

Call Sign

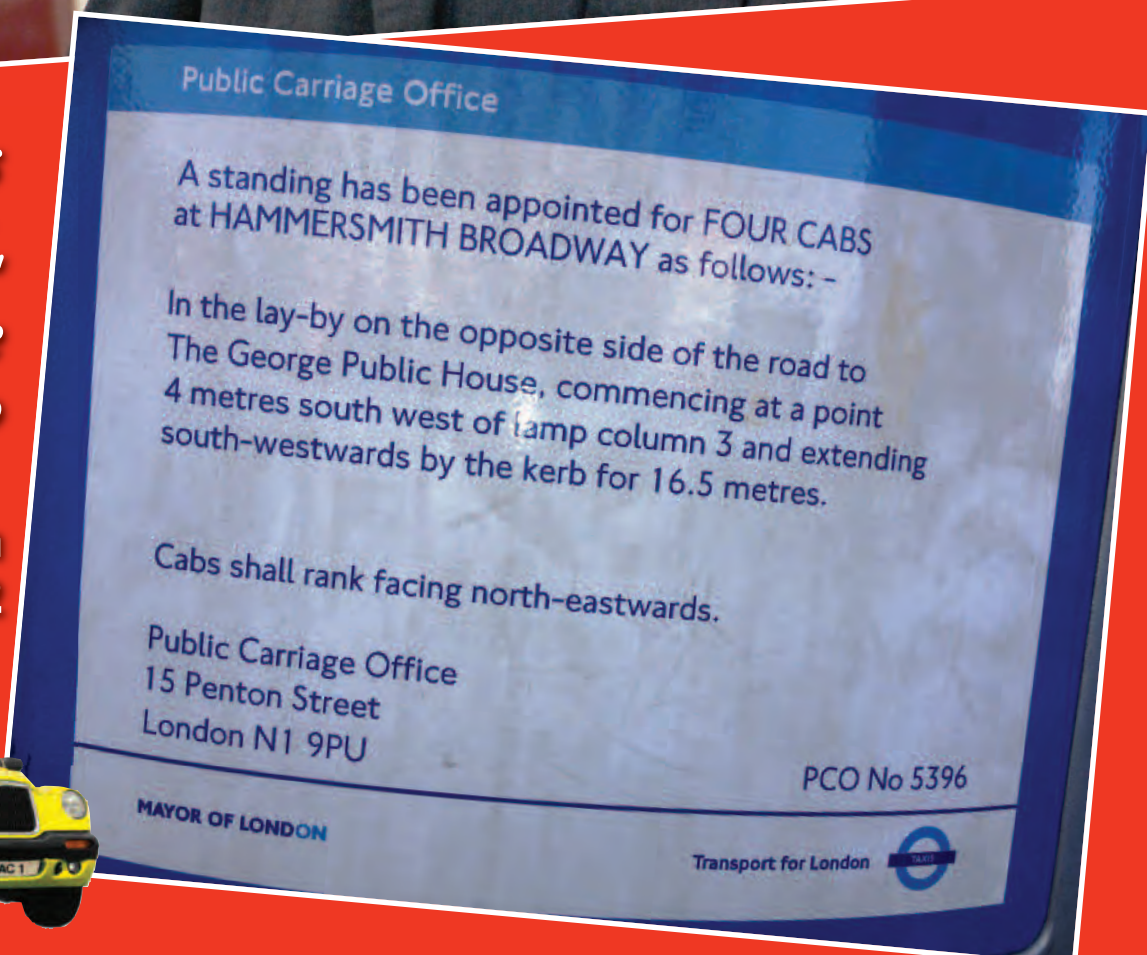


*Tom Whitbread
rushed to hospital
for emergency op*



*Why is
this TfL
rank notice
wrong?*

Find out on
page 22





NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Inspired from a comment by Laurence Kelvin W88. With the rapid closures of police stations, the “Met Police Station” section 9 of my Useful Information Document (UID) is out of date. So this month a list of the 24 hour Police stations followed by a list of all other police stations that are open ‘part-time’ in the 32 London boroughs.

Police Stations open 24 hours per day			
Acton	250 High Street, Acton, W3 9BH	Kingston-u-Thames	5 High St., Kingston-u-Thames, KT1 1LB
Bethnal Green	12 Victoria Park Square, E2 9NZ	Lavender Hill	176 Lavender Hill, SW11 1JX
Bexleyheath	2 Arnsberg Way, DA7 4QS	Lewisham	43 Lewisham High Street, SE13 5JZ
Brixton	367 Brixton Rd, SW9 7DD	Notting Hill	99 - 101 Ladbroke Road, W11 3PL
Bromley	High Street, Bromley, BR1 1ER	Plumstead	200 Plumstead High Street, SE18 1JY
Charing Cross	Agar Street, WC2N 4JP	Romford	19 Main Road, Romford, RM1 3BJ
Chingford	King's Head Hill, E4 7EA	South Harrow	74 Northolt Road, HA2 0DN
Colindale	Grahame Park Way, NW9 5TW	Stoke Newington	33 Stoke Newington High St., N16 8DS
Croydon	71 Park Lane, Croydon, CR9 1BP	Sutton	6 Carshalton Road, Sutton, SM1 4RF
Dagenham	561 Rainham Road Sth, RM10 7TU	Tottenham	398 High Road, Tottenham, N17 9JA
Edmonton	462 Fore Street, N9 0PW	Twickenham	41 London Road, Twickenham, TW1 3SY
Forest Gate	350-360 Romford Road, E7 8BS	Uxbridge	1 Warwick Place, Uxbridge, UB8 1PG
Hammersmith	226 Shepherds Bush Road, W6 7NX	Walworth	12-28 Manor Place, SE17 3BB
Hounslow	5 Montague Rd, Hounslow, TW3 1LB	Wembley	603 Harrow Road, Wembley, HA0 2HH
Ilford	270 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1GT	West End Central	27 Savile Row, W1S 2EX
Islington	2 Tolpuddle Street, N1 0YY	Wimbledon	15-23 Queens Road, SW19 8NN
Kentish Town	12a Holmes Road, NW5 3AE		

All other Police Stations open less than 24 hours			
Barking	6 Ripple Road, Barking, IG11 7PE	Kensington	72 Earls Court Road, W8 6EQ
Barkingside	1 High Street, IG6 1QB	Kilburn	38 Salisbury Road, NW6 6LT
Barnet	26-32 High Street, Barnet, EN5 5RU	Limehouse	27 West India Dock Road, E14 8EZ
Belgravia	202 Buckingham Pal. Rd, SW1W 9SX	Marlowe House	109 Station Road, Sidcup, DA15 7ES
Berlin Underwood	90 Windmill Road, Croydon, CR0 2XR	Mitcham	58 Cricket Green, CR4 4LA
Brick Lane	25 Brick Lane, E1 6PU	New Malden	CI Tower - Dukes Ave., KT3 4HN
Catford	333 Bromley Road, SE6 2RJ	Paddington Green	2-4 Harrow Road, W2 1XJ
Chiswick	209-211 Chiswick High Road, W4 2DU	Peckham	177 Peckham High Street, SE15 5SL
Copperfield Hse	Maple Road, Penge, SE20 8RE	Plaistow	444 Barking Road, E13 8HJ
Deptford	114 Amersham Vale, SE14 6LG	Richmond	18-20 Kew Road, Richmond, TW9 2NA
Ealing	67 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, W5 5SJ	Shoreditch	4-6 Sheperdess Walk, N1 7LF
Eltham	20 Well Hall Road, SE9 6SF	Southall	67 High Street, Southall, UB1 3HG
Enfield	41 Baker Street, EN1 3EU	Southwark	323 Borough High Street, SE1 1JL
Fishmongers	287 High Road, Wood Green, N22 8HU	Stratford	18 West Ham Lane, E15 4SG
Fulham	Heckfield Place, SW6 5NL	Streatham	101 Streatham High Rd, SW16 1HT
Hayes	755 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, UB4 8HU	Teddington	18 Park Road, Teddington, TW11 0AQ
Holborn	10 Lambs Conduit Street, WC1N 3NR	W. Wickham	9 High Street, West Wickham, BR4 0LP
Holloway	284 Hornsey Road, N7 7QY	Walthamstow	191-193 High Street, E17 7BX
Hornsey	98 Tottenham Lane, N8 7EJ	Wandsworth	146 Wandsworth High St., SW18 4JJ
Kennington	49-51 Kennington Rd, SE1 7QA	Worcester Park	154 Central Rd, KT4 8HH

I am updating part 7 of the UID and it should be on-line by the time you read this. Excluding Westminster that has 2 x 24 hour police stations, there is now just one per borough and most have only two stations. The UID part 9 will also list the part-time hours, which are not shown here due to lack of space...

from the editor's desk

Fares consultation

On 23 October 2013, *Call Sign*, along with other trade organisations, received details of a taxi tariff consultation document that set out proposals relating to the yearly taxi fare hike that occurs every April. However, I can't ask you to send in any comments as the consultation closed on 20 November.

However I did put it onto the *Call Sign Online* website and hopefully those of you who felt you wanted to make a comment took advantage of the opportunity to respond.

The document shows how complicated our fare structure is and surely there can be little doubt that over the past five years, it has taken away many of our regular clients because of the cost – especially on rate 3. There was a time when many accounts used to send their staff home with us, but now choose a cheaper option.

Neither can we talk about the competition using rust buckets, because it would be untrue. In fact, many private hire companies advertise on the radio and one recent ad gave comparisons – not with licensed taxis, but against other minicab companies! That probably says it all – they no longer even think of us as competition because we are on such a different price schedule as cars.

Part of the consultation document suggests moving any increase to 2 January so that announcements of the increase would be made at the same time as buses and trains. I can't see where that would benefit us unless it was to announce that we weren't seeking an increase on any given year. Put next to buses and trains, that might look good.

The document points out that in 2012, overall passenger satisfaction for London's taxis was 85% and that the overall satisfaction score has remained fairly consistent since 2002. *But* – and there is a rather large *but* – the survey also showed that whilst 35% of taxi users thought taxi fares were about right, some 65% thought the fares were either a bit or much too expensive.

If so many drivers are happy to work on an App with no run-in or gratuity and to pay 10% for the privilege, perhaps we should consider a year where we don't take an increase? After all, it could be that the publicity we get might be worth more than the 2% or so increase we'd get and which would frighten even more passengers away.

Anyway, hopefully you read my messages re the consultation document being on *Call Sign's* website and if you felt the need, then took advantage of it. If you didn't, then it's now too late...

15 year taxi conversions

Inside this issue, there is the first report in a trade paper concerning five year extensions for 15-year old taxis. The converted *Gastech Liquefied Petroleum Gas* (LPG) TX1 and TX2 taxis will give drivers whose cabs are in good condition, an extra five years as licensed taxis.

The eventual passing of the two engines at the **Millbrook Emissions Testing Centre** was, as you'd expect, a long drawn-out process – but also a very successful one that knocks NOX readings through the floor as it promotes the converted taxis to **Euro 5+** standards. *Call Sign* has followed the process from its early days and is the reason we have been given the story of its successful conclusion before any other paper.

The conversion can also be carried out on newer taxis for drivers who are keen to be green, but cannot be given to taxis whose lives have already ended. TfL MUST be notified that



you want to have your cab converted BEFORE its 15th birthday.

There are more details inside this issue, but I'd like to add something that will undoubtedly – and rightly – be brought up by some drivers. It could mean that *Dial-a-Cab* will have a substantial number of older taxis rather than the young fleet that the opposition private hire companies have. I can't deny that and I agree that a young fleet makes us look "fresher."

But with my other hat on, I know that *Call Sign* is here for all of DaC – the Board, staff and the drivers – many of whom have been with us for over half of their lives. Some of those drivers will soon have to go into a forced retirement because it just isn't worthwhile at their ages to buy another taxi or perhaps they don't work enough hours to make renting a cab a viable option.

I like to think that many older drivers actually look forward to a time when driving a taxi is no longer absolutely essential to give them a reasonable standard of life and that they can cope with the more relaxed way of living in retirement.

Unfortunately, through circumstances that may not even be of their own making, some will need to work so long as they have the strength and almost as importantly the tool we all need to drive a taxi – ie the cab!

I don't know how many drivers will apply for the extension, because it's a long way from being free. However, spread over the extra five years that it gives owners, it is a much better – and possibly the only – option for many. And for those in the **DaC Credit Union**, it could be a real life saver! Yes, it will increase the average age of the fleet, but in reality it will also make it greener.

But of course, if **Mayor Johnson** would like to spend some of his funds on a worthwhile project, rather than some Barclay-BoJo electric bikes floating around north London, then come to *Dial-a-Cab* and pay for the whole fleet to be converted. Then this Society, in its job of transporting the public around London, would become completely green and immeasurably help the capital become a much cleaner place. And it would cost him a fraction of what Europe will fine him/us for being dirty...

Taxis and wheelchairs

Dial-a-Cab driver **Bernie Silver's** (G08) daughter, **Melissa**, has appeared in *Call Sign* several times over the years – the first of which was after she appeared in the Special Olympics – an early version of today's Paralympic Games.

Melissa suffers from *Angelman Syndrome*. It affects young people, bringing with it a developmental delay, severe speech impediment and minimal use of words. There is often a movement or

balance disorder and those suffering from the neuro-genetic disorder sometimes become easily excitable. Against that, sufferers such as **Melissa** often have a happy demeanour.

Bernie regularly travels from his home in Essex to pick up **Melissa** at the residential home in Berkshire she has been in for many years to take her back to the family for a weekend, before then returning her back to Berkshire.

Bernie usually uses his taxi because of its wheelchair accessibility, but on one recent occasion **Melissa** came to London to see *Dirty Dancing* with two carers. There were no problems – at least not until they got off the train at Waterloo and went to the rank to pick up a taxi, where according to the carers, the driver refused to put out the wheelchair ramps and the carers had to physically lift **Melissa** and the chair into the cab. The driver just stayed in his seat. I can't believe it was someone on this circuit, but whoever it was should be ashamed of themselves.

Earls Court development

Yes, I know that people have to live somewhere, but surely there must be some thought given to what is being taken away in order to put up a new development. Just as surely the **Earls Court Exhibition Centre** is a critical part of the London tourist industry – and of course that includes us.

Without it, an awful lot of small hotels will have no drawing power, while the lack of customers staying in the area will have a direct bearing on the local shops. So if the arena is pulled down, how much will it help the housing shortage situation? Well, the type of housing described looks to be very upmarket and expensive, with the new incumbents looking to be from the wealthier side of London Society. Is that what London is to become; somewhere nice to live but with nothing to do?

The 77-acre redevelopment has been approved by Mayor Boris and involves demolishing two estates in addition to the Exhibition Centre. In its place will be four 'villages' and a so-called 'High Street'. The end result will be some 7,500 upmarket homes.

Against that, the Exhibition Centre is said to be responsible for bringing in over £1 billion to London's economy while attracting 1.5 million visitors. It also provides far more work for the taxi industry than the new homes ever will. The development is expected to be completed by 2035.

Christmas already!

Yes, *Call Sign* has followed tradition for more years now than we care to remember and that means that the issue dated December, actually means that it is now officially **Christmas!** The fact that this issue comes out on 1st December has long been irrelevant, even though the 1st January issue will probably drop through your letter boxes just a day or two after the magic of December 25 and at a time when you are still noshing at the turkey leftovers.

So can I wish you all the season's greetings. For those working, I hope it is successful and for those taking the more relaxed option, I hope you have a wonderful time. For Jewish readers, substitute **Chanukah** for Christmas. Unfortunately I missed **Eid-al-Adha** for our Muslim drivers as it occurred in October this year. But to everyone, I just wish you all a peaceful holiday time...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Minimum fares...

I have had several of our Members asking me if Dial-a-Cab intend invoking a minimum fare of £15 during tariff rate 3 to compete with an App that is out there and currently charging that amount. The simple answer is 'no' as I believe the charge could be illegal and drivers could be prosecuted by Transport for London.

I know the company supporting the App has stated that it is they that would be prosecuted by TfL and not the driver, as the contract is with the App supplier and the customer.

Personally, I do not agree with that assumption, as I believe the contract is between the customer and the driver - the App supplier has merely acted as an Agent and put the customer in touch with the driver for which the App supplier has taken a 10% commission from the driver. If anyone is going to be prosecuted, in my opinion it will be the driver and not the App supplier because as I have stated previously, I believe the contract to be between the customer and driver.

I know all the arguments regarding the customer agreeing to terms and conditions and because they have agreed to the £15 minimum, then it is ok to charge it, so I would like to give you a little scenario.

A prospective passenger stops a taxi one wet night when it is raging busy; the passenger asks the driver to take him on a £10 journey to which the driver replies that he will take him for £25 and the passenger agrees. At the destination, the passenger hands over the £25 for the £10 fare and the next morning, promptly reports the driver to LTPH for overcharging. Now I wonder what LTPH would do about this situation, do you think they would prosecute the driver for overcharging? Of course they would! And do you think the driver's defence that the passenger agreed to his terms and conditions (the agreed £25 fare) before he entered the cab would be taken into account and the driver let off? I think not.

I've had some Members telling me that Dial-a-Cab operate an £8 minimum and have done so for quite a considerable time; that is correct but that is charged to Account Customers only and is charged by Dial-a-Cab and not the Member. We have never charged a minimum on any credit card or cash ride.

I believe the law states that it is illegal to charge more than the metered fare, so if someone leaves a taxi and the metered fare is showing £7 and the driver demands £15, then I believe the driver could be leaving himself open to prosecution.

However, I have to say that in recent times my confidence in LTPH has gradually dwindled away and it would not surprise me in the least if they just endeavoured to ignore the situation. A problem may arise however if an individual makes a stand and invokes some sort of action. That situation is certainly feasible.

In my opinion, what needs to be made clear is that the App supplier has not introduced the minimum fares for the welfare of the drivers, but that it has been done because their coverage was so abysmal and the App's management or venture capitalists saw their 10% commissions dwindling away and they had to increase their income, hence they introduced minimums to improve coverage, which it probably has.

However, what it has also demonstrated to the public is that we are a greedy, grasping trade that only wants to do the trips that suit us and that we do not give a jot about providing them with a service. If it doesn't suit us, then you don't get a cab! But then they probably thought that anyway!



All Change

As some of you are probably aware, we have had a change of jobs at Dial-a-Cab House. **Keith Cain** has moved from Operations to Sales, I believe this to be important because if the pundits are to be believed, then business could be picking up in the near future and we should be in a position to respond. Keith has many years' experience and will not have to be taught the ways of the taxi industry, which is a niche market.

Neither will he be coming in from the outside to be taught our business, only to then promptly be hired by another circuit or minicab outfit in an attempt to leave us with

as many of our Accounts as possible in tow!

Allan Evans has been moved from Compliance Officer to Operations with **Garry White** moving into Allan's old position of Compliance. Garry has been here for 9 months, consequently, I hope he now has some idea about how we operate and as he still drives a cab on a regular basis, he is well acquainted to take the roll of Compliance.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the three of them well in their new roles.

Christmas

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year. Let's hope work levels continue to improve in 2014 as they appear to have done in recent times.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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OVER the last 12 months, the new Nissan NV200 London Taxi has been undergoing an intensive development process by Nissan engineers. At the same time, Nissan's design centre in Paddington has been applying the finishing touches to what they refer to as 'an iconic new exterior designed especially for the London cab' - although the front end is still a secret!

Now Nissan has begun London-specific real-world testing of its NV200 with the aim of making it the most reliable, economical and user-friendly Hackney Carriage the Capital has ever seen. Perhaps surprisingly to some, the new taxi will have a Nissan-sourced 1.6-litre petrol engine - although they say a diesel version will be available, with an electric version on the cards within two years.

In its final specification, the NV200 now enters the last phase of its testing process - hitting the streets of the city where it will spend its working life. Based on the NV200 compact van, the taxi version has been designed from the inside out for the well-being of passengers, drivers and even other road-users. It complies with all TfL regulations with a 25ft turning circle and thanks to its petrol engine, be more environmentally-friendly than current diesel models.

Sliding doors give easy, safe access to the

NV200: "Nearly ready to go!"



The Nissan NV200 with a mask over the front end. It will be revealed next week...

new NV200 London Taxi. It's an iconic and very exciting vehicle - we're looking forward to looking after the needs of our new taxi customers."

Nissan will reveal the final look of the new NV200 London Taxi at

five-passenger rear interior, while other highlights include a glass roof (so that those on board can enjoy the view of the city), rear air-conditioning and even plug-in ports for charging smartphones. It all adds up to the most advanced and enjoyable London cab yet.

Nissan also announced that the Glyn Hopkin dealer group has been selected to sell, service and maintain the NV200 London Taxi.

Glyn Hopkin, Chairman of the Glyn Hopkin Group, added: "We're very proud to be selected to sell, service and maintain the

an event in the next few days - possibly December 2. Designed to be instantly recognisable as a London taxi, it gets a bespoke 'face' with distinctive and modern lighting, plus a new grille and bumper treatment over the regular NV200. The exterior certainly isn't the only part that has had the bespoke treatment, though; everything has been taken into consideration to ensure it can meet the demands of life as a London taxi.

Sales are scheduled to begin in the second half of 2014...

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London taxis still the best

Same old, same old...

It's now six years in a row for London taxis being voted the best in the world, according to the annual global taxi survey from **Hotels.com**. London won 22% of the votes, followed by New York City with 10% and Tokyo with 9% in third place. Berlin came fourth with Madrid, Mexico City and Amsterdam tying in fifth place.

Of the 30 countries surveyed, London topped the list across five of the seven categories, including cleanliness (23%), knowledge of the area (27%) and quality of driving (30%). We were also voted top for friendliness, although this category was said to be the least important to most travelers. Safety was the number one priority for travelers and we also topped the list for safest drivers with 23% of votes.

The Hotels.com survey also revealed the world's more obscure objects that travelers have admitted to leaving behind. They included a prosthetic leg found in an Australian cab, a trombone in Finland, a set of dentures in Germany and a wig in a US cab! Mind you, none compared to the baby that **Call Sign's** Editor discovered in the back of his taxi many years ago!

In answer to which nation was the most amorous in the back of a cab, Brits took the lead with 14% of passengers surveyed admitting to displaying passionate behavior. The average among other countries was a paltry 4%!

Alison Couper, Hotel.com's Senior Director of Communications told **Call Sign**:

"Six years running and London cabs are still leading the pack when it comes to travel - it's great to see! Our iconic black Hackney Carriages and their well-informed cabbies can pride themselves on being globally recognized for their expert knowledge and quality of driving. Maybe next year we can top the list for all categories!"



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Following his exclusive interview in the October *Call Sign*, Chairman of the **Zhejiang Geely Holding Group** - owners of **London Taxi Company** - **Li Shufu** has also spoken to the Chinese-based **Global Times** about buying the LTC and his plans for the future of the London taxi.

There is no doubt that before the purchase went through, which removed the LTC from the hands of the administrators, some had assumed that the name of China alongside that of the TX4 would mean cheap and poor quality. Geely's purchase of **Volvo** certainly removed those perceptions.

Geely is a cash-rich private motor company who take their purchases seriously and who have no intention of allowing the London taxi product to fall below its accepted world famous iconic standard and who intend improving it. A £150million investment programme into the TX4 taxi business over the next five years is testament to that.

The addition to the wall at the Coventry factory entrance of the words Zhejiang Geely Holding Group displays the pride they have in the product. In addition, all senior executives of the company now have Chinese translations on their business cards with the company's new identity proudly displayed on the back - Wholly-owned subsidiary to Zhejiang Geely Holding Group!

Global Times asked Li Shufu why he had invested money in the London Taxi Company, after all, compared to companies such as Volvo, it was relatively tiny! Mr Li replied that there were no other automobile companies in the world that specialised in manufactur-



GEELY: THE FUTURE OF THE TX5

ing taxis. His goal now was to make "professionalised taxis." He also admitted that the LTC profits were a drop in the bucket, but that what he valued was the special status the company enjoyed in the UK, its additional service concept and brand effect.

Director of Operations at Coventry, **Paul Woolley**, added that over the next five years, 3 new models would be developed on the basis of the existing product brands. The first would be to improve the current TX4. Then plans are afoot for a smaller-sized taxi for private use, while the last new model and perhaps the most significant was the develop-

ment of a new TX5 cab which the company hope will outperform the energy-saving efficiency and environmental protection function of the existing vehicles in terms of indexes. This will include a low-weight body, zero-emission standard and hybrid power. The plan will be put forward formally in 2018.

Research and Development of the new TX5 will make use of the global R&D network, including the R&D power from the cooperation with Volvo. The hybrid power technology will come from Volvo. It looks like the traditional London taxi is on the march..!

Our thanks to Global Times...

Holborn Circus Permanent Closures

For those who have been away, these are the changes at Holborn Circus that will eventually create a new public square between St Andrew Street and New Fetter Lane. The first two changes are permanent:

You can no longer turn right from Charterhouse Street into Hatton Garden

There is no access from Hatton Garden to Holborn Circus

There is no access from Holborn Circus into Hatton Garden, but this reopens 22 December...

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Over the past six months, *Call Sign* has been in contact with a company that claimed they could convert 15 year old TX1 and TX2 taxis to run on **Liquefied Petroleum Gas** – aka LPG. That would give drivers who assumed their taxis' working lives were over, an extra five years. Whilst we took an interest, all we could tell them was to come back if their system was ever passed by TfL for use as a licensed taxi.

Well, some two months ago, they did indeed come back and after much testing, they informed us that the converted taxis had been passed and would *Call Sign* like to test them?

Former Dial-a-Cab driver, **Stanley Roth (ex-Y53)** is one of those behind the **Gastech** conversion. He told this magazine about the battle to get extensions for older taxis. Both the Gastech TX1 and TX2 engines are rebuilt to a new standard and the notorious TX2 timing chain is replaced with a real Ford timing chain and not the ones originally fitted to the cab. It will operate even better because of not having pressure put on it by driving the fuel pump.

Gastech gave Call Sign some figures concerning the replaced LPG engines. The Gastech TX1 NOX emissions are 0.0254 gr/km. That is claimed to be 91% lower than diesel Euro 5. Their TX2 has 0.014041 gr/km - some 95% lower than diesel Euro 5. It is significantly lower in Oxides of Nitrogen than any modern day diesel engine and there are zero particulates / smoke.

You cannot bring your taxi out of retirement once it has passed its 15th birthday, but provided it hasn't reached that birthday and you want to convert it and gain another 5 years, the cab owner must write to TfL and tell them they wish to convert the cab to the Gastech LPG system.

The price of the TX1 conversion is £6,300 plus VAT and the TX2 is £6300 including VAT.

All the above has become fact since the LPG Gastech's Euro 5 cabs were successful at the rigorous testing procedures undertaken at the **Millbrook Emissions Testing Centre**. The engine is capable of operating on 100% LPG but can be switched to Automotive Petroleum if ever required.

It sounds like the answer to the problems some older drivers now find themselves in – although the conversion can also be carried out on newer cabs whose drivers wish to become far greener than they currently are. Those interested should email gas-taxi@gmail.com.

Call Sign decided to send out a reporter to test one of the converted cabs. Gary Cox (O46) used it for around eight hours and although the taxi was licensed, he decided to simulate a day's work instead so that he could stop whenever he wanted. This is Gary's report...

I was given a 10 year old LPG TX2 cab to test for as long as I wanted. You could say the converters were either tempting fate or very confident! Like all things, it's got its' up side and its' down side. The fact is that you can get another five years-worth of licence

Got a 15 year old taxi that is approaching the end of its working life and causing you to consider your future? Call Sign now has news that could help your TX1 or TX2 get...

A FIVE YEAR TAXI EXTENSION!



The NOx reading is at least 40% cleaner than the Euro 5 TX4

plates out of the jalopy with an LPG upgraded engine, plus LPG is running at 71.9p a litre at Edgware Road / Staples Corner or 65.9p at Sainsbury London Colney – at least until the chancellor is feeling foolhardy enough to take on the green lobby!

The engine has a seal on the tuning dial, which should of course extend the life of the engine and allow it to stop on the original braking system. Sorry lads up at the airport, you can't tune her up without TfL or the conversion folks knowing.

The obvious best thing about the cab is the engine; the rest of it is still a TX2. But then again, it is still YOUR TX2! The boot is full of gas tank, meaning no spare wheel. The battery is located where the derv tank was, although you can still jump start the battery from the bonnet of the cab.

The word interesting keeps cropping up - none more so than the life span of the battery and starter motor compared to a diesel engine. The engine has none of the heavy vibration of a diesel, from the front of her to the clean exhaust up its rear. That must be in its' favour when it comes to longevity. Maybe FX cab wings wouldn't have needed welding until much later with LPG engines!

With the click of a switch in the drivers' compartment, the cab changes from gas to petrol with about 75 miles going downhill. It's going to get you to Gatwick and a quick flick of your smart phone app will display the nearest LPG station. Filling with gas

takes a little getting used to, but garage staff have been trained in how the filling procedure works so you won't be on your own for those first few times. I would recommend going to a filling station that has lots of staff on hand. Stick a part-time partner on the cab and within 12 months you're quids in!

Finding a garage to service it might be a bone of contention until the company behind the conversions line up a set of recommended service garages, because you're not going to leave it in the hands of a back street Johnny who will rub his hands at the thought of trial and error on your nice clean engine.

The craftsmanship and detail is very impressive on parts we put a spanner to. On close inspection on the ramp, the differential appears well balanced with the engine - the complete opposite of the 3 litre Perkins upgrade substitute engine on the 2.2 FX4R. At around 26 miles to a gallon, it's not overly impressive, but then again at today's cost of LPG you can excuse it for that and in reality could represent up to a 40% fuel saving.

Before you think about a conversion, get it on paper how much oil it's going to do, because if it's more than a litre of oil every 700 miles, that could work out expensive. Think about the timing belts and tell them the bloke in *Call Sign* reckons they should give a 100,000 mile warranty if they think it's as good as they say it is.

Your cab may fall to bits, but someone will always buy the cab for this engine. Bet you're smiling if you've a TX1 or TX2 because the price is going to rocket thanks to the conversion to enlightenment.

Is it good for DaC to have old taxis on its fleet? No! Would I do it? Well if the body of the cab was up to it, then quite possibly yes. It's also tempting to have a quick respray, change the back seat, bang on a cheap personalised number plate, then to the public it's a brand new cab - especially with the cab engine just whispering compared to a diesel taxi. Will any of the big manufacturers ever fulfil our dream of a dual fuel taxi? Don't hold your breath. And if they do, you will be the last to know, mate!

I wish to point out that this was a blind test, not knowing who did the conversion, which in turn meant I had no preconceived ideas or prejudice against any person or company.

I would like to personally thank **Stanley Roth** for his pearls of wisdom and in fulfilling my curiosity. Stanley, you're always a gent...

A strange coincidence happened to Call Sign recently. This magazine's long-time photographer, Alan Green (E52), had stopped for a street hail on Finchley Road and was asked to take the passenger close to The Ivy in West Street. His clothing suggested he wouldn't be dining there!

The passenger was silent throughout the journey until close to the Shaftesbury Avenue junction with High Holborn, where the traffic slowed down almost to a halt. As they entered the top end of Shaftesbury Avenue, the passenger said he would get out and walk the rest of the way. So Alan pulled in towards the kerb, but was prevented from getting in too close because of other parked vehicles.

Alan continued the story that so many drivers over the years have come up against:

"The passenger got out, closed the door and while I was expecting to be paid the £22 at the nearside window, calmly just walked away from the cab before breaking into a trot towards Cambridge Circus! Stuck half out in the road and with other traffic close by, I could neither leave the cab where I'd stopped, nor open my door to give chase."

Alan described the bilker as white, around 6 feet tall, slim build with short dark hair, bushy beard and dark framed spectacles. He was wearing blue jeans and a dark coat with a satchel on his shoulder.

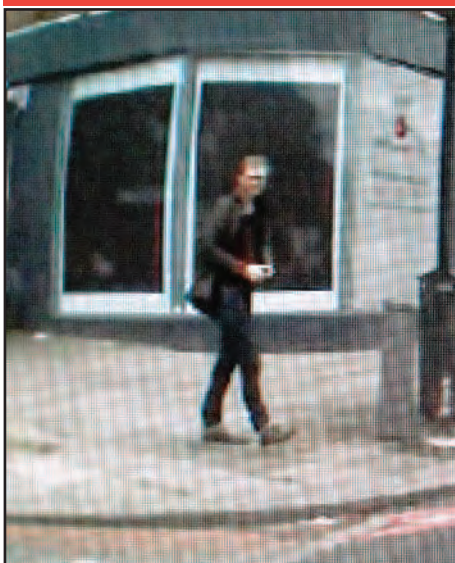
But Alan also had a witness – a Novus CabCam attached to the inside of the cab's front windscreen, which took the image shown here.

Alan added that his Novus camera was primarily a road safety feature, but it also has other obvious benefits, such as capturing the image of a bilker for everyone to see – including the police.

Not too long before Alan Green's bilk, Conservative MP Richard Fuller (Bedford) was attempting to bring in a new Bill to Parliament that would require all licensed taxis (and private hire) to install closed

Power of the CabCam?

The bilk and the Bill arrive together!



The quality may not be brilliant but is good enough for the person to be recognised!

circuit televisions in their vehicles.

According to Mr Fuller: "Taxi drivers have been treated like second-class citizens and are an overlooked community when it comes to personal safety. Yet they are an essential part of our public transport system, for in many towns across the country who is going to take people home in the evenings? It will be a taxi or private hire vehicle. However, the safety provided in those circumstances is below that provided in other forms of public transport. It is the most trusting of circumstances: one, two or three people in a vehicle at night, with nothing to provide evidence if a crime is committed."

Mr Fuller described bilking, but added that drivers from ethnic minorities were being racially abused and claimed that incidences of that abuse were reduced where the cab had CCTV fitted.

"Having CCTV in taxis is about providing safety, not only for drivers but for passengers,

because there are sometimes instances of passengers attacking each other in the back of taxis. In my conversations with the Met police, I was interested to hear that they regard the provision of CCTV in taxis and private hire vehicles as helpful in cases of sexual assault or rape that occur after people have been taken by taxi to a place of residence."

Richard Fuller then told of a sad occasion when one of his constituents, Mehar Dhariwal, was murdered. This, he claimed, was what brought into sharp relief the dangers that men and women in taxis can be under when they are put in situations of risk.

"This Bill," he continued, "proposes to provide for secure and encrypted CCTV in taxi cabs. It is important from the point of view of privacy that the information is secure and encrypted. It should also be accessible by the police only in circumstances in which a crime is reported to have been committed. The system should be mandatory, because then the citizen would know that it was being used when they got into a taxi cab. If the take-up were voluntary rather than mandatory, people would not know exactly what type of safety provision was in use. Councils around the country have seen the value of introducing a mandatory system over a voluntary one."

He ended with the issue of costs, saying that bus drivers do not pay for the CCTV that protects them and nor should taxi drivers have to pay for their own personal safety while they ply their trade.

However, CabCams are also able to see outside the vehicle as well as inside. The outside view is what Alan Green used to get the photo of his bilker. The outside view also enables insurance companies to reduce premiums and those views are available to the drivers, whereas inside the cab would not be unless downloaded by the police or licensing authority first.

Further information on the Novus CabCam is available from Deltec AI Ltd, Oxford Road, Wealdstone HA3 7RG or call Jason 0208 515 7820.



Complaints / Appeals results



An Appeals meeting took place at DaC House on Wednesday 30 October 2013

Name & call sign

David Tobias (N80J)

Description

Driver accepted DaC credit card trip through system and shortly into the journey changed trip to cash and cleared the credit card ride through Hailo
Rules 2, 3, 21

Verdict

2: Two week susp
3: Two week susp
21: Expelled

Original Complaint result: 2: One week susp, 3: One week susp, 21: Two weeks susp...

David Jones (N86)

Driver completed two trips
24 times in one-month period
Rules 2, 6, 11

2: Reprimand
6: Warning
11: Two week susp

Original Complaint result: 2: One week susp, 6: One week susp, 11: Two weeks susp...

Hello Ladies & Gents

This will be my last report as the Society's Compliance Officer. At the last Board of Management meeting it was decided that there would be a change of Board Members responsibilities with immediate effect. My new role will be head of Driver Operations and Contact Centre Manager, a position that Keith Cain has previously carried out. Keith will now be head of Sales and Garry White will step into my shoes as the new Compliance Officer.

All three of us will, I am sure, be working very closely to make the changeover as smooth as possible and we will all share our knowledge and experience with each other whilst we get to grips with our new responsibilities. All three roles are very important and I know all three of us have the confidence and knowhow to make the re-shuffle a success.

Before I pass the position fully over to Garry, I'd like to bring to your attention a number of issues that are still cause for concern. I have received more reports lately of members not displaying the Society Logo, and what is more alarming is that one or two DaC members have been seen with the Logo missing while displaying 'Hailo' stickers on the windows or partitions of their taxis. It's no wonder accounts are

CONTACT CENTRE CHAT

With Allan Evans



Please consider the consequences of these actions. I have spoken to many of you recently and I believe we all understand that the climate has changed dramatically and we as a Board know that to gain accounts and maintain our existing account base, we must react to the competition out there in the market place. Some of the decisions may be tough, but the Board will consider all available options to take our Society forward.

Finally, in my new position I will still be contactable on my current line number of 0207 553 7222 and email address Allane@Dialacab.co.uk. I will always be happy to help and advise any member that may need assistance. Be very lucky in what we hope will be a busy lead up to Christmas and please help us cover trips in problem areas from East to West/North to South at all times of the day. Remember local trips often end up as roaders and you can never be too clever.

Allan Evans
Head of Driver Operations
Contact Centre Manager

now expecting no run ins or gratuities, with cheap fares on par with minicabs!

It is certainly not helping the Society and even though we sell our services as the circuit with true professionals and with the technical back-up to match, it makes it increasingly hard to compete on a level footing without compromising our taxi drivers as Hailo seems to be doing.

DIAL-A-CAB RESHUFFLE

Dial-a-Cab Chairman **Brian Rice** has announced a reshuffle of Board of Management positions.

Former Operations and Contact Centre Manager, **Keith Cain**, now becomes Head of Sales. Former Compliance Officer, **Allan Evans**, will be taking over Keith's position in the Contact Centre, while newest Board member, **Garry White**, is now Compliance Officer.

Both **Tom Whitbread** and **Mike Son** remain without portfolio...

Taxiworld launches Brewery Road office

Taxiworld has announced the opening of a new office at the TX4 retailer's Brewery Road dealership site, now giving customers the choice of three dedicated Taxiworld sites and complementing their 16 strong dealer network throughout London.

Taxiworld MD **Jill Paton** commented: "The Group is very excited about the prospect of working more closely with **The London Taxi Company** and the opportunity to give our joint customers an enhanced level of service.

"The facility at Brewery Road is an ideal location for our customers to visit and experience our complete range of products, from our unique **SIM card taximeter**, which negates the necessity to attend time consuming annual tariff changes; to the latest range of **Smart Witness CCTV cameras**."

Taxiworld's new range of products, coupled with their expansion to the new facilities, has created a requirement for a number of new personnel to join the company. However the existing team led by 'Auntie' **Linda** will be splitting their time between all sites, ensuring that there will always be a familiar face to provide product information and demonstrations.

The new outlet will be manned and open during Brewery Road's normal operational hours, Monday to Thursday, 8.30am until 5pm and Fridays, 8.30am until 4pm.

UK Retail General Manager **James Dennison** added: "We knew this partnership would make sense for both parties, however, most of all for our joint customers. We're excited about the opportunities that this venture will bring, including the possible efficiencies to be gained for both operations."

Customers will find the Taxiworld team in their new office adjacent to the Service Reception entrance or they can call the team direct on 0207 700 9837.



THE HERTFORDSHIRE Winter Pro Am Series

The Hertfordshire Golf & Country Club is pleased to announce dates for the 2013/14 Winter Pro Am Golf events

2013

Friday 13th December 2013

2014

Friday 17th January 2014

Friday 28th February 2014

Friday 28th March 2014

The format of each event will be in teams of three amateurs with a Professional played as a team with the best two Stableford scores to count and an individual Professional competition

Each event will follow the below itinerary:

09.30 Coffee & bacon roll on arrival

10.30 Shot gun start

15.00 Two course meal

Team prizes and Individual cash prizes for Professionals

For team of 3 Amateurs visitors £135

Members & **Dial-a-Cab drivers** £105.00

(£25 for professional)

Maximum handicap: (3/4 handicap) of Gentlemen 24, Ladies 30.

You may enter an amateur team only (we will allocate a Professional for you) or Professionals can bring their own team

Please call Elaine on 01992 466666 ex 249 for an entry form.
To confirm entry, full payment will be required with your entry form

The biggest but still the best



A successful taxi support company which employs 55 people and provides crucial services to London's illustrious black cab industry has relocated to new, larger premises at Blackhorse Road.

Originally founded by Micky Ascott around 1980 the name changed to Ascott Cab Company in 1991 and has enjoyed great success ever since and is now the largest independent taxi service firm in the area. This proudly independent 'one-stop taxi shop' caters for drivers of London's iconic black cabs by providing vital services including Taxi Sales, with the unrivalled Tower Gold Warranty, specialist servicing, diagnostics and

warranty repairs, MoT's, Cab Rentals, Digitax meter hire and our leading insurance approved body shop. We offer NSL pre-tests, which prepares the vehicle and owner for the stringent government licencing and inspection procedures, also Ascott Cab Company has its own Apprenticeship Scheme associated with Bromley College on day release investing in youngsters for the future. On site is Quotax Insurance services tailored specifically for taxi drivers. This family-run company, who we are proud to be associated with, aims to offer everything that the professional cabbie needs in the most friendly, economical and convenient manner possible.



Over half of Ascott's 55 dedicated staff is drawn from the surrounding area with 33 employees living within five miles of the new premises, which are located just 200 metres from the former site in Evelyn Street. The move forced upon us due to the redevelopment of the existing site has encouraged the company to invest over a £¼ million in this expansion project, which has enabled the company to increase the number of ramps in the workshop from 15 to 19. This means that the 18 fully trained technicians are able to accept an increased workload whilst operating more efficiently, and that waiting times for customers have been significantly cut. The workshop is al-

so equipped with fully computerised diagnostics systems.

Nearby Ilderton Road is the location of our full body shop facility which boasts a further 16 specialist body shop technicians undertaking personal, insurance and non-fault repair work. Its state-of-the-art facilities make for high quality workmanship and a rapid turnaround, which means minimum downtime and a hassle-free experience for working cabbies.

The Ascott Cab Company has built an unparalleled reputation for customer service and integrity, and enjoys an extremely loyal client base among London's taxi driving community.

For more details call **020 8692 1122** or visit the website at www.ascottcab.com The new premises are located at **Blackhorse Road, SE8 5HY**.



Ascott Cab Company would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all our customers for their continued support, present and in the future.

Former Dial-a-Cab driver Bob 'The dog' Heath (Ex-F44) retired from taxi driving around 16 years ago: "I was forcibly retired from driving a cab following heart bypass surgery," Bob told *Call Sign*, "and yes, contrary to popular belief, they actually found one to bypass!"

Six years before that, Bob and Tom Whitbread had founded Dial-a-Dream, the charity that makes the wishes of terminally ill children come true and coincidentally, the formation of which you can read about inside this issue.

Earlier this year, Bob and his wife Jacquie had been on holiday at Queensland's Gold Coast City of Surfers Paradise, which is said to be the Australian Gold Coast's entertainment and tourism centre.

Surfers also lays claim to the world's best looking traffic wardens! Fortunately for this mag, regular reader Bob took a photo of the Meter Maids on his iPad and passed it over to us.

It isn't just that they are female and gorgeous – Bob's words as *Call Sign* always keeps clear of sexist comments (!!!) – but while patrolling Surfers beachfront area, the Maids keep a supply of small value coins on them for those parked motorists whose time is on the verge of being up, but need a few extra minutes to buy that last souvenir. The Maids use the coins to give those motorists an extra 15 minutes before the real wardens come along and for which

Parking paradise at Surfers Paradise!



Bob with two of the Meter Maids at Surfers Paradise

most people thank them by donating a buck or two to the local charity. For an extra dollar, the Maids will pose with you for a photo!

"I don't think it will catch on in Wanstead,"

Bob said referring to Dial-a-Dream's East London HQ, "and I doubt that many of our wardens would look that good in a swimming costume anyway!"

Of all the account clients that have passed on over the years, none seem to have brought on memories like Sir David Frost did. We have already published several and Eddie Smith's will be the final one...

Memories of Sir David Frost

"Who could forget the real gentleman that was Sir David Frost?" Eddie Smith (Y56) posed the question to *Call Sign* when we met recently while discussing the long-time Dial-a-Cab client's recent death.

"As a youngster, I watched his television programs with interest, especially those celebrity interviews, with searching questions that some interviewee's squirmed to answer fully!

"And then a few years ago, I clearly remember picking him up from a TV studio late one night to take him back to his Chelsea home. He looked absolutely shattered, completely drained and yet during the journey, he still thought to ask how I was and if I had had a good day. Then he asked if I had a family and asked about them. How could you not be impressed when one of the world's most recognisable celebrities takes the time to enquire about you.

"He could have just fallen asleep in the back and who could have blamed him, but he took the time to enquire about me which was really unforgettably nice," Eddie told us.

"On another occasion I took him from Kensington to Harley Street. My instructions were 'wait and return' but little did I realise that wait was to be well over an hour. Anyway, when he came out from the address, as he got back into the cab he gave me a David Frost smile, apologised for the length of waiting and added that at least it was a nice job for me! Then we moved off swiftly back towards W8.

"He is missed by the world as a celebrity but is also missed at Dial-a-Cab as just a really nice guy."

Then Eddie went back to work...



Sir David with former BM Allen Togwell



Eddie Smith

Call Sign

December 2013

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AGM REMINDER



All members should have received the *Notice of Annual General Meeting 2013* advising that the meeting

will again be held at The HAC, Armoury House, City Road on

Sunday 9th February 2014 at 11am. The meeting this year will consider an agenda *excluding* the election of officers, but *including* as usual, proposed Rule Changes and Propositions.

Any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions must be received at Dial-a-Cab House on or before

09:00hrs on Thursday 5th December 2013 as per the Notice of Annual General Meeting 2013 letter.

Please remember that if you do not vote by post then you should attend. If you do not attend or vote by post, you will be liable for a £50 fine.

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

Call Sign's Stephen Berndes (R14) says..

Its a Cabbies Life

A heavy problem...

I was on point of the **Cheapside** rank at **One New Change**, the new City shopping mall. A morbidly obese lady – ok, a very fat lady – waddled up and said she wasn't going far but had a heavy laptop and could I please take her to **Marks & Spencer** on **Cheapside**.

"You are on Cheapside," I said with incredulity. All that extra data was loading her down methinks. She thumbed around using her podgy fingers, stabbing at her *iPhone* and then corrected herself by curtly changing the address to **Finsbury Pavement**. I acknowledged and engaged the meter. She squeezed her bulk through the extended door, occupying the volume of space like a plug occupies the circumference of the hole in a bath.

On our short journey, she contested every street and every turn. I could clearly see her following the journey path on her *iPhone* – no doubt on the *Google* map.

My blood pressure was rising in proportion to the number of interruptions she had made by this time and I was beginning to develop a nervous twitch, using deep breathing exercises to ally the onset of a seizure! Then with her operatic bulk and a satisfied grin, she suddenly yelled out: "There it is!"

I laughed and congratulated her as I pulled up at Finsbury Pavement. She then began extracting her potato frame causing – may I add – huge and deep indentations on the passengers' seats; she had straddled all the seating positions!

I suggested as pleasantly as I could that it might have been less stressful for her if she had just relaxed in the back seat and read the paper or made phone calls like most other passengers.

"I'm not a taxi driver," she replied.

I ended our conversation with a quiet "evidently not" before wishing her a polite "have a good day." Her response was to slam the door.

If you think I'm a touch *fattist*, it's just that I find being rude avoids the need for expletives. Perhaps next time I'll handle it differently, but with the advent of technology these incidences are likely to increase, causing some consternation – even when we are carrying out our job in the correct manner.



And on a 'lighter' note!

My wife is a foreigner. As a proud Lithuanian, she refuses to renounce her Lithuanian passport in favour of a British one. In common with many foreigners, her linguistic skills are plentiful; fluent in four languages – which sometimes have unexpected advantages relating to my work.

I had joined the **Victoria Coach Station** rank and was third from point. Two drivers were stretching their legs talking to one another, giving the distinct impression that they had no interest in the fare standing next to them beside his battered suitcases.

I walked up and tried to engage in conversation with the chap, establishing that he was Polish. So I then called my wife and passed my mobile over to him. They spoke in Polish for a while and when he passed the phone back to me, my wife said the guy was fine and explained what he had said.

I began to load his cases into my cab. One of the drivers ahead of me wandered up and with rather colourful language, warned me that the character was decidedly dodgy. I told him it was ok and that my wife has vetted him by explaining that she speaks Polish.

I then pointed the cab in the direction of Hounslow...

Stephen Berndes
Call Sign Online

Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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

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

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

The cost?

Just 1% per month on the outstanding balance (or APR of 12.7%).

Loans can be paid back early AND there can be an annual dividend on your shares.

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

Call us on 020 7729 8171 or 020 7749 0585

*Members of the Financial Ombudsman Service
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DaC Credit Union Ltd, Peterley Business Centre, 472 Hackney Rd E2 9EQ
Authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority
Registration number 213263*

Tom Whitbread: Colostomy bag for six months...

Around seven years ago, I suffered a bout of Diverticulitis. It seemed to be under control with drugs until four months ago when I suddenly developed a new set of pains in my stomach. After repeated visits to my GP and explaining the symptoms, his explanation was that I was getting old and that half the population had Diverticulitis. But he agreed to send me for a colonoscopy (camera up the bum).

On the day of my examination, there was a problem due to my intestine either being partially blocked or narrowed, so it had to be abandoned. The doctor said I would need an urgent CT scan via my GP, but he booked the appointment incorrectly. After my wife, eldest daughter and I laid into him, he contacted Homerton Hospital and said I needed the CT scan urgently as he thought I might have cancer – that meant they had to see me within 72 hours.

Within a few days, I had an appointment with a Gastroenterology specialist Surgeon at the Homerton. He immediately saw the serious nature of the situation and said he would try again for a colonoscopy or failing that, the CT scan. I had full confidence in him as he explained what was awaiting me in the near future. But four days later, I had a serious problem with my intestine and bladder - which had perforated - and my body was becoming poisoned.

I phoned the hospital and was admitted within the hour with an operation set for the next morning. The surgeon impressed on me how dangerous the operation would be, but I had faith in him and his team - as you must have at a time like this.

At 7.40 the following morning, the surgeon came rushing onto the ward and asked if I would complain if need be as someone in administration wanted to put my operation off for several days. The surgeon said that any delay could mean I would not be seeing the next weekend! So he got two of his team and a porter to take me up at full speed to the anti-theatre to be prepared and installed on the operating table. Now there was no going back...

Tom or the London Underground!

The next thing I remember was coming around at 5pm and having more tubes coming out of me than the London Underground and a colostomy bag fitted for a period of 6 months. While unconscious, the surgeon and his team had sliced into me like a Sunday roast and removed six inches of intestine, while re-routing the rest.

This was the start of a dignity breaking four weeks; they pushed a tube or aspirator into any orifice they could find as well as cannulas in my arms and hands. Then to finish, they put main line tubes - five at a time - into my neck! This was topped off with the humiliation of wearing idiot gowns. If I needed to go to the bathroom, I had to drag along a mobile stand with all my intravenous drugs and liquid vitamins. If I tried to sleep, they'd wake me up every hour for my observations to be taken, although that eventually became every 3 hours. There were also regular injections.

During the following 3 weeks, I was not allowed any solid food and for almost 3 weeks, no fluid by mouth. Watching others eating what looked like appetising food and drinking hot tea, was torture.

During my second week in the Homerton, I was having great difficulty in sleeping due to all my tubes, so the curtains around the bed were drawn whilst I had the light on allowing me to read. Then at 2am, there was a noise on the other side of my curtain with much arguing and



scuffling. This was to last for the next four nights. I discovered that this person had been forcibly put on the ward via a 28 day mental welfare section order while he received surgical treatment for his arm. He was guarded by up to ten escorts at a time. His room was six feet away from my bed and each night he'd get out and away from his escorts, then put on his demonstration next to my bed. Why was he not transferred to the hospital wing next to ours that specialised in mental problems as he was able to walk about? Well whilst I was at the Homerton, a murderer serving 28 years escaped from there!

I also got talking to the patient in the room opposite my bed and next to the night entertainer's room. This man in his late 40s, had a heavy American accent and had gone to the US when a young boy. He told me that in his early 20s he became involved in heavy drug dealing and during his last drug deal, his seller had pulled a gun and tried to shoot him, but the gun jammed so he took his chance and stabbed him in the neck with a knife and killed him. He was caught, arrested and sentenced to 23 years imprisonment. He could have been released on parole after 15 years, but got into more trouble in prison and had to serve 18 years. During our time in hospital, we had a lot of chats to pass the time.

One evening at the end of my second week, I felt some serious pain and called a young doctor over to explain my problem. He examined me and called down a Registrar for a second opinion. They both agreed that because I was not eating, my stomach was filling up with bile (which acts in the stomach to break down food allowing it to pass through easily). This had the effect of making me drown! So that was where they came up with another minor torture, passing a narrow tube up my nose and down the windpipe towards the stomach. Then they attached a large syringe to the end of the tube and drew out excess bile. The first attempt drew 2 litres with another one and a half litres the next morning. I thought that had cleared it, but again I was wrong and two days later I again had the same pains.

The same doctor from two days previous was on duty and contacted the Registrar who said he would be down. Three hours later and still no sign of him. When they did contact him, they said an x-ray was needed so we waited and it was eventually done at 4.20 am. Whilst there, another mentally disturbed patient went berserk outside the door. So if you want an eventful time in hospital, just stick with me!

The Registrar had the x-rays within five minutes on his portable PC, so now it should have been all systems go. But no, he said as it was 4.45am it could be left until my consultant came in at 8am. All this Registrar had to do was to tell my senior male nurse to go ahead and I would have been out of pain within minutes, but because of an inability to oversee their workload and delegate, I had to suffer from 8pm until 8am

the following morning. As soon as my Consultant came in and saw my dilemma, he had the aspirator replaced and another one and half litres removed from my stomach. If I could have got hold of that Registrar in the middle of the night, I would have shown him how a dog feels like after being neutered.

Dracula arrives...

Each morning, Dracula came in to draw off more blood, then you had the young F2 doctors who inserted cannulas. During my time at Homerton, I never found one F2 who could insert a cannula with no problem and get it to stay in without falling out. Twice in the middle of the night I had to have my bed linen changed, as the doctor tried to insert the needle and ended up covering the sheet in my blood. Luckily Dracula had gone!

I'm someone who has a problem with needles. My fear stems from a past job as an accident ambulance driver. I had been assisting a doctor who was treating a rather awkward drunk with a knee injury. As the doctor inserted the hypodermic needle by the knee joint, the patient lashed out and broke the needle. We then had to hold him down whilst the doctor cut out the broken part of needle; since then I have not liked to watch a needle being inserted into my flesh.

It was not until I had to have my dressing changed for the first time after the operation that I was told of the new ruling; that they were not allowed to shave hair off sensitive parts of the body but had to use an electric hair trimmer. That doesn't get right down to the skin and leaves a small stubble around a man's most precious part, then they stick a 2 inch wide super strength plaster over the wound and hair so when the 'don't make a fuss' 15 stone nurse decides to change the dressing, you have a scene resembling a Tom and Jerry fight with this Tom hanging from the ceiling screaming in pain! The nurse always says that it wasn't so bad! Not bad? She had just given me a Brazilian with no warning!

At the end of week 3, a doctor arrived with a bag filled with vitamins to compensate for the food I'd been deprived of. It looked like liquid Polyfilla and put into my body via a cannula inserted in the side of my neck during a previous visit to the operating theatre.

During my stay, most patients were there for just a few days and by week three I felt like a prison lifer. The boredom, especially at nights, was only broken when someone fell out of bed or decided to re-enact a scene out of the film, *one flew over the cuckoo's nest*.

By the end of week 4, my surgeon decided to allow me home for some good food and exercise. But I soon realised that due to the operation across my stomach, trying to bend over was strictly restricted as the healing flesh did not want to be stretched. I also didn't realise how long the healing processes takes - according to the surgeon, it takes as long as the body needs. But he added that the reversal operation could take place in 6 months but that I should not thank him until 5 years had passed. Well, at my age, his thinking that I will still be alive in five years' time is a bonus!

But I must say a big thank you to all the doctors, nurses, physios, assistants and even cleaners without whose expertise and good humour, I would have gone mad.

Be careful, keep yourself healthy and a very Merry Christmas to you all...

**Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member**

In the days of taxi overhauls, *Call Sign* often received letters from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers telling us about something petty that stopped their cab from getting its yearly plate. There were unauthorised stickers such as the AA's *Relay*, which was banned along with many others stickers of that ilk. There was the occasional missing screw and the best of all – the missing strap to tie the luggage in for when you took a corner too fast. The fact that in those days of yore taxis had just three doors and no luggage door, mattered not because even with four doors, the old PCO insisted on the strap being there. But those days have mostly gone – which is why DaC driver **Laury Bartlett's (184)** tale stunned us. We'll leave Laury to take up the tale...

"I have been musing for some twenty years and it has always amazed me the trivial things they find to stop you from getting your new plate. Today at Crayford was, I thought, going to be easy. New tyres, freshly washed and after all, the **Vito** taxi I drive is only two years old. Nothing could possibly go wrong... could it?

Well it failed. Why? Well the size of font on the insurance certificate was a size ten and it should have been size twelve so people can see it from the kerbside! I don't really think they would manage to see a size 12 font either, but there you go! Ok, there was also the matter of the MoT certificate not being signed twice (it had been only signed once), but surely they could use a bit of discretion. The taxi driver in front of me had left his MoT at home and it still got passed on the understanding that he dropped it in later. Could they not have done the same with me? I know they have a job to do and are applying the letter of the law, but isn't it just a bit

SO SIZE DOES MATTER!

NSL tell DaC driver it's too small*
**(...the font on his insurance certificate that is)!*



pedantic? Or is it me... am I the wrong type too?

But it wasn't all bad because having phoned my brokers, they were informed that the font size on the appropriate template had been approved by NSL. However, when I informed the office manager at the Crayford

depot, he said he had not received any communication from his director about this. In fact he phoned his boss whilst I was there and was told that no such approval had been sought or granted! I guess there was some sort of communication breakdown and the only way I could see for a way out of this was to find some new insur-

ance with the relevant sized font! This I did through **Quotax** - and I managed to save almost a £1000 in premiums! Plus I now have a protected no claims which I never did before. What is it they say about clouds having a silver lining!

I am still puzzled as to why **Aviva** changed the way they produced the certificate, as it was perfectly acceptable before. But the serious side to it is that there may well be Dial-a-Cab drivers out there with a similar issue regards font size, and although they may not warrant a stop on the street, it could mean a 'fail' when it comes to the annual test..

The office manager at NSL went over and above his duty to help me get back on the road that afternoon for which I am grateful, but another cabby might not be so lucky."

Call Sign wrote to the head of NSL – who appeared in this mag last year to explain how they would operate after winning the account from SGS – but sadly no reply arrived. So we have to assume that contrary to popular belief, size does matter... !



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Having lost in the last seconds to a disputed goal in their FA Cup match against Canvey

Lee Pearce: We were tanked!

Island, Dial-a-Cab driver Lee Pearce (J71) was looking forward to a run in the prestigious FA Trophy. But unlike their FA Cup game, there was no dispute over the result against *Calor Gas* Premier League leaders Hemel Hempstead Town. As Lee put it: "We were well and truly tanked!"

Yet Lee's North Greenford United took an early lead with a well taken goal from striker Jeffrey Kalejaiye and were playing well. But Hemel showed that their attacking prowess is deadly when scoring 2 goals late in the first half and no less than 7 goals in the second half. Hemel's domination can be seen when you realise that Lee was possibly NGU's best player, saving five one-on-ones!

Lee Pearce told *Call Sign* after the game:

"We were awful in that second half and just allowed them to take control. We were well and truly tanked!"

Lee, perhaps unsurprisingly, refused to tell us what NGU manager, former Chelsea legend Neil Shipperley had said after the game. A brief *he wasn't very happy* was enough!

We're not sure if NGU can take any comfort from one fact: Hemel Hempstead's next match was in the league against Bashley FC and incredibly, after their 9 goals against NGU, they smashed in another ten in a 10 – 0 whitewash, which actually makes Hemel Hempstead the most free-scoring side in all of Europe with no less than 49 goals in 13 league games!

It can always be worse!

DaC driver Richard Potter asks if this is the...

Self-Destruction of the Taxi Trade?



As we end the year, 2014 now makes this the longest downturn in Taxi trade history - year six. Without doubt, things have been hard and the trade is now starting to split apart, or should I say self-destruct in a way I have never seen before. One radio presenter recently said there was no love lost between taxi drivers and you only have to look at the **LTDF** website to see that. Or you need just look at what the app companies are doing or see how many times you get hooted at or not let out by other taxi drivers. In my eyes, it has become quite sad.

As regular readers of *Call Sign* will know, I used to work for the fire service in Kent and the flexibility of taxi driving allows you to commit to being full time whilst working another job part-time. During my time at **KFRS**, I was approached to become a rep for the **FBU** (Fire Brigades Union), which I accepted. I represented **Retained (part time) Fire-fighters** in my own brigade and

also my region, which covered Kent, Surrey, East and West Sussex. Not long after I started, we went into dispute with the Labour government over pay and organised strikes to get a financial increase, which we eventually got. The history behind the strikes was that the Labour Government wanted to make changes to Fire-fighters terms and conditions of service, which were detrimental to us and the FBU were pursuing a pay increase. Funnily enough, Labour Ministers had over a number of years refused, but said they would discuss pay in return for changes in terms and conditions. Fire-fighters pay had not increased for years and was falling behind other services like the Police. New Labour knew it was only a matter of time before the FBU came cap in hand. The general consensus was that the FBU needed a pay formula which would allow Fire-fighters a yearly pay increase without having to trade off more pay and conditions - nor go cap in hand to the Fire ministers.

Now what other organisation has a yearly pay formula which is indexed linked and gives that organisation an unconditional pay increase? What the FBU or any trade organisation like the RMT would do to have a pay formula like ours!

So...

Did you hear the story about the trade organisation that had the best pay formula in the country, but some of its trade members decided to undercut it by doing work at a lower hourly rate than what had been agreed to try and 'win work back' that they already had! And that the whole structure was founded by members themselves and the benefits don't stay within the organisation, but go to outsiders who don't care whether the trade lives or dies! So who are these people hell bent on self-destruction? Of course it's us - the taxi trade!

If you are foolish enough to do work for the app companies, you are paying yourselves on average £4 less per job compared to DaC. So what's their motto: "Come and work for us, do shorter jobs, work harder, get paid less?"

Geely

On a more positive note, it's good to read **Geely** in *Call Sign* saying they are looking into ways of improving the **TX4**. But one thing that never gets a mention is the danger of the blind spot you get from the windscreen pillars. It really is about time they made them thinner and safer, whilst we all know the benefits of improving the MPG by making the taxi lighter and removing the *Laurel and Hardy* type chassis.

One useful thing you might like to know is that if your brake light stops working during a shift, swap it with the reversing light bulb as they are the same and easy to change. The chances of you being stopped by the law after you both reverse up the same street are remote, however no brake light is an easy stop.

As Christmas is fast approaching, wherever you are and with whomever you spend it, I hope that all DaC members and their families have a Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Richard Potter (T51)
Call Sign Online

This series commemorates next year's centenary of the beginning of WW1 in 1914...

DAC WAR HEROES

Lou Sherman's War

Lou Sherman was with ODRTS for only a brief period, but his story is well worth telling. His war began even before the Germans invaded Poland on September 1st 1939. The day previously he had gone into his garage, **Watson's of Caledonian Road**, only to find an officer from the fire brigade telling him that his cab had been requisitioned. He was told there was no point in arguing and his cab, a **Beardmore**, went. It was the last he would ever see of it. The following day, Lou was told that he too had been requisitioned along with his two cab driving brothers, into the newly formed **Auxiliary Fire Service**. Entrants to the AFS had to pass a physical test – using a hook ladder to scale up the outside of a building. Lou passed the test, his two brothers failed and Lou was in the AFS.

There was supposed to be a week's training, but even that did not materialise. The first air raid siren of the war was heard on the opening day of the war, **September 3rd 1939**. Lou and his crew rushed to their tender and drove out into the City. And waited! And waited! It was a false alarm. There were plenty of other false alarms during what was termed the *Phoney War*.

To pass the time Lou and his mates reared chickens and rabbits, selling the meat to the butchers and the rabbit pelts to a furrier. The vicar of St Botolph's in Aldgate allowed them to grow vegetables in the garden - the churchyard was still in ruins from being bombed in the Great War.

Lou was based at **Fairclough Road School**, just off **Backchuch Lane**. There were 3 other cab drivers and they helped turn the canteen into a virtual cabmen's shelter, selling the type of food the cab shelters were selling pre-war. So successful were they that officers from the nearby fire station in Commercial Road would forsake their own canteen and eat at Fairclough Road!

The *Phoney War* ended when the **Blitz** began on **September 7th 1940**. Lou and his crew had their first real shout. A runner came to the school to tell them where to go and with Lou driving, the other men clambered on the outside of the tender. They only got as far as **Plumbers Row** when a bomb damaged wall came down on them, one of the AFS men was killed and Lou escaped with just a broken finger.

The fire at **John Lewis** eleven days later was particularly dangerous for Lou. He and another man had been walking through the smoke-filled store, kicking a stone in front of them to test if there was actually a floor. Unfortunately the floor they were on gave way, Lou fell to the floor below but was relatively unscathed; the fireman next to him fell several floors and was killed. Two other firemen died that night inside John Lewis, though the 200 people taking shelter in the basement all survived.

Just before Christmas 1940, Lou had been having an extremely lucky session of brag in the canteen when the bells went down for another raid. He scooped his winnings, 15 shillings, all in tanners (6d) into a handkerchief and set off towards the fire. Driving through the blackout was hazardous at the best of times and Lou was fortunate to stop his engine just in front of a large crater that had appeared in Commercial Road, down which was an equally large ticking bomb. Unable to drive around it or reverse due to the tenders behind him, Lou stood in the road and pulled his handkerchief out to blow his nose – and 30 six-penny bits fell down into the crater! Fifteen shillings was a lot of money to Lou and despite the dangers, he jumped down the crater and retrieved every single sixpenny piece!



A few days later on December 29th came the worst raid of the Blitz thus far; Lou was called out to tackle the large fires at the gas and oil works at **Thameshaven**. There was little they could do other than keeping the large holders that were not damaged from exploding by keeping them cool. Lou and the other men tackled those fires for three days and nights – they believed they had been forgotten as no one came with any food for the first two days!

May 10th 1941 was to be the last night of the Blitz, although London didn't know that. The Luftwaffe dropped 10,000 incendiaries onto London and the whole of the City was ablaze. Emergency water supplies soon dried up, so Lou was sent down with his tender to the **Tower of London**,

dragged his hose over the side of the railings and linking up with other tenders every 200 yards, managing to get water up to the **Bank of England** where the fires were still raging. With London a beacon from the air, the Germans had no problem following up the fire raid with high explosives. As the fires raged, the tide went down and there was nothing anyone could do but wait for the fires to burn out. By this time, Lou had been sent to **Shadwell Hospital**, having been hit on the hand by a piece of shrapnel following an explosion.

Lou was later recalled back to the John Lewis building to assess whether an outbuilding there was safe. It wasn't. In an all too familiar setting, the floor caved in there as well. As before, the other man came off worse with his spine severed. Lou had badly damaged his back. After a week at Shadwell Hospital – described by Lou as an awful place - Lou returned to his duties but by now could only act as driver. He carried on like this until 1943 when he was pensioned off. Lou Sherman's war was over.

In 1946, Lou returned to cab driving whenever the pain in his back allowed him to. He was an ardent trade unionist and stood for election in Hackney Council, eventually becoming Mayor there in 1960. He helped regenerate the Lea Valley into a green lung for Londoners and was vice-chairman of the Harlow New Town housing committee. He was later awarded the OBE and was then knighted.

In 1975 he handed in his badge after 39 years. Lou died in 2001. Perhaps his greatest memorial is the **Olympic stadium** – if it had not been for Lou Sherman's effort to get rid of the factories along the River Lea, London may not have had a chance to stage the 2012 Games.

Sean Farrell (B39)
Call Sign Online



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TAXI CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE RESEARCH



Transport for London has commissioned research on charging infrastructure to assess the potential for electric or hybrid-electric taxis. The research includes a survey which asks taxi drivers about their typical working patterns, breaks and the areas where they work.

The survey should take no more than

15 minutes and can be completed on a smartphone, as well as a computer. A link to the survey will be available on the *Call Sign* website home page from early December and all drivers who complete it will be entered into a draw to win one of two £50 Amazon vouchers.

Your feedback will be crucial to the

potential development of an electric taxi network for London and we are grateful for your time.

*Ian Featherstone
Knowledge Manager,
Energy Saving Trust*

NCA Blackmail Warning

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

Kupkake's Korner



Teenage Drinkers

They're drinking in the boozers,
They're drinking in the streets,
They are drinking as they're walking,
They're drinking on their feet!

They drink away their sorrows,
They drink to celebrate,
They drink like there's no tomorrow,
Drinking till it's too late.

They drink with their smart 'phones,
Held in the other hand,
They're drinking as they're texting,
To their friends in foreign lands.

They're drinking till they're legless,
And propped against the wall,
Acting really reckless,
As they try not to fall.

And then they need a Taxi,
To get them to their home,
And they wonder why they're stranded...
And drinking all alone.

Copyright Kupkake 2013



If you get this splash screen with a countdown timer, you could be in trouble!

Unusually, the National Crime Agency's *Cyber Crime Unit* has issued a warning alerting people to a mass 'ransomware' spam email. The email has a legitimate looking attachment from a bank or financial institution and purports to inform about an invoice or suspicious bank payment etc, but is in fact a malware that can install Cryptolocker.

If opened, the malware encrypts the user's files as well as that of the local network it is connected to.

Once encrypted, the computer will display a splash screen with a countdown timer and a blackmail demand for the payment of 2 Bitcoins in ransom (around £535) for the decryption key. See photo with the countdown timer.

Lee Miles, Deputy Head of the NCCU told us: "The NCA are actively pursuing organised crime groups committing this type of crime. We are working in cooperation with industry and international partners to identify and bring to justice those responsible and reduce the risk to the public."

Who is behind Cryptolocker is a matter of speculation, but the culprits are believed to be an organised crime house with Russian and Ukrainian connections. The NCA say they would never recommend paying a ransom as there is no guarantee it would be honoured, while Russian firm **Kaspersky Lab** has warned that criminals using the malware appeared not to be supplying unlock keys to paying victims anyway.

If your computer is infected, it should be reported to **www.actionfraud.police.uk** immediately. For further advice on staying safe online see **www.GetSafeOnline.org**.

COMPLIANCE WITH GARRY



Change round

Hello ladies & gents

As some of you may already be aware, there has been a Board member shuffle at Dial-a-Cab with myself being appointed as the new Compliance Officer - a position I am looking forward to carrying out.

If a complaint is made against a member, I will investigate to find out all the facts before making any judgement and will always do this in an unbiased way, using the experience I have gained from driving a taxi for over 26 years.

I'm sure you all know what's required from you when undertaking a DaC job. So please make sure you watch your run-ins. Let the dispatcher know of any destination change

or long stops *en route*. If a client requests to go a preferred route that will make the meter fare higher, then please inform the dispatcher as this can then be logged or in some cases to gain the permission needed so as not to delay your payment. And of course, only clear journeys for what is showing on the meter.

I will always be available to answer any questions that you want to ask. At present I will be at DaC House on Mondays, so if you have a problem that's the day to contact me. If, however, you need to speak about an urgent job related query or other DaC matter, please ask for Shelagh Adkins or another Board member.

Anytime you see me out working in the cab, I'll always be happy to assist if it's just a quick question - so long as I'm not POB!

Busy month ahead

As this year comes to the busy time for the taxi trade, I do hope the coverage given by you, the driver, to all our clients new and old gets the appreciation it deserves when considering the appointment of their taxi supplier if contracts are up for tender!

Clients take good service / coverage as a given by taxi suppliers, however not all suppliers value the driver's time when tendering for work.

Many non-radio drivers tell me they switch off the app devices that give them work as soon as it gets busy as it does not pay them to accept jobs offered via these companies.

However that's not the case with DaC work.

App clients wanting cabs at busy times are being let down by these new players (as I like to call them - the Kings new clothes outfits) and I feel sure they will revert back to the circuits that have always given good service at the going rate for the job to ensure they get cabs when they require them and not just during quiet times of the day.

Overhauls

When you get your cab back from overhaul, please be aware that if you have the new terminal (which is working well now on the O2 network) you may need to have your meter reset so the terminal can read when it's switched on and off.

Clearing jobs

When doing a DaC job, please leave the fare showing on the meter before clearing through your terminal so the fare gets captured on your terminal as shown on the meter.

Holiday season

All that's now left for me to say is for you all to have a lucrative run-up to Christmas and for those taking the time off, to have a happy and peaceful Christmas...

Be lucky,

Garry White
DaC Compliance Officer

Bob Woodford looks back and recalls...

THE BILK OF CHRISTMAS PAST



It was during the run up to Christmas in 1991 that I was cruising the streets looking for nothing more than a few more jobs while the extra 40p was on the meter. For those *Call Sign* readers who are younger than me, this was a time before rates 2 and 3 were introduced - we got an extra 40p after 8pm and 60p after midnight. Everyone in my circle of tea drinkers on Chelsea Bridge called it *chocolate time*, which I think was brought in years earlier by Dial-a-Cab dispatcher **Johnnie Thwaites**. By the way, that tea stall was once known as **Snotty's** - presumably after the relish that used to fall from Ray's hooter into your hot dog along with all his fag ash!

Anyway, my method of cruising seemed different to others. I would never for instance turn right from Fulham High Street on to either the New King's Road or Fulham Road to join a grand procession of cabs all hoping that a punter would leap out of a doorway. Instead I would take my chance heading up the Fulham Palace Road. Or if I set down in Clerkenwell, I wouldn't head west towards Holborn with all and sundry but instead would consider having a mooch up St John Street towards the Angel.

On the night in question I was Angel-bound and found my angel in Upper Street; the outstretched arm of a well-dressed business man with a briefcase in his other hand. I stopped, suitably impressed with his smart dress code and thinking I should get this guy off the streets before closing time!

"Could you take me to **East Midlands Airport** please driver," was the opening salvo in a German accent. His surprising request was met with me asking if he wanted St Pancras Station. But no, he asked me to please take him to East Midlands Airport!

In those days I would instantly forget any feelings of tiredness and just crack on, which I did - straight up the M1 to a partially deserted set-down point arriving an hour into the following day. A glance around revealed a couple of guys pushing brooms about - and nobody else as far as I could see! But I was very happy with the £90 showing on the meter and Fritz seemed happy to have been safely transported to an International Airport terminus - albeit not exactly buzzing with business!

He stepped out of my F477 PUV, placed his briefcase on the paving and began tapping all of his pockets in the age-accustomed way of letting you know he was searching for his wallet, only to exclaim that he was sorry but he did not have any money! My surprisingly calm response was to suggest we should find a Policeman and he agreed: "Yes, please take me to a Policeman."

We headed for Loughborough Police Station and by the time I had given my Statement and the local constabulary made enquiries about my Bavarian bilker, it was approaching 5am and all I could think about was my pending round of golf at **Lullingstone Castle** being kicked into touch.

I was interviewed by a PC that resembled **Dickie Henderson** and listened out to hear if he was tap dancing when he went down the corridor in search of mugs of tea! The delay was ended when a WPC (who resembled **Giant Haystacks**) strolled in to inform me that my 'Angel on Upper Street' was certified insane and that the German authorities would reimburse my fare. Great! I made my way home to Kent via the newly-opened Queen Elizabeth Bridge ready to forgo golf for several hours sleep.

But there are two questions still to this day that remain unanswered:

1) Why did it take the German Chamber of Commerce 6 months to post a cheque to me for £88 instead of £90 and **2)** Why do WPC's never look like **Julie Andrews** or **Angela Lansbury**?

Be careful out there over the next few weeks - and have a great Christmas!

Bob Woodford, Call Sign Online

DaC driver Sean Farrell (B39) looks at trade history from a different angle

Brethren of the Whip

The first cyclist/taxi clash OR the Dawn of the Velocipedes...



The Times had already described them as "...a new terror on the streets!" There were also cries for them to be banned or at least licensed. Such were fears created by the introduction of the first bicycles to hit the streets of London.

The first cycle dealer had opened up his premises in **Old Street** in 1869, selling models imported from France. By the end of the decade, a Coventry-based firm was manufacturing bikes for export to France! But with the outbreak of the **Franco-Prussian War**, orders ceased and the company turned its direction towards the home market. The following year they produced the **Ariel cycle**, to become more famously known as the **Penny-Farthing**.

On October 13th 1878, cabman **William Davey** picked up his fare from **Inverness Gardens**, at Vicarage Gate, Kensington and turned right into the nearby **Brunswick Gardens**. As he took the corner, he was confronted with **Raymond Keene Junior** on a cycle (what type is not declared by the press report) who collided with the horse, resulting in the cycle and cyclist falling to the ground.

Keene was not hurt, in fact in a scene all too familiar in the years to come, he sprang to his feet and took **William Davey's** badge number. Davey himself thought little of the accident and did not even get down from the box to check his horse.

But Davey's ordeal was not over, because following behind the cyclist was a private carriage and inside it was the cyclist's father, **Raymond**



The first bicycle to be involved in a clash with a cab was a Penny-Farthing

Keene Senior. Keene Senior demanded that Davey get down from his box, but Davey refused. Keene then grabbed hold of the cabman and tried to pull him down, but in doing so broke the cabman's whip.

The subsequent court case is, I believe, the earliest ever between a cabman and a cyclist. Davey summonsed Keene Senior for assault, for the breaking of his whip and wanted 10s (50p) for a new one. The Keanes fought back with three summonses against the cabman; one for driving dangerously, one for assaulting the cyclist and a third for assaulting the cyclist's father.

The Keane's provided witnesses who stated that Davey had taken the corner into Brunswick Gardens too wide and that the cyclist was riding by the side of the carriage and

not in front as Davey had asserted. The old adage of having an independent witness to back your side of the story is not a bad thing; Davey produced his passenger, Liberal politician **Sir George Bowyer MP** who in addition was also a barrister. He testified that Davey took the corner close to the kerb and that the cyclist was at fault for driving on the wrong side of the road.

The magistrate said he'd heard enough and found for Davey, the cabman, in his complaint against Keane for assault. Keane was ordered to pay £3 with a further £1:3s (£1.15) costs. Keane was also ordered to pay 10s for a new whip plus 12s:6d (62.5p) costs and a further 10s for breaking it in the first place. The magistrate then turned to the three charges made by the Keanes against Davey... and dismissed all three. If that was not bad enough for the Keanes, their predicament got even worse when the magistrate also ordered that for each of the three charges dismissed against Davey, the Keanes should pay 10s:6d costs.

The Keanes left Hammersmith police court £7:7s poorer and with a damaged bike. Davey, unlike many cabdrivers who despite winning a court case still lost out on expenses, must have counted himself lucky. After paying out his expenses, he would have got a share of the £3 fine, his moiety, and no doubt celebrated his and the trade's first victory over the cycling fraternity. The Keanes no doubt, were none too 'kean' (*sic*) to bring any further actions against the cab trade.

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

Now it's Kabbee v Hailo

Once Hailo announced that their drawing attraction of cheap taxi fares for the public was going to attract a minimum fare of up to £15, it was just a matter of time before the minicab app, Kabbee – which links PH companies into one – would jump in. Kabbee now claims to have secured £3.8million in investment to challenge Hailo, with backers such as Zoopla, food firm Graze and Simon Nixon, the founder of moneysupermarket.com, lining up!

Taking the advantage thrown by Hailo of taxis once again being expensive, Kabbee's chief executive Justin Peters said: "Satnav systems mean that The Knowledge is no longer essential and because black taxis congregate in Central London, minicabs now offer better coverage. Londoners have a right to demand the best transport service, so it looks like London's iconic black taxis will have some difficult decisions to make."

TfL is still looking into Hailo's minimum fares to decide whether it is the drivers or the company that is responsible in charging more than the metered fare – something that is prohibited in the rulebook. But Hailo appears to be sticking to its minimum fare plans.

The Kabbee app links up a fleet of 5,000 minicab drivers and pushes the fact that it does not have a minimum fare.



- Roadside repair
- Roadside assistance
- Running repair recovery
- Accident recovery
- Pay as you go to membership
- Credit card taken at roadside

0845 094 5307

We make wheels turn
so you can earn.

David Heath (ex-W27) – who lives on the south coast – was strolling down Falcon Road, Battersea on a bright – if cold – Sunday morning having arrived by train at the station and on his way to pick up a cab.

“I noticed the road was blocked with police,” he told *Call Sign* still sounding shocked. “Car lights were flashing and a helicopter was flying overhead. I stopped for a few seconds where a small crowd of people had gathered to see what was going on. Suddenly I heard a voice shouting at us to look out as he was coming our way! I had no clue as to who or what they were talking about.

“Suddenly a young guy ran into the road. He looked crazed and agitated and was brandishing two huge knives. He ran around the police cars and straight at us! We all legged it like mad in different directions.

“There was lots of shouting and screaming; it really was very scary with many of those who had been onlookers now looking absolutely petrified; it was like a horror movie – but this was real. My first thought was why the police didn’t take him out with a Taser, but apparently not all response units carry them.

“A few minutes later and more sirens, with people congregating once again. I asked an



Ex-DaC driver in crazed knifeman horror!



Everything stopped as a crazed knifeman ran riot (inset David Heath)

officer if they had got him and he said that they had. What I saw on that sunny Sunday morning made me realise what a tough job the police have. The following day

the papers said that a man running riot in Battersea had been Tasered by police and that there had been mental and medication issues with him. Welcome to the 21st century!”

Montpelier Street: New rest rank

The rank in Montpelier Street has now been converted into a rest rank for taxi drivers. This rest rank will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will be for up to three taxis.

However, this is not a rank for leaving your taxi to go Christmas shopping. It is a rest rank for taxi drivers where you can stop for up to 60 minutes..

Toggers and Remembrance Sunday

Call Sign recently heard from former DaC Marketing Manager, Allen Togwell, concerning Remembrance Sunday.

“I had a nice experience on Remembrance Day when helping to get licensed taxis to take war veterans to Whitehall for no charge. I was allocated Kings Cross Station by the UCG, who organised the event. I did it with the help of two Knowledge Boys from 8am to 10am; then it was down to Westminster Bridge to help get the vets back to wherever they wanted to go. Some went to stations, others further afield to Essex and Kent. The response from drivers was great, with a double row of cabs – many of them sporting the **Dial-a-Cab** logo – going the length of the Bridge. There were many volunteers organising the event, one driver especially deserves to be named – **Mike Hughes**, who organised the event on behalf of the **United Cabbies Group**.

Fortunately it wasn’t raining, but it was ruddy cold! My feet felt like ice. But I was pleased I did it; it was something I hadn’t done before. And the response from the veterans when saying what a wonderful job the London taxi trade had done was most appreciated.

Perhaps the nicest part was that there was little or no publicity involved; it was done because the taxi trade wanted to show its appreciation to these brave people. Whilst perhaps I felt a little surprised at the number of cabs at Kings Cross who said no when I asked if they would do a love job for a vet down to Whitehall, the number that did work for nothing that day made me feel proud of our trade.”



Many of the vets were provided with free taxis



The fourth cab overlaps while the front section is impossible to get onto (see cover for PCO notice)

Just what is going on at Hammersmith rank???

Do you use the rank at **Hammersmith Broadway**? There are times when it moves well, besides being situated in a part of London where ranks are few and far between. But it is also seen by some as something of a cash booster for **Hammersmith and Fulham Council** because they have a CCTV camera pointed straight at the rank and anyone putting on 'foul' will receive a PCN through the post.

It could also be said that some taxi drivers ask for trouble when they put on behind a full rank and are subsequently parking on double yellow lines.

But Dial-a-Cab driver Steve Thomas (N10) has raised an interesting point that should qualify for a PCN refund for many who have been "caught" by those cameras over the past few years.

As a regular user of the rank, Steve told **Call Sign**:

"Hammersmith and Fulham Council

have been fleecing drivers for allegedly over-ranking at Hammersmith Broadway rank for some time now. But it's no wonder drivers get confused – the whole rank itself is completely confusing.

The PCO sign (see cover) says the rank shall extend 16.5 metres. However, the length of a TX cab is 4.58 metres, with Vitos even longer. So just going by the "shorter" TX cabs, 4.58 times four comes to 18.32 metres and that doesn't fit easily into a rank legally marked out as extending 16.5 metres!

Then, if that wasn't enough, there is the bizarre marking at the front of the rank where you would be ok if your taxi was the same width as a bike!"

Surely Steve's discovery should mean that those who have received PCNs at this rank should be entitled to a refund? Perhaps Hammersmith and Fulham Council would care to comment?

TOUTING: CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

Rogue minicab drivers convicted of plying for hire



Helen Chapman

Three 'rogue' minicab drivers have been convicted of illegally plying for hire and accepting bookings without holding a private hire operator licence. All

three were caught by Tfl's LTPH Compliance team in three separate West End incidents in December last year and January this year. The courts ordered all three drivers to pay fines and costs which totalled nearly £4,500.

Two of the drivers, Arnold John-Mensah and Anas Amiri, were licensed private hire drivers and were ordered by Westminster Magistrates Court to pay fines and costs of £1,200 and £1,710 respectively. The other driver, Arif Said Moqiam, was posing as a legitimate minicab driver despite being unlicensed. He was ordered by the City of London Magistrates Court to pay £500 for each offence, plus a victim surcharge of £15. He was also ordered to pay £960 in costs.

This brings the total up to four successful convictions for illegal plying for hire in recent months, with many more cases currently awaiting court dates.

Helen Chapman, General Manager for

Taxi & Private Hire, said: "We welcome the courts' decisions in these cases. These drivers were blatantly flouting the law by picking up passengers without being pre-booked and one bogus driver was wilfully putting the public's safety at risk by pretending to be a legitimate driver, fully aware that he had not gone through the thorough criminal and medical checks that we insist on before we licence a driver.

"In recent years we have spent time reviewing the law and building some solid cases for illegal plying for hire prior to testing these in court. Clearly the fruits of our labour are now being rewarded and I hope this acts as a stark

reminder to all bogus drivers and licensed private hire drivers that breaking the law will not be tolerated and can result in a criminal conviction.

"These convictions are a result of the important work carried out by Tfl's Compliance Officers, who are out every night of the week to enhance the safety of the travelling public in London. I urge the public to remember that that only licensed taxis (black cabs) can be hailed on the street or outside a venue and any minicab journeys should be pre-booked through a licensed private hire operator, details of which can be found through our free Cabwise app."



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



It's always open season on the taxi trade. The media loves to have a go. Some young so-called comedian will declare that we never go south of the river. Never ever! And journalists short of a story fill the space by writing that

we are opinionated, boring, right-wing bigots. Fact. And then there's Steve Allen of LBC 97.3 - a man whose smugness almost outweighs his ignorance. According to him, we earn £100,000 a year and made a fortune during the Olympics! It must be right then!

But the problem is that the public believes all this guff and thinks it knows all about us. But one thing they may be unaware of is that sixth sense we develop. We invariably realise when a job looks like it's going to be a problem. But how do we know our instinct is correct? Because we go ahead and pick up and afterwards when the inevitable aggro occurs, we say we knew it was going to be trouble!

So what was it about the man at Acacia Road rank on that cold grey afternoon? Strangely, it was his trousers! Corduroy, too baggy and too long. They were fraying as they dragged on the ground and despite the weather, he just wore a shirt and sleeveless jumper. He looked like he'd been dressed by Oxfam, yet the voice was pure Eton, Sandhurst and the Guards.

"Now look here," he intoned, "I want to go to St James's, a few stops in the West End and then back here. What do you reckon... about forty - fifty quid?"

"Sounds about right," I said as far far away, a

Another true story from Geoff Levene

THE SIXTH SENSE OF TAXI DRIVERS...

faint alarm bell rang. But away we went. He was very chatty and it made me nervous. We pulled into the forecourt of the **Dukes Hotel** and he leapt out saying he would be back in a few minutes. I was sure he was going to do a runner and disappear through the **Little St James Street** exit but out he came and imperiously ordered the truck that had pulled in behind to let us out.

On to **Coutts Bank** in **Cavendish Square** from which he emerged with an armful of brochures, shaking hands with a manager. But still....*ding ding!* A similar scenario round the corner at the offices of the **De Walden Estate** in **Queen Anne Street**. No rubbish for our man and then it was the bottom of **Marylebone Lane**. When he came out he was hooting and hollering with another middle-aged *Hooray Henry*. They laughed and slapped each other on the back.

"Bye Johnny!"

"Bye Rupert!"

Rupert looked at the meter and asked how much the fare was so far? It showed £45.

"Not too bad," said Rupert showing no sign of concern. "Let's go to the other end of the road."

Ding ding! When's the sting coming? Not long now.

We stopped outside a pub. I could see him through the frosted glass wandering about. Out he came.

Now at last. Throughout the journey he had been clutching a paperback. He thrust it towards me and said: "Hang onto this," he said, "I'll have the money in half-an-hour!"

"I don't want your lousy book!"

"It's a good book," he wailed.

"I just want the money," I yelled.

"I've had some problems," he pleaded.

"Tell that to the police," I replied expecting a reaction but not the one I got. What he said next caused the alarm bell not to just ring but to toll like the Great Bell of Bow.

"Certainly. I'm well known at Savile Row and St Johns Wood." I was beginning to wish I'd gone home early. At Seymour Street Police Station I explained all to the Sergeant and he asked Rupert if what I had said was correct? Rupert nodded enthusiastically and quoted all the laws he was breaching. I could've been having a cuppa with the good lady wife.

"So what are you going to do," the copper asked him.

"Well you could call Johnny and have his secretary bring down fifty quid." It seemed like a good idea, so I did it. There was a stunned silence when I told Johnny the story.

"Of course," I said, "it's entirely up to you, but otherwise I'm afraid the next time you see your pal might be in a police cell."

That seemed to do the trick and Johnny replied that if I got to him in fifteen minutes, he'd have the money for me. I prepared to leave the Police Station.

"What am I supposed to do," cried Rupert. I suggested something physically impossible!

And that book Rupert thought was so good? *How to run a successful business by Sir John Harvey Jones!*

Geoff Levene (W32)

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This issue harks back to the May 1999 issue of Call Sign and a look at the future as seen from almost fifteen years ago...

From Call Sign, May 1999



In the future the public will depend more on low emission taxis

A TAXI RIDE TO THE FUTURE?

Imagine a car-free London with people very much dependant on low emission taxis, buses and Underground trains for public transport.

Such an idea has been explored by The Architecture Foundation, an Arts Council supported organisation, which is

showing an exhibition of ideas resulting from the 'Car-free London' competition at the Oxo Tower Wharf until 31st May 1999.

Keynote speaker for the opening event on April 21st was London mayoral candidate **Trevor Phillips**, who was driven in a specially liveried **TXI** to deliver his speech. One of **Mann & Overton's** courtesy **TXI**'s will sport the car-free London distinctive logo throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Terry Fryer, Public and External Affairs Manager for **London Taxis International** told *Call Sign*:

"It is clear from government policy and public attitudes that cars will not have the same level of access to our cities in years to come. In the next 20 years, the travelling public will depend more and more on low or zero emission taxis to transport them from door-to-door rather than see too many buses and cars clogging up the streets."

LTI recently announced continuing progress in its development of a green taxi of the future. The company further re-iterated its low emissions policy of providing a clean form of transport that will allow taxi drivers to ply their trade in areas where other vehicles are likely to be excluded.

The Architecture Foundation's exhibition of ideas will show the fun and serious sides of a car-free London. The competition, which they launched in July 1998, received 205 entries of which 17 were selected as prize-winners and 5 were short-listed to develop their ideas further.

Flashback
1999

"It was really rather scary," Trevor Denton (Y51) recalled to *Call Sign*, "because this whole incident took place just about 30 yards away from my taxi!"

The incident Trevor was telling us of occurred recently when the **Dial-a-Cab** driver was heading west towards Kensington with a passenger on Board. Trevor continues his story...

"As I came through Admiralty Arch and drove along The Mall towards Buckingham Palace, the sun struck the taxi windshield and I could barely see ahead of me. In my twelve years of cab driving, I do not recall such blinding sunlight necessitating me reaching for my sun glasses at this time of year! Anyway, ahead of me were two mounted police officers on patrol and I could just about make out other traffic between me and the two mounted officers, when suddenly a car in the line of vehicles ahead of me appeared to pass by them very closely indeed. I think it could have been because of the extreme sunshine that the driver did not see the police horses until the last second and then had to swerve to avoid them. That overtaking manoeuvre must have taken the police horse by surprise because it suddenly reared up, throwing its rider backwards to the ground. Then it turned round and bolted back in my direction looking to be running completely amok.

"The thrown male police officer was laying there, a crumpled heap on the tarmac. It was a terrible sight to see with the female police officer looking to be in a state of turmoil as to whether she should chase after the crazed, out of control horse that was now a danger to pedestrians and other traffic or dismount and

The DaC driver and the spooked police horse!



A lovely sight - but what happens if a police horse becomes spooked?

mounted police officer got there and gave the animal a handful of sweets from her pocket to calm it down and regain control of the situation, but it really was a pretty hairy time. Even my passenger was shaken because there was no way of knowing what the police

horse might do in a panic situation – especially when heading towards my cab!

"I hope the fallen police officer turns out to be ok, but it goes to show that even with the high degree of training that police horses undertake including crowd control, general traffic noise and coping with busy streets, a sudden and perhaps unwitting movement can catch them unaware with possible dire consequences. With the benefit of hindsight, perhaps the mounted police should use the bridle path on the other side of the road by the ICA Gallery..."

tend to her fallen colleague. She also shouted for the car that had passed them to stop, telling the driver not to move! She then called out to passers-by to try and stop the runaway horse.

"The frightening part was the spooked horse running frantically towards my taxi! Thankfully it did come to a stop - right alongside my driver's window! I could have reached out and touched it, it was that close!"

"Meanwhile, the mounted police officer was calling to her injured colleague not to worry, telling him that she had an ambulance on the way. Eventually a member of the public duly - and I might say bravely - strolled calmly up to the riderless horse and held the reins until the

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

Bicycles and the 'Ride to Work' scheme...



As winter sets in and the darker evenings are upon us, the increase of cyclists without proper high visibility clothing and a lack of lighting and protective headwear during rush hour periods becomes all the more evident.

A major contributory factor to the increase in cyclists is the government's *Cycle to Work* scheme. This is a commuter-based idea with the added incentive of leisure and health benefits for all, while offering up to 42% towards the cost of a bike and equipment with a top price of £1000. This offers individuals a very good incentive to get on a bike.

Unfortunately, the scheme - although offering the discount for equipment including lights, clothing and protective headwear - does not make the purchasing of these essential items compulsory. As a keen cyclist, I spend many an hour in different bike shops and have stood and watched people buying bikes under the scheme.

The differences between the buyer and seller can be quite alarming. Generally the purchaser wants to get the more expensive bike and blow the whole £1000 on the bike with no regard to their safety or any interest in the equipment. I have seen reputable sales staff guide customers into the benefits of safety equipment - although sadly, there are also others who just try to sell the most expensive bike.

As this is a government funded scheme and in effect subsidised by us all, I believe the scheme should insist that the purchase of the bike includes all the relevant safety equipment and actually make it compulsory. In addition, once purchased and used, should any of the cyclists be stopped without the minimum set of lighting or for not wearing a helmet, then they face having to return the subsidy.

I certainly would never go out in the twilight hours without the full equipment being worn and fitted. After all, you cannot buy a car, van or lorry without lights and for a government to subsidise a bike without it makes a mockery of their 'safe bike' campaigns. Can you imagine buying a new TX4 and finding out that lighting was an optional extra!

As for those cyclists who do ride without lighting, stopping and fining them is all well and good, but I would like to see the introduction of *Le Tour de France Broom Wagons*. These are where riders who've had to aban-

With Tom Quigley (Y33)



Andrew Mitchell minus crash helmet



Mayor Boris with flapping coat

don their bikes are put into the wagon and driven to the finish. I've read autobiographies of many famous cyclists who say it is the most humiliating feeling in cycling; arriving in the wagon! The other option is to confiscate the bike until a proper fine is paid and lights are fitted. The bike could then be returned, but a second offence would then lose the bike permanently...

Plebgate and the CS2

In the above piece, I have reflected on the wearing of safety helmets and using the correct lighting during periods of poor visibility whilst riding a bike. Yet once again we see an Honourable Member of Parliament doing neither,

You must have seen the photo of **Andrew Mitchell MP** leaving Downing Street with his bike in the affair now known as *Plebgate*. The

photos show him with a lovely basket and suit, but no helmet. I have no desire to comment on the inquiry, which was said to be running at a cost of over £300,000. But perhaps it would be nice for someone to actually ask Mr Mitchell why he doesn't wear a helmet.

As I write this, the sad news has come through of yet another cyclist being killed on London's roads - this one in Camberwell and the fourteenth this year, with the last six in just thirteen days compared with three in the whole of the first 6 months. At the same time, **Mayor Boris** has launched the new fully integrated CS2 cycle lane. Yet with this recent death in mind, Boris rode his bike along the new lane with his coat undone and flapping in the wind! And just as bad, he did so with dark clothing and no *bi-vis* clothing on. Does he not see or understand why whilst promoting or riding a bike, how imperative it is to wear appropriate clothing at all times, even if it's just for TV and press.

I have checked out the new segregated lane for both myself and *Call Sign* and whilst welcoming the idea and the concept, I have concerns at the design of the ramp areas next to bus stops and crossings. There seems to be a flaw in the drainage outlets and as the winter rains leave their puddles, it won't take long for the lane to become clogged with leaves and debris, making the ramp areas hazardous. Then if the temperature drops, these areas could become icy and dangerous. Will we now see signs proclaiming: *Beware blue ice!*

Also, with bus stops and the likelihood of crowding, it will be difficult to keep the lane clear of pedestrians and to avoid this I can envisage cyclists going up the ramp, out of the lane altogether and riding in the road as it will be clearer.

It's early days and like all things there will be teething problems, but there has been a lot of money spent on the design and surely some questions should be asked first.

A Merry Christmas to all at Dial-a-Cab and Call Sign Online readers around the world...

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

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Ron believes in going the way that will be quickest and not necessarily the straightest

"Yes, I have a theory," Ron Matthews (T56) – now in his 25th year with Dial-a-Cab – told *Call Sign*, paraphrasing Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech.

We all have theories on something. Ron Matthews involves traffic holdups!

I Have a Theory...

"I have a friend who also drives a cab, although not on Dial-a-Cab. As cab drivers do, we frequently discuss routes and the current state of roadworks and general congestion. He says he always goes on the cotton ie the straightest possible route between two points regardless of the circumstances on the road at the time.

"I, on the other hand, have this theory that suggests by going a different way, using roads that might be slightly longer but less congested, I am giving the passenger a better service by using my knowledge to negotiate the streets and getting them to their destination more speedily while my friend is stuck in traffic and hardly moving.

"I'm not talking about 'scenic route' runs, but if my Dial-a-Cab terminal flashes up a message that so-and-so street is blocked for whatever reason, I tell my passenger the situation and suggest we go another way, asking if that's alright with them. I see it as a customer service issue by giving my passengers the best possible experience when travelling

in my taxi. This not only promotes Dial-a-Cab, but bodes well for the trade in general, while enhancing our reputation as the best taxi service in the world!

"My friend and I recently decided to put my theory to the test," Ron explained. "Both of us were on Paddington Station rank and, by co-incidence, both went into the City. My pal decided to use Proctor Street, Holborn and the roadworks at Holborn Circus, while I chose - with the customer's agreement - to use Clerkenwell Road and drop down at Aldersgate Street. We still met with some traffic of course, but I was there before him and while he was about to set down, I was already paid off and looking for my next fare!"

Ron grinned broadly to *Call Sign's* reporter – who thought to himself that he would have used the Embankment!

"It would be interesting to hear other driver's views," said Ron, "because the traffic conditions are not getting any better and it can be a real struggle at times to move around, even with the best intentions."



LTFUC 85th anniversary raffle results



The London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children's raffle draw to celebrate the charity's 85th anniversary took place at the LTDA offices at Woodfield Road.

LTDA Chairman, John Thomas, drew the five winning tickets out of the box in the presence of LTFUC Hon Chair, Susan Angel.

The winning tickets are:

- 1st prize - No. 1972 - Weekend at a Warner Leisure Hotel (BB & EM)
- 2nd prize - No. 3484 - iPad
- 3rd prize - No. 2558 - Digital Camera
- 4th prize - No. 2631 - Set of Suitcases
- 5th prize - No. 3524 - DVD Player

The Hon President, Hon. Chair and Committee would like to extend grateful thanks to all the people who purchased raffle tickets leading up to the draw..

POLICE Witness Appeal

The Police are appealing for assistance. On Monday 28th October 2013 at or shortly after 12.52pm, a licensed Hackney Carriage picked up a female passenger (white with blonde hair) from Ludgate Hill, close to the Earl Of Sandwich at 40 Ludgate Hill and took her to an address in the Belmont area of Sutton, Surrey (possibly Westover Close in Sutton). The fare cost approximately £55.

The Police need to identify the driver who picked up the above fare. If you were the driver who took this fare or have any information that could assist the police, please call the appeals number on **0208 721 4066** or you can call anonymously on the **Crimestoppers** number of **0800 555 111** quoting **Operation Jaspersgreen**.

Your assistance is much appreciated...

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"It was a very good copy, as dodgy £50 notes go," **Pat Keefe (G01)** said with a grin to a *Call Sign* reporter, "but it didn't fool me!"

"I had just dropped off a passenger at **It didn't fool Pat but keep a look out for fake £50s**

the top of Kensington Church Street and before I knew it, a voice from the back of the cab asked for Westbourne Grove. Suddenly there were two characters sitting in the back, but I had no problem, I was just pleased it was so busy! When we got to Westbourne Grove by the toilets at the top end of Queensway with £6.20 on the meter, they got out, and handed me a £50 note with the offer to 'take £7 mate'. However, the £50 was brand new and quite crisp, not even a fold or crease in it. In fact it was pristine as though it had just come off the printing press - which it probably had, but not from the Royal Mint!" Pat laughed at the thought!

"Yes, it was extremely good as fakes go and might have fooled somebody at night or in poor light, but it did not have the vertical security strip and it was just so new that my suspicions were immedi-

My fake £50 note...

ately aroused because people usually fold or crease a large denomination note like that, although the overall colour was too accurate for comfort anyway.

"They scraped £7 together, pushed it into my hand and walked away, one wandering off towards the Oxfam shop, probably to pass it off there - and where the clothes in the window were better than the scruffy items he was wearing - while the second male walked off down the road, possibly with intention of

passing more notes of dubious origin to other unsuspecting shops, who knows?

"They were both very dowdily dressed," said Pat, "one was short, about 5' 6" wearing a blue top and the taller one around 5' 9" and even more tattily dressed than his accomplice. So watch out for them and be on your guard..."

Alan Green
Call Sign Online



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"None walks so tall as he who stoops to help a child"
www.ltfuc.org.uk

New rank in Charterhouse Street

A new taxi rank has been appointed in **Charterhouse Street** outside **Smiths Restaurant** and the **Fabric nightclub**. It temporarily replaces the old rank, which is currently suspended because of Crossrail works in the area. The rank is in three portions; the first portion is for two taxis and the second and third portions are for three taxis each.

The rank operates Monday to Thursday from 13:00 to 23:59. Friday, Saturday and Sunday from midnight to 07:00 and 23:00 to 23:59

Usual taxi rank regulations apply. Private hire don't like it, so use it or lose it...

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There have been many mentions in Call Sign over the years of Dial-a-Dream - a charity run by Tom Whitfield and former DaC driver Bob Heath - including regular ads for the Charity's amazing holiday homes in Florida. Tom told us how it began...

Dial-a-Dream: How it all started

Whilst out working in our taxis, we often get used to sitting in heavy traffic listening to moans from the passenger compartment hinting at why we didn't go "the other way!" Of course, no matter which route we decide to use, it should have been the other one! Why did we not know that *British Gas* was going to suddenly dig this big hole in the middle of the main road!

It was a time like that when I was making a regular trip from Hackney to Sutton's **Royal Marsden Hospital**. The reason for the journey was to see my nephew who was in the cancer unit; he had been subjected to a bone marrow transplant that failed and now he was back for another.

Whilst in the waiting room, I got talking to a lady by the name of Margaret Hayles who ran a charity called **Dreams Come True**, which made dreams a reality for terminally ill children.

Being an avid book reader, I sourced her autobiography and read it. I was moved by the fact that here was someone making what were perhaps the last days of some very short lives, much happier. So the next time we met, I delved a bit deeper into what I could possibly do to help. Mrs Hayles then related a sad story about a group of terminally ill children in Belfast who with the help of friends had raised money to have their holiday of a lifetime at Florida's Walt Disney World. However, a female helper had run off with the money, with the funds alleged to have ended up in the coffers of an illegal Republican organisation - this being at the time of the Northern Ireland troubles.

I asked Margaret how I could help, assuming that she'd give me a few raffle books to sell or a collecting tin to rattle outside Sainsbury's. She looked at me and responded by asking if I could raise £28,000! To say this shocked me would be an understatement. It's a huge sum now, but back in 1990 it was absolutely massive!

Later that evening whilst out in my cab, I came across a Dial-a-Cab friend of mine - Bob Heath - and related the story to him. After talking about it at great length, Bob said we should at least have a go at it, even though it sounded almost impossible. Neither of us had ever tried anything like it before, but with the help of **Dial-a-Cab** allowing us the use of a phone, photo copier and fax machine (computers were still in their infancy), we began contacting companies and organisations requesting their help and maybe their money. The first collection was at Heathrow's taxi feeder park; we also organised raffles and some fund raising events. We also came across a man who ran the **Seven Kings** pub in Ilford. This was a very large pub and car park - a great place to hold a show and auction. We had a very successful fundraising night there.



Tom and Bob

Our time limit was 8 weeks; however Bob had to phone the British Airways Chairman to get us a 2 week extension. But those ten weeks allowed us to complete our task and we got the children and their families on their holiday of a lifetime. Keeping in touch afterwards, we discovered that for some of these children it was to be the last big holiday of their tragically short lives.

Our success in getting the children to Florida got Bob and I wondering whether we could start our own charity. So we applied, gained a registration from the Charities Commission and now, well over 20 years on, we are one of the few charities undertaking this type of work, especially where no funds are taken out for wages or salaries. Everyone at **Dial-a-Dream** works on a voluntary basis. I don't think I need waste too much of *Call Sign's* glossy paper explaining how we thought of the name!

Since 1991, we have completed well over 1000 dreams ranging from meeting celebrities to Disney trips costing thousands of pounds. In addition to us working on a voluntary basis, neither do we do employ a full time promotion team which would cost us a fortune. So it is twice as hard for us to get the funds to make the dreams a reality for these terminally ill children.

During the time we've been going, we have always been very careful with the charity's money and have been able to purchase some properties in Florida, just minutes away from Disney. So if you are thinking of a holiday in Florida, visit our website at www.thedreamvillas.com or see our ad in every issue of this mag - an ad that the editor kindly donates at no charge.

You will not be disappointed because these will provide you with magnificent family holidays. One driver's wife (Mrs B49) even wrote in the October *Call Sign* how much her family had enjoyed their time in one of our dream villas. We can also help with advice on air fares, car rental and Disney passes. The money you pay for the rental of these villas goes towards the upkeep of the villas and funds needed to help make another terminally ill child's dream come true.

The Charity's only stipulation is that it must be the child's dream and not that of the parents, guardian, nurse or social worker.

Over the years, we have helped children to meet celebrities such as **Sylvester Stallone**, **Phil Collins**, **Phillip Schofield** and many others. There were also dreams such as the one a boy whose sight had almost gone asked for - to drive a racing car around a race track. Or the young lad who wanted to be a customs officer for a day at Gatwick using searchers and drug dogs! Another boy toured Concorde, even going into the cockpit and sitting in the Captains seat! We also sent two terminally ill children to Lapland so they could meet Santa Claus, while one young girl wanted to go to Jerusalem to see where Jesus was born. I could go on, but I think you can see what we try to do.

If you know a child with a life-limiting illness or would just like to help Dial-a-Dream, the Children's Charity, take a look on www.dial-a-dream.co.uk.

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member

Glasgow Taxis have been called Scotland's **Dial-a-Cab**. Like us, GT began as a friendly society and still remains so. They too have steadily expanded and now boast around 2000 drivers - the largest taxi company outside of London and have visited DaC House on several occasions.

But they have now gone one up when they recently received a special commendation from the 6th Battalion (6SCOTS) of the Army Reserve and were presented with a handcrafted clock in recognition of its support for Reservists and ex-servicemen and women.

In a relationship spanning multiple decades, Glasgow Taxis Ltd has been an avid supporter of the armed forces, both full time and reservists, and has been actively involved in initiatives such as Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE), providing work experience opportunities to Reservists and those returning from duty.

SaBRE is a Ministry of Defence campaign tasked with promoting a positive relationship between members of the Army Reserve and their employers. It works impartially on behalf of the military and civilian communities and was created to help employers, particularly small businesses, understand the role and skills of Reservists and increase their support for Reserve Forces employees.

The handcrafted wooden clock - which incorporates the Army's slogan 'Be the Best' - was designed and sculpted by a former soldier and presented to Glasgow Taxis by Lt Colonel Sandy Fitzpatrick of 52nd Lowland, 6th Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland (6SCOTS).

Army Reserve salutes Glasgow Taxis for support



Stephen Flynn, vice-chairman of Glasgow Taxis told *Call Sign*: "We are humbled to receive such a gesture from 6SCOTS and delighted to be involved with one of the country's most important organisations. The people of Glasgow and Scotland are hugely indebted to the work of the Armed Forces and we will continue to provide their personnel with as much support as we can through initiatives like SaBRE and any other means."

Lt Colonel Sandy Fitzpatrick added: "Glasgow taxis have championed the

very idea of community engagement with the Regular and Reserve Army. They have made an outstanding contribution over the last few years and I am therefore honoured to be presenting them this engraved clock in recognition of our appreciation."

The photo shows (L-R) Lt Colonel Sandy Fitzpatrick of 52nd Lowland, 6th Battalion Royal Regiment of Scotland (6SCOTS), Stephen Flynn, vice-chairman of Glasgow Taxis Ltd and Jim McVicar of SaBRE.

LTFUC AGM



The Annual General meeting of The London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children takes place on Tuesday 3rd December 2013, 7.30pm at:

The New Park Day Centre, 19 Highbury New Park, Highbury N5

Parking is available at the Centre and refreshments will be available. All drivers are most welcome to attend...

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Mailshot

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

Hailo ads

Dear Alan

Just a few thoughts about three topical subjects... though perhaps other drivers have already said the same.

(1) No run in / no gratuity debate: If just the latter was brought in, it could mean reducing income by well into 4 figures. Would those backing the idea be happy working an extra week or two?

(2) Hailo stickers: Your example about run-ins in column two of the *November Call Sign* says it all. I'd favour banning all stickers / equipment on our taxis which are not for DaC. Further, I'm not sure a DaC driver should be on any of them. I spoke to one driver who had two of these apps. Mind you, I wouldn't have adverts on the cab or allow those dreadful new monstrosities on the roof either. Am I alone in thinking that standards in the trade have dropped or am I just a stick-in-the-mud!

(3) My licence renewal took less than 4 weeks and I don't recall sending anything apart from the form, having ticked the correct box for TfL to 'check me out'. A minor gripe was having to visit the Post Office twice - once to pay for the TMG CRB check and then returning with the reference number (received by email) and completed form for TfL. I'm no great shakes on the computer but encountered no problems and found the Wealdstone PO staff very helpful.

Alasdair Kay (C47)

Run-ins

Dear Call Sign

Here's an idea; how about no run-ins on ASAP jobs to help DaC compete with others. This would go some way in compromising with account clients who are obviously being offered this and more by our competitors. I think this could help. Obviously you need to keep a run-in on pre-booked jobs to help get them covered (drivers won't do 12 - 20 minutes for nothing) and this can surely be justified to our account clients?

I think DaC have to do something. Just knocking our competitors and app suppliers is not good enough. Whether DaC like it or not, drivers *do* cover the app work. How much the driver gets for the job is the driver's problem (Hailo currently have a £10 minimum on rate 1 and a massive £15 minimum on rate 3 and *all* jobs are ASAP). But the pricing structure for other organisations is their business. 10% of each job means a driver has to earn around £350 per week from an app-based despatch system to match the cost of DaC (approximately £5 per day). Obviously he would need to earn the same on DaC to cover his subs otherwise the driver would actually be paying proportionately more to DaC than the 10% he pays to the app. The difference is that if he doesn't earn the £350 from the app, he only pays the same 10%

whereas the DaC subs are fixed.

I am a great believer in Dial-a-Cab and hope that we go from strength to strength. But I feel that *all* the major radio circuits have been caught with their trousers at half-mast by the new players in the game. However, I hope that at least DaC can be flexible enough to compete with them. Five minutes free waiting time or 12-20 minutes lead time for £4.20? What's best? I don't know, but just knocking drivers for doing it is not the answer. We need to be more flexible or we will lose more accounts.

Mick Davis (M14)

No run-ins or gratuities...

Hi Alan,

I would like to reply to Garry White's article in the *November Call Sign* where he consulted the membership as to whether we should work with no run-in or gratuity? I read the article with interest and naturally I can only speak for myself, but I would be very reluctant to do this. The whole point of a run-in to the metered fare is to compensate drivers for the additional cost in fuel and time to get to the pick-up point and the potential tip that we would receive from the cash paying customer. If we go down the road of trying to match Hailo and the GetTaxi pricing structure, I think we will erode away any advantages that currently exist for being on a radio circuit.

The additional cost to drivers of running to jobs will escalate and although Dial-a-Cab's subscription payments are the cheapest (thank God!) amongst the radio circuits, it is still a cost that I would have to think twice about if the opportunity to offset this expense was removed.

However, I do agree with the points made some time ago by the Chairman, Brian Rice, when he said that once you agree to these concessions, it sets a precedent for all future business and the only direction our fares can go after that is downwards. Just ask Radio Taxis who had to secure the London Underground account by accepting 75% of the meter per job!

I accept that it is a conundrum, but in the light of ever burgeoning costs of new taxis and repairs, and as much as I enjoy being a radio driver, if this trend were to proliferate, I would seriously have to look again at the viability of being part of a radio circuit. Hopefully, all those drivers who have eagerly signed up for the 'dumb down the trade' circuits will have a good look at themselves and see what they are doing to the future of the Licensed taxi trade.

I hate to be a purveyor of doom and gloom, but if the taxi trade persists in this race to the bottom in order to keep up with minicabs, this could be the beginning of the end for the *Best Taxi Service in the World!*

Clarence Ishmael (R54)

The best taxi service on the cheap?

Hi Al

I totally agree with your views on Hailo (*November Call Sign*, *Mailshot*). Drivers that I know are becoming wise to it. Christmas will prove decisive. London is one of the only places where Hailo is active but where the driver foots the bill. The best taxi service in the world on the cheap, but with passengers still using private hire for the longer trips!

And as a little extra, have any other drivers been told by their passenger that according to Google, the trip had been estimated as taking x-number of minutes and we were already a minute over that! Modern technology? Keep it!

Mickey Lappin (Ex-E46)

E14 Marshals

If rumours are true, then we have lost a big account back to a competitor. But life goes on and if official indicators are correct, we are at long last coming out of recession and hopefully work levels will increase. I just wonder if the way forward is to have a Marshall at all E14 accounts at the island so cabs can be called at any time day and night, as and when required so there would not be a five minute period where the meter is idle. Meanwhile, last night at Morgan Stanley I counted 18 Ad Lee cars and just 1 DaC cab.

I did a trip recently from Morgan Stanley, but only due to GLH cars being unable to cover. What is the actual status of this account? There are many companies at E14C: Barclays, HSBC, Northern Trust, Price Waterhouse, Credit Suisse and thousands more. Perhaps a permanent presence is required there and Mike or Keith together with some staff members could be there 24/7? Our sales staff are great, but they are in a results business...

Stephen Field (F68J)

Does the trade need one super-circuit?

Hi Alan

You may remember me from my letters to *Call Sign*. I still read the magazine online as I think it's the best trade mag about. Regarding Hailo, I'd like to make you right in your latest piece in the *November* issue, but not too sure if I can. This mail will seem a bit hypocritical because I use Hailo. When I first went on about 18 months ago, I thought it was a breath of fresh air to the trade. I was willing to run (a bit) to a job for nothing or wait a little minute with no meter on. However, the service that was originally for the benefit of drivers and passengers alike



Mailshot

continued from page 30

has seemed to have swung so much in favour of passengers and shareholders. Now I believe it could possibly turn detrimental to the driver just like I believe most taxi pre-booking systems have done over the years.

Passengers (not all) seem to think the five minutes free waiting period is mandatory and think nothing of keeping you waiting, then getting in to go to pick little Johnny up from school 200 yards away. Now I don't mind doing them, but in those instances I feel an instant flag drop should be allowed. I don't mind waiting five minutes either if they're going to be a £15 - £20 fare, that's why the minimum fare introduction is now a success and a lot more of these jobs are covered.

Regarding the 10% fee, I believe this is the fairest way but with perhaps a maximum. My fare to subs ratio with DaC most months worked out between 10 and 12 % so I believe the paying for the privilege argument is a non-starter. However I do think the apps are the future because more and more everyday people are using Internet apps just for their daily lives.

I take on board your point about no run-in and how radio circuits have fought for 50 years for the terms you have now, but equally these charges you brought in back then could also be seen as a death knell and it's only now the customers have started to really notice. Your point about how Russell Hall would react to no run-ins if he was still on the circuit is a valid one, but doesn't it equally show how Russell has changed in his approach and attitude to a changing market? I guess it's the same change as Dial-a-Cab had to make when introducing Concierge.

I've said it before; we have no right to any work and the public can choose Hailo, GetTaxi or even DaC's app. As a trade we need to change. We need to stick together and become one almighty force. I guess a super circuit is what's needed And Hailo are 50% of the way with over 12,000 drivers. You've said it yourself; DaC lost an account on the basis of no run-ins and I believe that you could be pointing the finger at the apps as the instigators and you're probably right. But I don't think it's as simple as that because DaC has for years battled with other taxi circuits and private hire on price alone to win an account. For example, the LTDA advertise £75 to Heathrow, Hailo's fixed price is always around the £60 mark and a flyer is still as rare as rocking horse manure. DaC offered the House of Commons for one price and Radio Taxis for another price. The only price we offer should be one price across the board and the only competition it should be with is PH. But it's not; it's with each other within the trade. So the LTDA, apps and circuits don't lose – it's the driver as always.

Ask yourself why DaC was formed, then Mountview, then ComCab, then Zingo, Tweet-a-London cab and Hailo etc.

It's because they all wanted to take control of the work and make money in the process. And as soon as that all started, that's when the war of prices started and that's when the driver started to come second.

Come to us, we do it this way or that way, their drivers are scruffy - ours are smart! All our drivers are owners, all theirs rent etc. As soon as we (the drivers) allowed ourselves to be divided, that's when the trouble started. A single circuit with one set of rules and fees would stop all the price wars over night.

Don't get me wrong, this is not a pro-app mail, far from it. I think the apps started off with good intentions but over time non-taxi people got involved and that's when perhaps they started to get greedy. I'm only 41 and hopefully have many more years of work. I don't think the trade or the knowledge is dying. I think the apps in some respects are working; my takings ain't down - although yes, they would be more if run-ins etc were in place, but sometimes you have to approach work and adjust to things differently. We have the best job in the world and if only we worked as one, we'd be untouchable.

Anyway, I hope you are keeping well Alan and my thoughts and prayers are with you over your recent loss. Keep up the good work on the magazine, it's a sterling read...

Michael Beevor (Ex-N76)

Thanks for all the above letters. Rather than have individual responses, I have left them all open for any comments you wish to add. However, the next issue will be out early due to printers closing for Christmas, so if you do want to enter the debate, please do so as soon as possible after receiving this issue.

Incidentally, I'm not sure if it will be common knowledge by the time this issue comes out, but we lost an account in central London after a rival taxi company's tender offered cut prices compared to ours. Within a short period of time the account asked if they could return to DaC because the other circuit's service wasn't as good as ours. You have to assume that was due to their cut prices and drivers reluctance to cover trips at cheap rates?

Will drivers be happy to work cheap if things become busier – as it seems to be getting? You will have to make your own minds up. And just one other point to throw into any debate, is there anyone out there who really believes that we would have a Hailo or app war had it not been for the recession? ...Ed

Trixie and my Uncle Harry

Dear Alan

I just seen your *Call Sign Online* article re my Uncle, Harry Croft and former ODRTS Chairman Trixie Solomons. I thought I should point out that the lady you showed in the photo as being Minnie Solomons, was in fact Harry's wife, May. Minnie Solomons was the lady in the black beret! Never mind,



but I thought you might want to correct it in case anyone who knows them queries it.

Janet Baine

Thanks for pointing it out Janet ...Ed

Strictly come taxi?

I've been watching *Strictly Come Dancing* and noticed that all the contestants arrive by limo / PHV with not one taxi being involved! It goes to show that we have been relegated to second class transport, scratching round for pennies falling from the rich man's table and with Private Hire having a stranglehold over us. Admittedly Addy Lee is not a real threat; everyone knows they are a bunch of misfits who can't read, can't write and not even spell their own names correctly. It is said that their cars smell of used chicken bones and associated detritus. Should their GPS ever go down then they would look like a bunch of total misfits. It is only then that the black cab driver could show a superior knowledge to his advantage. But I'm only wishing. What a shame. Will it happen?

Roy the Boy Manix (Ex-K98)

Hiya Roy, hope your health is improving. I almost agree with you about *Strictly* except I think the contestants should arrive by Pedicab! The funny thing is that having recently taken my grandchildren to see the WWE wrestlers, they promote their UK trip by having a red phone box and a gleaming TX4 by the entrance where the wrestlers appear from. And that image literally goes right around the world. So we do represent something – sadly I'm just not sure what because the name of the London taxi is famous around the world, yet ask an American or Australian what Addy Lee or Brunel are and they'd probably guess breakfast cereals! As for Addy Lee and as I've never been inside one, I'll have to pass on the chicken bones comment. However, joking aside, no one should underestimate the big PH companies. They are not just dangerous competitors, they are a threat to our trade.

There is now so much money in that side of the business that it would not surprise me if one of the big ones tried to buy us out in the next few years. We once turned down around £10million, but everyone has their price. Of course, someone could pay a fortune and our drivers could then just take it and walk away. But there is a new breed of taxi drivers out there who will do what is best for them and their families. And that opens up possibilities that we thought would be impossible just a few short years ago. And to save anyone asking, no, I don't know of any offers! ...Ed

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