

January 2013

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Call Sign



*Call Sign asks drivers the unaskable...
Should we dump the Conditions of Fitness???*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Need to know where the work is? New Eurostar timetable operates from 9 December to 1 June 2013

From	Arrives	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Note	Train #
Brussels	07:57	✓								9109
Paris	08:00	✓								9005
Paris	08:30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9007
Brussels	08:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9113
Paris	09:00	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9009
Paris	09:30						✓	✓		9011
Brussels	09:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9117
Paris	10:00	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9013
Paris	10:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9015
Paris	11:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9019
Paris	11:39							✓	1	9019
Brussels	11:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9125
Paris	12:30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9023
Brussels	12:57							✓		9129
Paris	13:30	✓				✓		✓		9027
Paris	13:30		✓	✓	✓				1	9027
Brussels	14:03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9133
Paris	14:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9031
Paris	15:30						✓	✓		9035
Brussels	15:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			1	9141
Paris	16:00					✓				9037
Brussels	16:03						✓	✓		9141
Paris	16:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9039
Brussels	16:57							✓		9145
Brussels	17:03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9145
Paris	17:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9043
Paris	18:00							✓		9045
Paris	18:00					✓			2	9045
Brussels	18:03						✓			9149
Brussels	18:09	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9149
Paris	18:30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9047
Paris	19:00					✓				9049
Paris	19:00		✓	✓	✓				1	9049
Brussels	19:03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				9153
Brussels	19:06							✓		9153
Paris	19:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9051
Brussels	19:57							✓		9157
Brussels	19:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			2	9157
Paris	20:00							✓		9053
Paris	20:41	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9055
Brussels	21:03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9161
Brussels	21:06						✓			9161
Paris	21:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9059
Paris	22:00							✓		9061
Paris	22:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		9063

Note 1 Runs 09/12/2012 till 05/01/2013 and from 10/02/2013 till 01/06/2013

Note 2 Runs 31/03/2013 till 01/06/2013

Nash's Numbers would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Don't forget to visit www.nashsnumbers.co.uk which not only has all the back issues but direct access to the MyFav website designed as your ideal "Home Page", combine this with the unlock code of taxi and this will be your best launch pad to everything you will ever need on the internet. Personalise with your favourite search engine, retailer, gadgets, your own bookmarks and 100's of icons to launch all the most popular websites.

from the editor's desk

Well, that's the first part of the holidays finished and we are just days away from the annual fight for fares. But if I've learned one thing in my almost 42 years in this business, it is that you can never tell! So perhaps 2013 will turn out to be a much better year than we think. If true, then don't forget you read it here first. If it isn't, then the editor of TAXI told me to say it!

'Caught' at the 'Cross'

No, don't be silly, I'm not talking about *that* Cross – this is a little tale about one of the northern stations, **Kings Cross**.

I was sitting on the rank like the good little boy that I am with around 10 cabs in front of me, when a prospective male passenger came up to me. I put my **Evening Standard** down and opened the nearside window assuming that he had a question. But he just asked if I was for hire.

I politely directed him towards the first cab on the rank and off he trotted. I reopened the paper, but almost immediately another male came up to me, held out some smallish object in his hand that I couldn't read because it was dark and he exhaled the words that I hadn't heard for some time:

"PCO driver, can I see your Badge and Bill please."

I was taken back for the minute and unsure how genuine this guy was because I was under the impression that the expression 'PCO' had been overtaken by LTPH – or TPH for short! But I decided to assume that he believed I was a bit of a pillock and that I wouldn't have known that **Transport for London** had given us TPH out of the ruins of the former Penton Street administration. So perhaps using PCO was just the easier way for him to get across his point – that he had seen me "refuse" a passenger.

So I gave him both items and sat there quietly while he examined the numbers and then walked round to the front of my TX4 to compare the numbers with my green identifier.

He came back to my nearside window and passed both items back to me with no comment other than to ask if the passenger I had refused wanted to pay with a credit card?

I said that I didn't know as he had only asked if I was available and I just redirected him towards the first cab. He sort of nodded and walked off and I was left wondering whether he was genuine or just looking for a badge number to copy.

The next day, that latter thought became even more relevant when I took my cab in for a major service. At the end of it, Wayne, the boss of the garage came up to me and said that everything looked fine, but did I know that my road fund licence was two months out of date? As I remember renewing it, I found that to be rather astonishing but soon unravelled the mystery. The previous year, my taxi failed its overhaul because I had put a new tax disc on as the old one expired the following day. But the passing station said that the cab had to have an up-to-date disc and failed it – even though when they pointed it out, I rather stupidly assumed they would tell me not to do it again and pass it anyway.

This year saw the cab go up again just two days before the old disc expired, so having learned from the ridiculous situation of the previous year where I had to buy a new disc, let the passing station see it and then return it to the DVLA for a refund while losing one month in the process, I tucked the new disc behind the old one. Then I forgot about it and it stayed hidden until now!



The strange thing is that the guy who said he was an officer for an organisation I thought no longer existed, made a great play of comparing my Badge / Bill number with that on the identifier, yet missed the fact that the road tax – situated just below it – was two months out of date!

But hey, it's the season of goodwill and I don't hold grudges, but it did make me wonder just who the hell he was....!

Norovirus

It was pointed out to me recently that the Norovirus is much stronger than last year. The virus is often transmitted via contaminated food or water but can then be passed on by person-to-person contact. Does that ring a bell for taxi drivers? Norovirus is often a cause of viral gastroenteritis and can affect people of all ages. The virus can also affect your future immunity.

One answer is to carry a chlorine-based disinfectant, which is very effective in nullifying the virus. Surgical gloves would also be effective but could possibly cause some alarm – if not insult sensitive passengers!

The Norovirus doesn't just pass easily from person to person; it's also a very nasty illness. Be aware...

Hailo charges

In last month's **Call Sign**, I wrote under the heading of *'So who are the mugs'* that the Chicago version of **Hailo** – from the same three Americans who released it over here – charged passengers a premium for using the service. I compared it to London drivers who are paying for the service with no run-ins and up to five minutes free waiting (which then gives the Hailo driver £2.40 against a DaC driver's £6 assuming he had an average £3.60 on the meter on arrival). So besides losing an average £3.60 on each job, the driver has to also pay 10% of the fare! No wonder those US entrepreneurs are doing so well. But apparently there were some drivers on one of the internet chat site who thought I had made it up. I'm only on the US Taxi-l list – which I've been on since 1989 – so I didn't see any of the comments. But let me quote a piece from the *Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA)* which praised the App. In a recent newsheet they said:

"The Hailo app is free to download and you don't pay any more until you're delivered a Hailo taxi, at which point you'll get charged a Hailo Fee. The meter doesn't start running until you get in the cab and you get 5 minutes of free waiting time. The minimum fare is only \$5. Of course, good service deserves recognition, which is why we have made

leaving your driver a tip easy and optional.

The Hailo Fee in Chicago is as follows. Non-Peak Fee \$1.50 with the Peak Fee (6-10am and 3-6pm, Mon-Fri) \$2.75."

So as I said last month: Just who are the mugs?

Baku Taxis

As **Call Sign** exclusively revealed in our October issue, the **Baku Taxi Company** in Azerbaijan have now ordered a further 1000 TX4 taxis to add to the 1000 they purchased last year. Company director, Ilgar Gasimov told us via an interpreter that they were so happy with the first batch of TX4s, that they wanted a second 1000 in 2013. Of course, these taxis will come from **Geely** in Shanghai – the same Geely who refused the loan that could have seen the **London Taxi Company** through their current difficulties and avoided them going into administration.

As I wrote in the November issue, if it transpired that Geely ended up buying the remains of the LTC to add to their 20% at a knock-down price, I would find that to be reprehensible. In fact, if it was a Geely TX4, I doubt that I would contemplate buying a TX4 again – even though I have always believed that it is by far the best taxi in the trade.

Now let's have a coffee?

Look, it's still officially the holiday season so if the following seems to have little relevance to taxi matters, that's because it doesn't. But I'm part of the trade and this happens to me several times every week and at Xmas / New Year time, I'm allowed!

It's all about my lovely wife **Linda** and her choice of coffee. Like many others, our local High Street gives us a choice of **Costa** or **Caffè Nero** whenever we fancy a coffee and – just as importantly – a sit down! We find Costa a bit like drinking hot milk, but if Nero's place is busy with the mothers and babies union, then it has to be Costa where I always order a small *Americano*.

That doesn't appear to be much of a problem to the staff; but then I have to order Linda's Java fix – and that ain't so easy unless you have the memory of a 21 year old.

"And can I also have a small, skinny, decaf cappuccino with an extra shot and cinnamon sprinkles instead of chocolate and in a takeaway cup with a sleeve for holding it but with no lid please!"

Incredibly, they usually get it right, but whatever happened to the days when you could just walk in and order two coffees!

Call Sign

Because the printers of **Call Sign** closed for two weeks over the holiday period, this issue was put together in almost half the usual time so I hope the quality is as good as you would expect. Can I also thank all those contributors who came up with articles in a much quicker time than they would have usually done in addition to thanking everyone that takes the time to write for or to the mag. That's what keeps it going and I hope you will all continue with that contact in 2013.

Finally, can I wish everyone out there a very happy New Year, with my sincere hope that you and your families have good health and that it turns out to be surprisingly busy...

Alan Fisher
Callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

EC5

As most of you nightmen are aware, we changed the Finsbury Square rank so that future work could be despatched to the individual zones of EC1/2/3/4. This was due to several members asking for the change due to our largest account re-locating to the 'Island' and in future their work would not be despatched to EC5, but to E14 instead.

The thinking behind the change was that members would then be able to *soon-to-clear* into the EC zones, something which was not available to EC5. Also, you had to be in an EC zone before you could book into EC5, whereas you only had to be 15 minutes away from the furthest point of a particular zone when trips were despatched to the individual ones.

The request for a change seemed quite reasonable and the BoM are only too happy to improve service to Members and customers alike, so we agreed to the change for a trial period. What then transpired was that Members were booking into the zones, but in our view some would have needed a jet propelled cab to get there in 15 minutes and thereby offering an inferior service to our clients. We were also inundated with complaints from Members stating they wanted EC5 to return and pointing out the pitfalls (in their opinion) which could occur.

I believe their concerns were justified; consequently the EC5 rank was re-introduced as the BoM believe it is in the interest of the Society to do so!

I have heard some comments - from outside of our Society I might add - asking if the BoM know what they are doing? Actually the answer is 'yes' and as I have stated before, we are only too keen to improve service for Members and clients alike. It really does not make any difference to us so long as the service to clients is impeccable and the majority of Members are happy. I say majority, as whatever we do or introduce, there will always be a section of the Membership that will not be happy with the decision.

As you can see from the above, we do listen to Members requests and are only too happy to change something, but once we do, we must be confident that it is for the better and will improve service and in this instance, we did not believe it was for the best, hence the reversal.

Finally on this topic, if you were one of the original Members that asked to have EC5 disbanded, please don't ask again as the *status quo* will prevail unless of course circumstances drastically change.

Ernst and Young Audit

There are many topics and issues that arise within Dial-a-Cab that Members are totally oblivious to, however something has arisen recently that I thought you might be interested in and the type of situation that occurs.

From time to time some of our larger customers like to do their own internal audit into Dial-a-Cab, just to see the systems we have in place and how secure the information we hold on customers really is. To that end, a very large bank employed the services of



Ernst and Young to carry out an investigation / audit into Dial-a-Cab and our systems.

The Auditors were on our premises for five hours and we had to satisfy them on 496 counts as to how we deal with the information we receive and how secure it is. At the time it appeared to go smoothly, but of course you never know until you receive a final communication from the bank concerned. When we eventually received the final result from the bank, there was not one suggestion on how our systems could be improved or how we collect and store data. So we easily passed the audit inspection.

The report also contained the recommendation that in their view Dial-a-Cab was a negligible risk and we would not have to undertake an audit of any description in the future - or as they put it: NLR (No longer required)!

They have also marked their vendor profile for us as 'retired'! I think you will agree that is quite an accolade, especially coming from one of the largest financial institutions in the world.

So you can see why I sometimes smile when I see some systems that operate within our industry that are not even Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant, when they make some of their credit card transactions. I really cannot understand why this situation is allowed to prevail by the authorities, because if any cards were cloned after being used in a London Taxi, then our whole industry would

be thrown into disrepute regarding the processing of credit cards.

Apps

As you are now aware, we have launched our App for Credit Cards and it is working very well. We will also be launching an App for your Account Customers in the New Year.

Whilst I am talking about Apps, it appears there is some confusion regarding Members using Apps from other companies.

As you can imagine, the BoM are not thrilled with Dial-a-Cab vehicles turning up to a customer displaying our livery and then doing the cheap trip on behalf of the other App supplier. Well, what can we do about it? The answer is very little at the moment as we are unaware of who has an App and who doesn't and it would seem very churlish of the BoM to try and police something that we cannot monitor or indeed enforce.

However, what we can do is to state quite categorically that if a Dial-a-Cab taxi has hardware fitted from another organisation, then that is against our rules and action will be taken.

I have been told there are some Barrack Room lawyers on a particular taxi forum, who say we can't do anything about it, but we can and we will as we believe it is against our rules. I can understand to a certain extent someone wanting as many strings to their bow as possible, but the line must be drawn somewhere and it will be.

Also remember that if you are caught using a mobile phone whilst driving, it is a £60 fine and three points on your licence and if there is an accident or worse, then goodness knows - I know those scenarios only happen to others!

Finally

Another year has come and gone and 2012 has proved to be a particularly bad year for the London Taxi Industry, we can only hope that 2013 is better!

However, I would like to wish you and your families a very Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

Brian Rice
Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

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	<p><i>"It is at the edge of a petal that love waits"- William Carlos Williams</i></p>

*Vito rear axle steering preparation***235 Vitos ordered without it!**

According to an internal memo at Eco City Vehicles or KPM, their quality control has identified 235 Vito taxis having been ordered without the rear axle steering preparation. London Vito Taxi sales with internal code BB4 were not updated in the vehicle documentation system upon installation of the rear wheel steer system.

As a result, the ESP system - electronic stability program - may be activated unnecessarily at speeds below the 12km/h when the rear wheel steer is operated. This would be displayed in the instrument cluster by the yellow ESP warning light illuminating. In plain English, ESP improves the safety of a vehicle's stability by detecting and reducing loss of traction or skidding.

The memo concludes that it is therefore necessary to carry out special coding on the ES and EZS control units. It adds that



235 Vito taxis ordered without rear axle steering preparation

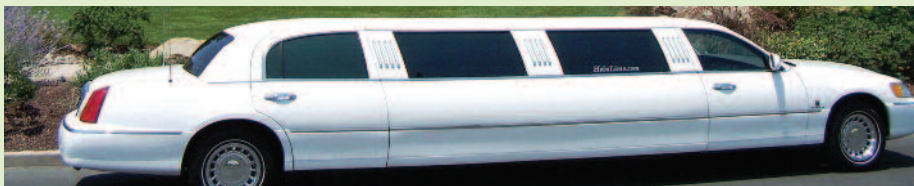
"failure to SCN code both the ESP and EZS control units successfully will result in fault codes occurring."

In other words, Mercedes Benz and other dealers seem to be happy to say to Vito owners: Look, don't blame us!

Rogue limos driven off capital's roads

A new wave of enforcement against unsafe, uninsured and unlicensed vehicles in the capital has seen rogue operators of unsafe limousines hit with 17 prohibition orders.

Operation Kansas, a joint initiative between TfL, the Vehicle and Operators Services Agency (VOSA) and the TfL-funded Safer Transport Command from the Metropolitan Police Service, was launched in London at the beginning of March to step up enforcement against illegal luxury or novelty cars that feature prominently in the capital's nightlife.



Roadside stop-checks on limousines and other vehicles were carried out on Victoria Embankment on Saturday night, 8 December, as the city got into the full swing of Christmas party season. On that day, 26 vehicles were stop-checked, seven of them issued with immediate prohibition order preventing them from being used until remedial action had been taken. Of those seven, one was immediately impounded for having vehicle defects and no operating licence. Three were immobilised at the road side. Five vehicles were issued with delayed prohibitions by VOSA inspectors, requiring them to make improvements to the vehicle within a set period of time. Those vehicles will also be required to undergo a new MOT inspection. Five further vehicles were issued with inspection notices.

Since concerted enforcement activity began in March, Operation Kansas has stopped and examined more than 300 vehicles. Despite significant progress over recent years, illegal limos, cabs and private hire vehicles remain a high priority for TfL as they are a danger to the public, especially as they operate around the capital's night life.

TfL's Commissioner, **Peter Hendy CBE**, said: "TfL and our partners have come down hard on rogue operators in recent months and we are now starting to see positive results on the road. These vehicles, which in many cases are unsafe and uninsured, are a danger to anyone who hires them and we will continue to bear

down on dodgy operators to raise safety standards across the capital."

With the fad among young partygoers to rent stretch limos, there are likely to be a lot of disappointed faces around...



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"Never mind bloody 'appy new year, that was my job!"

LTFUC pop in to Camilla's pad!

Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, recently invited the **London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children**, together with eight children, to spend some time at **Clarence House** with her and just as she did last year, the charity's patron got the children – who were from Oxford hospice **Helen and Douglas House** – to help her dress the royal Christmas tree. Her Royal Highness and the children also enjoyed a lunch of bangers and mash.

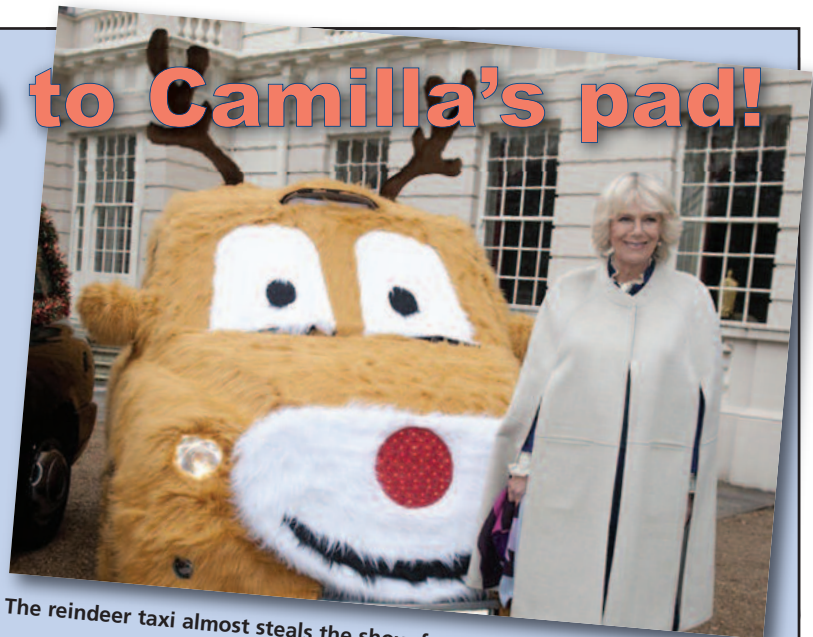
LTFUC Hon Chair, Sue Angel, her Committee and the children arrived at Clarence House in ultra-smart looking taxis, one of them complete with a flashing nose!

In addition to the LTFUC, Camilla is also Patron of the hospice, which provides respite and care for youngsters with life-shortening conditions in addition to helping their families with practical and emotional support.

Prince Charles Assistant Equerry, **Captain Charles Fraser-Sampson**, who was dressed in his Welsh Guards ceremonial uniform complete with bearskin, allowed the children to try on some of his uniform – ever mindful of his ceremonial sword!

Speaking to **Call Sign**, LTFUC committee member and **Dial-a-Cab** Board member, **Mike Son**, told us that the Duchess was a natural with the children and personalised the day by her ability to remember every child's name.

"She is the perfect host," said Mike, "and her staff admitted that this was one of her favourite days of the year! The children enjoyed it tremendously."



The reindeer taxi almost steals the show from HRH!



Camilla with the LTFUC committee

If you were one of the **Dial-a-Cab** drivers at **Ricky Manetta's (N16)** recent *Krav Maga* course, you may have noticed a team from **BBC 2** coming in and speaking to some of those on the Israeli self-defence class.

Having spoken at length to **Call Sign** editor **Alan Fisher** about the taxi business, they decided to go to Tench Street in Wapping where the classes take place and select a driver they could follow around for two days in order to assist in making a programme about taxis, provisionally called **The Roads**. This is a follow-up to the recent BBC 2 programme – **The Tube** - about an underground train driver.

BBC 2 ended up selecting Marc Turner (R97) as their taxi driver and we asked the night driver how it went.

"They came to my house at around 4pm on a recent Saturday and about an hour later began fitting the cab with camera equipment; they put four cameras in total in both front and back taking almost three hours before they could say they were ready. In the meantime, the inside of my taxi was bathed in an amazing light as I began work.

The BBC 2 crew, including the programme's producer, were in a car behind following me with a radio mike connected to the cab and I ended up doing two days with them. I worked as usual and as my passengers got out, the BBC men would ask them to sign a disclaimer document saying they didn't mind being on television. Some said no, but most agreed.

Although it was a Saturday night and sur-

DAC DRIVERS ON THE TELLY!



Marc was selected by BBC 2

prisingly quiet on the streets, I decided not to do any radio trips because I was nervous that the camera would pick-up information about our clients that they wouldn't necessarily want publicised. I could have used some DaC work, but I didn't think it was worth taking the risk.












Perhaps the most astonishing part was that even though the cab was illuminated more akin to Las Vegas than a taxi's interior, very few queried why or realised they were being filmed! I actually pointed out to the men from the Beeb that the heavy lighting would take away the intimacy associated with a late-night taxi ride, but they said there was no choice.

I believe at least one other DaC driver was filmed and they even mentioned that the Editor had offered them a tour of DaC House if they wanted it as part of the programme. They also said *The Roads* will be on sometime early next year..."

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

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Taxi Driver of the Year Dinner and Dance

The Holiday Inn London Kensington Forum recently celebrated the 40th annual **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity's** dinner and dance, with all funds collected being equally shared by the trade's charities. They are the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children, East London Cabbies Outing, London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled, Albany and the Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children.

An excellent dinner followed by dancing to **Fraternity** made certain that this would be another great evening and all those present - including special guest **Helen Chapman**, Deputy Director of TfL's Taxi and Private Hire Office - enjoyed themselves

Russell Poluck MBE (T55), Honorary Chairman of the TDOY Charity Fund and his wife **Barbara** work really hard every year to organise this event and *Call Sign* congratulates them on celebrating the Charity's 40th anniversary - even though the actual trade show seems to have faded from the calendar. At least the trade charities still benefit.

There were a number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers there, including the always irrepressible duo of **Bill Tyzack (C06)** and wife **Grace**. As always, DaC took a table with places taken by **Brian Rice**, **Allan Evans**, **Mike Son**, **Shelagh Adkins** and their respective other halves. Editor **Alan Fisher**, his wife **Linda** and trusty camera **Bertie McGee Number 3** were also there. Sadly, like last year, no other circuits were represented, but the unanimous verdict by those enjoying themselves at the Forum was to bring on next year

John Dixon (B67)
waits for a slap!
Allan Evans
looks on while
Maxine Son
wonders what
Mike is doing!



Sue Angel collects a cheque for the LTFUC



Brian and Brenda Rice enjoying the party

Allen Togwell's Marketing Place

To everybody at **Dial-a-Cab**, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families' peace, goodwill, happiness and good health for the New Year. 2013 - a year ending in 13 is ominous in itself. It is likely to be yet another uncertain year particularly for the cab trade, but not as uncertain as it was for us old'uns who remember January and February - and even March - when they were always *Kipper* months and it was common to sit on the rank at Kings X that went to the top of Pancras Road! Then after an hour or more of freezing your whatsits off, you got to the point and your hopes would rise when you saw luggage, only to be deflated when hearing the destination was a hotel in Argyll Square, which you could practically see from the rank. There was no brooming trips off in those days and as tough as it was, if a cab driver overtook you and saw a fare waving, he would indicate to the cab he had just passed and carried on driving. A gesture that has sadly disappeared with time.

Silver Anniversary!

2012 was my 25th year of serving on your Board and knowing how in the past Board members used to come and go like ships in the night, I was secretly thinking all year I might be presented with a Mickey Mouse watch or even a cake, but no such luck. But joking aside, it really has been a remarkable 25 years.

Dial-a-Cab had not long moved from **Shirland Road to Brunswick House** when I joined the Board. And considering how much bigger the new building was, it wasn't long before an additional floor was added to accommodate a new control centre. Even though I'm not an architect, I was delighted to get the chance to redesign the entire ground floor including the reception area and later to redesign the control centre. Which was a far cry from when we moved across the road to **Dial-a-Cab House** and able to afford professional architects at fees in the tens of thousands.

Technology 25 years ago was in the form of electric typewriters. When word processors came into fashion, I made a request for one but the then Board said we couldn't afford it so I had to make do with a second hand Amstrad with a nine-inch screen. The text was so small that I bought a pair of spectacles with huge frames, which made me look like *Brains* out of the 1960's TV show **Thunderbirds**.

Board meetings back then, compared with today, will always be remembered - but not with affection. They were noisy, aggressive and health wise I feel lucky I haven't suffered the effects of passive smoke, because everybody except me smoked at Board meetings. One even smoked a cigar in a room with no ventilation for ten hours solid, made worse by another BM who brought a dog to the meetings that used to relieve itself under the Boardroom table, always near to where I was sitting! Some might find that amusing, but in reality it was a just one example of how badly the Society was run at that time. And it could well have continued that way if it hadn't been for the present Chairman taking office in



1996. Radical improvements were made at Board level, including team spirit, professional managers were installed and the Chairman adopting a role more akin to that of a CEO. Resulting in the society experiencing the most successful period in its history.

Remembering...

But enough of dwelling on the past, I'll leave that for **Mr Whitbread**. I'm aware that not all of our members read my articles, but from the few that do there have been some who have benefited from my mentioning either things in the market place that they were unaware of, or simply a prompt to get something that they have been meaning to get but just haven't got round to doing.

In my last article, I mentioned the hands-free **Bluetooth** car kit for speaking on a mobile when driving your taxi, which costs less than £19. As I write this, I have just seen an article in the press that included a photo of a cab driver talking on a mobile, claiming that a million people have been nicked using a mobile whilst driving. Why they pick on a cab driver out of a million people is probably because we are considered to be responsible drivers, which is praise in one respect but also a warning that a cab driver is more likely to be nicked than the average motorist.

On the question of gadgets, I was saddened to read tragic stories recently about people, including the elderly, young couples (many on holiday) and whole families who have suffered, with many having died from carbon monoxide poisoning. It's ridiculous to think that almost all could have avoided that tragedy for as little as £14, which is the cost of a carbon monoxide alarm. These alarms are easy to fit, particularly for the elderly; they are battery operated and if you are going on holiday, particularly to a villa that could well have a dodgy heating system, you simply take the alarm with you. They are so small, you can put it in your first aid bag. Many of you may already do this, but if you don't then pop along to your nearest DIY store or even your local chemist, it could be the best 14 quid you have ever spent.

Paxo and my tie!

Changing the subject, I had to smile recently when I had my head buried in the mountain of paper that comprises the **Sunday Times**, when seeing the headline: *Paxo, put your tie back on, there's nothing more pathetic than an old man trying to be groovy*. Which I immedi-

ately thought would be an apt description of me if I took the advice of **Mr Lyons (Y52)** who suggested I go casual when writing about our member's dress code.

In Paxo's case - or to give him his proper name **Jeremy Paxman** - he was criticised in a humorous way by columnist **Quentin Letts** who wrote that *Newsnight* viewers have been treated to the sight of Paxo's scrawny dewlaps flapping below his chin. Is that a neck, sir he asks, or is it the undercarriage of an amorous turkey hen?

The criticism came because of Paxman being tieless during an interview with **Lord Black**, who had recently been released from prison. Lord Black was wearing a smart grey suit and an imperious purple tie. The BBC's Paxman, conversely, wore a jazzy blue jacket and an open-necked blue-and-white stripey shirt, which could have been his pyjama top. Letts then went on to say that the rule of thumb should be that presenters should dress in a way that suits their age. Which I believe applies to anybody, me in particular. Apart from complimenting a suit, I find the benefits of wearing a tie keeps me warmer on a cold day, can bring a splash of welcome colour to the 'bib' of a shirt and it can pull together the top of the collar, hiding all my unseemly old-lizard neck.

Best in the world?

As regards the uncertainty of what the cab trade holds in 2013, if it's any consolation, the report that London cabbies are the best in the world, beating our rivals from New York, Tokyo and Shanghai for the fifth year in succession (last month's **Call Sign**) should lift the spirits. It is just a pity that **Alison Couper**, senior director of communications of *Hotel.com* who undertook the survey, does not communicate that fact to all those hotels in London who use minicabs. Personally - and it's only my opinion, - I think the ever increasing threat private hire was having on our trade over the past few years could well ease off since the introduction of so many taxi Apps. I'm not an App nerd myself - I don't own an *iPhone*, *Blackberry* or *iPad*. But I must say I'm extremely surprised and impressed by the effect these taxi Apps have had on the average cab driver and in particular quite a number of drivers on Dial-a-Cab.

For years I used to get slaughtered at our AGMs and in **Call Sign** when I retained or captured a new client by reducing our charges. On one occasion, I was physically threatened outside Brunswick House because I was forced to reduce the gratuity of our biggest client from 12% to 10% or else lose the account and as for reducing waiting time or run-ins, I wouldn't dare because no way would the work get covered!

Yet now we have many of those same drivers willingly covering work with no run-ins, no gratuity, no waiting time and gladly pay the taxi App company 10 percent of the ridiculously reduced fare for the pleasure of doing them. There has got to be a moral there somewhere, but I'll be damned if I can find it...

Allen Togwell
DaC Marketing

Obituary

DAVE PARRIS



When it comes to the Christmas period, we reflect on the people that have added something special in our lives. Maybe that's because we slow down and have a little more time to mull over memories. One person I will certainly be thinking of is **Dave Parris**, who was employed by DaC as a despatcher, working mainly on the night shift while I was the Board member in charge of the Call Centre. We recently heard that he had suddenly died.

I liked Dave; to me he was an honest character who would not lie if I asked him a question - even if it could have shown him in a bad light. Yes, he had his faults; he loved his pint of beer especially while waiting for an Arsenal match to start. His greatest friend at DaC during those times was **Jay Gomez** - another fanatical Gunners fan.

Dave was very dry witted, which matched in with myself. He loved baiting Board members - one of his favourite targets was Allen Togwell. But when it was work, he took it very seriously and he did not take too kindly to drivers who tried to take advantage of the system while he was despatching.

So I was rather shocked after years of working with him when he informed me he was leaving and going to work for Her Majesty's Prison Service.

After I moved to Roman Way, I used to see Dave as he was at that time working in Pentonville Prison, so he would occasionally pop around for a cup of tea and a chat. He also told me he fancied moving out to Banbury in Oxfordshire and buying a little place and that is what he eventually did.

In the first week of December, I received a message from Steve at the Roman Way depot to contact him. I did so that evening and he informed me that Dave's car had broken down three days earlier and so he had decided to use his bicycle to go to his new place of work - HMP Bicester. He set off without a care in the world, but on that journey a car went into him and killed him on the spot.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer the condolences from all staff and drivers of Dial-a-Cab to his family. May he rest in peace.

Tom Whitbread



London taxi guide Bob Woodford looks back at London's past...

JANUARY DISASTERS!

Every time we get around to **January**, I'm reminded about a dreadful event in London's history - the 110th anniversary of which will be on the 27th of this month.

Many Londoners probably know nothing about the tragic event that took place at the building that, when I was on the *Knowledge*, was called **The Friern Hospital**, but which has now become the **Princess Park Manor** luxury apartments in New Southgate.

Back in 1903, this collection of buildings was known as the **Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum** and operated by the *London County Council*, housing over 3,000 of the 'pauper insane'.

On the night in question, 52 people - all female - lost their lives when a fire swept through the wards - the death toll marking the worst peacetime fire in London's history since the medieval period. Many of the inmates were held in temporary timber wings in a complex famous for its long corridors.

But the inevitable happened: One of the timber wings caught fire and aided by strong winter winds, the conflagration spread, with the disastrous consequence of many poor souls being burned in their beds.

The fire occurred in the Jewish wing - people that were separated for apparently practical reasons such as shared dietary needs, but the temptation is there to suspect a prejudice. It was a sad time when psychiatric patients of any ethnic group were held in very low regard.

The Princess Park Manor luxury apartments website does not mention the tragic fire; neither does the *history* section make any mention of the building's former function as an Asylum.

There is also, strangely, no mention of this event in an absolutely superb book I was given as a gift for Christmas. If you intend to dwell on ranks during the *kipper* season, then I could recommend a thoroughly good read - check out **London's Disasters** by **John Withington**. This fascinating and unique book tells the story of over 2,000 years of disaster from fire, water, disease, storm, pollution, accident, riot, terrorism and enemy action as well as lesser known events such as whirlwinds and earthquakes.

It does, however, make reference to another disaster in January 1867 when on the 15th of that month hundreds of pleasure seekers descended on Regent's Park to take advantage of the boating lake, which had frozen over and despite the warnings of thin ice many visitors got their skates on and started to take a turn.

But the unthinkable happened - the ice began to weaken close to the banks and eventually cracked. The result was that around 200 skaters plunged into the freezing cold water, their heavy skates conspiring to worsen the tragedy. Despite the frantic efforts of those on shore - many of whom ripped off tree branches to haul people in - 40 people perished.

Two chilling stories of events from a chilly January of London's past. Hopefully, London will have a safe 2013...



Princess Park Manor (inset) and in its previous life as the Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

Dial-a-Cab driver Alex Smith (J67) was sitting on the **Claridges** rank recently when he saw a rather famous face leaving the hotel and being directed towards a limousine that had obviously been waiting for him.

"I recognised him immediately," Alex told *Call Sign*. "It was Olympic double sprint gold medallist, **Usain Bolt**."

Of course, when you are sitting on a rank such as Claridges or the Savoy, the chances are someone famous will eventually exit and more often than not, get into a limo. But Alex got a shock.

"I saw Usain shake his head and point to my Vito cab, apparently telling the doorman

USAIN AND THE VITO!



Usain poses with DaC's Alex Smith

that he would rather use a taxi than a car – and he was going to Heathrow!"

He was chatty and a really nice guy. And for once, I didn't mind having a 'runner' in the cab!

NISSAN GETTING READY FOR LONDON?

The **Nissan NV200** that is said to meet all the London *Conditions of Fitness* but that rather than using a rear wheel turning circle - that many Vito drivers have said doesn't work - will use a standard front-wheel steering system circle more akin to that of the TX4, is progressing well with Nissan hinting that it may hit London earlier than its original launch date.

According to Nissan, they learnt much about this trade and its taxis at the time it provided engines for the Fairway – although the last of that model was built over 15 years ago in 1997.

The head of the NV200 cab building program, **David Jackson**, has claimed that Nissan intends being a very prominent player and not just to throw a few taxis into the ring, adding that Manganese' problems could spur Nissan into speeding up their entry into the London taxi market – originally scheduled for mid-summer 2013.

Nissan also say that a battery-powered NV200 could begin production in 2014 – something that could make even the Mayor's ears begin to tingle. Boris has said that he wants London to have an all-electric taxi fleet by 2020.



The NV200

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

LTI sacked workers protest

Workers from Coventry taxi makers, *Manganese Bronze*, took their fight against being sacked to London after the company went into administration. They came to the capital as part of a *Unite – The Union* group to promote their *Save our Black Cabs* campaign.

In an attempt to raise awareness of their fight to keep taxi manufacturing in Coventry, they handed out leaflets and spoke to taxi drivers and members of the public.

Call Sign spoke to several of the workers, all of whom had been with LTI - as they called the company - for many years. They all said that it wasn't a demonstration, but a rally to generate support to help keep taxi manufacturing in Coventry. There is already a campaign on *Facebook*.

One of the workers told our reporter: "The response from the London taxi drivers has been fantastic and they've all supported our fight. Yes, we know they might have the odd moan and groan about the TX4, but they know that these are quality vehicles and they want to continue driving them.

"We've got no gripe with the administrator; they've got jobs to do. But we want to gain support and make the right people take over the business with manufacturing in Coventry the focal point."

A *Unite* spokesman added that the event went well and the workers were well received, particularly by the cabbies they spoke to.



Dennis Latchett, Call Sign Online

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

The Brethren of the Whip

Seeing is believing?

Ever been tricked into thinking that something you have seen on TV was not quite real? Sure you have, but commonsense dictates that what you've seen is some form of trickery of the camera. I know of several taxi drivers who to this day still believe that the moon landings were faked. Are such illusions sustainable at a theatre? After all, that is what makes Derren Brown and David Blane so popular; but even with these illusionists your commonsense and intelligence is telling you that you have been conned - even if you do not know how?

In 1843, **George Wilde**, lessee of the **Olympic Theatre** put on a production entitled **Road of Life**. The Olympic Theatre was in **Wych Street**, which was completely obliterated by the construction of **Kingsway** and **Aldwych**, but ran from **Drury Lane** south-east-erly to **St Clement Danes Church**. To give realism to the play, he wanted to engage a **handsome cab** and horse every night for the performance. There was nothing particularly unusual in having live animals on stage, particularly at the Olympic. In fact the first production it ever staged, **The Indian Chief**, had horses and it was even used for indoor pony races!

George Wilde approached a cab proprietor, **Mr Watson**, and offered to rent a horse and cab from him each night of the play for its six week run. Within the vicinity of the Olympic Theatre, there would have been dozens of stables and it is almost certain that in order to cut down costs, the proprietor would be based nearby. No driver would be needed as



again, to cut down costs, **Wilde** himself would don the multi-layered cloak of a cabman and perform the part. With rates agreed, the production went ahead.

Act one opened to a reproduced scene of Temple Bar. Towards the end of the act, the lead actor would hail the conveniently waiting cab on the rank and direct the driver to take him to Blackwall. Horse and cab would trundle across the stage as the curtain fell.

Act Two would open with the cab arriving at a scene depicting **Blackwall**. **Cabby** would be paid off and makes his exit. That was the sole use of the cab every night. Towards the end of the run, **Mr Watson**, the proprietor of the cab, took a seat in the gallery and watched the performance; he did not like what he saw. The following morning he was before the commissioners of the **Westminster Court of Requests** in order to take out a summons

against **George Wilde**.

What **Watson** told the commissioners not only astounded them, but had them nearly falling off their seats with laughter, while **Watson** could not understand what the fuss was about. His cab was being employed at an hourly rate each night, but the truth was that it was being driven each night from **Temple Bar** to **Blackwall**; he witnessed it with his own eyes. He believed therefore that he was entitled to the half-a-crown fare that the cab undertook every night for the six week run and so was entitled to put in a claim for £5.

Try as they might, they could not convince **Watson** of his error. In the end they sent for the treasurer of the theatre, **Mr Lewis**, who explained to him that "Temple Bar and **Blackwall** have been brought within the walls of the Olympic Theatre. Temple Bar is on the stage and **Blackwall** is in the Painting Room." Eventually **Watson** was convinced and no doubt scratching his head, proclaimed:

"Well, I declare, I thought the cab went to **Blackwall** and no gammon. I let my horse and cab to the theatre and of course when I thought it was used to take somebody to **Blackwall**, I wanted my reg'lar fare - I don't understand their stage deceptions."

There was little doubt that even **George Wilde** saw the funny side of things. Even though the summons was dismissed, he graciously paid two shillings for the summons and for **Watson's** time in endeavouring to justify what he saw with his very own eyes.

Sean Farrell (B39)

Euro 5 requirement suspended

Because the TX4 steering box problems caused such huge problems in the taxi rental market, TfL have agreed to implement a temporary relaxation of the requirement that all taxis new to licensing must be Euro 5 compliant and that requirement has been suspended until further notice.

As a result, TfL will now allow taxis new to licensing (and those previously licensed by TfL but which have not been licensed for some time) to be a minimum of Euro 4 standard for up to 5 years, but only within the maximum age of the taxi of 15 years. No taxi in scope will be allowed to exceed the 15 year age limit and that requirement remains unchanged.

In summary; the changes mean that individual drivers and garages can now source Euro 4 taxis that would have otherwise not been licensed by TfL and can present these taxis to meet the licensing inspection standards in the normal manner.

However, any Euro 4 taxi new to licensing will only be licensed for a maximum of 5 years and will not be allowed to exceed the maximum age of the vehicle of 15 years.

TfL say they will review the impact of this suspension on a regular basis and will end it once it is satisfied that there is improved stability and availability of taxis.

Individual drivers and garages who source Euro 4 taxis which they wish to licence in London, can now do so by following the standard taxi licensing and inspection process.

For further information, refer to previous TfL notices via www.tfl.gov.uk/tph.

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Mayor seeks ban on dangerous pedicabs!

The Mayor and Transport for London have called for a change to legislation that would allow them to effectively ban dangerous pedicabs in the capital. In its submission to the Law Commission's consultation 'Reforming the Law on Taxi and Private Hire Services', TfL proposes that pedicabs and other 'novelty' vehicles should be brought under the same legislative framework that governs Taxis and Private Hire vehicles. This would give TfL the power to remove pedicabs from London's roads as they don't meet the rigorous safety and licensing standards that Taxis and PH must adhere to.

Although there are a relatively small number of pedicabs that operate in a small part of central London, they have a disproportionate effect on traffic congestion and congregate in pedestrian areas – both of which impact on bus passengers and other road users.

Whilst there are some responsible pedicab companies, even they cannot ensure the safety of their passengers to an acceptable level and the Mayor and TfL believe they are unsuitable for London's roads. Neither pedicabs nor their riders are licensed with no requirement for riders to undergo CRB checks. Pedicabs are often unroadworthy and uninsured with riders often disobeying road rules and putting the public at risk. TfL has now released figures which demonstrate that pedicabs pose a risk to passengers and cause considerable congestion in the West End.

Between October 2011 and November 2012, joint enforcement activity undertaken by TfL, the Metropolitan Police and Westminster City Council saw 365 arrests and seizures and 839 warnings issued to pedicab drivers for offences such as dangerous riding, causing obstruction and cycling on a footway. The most recent enforcement activity saw 5 arrests for similar offences with one of the people arrested having been wanted for deportation by the UK Borders Agency for 18 months!

TfL and Westminster City Council had previously sought to introduce a voluntary registration scheme but it was recognised that this would not have resulted in a robust and rigorous licensing regime. The Mayor and TfL are seeking to change current legislation so that the issue can be tackled effectively.

A number of businesses and organisations have expressed their support for the proposal to ban pedicabs. **Boris Johnson**, Mayor of London, said:

"Although there are a number of responsible pedicab companies, the fact is that these vehicles jam up the capital's roads and consistently fail to ensure the safety of their passengers. Whereas other forms of public transport have measures in place to protect passengers, with pedicabs anyone can just hop aboard and ply for hire. It has become clear that a voluntary registration scheme would not have produced a robust solution. That's why we and a wide range of businesses, local authorities and West End institutions are calling for TfL to be given the powers to remove them from the streets."

Mark Field, MP for the City of London and Westminster, added: "The numbers of pedicabs have exploded over the past few years



We may soon see more of this!

and aside from the regular aggravation they cause local residents and other road users, there is increasing concern that these unlicensed, unregulated vehicles may cause serious accidents. I welcome the effort put in by Westminster, TfL and the police to make sure that the streets are a safe place."

Roger Johnson, from the Prince Edward Theatre – a hotspot for pedicabs after the show ends – said:

"The West End is a world class destination and safety plays a significant part to this; if pedicabs were banned or regulated, it would most certainly improve the area and the safety for our customers."

TfL's proposal to the Law Commission will require primary legislation to be implemented. In the meantime TfL will continue to work with Westminster City Council and the Metropolitan Police Service on enforcement activity to tackle illegal and unsafe activity by pedicabs

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2012 BOM ELECTION

Brian Rice has been returned unopposed as Chairman. The following are CVs of those standing (in alphabetical order) as members of the Dial-a-Cab Board of Management...

Keith Cain (Q07)

When I first joined the Board some 22 years ago, it was the year before the recession of the early 90s that lasted just over two years. That difficult time taught me some valuable



business lessons that I, along with others, applied to the way we have managed the Society. Since then we have experienced the best trading years this Society has ever seen and being prudent in managing the finances during those times has put us in such a strong position to fend off this current recessionary period. In such difficult times you have to consolidate and cut your cloth accordingly to ensure stability to ride out the storm.

Within my role as Driver Operations Manager, I have had the responsibility of over one hundred staff who work within the call centre. With clients having reduced their usage considerably, I believed that while there were clients who are prepared to pay for a top dollar service, our staff should be fully trained to deliver what has become the buzz words inside Dial-a-Cab; *Exceeding Good Customer Service*. Working closely with our in-house trainers to deliver this, I am confident that the service we give is the best in the industry.

Not knowing how long this recession will last, focus must now be on retaining our client base and to offer them the best service their money can buy. There will never be such a more important time within our Society for you, the members, to provide the best possible service you can. That may take some motivation, but the time has come to prove how much better we are than the rest. The next two years at least will be challenging and tough for any Board elected and it will be a case of rolling the sleeves up and getting stuck in.

Experience will be invaluable and I offer my experience to you once again. No one person can work miracles, but I can promise you all my determination and effort to help steer the Society through this unprecedented difficult time.

Allan Evans (Y83)

I have for the last twelve years been fortunate to represent you, the members, on the Board of Management. I am a licensed taxi driver with 34 years' experience and a member of our Society since 1985. I am jointly responsible for Driver Operations and now hold the position of Compliance Officer. My aim in this crucial role

is always to make the system fair and equal for us all and I have not been frightened of making important or difficult decisions when necessary. But I have always listened to each and every one of you before passing judgement. I treat my position extremely seriously and my decisions are built on experience, integrity and the need to safeguard our Society and most importantly you, the members.

I worked as a new Driver Trainer and Marshalling Officer prior to being elected, always on hand to be of assistance and throughout my time in office I have always strived to build up an excellent working relationship with some of our most senior clients.

As a working driver, I have never lost touch with you, the members, and I pride myself in being totally approachable, fair, open minded and at all times ready to offer help and advice. The knowledge and understanding I have gained during my time in office has given me a deep understanding of our Society and my commitment has never wavered. I am confident in my ability and have always been wholly dedicated to my position of Board Member; it is a responsibility that I certainly do not take lightly.

The last two years have been particularly tough and it is with optimism that as a member of this current Board under the guidance of the Chairman and with your loyal support, working together we have the experience, knowledge and technical knowhow to not only consolidate our position, but to effectively react to the challenges that lie ahead and steer our Society forward.

I ask you once again for your support so that I can represent you for a further term in office; I will certainly not let you down.

Mike Son (V52)

Dear Members,
It is yet another AGM election; I cannot believe it has been two years since the last election process.

What an extremely difficult few years for everyone to say the least. However we must be optimistic and look forward to a better future.

I became a cabdriver in 1965 and joined Dial-a-Cab in 1991. During the 1990s I successfully sought election to the BoM. During my term on the Board, my responsibilities have been varied; Driver interviews and training for a few years and then Customer Service, which gave me the opportunity of face-to-face meetings with clients, especially if there were service issues.



Those meetings, listening to clients with their needs and expectations of our service, were invaluable for both the customer and Dial-a-Cab.

Marketing was and always should be an important part of any company sales strategy. During these many years, we have promoted Dial-a-Cab not only from the literature aspect - ie brochures created by Allen Togwell - but also taking Dial-a-Cab out into the market place. As a result, I, together with representatives from our Sales, Account Management and Call Centre teams was able to meet new and existing clients at stands we erected at exhibitions such as Travel, Business and Office to promote all that our organisation has to offer.

Times have changed quite dramatically and many organisations have not the financial power to promote their service or products as they were able to do in the past.

As most of you may be aware, I still drive my cab. However, I am and hope to remain a valued member of your Board to offer new ideas and of course pick up concerns of the drivers when we meet out on the road.

With all this in mind and looking to a brighter future, I seek your support to continue as your Board Member for the next period.

Allen Togwell (Q08)

My name is Allen Togwell. I've held a green badge for 47 years. I joined Dial-a-Cab in 1979 and was elected onto the Board in April 1986 when two board members resigned suddenly mid-term. At that



time, the Society had no proper Sales department and having run my own business for a number of years, I immediately became responsible for Sales.

My first task was to design a flyer and create a database of over 600 companies that I intended to target. This type of direct marketing was new to our Society in those days and it proved to be extremely successful. However our then method of dispatching trips (by voice) became inadequate and I was a member of the Board that proposed we change to a computerised despatching system that went live in 1989, a system that we still use today.

On a more dramatic note, during the early 90s I, together with Keith Cain, was instrumental in keeping Dial-a-Cab afloat by capturing three major accounts after being told by our auditors that our Society was on the verge of becoming insolvent.

I have served with 4 different chairman and 22 different Board members. Unfortunately, during my early years the politics, animosity and unrest amongst Board members, exacerbated by the resentment at having to pay PAYE tax and the knowledge that the Board of Dial-a-Cab are personally liable should the Society go

2012 BOM ELECTION continued from previous page

belly up, resulted in many leaving after just one term, which was not only disruptive, but this lack of continuity did not bode well with many of our major clients.

For my part, I believe my 25 years' experience at Board level, my many years running our Sales and Marketing department and my creative work, the bulk of which I do at home in my own time, is still an asset to the Society and I would like to continue serving you in that role.

Tom Whitbread (Q09)

I would never have thought that when I walked over the threshold of that shop come-Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service office in Shirland Road, that I would still be working for the company nearly 40



years later. When I joined, it was London's top licensed radio taxi service and who would have thought it could still hold that position.

During that time, I have held most jobs that bind the Society into a well-oiled machine, respected by a multitude of clients and passengers. I have stayed with the Society in the good times and in the bad, even when Board members were threatened that if we carried on trading and work continued to drop, we could be liable and lose our personal assets. Some

Board Members cut and ran; I stayed with other Board Members who believed we could carry on to success again.

Whilst I held the Complaints / Compliance Officer job for some 20 years, I was told I could only see problems in black and white. This is correct, as I believe that only honest drivers should represent the Society and I hope this is the way you see me. Then every driver gets an equal share of the work.

I have always been my own man with my own opinions. This way I represent every driver unless he proves to me he is a villain and wants to do harm to his fellow colleagues working potential.

If you want a Board Member with these views and not one who wants to be on the Board just for the title, then I hope you will support me at the coming Annual General Meeting.

Garry White (L65)

Dear fellow members,

My name is Garry White. I have been driving a cab for 25 years and have been on Dial-a-Cab for the duration of 23 of these.

I am asking for your vote as I would like to become part of the Board to bring a fresh and bright new approach and to deal with the challenges that face us from the private hire companies and apps who have gained large inroads to the account work that DaC have cherished for many years.

At present, I feel that we have a maturing

Board consisting of members who have been working in cooperation over a lengthy time; therefore this conveys mutually arisen thoughts.

A brand new addition to the Board would mean further fresh thoughts, ideas and judgement. However, of course, we still need the members of Dial-a-Cab to play their part to promote the Society and help us achieve our goals.

Please vote for Garry White (L65).



Call Sign January 2013

Editor: Alan Fisher

Address: 39 - 47 East Rd, London N1 6AH

Tel: 0207 251 0581 Fax: 0207 553 7293

Email: callsignmag@aol.com

Website: www.dac-callsign.co.uk

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25 - 31 Violet Rd, London E3

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Tel: 07958 300 428

Email: dfdannyfresco@gmail.com

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Winner 2010

Winner 2011

At the **November** Board meeting, held at **Dial-a-Cab House**, a decision was taken following requests from drivers to get rid of the night-time **EC5** – formerly Finsbury Square - rank and replace it by reverting to the daytime system of four city zones and including the usual *soon-to-clear* facility.

The Board members that *Call Sign* spoke to – **Keith Cain**, **Allan Evans** and even Chairman **Brian Rice** – told this magazine the same thing: It mattered not to them which of the two systems we used, so long as the work was covered and that it was fair to all.

However, *Call Sign* received emails and phone calls from drivers all saying that the new system meant that some drivers could end up waiting far longer than others who had booked into a different city zone. Not one driver wrote in to say that they liked the new system.

We passed our reader's views over to the BoM just before the **December** Board meeting. As a result of those contacting *Call Sign*, added to those the Board had received direct, a decision was taken to revert to the original system.

Who said it doesn't pay to write into *Call Sign*!

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online

DRIVER MOANS GET EC5 BACK!



Most DaC drivers seem to prefer EC5



Is Lee
on the
move
again?

Dial-a-Cab driver **Lee Pearce (J71)** has been in *Call Sign* many times with stories about his goal-keeping involvement with *Combined Counties* football team **Wembley FC** – more so this year as the team made some amazing signings in a bid to progress to the first round of the FA Cup. Sadly for the north London team, the acquisition of players of the calibre of Argentinian world cup winner **Claudio Caniggia** and others such as **Graham LeSaux**, **Brian McBride**, **Ray Parlour** and a personal goalkeeping coach in ex-Arsenal favourite **David Seaman** – not to mention the team's technical advisor in no less than former England and Spurs manager, **Terry Venables**, did nothing to improve the team's performance.

Then Lee suffered a bad knee injury that put him on the sidelines for several weeks. When he was fit, Manager **Ian Bates** refused to change the team – even though they were having a poor run of results.

Now Lee has been loaned out to Evo Stik league team **North Greenford United**, who are managed by former **Chelsea** and **Southampton** star **Neil Shipperley** and the rumour mill has suggested a bust-up between Ian Bates and Lee – although the DaC driver refused to discuss the matter until it had been sorted out, only confirming that relations had been better.

Who said these things only happen to Arsenal!

Dennis Latchett
Call Sign Online

Lee Pearce Wembley bust up?

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In a year when the *double dip* recession hit the taxi trade hard, the **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** has, with our supporters help, gone from strength to strength. The trustees of this Fund work hard and diligently for no financial remuneration, enabling us not only to keep our reputation as being the best, but also ensuring that for every pound we receive, 98p goes towards assisting London's disabled and disadvantaged children.

Our year started in December 2011 where we were once again invited to take some children to Clarence House for lunch and to decorate the Christmas tree. The Fund's Patron, **HRH The Duchess of Cornwall**, had a good rapport with the disabled children who we took from the **Jack Taylor School**, this school being renamed after our past Chairman. What a wonderful day we had and the smiles on the children's faces said it all.

Also in December 2011 we held another Concert at **St John's**, Smith Square. It was an excellent evening with performances by the London Charity Orchestra conducted by William Carslake, Soloist Simon Kodurand and the New London Children's Choir amongst others. During the evening, many wonderful pieces were played including a new composition by a taxi driver from San Francisco who had contacted the Fund via our website. There were many surprises that night, including trustee **Michael Son** taking over the baton and conducting the *Liberty Bell* complete with 'L' plates! A good time was had by all and I would like to thank all those involved for making it the success it was.

In January 2012 we held our annual **Mad Hatter's** tea party at The Grosvenor House, a JW Marriott Hotel, for 600 disabled and underprivileged children. This party is a mind-boggling event and the children lucky enough to attend never forget this day. I'd like to thank all the trustees, wives, partners, family and friends, the celebrities, the entertainers, face painters, toy suppliers, donors and the many people who make this event so special. I also give a huge thank you to the hotel management and their staff for their continued sup-

LTFUC HON CHAIR REPORT 2011/2012



In June trustees attended the closing down party of the Jack Taylor School. This school for the disabled has a long association with the Fund and is now relocated to the new Swiss Cottage Academy.

In August, trustees and their partners visited **Helen and Douglas House**, a Children's Hospice, to present toys and goodwill to the children and we thank them for their hospitality. The day was pleasurable and gave us a little knowledge into the workings of a hospice.

In September we were invited to the **Pearly Kings and Queens Harvest Festival** at The Guildhall, followed by a service at St Mary-le-Bow Church. It's good to see this tradition of London promoted and we send our thanks to **Doreen Golding** and the Pearly Kings and Queens for their support of the LTFUC. The day was a great fund raiser and promoted this charity to a wider audience and I would like to thank the trustees and their wives who attended that day.

Also during the year, talks were given to various clubs and Women's Institutes about this charity and I would like to thank the trustees and their wives who gave these entertaining and humorous and sometimes heart rending speeches about the Fund.

I'd also like to thank the Fund's trustees and their wives and partners for their hard work and their continued support during a particularly difficult year, with a special thank you to my hubby Gerald.

Last but not least, I would like to pay our respects and give a moment of reflection to those who have sadly passed away this year...

**Susan Angel,
Hon Chair, LTFUC**

PCN request from Barrie Segal




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

"Can I ask that all drivers please write the date of receipt on all Penalty Charge

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

Barrie Segal



**THE HON. PRESIDENT, HON. CHAIR
AND COMMITTEE OF
THE LONDON TAXIDRIVERS'
FUND FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED
CHILDREN**
(Celebrating 85 glorious years in
2013)

**WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU ALL
A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR**
With grateful thanks to all our
drivers, sponsors, helpers and
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*"None walks so Tall as he who Stoops to help
a Child"*

With the TX4 uncertainty and Vito drivers having problems with the cab's turning circle, Call Sign asked DaC drivers at random whether they thought the Conditions of Fitness should be abolished and if we should be able to drive any vehicle regardless of the turning circle...

Jackie Kott (Y88):

Would we want to drive another vehicle? No, I really don't think so as the London taxi is a world famous icon and as such it's important that it should be easily recognised and that wouldn't be the case in just any type of vehicle, just because it has a TAXI sign on the top.



David Cohen (E94):

Yes, we should be able to drive any vehicle provided they are all the same colour as in New York City, which I visit regularly. Also in NYC, all cabs have a sign on the passenger division 'please alight at the kerbside' obviously for safety reasons. Just today I had a passenger causing a near miss with passing traffic because she decided to alight on the road side...



Jim Reason (T69):

No, so far as I am concerned the turning circle is a very necessary part of the cab. But I have to say that if another vehicle became available and it had the existing turning circle capability, I would certainly consider purchasing it.



Martin Freeborn (C67):

Given the current circumstances, the CoF could be modified taking out the turning circle, but the vehicle itself is iconic so far as the public - even worldwide - is concerned and any future vehicle/model should stay the same recognisable iconic style. It should obviously be a taxi with the present attributes of wheelchair accessibility, ease of entry and exit etc. As much as I



would like to keep the turning circle, I think we may have to move with the times in the longer term for the sake of the taxi trade as a whole.

Malcolm Chiswick (N18):

The turning circle should remain. It is a part of the iconic taxi image, otherwise we might as well drive cars and then would no longer be recognisable as taxis. So far as the Vito is concerned, it has the image of private hire. It might be a very good vehicle to drive, but it loses the taxi image.



George Christou (E14):

No, definitely not any vehicle. It is important that we keep the differential between us and the private hire sector. They are slowly dumbing us down to their level. I would not want to drive a cab in London without the 25 foot turning circle and all the practicalities that brings.



David O'Mahoney (V86):

No, the turning circle should not be abolished. You need it in central London. If numerous vehicles are having to make 'several point' turns around London, how



Conditions of Fitness:

DO WE STILL WANT IT?

much will that slow up traffic? Also, it has to be a purpose-built vehicle otherwise we would all blend into one and nobody would know what's what. All my taxis have also been black over my twenty five year cabbaging career and I think the general public would prefer us to be a uniform colour.

Steve Saxon (A21):

My view has always been that the 25foot turning circle is hugely important and I feel that it is just as important we make sure that any London taxi has the capability. I also would much prefer to have a purpose-built vehicle of our own to retain our identity.



Dennis Heavin (A01):

The CoF should not be abolished, but I could do without the 25foot turning circle as the MB Vito has suffered from rear-steer problems and I have learned to work around it. But I would add that if we are to be allowed other vehicles, then they should all be a statutory black colour as a recognisable iconic taxi. Furthermore, I would consider the durability of the vehicle and strength of construction in order to last at least the 15 year life span as at present.



Alan Green
Call Sign Online

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Since a recent *Call Sign* article asked about famous relations to **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, several have queried if Editor **Alan Fisher's** sister-in-law **Daphne Sherman** really was the wife of world-famous shirt maker and founder of the **Button Down** shirt collar, **Ben Sherman**. This magazine also received some emails from driver's children – who all seemed to doubt that Alan's wife Linda's brother-in-law, Ben Sherman, was indeed Mr Shirt himself! Well it's true!

After the 1950s with its Teddy Boys and their Edwardian clothing had long faded into history, the much fabled 1960s hit London with a bang and the button down collar designed by young shirt designer Ben Sherman was picked up and popularised by pop groups such as *The Who, Kinks and Rolling Stones*!

They were soon followed by millions of young men known as Mods, who adopted the Ben Sherman BD shirt as their own identification mark together with the Parka – something that was also used by Knowledge Boys

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

Kupkake's Korner



Food for thought...?

I can't stand people eating in my cab,
It makes me feel quite sick,
Fish and chips, doner kebab,
They all get on my wick!

McDonald's chips, Kentucky Fried,
Pizza in a box,
Onion rings from onions died,
Tough and hard as rocks...

And look at the meat on the kebab,
Revolving on its' peg,
The meat is grey, perhaps it's bad,
Could it be an elephant's leg!

Take-away Chinese is bearable - just,
Or curry in a carton,
Eat in the cab and I'm fit to bust,
And you might have to beg my pardon!

Kopyright Kupkake 2013

NO, NOT JUST A SHIRT!



August 1968: Daphne and Ben Sherman get married

although not for fashion! And who could forget the Skinheads with their Ben Shermans in the 70s!

But the bottom line is that yes, there WAS a real person called Ben Sherman – although he was born as Arthur Sugarman. Ben died many years ago, but Daphne still has vivid memories of the period and *Call Sign* asked her to recall them briefly...

"Ben brought his prototype of button down

shirt with him when he came back from the USA in 1962 and after working on details of the design for a year, he made the button down shirt his own. 1963 saw the first of his button down shirts in the shops - although the label inside the shirts said 'Sussex Shirts'. Later, Ben decided to name-brand his button down shirt and young people no longer spoke about buying a button down shirt, but of buying a 'Ben Sherman'!

Newspapers and magazines of the time began criticising the Ben Sherman, referring to it as a uniform linking the troubles between Mods, Rockers and later on Skinheads. But in reality, many other men also quietly purchased Ben Sherman shirts in their thousands for the style, colours, easy fit and ease of ironing!

In 1965, Ben opened his first showroom in the centre of swinging London and helped to put Carnaby Street on the map. His timing was perfect. Along with the music scene, London was leading the rest of the world in fashion – and no fashion conscious young man about town would be seen clubbing without his Levi's, Doc Martins and Ben Sherman buttoned down shirt!

And, here we are 50 years later and 90% of the young men and women still 'go clubbing' in their Ben Sherman shirts, shoes and suits."

*You can read about the Ben Sherman phenomenon in **My Favourite Shirt – A History of the Ben Sherman Style** by Paulo Hewitt and Terry Rawlings (Published by the Ben Sherman group - £20).*

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When I worked in the Call Centre at Shirland Road, Maida Vale as the Night Despatcher / Supervisor, my staff contained many different characters - some who brought light humorous relief to what could be a really monotonous shift.

One of these was an Irish lady who lived nearby and came into work at 23:30, always carrying a bag containing her sandwiches and a bottle of lemonade. As she worked on the phones through the night, she'd munch away on her sandwiches and sip her lemonade. I sat facing the telephonists at the end of a conveyor belt system; directly in front of me was a pigeon hole type of filing system and on the other side of it sat this lady. Sometime after she started working for us, Telephonist Supervisor **Anne Hughes** came to me in the middle of the night and asked if I had noticed ***** eyes? I said I hadn't, but when I looked, they seemed a little glazed. It was agreed we would keep a watch on her.

Some nights later, I noticed her eyes were looking glazed again and then at around 02:30am this rather portly lady fell off her chair and onto the floor. I rushed around to pick her up and was amused at her demeanour. She was grinning and seemed to have a lack of control in her limbs, a classic sign that someone is well under the influence of alcohol. It was later revealed that she had a drink problem and the lemonade was in fact pure vodka! So by the middle of the night she was well p****d but was a really good actress and had up till then been able to fool us all.

Another telephonist was a man aged between 40 / 50 years old with long grey hair; he had the appearance of an eccentric poet. During these times you were allowed to smoke in the workplace. This gentleman was a compulsive smoker and during every shift he was on, he would either throw a used match or cigarette into the waste bin, which had not been properly extinguished. It was these episodes that made me keep a fire extinguisher next to the despatching desk, so that I was ready and put out the fire within 30 seconds.

The night shift started at 23:30, so a despatcher and a couple of the late turn shift worked over until 02:00, this was to help cope with the influx of work from the banks and finance houses finishing off the day's work ready for the next morning's shift. Some of the banks would only let one passenger ride in a taxi at a time, even if other passengers were going the same way. The idea was that if the taxi crashed, only one member of their team would be injured and they could carry on functioning!

The despatcher who did the overlap was a man called **Manny Conway**; he also had a brother by the name of **Sid Conway** who was a driver on the circuit and did a little bit of despatching. Now Manny did not like hard work, so he always took the East side of London at 23:25 before I sat down. The east had most of its work despatched to fixed ranks, such as **Finsbury Square**, which made it easy.

If you had to despatch the west side, you needed a good knowledge as all jobs were despatched to streets - this was after we lost the BBC account which had been despatched

THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF DIAL-A-CAB

Bits you may not know as remembered by Tom Whitbread



to the Shepherds Bush rank. It was no good trying to bluff it, because if you did you could bet the driver would ask to save him looking it up, which road did it come off?

Manny and I were always pulling strokes on one another, the greater number being pulled by myself. One night a rather large aggressive driver was driving me mad over the airwaves, so I had a go at him to which he got annoyed, threatening to come over to the office. I assumed he intended hitting me! So I said: "See if I care, I will be here until 2am you come and ask for me, my name is Manny Conway." What the driver couldn't hear was the other drivers going into convulsions of laughter and calling me a rotten sod!

Every night after he finished, Manny would hang about to have a coffee or tea then go off to play snooker. But because a driver had gone over to his channel and told him what I had done, he was up the stairs and gone at 01:55.

You would also get drivers playing pranks on one another. When **Jack Taylor's** son **Howard** got his bill, he used to love playing pranks on his friend **Neville Chapman** - an ex Board member from **Mountview**. He called me over the air one morning to ask if Neville was out working, I called him and told Howard he was at that moment by the Moby Dick, to which Howard asked me to tell him to wait there.

Some 30 minutes later and Neville called to ask how long Howard was going to be. Howard's response was: "I just wanted him to stay there while I tried to get a job before he got into town and nicked all the work!"

You also had a group of drivers who sent coded messages to one another; one would call in and ask for his mate to meet him at the office. This was telling his mate he was holding a flyer at a regular hotel for him, so to get there quick.

When I started to learn and get my grounding of the running at Lords / DaC, the first person to instruct me into the working of the old key and lamp telephone system was Anne

Hughes. I worked full time in the control room at Shirland Road with Anne for about 9 years; this was before I took a more full time job as a Board member.

Even as a Board member I still worked with Anne, as most of that time I was still in charge of the control room. I was at her retirement party after 27 years of working at DaC. One of the main reasons for her retirement was that she had contracted Multiple Sclerosis and was getting to a point where it took her hours to get ready for work. During those years we had many a good laugh and I regarded her as a very good friend as well as a loyal worker.

The drivers who used to go to the front office to collect their credit work payments will remember the girls who worked behind the counter. Two of these were **Lorraine Carruthers** and **Lynn Pestell**. In the summer there would be a very large queue to get in the office as they were both wearing hot pants! The latter of these two girls left and became a **Playboy** bunny at their Park Lane Casino and then went onto the Bahamas. So you can understand the reason for the queue!

Another of the young ladies was **Denise Zemina**, who hailed originally from France. Denise left for a short period but returned and is still with us, which must be around 30 years. What is it that makes these people stay with Dial-a-Cab for such long periods? It must be something that we are doing right.

But I think that the one young lady that has stayed with us continually since she started and is now in charge of Credit Control is **Caroline McGowan**. Caroline first started with us when she was about 16 - not long out of school. Now she runs her own department with great efficiency and knowledge. Over the years she has seen her sister Sandra and niece Sophie also working at DaC in other departments. Her sister was the complete opposite to Caroline, a very tall young lady wearing short skirts and working closely with the Sales department and who often got **Allen Togwell** hot under the collar!

A despatcher who became the night supervisor after me was gentle giant **Micky Faust** - a man who would go to the **Granby Grill** and order two breakfasts, and I think that was for starters! He had such a dry wit his first name should have been Sahara! But he would always help you if you had a problem. He married **David Kupler's** sister and moved to the South Coast. Sadly he died some years ago.

These are just some of the other people who have worked in the Dial-a-Cab company; some have left; while others are still making us the top taxi company in London.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Healthy and Prosperous 2013.

Tom Whitbread

In the magnificent surroundings of **The Cutlers' Hall** in Warwick Lane, Liverymen of The WCHCD and their guests enjoyed an evening of elegant dining at the annual Liverymen's dinner. Many of those members who have received the *Freedom of the City of London* in a ceremony at The Guildhall, would have met the guest speaker at this dinner, **Murray Craig**. He is the Clerk to the Chamberlain's Court and many of the Company's Liverymen were presented with their Freedom by Murray.

He entertained everyone with anecdotes of some of the ceremonies he has officiated at during his time in office. The office of Clerk to the Chamberlain's Court dates back to 1294 and amazingly, Murray is only the thirty seventh Clerk to hold office since that time!

WCHCD Master, **Brenda Bartlett**, together with **Graham Woodhouse**, course tutor for the *Guide Course*, presented all the students from the recently completed course with their certificates and badges. The students were full of praise for the course, having enjoyed both the classroom experience and visits and walks. Now they have an extra means of earning more as they can undertake guided tours in their taxis. A new course begins in February and there are still some places available.

Education is an important part of the role that Livery companies play in the City and the WCHCD is justifiably proud of its Guide Course.

The evening commenced with a drinks reception, where guests were received by The Master and her Wardens, followed by a three course dinner with wines and port.

Livery companies such as WCHCD are an important part of life in the City and the WCHCD is made up of members from all different aspects of the cab trade. Many of its members are working taxi drivers, some are involved in businesses associated with the trade such as garages, knowledge schools, trade press and radio circuits – with **Brian Rice** representing **Dial-a-Cab** as he often does. The diversity of this membership is wide, but has one thing in common - promoting the taxi trade. Some of the guests were police officers, including the Commissioner from the City force, **Adrian Leppard**, who accompanied the **Magical Taxi Tour** on its annual trip to Disneyland Paris this year. Charitable works are an important part of the Livery and WCHCD is also affiliated with **20th Transport Squadron** and **Royal Docks School**.

For anyone who has not seen behind the doors of The Cutlers' Hall, it is a magnificent building. The Cutlers' Company is one of the most ancient in the City of London, having received its first Royal Charter from **Henry V** in 1416. It is the fifth Hall the cutlers' have had, built on land in Warwick Lane, which had been the site of the Royal College of Physicians from 1674 to 1825 and subsequently a foundry. During WW2, the Hall survived the great fire bomb raid of 29 December 1940. However, on 10 May 1941 a high explosive bomb demolished the adjoining building and took away the entire north wall of the Hall. By 1951 all the damage had been repaired and the Hall came back into full use. On the outside facing Warwick Lane is a finely carved ter-

Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers

WCHCD ANNUAL LIVERYMEN'S DINNER



Master Brenda Bartlett and Murray Craig



Brian Rice represents DaC at most events of the taxi trade

racotta frieze by the Sheffield sculptor **Benjamin Creswick**, which shows cutlers working at their craft.

Inside the building, the Company's ivory gavel of 1603 and the iron Elephant Alms Box dating from 1624 are housed and can be admired by visitors. The stained glass window on the left of the entrance hall shows Henry V granting the original Charter in 1416 and cutlers working at their trade. In the Livery Hall itself, diners can admire the Victorian hammer beam roof. Throughout the building there are artefacts and examples of the Cutlers work, including swords, knives and cutlery.

You can see more information at www.hackneycarriagedrivers.com about the WCHCD and read about recent events the Company has been involved with.

Sandie Goodwin

NOTICE OF 2012 DAC AGM



By now, all members should have received an individual notice of the Dial-a-Cab 2012 Annual General Meeting advising that it will be held at:

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

The meeting this year will consider an agenda including the Election of Officers and any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions, all of which should have been received at **Dial-a-Cab House** on or before 09:00hrs on Monday 12th November 2012 and in accordance with Society Rules.

As a reminder, if you do not vote by post, then you must attend in person. If you do neither, you may be subject to a £50 fine...

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

TfL recently issued notice 24/12 detailing problems of drivers urinating in the street. The main areas of complaint are Cornwall Gardens, Ecclestone Square, St Georges Square and Vincent Square. Many others areas have had problems reported but are not documented.

Like having a bale of hay and lamp oil in the boot, it seems that peeing up the rear offside wheel is also a thing of the past. Mind you, as you then had to find a policeman to protect your modesty with his cape, that wasn't always a particularly handy option!

When passengers tell me they would love to drive a taxi and be their own boss, I do point out there is no holiday pay, no sick pay, no superannuation scheme and *no office toilet!* This has always been a problem, but the notice now uses the following words:

Urinating in the street is unpleasant, unacceptable, a criminal offence and drivers can be charged and appropriate action taken. Any driver charged and convicted with this offence may have their licence suspended or revoked.

This will mean a visit to Palestra House and it will not be to use their toilets! Ranks are also highlighted as areas of offence and local boroughs may revoke ranks if the offences continue, which will affect many drivers by the actions of a few.

TfL do admit that access to toilets is an important issue and are working with local boroughs to increase access and availability, but that is the future and having a stronger bladder is today's option. Their notice does list 'Toilet facilities –

A wee message from TfL...

Urinating in the street



The Regency Place foul smelling toilets that taxi drivers are compelled to use - hence the reason they are in black & white

Useful information' which is not reproduced here as it is just a list of stations where the problem just passes from solving a bladder problem to creating a parking problem.

To see their notice, there is a dedicated icon on the MyFav website's taxi page. Just go to www.myfav.co.uk and use the unlock code *taxi*.

Finally, a tip for the boys; an old 2 litre fabric softener bottle is an ideal 'in the cab toilet'. My preference is *Comfort* because it does what it

says on the tin! No, nothing to do with adding 100% freshness!

Alan Nash, Call Sign Online

Call Sign Comment

As Alan points out, a list of toilets accompanied the press release, but as none of the London stopping places had facilities for parking, there was little point in publishing them. You will have to take your chances at the foul-smelling Regency Place 'Iron Lung' where we are only up against wardens and CCTV...

Call Sign visits London's most gruesome yet fascinating exhibition...

DOCTORS, DISSECTION AND RESURRECTION MEN

Call Sign was recently invited to a private viewing of the amazing - if sometimes gruesome - Doctors, Dissection and Resurrection Men exhibition at the Museum of London.

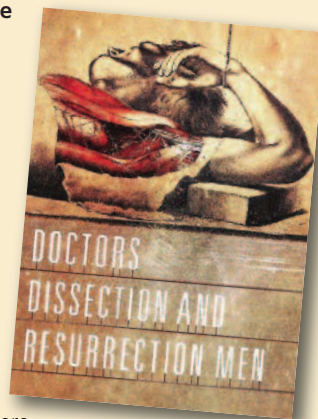
In 2006, during excavations at the Royal London Hospital, the Archaeology Department discovered some 262 historic burials, some showing signs of dissection.

Before the Anatomy Act of 1832 introduced by MP Henry Warburton, pioneering surgeons and medical practitioners would often use 'Resurrection Men' (body snatchers) to supply fresh human corpses for anatomical studies, research and dissection. Sometimes people would also mysteriously disappear, never to be seen again.

This fascinating exhibition follows the history of anatomical research, the shadowy world of those who supplied the fresh corpses and the fate of those whose physical remains were subject to close scrutiny. Implements used by those pioneering surgeons in days gone by are also showcased, so while this exhibition is not for the faint-hearted, it does make you very grateful for the ability of the medical profession to accurately pin-point organs of the human body and the knowledge to successfully diagnose and treat ailments and disease.

The Doctors Dissection and Resurrection Men Exhibition at the Museum of London is on until 14 April 2013. There are some post-cards in the DaC drivers reception for a 2 for 1 ticket offer.

To pre-book, visit www.museumoflondon.org.uk/postcard or call 020 7001 9844 and quote POS241. With special thanks to Nicola Kalimeris of the Museum of London.



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George Cato (H80) has been on Dial-a-Cab since 2001 and appeared in Call Sign several times since, but none of those appearances have been quite as astonishing as an incident that happened to him at the prestigious Ivy Restaurant in West Street. George takes up the story...

"It was around midnight on a normal Friday night and I was trying in these difficult economic times to make a living with fewer radio jobs and even more yellow lights around. I went to Covent Garden in the hope of getting a fare and was driving along Shelton Street. I turned into Mercer Street and as I approached Seven Dials, a man stood in the middle of the road with the stance of Henry VIII in a top hat and full length coat, trying to get me to stop.

Ok, I admit I have never liked people who purposely obstruct my path to gain a cab under duress, so I drove around him at walking pace to the kerbside and continued my journey up Mercer Street towards Shaftsbury Avenue. As I got there, I was hailed and picked up two passengers. While waiting to cross the stationary traffic, I noticed in my rear view mirror that the man in the top hat was running at pace towards me. I still was focused on trying to get out of Mercer Street with my fare when the man in the top hat ran past the cab and stood in front of the taxi obstructing my path.

He had a mobile phone and was using the flash to take photos of my front number plate, the front of the cab and then tried to take photos of me. The traffic in Shaftsbury Avenue was still not moving.

He then came to my driver's window and said that he was going to have my cab licence taken away at the PCO. I told him he knew nothing about cab law and that he did not have the power to have my licence taken away. He then began skipping like a boxer and placed his fists in a clenched style as in sparring and told me to get out of the cab so he could hit me! All this with his top hat still on!

He suddenly reached through the driver's window and snatched the glasses I was wearing from my face and with both hands, twisted the frames before throwing them back at me and then running back down Mercer Street towards Seven Dials.

Ruining my glasses undoubtedly constituted criminal damage and with my two passengers as witnesses, I decided to dial 999 and summon the police. Whilst on the phone to them, I noticed the man with the top hat get into another cab in Mercer Street but because of the one-way system, it had to drive towards me. So I approached the driver of that cab as he stopped behind mine and advised the driver of what his passenger had done and that I was now awaiting the arrival of the police, to which the man in the top hat got out of that cab and ran along Shaftsbury Avenue towards Charing Cross Road. I asked the other cab driver where he was going and he said it was to **The Ivy** restaurant in West Street.

There was now no reason to hold up the traffic, so I took details of the other cab driver

Following an alleged assault by the doorman against George Cato...

DaC driver wins judgment against The Ivy!



George and the man in the top hat (Pic courtesy Observer Food Monthly)

and then moved my cab into Shaftsbury Avenue and parked awaiting the police. My two passengers were willing to be witnesses and waited with me. When the police arrived, the two officers asked what had happened and then one of them drove off towards the Ivy as the other one spoke to my passengers.

Whilst talking to the remaining officer, his radio was paged and he moved out of earshot before coming back and saying there was a counter-allegation by the man in the top hat, claiming I had spat at him and also tried to kill him at Seven Dials! He added that if the investigation was to proceed with my allegation of criminal damage that I would have to be arrested and taken to Holborn police station. Then, in the words of the policeman, I would probably be locked up until the following afternoon at the earliest after which "anything could happen!"

I wasn't prepared to give up and told my passengers to seek another cab and asked the officer to allow time for my wife to arrive to recover my cab, as I lived not too far away. The policeman then radioed my request to the other officer at the Ivy. There was whispering over the radio and the policeman kept going out of earshot, but there seemed to be a lot being said between the two of them. Then the officer with me said I could possibly be in the police station most of the weekend to sort it out. I said I would do anything to recover the cost of my glasses as they had been an expensive pair.

The second officer then returned from the Ivy and both officers told me it would be a waste of everyone's time and that I would be better to just put it down to experience as I would lose more money in time carrying on with my accusation than my glasses were worth. As a result, they were taking no further action.

I smelt a bit of a rat and believed that there was something going on as I had the two passengers in the cab and the other cab driver as

witnesses to the facts, while the doorman had none. I took the officer's details and advised them that I wanted the details of the doorman from the Ivy so that I could recover my damages in the County Court.

The officer who first went to the Ivy then got back in the police car and drove back to the restaurant - I assumed to get me the information - while leaving me with the other policeman who seemed stunned that I was to continue with this course of action. I told him I had used it before to recover damages.

The other officer then returned with details of the Ivy doorman and I asked him if the details were genuine? Amazingly he replied that he had known him for several years! The plot thickened and it all became clear as to the non-action on the police officer's behalf.

I returned home later that day and went online to make a claim in the County Court for the damages caused to me by the Ivy employee as he was employed by them to procure cabs from the street for their restaurant. As a result, I held them responsible for his behaviour. I also wrote a letter of complaint to the director of the Ivy stating all the facts of my complaint.

The County Court served the summons to the Ivy for my damages and again they, for whatever reason, chose not to reply. The time line of the claim then expired and I applied for judgment and it was issued.

I hope all of you reading this in *Call Sign* believe, as I do, that we don't go to work to fight or do work under duress in any form and that the pen is always mightier than the sword.

Finally, to finish the story, I eventually received the sum of £275 from the company that owns the Ivy. But other than the cheque, which represented full payment of the damages, there was no letter or any note of apology whatsoever! Nice place..."

George Cato (H80)

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



Hello ladies & gents,

Manganese Bronze

I have been asked by the Editor to put pen to paper fairly soon after the last report due to printing closures. So even though it isn't yet Christmas as I write, it probably will be by the time you receive this issue, so I hope that you all have and had a busy and prosperous lead up to Christmas and that those of you who had a well-deserved break over the festive period, will come back with your batteries fully recharged.

Although at this time of writing Manganese Bronze are still in the hands of the administrators, it does appear that a number of interested parties are still in discussion and I hope by now

it may be somewhere close to a satisfactory resolution. Most of you who unfortunately had recalls on your steering boxes should now be back on the road, but again to suffer this situation at the busiest time of the year was and is totally unacceptable.

£80 trips

Most of you will know that trips over £80 in total are automatically rejected for re-validation before they are invoiced to the client and paid to you, the member. I have mentioned it before, but it is important that if you are out of signal range and have a problem clearing the trip or if you have additional details that may add to the meter fare or even reduce it, please make the Call Centre aware either by phone or terminal message (if possible). They can then in turn enter a trip update on the event logger that will not only significantly speed up payment, but also prevent unnecessary queries which can be time consuming and hold up payment.

Credit cards

It's nice to hear that most of you are displaying the new credit card stickers in your taxis that along with information on the Dial-a-Cab website, will slowly but surely get the message out to passengers and steadily generate more of this type of work.

As the weeks pass, it will also go out on the public network and as long as we all support the project, it will work. It is equally important that every one of you display the door logos on your taxi, it helps clients locate their particular taxi and also advertises Dial-a-Cab, which surely is a no brainer.

And please don't forget that there is no longer a £2 booking fee on credit card trips via the system and that the former 12.5% charge has been reduced to 10%. The £2 charge remains for cash trips.

EC5

The Chairman has already mentioned in his report the reasons behind the initial trial to the EC5 rank and why it was reverted back to normal working, so I won't go into heavy dialogue. All I will say is that this Board of Management does listen to the membership and any reasonable requests will always be considered and rightly so.

In this instance, there was an overwhelming disapproval to the changes, so much so that it seemed prudent to reinstate the system as it is today.

Before I finish, can I wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2013...

Allan Evans

Allane@Dialacab.co.uk

Winter Wonderland Taxi Rank



Now that it is likely to be somewhat quieter for a few months, events such as Hyde Park's **Winter Wonderland** are likely to look an attractive proposition for trapping a fare. But of course other drivers will be thinking the same thing, so please make certain that if someone puts their hand out, that there are no cabs on the official rank.

If you aren't sure where the rank is, then it is along the side of Aspley House, Hyde Park Corner, in the same location as last year. The park gate is open only for entrance to the rank and is for 12 taxis.

It has been very successful in previous years, but problems have been reported when some drivers have not used the designated taxi rank but instead have formed an unofficial queue on South Carriage Drive.

So please, when picking up passengers from Winter Wonderland, please make sure that the designated taxi rank is empty, otherwise please go and wait there and not queue on South Carriage Drive. Otherwise the police have said that the rank may be removed in future years.

Winter Wonderland is open every day between 10:00 to 22:00 until Sunday 6 January 2013.

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Minou wasn't just a cat, she was Denise's best buddy for 22 years. But she passed away in November 2006 and Denise – who works in **Dial-a-Cab's** administration department and is the account manager for one of DaC's largest clients - still misses her greatly, explaining to *Call Sign* how much of a character she was and how she was loved by the many that knew her.

Denise, who was with DaC way back in our **Shirland Road** days, wanted to do her bit for her favourite charity in memory of Minou – but especially to help raise much needed funds for **The Celia Hammond Animal Trust**, who over the years have campaigned tirelessly for the welfare of animals - especially cats and dogs. The Celia Hammond Animal Trust receives no government funding and relies solely upon the generosity of the public to fund their rescue and rehoming work as well as their free veterinary services. So Denise set herself a target...

She began on **Monday 12 November**, when instead of going on the tube, she walked home from work each day for 10 days, covering a distance of 4.3 miles each day and 43 miles in total.

She began to enjoy the walks with her only complaint being the dodging of all the fellow workers coming out of their offices at the end of their working days. But half way through her daily trek, Denise was struck down with a touch of bronchitis, began feeling quite poorly and was put onto antibiotics. But she wasn't prepared to give up on her target and completed the full ten days.

DENISE AND THE CELIA HAMMOND ANIMAL TRUST



Denise and Minou

Denise told *Call Sign* after completing the walk: "I know it might sound daft to some humans, but I'm still grieving for Minou and my way of coping is to belong to a few charities and sponsor animals at a distance: There is a cat called Lila, a dog called Shane and a donkey called Wayne! Yes, I know I am barmy but *Call Sign* already knows that!"

If anyone wants to help Denise raise those

funds that CHAT needs so desperately, then you can easily do so via safe online *Just Giving* donations. No matter how small, it will be put to good use by the Trust. You can do it easily by going to Denise's *Just Giving* website and put in your donation.

Just go to:

<http://www.justgiving.com/in-memory-of-minou-anonymous>

Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers

DISNEY GALA BALL RAISES £2500...

The Children's Magical Taxi Tour is organised yearly by the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers** when it takes around 200 children, many of whom suffer with life-threatening illnesses, to the **Disneyland Resort, Paris**.

Many of the volunteer drivers and organisers are from **Dial-a-Cab**, but in this case that comes second to the brilliant job they all do as the children have the weekend of their lives.

The WCHCD also organise a **Christmas Gala Ball** in which they raise funds for the following year's Disney trip via raffles and an auction. This year's ball raised over £2500 and included in that total was a hand-made set of three cross stitch pictures featuring characters from Disney's **Winnie the Pooh** from **Dial-a-Cab**

Customer Service Representatives, **Fiona McLachlan** and **Carole Chart**. This is the third time Fiona has been involved in making a cross stitch for the WCHCD auction and it was snapped up in ultra-quick time to help with the fundraising.

DaC Chairman **Brian Rice** bought the star auction lot of a **James Bond** package for his two grandchildren, but rather surprisingly a signed record from

Englebert Humperdinck was left unsold and anyone interested in making their wives relive their youth with memories of Enge, just let *Call Sign* know and we'll put you in touch - with the organisers and not Englebert!

DaC's Phil Davis (F10), Chairman of the Disney committee said: "Thanks to everyone who came along to this fund raising event and made it so enjoyable. We look forward to seeing many of the drivers on the 2012 Magical Taxi Tour and appreciate the support we receive from you all."



Fiona (left) and Carole with their cross stitch
Inset pic: Englebert left unsold!



In the October Call Sign, retired member Terry Farmer (ex-T55J) asked whether anyone on Dial-a-Cab had a previous famous life before doing the Knowledge. Several drivers responded, but Terry's original request has also spawned a new offshoot – about famous people DaC drivers have picked up. Brian Marcantonio (R73) has been on DaC for 34 years and is a past Taxi Driver of the Year. This is his tale...

"For part of this story, I have to blow my own trumpet. That was when in 1993 I won the **Taxi Driver of The Year** competition and amongst the other prizes I also received two plaques that were to be placed on the two tip-up seats of my taxi. The inscription on each one read:

'The Driver of this taxicab, Mr Brian Marcantonio, was the winner of the Taxi Driver of the Year competition 1993.'

It was the following summer in 1994 and although my year was coming to an end, I was still officially the Taxi Driver of the Year. I had accepted a cash trip on the radio from Upper Phillimore Gardens to SW3 and the name of the passenger was Ustinov.

Now **Peter Ustinov** was someone I really looked up to and I knew he was appearing at the Haymarket Theatre. I wondered if it was possible that it could be him; my heart speeded up at the possibility as he had always been something of a hero to me.

I rang the bell and a lady appeared telling me that he would be out shortly. Sure enough, just a few minutes later the door opened and there he was – the great **Sir Peter Ustinov**!

I couldn't believe it was him, but there he was walking towards me! I jumped out of the cab - **Allen Togwell** would have been proud of me - opened the door for him to get in and gushed!

"It's an honour to have you in my cab, Sir Peter." He smiled and thanked me. I got back in the cab and asked where he wanted to go to? He said Sloane Avenue and off we went.

As I turned down Argyle Road at the crossroads with Phillimore Walk, I gave way to an Oddbins van that had written along its side: *Oddbins Wine Merchant of the Year*.

Immediately Sir Peter leaned forward towards the opening in the partition and said:

"Wine merchant of the year; Taxi Driver of the year; it's an honour to be here!" I was laughing all the way to Sloane Avenue.

It was a great loss to the world when Peter Ustinov died; it was easier to list what he didn't do than what he did. If all my teachers at school had been like him, I would be a genius now and not driving a taxi for a living! When he spoke, he had

Peter Ustinov, DaC and me!



Peter Ustinov and the Taxi Driver of the Year!

the kind of voice that made you just want to sit down, shut up and listen!"

Brian Marcantonio (R73)
Brilliant actor, writer, director, dou-

ble Oscar winner and superb raconteur, Peter Ustinov was appointed a CBE in 1975 and Knighted in 1990. He died in 2004 ... Ed

EDNA MITCHELL

It was very sad news when I heard of the death of **Edna Mitchell**, wife of **Ronnie Mitchell** of **Stable Taxis**. Edna had spent 10 weeks in hospital and recently celebrated her 84th birthday before passing away.

It was over 25 years ago that I first met Edna, when as a butterboy I rented a taxi from Stables. While chatting to her, it became obvious that Edna was very knowledgeable about the Taxi trade and I was surprised how she knew everybody's name - not easy with a fleet of over a 150 taxis and who knows how many musers going in and out!

In the 1970s, Ronnie rented some space from a very old taxi company called **Goode's and Cooper**. They went back to the days of horse-drawn cabs and gave Ronnie the stables - hence the name **Stable Taxis**.

The fleet grew steadily and at one point reached over 150 taxis and Edna became involved in the running of the company, only retiring some 3 years ago due to ill health. Edna was just like Ronnie - always willing to help a taxi driver who was in trouble.

I know many Dial-a-Cab drivers have used Stables Taxis in the past and like me, would wish to offer their deepest sympathy to Ronnie and all of the Mitchell family.

Edna is survived by Ronnie, who she married in June 1951, three children, Gary, Glen and Jill, nine grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

Our sincerest condolences to the family and rest in peace Edna...

Jon Robinson (E88)

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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 month's Flashback returns to October 1970 and a story featuring two well-known stalwarts of this radio circuit who were interviewed in the Evening Standard...

From the Evening Standard – October 1970

Taxis and the Maxwell Stamp report...

If I were out on a big story and in a cab, I would wish my cab driver to be **Jack Taylor**, he is quite the most talkative cabbie I have ever met! The first thing that Jack and every other cab driver must do is to learn the Knowledge and that takes about a year.

"You have to learn every street in London" says Jack, "and it's a bastard, I'll tell you! You have to cotton-up 468 point-to-point runs from a pink book which is called the Blue book, and Scotland Yard test you rigorously on it. Then with your Knowledge and clean bill of health, you look to 'wangle'. That means you go to a garage with a fleet of cabs and learn to drive one of them. There were five wangers at my garage and I ended up teaching them! Maddeningly, they all passed their 'drive' first time whereas I failed my first two!"

Jack remembers his first day well. "From my first trip from Shoreditch to St Pancras to the end of the day, I was working solidly. They call it butterboy luck because in this game you can't be a clever driver, only a lucky one. That's why when we say goodbye to each other we say 'be lucky' and not cheerio."

Jack's days aren't typical, because he is the Chairman of the *Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service* in Maida Vale and spends much of his day at the office. But on a working day, Jack puts his 'for hire' light on straight away. "Mind you, I live in Tottenham and rarely get a job before reaching Manor House where I usually put onto the rank. All ranks are free for all drivers to use, but my favourite is the one at Hanover Square because that's where I usually eat! The food is cooked by Arthur and is great."

When Jack and I walk in to the Hanover Square shelter, everyone calls out "Hello Curly" – rather strange, as Jack doesn't have a hair on his head! But the food is very good. Over lunch, Jack explains why he enjoys cab journeys to places such as Blackheath and Finchley:

"Being on ODRTS, there is always the chance that someone will dial 286 4848 wanting to go into town. And while I have the chance," said Jack, "I find it very rude when people keep asking me how much I earn. How would a passenger react if I kept asking them the same question! Don't forget, we only earn when someone is in the cab; so if I do a 12s:6d fare from Shaftsbury Avenue to Highgate and I don't trap on the way back, that means that after expenses that I probably earned 7s:6d in that hour. I think that there should be a minimum fare of 4/-. That way we wouldn't have to spend up to 30 minutes waiting for a 2s:6d ride."

Before I could say "Thanks Jack," he had already changed the subject: "And what about those minicabs," he shouted, "we do the Knowledge and then they get away with murder."

Jack has recently bought a new black Austin FX4 for £1365 and now had to get back to work...

Like Jack, **Joe Toff** isn't shy to pass his opinions. Joe is the Editor of *Steering Wheel*, the journal of the British taxi industry and until recent-

ly also edited *ODRTS Monthly*, so he knows a fact or two about the taxi trade.

"It's about time that we had taxi sharing," said Joe, "sometimes you can go into Euston Station and see a huge queue. My job may go to Liverpool Street as may many of the others waiting, yet even if the passenger doesn't object, I'm not allowed to see if anyone else is going the same way. The queue would shrink and we'd all be happy. But I'm not allowed to! Joe wants to see legislation to permit taxi sharing. Currently, anyone caught doing it faces a £10 fine."

"All we would need is a retired cabbie controlling the queue and Bob's your uncle. Cab sharing is in place. It is so simple."

The scheme has been recommended to the **Maxwell Stamp** committee by London's youngest trade organisation, the **Licensed Taxi Driver's Association**. General Secretary **Bill D'Arcy**, claims that taxi sharing, would mean that each of the four passengers would pay half the meter fare on exit giving the driver a good profit and the passengers a good service. London's other taxi organisation, the **Transport and General Workers Union**, are against it fearing that it could lead to abuse.

Their spokesman argued that it could lead to accusations from strangers sharing the cab of a male trying to pick upon an innocent girl or a prostitute trying to solicit custom. They also asked how much the driver would charge if only two were sharing. Would they still pay half each, or what if four from the same family jumped in, would they end up paying double?

Maxwell Stamp may well have his work cut out...



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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

Am I mad?

It began with a fare from Canary Wharf to the **John Howard Centre** in Kenworthy Road, Homerton.

Knowing the area and the road, I didn't know of the Centre, but the client informed me that it was a secure psychiatric unit, which those of us of a certain age – and in our ignorance – would call a home for nutters, a mad-house or asylum.

It wasn't until we pulled up outside the gates that I realised the Centre was in the grounds of the old Hackney Hospital, where I was born and spent most of my summer holidays with my brothers and sisters being stitched up, or put in plaster – not from abuse I should add, but from the usual falls and scrapes of a childhood before *Health and Safety* was invented!

In fact it was often a pleasure because our Auntie Anne worked there as an orderly in the A+E Department. She was a big lady with a big heart who would share any sweets that patients left her with all the children in the waiting room.

Like many of us, I have a *Facebook* account and was recently sent a link by an old school friend – *Lost Hospitals of London*.

It contained a history of the secondary school that I went to – **Brooke House in Clapton** – because from 1758 to 1940, it was a mental asylum. When we start on *The Knowledge*, everyone says that we're mad! But as we all know, the first *Knowledge* run is **Manor House to Gibson Square**. The **Woodberry Down Estate** – a Manor House 'point' – stands on the grounds of the old **Lanhamberland Mental Hospital in Green Lanes!**

To finish the story off, wife Wendy went to **John Howard Grammar School**, **John Howard** being the inspiration to the *Penal Reform*

With Tom Quigley (Y33)



Society and the same said person the original centre was named after! Who said it's a mad, mad, mad world!

Valuable clutter

It's that time of the year when after a barrage of full shelves goading us to buy gadgets, toys and other goodies, shops clear them out of the way and fill the shelves with all manner of storage boxes for us to buy and put what were once desirable goods into, but what has now turned into clutter!

But to us, this is not any old normal clutter – these are classed as inheritance clutter. We stupidly believe that if we don't use the goods for the purpose which we bought them and at the over inflated prices in their special seasonal packaging, that they will turn into some valuable collector's item.

Storing them in lofts, cupboards, garages and anywhere there is a space – although if there isn't a space, we will make one by throwing out previously stored valuable clutter – even going to the expense of hiring a skip or a *Man with a Van* and paying them to take our

once valuable future inheritance that has now been surpassed by the new next best thing!

It has now got to the stage where there are now out-of-town storage depots that were once the reserve of large companies, but which are now being used by families to hide (yes hide and not store) larger items like your nan's old sideboard, that no one except nan liked and which is so big that it won't fit in any modern room! It is, however, made of good solid heavy wood and not like today's rubbish!

It then becomes full of memories so that every time we see something similar on a TV show – be it a period drama or daytime auction show – we scream at the screen to the annoyance of our children that their nan had one of them and that one day they will be the recipient of one! We rub our hands Fagan-like with a smug smile and self-congratulatory nod of the head at how right we were to pay for storing it, but too stupid to reason that if there are more of them in the world, it renders our timepiece less valuable.

Popping off for a short break to a seaside town, we stroll around the antique shops, boring the owners (who must have heard the same story a thousand times) about how we must have owned half his stock but had to pay someone to take it of our hands, or even dumped it! It doesn't register to us that the clutter we are keeping is the stuff we should have thrown out and that these shop owners have built themselves a nice life by the coast on our collective stupidity. In fact it only inspires us even more to store everything we can and those storage boxes we saw the other day look to be a bargain.

I'd like to wish everyone out there a very happy 2013...

Tom Quigley (Y33)

ECLIPSED BY A CLOUD!

Many readers will know **Sean Farrell (B39)** for his fascinating insight into historical cabbie stories from long ago (*The Brethren of the Whip*), but less familiar will be Sean's hobby of Astronomy – a passion he has pursued from a very young age.

"Earlier this year I was lucky enough to visit Australia on holiday, while taking the opportunity to combine my vacation and observe the solar eclipse," Sean told *Call Sign* while at DaC's Roman Way fitting bay. "Mind you, if it had not have been for those very nice people at the **DaC Credit Union**, it would not have been possible," Sean added, "because my previous radio circuit demanded a considerable sum of money to pay off a balance, which would have dented my savings to make the Oz trip, whereas the folks at DACCU made it all possible with an immediate electronic transfer that gave me the ability to realise my dream, so a big thanks there!"

Obviously a passionate supporter of all things astronomy, Sean continued: "This was my fourth eclipse observation and I had spent quite some time at the planning stage, even buying a special telescope that would fit into my rucksack for easier travel. That was bearing in mind that I was visiting numerous other places in Australia as well."

I was based at Cairns, north of Port Douglas, on the line of the eclipse and spent about two hours prior to the magic moment setting everything up so as to capture the eclipse, which was timed to last two minutes and four seconds as the shadow moved over the land. However, the weather had other ideas and at the critical moment, a large cloud moved across the sky limiting the time the eclipse was visible to a mere ONE second!"

Sean grinned philosophically at the memory. "Imagine all that effort for a one second display! I felt like crying," he admitted.

"It is said that only one in four eclipses can be viewed in their entirety due to weather or other factors such as environmental pollution, so I wasn't totally surprised. But that didn't stop me feeling very upset."

So was that his last planned eclipse journey outside of the UK?

"No, my next planned trips will be the Faroe Islands in 2015 and a big one in 2017 when the shadow of the eclipse will pass across the USA!" Sean's face reflected the excitement he was feeling with four years still to go – and hopefully for more than one second! Sean finished by giving *Call Sign* some relevant information for those interested in eclipses. "There is eclipse information on the internet and also the NASA Eclipse website. Furthermore, if you punch 'Fred Espenak' into a search engine, you will find a wealth of information as he is an acknowledged astrophysicist on eclipse prediction."

With that, Sean left Roman Way looking upwards to see if anything was happening!



Sean now to chase the eclipse over the Faroe Islands and USA!

Alan Green, Call Sign Online

Dial-a-Cab driver Ray Challis (G98) issued a friendly warning to Call Sign – accompanied by a wink – when he asked if we were sure about printing his tale! We nodded in agreement...

"It was about 5.30 in the morning when I arrived at the NW8 account address to pick up a DaC trip. I rang the doorbell as instructed and a female voice on the intercom asked me to go in and up the stairs. I assumed that there were heavy suitcases to bring down to the taxi, or perhaps she needed some other form of assistance. But I thought little else about it and went straight up several flights of stairs.

Entering the apartment I immediately realised that the form of assistance she was expecting didn't really match my own! There in the hallway, hiding behind the half open front door, the lady was standing with her slacks settled around her ankles!

'Help zip me up please, driver' the lady requested, and within seconds I found myself down on my hands and knees frantically struggling to close this woman's trouser zip while she, for her part, fought to secure the waistband together around a generously proportioned torso!

My mind was still in something of a shock mode, but I do remember thinking that if someone were to walk in at that moment, goodness knows what conclusion they might have drawn! There I was down on my haunches with my hands on the front of the lady's trousers, and she attempting to either do, or undo, same garment! Looking back now, the scene was akin to a West End farce!"

Now in full swing, Ray gave us another exam-

Following last month's story from Mike Son about his run-in with a stripper...

It could only happen to a taxi driver!



Ray smiling - no doubt wondering what will happen next!

ple of how it could only happen to a taxi driver!

"It was another time and another day in this weird job of ours. I had stopped in the City for a lady dressed in a formal business suit who gave me a W1 destination. It was late afternoon as we drove westwards through heavy traffic

and I was vaguely aware of some movement in the back of the cab. But people do move about and I just concentrated on driving.

Then we stopped at traffic lights and a large truck pulled up alongside me. The driver rolled his window down and called out to me. Then he just kept pointing to the passenger compartment, his eyes looking like two moons!

I automatically looked round to see what he was on about and could hardly miss seeing that my passenger was down to her bra and panties while changing dresses! I'm not sure, but I think I may have looked a little shocked, but fortunately the passenger smiled to relieve me of at least some of my obvious embarrassment while explaining what she was doing. She smiled as she also informed me that that the traffic lights were green again!

Apparently she was going out for the evening and took the opportunity to use my cab as a changing room. She got in looking like Miss Moneypenny, and got out looking more like Miss Whiplash! The smell of perfume was almost overpowering.

When my next passenger got in, he remarked that the cab smelled like a brothel. I didn't make any comment to him, but I did wonder how he knew what a brothel smelled like!"

With that, Ray got back into his taxi for another boring day in the office...!

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

War Disabled charity Christmas lunch



Brian Rice and Eddie with some of the Chelsea Pensioners in the background

This year's **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** Charity Christmas lunch took place at **Millwall Football Club** and once again featured a slap-up lunch for members of the charity, their guests and of course many former soldiers who have been injured whilst fighting for their country.

Representing **Dial-a-Cab** was Chairman **Brian Rice** who is seen in the picture with last year's **WCHCD** Master, **Eddie Crossley**. Brian also had a brief chat with charity President and former **ODRTS** Board member, **Harry Joel**, who celebrated his 88th birthday last October and who still likes to keep up with DaC events via **Call Sign**. Harry made a very pertinent speech about the past and future regarding the charity...

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EOBD light

Hi Alan

Sorry but I'm back again - as is the EOBD light! I can understand that the subject has had its run in *Mailshot* but I wonder if perhaps an appeal could be squeezed into *Call Sign* for any suggestions or help. The EOBD light comes on sometimes in damp weather and goes off after about 2 hours if I stop, have a break and restart. Both AA and garage checks with their computerised testers say the problem is with the EGR valve, which I doubted. However I have had the valve and a vacuum pipe replaced and still the light came on the following day! My gut feeling has always been a sensor problem as the cab runs well, so cleaners are not applicable. But I was told there isn't just one sensor but several. I wonder if any driver could definitely solve this or suggest a garage, preferably in the NW area, that can. It's galling to spend money and not fix the problem!

Alasdair Kay (C47)

Can anyone help Alasdair? We tried one garage that said they had the cure, but the cure didn't work and it's driving Alasdair mad! We hate to see DaC drivers beg, so if anyone knows the answer, please pass it on! ...Ed

End of Year Report

Alan

It's no surprise to hear that Dial-a-Cab are going to make a loss for our last trading year and after the way this November has been with the lack of work offered by my DaC terminal, I imagine a greater loss for the next trading year. I fear that my new DaC terminal will never get fitted.

But the reason I write is that surely our Financial Report for the last trading year should be sent out before or with the invitation for members to stand for election. The report might change member's opinions of the current Board's success.

Jon Robinson (E88)

It's a point Jon, but for the last eight years we have made profits totalling almost £5million, but no one suggested it then? You also have the problem of our year ending on 31st August, an audit in October and then printing and preparing the report before sending it out with the AGM bump, also in October. I think it's also worth pointing out that prior to the last month of the financial year DaC was in profit, but according to a recent Chairman's report in *Call Sign*, the month with the Olympics was the worst in our history and dragged the Society from the black into the red. I've worked it out that if we

lose a similar amount every year, then in 2060 we'll have to apply for a loan!

And yes, I have been assured that once the Christmas and New Year holidays are over, the new terminals will begin a fitting program ...Ed

More EC5

Hi Alan

I just wanted to add my name to the list of drivers who think that EC5 should be returned to how it was. I have been working that rank for the past 35 years and just cannot see what advantage we will gain by going back to the EC zones, other than drivers once again booking-in from all over London and being late getting to pick-ups. Is a dispatcher going to sit in the call centre checking to see if every driver that books in is within fifteen minutes? With so much competition around, the decision to change could well cost us accounts.

I did read Allan Evans response to **Alan Sullivan (F20)** in last month's *Call Sign*, but I still cannot understand the reasoning. It's not as though you can't get there after 9pm. Yes, during the days when it was so much busier there was sense in the decision of splitting the zones because it kept customer's waiting time down to a minimum. But it isn't tearing busy at the moment and unlikely to be so for some time according to the Chancellor. So will Allan Evans stick everyone on complaint who is 16 minutes away and who is to say how far 16 minutes is? It would be so much easier to just keep the *status quo* because it works. If the Board really feel that they must continue with this trial period, perhaps a compromise would be to go back to EC5 after midnight? But I still don't understand the logic in tampering with something that so obviously works.

Bernie Silver (G08)

I told Keith Cain and Allan Evans about the letters and phone calls this magazine had received, so at the December Board meeting they decided to revert back to EC5. My only concern now is how many letters and phone calls I get saying that they preferred the new system! ...Ed

The House...

Dear Alan

How odd I found the Chairman's reply to my partially printed letter re the House of Commons. Mr Rice called me and we had a discussion about my view of us aiding an unfair competitor. I won't go into all the details of the conversation although I can if required. At no time during the 40 minute call did the Chairman mention demoralisation, negativity or "always looking for a downside". In fact, I felt he sympathised with my concerns but gave me the impression that his hands were tied.

I believe had we not been helping out Fairway and Kenwood, they would have

lost the contract very quickly. What's to stop the powers that be terminating F&K's deal and going with another minicab firm knowing that we'll help them out (ie make them "look good")?

John Addis (K97)

Thanks for the email John. Re the chairman's response, I believe he was answering you but then went into a generalisation that wasn't necessarily aimed at you. If that's the case, then it's my fault for the way his response went in.

As for using another minicab firm, I doubt that the House would want to make their choice look bad, so instead they have both DaC and F&K on their books, but use us. It isn't a perfect world and sometimes you have to accept that things around you aren't perfect either. Meanwhile the House is happy with our service and using us far more than their elected little ones ...Ed

Now and then...

Hi Alan

Compliments of the season to everyone at Dial-a-Cab. I'd just like to add a few words about yet another interesting article in *Call Sign* - *Now and Then* in the December issue.

Most of the early motorised taxis in London were manufactured by French companies, such as Unic, Renault, Peugeot and also by Italy's FIAT, who incidentally tried to make a comeback in the early 1990s with their FIAT Tempra saloon.

In the 1990's others such as Mitsubishi, Vauxhall, Ford, AID and Volkswagen all took a long look at making the London type taxi, but did the figures and never really entered the market. Mercedes-Benz and Toyota were both strongly against producing a complete and specialised vehicle for presentation to the PCO. The late and great Ernie Keates was offered a great deal of money by one large American motor company if he could get their large European saloon plated by the PCO. How do I know this is true? I went with him several times to their UK offices in Essex to see if we could progress this project, all to no avail. The PCO would not budge over their Conditions of Fitness. As for the Asquith, in which a well know trade body and I were involved, I thought they made 12 taxis in total, 11 sold and one pre-production that was never meant to be sold and disappeared.

I do not recall any FX4s having that useful hydraulic jacking system as fitted to FX3s, even though it was common practice to fit a tap just under the reservoir to stop all the expensive fluid leaking from the



Mailshot

Continued from page 31

joints in the pipes and jacks. Carbodies were a large independent car body manufacturer specialist, who converted car makers bodies - for example Ford Consuls and Zephyrs - into estate cars and convertibles. They also made special bodies for Standard, SS/Jaguar and other well-known brands before becoming world famous for making London taxis. As far as I know, Austin was a supplier of major components to Carbodies for use in the production of FX3 & FX4s but never owned Carbodies. As for the Metrocab TTT, it was much better with its

Toyota running gear, but unfortunately never got the sales or backing it deserved.

Rodney Lewis (ex Dan77)

Dave Parris

Dear Alan

We were saddened to hear of the sudden death of former night controller, Dave Parris. He began working for Dial-a-Cab in the 90s as a call-taker during the day shift. After many years he went onto the night shift before being promoted to night controller on that shift. He left in 2004 to become a Prison Officer at Pentonville Prison. Dave was such a nice person and he

will be missed.

Our condolences go out to his family. May he rest in peace...

Curls Villiers

Senior DaC Night Shift Controller

Thanks Curls. I think most of those who knew Dave will agree with your sentiments ...Ed



Last month Jon looked at websites for kids, this month it's back to the adults...

Interesting Websites...



Hello, I hope you and your families had a relaxing and enjoyable Christmas; the fact you are reading this indicates you've survived the Christmas madness! The editor tells me that some of you have found the websites I've mentioned as being useful, so I thought I'd tell you about a few more. Hopefully, there'll be something here for everyone. So, on to the websites...

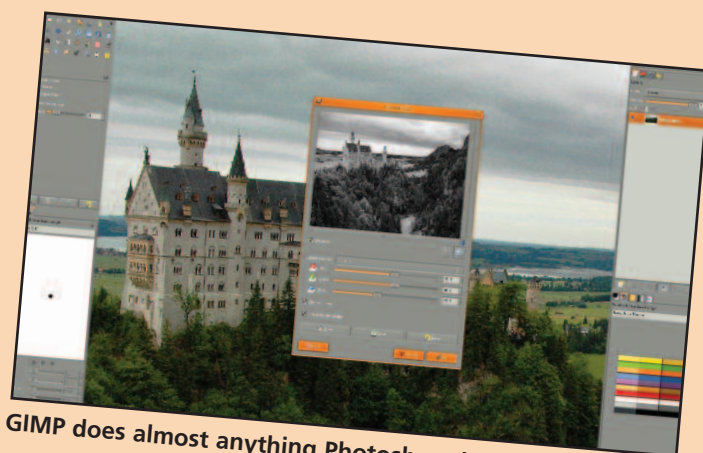
SavyGamer (www.savygamer.co.uk): I've been following this website for quite some time now; I first discovered it on *Twitter* (@SavyGamer). An English website, the owner works in the gaming industry and because of this he knows when the latest deals and bargains on games are coming up. The website is updated daily, providing gamers on all platforms (PC, Mac, XBOX, PS3, Wii-U, iPhone, Android etc.) with the best prices available from the various outlets. On many occasions, valid money-off codes are provided along with relevant links. If you are thinking of buying a digital game of any kind, be sure to check out SavyGamer first; you could save yourself a fair bit of cash!

GameSalad® (www.gamesalad.com): On the subject of gaming, do you have children from 8 years old and up who love video games? Are you concerned that they are not spending enough time exercising their creative skills? Well, help is at hand! GameSalad® is a really nice, easy to use and learn FREE piece of software that enables anyone – child or adult – to create video games. Providing an easy to understand manual, along with many free templates and “sprites” (in-game artwork), GameSalad® allows creative gamers make the games *they want to play without* having to know any programming languages. Better yet, if your little ones find they are really rather good at making games, they can distribute them on the Apple and Android app stores! The only cost incurred is if you sell them for profit on the app stores; GameSalad® takes a cut of the profits. However, if the game is made freely available, then there are no fees to pay. This is an excellent way to get your children (or teenagers) to be creative whilst engaging them in something that interests them. GameSalad® works on both Windows and Mac.

Vimeo (www.vimeo.com): If you are a YouTube user, you will no doubt know that whilst there are thousands of excellent videos available to view, there are many more that are rubbish. Add into the mix some “noise” - endless pointless comments and adverts - and the experience can quickly become one of annoyance. Vimeo is trying to offer an alternative - a clean, fresh website providing quality video content without ads, without “noise”. I like it, and whilst it may not have the same quantity of content as YouTube, it does have more quality.

The Mag Pi (www.themagpi.com): Perhaps you may recall some months ago I talked about the phenomenon that is the Raspberry Pi; a cheap credit card sized computer board which allows you to install and run a custom version of Linux. If you are interested in getting hold of one of these, or even if you already own one, then the free monthly Mag Pi magazine is an invaluable resource. Packed with ideas, tips and tricks for use with your Raspberry Pi, Mag Pi is the perfect accompaniment for any budding programmer or Linux user. My son and I used one of the articles on turning a Raspberry Pi into a retro games emulator, allowing us to successfully play tons of retro arcade and Super Nintendo games on our TV for free!

GNU Image Manipulation Program (www.gimp.org): No doubt you would have heard of - and possibly even used - a piece of software called **Adobe Photoshop**. Whilst Photoshop is an amazing product that allows you to create and manipulate pretty much any digital image, it is *very expensive*. This is where the GNU Image Manipulation Program (aka GIMP) shines. A free (and safe) alternative to Photoshop, GIMP allows you to do *almost* anything you can in Photoshop. Even better, the massive, dedicated community who use and improve GIMP provide hundreds of plugins, filters and tutorials freely available online. Perhaps you have a budding photographer or graphic designer in the family or just want to perform some image manipulation; you can save yourself literally £100s. Go download and install GIMP; you won't regret it! GIMP works on Windows, Mac and Linux. Well, that's all for now.



GIMP does almost anything Photoshop does – but its free!

Jon Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

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