excellent **BBC TV** coverage – especially of the road events that caused taxis so many problems – will probably bring in a host of future tourists. Athletes running through the City and places such as Leadenhall Market together with cyclists shooting through the Surrey countryside, made London look absolutely beautiful and hopefully that will draw people in.

That doesn't mean that **LOCOG** are forgiven for treating taxis as second class citizens and quite honestly, had it not been for **John Mason** and those working under him acting on our behalf, we'd have had virtually nothing – especially so far as ranking facilities were concerned.

And another thing, I was very disappointed to get a PCN for doing a U-turn at (what I believe was) Brook Gate. The details said: *Park Lane (NBND) no U-turn to Park Lane (SBND)* and that I failed to comply with a *prohibition on certain types of vehicles*. That meant a taxi and an ORN. I was more disappointed because the PCN hasn't come from Westminster, whom we expect to be picked on by, it comes from TfL and a camera operator has used CCTV to nick a licensed taxi doing its job. I believed that as we had been given permission to turn right along that stretch – again thanks to work by LTPH – that also meant the U-turn facility. Of course, as the PCN fails to say exactly at which junction this appalling act took place, TfL's PCN department are just wasting everyone's time. But I have the time if they have!

Boris was very quick to use taxis in the Beijing closing ceremony, while a Fairway was turned into the star of London's brilliant opening ceremony when it ferried **James Bond** to Buck House – not to mention the **Spice Girls** at the closure! Posh and co didn't stand on buses; in fact there wasn't one on show (I want to buy the one that **Baby Spice** stood on)!

Yes, the London Olympics as a show were brilliant, but that doesn't excuse LOCOG kicking us around and forcing us to drive around in a dangerous manner by constantly having to look for various signs to see where we could and couldn't go. Instead we should have been concentrating on the road ahead!

The 2016 Games have already been won by Rio and ROCOG is already in action there having begun its tenure at London's Somerset House on our Games penultimate day – and good luck to them. But for 2020, the taxi organisations of the bidding cities at Tokyo, Madrid and Istanbul – soon to be possibly run by TOCOG, MOCOG and IOCOG – are unaware of what they are letting themselves in for. Perhaps our trade organisations should warn their opposite numbers in those three capitals, then at least they would know what to expect because I assume that **Jacques Rogge** has picked his Rio hotel already. And that proba-



bly involves closing Copacabana Beach to tourists and making it an ORN!!!

GetTaxi and cut prices...

Call Sign knows from your letters and emails that a number of you are on **Hailo** and doing cut-priced taxi work. I also understand that sometimes you do what you have to do to eke out a living and whilst I personally dislike working cheap in London when what we offer is a five star taxi service, I do not condemn anyone who feels that **Hailo** is a useful tool whilst conditions are so quiet. I just hope that when business finally picks up, any damage to the trade will not be irreparable.

But I was shocked at the recent message sent to **GetTaxi** drivers under the guise of fighting private hire – pay £10 for airport trips from hotels! There are some drivers out there who have been doing that for years, but I have always assumed them to be in a minority. Yes, we have lost account airport trips because our prices are expensive compared to many private hire companies who are able to subsidise those trips via their cash ride prices, which are much closer to taxi fares. **GetTaxi**'s answer to fighting PH is to deduct £10 from their agreed fixed price fare (plus £1 that you pay to **GetTaxi** to buy a cash ride) and they will give it to a hotel doorman / concierge on your behalf. He, in turn, will give the driver a fixed price airport trip that the driver will have paid £11 for.

The example I was shown involved a trip from Chelsea to Terminal 5 at Heathrow. The usual fixed price on **GetTaxi** is £64, so after your £11 deduction, you are left with £53 – always assuming that's what the driver charges the passenger.

Ok, £53 isn't terrible in the current climate and let's be honest – many of our LAP prices are too high. But who would you want to benefit by a cut priced trip to the flyers – **GetTaxi**, a hotel doorman or the passenger? Well, from where I'm sitting, this scheme offers no incentive to the passenger to use licensed taxis again; it just lines the pockets of greedy doormen or hotel concierges and earns more £1 LAPs for **GetTaxi**.

If a driver is happy to go to LAP for £53, why not charge the passenger that in a fixed price rather than give the extra to a doorman? We can't stop hotel concierge from telling passengers that minicabs are cheaper than us, but perhaps we should think about cutting the prices of longer trips because good news spreads and word would soon get out. I know many drivers have been saying that for years, but these things only work

when everyone says yes and not just a few who want to charge ridiculously low prices to where they live in case they happen to be going home at the time. Quoting £30 to Luton because you live there would be stupid, but reasonable prices may bring back some longer trips.

New taxis

There are several new cabs on the horizon and it concerns me. The Nissan NV 200 looks like it could be a winner with its 50mph diesel usage – although I'm not too sure about the passenger's panoramic roof with the number of pigeons we pass in London! However, its fuel consumption and cleaner emissions, plus a probable lower price than its two rivals could give it an edge. But what if the Mayor says it is still a 15-year subject for eventual disintegration?

Then there's the electric Metrocab that has been touted for some time next year? That probably will escape any time limit as will the Hydrogen TX4, scheduled for final testing prior to release in 2013. And of course we have the diesel TX4 and the Vito.

My concern is that there are some months when just 80 or 90 new taxis are sold and all those manufacturers are not going to survive in such a small market. The Vito is also sold to minicabs, so Mercedes won't worry, but the others are all 100% taxis. The resulting war could see some of them going under and eventually we will find ourselves back with just the one or two taxi manufacturers.

But, and that is something of a big but, if the Mayor is so concerned about emissions and is happy to spend money all over the show, perhaps he could subsidise all new taxis by around £5000? Then the number of drivers wanting to renew would jump through the roof. Compared to the money it would save, the outlay would be minimal. But I'm not holding my breath!

Inside this issue

Laurence Kelvin (W88) has expressed a view on the Olympics inside this issue that is somewhat different to most others that have appeared in the mag. We also have a rather astonishing response from TfL as to why one company was given a thirty year contract to carry out maintenance to the Limehouse Link (as reported in the *August Call Sign*). The letter, sent to DaC's **John Addis (K97)**, could well send the **Plain English Society** over the edge! Ok, it isn't as bad as the piece from a professor of English at the University of Chicago who famously told pupils: "*If for a while the rise of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline, soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to 'normalise' formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality.*" But TfL's Limehouse Link explanation still drove us batty! And of course, there's much more...

Fuel prices

Hands up if like me, you really believed that fuel prices were going down and staying down? Ha! There's one born every minute! The fuel companies just fancied having a laugh. After all, BP's half year profit was down from £5.5billion to just £3.5billion. And you think you've got it tough!

Alan Fisher
Callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Olympics

I obviously could not let this month go past without mentioning the **Olympic Games**. Like most people in GB, I really enjoyed the Games and really got into them. **Team GB** did fantastically well and what a difference the extra funding has made to our sportsmen and women. It would appear that on two wheels or on water, there is not anyone to touch us!

The organisation seemed to be excellent and I thought the opening ceremony was quite something and full credit to all those that were involved; however I did think **Paul McCartney** struggled a little.

Regarding the closing ceremony, although again very good, I was quite surprised with the choice of some of the contributors. The Games to me represent all that is best in sport with the years of hard work and dedication that the athletes have shown in preparation for the Games. Any athletes that are caught abusing the rules by taking banned substances are quite rightly immediately disqualified from the Games and most probably from their sport.

So imagine my surprise when during the closing ceremony, it was deemed to be celebrating British *Pop music* and then the first act was **George Michael**, a man who has been convicted of exposing himself in a public toilet to a police officer and also convicted of drug abuse. Yet he represents GB in the closing ceremony? Although I am not a fan, how on earth was George Michael chosen above **Sir Cliff Richard**? What was even more amazing to me is I have not heard anyone mention this point, perhaps I am becoming just a bit more of a cynic!

Anyway, the above was the positive that we took from the Games, but what about our work? Although the end of July and the whole of August is traditionally quiet, this year has been the quietest I have ever known. Tfl did an excellent job in deterring the public from



venturing into town and as a result, public transport seemed to operate quite well. Our corporates were persuaded to either take their holidays or work from home, the problem was then that the restaurants, theatres and of course the taxi trade did not have any customers to service.

However, that did not worry Tfl as they had completed their task of keeping the traffic flowing and public transport moving. Many of us predicted the situation incorrectly, as we thought that although it would be quiet work-wise, the traffic would be bad. In reality the traffic was quiet and our work was even worse. But, yes, the Board of Tfl had done their job!

The past year has been a very difficult trading period for the taxi industry and I was very pleased that **Dial-a-Cab** entered the month of July trading in the black and showing a surplus with our financial year finishing at the end of August. However, due to the abysmal workload during July/August, we will most certainly come to the end of our financial year showing a loss.

Who got the bonuses?

What was particularly interesting to me was a piece I read in the *Daily Telegraph* just before

the Games started and I have reproduced that piece here so that like me, you can form a view. The piece was written by **David Millward**, *Transport Editor of The Telegraph*. It was published on 19th June.

Peter Hendy, the Commissioner and six chief officers are each likely to receive six-figure payouts under Transport for London's incentive scheme. The disclosure of the vast amounts set to be pocketed by senior executives' triggered accusations of hypocrisy from union leaders. There is already £560,000 in the bonus pot covering 2010-11, which has been put on hold until after the Olympics. This will be boosted by payments covering the following two years, which have still to be decided by a Remuneration Committee, and includes Boris Johnson, the capital's Mayor.

According to Tfl's annual accounts, the payment of the bonuses will hinge in part on the successful delivery services of the Olympic and Paralympic transport.

The other officers in line for substantial payments are Steve Allen, Managing Director Finance, Mike Brown, Managing Director London Underground and London Rail, Howard Carter, General Counsel, Leon Daniels, Managing Director Surface Transport, Michele Dix, Managing Director Planning and Vernon Everitt, Managing Director Marketing and Communications.

So there you have it, the Games went very well, the Board of Tfl did their job and frightened the traffic away from London, together with all our customers, but of course they will be particularly pleased with the result, especially when the Mayor rewards them with their bonus!

Brian Rice

Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

I had that cycling bloke in my cab!

Dial-a-Cab driver **Jon Trevor (W94)** has appeared many times in **Call Sign** over the years – very often through his exploits at being one of the county's top triathletes. However, as Jon has pointed out to us, that was then and as he has added a few years onto his total, standards in that most gruelling of events have risen and he watches more than completes nowadays. Mind you, that didn't stop Jon doing 1000 sit-ups to support a fellow driver who had fallen on hard times earlier this year!

So it was with some excitement when Jon told this magazine that he had picked up the *Keirin* Olympic silver medallist, German cyclist **Maximilian Levy**. And not just that, Maximilian had allowed Jon to put on his silver medal and perhaps wonder what might have been!

"I picked him up in Wapping High Street," Jon told us, "and took him to the Docklands Museum. I said I had watched his race where he was just pipped to gold by Sir Chris Hoy and that with one lap to go, I really thought he was going to win. But Chris Hoy just held on."

"He had a wonderfully self-effacing sense of humour and as I think he has a big future, I gave him a few tips – the main one being to keep away from Chris Hoy!"

"Holding that silver medal was wonderful and Maximilian is certainly not just 'that cycling bloke'. He really is a true life champion and a really nice guy..."



John with Maximilian Levy's silver medal

AZERBAIJAN REACHES 1000 TX4S!

Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku recently arrived at the amazing number of 1000 TX4s working full-time along its streets, with the **Baki Taksi Company** successfully operating the 1000 damson coloured London Taxis under the banner of **The London Taxi Service**.

Baku, which hosted this year's Eurovision Song Contest, is a modern city with many of the world's major companies having offices there. Perhaps surprisingly to some, the capital is also popular with tourists who flock there to see monuments such as the 15th century **Palace of the Shirvanshahs**. So a good taxi service was needed and judging by the comments of those using it, they now have the vehicles and if LTPH fancy giving them a version of the Knowledge, they will be well set!

The TX4s were delivered to Baku over the past year and can now be spotted easily wherever you go in the city, making life much easier for passengers and tourists who used to look out for a variety of poor different quality cars.

The **London Taxi Company** worked and continues to work with the Baki Taksi Company to help develop vehicle regulations, driver standards and vehicle standards leading to many black market vehicles being removed from the transport infrastructure.

All 1000 drivers have been through a London Taxi Company driver training programme to ensure they provide a world-class service to their customers on a day-to-day basis. As well as being operated by now trained professional drivers, the fleet is supported by a highly efficient maintenance and parts service to ensure all vehicles are safe and kept in first class condition.



Taxis ranking outside Baku's 4-storey shopping mall, Paek Bulvar

Baki Taksi Director, **Ilgar Gasimov**, told *Call Sign*:

"London Taxis have supplied the 1,000 TX4 cabs for Baku and they have proved to be a tremendous boost to our city, its residents and businesses. All 1,000 taxis were ready for the Eurovision Song Contest in May 2012, covered with bright "light your fire" decals, which delighted visiting guests to the Crystal Hall. I know our expatriate community welcomed the London Taxi and I am very pleased to say more and more local people are now experiencing the safe and secure London Taxi in their daily lives. Our drivers - dressed in our Baki Taksi

uniforms - have taken to the taxis with great pride in driving such an iconic vehicle. The London Taxi has proved so popular among our local taxi community that we now have over 500 new drivers wanting to join our company as drivers!

"We are now in the first stages of increasing the fleet and look forward to many more years with London Taxis in Azerbaijan."

London Taxi Company Country Manager, **Iain Robb**, handily lives in Baku and was purposely employed to assist with the smooth running and success of The Baki Taksi Company.

Trocadero to become Hotel

The **London Trocadero** complex at the Piccadilly end of Shaftesbury Avenue is set to become London's latest hotel. It is unlikely that any *Call Sign* readers remember visiting the Trocadero when it housed **J.Lyons Corner House** - but then again, that was in 1896!

However, in 2006 many younger *Call Sign* readers visited

The Trocadero's latest incarnation to the computer game heaven of **Sega World** after we were given lots of freebies. But visitor numbers never took off, no doubt because of the expensive admittance charged.

In 2005 the Trocadero was acquired by new owners and in 2009 they gutted the inside but kept the famous façade.

Now the owners, Criterion, have announced a new 7-storey hotel is to be built on the land. However, this is not intended as competition for the Dorchester or Savoy, but more for the Travelodge group with close to 600 rooms - most being small and with no windows, aimed at those who just want somewhere to sleep without having to pay for unused luxuries.



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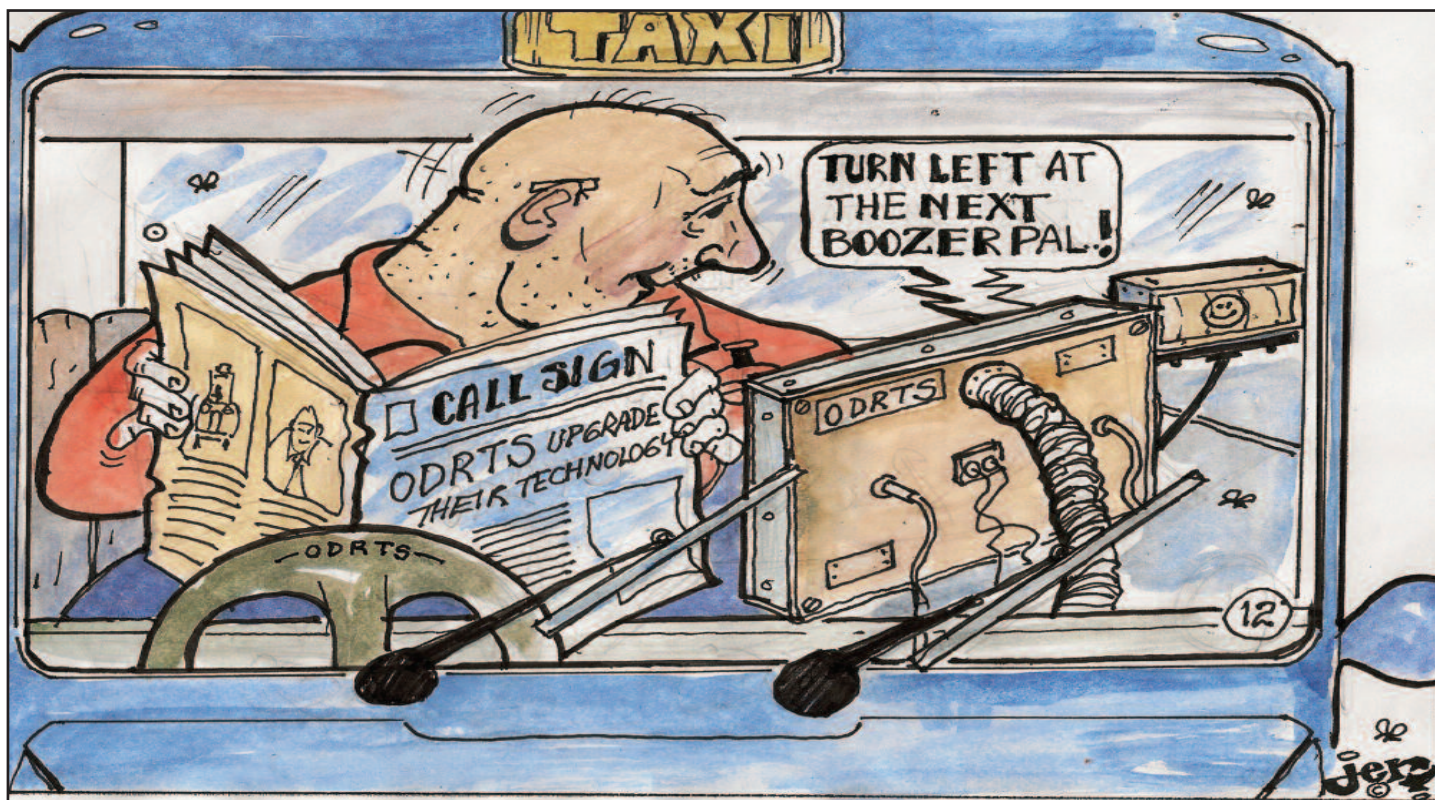
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ON HER MAJESTY'S OLYMPIC SERVICE

With the world still talking of HM Queen's 'parachute jump' to the Olympic opening ceremony, the LVTA has kindly sent us the story behind the jump starring James Bond!

The London 2012 Olympics focused the eyes of the world on the newly created London E20 postcode where the majority of events take place, including the staggering Opening Ceremony created by Oscar winning film director **Danny Boyle** and watched live by an estimated one billion people worldwide!

One of the most memorable moments was the short film *Happy and Glorious*, which saw Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II parachute from a helicopter above the Olympic Stadium moments before landing safely and taking her seat in the Royal Box. She did this in the company of **James Bond**, who had just arrived at Buckingham Palace in a London taxi supplied by **The London Cab Company Ltd**.

The company director, **Gary Zylberszac**, received a call in April requesting two identical iconic **Fairways** for a secret project called **BBC 2012**. These are kept in stock because identical vehicles are often required as a time saving exercise so the crew can shoot one cab from the outside, while preparing its twin with cameras and lights for the internal shot. After being searched by the police, the two Fairways were driven onto the forecourt of Buck House.

Filming took place between rain showers when the cab was waved through the gates of **Buckingham Palace** by the police, reversed out and repeated time and time again much to the bemusement of the tourists! The road was then closed to traffic while a helicopter carrying cameras swooped down low over the Mall, tracking the cab for its arrival. For continuity, the day was spent mainly leathering off rainwater from the Fairways in between takes!

Once *Happy and Glorious* was shown at the Opening Ceremony, a sudden burst of comments on *Twitter* came in thanking "James Bond" for supporting London's cab trade during the Olympics, while it had been side-lined by **LOCOG**, the **ODA** and **TfL**!

But **Daniel Craig** is not the only James Bond to have been a passenger in one of The London Cab Company's vehicles. Previous incarnation, **Pierce Brosnan**, has been a 'passenger' driven by Gary Zylberszac in a New York cab featured in **Mama Mia - The Movie**, which was shot outside the Lloyds Building.

The London Cab Company has been supplying cabs for film shoots since the late 1990s. In that time, the prop cabs have appeared in thousands of scenes from student films to TV programmes to adverts to major Hollywood movies, taking instructions from great directors such as **Paul Greengrass**, **Woody Allen**, **Clint Eastwood** and of course **Danny Boyle**.

Gary Zylberszac told **Call Sign**: "Whenever London features as part of a storyline, our taxis are used to emphasise that it's London. Our vehicles have appeared in *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Stormbreaker* and *The Da Vinci Code*. In *National Treasure II - Book of Secrets* starring **Nick Cage**, there was a four minute stunt-filled car chase through central London featuring a beer lorry, Mercedes, Range Rover and a Fairway carrying **The London Cab Company** logo on the doors as a tribute to our assistance in the project.

Our thanks to Gary Zylberszac and the London Cab Company Ltd..



Gary's Fairway on its secret mission to Buck House!

Many drivers have described the 2.7 litre **Fairway** as the best taxi ever produced, but most also realise that it was the introduction of the Nissan 2.7 engine unit that transformed that cab into more than just another taxi. As time has gone by since its 1989 introduction, Fairway drivers have reported doing in excess of 500,000 miles on the Nissan engine while one Scottish driver claimed he had clocked up a million with just a few minor repairs to the unit!

Now the name of **Nissan** may be back in the taxi business having recently unveiled its vision for what they call London's taxi of the future: the **NV200** with its 1.5 turbo charged engine and transparent, panoramic rooftop through which passengers can gaze at the moon! But Nissan's way of making a low-selling vehicle worth messing about with is the opposite way round to what the **London**

Taxi Company have been successfully doing for several years, where they have been selling the London icon all over the world. The NV200 was recently revealed as the **Tokyo** taxi and **New York's City's** next taxi – and now Nissan want to begin selling it in Australia and London!

However, there are a few differences to the Big Apple version: The Crewe-based builders, **Voyager MPV**, have fitted the CoF – required 25foot turning circle thanks to the NV200's new reworked front suspension, where the drive shaft is split into two and a second universal joint is mounted onto the lower wishbone. The front wheel drive shaft is short allowing the wheels to turn to a much more acute angle than normal front-

Nissan plan new taxi

It's the one New Yorkers call ugly!



The new Nissan NV 200 - New York and London versions

recharged twice each day – once overnight and once during the driver's break – although this second charge would be a quick 30 minute one.

Nissan's executive vice president, **Andy Palmer** said: "The black

drive vehicles can.

The main difference is the London version's 1.5-litre diesel engine with its claim of over 50mpg, whereas the NY version uses a four-cylinder petrol unit. However, like the Vito the NV200 is also a converted van - although this taxi looks like no mini-cab ever seen!

Nissan also say they are close to starting trials on an electric version of the new taxi that they claim could become available to buy within 2 years and which would remove 38,000 tonnes of CO2 from the London's atmosphere, while shaving over £1000 in fuel bills per year. However, at this time there is also a downside in that the NV200's slow charge battery would probably have to be












cab is as much a part of the London landscape as Big Ben and the NV200 is a great step forward for providing a transport solution that is good for both its users and other city inhabitants."

The NV200 taxi is expected to go on sale in 2013 and seat up to five adults. It should be priced far closer to the TX4 than the Vito and Nissan's association with the Fairway carries it in good stead, but whether drivers would want a manual cab that many who've seen it have described as ugly remains to be seen. But fifty mpg is a powerful selling tool...

Dennis Latchett
Call Sign Online

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fundraising in aid of



Multiple Sclerosis Society

Dial-a-Cab driver Karen Menpes (E01) recently returned home after riding her motorbike round Europe in aid of the Multiple Sclerosis Society's research unit at Kingston.

Karen estimated the total distance as being around 2000 miles after arriving back at the finishing post, having ridden through France, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Scotland. She told *Call Sign* that her hope was that when others read about her ride, it might encourage them to fundraise for similar charities.

Karen's brother, John, who is 48, has been seriously affected by MS and the Multiple Sclerosis Society has been an invaluable source of help to him and many other sufferers.

Speaking to *Call Sign* about her ride, Karen said:

"It took me about nine days in total and I averaged over 200 miles each day. Although the aim was serious, a few strange – almost funny – things happened on the UK stretch. For example, and bearing in mind the length of my ride, I ran out of fuel on the A1! A kind biker had to ride off to buy some fuel for me but by the time he got back with a jerry can of petrol, my battery had gone flat after leaving my hazard lights on!



Karen motorcycled 2000 miles round Europe to raise funds for MSS

Fortunately the RAC came to my rescue.

Then, after keeping my license clean for over eight years, I managed to get a speeding ticket and 3 points in not-so bonny Scotland!

The European section of the ride saw the reverse with a stroke of good luck. I was returning back from Europe on the ferry with a group of bikers whom I didn't know and after I explained what I was doing, they clubbed together and gave me a surprise

donation for the MS Society, even though I'd told them that I wasn't after any money from them. Nonetheless, I was well pleased!"

However, Karen is still looking for donations "Any donation, no matter how small, would be greatly appreciated," she told us. "Organisations such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society rely so much on charity and without these donations, people like John would find it so much more difficult than it is already for them."

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

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

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

CallOver available at DaC



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

The magazine is now left at DaC every month, so if you have a son, daughter or even a neighbour who is doing the KoL then keep a look out for *CallOver* in Driver Reception and pass a copy along to them. *CallOver* is a welcome addition to all the stuff Knowledge students accumulate...

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

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"Yes, I do have the hump big time and I shall let the various agencies, LOCOG, ODA and TfL - and just about anyone else who will listen - know exactly what I think!"

Dial-a-Cab driver Ray Buckland (P66) couldn't hide his anger when a roving *Call Sign* reporter happened to chance on him looking at the **Olympic Delivery Authority Taxi Driver Information Handbook - Making the most of the 2012 Games.**

"I used to be a dispatcher at **Dial-a-Cab** when we were on voice transmission and spent 2 years on the Knowledge full time, so I already know where I'm going! I also deal with members of the public every single day of my working life, as do all my fellow taxi drivers, so I doubt that we needed a patronising ODA document telling us how to deal with passengers or to 'familiarise myself with other features of my taxi!' Neither do I need advice about 'sharing the road safely' and all that that implies as printed on page 9 of the 76 page document that was sent just days before this major, once in a lifetime event, that I was expected to absorb and digest in order to do my job properly."

Ray was fuming and quoting numerous driving 'tips' in the book that we, as professionals, employ as a matter of routine on a daily basis.

"Are they joking, because I do not find any

Olympics confusion? You bet there was!



humour in being given a sustainability driving lesson," he continued pointing to a paragraph further down the same page.

"There is conflicting information on other pages too from what I saw," Ray pointed out, "so I was more confused instead of being informed anyway!"

Ray ended by giving his view on the Games as they pertained to the taxi trade.

"Whether they were enjoyable or not was irrelevant to us as taxi drivers; there was very little benefit that the Olympics had for us and if anything, they were more to our detriment. Taxi ranks were shut, there was limited access to pick-ups at the venues and generally just trying to get passengers to where they wanted to go with the usually empty *Olympic Route Networks* and banned right turns in so many places making it so difficult to the extent that many people just didn't bother using us. I still can't see why Bus Lanes couldn't have been used for Games vehicles - unless, of course, there was a hidden agenda that we have yet to discover...?"

With that, we left Ray in peace still looking at the ODA booklet and uttering unprintable curses under his breath that *Call Sign* can't repeat! Mind you, the booklet was also sent out to private hire outlets and we bet they probably found it too complicated to understand!!

Laurence Kelvin gives his view and says...

Olympics confusion? None that I can see...!

The **London Olympics** are over and I offer a few observations as a **Dial-a-Cab** taxi driver.

Whenever I have walked round London or used public transport, there has been a noticeable buzz in the air with volunteer ambassadors asking me and everyone else if they can help in any way - though not one has offered to lend me a fiver or carry my luggage!

The trains and buses have operated very well and the traffic has mostly run smoothly. It was impressive to see the new road markings, one way signs and layout installed in the early hours of the three days prior to the games with military efficiency.

The organisation of the Games as well as the traffic have been well planned and effectively executed. The intention was to enable competitors, officials and freeloaders (I mean Games family) to move from their hotels and between venues without any holdups and to that extent it was undoubtedly a success.

Yes, there have been longer routes necessary for some taxi journeys, but there was little justification for the demand by some drivers to be able to use the Games lanes. Why should we think that we are more important than plumbers or food delivery vehicles? Yes, London in the centre has been quiet and our work has been slow. Imagine how much we would be criticised now if the idea of a **rate 2** tariff for the Olympic weeks put forward by the **LTDA** had been implemented.

All visitors to the games are issued with a free pass to use on public transport, including the **Javelin** train between Stratford and St Pancras (a report to the contrary in **Taxi** magazine should be ignored), and any passenger spillover into taxis should be seen as a bonus.

Several of my passengers have commented on the friendly taxi marshals at King's Cross station and welcomed the help they gave with suitcases. Wouldn't it be lovely if this could be a regular service at all major stations?

London will reap the benefit of the Olympics for many years to come, with new Overground lines, a vast amount of new and improved accommodation built in East London, upgraded underground services and a general smartening up of buildings and infrastructure, all of which should encourage more visitors to come here well into the future.



Laurence Kelvin (W88)

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Oxford Street retailers say:

TOO MANY BUSES ALONG OXFORD STREET!



Peter Hendy

According to *West End Company* boss, **Dame Judy Mayhew**, there are already too many buses heading both ways along **Oxford Street** and that once the new **Crossrail** stations opens for business at both Tottenham Court Road and Bond Street, the need for a wall-to-wall of buses from one end of the street to the other will diminish – assuming, of course, that it actually exists! Empty bus after empty bus suggests that perhaps it doesn't.

TfL Head of Transport, **Peter Hendy** – who is said to be a staunch busman and also the holder of a bus driver's licence – is said to be delighted with the bus services and sees no problem with the carpet effect of red buses along the capital's premier shopping street. It seems highly improbable that he would agree to a lesser number of buses heading along that thoroughfare.

As a result of Mr Hendy's apparent intransigence, Dame Judy has gone over his head and asked **Mayor Boris Johnson** if he would set up a *Mayoral Commission* to decide on the future of

Oxford Street's transport. Whether that will include a place for London taxis will undoubtedly also be on the Commission's agenda.

Peter Hendy, the man who was most responsible for keeping the capital filled with bendy buses before the Mayor decided to get rid of them and bring back updated *Routemasters*, has something of an 'iffy' relationship with the taxi trade. Prior to the Olympics, he was quoted as saying on live radio that he had "given up" on taxis and didn't know what they wanted. That came in response to a driver who on one phone-in said that he was considering taking the whole month of Olympic competition off because he believed traffic conditions would be impossible and prevent him from working. That assumed he even managed to get into town from the east with its traffic light slow-downs and closing of lanes on the A12 and A13. That was also in addition to the ORNs themselves.

Mr Hendy responded that those taxi drivers who did work would "do very well" but that he "gave up on what these taxi drivers wanted!"

Call Sign can actually answer that question for Mr Hendy – they just want to be able to earn a living without being treated as third class citizens behind buses and tubes...

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

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

Kupkake's Korner



A summer's day in London town?

Well I must be psychic
all I predicted came out right!
Wish I could foresee the Lottery numbers
That well each Friday night!

The last week of July was awful
cabs ranking everywhere!
Kings Cross started in Goodway
Paddington back to Edgware!

Victoria ranked in circles,
the Raft just couldn't be reached.
Waterloo slower than turtles
floundering on a beach!

Our radio like a graveyard
no real trips to bid.
London was like a winter Sunday night
where were all the punters hid?

I drove around the City
I cruised through Covent Garden.
Though filled full of self-pity
I felt my resolve harden.

I plotted at a theatre
waiting for the 'burst',
but surrounded by those Rickshaws
just made matters worse!

At last the doors were opened
and the punters were released.
A couple nicely spoken
Asked: "Would you go south east?"

Visions of a roader
filled my anxious head.
Would they ask for Dover?
I just listened as they said....

"We parked somewhere in Southwark
we know it's not that far.
but we can't be bothered to walk...
please take us to our car!"

I wiped my mouth and swallowed
I was feeling so alone.
A couple of short rides followed
So yes, I just went home...!

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In a text that may shock older *Call Sign* readers and possibly younger ones as well, taxi app **GetTaxi** has sent a text message to their drivers telling them that they are going to “buy” hotel work that goes to Heathrow Airport.

Those older drivers will remember the fights and battles that this trade had against paying money for the privilege of going to work, now

GetTaxi: “Pay hotels for airports!”

many will say that GetTaxi has thrown all that away for a few pieces of silver. However, other readers may agree with the policy and *Call Sign* would like to hear from you.

Unlike **Hailo**, **Dial-a-Cab** drivers cannot belong to GetTaxi as it involves fitting radio equipment and is therefore considered to be an opposing radio circuit.

The text sent to GetTaxi drivers reads:

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! Fixed prices will be shown in 'job details' on the job offer screen, stating 'FIXED PRICE £XX TO HEATHROW T5'!

Is it now anything for an LAP? Tell *Call Sign*...
See editor's page...

The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled

LTBAWD take injured armed forces to Brands Hatch

Former Dial-a-Cab driver and Board member, **Harry Joel MBE (Ex-B81)** famously said many years ago: “As long as there is conflict and war around the world, there will be a need for organisations such as the **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled**.”

Now in his 89th year, Harry is still the President of The LTBAWD, a London taxi charity that since 1948 has helped past and current members of our armed forces in so many different ways.

The most recent event involved the charity receiving a request from **The Not Forgotten Association** – who provide entertainment, leisure and recreation for serving and ex-serving wounded and disabled service personnel. They asked the LTBAWD if they could assist with transport for injured members of the armed forces from the rehabilitation centre at Headley Court and take them to a track day at Brands Hatch. Several committee members took up the cudgels and made their way to Headley Court as part of the transport force.

They arrived at the track at 9.30am and met up with the rest of the invited forces personnel. After breakfast it was a safety briefing, on with crash helmets and off to trackside and cars that included **Lotus Sevens**, **Maseratis**, **Aston Martins**, **McLarens** and **Porsches** – one of which was worth almost £2million on its own! Insurance costs for the day? Don't ask!

The cars were made available by their owners who graciously gave their time for the day and drove each of their passengers at high speed round the track. All the servicemen returned to the pits sporting huge grins. Then courtesy of the **FF Corse** racing team off they went again in high powered **Ferraris**!

After lunch, the 70 former service people along with helpers were entertained by a demonstration of hyper-fast **Formula One** cars. Then following one final spin around the track, it was time to return to Headley Court.

The event was organised by **The Not Forgotten Association** and **Gary Eastwood**. The **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** has asked *Call Sign* to thank them for allowing the charity to be part of a memorable day.

Then on 8th August, LTBAWD committee members arrived at Waterloo Station to meet with staff and army personnel from Headley Court to transport them to The Olympic Park at Stratford and then collect them afterwards to return them to Waterloo. Again, the charity felt very privileged to be helping these wounded soldiers enjoy their day at the Olympics...

**Our thanks to Derek Leone, LTBAWD
Hon Vice Secretary**



The 70 members of the Not Forgotten Association trackside with some of the cars

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Allen Togwell puts the clock back and is ready once again...

Fighting the clean fight!

Poor old **Tom Whitbread**, he's been on the Board since the last King died and he opens his mouth for the first time about dress code and all hell breaks loose! He surely must have known what would happen from the way I have been slaughtered over the years whenever I've mentioned this very subject. In fact, having not mentioned it for quite a while, I'm surprised **Mr Connelly (T21)** who has only been on the circuit for a few years should be aware of my long standing views on dress code by including me along with TW to being *style police*.

Over the years I've heard all sorts of reasons why cab drivers dress the way they do, including the freedom to dress as they see fit. And they are not alone, hence the reason so many companies in recent years have dress down days. This was unheard of in my younger days and particularly in the industry I was in. It would hardly seem appropriate for me measuring up a female for an evening gown while looking like a schlock.

Most men in those days had a Sunday best suit (in many cases their demob suit) that was considered proper to wear at weekends to go to the pub or a football match. The cab drivers of that era wore a cloth cap and muffler, which might not have been stylish but were accepted as appropriate for the conditions in which they worked. Nothing was forced on anybody to look clean and scrubbed; it was inbred at a young age when your mum gave you a bath in a tin tub by the fire that was filled with hot water from a kettle. And when older as in my case, it was a bus ride up to the public baths in Prince of Wales Road.

Nowadays, like most things taken for granted and particularly with the amenities in most homes, they become unimportant and people's preference is to look unkempt. Encouraged I might add by so called fashion such as designer stubble, which is an excuse for not shaving, or jeans with holes in the knees and covered in mud which are just two reasons not to bother venturing into the bathroom for whatever reason, be that work or pleasure.

Twenty odd years ago when I tried to convince our members to raise their image in the fight against private hire, one driver asked what difference did it make whether he was suited and booted or wore a jock strap and flippers, providing he arrived at the pick-up address on time. I replied asking what about those drivers who slept rough in the back of their cabs in the feeder park at the flyers? How did these guys go about their ablutions, if at all? Was being unshaven, unwashed and having unpleasant body odours permeating throughout the cab of no consequence providing a punter had been taken to where they wanted to go? All he said was: "So what, are they bovered?"

Fast forward to the present day and witness the damage PH has done and continues to do to the trade. Has that changed? Apparently not. And that is the issue that people such as **Ian Connelly** fail to grasp. What, I wonder, would T21's attitude be if he hired a taxi for a wedding and when it arrived at the church, an unshaven driver got out and opened the door for the bride wearing a string vest, shorts and flip flops. I imagine Mr



Connelly would find it perfectly normal and probably ask the driver to smile for the camera!

Joining a club?

When I first became a member of **Dial-a-Cab**, I likened it to joining a golf, tennis or cricket club where there are certain expectations in the manner of dress when using the club. Nobody is forced to abide by those expectations, if they don't like it then don't join the club - which is what I tell every applicant who wants to join Dial-a-Cab. I explain that if they are accepted, they will lose a certain amount of freedom because we are committed to giving our clients a quality service.

Several years ago, I had cause to remind a driver of that commitment, followed by the unpleasant task of expelling that driver over his questionable personal hygiene and the filthy state of his cab. It was the absolute pits; you could hardly see him through the partition window because of the grime while the front mats were riddled with lice. So yes Mr Connelly, you are not the first to accuse me with being the *style police*. And as for waiting for TfL to implement a dress code, it really shouldn't be necessary, self-respect and willingness to give the cab industry a better image by looking presentable should be enough. When we refer our commitment to our clients, it comes in many forms particularly when tendering for new business. When I was in Sales, the majority of tenders were from the big banks and law firms whose annual taxi expenditure was in excess of a £1million. But this has changed in recent years and small companies with a taxi usage of just a few £thousands a month are now putting their transport business out to tender. When I did those tenders, they used to run to 30 pages with 12 questions on a page. Fortunately in my day I was able to make tenders attractive by including colourful artwork and graphics emphasising the size of our company, our control centre and our fleet size and so on. But that aside, when it came to the questions I was often forced to make my answers either ambiguous or be liberal with the truth. Such as the make-up of our fleet in model and age.

Would all our drivers be presentably dressed, polite, courteous and helpful etc? Do our drivers have the ability to reject trips that they don't find financially attractive? Will an additional waiting charge be added to a meter that is already charging waiting time? Is a gratuity compulsory when a driver turns up late or is rude? Why must a taxi

arrive with money on the meter? And the most difficult question of all to a company offering a contract of several million pounds a year, can we guarantee a service? Nowadays unfortunately tenders are all done electronically, but they are still extremely comprehensive - in fact more so, but there is little that can be done to give one an edge, particularly when the bottom line is often the statement that *'preference will be given to the most economically advantageous tender'*. And that is where we lose out to PH.

Using a marketing company

On reading T21's reply to Tom Whitbread, he appears to be typical of those who elect a Board and then wants to tell them what they are doing wrong, including the age old argument that the Board needs younger members, which I find odd on discovering he runs his own business. However, he may like to note that for many years before he came on the circuit, we advertised for young dynamic people from the private sector with proven CVs, to help generate new business. For several years we even employed the services of a marketing company with experience of working in the taxi industry. But whilst we persevered and invested considerable sums, it was never truly successful and the primary reason for this was because the management of DaC has no power over its workforce. The dynamic Sales people became despondent when told the meter and charges to our drivers were beyond negotiation. The marketing company, when they heard we had a fleet of over 2000 shareholders travelling all over London 24/7, were delighted with the assumption we had 2000 plus sales reps and came up with lots of ideas that would not only generate new business, but put money and gifts into the pockets of those drivers that participated. But typical cab driver apathy caused literally every idea to fail. And to assume young members from our own circuit would be more successful than a reputable marketing company, why are they driving cabs?

In the twenty odd years I've been on the Board, the youngest Board member I've served with lasted one year and a bit and it was during the bit that he learnt something about being a custodian of a Friendly Society that frightened the life out of him and he resigned immediately. Proving it's easy to stand and be elected onto the Board by making crazy promises and then when they discover they are out of their depth, don't bother standing for re-election. The danger with that, as was often the case in the past, is that it prompts criticism from major clients about our lack of continuity and the amateur manner in which we ran our business.

The Chairman and the current Board have done remarkably well in changing that image and it would be a tragedy if it ever reverted back to the ways of old.

As for moving forward, I feel the power that private hire now have has had such a dramatic effect on the market place, unlike at any time in our history. I honestly believe, and this is only my opinion, that the only solution to the future success of this society is for it to demutualise.

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing

ALPHA POWER PILL IS BACK!

If there is one question we get asked more than any other, it's what happened to the **Alpha Power Pills**. These pills are among the most amazing things we have 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 is getting hold of them!

However, **Call Sign** has traced another sup-



DaC's Divyesh Ruparelia was one who used Power Pill regularly before it vanished

plier in **Steve Vale** and the first person to

order some was **Dial-a-Cab** Chairman **Brian Rice**, who uses them in his diesel car. He ordered some via the website and received the pills two days later.

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 Alpha Power Pill, just go to 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.



YES WE KNOW WE ASKED FOR MORE...

But we lied!!!

Last month, **Call Sign** published three photos under the heading of *Are Addison Lee passengers at risk?* One photo showed a non-AL cab turning sharp left from Duke Street Hill into Tooley Street and getting stuck on a post! The driver who sent us the photo, **Steve Sloane (C86)**, couldn't understand how it happened unless the minicab driver was looking at his satnav instead of the road. We also published two photos showing an Addison Lee car turning round inside Blackwall Tunnel! Why would he have been stupid enough to do that unless he panicked after losing his signal?

Since then we have been inundated with AL cars involved in minor smacks, but most of the qualities weren't up to printing standard and weren't too interesting. But this one from **Steve Bryant (Y41)** showing an AL car going into a bus at the Bow Church roundabout – with the police on the scenes – seems to be another instance showing that cheap isn't always good! But no more please! We get the picture!



MANGANESE DISCOVERS BLACK HOLE!

With most people aligning the expression *black hole* as being more likely to come from the recent US 'Curiosity' lander touching down on the planet **Mars** than a taxi manufacturer, **Manganese Bronze** – parent company of the **London Taxi Company** – contradicted that view by saying they have found a £3.9 million black hole in its accounts and that this has caused an approximate one month delay in releasing their half-year results. They now hope they will be released by 24 September.

In a statement, an LTC spokesperson said: "Due to a combination of system and procedural errors, a number of transactions relating to 2010 and 2011 and some residual balances from the previous system were not properly processed through the new IT system. The cumulative effect of these errors is an estimated £3.9million understatement of historical losses, which go back over several years although the work to apportion the loss between previous years is not yet complete."

Manganese Bronze, formed in 1899 but nothing to do with taxis back then, is nowadays 20% owned by Chinese car maker **Geely Automobile Holdings** and has now said that its balance sheet at December 31 and the financial years for 2011 and prior years would have to be restated as a result of the black hole.

The statement added that trading in the first seven months of 2012 had still been difficult and challenging and that it expects to report net losses for the first half that would be substantially higher than the corresponding period last year.

Manganese Bronze said that as of the end of June, it had £2.8 million of headroom on its agreed banking facilities and continued to have the support of its bankers and Geely. With the completion of its 1000 cab order from Azerbaijan, their international side is still doing well...

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"I recognised him right away," Tony Powell (S67) told *Call Sign*, referring to his encounter with Denis Thatcher, the late husband of Britain's first woman Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

"I had just set down at the Savoy Hotel and as I made the U-turn and came back up the Savoy service road towards the Strand, I saw him standing there bolt upright on the corner of the street. He was wearing a long black cloak held together with a gold clasp and chain. Standing a discreet distance behind him, but close enough to respond quickly if need be, was his personal protection officer.

"Mr Thatcher obviously realised that I had recognised him and simply said: 'Number 10 please driver!' So off we went. I was turning over in my mind where I should set them down as we drove along Whitehall, but on the approach to Downing Street I was told to pull right up to the gates, which I did very slowly. Denis dropped the window and leant out so as to be seen and the police officer swung the gate open.

"He asked me nicely to pull right up to the door and that's exactly what I did – right outside the big black door of number 10. Not many people get to do that," Tony said with a look approaching pride!

"Denis paid me off with cash and as his

ANYONE FOR DENIS???



Tony Powell. Inset pic: Denis & Maggie Thatcher



detective got out after him, he turned to me and commented on what a very smooth ride it had been and the pair then rapidly vanished through the door, which had magically opened!"

While on the subject, Tony told of another 'celeb' he had picked up and it was a rather strange tale.

"It was actor Albert Finney," Tony

recalled. "I stopped for him on the street and we went to the **Turf Club**. On the way there, Albert sat on the tip-up seat behind me and chatted away asking lots of questions - many of a personal family nature but which I was happy to answer. I also told him I was hoping to move home soon. Looking over my shoulder, I noticed he was writing down all my answers and generally scribbling into a small pocket notebook, but I thought little of it.

"Anyway, some five years later I picked him up again and to my utter amazement as I wound down my window to take his destination, he greeted me with a broad smile and said: 'Hello Tony, how's life in your new house? How's your son James?'

"I was absolutely stunned and could only imagine that he was bluffing. But Finney said that to get to where he was in the acting world took a tremendous amount of hard work and the ability to remember lines. He told me that to help himself he kept notes on everything - including on those he met.

"I mean," said Tony ending, "we learn the Knowledge but to remember a 5-minute conversation from 5-years earlier certainly earned my respect!"

With that, Tony went to drive off but not before letting out the plaintive cry of where did he put his keys...!!!

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As the aged Fairway taxi rumbled into the **Roman Way** depot to be stripped of its **Dial-a-Cab** equipment before going to that big taxi rank in the sky – courtesy of the Mayor's 15 year rule - the first thing *Call Sign's* snitch noticed was the original 'CCC' logo on the windshield.

"Yes, and I'd like to keep it as a memento," the Fairway's owner **Don Leppard** (A89) requested to the technician. "I've had this cab a very long time and we've covered close to half a million miles together. But the time has come..." His voice tailed off with a sad lilt.

"It's been a good cab and it owes me nothing. Everything is pretty much original except for the obvious consumable things and regular maintenance."

Continuing his story almost as though his Fairway were a family member, Don said:

"When I got my Green Badge, friends told me to join a radio circuit and all agreed that 'Lords' - as we were then - was by far the best with lots of big City accounts and generally very busy all over London. So I went round to Shirland Road in Maida Vale, which is where we were based in those days, but was unsuccessful in joining at the time as there was a long waiting list. But I kept going back every week or so until they were so sick of the sight of me turning up on the doorstep at regular intervals,

Goodbye old friend...



Don bids his trusty Fairway and its original ccc sticker goodbye as a licensed taxi

that **Jack Taylor** bellowed to someone in the back office 'get him fitted up, he's driving me nuts!' And that's how I joined!"

So was he retiring? "Oh no, I've been very happy here over the years, which is why I am going to be replacing this old lady for something more modern and will continue cabbage. I don't feel like retiring just yet," he added.

Letting his mind wander back, Don told us about some of the celebrities who had sat on

his Fairway's seat: "Celebs were very prevalent when we had the BBC account at Shepherds Bush. **Dame Shirley Bassey** and **Sir Terry Wogan**, come readily to mind, but there was one fare I recall with particular clarity," Don whispered almost rhetorically knowing that we'd ask who it was...

"I was going south along Park Lane when a hand went out and so I stopped. It was the Greek singer **Demis Roussos**. His *Rolls Royce* had broken down and he needed to get to the *Inn on the Park* hotel - now the *Four Seasons*. Anyway, besides having a magical voice, he was also somewhat on the very large side and as he got into the cab, it went right down on the springs! We gently travelled the short distance with my cab chugging along in a very lopsided manner and me struggling to keep it in a straight line! Cabs were passing me and staring at the way we were tilted!"

Don briefly laughed at the memory before remembering why he was at Roman Way. Yet another Fairway - the taxi that many call the true icon of the trade - was being laid to rest...

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BOOK REVIEW *** BOOK REVIEW *** BOOK REVIEW ***

BELFAST TAXI:

A drive through history, one fare at a time

Most people of an age that could be advancing quicker than they'd like, might still associate Belfast with the IRA and Catholic / Protestant ongoing battles. But that is in the past, with Northern Ireland now getting more publicity as a tourist destination!

But one group of people were there both then and now – Belfast's taxi drivers in their familiar London style black cabs. It's said that Belfast's taxi drivers keep a close eye on the city and its peoples with no small number having been involved in the conflict on both sides. And of course, taxi drivers – whether at **Dial-a-Cab** in London, **Glasgow Taxis** or running around on the streets of Belfast – see and watch life and history unfold through their rear-view mirrors. And they rarely forget anything worth retelling...

Belfast Taxi: A drive through history, one fare at a time (Lee Henry, published by The Blackstaff Press on 27 September) is exactly like that, a fascinating look at their city through the eyes of Belfast cabbies. In a collection of eye-opening, moving and often shocking interviews with taxi drivers of all ages and backgrounds - Catholic and Protestant, male and female, young and old - Lee Henry helps reveal not just the personal pressures (and pleasures) of the Irish equivalent to what we do, but in doing so gives a fascinating history of the city.

There's Billy, the sociology graduate and Gerard, whose mother was the first female taxi company owner in Belfast. Then there is classical music lover Gerry who prides himself on introducing Tchaikovsky to the drunken hoards frequenting his taxi! Fionola is not only the only female driver in her depot, but she can beat any male at arm wrestling! All pretty normal for cabbies and indeed in the July *Call Sign* there was an article about DaC driver **Cliff Giffin** (C55) who tries to calm harassed passengers by turning up *Classic FM*.

But in Belfast, you have to dig a little deeper and many of the stories take a more sinister turn - drivers forced to dive for cover during bombings and shootings as their press corps passengers jostled for position; hijackings; drivers who had had their taxis sequestered by paramilitaries and used to transport arms or explosive devices into town; drivers murdered by the paramilitaries for no other reason than they were either Catholic or Protestant.

Author **Lee Henry** was inspired to write **Belfast Taxi** after seeing photos of his grandfather, a taxi driver from the 1940s, and by conversations with some of the many taxi drivers he met as he travelled around the city. The book covers the origins of the taxi business in Belfast, right through the era of the bloody troubles with taxi drivers working around the Falls and the Shankill Roads where you never knew whether your passengers wanted to go to the local pub or was looking to kidnap you! The book takes the story up to the present day.

There is much sadness in **Belfast Taxi** but there is also a sense of fun with taxi drivers who obviously have giant personalities! Definitely a recommended read – and not just for taxi drivers...



Dennis Latchett
Call Sign Online



Dear Donald,

You may be surprised to find that I agree that the London cab driver is tied down and could benefit from a wider choice of vehicle in which to ply for hire. However let's address a few of your remarks regarding my **Call Sign** article.

Firstly you ask who I am to tell others what to do with their hard earned dough? Well at no point in the article did I instruct or advise other drivers "what to do" As I stated in the article, it was just my opinion with no basis or foundation, nothing more and nothing less, just an honest appraisal of the vehicle as presented to me.

Prior to your response, I was asked by the Editor if I would give my blessing to your right to reply - which I welcomed with open arms, even suggesting that I may have been a bit harsh, bearing in mind I had NOT driven your adapted vehicle. Furthermore I asked Alan to enquire whether I could have an extended test drive, adding that if I found the E7 better than my original opinion, which followed just half an hour of prodding, poking, pulling and replacing switches suggested, I would be both honest and brave enough to put it in writing.

I anticipated that my article would ruffle a few feathers but hoped your retort would be far more explanatory than it was. Here's why; yes my article had humour scattered amongst its content of personal opinion as I did not wish to convey a nasty bile-filled hatred to the producer of this "adapted" vehicle, which may or may not be able offer an alternative to the current stock of licensed vehicles.

So I was somewhat bemused to find your article replied on 'seven facts', which have little or no supporting evidence. At no point does your list of these 'seven facts' offer a body from which the 'seven facts' are drawn. The Oxford Dictionaries (available free online) define a *fact* as something that is known or proved to be true - information used as evidence or as part of a report of a news article. It goes on to describe *fact* as something used to emphasise the truth of an assertion, especially one opposite to what might have been expected or what had been asserted. So here are a few facts about me and mine: We stand alone as self-employed men and women, trained to the highest standard in the world - that is a commonly held fact. The world's best taxis: London's iconic black cabs were rated the best in the world for the fourth year running in a *Hotel.com* survey (**Call Sign** Oct 2011). London was placed top in five out of the seven categories including safety, friendliness, cleanliness, quality of driving and knowl-

When DaC driver and fleet owner Peter Begley (K98) gave his view of the Peugeot E7 taxi in our July issue, Cab Direct Marketing Manager Donald Pow asked for space to respond (August). Now Peter has come back with his answer to Donald - and a challenge...

Call Sign and the Peugeot E7

edge of the area. London's taxis beat competition from other top international destinations including New York, Hong Kong and Tokyo. Fact.

Your fact 6 of 7 suggests that in a survey of Vito drivers, all expressed that given one wish....well you know exactly what you quoted: *"If you could grant them one wish, it would be to have Mercedes' axle put back the way it was originally intended to be. So we have hundreds of cabbies driving around London with thousands of pounds worth of steering device they neither want nor need."* Really? Hundreds of them?

Let me state that each and every one of your seven facts would take me no more than a hare's breath to rebuff as they are without substance and appear in print to be fanciful shots in the dark. I would not dare tell any London driver what he or she should or should not do for one simple reason - they are my Peers of equal qualification. I am certainly no better than any one of them, but I hope equal to them by our unifying world renowned and envied Knowledge of London. This is the standard my colleagues and I have all risen to, which grants us the privilege to enjoy the right to ply for hire in London in a vehicle that whether you like it or not, must meet the *Conditions of Fitness* currently enforced by TfL.

So it's really quite simple when it's comes down to it, at the crux of the matter is this: **Your E7 vehicle does not meet the standards required to enter the London market! Therefore, my opinion - which was just that, ie my opinion - does not matter as you are not allowed to play in our game.**

As a by-note, I did survey your version of the "adapted" Vito and found the fit and finish of the one currently licensed in London to be of a much higher standard. I should add that the producers of the London licensed Vito are - again in my opinion - at best poor and I do not hold their service in high regard. But the Vito they produce excels in all areas but one - the rear wheel steering. So please tell me that you are looking into producing a better Vito that complies with COF than the one currently offered to London drivers by Eco City. That being the case, you will find a true ally in me who will sing your praises loud and clear.

As a footnote, I personally stayed away from LTI - now LTC - for quite some time, but returned to find a very different attitude. I am impressed with both the vehicle and staff, although I concede the current TX4 is a work in progress. That said, LTC's vehicle is purpose built, whereas yours is not.

You also make the point about LTI and China, so please explain how buying a French based vehicle, with all its worry about the Euro, is better than being the partner of a Chinese business - one of the world's emerging super powers with money to invest in the world's best?

I am, as I have said, still open to be persuaded differently. I will set aside a full week in which I will be happy to test an E7 provided by you exclusively. Obviously, I will not be able to ply for hire but can conduct all other aspects of my fleet business - travelling across London to visit my clients and suppliers, thus gaining a true opinion of your E7. I will then publish my findings in **Call Sign** (and any other magazine of your choice). If your vehicle is good or even better than you say it is, I will say so as it would undoubtedly be in the interest of my colleagues.

Just let me know the dates where you have a cab available and I will appraise your E7 and will judge it on the following (in no particular order).

1. Easy of entry for driver and passengers including disabled passengers a member of my family is disabled.
2. Driver and passenger comfort in town and on a run.
3. Driver aids/controls.
4. Economy, power, braking.
5. Noise levels (to be measured by a decibel meter).
6. Fit and trim.

I will also complete numerous three point turns to see if the current COF is valid. I will also carry out any other tests you would like me to perform.

So there you have my offer, which I think is fair and reasonable, should you wish to take it up please let me know by return.

Peter Begley (K98)



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so you can earn.

Recent issues of *Call Sign* told of Dial-a-Cab driver / boxing trainer, **Alec Wilkey** (W83) and his latest protégée from Athens, undefeated female boxer **Areti Mastrodouka**. But Alec doesn't just train Areti at the well-known **TKO Gym** under **Jonny Eames** managership in Canning Town.

Another of Alec's successful fighters is **Danny 'Cassius' Connor** who has been given the chance to capture his second professional title in successive fights after being matched against unbeaten **Chris Evangelou** for the vacant Southern Area light-welterweight title. It takes place on September 8 on **Matchroom Sports London Calling** show at **Alexandra Palace** in which **Darren Barker** tops the bill making his UK return, with the action being called live on **Sky Sports**.

26 year-old Connor is coming off the back of a points win against **Tyler Goodjohn** for the vacant **Masters Welterweight Championship** in a brilliant top-of-the-bill fight at **Bethnal Green's York Hall** in May and the **TKO** trained fighter from Sutton is now looking to take his good form into the biggest fight of his career thus far. Connor got the decision by a point in his outing against Goodjohn over the ten rounds by using his jab and slick boxing skills. Danny told *Call Sign*: "I stuck to the game plan and got the win. That's all that really matters. But as much as I've achieved in my last few fights, I have to give credit to my trainer **Alec Wilkey**."

For the Southern Area Championship bout, Cassius is coming back down to light-welterweight but will be in for a tough test against **Enfield** boxer **Evangelou** – also aged 26. Nicknamed *The Flash*, **Evangelou** has won all his 9 pro bouts while Connor has won his last four. But this Southern Area title shot could be just a stepping stone to bigger things for the fighters, as former British champions **Lee Purdy** and **Colin Lynes** both fought for the same title earlier on in their careers. Danny

DaC driver and boxing trainer **Alec Wilkey** on who's fighting who...

DANNY CONNOR CHASES SECOND TITLE!



has been training hard for this bout and honing his skills at **Jonny Eames's TKO Gym** under **Alec Wilkey**.

Connor, who fought for *Fitzroy Lodge* and *Rosehill ABC* as an amateur also spoke about his opponent for the title bout: "He's a good fighter, but I feel very confident going into the fight. I've been working hard in the gym with **Alec** and some good sparring partners. I wouldn't be going in there if I didn't think I was going to win."

This highly anticipated night of boxing also features some other title fights and big names in boxing, with **Darren Barker** vying for the **IBF Inter-Continental Middleweight** belt against **Simone Rotolo** after coming back from hip surgery following his loss to **Sergio Martinez**. **Liverpool's Tony Bellew** takes on

Edison Miranda for the vacant **WBC International light-heavyweight** title, while **Erick Ochieng** features against **Ryan Toms** for the **English Middleweight** belt.

Lee Purdy, **Wadi Camacho**, **Martin Ward**, **Ryan Taylor**, **Iain Weaver** and **John Ryder** make up the undercard. Boxing begins at 6 pm with tickets for *London Calling* at **York Hall** on **Saturday 8 September** priced at £40. If you are interested in buying

tickets for what looks to be a great night of boxing, contact **Alec** on **07944 791 360**.

Alec Wilkey has 4 of his fighters climbing through the ropes on **Sunday 23 September** also at **York Hall**, with **Scott Hartley** making his professional debut after a solid amateur career and **Eren Arif** also featuring. Unbeaten light-middleweight **Brett Callaghan** makes his fourth outing whilst Greek female **Areti Mastrodouka** continues her journey towards a world title shot. If you are interested in purchasing tickets for an afternoon of boxing, tickets are £35 and you can again contact **Alec** on the number above.

L – R in the photo: Scott Hartley, Brett O'Callaghan, Alec Wilkey, Danny Connor and Eren Arif...

David Wilkey

Wembley All Stars win first FA Cup game

The *August Call Sign* revealed that **Wembley Football Club** – whose goalkeeper is **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Lee Pearce** (J71) had, thanks to sponsors **Budweiser**, tempted six ex-international soccer legends to the club to see how far the **Combined Counties** Premier league team could progress in the **FA Cup**! The six, who wouldn't be playing in league matches, were former **Arsenal** and **England** goalkeeper, **David Seaman**, ex-**Arsenal** and **England** midfielder **Ray Parlour**, former **Arsenal** and **England** defender **Martin Keown**, ex-**Chelsea**, **Blackburn**, **Southampton** and **England** defender/midfield player **Graeme Le Saux**, **USA** and **Fulham's** prolific goalscorer **Brian McBride** and possibly the biggest shock with the amazing signing of Argentinian world cup player **Claudio Caniggia**! When not playing, the six would be there coaching the team, although **David Seaman** was just there to coach **Lee Pearce** and wouldn't be playing in the games. And by the way... the manager was former **Spurs** and **England** manager **Terry Venables**!

The first cup game, in an extra preliminary round, took place at **Wembley's Vale Farm** ground with **Langford FC** being the visitors. For the first time ever, a match in that round was televised live (ESPN). The crowd was 10 times the usual number and the **FA Cup** itself was on show – closely watched by some burley security types!

The weather was hot – which wasn't ideal for some of the **Wembley** celebs all being in their 40s, but they started well when after 12 minutes **Claudio Caniggia** calmly clipped the ball over the advancing **Langford** goalkeeper, **Adam Harpur**. It was all **Wembley** with **Brian McBride** going close on 20 minutes with a header. But then in a rare attack, **Langford** levelled on the half hour mark. **Dean Auburn** surged through from midfield but scuffed his shot which sailed harmlessly across the area only to see **Ashley Fitton** nip in to score. But within two minutes **Wembley** were back in front, **Daryl Atkins** pace saw him race through the defence and shoot neatly past **Harper**.

The second half saw a quick goal from **Wembley** when **Claudio Caniggia** sent a beautiful pass to **Daryl Atkins** who shot from a sharp angle to beat the **Langford** goalkeeper. But the day was getting hotter and some of **Wembley's** new players may have been feeling it as **Langford** began coming into the game more until on 55 minutes they pulled one back when **Lewis Taylor** latched onto a through ball and although there was an excellent save by **Lee Pearce**, **Taylor** got the ball back and scored.

Ray Parlour was substituted by **Terry Venables** and **Graeme Le Saux** came off after picking up an injury. **Langford** threw everything into attack to save the day with both **Gregson** and **Taylor** causing problems. The duo created another chance for **Lewis Taylor**, but again **Lee Pearce** kept it out. But **Wembley** managed to hold on for a famous 3 – 2 victory and they now play **Uxbridge** in the next round.

Wembley's captain and player manager for league games, **Ian Bates**, said that considering it was the players first game as a team, they had done really well.

Lee Pearce told *Call Sign*: "I thought the new players jelled in very well and especially as it had been so hot. Also, considering their vast experience compared to us, they were all so nice and really encouraged us."



Wembley's cup manager Terry Venables plans the defeat of Langford. Was it different with Spurs!

LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

With Tom Quigley (Y33)

Brad the Mod v The Mayor!

Congratulations to **Bradley Wiggins** on winning the **Tour the France** and also his success in the **Olympics**. Unfortunately, the same day as winning his gold medal, a cyclist was killed near the Olympic Park. Bradley was asked for his opinion and in his usual calm manner emphasised his concern for better safety standards for cyclists, including the compulsory wearing of helmets.

Mayor Boris Johnson, however, took a different stance when asked about helmets being compulsory when hiring 'his' bikes, spouting off unproven statistics regarding the benefits of wearing a helmet. As much as Boris rides a bike, I would hazard my mortgage on the fact that Brad has more experience on the different roads throughout London, having ridden his bikes from Maida Vale to Herne Hill at the age of twelve to practice along with the millions of miles he has covered since in his quest to become the number one cyclist in the world.

When the 'Sky' team – Brad's sponsors on the Tour – researched that after a series of crashes to both himself and other riders, what was the best and safest way to get Brad into a position to win, they followed the format of **Lance Armstrong** (7 time-winner) who never crashed in those 7 wins. With that information, I would expect Bradley to know what he was talking about.

You could also perhaps arrive at an apparently obvious conclusion that if a tourist family of four had to spend around £100 for helmets for a few hours bike use at the weekend, there would be a significant drop in revenue coming into Boris's coffers?

I think Boris missed the whole point of the Olympics when he ranted on about a legacy for our youth to emulate their idols – those same idols that are seen by millions of young kids as they ride bikes around the streets of London in road races, triathlons and in the Velodrome, looking cool and unbeatable AND wearing helmets. If future generations wear them to copy their idols, surely that would be a good thing, the same as we all wear seat belts. Crash helmets on motorbikes are a must, as is the process the com-



pulsory wearing of shin pads in football where millions are spent on kitting out kids who want to look like their heroes.

Furthermore, the need for Hi-Visibility clothing should be compulsory, the same as it is on building sites and many other workplaces where insurance companies will not pay out if proper safety clothing is not worn. If you go to your local supermarket, the guys collecting trolleys all wear Hi-Vis clothing as they walk around so they can be seen by motorists. It's also employer's duty under *The Health and Safety at Work Act* for them to make sure they are worn.

Surely Boris should take the same stance, even offer cycle shops free HI-Vis jackets with a Mayoral safety logo when people buy bikes. At about £5 a jacket, that is cheaper than all the emergency costs and heartache and pain endured by the families of victims and all those concerned following a cycle accident.

Underground rickshaws

Copyrights, trademarks, logos and exclusive rights are issued to protect the supplier, sponsor and public to ensure that what you are buying or using is up to a certain standard and safe. In the middle of the **Olympic Games** where the might of the law is brought swiftly on anyone using the *Five Rings* logo, even local butchers or bakers who, getting into the spirit, display rolls, doughnuts or black puddings with the Olympic logo on

are threatened to remove them or else.

On London Transport - now TFL - the famous tube saying of *Mind the Gap* and the *Underground* sign itself are protected. If you walk along Oxford Street or Covent Garden to buy a T-shirt with the Mind the Gap or Underground logo or any other similar merchandise, believe me there is a huge range from teapots to pencils to underwear thongs (*that the Editor would probably use as a catapult*). You will find that shops and stallholders are not allowed to stock or sell them without a proper licence and that those do have them have to pay such a premium that generally they are the dearest items in the shop!

But it appears that the same actions are not swiftly taken out on other areas of London Transport. It's not unusual to see a PCO (or whatever they are called now) registered minicab office using the Underground logo to endorse themselves. And even more disturbingly, there now appears on the streets of London rickshaw companies using the logo with their name in the middle! This is a gross flouting of the law, as firstly they break the copyright laws and even worse, to the unsuspecting tourist seeing the logo they will assume and believe that the rickshaw is legal, insured and endorsed by TFL. In fact they would probably then assume that all rickshaws will therefore be safe and legal.

It's not that these logos cannot be noticed on rickshaws, as anyone working nights will have seen them as they are often lit by neon lighting. That then brings a further question: How are the neon lights powered? Is it by large batteries and do those batteries also power the vehicle? Therefore they could be breaking *Vehicle Registration and Motor Tax* laws.

This is the sort of apathy by the authorities which leads to discontentment among we taxi drivers. We can see the dangers and risks, sadly TFL either do and turn a blind eye or don't, thereby questioning their capabilities of running the industry.

Tom Quigley (Y33)

WCHCD BRAVERY AWARD

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO DESERVES IT?

Frederick Hitch VC (1856 – 1913) was a taxi driver born in the days of horse-drawn hackney carriages, but that isn't what he was best known for. It was his amazing bravery on 22/23 January 1879, when at the age of 22 he was one of just a few soldiers at the **Battle of Rorke's Drift** who fought off the huge numbers of **Zulu** warriors to allow wounded soldiers to get out of the hospital they had set up. Thanks to Fred and **Corporal William Allen**, all the patients escaped. However, both soldiers were badly wounded and had to leave the army.

When he died in 1913, Fred's bravery was remembered with a *blue plaque* placed outside his home in Chiswick and he was buried in St Nicholas' churchyard, Chiswick, with full military honours. In an moving act of remembrance, some 25 years ago members of the London taxi trade paid to have his grave renovated.

Each year the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers present awards and although the Bravery Award is not given every single year, it is given in the name of Fred Hitch - The Hitch Award.

In past years, it has been awarded to a taxi driver who rescued people from a burning building, another who pulled a passenger (and his luggage!) from a cab that was on fire and a taxi driver who leapt into a moving vehicle to bring it to a halt after the driver had a heart attack.

If you know of any driver who has acted with bravery, you can nominate them for the award. You don't need to be WCHCD member to nominate or receive the award. Just contact any member of the Awards committee or the Clerk, Mary Whitworth on 0149 - 476 5922.



Do you know anyone who has performed an act of bravery?

Just for a change, I thought I'd try to look back over the past 40 years or so that I have been on **Dial-a-Cab**. Doing that does tend to remind one how old you are, but at least I'm still years behind long serving members **Bill Tyzack** (C06) and **Ivor Belkin** (C97)!

I joined the circuit when it was in a little shop at 144 Shirland Road; it had the control room in the basement with the administration and drivers pay-out counter on the ground floor. On the first floor was the Boardroom, whilst on the second floor was where **Phil Emden** printed the handout newsletter **News 'n Views** that he produced on a hand-cranked *Xerox* printing machine. Later on they made a workshop on the top floor where former *Motorola* employee **Peter Thurston** could repair radios.

I was K26, while as a point of interest another young driver joined at the same time as me. He was a blond headed guy named **Brian Rice** (K16). I often wonder where he ended up!

The Board was run by Chairman **Martin Gellman**. On it were **Aubrey Siteman**, **Jack Taylor**, **Phil Emden**, **Phil Messias**, **Peter Fennymore**, **Micky Gee** and **Kenny Burns**. Board Meetings were once a month and could sometimes run into two days due to there being much repeating of subjects. If a new member came onto the Board, it was hopeless for them to propose any changes, as new BMs would always get voted down by the older members. It was as though they did not want change or they wanted to keep these new upstarts down and in their place. So if a new member wanted to get anything approved at a Board Meeting, he would corner an older member to propose it as his idea and it would be passed immediately.

I did nights from the moment I started driving a taxi, going out with my smash bag which was mainly full of old pennies, threepenny and six-penny pieces. The despatcher on nights was a great character called **Johnny Thwaites**; he had never been a cab driver but travelled all over London on the top deck of a bus remembering streets, building and all the pubs. If when despatching he was unsure of who was the near-est cab, he would call two taxis and say they were equal and that he would spin a coin. In reality, he would then proceed to make a noise using his metal lighter and not a coin. One night while doing that, he threw up the lighter but missed it coming down and it smashed the glass which was used to protect the map!

Account or cash?

At that time there was never a shortage of account work and they usually called a job once and then just put it to the side hoping a driver would remember it and eventually get it covered! This was at a time when we had the BBC and many large banks and money houses as well as stars of TV and films.

These included **Vincent Price** of horror movie fame, **Dandy Nichols**, the *Silly Moo* wife from *Till Death us do Part*, **Charles Gray** (Blofeld in the Bond films), **Terry Thomas**, the upper class twit from stage and films and many other celebrities.

Drivers in those days used to ignore account work if there was plenty of cash work around; on a Saturday night if you were coming in from the west you would not get past Harvey Nicholls before you got flagged down. It was because of this attitude towards account work, only doing it if no cash work was about, that **Welbeck Motors**, the first minicabs, got a foothold in the door with their *Renault Dauphines*. You all know the continuation of that story...

After I'd been on the circuit for a few years, I

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

Bits you may not know about as remembered by Tom Whitbread



wanted to see how the control room worked so I had a talk with **Micky Gee**, who was the Board Member in charge of the evening and night shift. He invited me down to have a go on the phones and to see how it worked, then to try despatching under the eye of an experienced despatcher. In those days with my mate **Aubrey Siteman**, you did not get paid whilst you were learning.

About this time, I bought one of the first carmine red taxis that Londoners had ever seen; not actually a good choice because as I drove down the road punters would look at you and then hail the black taxi behind! One day as I was driving this taxi along Prince Albert Road into the roundabout at Park Road while heading towards our Maida Vale office, a man ran out into the road. He was wearing the light beige mackintosh that you associated with spies! It had epaulettes, leather buttons and little belts with buckles at the wrists. I called through the open luggage door window that I was not for hire, but he continued running alongside the cab into St Johns Wood Road. Thinking he was a fair old runner and I would not get rid of him, I put the brakes on to explain again that I was not working. It was only then that the red faced and totally knackered runner explained that my door handle had gone through his wrist belt loop and I was dragging him along! After that experience he was well in need of a taxi!

After a short while I became quite accomplished at despatching and was talking to **Mickey Gee** about the number of scrubs we had. It could be as high as 300 on a night shift (11:30pm to 8am). It was then that Mickey asked me if I thought I could do better! I said yes and he just replied: "Well do it! You are now the Night Despatcher!"

At that time, **Johnny Thwaites** had just died. I still miss him. I often picked him up from his home at Canonbury Court to take him into work. Despatchers used to tell drivers who didn't know **Johnny** and who were picking him up that they would easily recognise him: "A really dapper man, suited and booted with a copy of *The Times* under his arm!" In fact **Johnny** was about 5ft 2ins, very slim with a limp and usually in a suit wearing his trilby hat.

Due to me saying how good I thought I was at improving the work levels, I had now put myself in to the position of night despatcher for the next eight years...

Tales of the night shift...

The night telephonist supervisor was a very nice lady who went by the name of **Ann Hughes**. She was with us through the change to Brunswick Place, completing some 30 years and only retiring due to contracting an illness. Other well-known notable telephonists were **Barbara Assenhiem**, whose father **Joe** was one of the founder drivers of **Lords** radio taxis (the name **Dial-a-Cab** was known as then) and the man who thought up our nickname of the *Gentleman's Circuit*. **Hazel Goldberg** was the daytime telephonist supervisor and woe betide any driver who crossed her. Very often when she did Saturday night overtime with me, she'd give me a right hander and knock me clean off the chair. This was **Lee Morland's** first Mother-in-Law; no wonder he took up boxing! **Lee** is DaC's current daytime despatching supervisor.

At this time, **Aubrey Siteman** was the Treasurer and to say he tried to lower company spending would be an understatement. The builders he used to do work came in wearing Stetsons, jeans and spurs! These people always worked through the night because of restricted space with the number of telephonists employed on the day shift. I would sit there trying to allocate work with bits of plaster and dust covering me and as I used to always wear a suit, you can imagine I was annoyed. One night, halfway down the stairs leading to the basement control room, one of the cowboys decided to hammer a nail in the wall. Of course he hadn't checked and it went straight through the water pipe. This flooded the control room and we had to go into the back garden to get bricks to lift the telephonist's chairs as no one had any wellington boots. If ever these men were needed to do any painting, you'd swear that they did it with their eyes shut!

The man in charge of the control room during the day was a very quietly spoken man, **Charlie Rubin**. He was a real diamond of a fellow, very rarely losing his temper or getting worked up. I know, as I would often pull jokes on him. One morning - the date just happened to be 1 April - I decided to put out a message, remembering that this was in the days of voice despatch. I told drivers that the Board were thinking of opening the front office for driver's payments throughout the night and that they were looking for driver's comments as to whether they thought it was a good idea. I also said that any driver interested should phone **Charlie Rubin** during the morning before 12 midday - that should have been the clue! At 1pm, my wife woke me up to say the office was on the line; it was a driver who said that **Charlie** had told him to phone me at home as he was inundated and could not handle any more calls. When I saw **Charlie** the next morning, we both burst out laughing when he said that over 100 drivers had phoned him. So I must have been good at convincing drivers what they should do!

On another occasion, **Harry Griver**, a driver who trained young boxers at a gym in Colvestone Crescent, Dalston, came out of the Shirland Road office and got into an argument with a tall fellow

continued next page

Last month's *Call Sign* included the story of a *Freedom of Information* request to TfL asking why the **Limehouse Link** maintenance, which of late had helped traffic by moving from a 10pm start to midnight, was once again commencing at 10pm. The driver requesting the information was **John Addis (K97)** and the answer not only stunned him, but the many drivers who called this magazine to enquire whether the story was true. But this definitely wasn't an April 1 issue!

That TfL response told John that the *Design Build Finance Operate* contract had been awarded to **Road Management Services (A13) plc** by the Secretary of State on 12 April 2000 and that in March 2001 it had been extended to include Docklands roads and the Limehouse Link tunnel. As John told *Call Sign*, that seemed to mean that RMS (A13) could do as they liked until the year 2030, including the extension of hours they carried out routine maintenance that they had already shown they could do in two hours less each day.

So John wrote again to TfL saying he was flabbergasted at the length of contract awarded to RMS (A13) plc and asked why the company had reverted to 10pm Limehouse Link closures instead of midnight? He queried whether it was so that RMS could employ and pay for a smaller workforce at the expense of everyone else that lives and works in the surrounding areas? That especially applied to the companies serviced by **Dial-a-Cab** at Canary Wharf and its surrounds.

John received a reply from TfL that could well make the **Plain English Society** – who campaign against people / organisations that use ten words where one would do – sit back in wonderment! That response is below, but is as useful as an ice cream parlour on an Arctic ice flow! It reads...

Dear Mr Addis

As you have stated, the start time for the maintenance closures for Limehouse Link Tunnel was changed from 22.00hrs to midnight during the period when the Blackwall Tunnel was being refurbished. The overall period of closure therefore reduced from 8 hours to 6 hours, but when taking

Now that's what we call a contract...part 2

...and one for the Plain English Society



Obviously more complicated than we thought!

into consideration the period of time necessary for installing/removing traffic management and also for the safety drive through, this reduces the available time for work each night to 4 to 4.5 hours maximum, equivalent to a 30% reduction. On considering other elements of downtime such as plant start-up and travel, comfort breaks etc, the work period of 4 hours reduces further and is significantly less efficient than the normal 6 hour work period.

During this period, the Concession Company, RMS, was unable to complete all the maintenance activities normally required during the maintenance closures. Although essential maintenance was able to continue, items such as preventative maintenance and replacement of accidented wall panels were curtailed and some routine maintenance items were carried out less frequently than the optimum. In addition, replacement of plant and improvement schemes planned for this tunnel were put on hold. In order to keep pace with just

essential maintenance requirements it became necessary to have additional closures to the planned maintenance closures and also take advantage of closures for events such as the London Marathon by extending the normal closure period for those events.

Following the start time reverting to 22.00hrs early this year RMS have increased their resources in order to recover the backlog of maintenance and repair/replacement items of work. Over the last few months there have generally been between 60 and 90 operatives in the tunnel during the closures.

TfL consider that the optimum time for carrying out maintenance works to the tunnel, especially in view of its length, is between 22.00hours and 06.00hours. Any shorter, then an additional night would be required and the work becomes significantly less efficient, any longer then more disruption would be caused to the network. It is necessary to carry out the work on a regular basis in order to mitigate unnecessary equipment failures resulting in unplanned tunnel closures possibly at inconvenient times to the public, but unfortunately whatever time is chosen there will always be an effect on travelling public. All we can do is to choose a time that will be the least disruptive to the travelling public yet still provide the contractor a work duration that is workable and not unduly inefficient.

I thank you once again for your correspondence and hope that the above is of interest to you. If there is any other matter which I can assist you with please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks TfL, I think we know enough!!!

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online

THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF DIAL-A-CAB (CONTINUED)

regarding parking. Harry was only about 5 foot 11inch in his leather shoes, so Charlie Rubin - thinking that Harry was going to get a good hiding - rushed up to help him but came back just as quick with a beautiful black eye. Harry ended up giving the bloke a slap!

Another driver who was a bit of a character was **Sid Gold**; he dabbled in selling radios and TVs and was a bit of a Del Boy entrepreneur. Another driver and former Board member, **Peter Speroni**, who was leaving the office, had ordered a taxi to take him home to East London. After a delay and no takers for the job, Sid offered a time and duly turned up at the office to complete the journey.

When Peter opened the back door to get in the taxi, he found it full of boxes containing radios, televisions and other electrical items. Sid apologised and asked Peter if he could sit in the luggage compartment on a small box!

At the destination Sid told Peter how much he had on the clock, to which Peter went red faced and nearly exploded. "I've been sitting on an 'effing box in the luggage compartment, you must be joking!" Sid just sat stoney-faced: "Well I got you home, didn't I?" That was followed by a Sid grin!

The Company Secretary at the time was **John Bernardout**. As a side line he started to rent out

videos to the staff and drivers. Next he set about looking for a partner and talked Aubrey Siteman into joining him. Needless to say the enterprise went belly up and if I remember correctly, so did Aubrey's money! John went on to marry a driver's sister. He died some time later of a terminal illness.

Some more memories in another issue...

And 2012...

In the *August Call Sign*, a driver vented his anger at my article in the July issue regarding the Olympics. The Editor did not mention to me that this letter had arrived and that he was putting it in *Mailshot*. This meant that I didn't get the opportunity to reply while the article was still fresh. I know that the Editor likes **Allen Togwell's** and my articles because they often generate responses and help fill up the letters pages. I think I am just leading Allen in the number of letters!

So in a quick reply to **Colin Vincent's (V62)** comments: I accept that we go under the umbrella of Great Britain and yes, I do not like **Seb Coe** – it's his attitude of talking down to people. But if Colin had read in depth what I'd said, then I stand fully behind our athletes and was delighted to see how many medals of various colours they won. I am proud of our ath-

letes, what I said was that they have to rely mainly on charity as our Government does not allocate enough money to give them the professional training and facilities to get them to really excel. Yet for every Gold medal we achieved, another MP crawled out of the woodwork to gain media coverage off the backs of the athletes!

There were a few other inaccuracies on Colin's side; I have never worked at our new East Road office so I do not have a cosy desk. I write my articles at home whilst not being paid an hourly-rate by Dial-a-Cab. Yes, I do go to Asda at Leytonstone who are now promoting our Charity, **Dial-a-Dream**, which realises dreams for terminally ill children. So if you go there for your shopping, at the checkout you can collect your green disc and in the entrance put it into the Dial-a-Dream box. Then if we win, the money goes straight to the children.

Fact number two; I have been teetotal for the past 8 years as any full time Board Member will tell you if you visit the office. So you see I read what people say fully before replying and as far as trying to cheer me up, I have been married 44 years and I support Arsenal so I am entitled to look sad...

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member

We at *Call Sign* aren't too sure why the article on London taxi driver **Phil Hewson** - more commonly known in the cab trade as **Loz** - had quite the number of readers that it did in our last issue, so we have to assume that there are a lot of you currently interested in your health and well-being.

How do we know so many read it? Well the magazine reached most of you on July 31 and from that morning until the following evening, our phone never stopped ringing asking whether we knew that there had been a typo in the article? As for the DaC staff, it was as though they couldn't wait to tell me! You would have thought we had threatened something sensational rather than accidentally write about the Loz as a purveyor of **Keep Fit** rather than one of **Keep Fit!** Yep, we said it again!

It was *Dial-a-Cab's* **Paul Taylor (M01)** who reminded us about **Phil the Loz**. **Phil has been running keep fit classes for taxi drivers for over 30 years - the last fifteen of them at the John Orwell Sports Centre in Tench Street, Wapping. Paul told us:**

"If you are thinking of trying to shed a few pounds and need to get fit after all those years stuck behind the wheel or even if you are already fit but need to find a new class, then this will be the one for you. Phil's classes are suitable for all ages and all levels of fitness abilities, regardless of your current fitness status. From the very fit to the very fat, you can

Loz: "It's definitely keep fit!"



feel rest assured that you will get a thorough but safe workout, because you are able to work at the pace that suits your level of fitness.

The workout starts from a free standing position (there are no apparatus), consisting of exercises ranging from aerobics, muscular strength and stamina, reaching every body part including those all-important lungs!

If you are overweight and feel shy or embarrassed about joining **Loz's class**, then don't be. There are no targets and definitely no 'peer pressure'. In fact it is a very friendly atmosphere.

Loz's classes are held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, all starting at 1.15. The added bonus is the price at just £5 per session. You can attend as many or few times as you like to suit your work patterns and fitness levels, so if you are a beginner and you only fancy once a week, then that's fine. You only have to pay for the sessions you attend and if you don't attend, then you don't pay. There are no membership fees or contracts, but there is ample free parking so you don't have to watch out for wardens! £5 is excellent value for money, but first-timers enjoy a week's free trial from the Loz!"

The Loz's keep fit classes are held every Monday, Wednesday and Friday beginning at 1.15 at the John Orwell Sports Centre, Tench Street, Wapping... and it's definitely JUST keep fit

LONDON CALLING

London called the rest of the world to come and join us. It took seven years to plan with a cost of over £10 billion, but the Olympics finally arrived back in the capital after 64 years. Instead of *Hey Jude*, perhaps *Paul McCartney* should have closed the opening ceremony with *when I'm 64*!

No doubt those Olympic visitors who came will have returned to their homes moaning about how expensive our capital was, with coffee shops in *Holiday Inn* style hotels charging £2.05 for a cup of tea, £3.45 for a cappuccino and sandwiches starting at £4.50! As a London taxi driver, we are often told by passengers how very expensive London is, but it doesn't seem to stop people flooding in. It's mainly the wealthy that stay on, because London is now firmly entrenched as a rich man's city. OK, so you won't starve in London even if you haven't a brass farthing! Many of the sandwich shops and patisseries give their food away to charity or reduce prices if not sold on the day. But just look at the queues forming before closing time, I know because I am standing at the end of one!

But undoubtedly the gap is indeed wider than ever between the well-off and the poor; ironic when you consider we had a Labour government for fifteen years! The discrepancy between wages and house prices is of Everest proportions. Once upon a time, buying a house in London was achievable for a decent wage earner. No chance now unless you are a banker, lawyer or stockbroker.

The areas attracting the well-heeled with disposable incomes are London's villages: Hampstead, Highgate and Wimbledon etc. One of the most sought after is Marylebone because of its prime location. The *Howard de Walden* estate with its portfolio of properties standing at £1.8 billion has been instrumental in raising the profile of this area, bringing in top-class retailers such as Waitrose, Conran and quality independent shops and posh patisseries. This has now given *Marylebone High Street* an almost chi-chi Knightsbridge style as we see more Arab shoppers coming down from the Edgware Road overspill!

How things have changed. Back in the seventies and eighties that high street was a friendly, quiet backwater with a butcher, baker, fish-



monger and even a few charity shops plus plenty of traditional pubs. Those traditional pubs have now become gastro pubs where the cauliflower cheese has been catapulted into nouvelle cuisine status by adding the word soufflé - ok, you also get a dash of white wine! This dish, if washed down with a pint of real ale from an independent brewer will see little change from twenty quid. There are still places left that offer reasonable prices, but you need to know where to go and they are dwindling at an alarming rate.

London's village areas now also boast farmers' markets. Yes, word on the streets is that a big shipment is coming in and we're all going to get happy! They're selling organic cauliflowers for £5 each! My son says London can still be good value, but knowing where to go is the key. You can be ripped off far too easily. However, speaking of good value, London's taxis are still that when five people can travel in the back of the world's best taxis for the price of one. Now that's value...

David Heath (Ex-W27)



Keith Reading
Professional Toastmaster
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In a month where three new vehicles that will abide by the *Conditions of Fitness* have been touted as soon being ready to enter the licensed taxi business (**Metrocab Electric**, **Nissan NV200** and **Intelligent Energy's TX4H**), as well as one which doesn't - although currently on sale throughout the rest of the UK as a taxi (**Allied Vehicles E7**), there has been some confusion as to which of the currently available two - Mercedes **Vito** and the London Taxi Company's **TX4** - actually sells the most vehicles.

No sooner had news broke that Nissan's NV200 could happen in 2013, than Mercedes issued a press release claiming to be the only Euro five taxi available in London. They had earlier claimed to be taking 40% of the London market - that figure courtesy of the finance deal they introduced earlier this year.

LTC would obviously argue that the Vito claim is untrue, as the latest TX4 is also Euro five and they also now have a deal where you pay £135 a month with a £2k deposit and drive away a new Euro five TX4.

The latest figures seen by *Call Sign* suggest that LTC have clawed back a large percentage of new cab sales courtesy of their new deal. June sales certainly showed the Vito as having their best month in comparison to total London sales. Although just 88 taxis were registered as having been sold, 35 were Vitos and that represents 40% of the total - the company's best performance so far as a direct comparison is concerned.

However, July sales told a slightly different story. Total sales shot up by over 50% to a total of 135 new taxis, but this time it was LTC who captured the lion's share selling 105 cabs (78%) as against the Vito's 30 (22%). Although their advertising campaign hadn't yet got into full swing, we suspect that those enquiring about a TX4 were offered the new deal and their increased figures probably represents

TAXIS, TAXIS EVERYWHERE!



I've heard of 'it's raining men' but raining new cabs???

that.

When the three new cabs finally appear - and *Call Sign's* experience suggests that pre-publicity is some way from actually seeing the actual vehicle - we have to wonder how the total number of London sales will be able to justify so many different vehicles?

Some would say a situation such as that could help drive prices down, but looking logically, a higher probability is that some could come and then go - leaving drivers with taxis they can't sell - a situation that diesel Metrocab owners found themselves in when the company folded in May 2006.

Certainly, taking the situation as it seems, London will soon see taxis, taxis everywhere!

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

The benefits of driving a car during the Games - ORN use and free tickets!

I know the Olympics did not go down too well for most cabbies and I had an idea that would be the case, certainly for day men.

The Games Lanes embargo was always going to be contentious, but when Boris announced that day travel cards were to be issued free with any lucky ticket purchasers via the ballot, then that was all it needed to tell drivers that pushing a cab around while the 'greatest show on earth' was taking place in E20, was going to be a struggle!

Within days of the travel card announcement, I happened to notice the 'Drivers wanted during Olympics' feature in many of the cab trade papers including *Call Sign* and I thought to myself why not, let's see what this is about! I ended up working for an American Hospitality Agency driving a mixture of BMW 7 Series, Mercedes Vito's and Hyundai i800s - taking VIPs to events and finding tickets falling into my lap for various events, including the opening ceremony and the night Usain Bolt blitzed the 200m Final. We also saw **David Rudisha** smash the 800m world record!

I must say I was surprised that the workforce



Bob and Brian With (Y84) and their Olympic tickets - all part of their driving job

of 170 odd drivers was made up of Knowledge boys or Yellow Badge drivers - not too many of us 'Greens' thought it was

worth a go then? However, there was at least one DaC driver in **Brian With (Y84)** and we copped all those Olympic tickets! My first day in the job - I couldn't really count going to the Olympic events as part of the job, even though it was - found me sharing a changing room with veteran cab trade scribe **Al Fresco**. And yes we both needed to change our uniformed trousers on account of our rapidly increasing waistlines!

My abiding memory from this work experience? The sheer craziness of me driving home in my

Hyundai in an empty Games Lane - no VIP - just me getting a clear run all the way from the Dorchester Hotel to the A2, no traffic in front or behind but a solid line of stationary vehicles on the inside lane.

At a rare red light on Victoria Embankment, a Dial-a-Cab subscriber that I recognised caught sight of me, extended his right arm and shook his wrist in disgust. I had to laugh at the sheer stupidity of it all!

Joe Skeggs

I would like to record my feeling of sadness to hear of the passing of **Joe Skeggs**. Joe and I were in a team of 7 that completed the **New York Marathon** in November 1994. Joe never really liked running much at first, but the man had the heart of a lion and helped our team raise a healthy sum for the **Children with Leukemia** charity.

I will never forget when Joe asked a Police Officer on 5th Avenue if he could spare a 'fag' - Skeggsie very nearly got arrested! Rest in Peace Joe - Thanks for the memories...

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

Dial-a-Cab has links with a London hospice that can never be removed from its history, when for six years four DaC drivers virtually ran the outpatients transport department with their taxis at Hackney's **St Joseph's Hospice** on a completely voluntary basis. Their exploits were published in **Richard Lamerton's** book **East End Doc** (Lutterworth Press).

Now DaC Board member Mike Son tells of a visit with the LTFUC (London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children) to a children's hospice and the effect it had on him.

"During one's lifetime, you are lucky if you meet just one person who has made an unforgettable impression and discernible difference to others. Well we at the LTFUC were privileged to meet one such person.

Last year I, together with committee members from the LTFUC and some special needs children, were invited to **Clarence House** to meet with our Patron **Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall** during the Christmas festivities. During the visit, we were introduced to other guests including **Sister Frances Dominica** and her team, plus some very unwell children from **Helen & Douglas House Children's Hospice**.

When you meet and speak with **Sister Frances Dominica**, founder and Trustee of **Helen & Douglas House**, you know you are in the presence of one of those 'Special People'.

Helen House was the world's first children's hospice, opening in November 1982. It sprang from the friendship between **Sister Frances Dominica** and the parents of a seriously ill little girl called **Helen** who lived at home with her family, but who required 24 hour care.

It is only natural that the parents of a much-loved, but very ill child, would want to care for them at home, but caring for your child every day and night as well as looking after the rest of your family and earning a living, can be exhausting.

Helen's family's experience highlighted the need for respite care and support for children with life-shortening conditions and so **Helen House** was set up to help families cope by providing occasional respite care modelled on that provided in the family home - personalised and tailored to individual needs.

The building was based on the family home with just eight children's bedrooms, as the small scale provided flexibility as well as affording the children and families who stayed there, with sensitivity and dignity. The emphasis is on making the most of life, whatever the circumstances.

Two years after **Helen House** opened its doors, **Douglas House** started in 2004 as the world's first hospice specifically for young adults between the ages of 16 and 35.

So it was that in August this year, the LTFUC were invited to **Helen & Douglas House** to meet with the staff and some of the children. Unfortunately, **Sister Frances** was away from the home - no doubt trying to get more funding. However, we were greeted by **Tom Hill**, Chief Executive Officer and **Clare**

Wearing his LTFUC hat, DaC Board member Mike Son writes about a children's hospice and tells Call Sign why he calls those he has met...

'Special People'



Members of the LTFUC at the hospice with Tom and Clare (on right)

Edwards, Director of Clinical Services. During our visit we offered some toys for the younger children, which we hope they will enjoy.

So what has all this got to do with taxi driving? The answer is absolutely nothing - other than fact I wanted to tell you about the people we met at the hospice, the amazing dedication and cheerfulness they contribute to the wellbeing of children with shortened life expectancies, the support given to the parents that have to meet with adversity every day and the awful tragedy when a child is taken.

So the next time you are dwelling on a

rank or waiting for a trip via the radio and you feel you have been waiting for an eternity, please just take a moment to think how lucky we are and to relish in our good fortune.

I'm not asking for anything other than Dial-a-Cab drivers to give just an occasional thought to those who dedicate their lives to helping others and perhaps say to ourselves: *There but for the grace of God, go I....*"

Mike Son
DaC Special Projects

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David Seal has been working at **Dial-a-Cab** as a part-time call taker since June 1997. He is also a talented musician who has played up front for many bands as well as providing the backing tracks on other occasions. He also has his own recording studio at his north London home.

In October 2004 in a rather strange **Call Sign** competition, we gave away a recording session at a studio (not David's) and the winner was a young lady call taker with a delectable voice, **Sam French**. But it was David who organised the backing tracks, giving Sam a four track extended play disk.

Going back a few years, David had been suffering with a pain in his leg but took little notice. He'd had an x-ray that showed nothing - but that was because it was assumed the problem was somewhere below the knee. Then one day he was in Sheffield for a recording session and went into a bar for a drink. Suddenly and shockingly, his leg just broke! David described it to **Call Sign** but we are not publishing details. Suffice to say it sounded awful.

In hospital, David's problem was said to be that his **femur** - the bone between the hip and the knee joints - had broken. Finally, together with his wife and mother, he was told to see the consultant that had performed the operation and was told he had a tumour. It had been diagnosed as a form of **Osteosarcoma** - an extremely aggressive form of primary bone cancer that if anyone, attacked young chil-

DaC call taker breaks leg only to be told: "YOU HAVE CANCER IN YOUR LEG!"



David's cancer was missed because doctors x-rayed the wrong part of his leg!

an operation to remove the affected bone and I was told there was no sign of the cancer left inside it. But I still had to go on even more chemo and radiotherapy treatment, something which made the skin stick to my clothes."

dren. David was 34 and he was told that this form of cancer in an adult was unusual.

"I can't say that made me feel any better," David told **Call Sign** as his mind went back. "In fact I was feeling pretty numb at the time. I hadn't been married long and this was the last thing I expected to hear. I was told that the cancer was very aggressive but that they hoped it could be treatable. I was put onto a course of six chemotherapy sessions, each lasting 4 - 5 days and I had that every three weeks.

After that had been completed, there was

David was told that if everything remained clear after 18 months, then the long term prognosis was good and that time has pretty much elapsed. He still has check-ups every two months, but everything seems to be ok. He is also undergoing some physiotherapy and currently walks with a slight limp, but compared to his original diagnosis, that is a nothing!

And the Sheffield recordings? Unfortunately the band he was with split up, but as David so poignantly put it:

"Worse things happen in life!"

Soccer Saturday...

With the **Olympics** nearly over, it will be nice when the IOC gives London back to LOCOG, who it appeared rented it out to them for a couple weeks and the PTFE type tape is peeled off, turning roads back to a format we can easily recognise again. **Peter Hendy** said that taxi drivers would do well out of the Olympics - is that right! London, good enough to host the Olympics but not good enough to host the World Cup! But I will say no more.

What we have got to look forward to is the start of a Premier League season, which simply can't surpass last year's excitement. It's great that we now have the best football league in the world considering that in the 90s, foreign players would not come here and the tide turned only when **Jürgen Klinsmann** and **Ruud Gullit** bucked the trend and indeed we have much to thank them for.

But looking at England's mediocre performance in the European Championship, the last time we had a good England football team was in 1990 when we reached the World Cup semi-finals, incidentally **Paul Gascoigne's** last appearance in an England shirt at a World Cup finals. England didn't qualify in 1994 under **Graham Taylor** and he wasn't picked for 1998, having been seen after a good session eating doner kebabs in the west end one week before the team set sail.

So has the England football team become more mediocre as a national side since the improvement of the premiership and the mass influx of foreign players to our shores? Well most continental players are technically more gifted than ours because of their training as youngsters. I currently help coach a girl's team at our local primary school along with a mum who happens to be Canadian. She has numerous training regimes and routines for the girls to do to

Former fireman Richard Potter and life behind the

POTTERS WHEEL



improve their all round play, something I never had. For me, we were taught to tackle hard and compete hard, get into space and pass the ball to someone who was in a better position. I had never heard of hitting the ball through the laces?

I picked up former **Arsenal** and **West Ham** player **Freddie Lungberg** once and he asked me whether I thought English players should reap the benefits of playing with more technically gifted players and I agreed. Being with them, you hope they would play like them however it doesn't really appear to have worked out. Raw talent over technical ability! Who remembers a young **Ryan Giggs** being wholly criticised for not being able to cross a ball in his early days at **Manchester United**? Look at him now!

The FA is currently trying to improve English national football by constructing **St Georges Park National Training Centre** at Burton. It is intended

to be a training base for all England teams from u-16s upward and a coaching and development centre. This should have been built a number of years ago but was put on hold because of the excessive cost of the new Wembley Stadium. Let's hope it has the desired effect, because if you look at the burnt out **Steven Gerrard** and the firing on two cylinders **Wayne Rooney**, it looks like the Premiership takes its toll of the national side physically, mentally and technically. I suppose that wanting the best premier league in the world and the best national side in the world simply won't happen and it's impossible to have both. And most people I speak to would concur that really the premiership is more important.

Sticking to a football agenda, I was saddened to read that the great football referee **Jack Taylor** died at the end of July aged 82. A real giant of a man who in the 1974 World Cup final was accused of being biased by **Franz Beckenbauer** for being English!

Taylor awarded two penalties in Munich, which in those days had few TV replays. What would Sky make of it today whilst going over them again and again? Well if you have time, take a look on *youtube* and judge for yourself. How times have changed because there is never a mention of any controversy. Before **Howard Webb** started dishing out yellow / red cards as if they were happy hour tickets in the 2010 World Cup final, Jack Taylor was the only Englishman ever to be asked to referee such an event. A real legend...

Richard Potter (T51)

"I upgraded my mobile phone to some fancy new complicated piece of kit," John 'the Mush' Tremlett (Y32) told *Call Sign* "and then briefly put it down with a view to re-reading the instruction manual. However I didn't need it for several days and when I did go to use it, I just couldn't find it and had completely forgotten where I had put it," he exclaimed.

John became worried for the security of his new piece of talking technology and went back to the supermarket where he bought it and reported the Tesco mobile handset as being lost with the expectation that it could be blocked from further use. But in order to prove that the handset he was reporting as lost was actually his, John was asked to provide two telephone numbers that he would have frequently called.

"My home land-line number was no problem," John told the mag, "but try as I might, I just couldn't recall any other number with the result that the assistant said she was unable to help! I did feel a bit silly at not being able to come up with another - and second - crucial number, but had no alternative other than to accept it and there was now nothing I could do about it. But I was about to go on holiday and decided that I would attempt to sort it out on my return, although in all honesty I had already resigned the phone's fate to the unknown."

A suntanned John returned from holiday some three weeks later and one of his first jobs was to get a cab tyre repaired before going off to his golf club for a few rounds with friends. He put his bag and trolley into the cab before setting off for the tyre shop. The lost phone



John looks after his tools better than his phone!

was just a memory.

"The tyre sorted," said John, "I whizzed into the club car park and pulled my trolley and clubs out of the cab. Unsure if I had a new set of balls to play with, I decided to check the small compartment in the front of the bag where I keep them and to my complete and utter surprise - and no small amount of delight

'The Mush' and a missing phone...

- there was my missing mobile phone!"

As John recounted his tale, he began laughing at himself while referring to senior moments!

"Why I would have put the phone into my golf bag where the balls go, I have no idea," John conceded, "but I was really pleased to get it back after believing it had gone forever!"

John acquired his *John the Mush* nickname from other drivers many years ago after going mushing (becoming an owner/driver) following a stint at hiring cabs from the **London General Cab Co** in Kennington. With his engineering background, John took an interest in how taxis worked and gleaned vital tips from the mechanics that worked there. When he eventually bought his own cab and went mushing, he always carried a few essential tools in the back of the cab in case of a breakdown and was well-placed to also help out other drivers when their cabs 'failed to proceed' as he put it. But fortunately for those many drivers, John the Mush has never forgotten where he keeps his tools!!!

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A DaC driver looks at the stresses and strains of driving a taxi in London...

TAKING A DEEP BREATH!

David Abrahams (R95) was chatting to a *Call Sign* reporter about the job taxi drivers do and how some respond to it.

"I'm usually placid by nature," he said in an ultra-calm way, "and I just take this job as it comes." Then almost as an afterthought, he added: "Well at least I try to! But times, together with people's attitudes, seem to have changed.

"I've been driving twenty years and have been on **Dial-a-Cab** since 1994. In that time I've noticed the change with people seemingly far more tense and stressed than they ever used to be under similar circumstances. Perhaps it's the economic downturn that has affected folk, with job and finance security so important, yet so unreliable nowadays. The result is that people seem less relaxed - unless it's just me being even more *laid back* than I used to be to counter the tensile attitude of others!"

Now in full swing, David gave an example of what he meant.

"Just the other evening I took a passenger to Clapham Common. I was merrily chugging along concentrating on the road while he was busy looking at his laptop. As I came around the one way system of Clapham Common, he looked up and suddenly let out a shout to ask where I was going! At that point my heart gave a jump and I nearly fell off the seat with the sudden shock of his booming voice!

"This all happened in a split-second and then the passenger suddenly realised where he was and I explained about the road layout. The passenger then apologised, but I didn't really need that moment of sudden shock. It just confirmed my theory about stress, because a momentary pause to put his brain into gear before my man shouted out would have saved us both a great deal of grief.

"I notice it on the roads as well. When I'm driving in my cab, people are sometimes less polite than when I am in my car. Perhaps it's me, but I get the impression that nobody loves you when you're driving a taxi. Yet in my car, other motorists let me out of side roads which they do not always do when I'm in my cab."

With that David took a deep inhalation of air and again emphasised his philosophy; "Take a deep breath first!" And then, looking calm, he was gone in a flash to join London's traffic...

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online



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In the July issue of Mailshot, Ian Connelly (T21) wrote suggesting that Dial-a-Cab should consider switching to GPS when our new terminals come into use. Now Ian Skeels (J74) has joined in the debate, but due to the length of his letter and the responses he required, Call Sign has given the subject a page of its own...

Ian Skeels (J74)

I read with interest Keith Cain's article in the August mag and the blatantly obvious outcome is that we need GPS / AVL. Keith says that customers are annoyed when they see our cabs go by with their *for hire* lights on whilst they cannot get a cab, but he apparently fails to grasp why. In the July issue, Ian Connelly (T21) wrote about our zonal system where passengers do not get the nearest cab, but the one where the driver has been waiting longest. DaC's Sales force must secretly despair when trying to win new business and telling clients that we operate that antiquated zonal system.

If the real reason is down to cost, then I wish the Board would be more honest about it. As Brian Rice wrote recently, some drivers are leaving to cut their overheads but he sees that as a short-sighted option. Well I think – no, I know – that not using GPS will eventually have a far more negative effect on our Society than any other issue.

How am I so sure of that? Well, two reasons; firstly I was on ComCab when they went to GPS / AVL around ten or so years ago and after a few early hiccups the system proved excellent to work with. Ranks such as Canary Wharf were still able to be booked into and used on a rotation basis. The whole system was very user friendly and stress free with no wondering what zone you'd booked into on a screen you often can't see! Please don't hit back at me saying that if it was so good why did I leave or why don't I just go back to ComCab. I left because I wanted to join a better circuit and I still believe DaC is that, but we are in danger of complacency. If we keep telling people to leave because they hear or read something they don't like, it's no wonder that the fleet will have shrunk by 35%.

The second reason for GPS is that I am one of those "terrible" drivers who is using the Hailo app. Just to straighten out a few points, Hailo uses GPS only sending you jobs that you are generally very near to, so there is very little dead mileage. Most times the customer is waiting outside for you, so the 5 minutes 'free wait' is hardly ever used.

The issue of cost was also brought up and it's true that we use our own phone, but most people have one anyway! In any case, don't we have to pay a strip-out fee even if are upgrading our cab? At the moment, with the lack of work and on a pro-rata basis, Hailo is actually cheaper. Please don't berate me for trying to maximise my income as we have often been told by various Board members that we are running small businesses.

I'd like to finish by saying that the points I have made are intended as constructive criticism rather than just moaning. Think about this; we promote ourselves as the *Gentleman's Circuit*, so let's not end up like one of the gentleman's clubs in St James where they sit in a large room on leather chairs, the air heavy with cigar smoke, drinking port and patting each other on the back whilst oblivious to the world moving on outside.

Keith Cain

Further to what Ian Skeels has written, I would first like to say that there is no war between the

GPS: THE MAILSHOT ANSWER



Board of Management and members. I know that some members love to moan and criticise the Board by writing in the magazine or on blog sites, but in Ian's case I've taken his points as more an expression of his personal experience - which is very informative - rather than just criticising for the sake of it.

I am still to be convinced when individuals say that I can take criticism providing it's constructive. We as humans like to think we are likeable and that no one will disagree with what we say or do. If that were only true, what a wonderful world this would be.

Ian has written his opinion from his experience of being on another circuit and his use of Hailo. I totally respect what he has said, but where we may differ in opinion is the point that he says GPS/AVL is needed to stop customers seeing our drivers going past their offices empty. It doesn't matter what system of dispatch we use, this will never be prevented. Yes, I agree the trip would be offered to the cab that is the closest but if a driver doesn't want to do it, the Sales team will always secretly despair in trying to selling our service.

That doesn't mean the Board are totally dismissing ever using another method of despatch. I can inform Ian that prior to ComCab going down the route of installing a GPS /AVL system, the DaC Board of that time took a very close look at the systems that were available. They were also very aware of all the problems other circuits went through developing their systems and the financial costs it placed upon them. At that time also, the Board were still licking their wounds from the cost our own system had placed upon us. Many members do not realise that when our system was purchased and installed, the £1 million pounds a year it was costing to buy it became the primary reason why this Society came so close to going under and closing its doors permanently. But the Board could not prove at that time that GPS /AVL was a better product or would improve the service members gave.

That doesn't mean to say the current Board's opinion is still the same. We all agree that technology has moved on in leaps and bounds since then and our own financial position is far better now. A new system is on the agenda but the development and implementation cannot take place overnight. What needs to be taken into consideration is this - and I touched upon it at the beginning. If drivers do not want to take an offered trip, whether they be the closest cab or not, then it makes no difference what system you choose. Hailo, which uses GPS closest cab, has proven this by sending out information to their drivers about the consequences they can expect if they keep refusing to accept work.

You may all be very surprised at how much communication with members actually goes on a daily basis. I can honestly say to Ian that I have not taken the points he raises as moaning and we will not end up like those individuals he describes as members of the St James Club. No one on the Board smokes or drinks Port for that matter and we certainly don't go round patting each other on the back. Quite the opposite sometimes!

Brian Rice

I believe Keith's answer has addressed your points, Ian, and he is absolutely correct that no matter which system is used, if a driver does not accept the trip then there is a problem. It could be he does not accept the trip because he is covering a ride for Hailo, whilst he expects his fellow members to cover the **Dial-a-Cab** account work to keep customers happy and retain their business until he fancies doing a trip for this Society.

I've stated in the past that to change from zonal to GPS is like changing from driving on the left to driving on the right, I personally believe a zonal system has its merits over a GPS system and vice versa and if we did change, then we would have some members requesting us to have a zonal system.

You are obviously a fan of Hailo, but do you know how much money the three entrepreneurs have invested in the system? I'm not talking about the three cab drivers that front the system, but the real money men behind it. Well, I can tell you it is £millions and they have also just borrowed another £11m to invest in the system. Ian, are you seriously suggesting we should go along that route?

The crux of the matter is members putting themselves out from time to time to cover work. I was recently at a prospective new client's office in **Holborn Viaduct**. I left at 12.15 on Monday lunchtime and telephoned for a taxi to go back to our office. I waited for 30 minutes for the taxi to arrive, incidentally, the prospective client was with me at the time – embarrassing or what?

When I got back to the office I had a look at the trip and it had 12 rejects! Please don't tell me there was not one cab within striking distance of EC1, they just didn't fancy it – no system would change that scenario.

However, if it were a Hailo trip the driver might have accepted it because he would be unaware of where the trip was going – now there's a thought!

Finally, I know you mean well Ian and your letter is intended as constructive criticism, but we do not have any plans to change our system in the near future.

Call Sign

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Mailshot

**Either write to Call Sign at
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or email us at
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Olympics

Hi Alan

I received my 76 A4 page Olympic information manual in the post, just days before the opening ceremony. I never realised that I would have to do the Knowledge of London again, which originally took me three years! How we were expected to remember all that guff in just a few days beat the hell out of me. I hid under the duvet for the duration!

Kevin Went (N19)

Hello Alan

I eventually got my Olympic manual in the post but didn't have a clue what most of it meant! Why couldn't they ask you to write it – then at least we would have been able to understand it!

Sid Nathan (K88)

In all honesty, once you dismissed the majority of stuff that didn't apply to London and the obvious stuff that any self-respecting taxi driver would automatically know, the set-down and pick-up maps were far more useful than I thought they would be – even though I had so few passengers wanting to go to any of the events. Like many other DaC drivers, I had already downloaded the version from our website so I knew pretty much what it contained – but putting it onto A4, rather than the smaller online version was a good move as it made the maps much easier to read. And I hate to say it, but the London Games themselves were brilliant! ...Ed

Dear Alan

Spotted while parked on Walworth Road during the Games: An Olympic BMW having its boot filled with cases of Guinness. Didn't know they were sponsors! It couldn't possibly have been the driver using the vehicle for personal use... could it?

Peter Doyle (P60)

I believe that Icelandic Marathon competitors like to harden their feet by leaving them soak in Guinness overnight. What do you mean there were no Icelandic runners in the Marathon! Also, read Bob Woodford's piece in Call Sign en la belle France because Bob was one of those car drivers who could apparently use the vehicle for anything he wanted to ...Ed

Hi Alan

I received a Warning notice in the post today with a picture of me using an Olympic lane at 23.26 on 30 July along Euston road. Although it is just a warning, I am disputing it because at that time the road side illuminated signs clearly stated that games lanes were open to all vehicles.

In fact the photo shows several other vehicles also using the games lane, so I expect those drivers will also have received a warning. I just thought I'd pass this info onto you in case it happened to other DaC drivers, as next time TfL make a cock-up I'm sure it will be a fine and not a warning!

Gary Johnson (P28)

Gary wasn't the only DaC driver to tell Call Sign about receiving a Warning notice re straying into the ORN lanes, there must have been at least 20. I'm waiting to hear how many taxi drivers, just like me, actually received a fine because I have this horrible suspicion that issuing Warnings was easier in most cases than proving whether the signs were on or off. There were so many different forms of signage. If it was dark and there was no illuminated sign, the only clue is if you drove looking downwards for any painted Olympic rings – but that would mean you were not looking straight ahead. There were also other occasions, such as turning left from Queensgate into Cromwell Road eastbound, where if you looked on the ground to your offside while turning, you'd have seen the painted rings. However, you might also have knocked a cyclist of their bike had they tried to overtake on the inside whilst you were turning left because you'd have been busy looking the wrong way. Yep, the Games were brilliant, but that was more due to spectators embracing them rather than anything LOCOG did on the roads. Oh yes, my PCN was for doing a U-turn from north into the southbound Park Lane at a place where we were told it was ok for us to turn. But the CCTV operator obviously was once turned down for a taxi ride and took it out on little old me! ...Ed

Some you Wynns!

Hi Alan,

I used the diesel cleaner that Alasdair Kay (C47) asked about (Call Sign Online July) in my workshop on customers diesels. It is called EGR 3 but according to my rep it has now been superseded by EGR 4, which I have been told is better for the environment and has more detergent to do a better job of cleaning the EGR valve and injectors. EGR 3 is made in Belgium while EGR 4 comes from the US and Australia. Alasdair should contact a Wynns supplier to find out if EGR 4 is available in the UK.

Regarding the story about John Barry (O51) accepting a fake £50 note, I got caught by a dud £50 under similar circumstances as John when I was still driving with DaC. Then about three months later I did a filming job for the Bank of England, a training video on how to spot a dodgy note as we didn't have pens or scanners then. As for my £50 note, we had friends over from Australia who took the note back with them and exchanged it in Singapore for Oz cur-



rency. Then they sent the money back to us! Of course I wouldn't do that now as it is morally wrong!!!

Howard Sales (Ex-A11)

Queensland, Australia

Thanks Howard. Somewhere inside this issue is the address of the new Power Pill suppliers. Many drivers (including me) have used the Alpha Power Pill and that also works by cleaning out carbon, reducing smoke and in many cases, increasing mpg ...Ed

Windscreen wiper for 1935 low loader

Hello all

Does anyone at Dial-a-Cab know of anyone who could possibly have a Trico Visional vacuum windscreen wiper? The wiper is about 50 inches long and fits across the top of the screen of my 1935 Austin Low Loader. Unlike today's arc movement, the Trico Visional fits across the whole width of the screen. As far as I am aware, this type of wiper was only ever fitted to taxis in the UK but that they were an American concept and fitted to various USA non-taxi vehicles. I don't know what make(s) they were. I have tried to restore my wiper but without success and I believe the majority of previous owners of pre-war cabs gave up and fitted electric wipers. I tried contacting Trico in the States but in the end got fobbed off with a total lack of interest. There is some relevant info about the unit online, but what I need is the actual wiper and any useful info re its fitting. I know it's a longshot, but any assistance is desperately sought. As we've just gone through one of the wettest months on record in the UK, the earliest response would help me see where I'm going in future!

You can contact me at irthomas@tiscali.co.uk.

Iayn Thomas

LVTA UK

Not much of a good-bye...

Dear Alan

Just a note to say how much I enjoy reading Call Sign Online even though I have now retired. I thought I would also let you know about the 'lovely' letter I received from TfL when my licence expired on my 75th birthday on 14th July 2012. I had returned the licence together with my badge having held a clean licence for 54 years.

I received a letter from Mr Nick Bignall, the TfL Licensing Manager, acknowledging

Mailshot

Continued from page 29

receipt of my badge and licence. He also added two more lines that I quote as follows: "As a licensed London taxi driver, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the many years of service provided to the travelling public in London." There were no words wishing me a long and happy retirement or even sending me a small memento, such as a copy of my first licence in 1958 for me to keep to show that I had been a taxi driver for all those years. I know there are many drivers older than me who are still driving, so I am writing this to let them know what they can look forward to from TfL when they retire. Hope it will be of some interest to your readers.

I also have quite a few old fare increase tables which we used to receive from the old Carriage Office to stick on our partition windows dating back to 1979. We had these because the old mechanical meters could not be altered at the time of increases. Also I have an old Transport & General Workers Union booklet dated 1957 when the West London Air Terminal was in operation informing the drivers what the recommended fare from the Terminal to all the main line stations should be. For example, Euston Station for 1 passenger was 7s. 9p (40p). I don't know if these would be of any interest to anyone in the trade.

Thanks once again for putting *Call Sign* Magazine online and my best wishes to you all at Dial-a-Cab.

Monty Dobrin (Ex-B56)

Nice to hear from you Monty. In all fairness to TfL, most drivers I speak to who have retired, actually do get a photocopy of their first licence. Perhaps the Olympics caused them to change their procedure to save the time of looking?

TX4 deal

Dear Alan

Ref the £135 a week offer from the LTC; I can't believe you put this junk in with the mag. Its content treats the taxi driver as a knuckle-dragging neanderthal and is embarrassing! And £100 off the circuit fee! The mind boggles. I have just got off the phone after speaking to an LTC salesman. I've only had a badge for 25 years, but this offer smelt foul immediately; £30,000 payments + end payment of £14,000 = £44,000. Then there's 4 years insurance = £4,000 + a 4 year service plan = £1,320 + tyres for 4 years = £1,280 + 4 years overhauls = £1,600 + odds and ends such as the meter, plate, printer etc for those 4 years = £4,400. Total = £12,594 plus £44,000. That comes to almost £57,000. The deal the trade is waiting for? What's that for? To go skint and end up in hospital? You're an intelligent fellow; what was there to be gained from including this toilet paper with the mag? How about you doing a piece in the next edition comparing this

junk offer with the other choices ie renting and long term ownership...

Rob Lyle (W39)

Hi Rob, I take it the deal doesn't suit you. However those drivers whose cabs are nearing the 15-year mark will need deals such as this because it is a good deal for them. Overlook the buying part for a moment because this deal is a way for those whose cabs are approaching the 15-year mark to get a new Euro 5 TX4 cab at a cheaper rate than it would cost them to rent – even with the add-ons such as insurance etc.. They would then also go down as the owner (and stay on DaC should the driver want to). This deal certainly isn't junk, because most drivers who don't have to worry about their cab's licence will be able to still do an ordinary deal and put down more than the £2000 this deal needs and just buy the cab. But Rob, if you were in your mid or late sixties instead of the tall, good looking young man that you are, you might look at a deal that keeps your monthly payments affordable with the view of just giving the cab back after 4 years rather than adding up the huge total that any HP type deal brings – especially at an advanced age. Even worse, you could be forced out of business because you no longer have a cab! But with this deal, after four years you can pay off the outstanding amount, which would put your monthly repayments down even more. Or you can just give the cab back! This deal could prevent drivers losing their livelihood because they can't afford to update their cabs. That's not junk, Rob, that could be a life-saver.

The £100 they offer is an extra that non-DaC drivers won't get, but if anyone doesn't want to take it, I can tell you many who would be glad to take it for you! The deal may not suit you or me, but it will suit many others who see it as a way of getting out of the pickle the Mayor and Europe have got us into ...Ed

The Anderson Shelter

Hi Alan

As you seem to know most things, can you tell me what happened to *The Anderson Shelter*? It was a useful blogsite to get updated bits of news about the taxi business – not as good as *Call Sign* of course, but hey, what is!

Alex Constantinou (N05)

Schmoozing will get you everywhere Alex! I asked Jim Thomas – aka Thomas the Taxi – what happened. He told me that The Anderson Shelter was accidentally deleted from the blogger platform while Jim was trying to "tidy up" the site's archive section. Once deleted, it becomes impossible to retrieve. As a result, Jim decided to take a well-



deserved break. Keeping a site such as The Anderson Shelter up-to-date involves a lot of hard work, but no doubt Jim will return somewhere down the line. There is a London Taxi Driver's Forum, but as I've never been on that I can't tell you much about it other than what I am told and that is that one of their favourite pastimes (in extremely fruity language) seems to be to attack little old me and our big bully of a Chairman! But if it entertains, then I am happy to accommodate them! ...Ed

Goodbye Maeve

Hi Alan

I was very sad to read of the death of author Maeve Binchy at 72 – young by today's standards. Maeve had an account for many years on DaC and I was always delighted when I had to pick her up from her home near Olympia.

During the last few years, she phoned us less regularly because her health stopped her going out quite as much as she had done previously. But she was always happy to talk to anyone – be that those who read her books or those DaC taxi drivers who took her around town – often to what she referred to as her only excess, the hand-made shoe shop in Paddington Street.

It was a pleasure knowing you Maeve. RIP...

Tony Hizer (E63)

Maeve Binchy died on 30 July in Dublin. She once wrote something that ties in with Tony's email: *"The happiest moments of my life are connected with family and friends. There is a great comfort about being with people who knew you way back when. There is a mental shorthand, an easy-going feeling that life doesn't have to be explained or defined; we are all in more or less the same boat. To have a community around you in a changing and unstable world is invaluable and nothing can beat the feeling that there will always be people out for our good."*

Rumours?

Hi Alan

Is there any truth in the rumour that DB are dumping Addison Lee and reverting back to black cabs? If so will they be using us?

John Stowers (K40)

Sorry John, it was a rumour emanating from the AL driver's chatsite and nothing has changed. As their drivers don't really know where they are going, it's not unreasonable to expect that they don't know how to put out a good rumour! ...Ed

Mailshot

Continued from page 29

Minicabs available – but no taxis?

Hi Alan

Can someone help me? I can find the marked out spaces for minicabs on the forecourt of the Royal Free Hospital in Pond Street, Hampstead, but I'm having trouble finding the licensed taxi trade's spaces. You know something; I am going to run miles for app jobs from the Royal Free - but no doubt most jobs will be TV crews!

Gary Cox (046)

It's amazing how often I've picked up at the Royal Free after setting down and "dwelling" for a few minutes while looking for lost property – which we do after each trip. I'm not sure why, but my searching usually seems to cause some consternation to the several men whose hobby seems to be to stand by the exit! ...Ed

Slow meters...

Hello Alan

My meter recently needed re-timing as it was running slow. I was told that Cygnus could alter the timing by up to 3 minutes per calendar month and I took my cab to have it done. When I got there, I was told that LTPH had banned the alteration and that I'd have to wait until the overhaul and meter change. What if it had been running fast and went onto rate 2 at 19.57? Would it then be ok to just carry on overcharging passengers, because when the traffic is light and perhaps you are going on the Marylebone flyover or M4, those three minutes at the wrong rate could come to an extra pound or so?

In any case, even cheap radios now have atomic clocks of which some are said to keep time to within one second every million years. I'd settle for one that loses or gains one second each month. Why don't the meter companies work off atomic clocks?

Malcolm Levan (F24)

Hiya Malcolm, there's no atomic clock I'm afraid as they said the expense couldn't be justified and it would have to be passed onto drivers. But I asked LTPH about the rest of your email and they told me that there was no restriction on how many minutes meters could be adjusted by. However, Cygnus disagreed with the adjustment section telling Call Sign that LTPH had banned it. How that misapprehension came about, neither side knows. However, Cygnus have told this magazine that if anyone goes in because their meter is gaining or losing time, then they will just change the meter – which takes the same time as an adjustment. LTPH told us that either way is fine with them provided that when you leave, your meter is showing the correct time regardless of how incorrect

it was when you went in. LTPH added that they allow a leeway of up to three minutes either way before the meter must be adjusted or exchanged. My sincere thanks to John Mason and Mark Bass at LTPH for their help in sorting the matter out ...Ed

Slow work!

Dear Alan,

I'm angry! I'm angry because of the terminals, the problem with reception in the city and I'm angry because there's no work. It's tough out there at the moment and I'm sure you know that. The other day I went out and in an 8 hour shift, I did just 4 jobs! Not even in the January of 2009 did I have a day as shocking as that!

Tonight I put on the rank in EC5 at about 2200 and by 2245 I finally managed to get offered a fixed price job, which I declined. I was offered another, which I also declined and then the same job again which I decided to accept as it was better than sitting with no job and the possibility of getting offered something going 'round the corner'. However, the *accept* button was jammed and I was booked off EC5! Alan, my blood wasn't boiling but I did feel absolutely gutted about it. As you can imagine, after waiting for 45 minutes in my 4-wheeled sauna, I was extremely dismayed about this so I decided to call the drivers line. I spoke to a nice young lady who informed me that there was nothing she could do for me and at least offered me some positivity, which I took and promptly threw out of my window! I know it wasn't her fault, your fault and not even Brian Rice's fault, but this situation has happened to me before and it's frankly unacceptable to say 'well, there's nothing we can do, the systems not designed for us to re-introduce you back into the queue....etc.' We know that time is money in this game and to waste 45 minutes of my time like this ruined my night, especially in these extremely hard times. I'm usually very tenacious and if it gets tough I try and forget about it, get on with it and try and put it behind me, but I feel so aggrieved I'm writing this at midnight because I need to get it off my chest!

The lady I spoke to on the drivers line said that this has happened to a few people on the circuit and no doubt they will have felt aggrieved about it too. Maybe drivers caught in this predicament in the future could be waived a week's subs for each member who has this problem. It would go some way to making up for potentially lost revenue, but also be a sign of good faith from the Society ie us! Do you think this would require a rule change to make it happen and would this have to be balloted via post before the next AGM?

I know the job I was offered was nearly enough to cover a week's subs and that's one of the reasons I waited 45 minutes for a job, because the work levels on the circuit



have been so low I haven't even been able to cover my subs in the last couple of weeks. To be honest with you Alan, HELP!!!

Now I've got that off my chest and written everything concisely (hopefully), I feel much more relaxed, maybe I'll book back into EC5 and go find that positivity I turfed out of the window near Holborn Circus!

I hope you can look into this and maybe pass it to Brian Rice if he has the time...

Steve Albasini (V02)

Brian Rice replies: Hi Steve, how frustrated you must be! It's bad enough having an extra quiet August without getting booked off. I took a look at your logger and your facts are correct. You booked in EC5 at number 59, during the next 26 minutes you did 8 QP's so you were obviously feeling the strain. Then at 22.46 you were offered the fixed price trip to NW3 for £28.20. You rejected the trip but it came back to you but your acceptance of the trip was NAK'd (Not Acknowledged), and consequently you were booked off. The trip was eventually covered after 7 rejects, however the driver waited more than 9 minutes so the FP was taken out. That driver eventually cleared the job at £38.40, so adding in the gratuity of £3.80, it made a total of £42.20. There is probably a moral in there, Steve!

But I can only apologise for you being booked off; nothing in mobile technology is 100% and you have probably experienced the odd occasion when you have been cut off on your mobile phone. I wish I could turn the clock back for you because I do understand your frustration. I would also like to be able to assure you that it will never happen again, but I can't. Although it is rare to be booked off, it does happen and unfortunately there is nothing I can do about that. So let's hope that 02 will be perfect when we go over to that...

Trade spokespeople

Dear Editor

I am an owner-member of the Dial-a-Cab Credit Union Ltd, a pedestrian, who is writing to you in an individual capacity.

On 10th August on BBC TV News, a spokesperson appeared bemoaning the taxi drivers' lot during the Olympics. What he said was probably factually correct, but his delivery method was dire and appeared to be full of self-interest that would not create any sympathy at all with the viewing public.

When I undertake credit union tasks in the USA, I take with me three toy London icons to be auctioned for charities and they are a London bus, a Big Ben and toy taxis – and it's the latter that raise the most money.

Mailshot

Continued from page 30

This should show everybody how highly regarded London cabs and their drivers are worldwide.

Why don't the spokespersons appearing for the London taxi trade ever give positive stories about their services, which would be the best type of sales promotion ever to consumers and encourage them to use London cabbies in preference to the "unspeakable." For instance:

*At a time of any civil strife, news stories that London cabbies and dockers led the fight against fascism in 1936.

*I witnessed London cabbies running people home sometimes over 100 miles without charge on 14 July 2005, after the public transport network was halted following the aborted repeat of 7/7. These were people of all nationalities – I know, because I was at Kings Cross.

*Why do spokespersons never report the London cabbies' consistent and invaluable support for charities, assisting terminally sick children to have a good time?

*Why do spokespersons for the cab trade never repeat the message that **Brian Rice** (who I don't know and have not met) presented to the *Financial Times* in 2008, after the failures of **Lehman Bros** and **AIG** etc – that London cabbies will work in new ways to survive.

*Why don't spokespersons ever state in their public pronouncements that becoming a Licensed London Taxi Driver is a tremendous opportunity for self-employment – always on the rise throughout every economic downturn – that then gives opportunities for those people to develop other

business opportunities, particularly in the transport sector.

*At the Olympics Closing Ceremony, the **Spice Girls** appeared on top of London taxi cabs! Can you imagine "Mrs B" in a minicab?

The Directors of the Credit Union (I am not one) always put their best foot forward in extending service to its owner-members and putting a positive slant on everything. Possibly this is why it's growing at a fair old rate of knots. Sadly, the current media spokesperson for the London taxi trade and his predecessor, presented a sour image to the consuming public of what is a magnificent trade, regarded highly throughout the world and it should have spokespersons worthy of it despite them being appointed or elected to post – it's called 'Public Relations'.

Barry Epstein

Owner-member – Dial-A-Cab Credit Union Ltd

Thanks for the letter Barry and I'm sure **Brian Rice** will enjoy your comments about his FT interview in the December 2008 issue (available in the Call Sign library). But I'm sure that he would agree that giving an interview to a magazine (he has done quite a number of them in addition to radio broadcasts) is one thing, but controlling what actually goes out on a TV interview is another matter altogether. I'm often asked to give interviews and rarely say yes unless it is a fun item. **Allan Evans** was recently interviewed by a radio station and he told me afterwards that he didn't even recognise it when he heard it later! Sometimes you hear taxi drivers calling phone-in programmes and however well-meaning and doing their best, they can sometimes send the argument into



reverse. But when your interview is recorded and then edited for later transmission, you just don't know what they are going to do with it. However, the person you are referring to is on our mailing list and will undoubtedly read your points ...Ed

DaC's App campaign

I read about the soon-to-be released DaC App in the *August Call Sign*. It sounds like good news and I hope there will be an advertising campaign to launch it. We need to let the public know our App is here with some wide media coverage to get the message across. Perhaps we could have some small business cards like the ones we already use to hand out to people and also notices on the cab interior's division window informing passengers about our App. How about stickers on the doors like the long credit card signage currently available? **Tony Hones (C70)**

Watch out in the next issue ...Ed

Hailo/ GetTaxi and yellow badges

If a yellow badge on GetTaxi or Hailo is offered and accepts a ride in green badge territory, is he plying for hire out of his area? **Jon Robinson (E88)**

A Hailo spokesperson told me that it can't happen. I took them at their word. I don't know whether it can happen on GetTaxi ...Ed

TX4 v TX4!!!

Euro V TX4: Drivers put 'smoothest drive' claim to the test against the old Euro IV!

Drivers from across the UK took part in the **London Taxi Company's** test drive campaign and rated the latest TX4 on seven different response areas. More than 80% of the drivers surveyed had previously driven or test driven the TX4 (Euro IV), so were well placed to comment on the newest black taxi.

With the votes in, counted and verified, the undoubted verdict was that the TX4 (Euro V) is a smoother drive than the Euro IV variant!

TEST DRIVE QUESTIONS: PERCENTAGE RATING	GOOD	OK	POOR
How would you rate the drive experience?	94%	5%	1%
How was the steering?	92%	6%	2%
What's the gear change like?	93%	7%	0%
Describe the initial power take-up.	94%	6%	0%
Rate the engine's responsiveness.	92%	7%	1%
How about the suspension and general comfort?	94%	6%	0%
How much road noise could you hear?	NONE	SOME	LOTS
	18%	77%	5%

Test drive survey conducted June - July 2012 with 83 respondents

Cabbies are of course by nature, shy and retiring types, but a few of them were encouraged to provide some comments – this is a selection:

"More response, feels tighter and more assured on the road."

"Drives better than the Peugeot I have already test driven."

"Very good, the best so far."

"It seems nice, but it is brand new. Will it be as impressive at 160,000 miles?"

"Driver seat is excellent."

"Driver seat is hard."

"Quieter, faster, tighter and still the best cab for the job."



Go to www.london-taxis.co.uk for more information on the TX4, to arrange your own test drive or to find your nearest dealership...

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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.