

October 2013



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



Exclusive!
*Geely Chairman
Li Shufu talks to
Call Sign about
LTC and the TX4*



*Why is there a photo of war-torn
London on Call Sign's cover?
See Bob's War Tour...*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Part 1 of central London restaurants that have 4 or more (out of 5) stars by customer reviews

Central London Restaurants

"@ Thai", 30 Greyhound Rd., W6 8NX	Cinnamon Kitchen - 9 Devonshire Square, EC2M 4YL
"1701", Synagogue, Bevis Marks, EC3A 5DQ	Club Gascon - 57 West Smithfield, EC1A 9DS
108 Bar and Restaurant, 47 Welbeck St., W1G 8DN	Cocochan - 38-40 James St., W1U 1EU
140 Park Ln., Marriott, 140 Park Ln., W1K 7AA	Cotidie - 50 Marylebone High St., W1U 5HN
500 Restaurant, 782 Holloway Rd., N19 3JH	Cuban Camden - Stables Mkt, Chalk Farm Rd, NW1 8AH
Abbeville, 69 Abbeville Rd., SW4 9JW	Dalila - 123 Queenstown Rd., SW8 3RH
Addendum Restaurant, Apex, 1 Seething Ln., EC3N 4AX	Depot - 125 Mortlake High St., SW14 8SN
Albannach, 66 Trafalgar Square, WC2N 5DS	Diciannove - Crown Plz, 19 New Bridge St., EC4V 6DB
Alyn Williams, Westbury, Conduit St, W1S 2YF	Dockmasters House - 1 Hertsmere Rd., E14 8JJ
Amaranto, 4 Seasons, Hamilton Pl., W1J 7DR	Emile's - 96 Felsham Rd, SW15 1DQ
Angelus Restaurant, 4 Bathurst St., W2 2SD	Fino's - 123 Mount St., W1K 3NP
Apsley's A Heinz Beck, 1 Ln.sborough Place, SW1X 7TA	Forty Dean Street - 40 Dean St., W1D 4PX
Aria, 84 Westbourne Grove, W2 5RT	Franco's - 61 Jermyn St., SW1Y 6LX
Artigiano, 12A Belsize Terrace, NW3 4AX	Gattis - Whitecross Pl., 1 Finsbury Ave., EC2M 2PA
Axis at One Aldwych, 1 Aldwych, WC2B 4BZ	Gay Hussar - 2 Greek St., W1D 4NB
B@Juan's, 240 Upper Richmond, SW15 6TG	Gaylord - 79 Mortimer St., W1W 7SJ
Babylon - Roof Gardens, 99 Kensington High St., W8 5JA	Gin Joint - Barbican Centre, Level 2, EC2Y 8DS
Bacco Restaurant & Bar, 25-26 Red Lion St., WC1R 4PS	Gola - 787 Fulham Rd., SW6 5HD
Baltic, 74 Blackfriars Rd., SE1 8HA	Grace - 42-44 Great Windmill St., W1D 7NB
Banyan On The Thames, 34 Lombard Rd., SW11 3RF	Grappolo Ristorante - 1 Plough Pl., Fetter Ln., EC4A 1HY
Barbecoa, 20 New Change Passage, EC4M 9AG	Great Taste at The Cadogan - 75 Sloane St., SW1X 9SG
Beach Blanket Babylon - 19 Bethnal Green Rd., E1 6LA	Gregg's Bar & Grill - Bermondsey Square, SE1 3UN
Beach Blanket Babylon - 45 Ledbury Road, W11 2AA	Hardy's Brasserie - 53 Dorset Street, W1U 7NH
Beaufort House, 354 Kings Rd., SW3 5UZ	Harrison's - 15-19 Bedford Hill, SW12 9EX
Bellamy's, 18a Bruton Place, W1J 6LY	Henry Root - 9 Park Walk, SW10 0AJ
Belvedere, Holland Pk, Abbotsbury Rd., W8 6LU	Hibiscus - 29 Maddox Street, W1S 2PA
Benugo Bar & Kitchen, Belvedere Rd., SE1 8XT	High Timber - 8 High Timber Street, EC4V 3PA
Blakes Restaurant, 33 Roland Gardens, SW7 3PF	HIX - Browns Hotel, 33 Albemarle Street, W1S 4BP
Bloomsbury Street, 9 - 13 Bloomsbury St., WC1B 3QD	Homage - Waldorf, 22 The Aldwych, WC2B 4DD
Blue Door Bistro, 15 Montague (hotel) St., WC1B 5BJ	Iberica - 12 Cabot Square, E14 4QQ
Bogayo Restaurant & Bar, 320 Old St., EC1V 9DR	Il Ristorante - Bulgari 171 Knightsbridge, SW7 1DW
Bombay Dine Club, 133 Lavender Hill, SW11 5QJ	Inamo St James - 4 - 12 Lower Regent St, SW1Y 4PE
Bombay Palace - 50 Connaught St., W2 2AA	India Restaurant - 21 College Hill, EC4R 2RP
Boyd's Brasserie, 8 Northumberland Ave., WC2N 5BY	Indigo - One Aldwych, WC2B 4BZ
Buddha Bar, 145 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7PA	Isolabella - 45-46 Red Lion Street, WC2B 4BZ
Butcher & Grill, 39-41 Parkgate Rd., SW11 4NP	Jam Cupboard - 61 Gloucester Road, SW7 4PE
Cafe Des Amis, 11-14 Hanover Place, WC2E 9JP	Jam Tree - 13-19 Old Town, SW4 0JT
Cafe Mode, 57-59 Endell St., WC2H 9AJ	Jam Tree - 541 Kings Road, SW6 2EB
Café Royal Ten Room, 68 Regent St., W1B 4DY	Jamie's Italian - 38 Threadneedle St., EC2R 8AY
Cafe Spice Namaste, 16 Prescott St., E1 8AZ	JW Steakhouse - Grosvenor Hse, 86 - 90 Park Lane, W1K 7TN
Camino Monumento, 15 Mincing Ln., EC3R 7BD	Karpo - 23-27 Euston Road, W1K 7TN
Caravaggio, 107-112 Leadenhall St., EC3A 4DP	Kaslik - 58 Greek Street, W1D 3DY
Cassis Bistro - 232-236 Brompton Rd., SW3 2BB	Kaspar's - Savoy, Strand, WC2R 0EU
Chakra - 157-159 Notting Hill Gate, W11 3LF	Kettner's - 29 Romilly St., W1D 5HP
Cheyne Walk Brasserie - 50 Cheyne Walk, SW3 5LR	KIN - 88 Leather Lane, EC1N 7TT
China Tang - 53 Park Ln., W1K 1QA	Kitchen W8 - 11-13 Abingdon Road, W8 6AH
Chino Latino - 18 Albert Embankment, SE1 7TJ	Koffmann's - Berkeley, Wilton Place, SW1X 7RL
Chutney Mary - 535 Kings Rd., SW10 0SZ	Kopapa - 32 - 34 Monmouth St., WC2H 9HA
Cilicia - 440 Muswell Hill Brd.way, N10 1BS	La Brasserie - 272 Brompton Road, SW3 2AW
Cinnamon Club - 30 Great Smith St., SW1P 3BU	Langan's Brasserie - Stratton St., W1J 8LB

More next month. A new section of the UID will detail the full list.
This can be found at: www.nashsnumbers.co.uk/uid/uidpt5aiss1.pdf
and lots of taxi related information on the MyFav taxi page at:
www.myfav.co.uk/iehome.php?g=taxi
Alternatively scans theses QR codes...



MyFav Taxi page



List of Restaurants

Scan QR code with smart phone...

from the editor's desk

Call Sign advertising policy

Yes, most of you know my advertising policy for the mag; no online casino ads because there is the possibility that under-age persons could read it and use someone else's credit card details – possibly a parent. No one can tell me that it can't be done because at least one **Dial-a-Cab** driver tells me it has happened to him.

Neither will I advertise club's that have women (or men if it's a gay establishment) in a state of undress in the ad. I'm not a prude, but I don't think that type of graphic ad should be in a magazine that is delivered by post and which could be opened by anyone in the household.

So why is there a lap dancing club advertising in this issue? Well, when the club – 23 Paul Street – approached me, I told them of my policy and they said they wanted to contact our drivers via the magazine and would put just text into their ad. I looked at it and had no problem with it, so it will be appearing regularly. But the policy has not changed. I just thought I'd save anyone asking...

Bus lanes and Addy Lee...

A recent Chairman's Editorial in Addison Lee's *Add Lib* magazine having a pop at the black cab trade's fares got me wondering about **John Griffin's** minicab company and the bus lanes review.

I'm not sure if it's me, but the result of their **Judicial Review** appeal against **TfL** to gain access to London's bus lanes seems to have gone on forever.

I can understand a few days or even weeks – but why does it take months to get the result? No doubt it will now appear before this issue comes out and make me look silly! But I can put up with that if the result is the right one...

Cyclist stickers

By now you should all have a letter from the Mayor of London, **Boris Johnson**, asking if you would be prepared to affix a sticker to the top right hand corner of the passenger's off side door warning them that there could be cyclists overtaking the taxi and that they should be aware of that possibility when exiting the cab.

There can't be many drivers who haven't been sworn at by a cyclist after a near miss from a passenger's door, as though it were you that opened it. However, there is little doubt that opening the offside door can be very dangerous to the cyclist – and even passing cars. It would also be very expensive for the driver – even though he or she has done nothing wrong.

I've had several drivers phoning to ask me what I thought of the message and in all honesty – whilst I doubt many passengers will bother reading it – anything that saves even



one cyclist and one door is worth doing.

The fact that it is not compulsory also makes it worth doing (cab driver's logic)! I personally won't be doing it because I was sent the letter but no sticker! But if anyone at the Mayor's office would like to send me one then yes, I will put it into my cab.

But as I've written here before, whilst there is nothing wrong in ads proclaiming that we should *Think Bike*, perhaps it would be just as good an idea for ads in cycling mags telling the two wheelers to *Think Car*...

David Frost

If you as a **Dial-a-Cab** driver were never lucky enough to pick up **Sir David Frost** on his **David Paradine Productions** account, then you may have missed an opportunity to chat to a man whose knowledge of the world around him was huge, yet who also had this amazing sense of humour and fun.

I had many opportunities over the years to say hello, good evening and welcome to the only man that I ever allowed to smoke a cigar (when it was allowed) in the back of my cab! One thing always stood out for me – this was one of the most famous people in the world, yet someone who was always happy to chat away about how our business was, what was on the telly or even about DaC itself.

This was the man who brought down the

likes of **Emil Savundra**, who in 1966 was said to have milked thousands of pounds of motorists' money through his Fire, Auto and Marine Insurance Company, leaving them totally uninsured. He gave himself the prefix of Doctor.

Many years later, Sir David brought down another man with a prefix - Richard Nixon when getting the former USA President to admit lying over Watergate.

Yet this was the same man who gave us the Two Ronnies and the early foundations of Monty Python via John Cleese..

Over many years, I never ever heard him say a bad word about this Society, his appreciation of the skill needed to drive a taxi in London obviously having left an indelible mark within him.

His death is not a tragedy for Dial-a-Cab; it is a tragedy for the world. I am just one person who is so sad to know that I will never be able to chat to him again...

Who is proofing the proofer???

Producing a monthly magazine such as **Call Sign** without a single error or typo is an aim that will probably never be achieved. The only consolation I get when someone points out a typo is that I also see them everywhere from the *Daily Mirror* to the *Financial Times*.

But I feel proud that this mag takes mistakes seriously and is proofed several times before publication in that vain attempt at perfection. Having said that, the role of **Call Sign** proofer has long been the domain of my wife **Linda**, who regularly goes through each and every page before publication.

However, Linda recently had a medical problem involving a fairly lengthy stay in hospital where her condition made it impossible to proof the issue you are currently reading. As a result, if you find any major errors, please phone Linda and blame her!

Alan Fisher
Callsignmag@aol.com



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

reflections of the chairman

Work levels

The holiday season is over and fortunately work levels are increasing - perhaps not to the extent that we experienced five or six years ago, however the fleet is smaller as some Members have left in an attempt to reduce their overheads.

So we return to the same scenario as always and that is coverage, especially in the West and South West in the mornings. Therefore, if we wish to retain our account base, some of you will have to put yourselves out a little in an attempt to maintain service levels. As soon as it gets a little busier or starts to rain, some Members suddenly become very *picky* and *choosy*. I'm sorry, but those days have gone! Every account and every trip is precious as there is so much more competition out there in the market place than ever before. We have to also remember that much of that competition has drivers working for a reduced rate compared to us!

I get a daily report on trips that we have scrubbed the previous day and I am continually astounded by the number of rejects on some trips and indeed, the type of trips we scrub. All trips are scrutinised to make sure the Contact Centre has done everything possible to cover the work and in the main it does appear that they do everything they can, but if no-one takes the trip then we do not have an alternative other than to scrub it. We then have the task of explaining the problem to the customer.

I know most of you endeavour to cover the work, but there are still a sizeable percentage of our Members that need to *up their game* if we are to compete, it is so very disheartening for everyone when we see how some Members perform.

I have just read Board Member's contributions to Call Sign and I must say that I totally agree with Keith Cain's sentiments regarding the attitude of some Members. We have to improve. I know the above comments will raise criticism from some quarters but I believe they're justified.

Whilst moaning and criticising, I might as well add that some of you appear to not have any regard for rules regarding run-ins. Once again we are getting reports regarding Members run-ins and that a number of you appear to be arriving with more on the meter than there should be.

These may well be some of the same Members that work for Apps that operate with no run-ins and then appear to want and try to make up that shortfall by adding to our run-ins. Please be more vigilant and play the game.

New drivers...

As work levels do increase, we also now need to increase the size of our fleet in an attempt to maintain service levels and retain our account base. Consequently, we have decided to offer free fitting for any new Members, plus four weeks free subscriptions providing they are prepared to give the Society a try for a minimum of twelve months.

Of course we will fit them with the new equipment and at £30per week plus VAT, we are certainly very cost-effective compared to others. So if you know of any good drivers that might be interested, then please get them to telephone Shelagh on 020 7553 7200. As you know, we now pay Members weekly so there should not be a problem with their cash flow.

Whilst we are on the subject of payments, if any of you that receive a paper invoice from us have an e-mail address, please contact our **Driver Services** department so that we can scrap your paper invoice and issue you with an e-statement. It would make life so much easier for our Finance Department as well as being so much easier for you to file.

Law Commission

It appears of late that whenever I look at a trade paper, there is something written about the on-going **Law Commission** report into the Taxi and Private Hire trade. It seems that everything I read is doom and gloom and that the end of the London Licensed taxi trade as we know it close is at hand! That is a point of view that I do not agree with.

The Law Commission will publish their report later this year. I have had three meetings with them and I understand they have received over



3,000 submissions from all parties in an attempt to influence their findings, including one from the London Radio Circuits. I believe the taxi trade in London will be *ring fenced* and still be responsible to TfL and the Mayor. Neither do I believe that there will be any lowering of our standards as London is a special case. However, there could be some scenarios that whilst not directly affecting our taxi trade, could have an impact on us. It appears the Commission is in favour of one standard nationally for the Private Hire industry; that could mean that in London they are removed from the jurisdiction of TfL and the Mayor and if the national standard that may be required is less than we have at present in London, then that could prove to be detrimental to our trade. But I believe that is a topic

that TfL/the Mayor would be totally against because as I understand it, if there was a national standard then a Private Hire driver licensed in, say, Liverpool, could in fact work anywhere and that surely cannot be right. It would also be possible for minicabs to be liveried, something which is allowed outside of London and is an issue that I and the remainder of the now defunct **Taxiboard** fought very hard to resist in London years ago - and with some success.

Any vehicle that displays signage stating something like *Prior Bookings Only* or verbiage to that effect, is merely stating to members of the public that they are in the personal transport business. We think touting is bad now, so if exterior signage was allowed on minicabs in London, then that would prove to be extremely detrimental to our industry, of that I am convinced.

However, the inquiry is on-going and there are some in our trade that will do their best to influence the Commission in their findings, which in turn will affect any draft bill.

Brian Rice
Chairman, Dial-a-Cab

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Last month's *Call Sign* revealed that TX4 production at Coventry was about to commence again and on Wednesday 11 October, the London Taxi Company's Coventry facility was packed out with reporters and television crews from around the world as that production began officially with the first TX4 off the line.

Also there to witness the event was **Dr Vince Cable**, the coalition's Business Secretary and of course **Geely Chairman, Li Shufu**, whose company purchased Manganese Bronze from the administrators in February and who as a consequence, is now the owner of The London Taxi Company.

Geely now plans to invest £150 million in LTC over the next five years in addition to significantly improving LTC's Coventry manufacturing facility, which has also seen 65 new jobs created at the plant making a total workforce now of 170 including London salespersons. They now intend building up to 10 new TX4s a day, five days a week – the first month's pre-dicted production having already sold out!

It was also announced that the Company are looking at some potential new production sites in Britain – including in Coventry.

Li Shufu told those at the reopening: "We have created jobs, we have developed a fresh supply chain with more focus on the UK and we have created a new business that is fit for the future. But while this moment is truly a milestone, it is only the beginning for us."

Call Sign has obtained a full interview with Chairman Li inside this issue.

Vice President of UK Operations, **Peter Johansen**, added: "I am delighted to report that sales are already ahead of our expect-

tations. Sales in London last month were 51% higher than the previous year and we have taken a record number of export

black cab company, protecting highly skilled jobs in the Midlands and ensuring that London cabs continue to be made here in Britain. It is also a clear demonstration of the success of the British car industry, which has gone from strength to strength even during tough economic times."

The bottom line is that the TX4 is back and looks as though it means business!

Now it's official... THE TX4 IS BACK!



Chairman Li Shufu cuts the ribbon with Vince Cable to officially reopen LTC

orders as well."

He said that the company were on target to deliver over 200 vehicles this month into London alone and that they would be building an additional 75 vehicles this year on top of the 424 they had originally planned.

A delighted sounding Business Secretary, Vince Cable, told the invited guests: "After a period of worry and uncertainty for the workforce, Geely Group's investment has secured the future of the iconic

PCNS: NO MORE LOOKING THE OTHER WAY!

ANPR cameras are searching for victims...

A number of taxi drivers – not necessarily from **Dial-a-Cab** – have often inferred that if you disregard a **PCN** or **motor-ing fine**, then the issuing council will just forget about it. Well that may have been the case at some time in the past, but if it ever was then it certainly isn't any longer, with motorists being warned that they could face extortionate bailiff charges – not to mention a damaged credit rating – as councils realise that these funds represent an untapped source of income.

Figures recently released by the Ministry of Justice revealed that 1,132,776 motorists had debts registered against them at the Traffic Enforcement Centre in Northampton last year.

Now motorists with those unpaid debts are being warned that bailiffs using unmarked vans and number plate recognition technology are hunting cars with unsettled fines against them. But there are also some cars that have changed ownership, but still have unpaid charges registered against them.

The **London Motorists' Action Group** held a meeting with the **Commons Transport Select Committee** earlier this year and warned that bailiffs frequently and fraudulently demanded fees that were far in excess of the permitted statutory levels. In addition, it was pointed out that once a case was registered at the Traffic Enforcement Centre, the fine increased by 50 per cent, which could take a standard £60 parking fine up to £90 before bailiff's fees, which often came to several hundred pounds.

Speaking to *The Daily Telegraph*, an AA spokesperson voiced concern over the readiness of councils to use bailiffs and added that it was disappointing that some mistakes are made, yet councils seem to readily wash their hands of drivers trapped in a cycle of threats from debt collectors and bailiffs.

"The fact that bailiffs are now swanning around like bounty hunters in vehicles with ANPR cameras to find vehicles with outstanding warrants, is sinister."

While we have no doubt that DaC drivers always pay their debts, perhaps we should pass the message on... ANPR cameras are out there and working – especially if you are a bailiff...!



ANPR cameras are watching!

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Jery's World



"I say chums; perhaps the answer to my electric taxi is to invent a longer lead?"

Drivers Query 6 month MOTs

We are now well into the new licensing system that replaced the previous one which taxi drivers used to refer to as the annual overhaul. The new system involves two visits, six months apart, to an **MOT** testing station in addition to a booked trip to one of the **NSL** stations, currently working under the TfL auspices, for a check that some describe as a mini-overhaul. Certainly it is nowhere near as thorough as the old one. But **Call Sign** has had several phone calls from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers all asking the same question.

According to the MOT test certificate, under the heading of 'additional information' it clearly says:

To preserve the anniversary of the expiry date, the earliest you can present your vehicle for testing is... then adding a date which will be 12 months from the one on the 'pass' certificate.

However, on the LTPH letter sent out to owner-drivers, it clearly says that your taxi must pass two standard (class 4) MOTs per year. The first, no more than 14 days prior to the (NSL) licensing inspection, with the second 6 months on from the first date.

So the question we have been asked is how you can get a six month MOT when the earliest date appears to be 12 months ahead?

So we asked **Simon Buggiey**, the *Driver and Operator Policy Manager* at London Taxi and Private Hire. He told **Call Sign**:

"The wording on the certificate only relates to preserving the expiry date. It allows a motorist to get his car MOT'd in advance of the expiry date, but still have the new certificate start on the date the old one expires. If you get the vehicle MOT'd more than a month before its expiry date, you lose this privilege. There is nothing to stop anyone getting additional MOTs at any time, so you can go to an MOT testing station in six months and get another one for your taxi."

So now you know. Our thanks to Simon Buggiey...



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so you can earn.

London City airport has outlined plans to double passenger numbers over the next 10 years. They include increasing the number of flights and taking bigger aircraft. There will also be an aircraft taxi lane allowing more passenger jets to use the single runway while helping to clear that runway much more quickly than it does at present.

The expansion, said to cost around £200million, would help to increase the number of annual incoming and outgoing flights from the current 70,000 up to 120,000 by 2023, with a doubling of passenger numbers up to 6 million.

Anti-noise group, **Stop City Airport**, is opposed to the LCA expansion and is urging Newham Council to reject the planning application, citing their concern over aircraft noise and pollution.

As for licensed taxis, it appears that LCA is hoping to recoup some of their outlay by charging taxis a figure said to be around £3.50 for being allowed to pick-up at the airport.

The plan is being passed to TfL for permission to allow drivers to pass the charge onto passengers. What passengers will say to that is unknown; however *Call Sign* spoke to several regular LCA users, none of whom had any sympathy

LCA expansion to cost the taxi trade?



An aircraft taxi lane will help increase LCA flight numbers - but who will be paying for it?

for the suggestion with the majority view being that drivers are performing a service at LCA and should not have to ask passengers to pay for getting a taxi.

Several suggested that as the majority of passengers from that airport arrive with little more than a briefcase, they would simply walk around the corner and hail an empty taxi that had set down and was leaving empty.

If any readers are regular users of London City Airport, please let *Call Sign* know whether a £3.50 charge would stop you using it or whether you think passengers would be happy to pick up the tab...

Call Sign

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Yellow badges intimidate DaC Driver

Call Sign has never been afraid to enter the fray when it comes to suburban **Yellow badge** drivers trying to take advantage of the vehicle we all drive and using it in an attempt to convince the public that a taxi is a taxi. We also know that the majority of suburban drivers work in the way that their licence dictates they should do, but there are a minority that give them all a bad name.

Over the years, we have published reports from **Dial-a-Cab** drivers on Yellow badges picking up outside of their area, but what we have never come across is intimidation between the two groups – until now that is. We have allowed the **Dial-a-Cab** driver concerned to remain anonymous. What we will say is that the driver is female and that the two drivers she is specifically writing of are also female. This is DaC driver's story...

"Is it only Green Badge drivers that harass and supposedly intimidate Yellow badge drivers, I asked myself?

Very recently, after a long shift working for Dial-a-Cab, I turned up at the Esso petrol station near Canary Wharf to grab a cup of coffee, only to be confronted by two Yellow badge drivers who rapped aggressively on the window of my taxi. I wound it down and was then accused of harassing one of them. My crime was that I'd simply 'looked' at one of the Yellow badge drivers whilst she was waiting at a set of traffic lights on the Canary Wharf estate. The two female cabbies also said that I was acting in an odd way when I was getting a coffee at the petrol station when I had just simply got out of my cab, walked to the coffee counter, came back and then sat in the taxi quietly drinking the cof-



fee. What's was so very odd about that?

In November 2012 while at the same E14 petrol station, I was subjected to a threat and intimidation by the Yellow badge driver who was now accusing me of the harassment! I had mentioned some of the incidences of intimidation to a Green badge ComCab driver, since the Yellow badges contract for ComCab and following that comment, I received a more serious threat from the Yellow badge driver. The threat, which was voiced to an acquaintance of mine and not to my face, was along the lines of: "I'll knock that woman all over the station if she contacts ComCab again!"

When I told my legal people about the threat I'd received in Nov 2012, I was immediately told to inform the police about the contents of the threat. A log was made with TfL about the threat of violence from the female cabbie, however I did stress to TfL that I wouldn't take action until the threat was made directly to my face.

More recently, Yellow badge lady drivers have been photographing my cab,

while last night a male driver pulled up in Canary Wharf to 'find out' what I thought about Costa coffee and the Esso station parking situation! He also asked me questions about evading tax whilst on DaC. I suspected that it was probably a 'set-up' and noticed that he had his cab badge turned round other way.

The women who verbally threatened me is probably trying to get some proof that I reported the YB parking issue to Esso. I actually have footage of the cab driving pulling up behind me last night and directly jumping out of his cab to talk to me.

My taxi association will be taking this issue further at some point since other Yellows are now getting involved with things. The problem is all this because I overtook the YB lady on a slip road in October last year and this where things have progressed to.

I am currently logging all incidences that occur between myself and the Yellow badge drivers at the petrol station, however, it's now a sensible idea to avoid the Canary Wharf petrol station altogether.

That E14 Esso petrol station has now lost one customer owing to the congregating Yellow badge gang. How many more customers are going to be being intimidated in the future?"

If you have had any problems with Yellow badge drivers at the Canary Wharf Esso garage, please let Call Sign know...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online



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iPad Board Games

For most people, the term 'board game' conjures up memories of mind-numbing hours spent playing **Monopoly** or **Scrabble** with the family, all those rainy afternoons of squabbling and boredom. Those games were simply exercises in luck and patience.

Modern games, on the other hand, immerse the players in a world of strategy and tactics, a world of deception and intrigue. It has been said that we are living in a golden age of board gaming, with hundreds of extremely well thought-out games now available. With the advent of so-called **Eurogames** – strategic games which originated in Germany – board gaming is now so far removed from the likes of **Monopoly** that you wouldn't recognize it. Some prime examples of the hundreds of these games are: **Carcassonne**, **Ticket to Ride**, **Settlers of Catan** and **Dominion**.

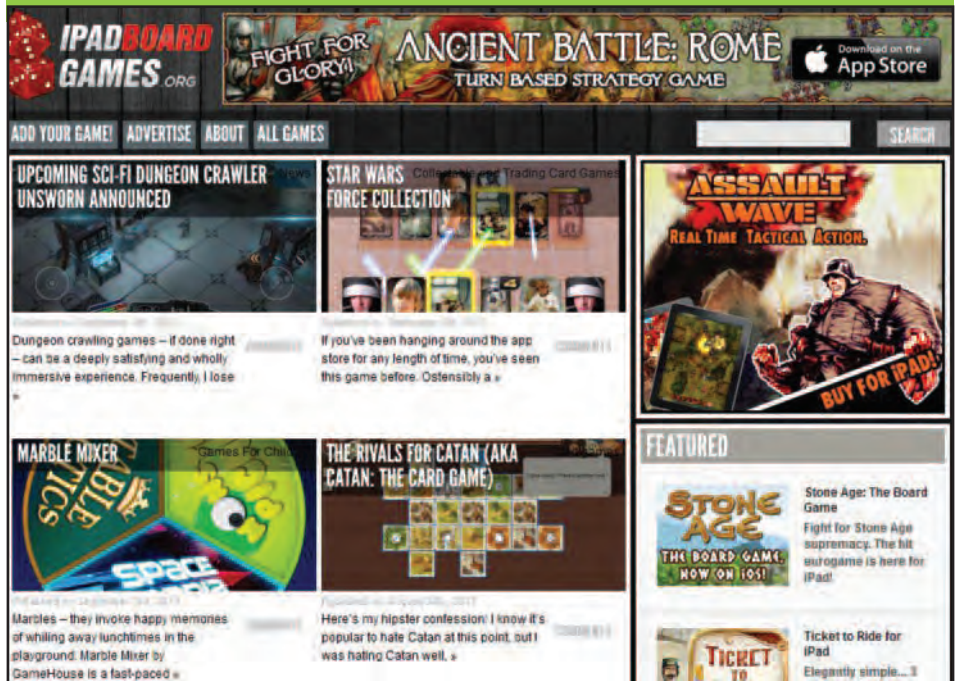
Whilst these games are often beautifully crafted, well designed and a joy to play, there are a couple of reasons which put potential players off. Many of the more popular games retail for anything between £35 and £70. Secondly, if you don't have other like-minded people to play with, there's not a lot of point in buying them.

This is where technology comes in. Many of the more popular board games are now available to play on **iPad** and more are being added all the time. Playing on the iPad opens a whole world of games to solitary and even reluctant players. In fact, if you've never played some of these games before because the rules are off-putting, learning them on your iPad is so much easier. The game engine will handle all of the scoring and set-up of games for you, leaving you free to get your teeth into some enjoyable gaming. Most have excellent tutorials or walkthroughs, making short work of getting the rules across. If you want to play against other people, the majority of board games now tie in to the **Apple Game Center**, allowing you to play against your friends or other players around the world.

One other point to consider is that the majority of board games which have evolved onto the iPad platform are considerably cheaper than their physical counterparts. For example, a physical copy of **Ticket To Ride Europe** retails for £39.99. The iPad edition

DaC Network Administrator Jon Winterburn enjoys playing the latest computer games

GAMING WITH JON



costs a mere £4.99. So as you can see, board gaming on your iPad is very affordable!

So now we've ascertained that modern board gaming is fun and affordable on iPad, how do you go about finding the best games? If you've spent any amount of time on the **App Store**, you'll know what it's like trying to find the *right* game or app. There are quite simply too many variants of the same game available and unfortunately, many of these are poor quality. Don't take chances with your hard-earned cash. Don't fall into the trap of downloading 'freemium' games, which will require multiple cash injections (aka In-App purchases) to have any chance of winning the game. Instead, read reviews on a

dedicated iPad board games website.

My favourite iPad board games website is the aptly named **www.ipadboardgames.org**. Set up in 2010 by Londoner **James Bruce**, iPadBoardGames.org is specifically focused on the board games niche. There are literally hundreds of reviews here, as well as comments and ratings from players in the community. I've even written a few of those reviews! Before parting with your cash on a board game, look it up on this website. You'll be glad you did!

Jon Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

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Tom Whitbread looks back at his early days...

The Butterboy and the IRA



I was still pretty much a **butterboy** when this incident happened. My passenger had asked to be dropped at **Soho Square** and I was fighting my way through the evening rush hour traffic from the City to West End, happily listening to music without allowing the heavy traffic to upset me.

So I was in a good mood, watching pedestrians scurrying back and forth checking shop

windows for bargains or just trying to dodge traffic whilst crossing the roads. Nowhere in my mind could I imagine what was going to happen in the next 30 minutes.

Back then you could still turn left from **Oxford Street** into Soho Street and as I turned left again into Soho Square, my passenger asked me to stop briefly while he picked up a few things. I sat there just glancing at life going on around me, especially towards a group of youths laughing behind cars parked against the central area. They seemed to be relieving their bladders against the boot of one car exactly adjacent to my taxi and laughing as though this was a jolly jape.

It was then I noticed a flame on the roadway under the car boot. I yelled at my returning passenger to get back into the taxi quickly. He looked at me as though I was mad!

"Those kids have set a car on fire," I screamed at him, "get back in quick!"

He jumped back in and I drove quickly to the other side of the square and within those few seconds the flames had grown into a roaring bonfire. As I applied the brakes, the car's petrol tank exploded and the boot of the car shot open.

The passenger paid me off and I made a quick exit down **Greek Street** as fire engines raced out of their station in **Shaftsbury Avenue**. Everything was happening so quickly, but this was a time when London was on high alert due to **IRA** bomb attacks. In the previous month, there

had been four occasions when I'd just passed a location by just minutes when a bomb went off. I was becoming very worried that my chances were being cut down and the next one could have my name on it.

As I reached Shaftsbury and Rupert Street, a punter's hand shot up and I was off to Kensington - again through heavy traffic - but at least I was going away from the Soho area, which was about to grind to a halt. But my guardian angel must have been taking the night off because as my passenger alighted at the **Derry and Toms** store, a couple ran up to my taxi in all their finery and asked to be taken to a restaurant in **Frith Street, Soho!**

But that's why people use licensed taxis - somehow we get people to their destinations regardless of any circumstances attempting to stop us. We eventually arrived at Frith Street and drove towards Soho Square - yes, you could do that as well! As we headed towards the restaurant, two police officers were standing in the road by **Bateman Street** with their hands out. I stopped and they told me I couldn't get any further due to a bomb explosion. I said that it was surely some youngsters who had started the fire? After all, I had been there at the time.

The police officers escorted me to the restaurant, waited while I got paid off and then escorted me into Soho Square where I was introduced to some well-dressed plain clothed police officers. They were from a squad that dealt with terrorist activity as well as the **IRA** bombings and questioned me before telling me to report to **West End Central** police station the next afternoon - this was after I had tried to convince them that it was not a bomb. They said they believed it had been a bottle of white spirit made into a **Molotov Cocktail**, as they had found another one under a different car further round the Square and ready to be lit.

The car I had seen was totally burnt out and had also destroyed parked cars alongside it. It was then I decided that I would never buy a two door car again. The speed the fire had taken hold and exploded the petrol tank meant that no one in the back seats would have had a chance of getting out alive.

The next day I spent 3 hours at **West End Central**, answering questions and completing statements. All those hours of lost work and no money educated me into keeping my mouth shut. You may consider that to be not very British, but it was my neck on the line had I been requested to go to court and all my details were splashed out - including to the defendants!

Those days of driving around with **IRA** bombs going off everywhere were awful. It was also at this time that my wife and I decided to go and visit the **Ideal Home Exhibition**, even though we knew it was a worrying time to go out. We were on the upper level of a bus and had just passed a corner on which there was a rubbish bin. After we passed it, we heard a dull thud and felt a rush of wind blow against us. It was a bomb and once again I had been lucky. However, another **Dial-a-Cab** driver - a good friend of mine - was just passing the corner with his child, who received nasty leg injuries as they were thrown backwards. Luckily it was not fatal, but it was too close.

Whilst you are out working, you should always be aware of what is happening around you. You never know, it could just save your life...

Tom Whitbread
DaC Board member

TfL ranks update



New taxi rank at Regent Street

A new taxi rank has been appointed in **Regent Street**. The rank is for eight taxis and operates between 00:00 and 04:00. The rank, which is on the western side of Regent Street, starts just to the south of the junction with **Heddon Street** and is in the bus lane, but operates when the bus lanes is not operation and has been marked out.

North Greenwich Station taxi rank

The essential works at North Greenwich Station have now finished and the taxi rank has reopened. During those works, the rank was remarked and drivers should use both lanes when the rank is busy.

New taxi rank at Vigo Street

A new taxi rank for 2 taxis has been appointed in **Vigo Street**. The rank is outside the **Burberry** shop and operates 24 hours a day.

Kenwood House and Tobacco Dock

And finally, thank you to all of the drivers who supported and worked at the recent events at **Kenwood House** and **Tobacco Dock**. The feedback received has all been very positive..

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The biggest but still the best



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

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

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



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

so equipped with fully computerised diagnostics systems.

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

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

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



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

Call Sign has discovered that two Dial-a-Cab drivers have been road testing what many believe will be the future vehicle of the licensed taxi trade, the TX5H – the H standing for Hydrogen.

We have promised not to reveal the names of the drivers or anything about the testing program, however we did speak to one of the two drivers and asked him whether it drove in any way like the old milk floats, as some rumours had suggested?

The DaC driver told us: “Nope, I can assure you that it is nothing like a milk float! There are currently two of us on the Hydrogen taxis and they drive beautifully because they are so quiet when they start, with very little vibration.”

With that, the brief interview ended as the driver was told that he shouldn't yet be speaking to the press as these were purely prototypes. But they certainly sound nothing like milk floats



Running on Hydrogen

Garry's Year



Garry, Sasha, Shane and Karen

It has certainly been an eventful six months for **Dial-a-Cab's** newest Board member, **Garry White**.

On 3 February at the *Honorary Artillery Company* barracks on City Road, he was elected onto the BoM, replacing **Allen Togwell** by a single vote.

Then on 25 August, Garry's eldest daughter, Sasha, tied the knot with fiancé Shane to go from Sasha White to Sasha Huntley.

The wedding took place at Northern Ireland's **Clandeboyne Lodge Hotel** in Bangor, County Down. Proud dad Garry told *Call Sign*:

“We had a great time with family and friends who had all travelled to Belfast for the Bank Holiday weekend. It was then onto Bangor for the wedding with guests travelling from all over – some even as far afield as Sydney, Australia!

“It was quite an emotional time for Karen and myself as Sasha's mum and dad, but it was such a brilliant occasion and yes, my father of the bride speech went well!”

Our best wishes to the happy couple...

CAN YOU SING???

Are you a licenced taxi driver who can sing? The Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund has been asked to find the best singers in the taxi trade, so if the answer is yes would you please be kind enough to get in touch with one of the TDOYCF contact numbers below.

Please also remember to book your tickets for the TDOYCF's dinner/dance on 30th November 2013. For more info, phone or email TDOYCF Hon Chairman, Russell Poluck MBE (T55).

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Dial-a-Cab driver **Lee Pearce** (J71) is the goalkeeper for *Evo Stick* Southern Division One (Central) football team **North Greenford United**. While *Call Sign* often gives updates of how the team is going in the league and their ongoing battle to reach the **Ryman League**, there is one part of Lee's season that we tend to enjoy more than any other – the **F.A.Cup**.

While Premier and Championship teams have several months yet before entering the competition, teams such as North Greenford United are beginning theirs now and what NGU didn't want was one of the 'big boys' at this stage – **Ryman Premier** league teams – who would be looking to get through the first few qualifying rounds at least. This being the **first qualifying round**, NGU were hoping to get a lower league team to kick off their **F.A.Cup** and at the very least, a home draw.

When Ryman Premier **Harrow Borough's** name came out the hat, NGU were hoping their name wouldn't follow – but it did! So on 14 September, the team made the short trip to Harrow as huge underdogs and as the 90 minutes ticked by, it looked as though this season's **F.A.Cup** was already to become a distant memory.

First, centre back **Mike Dart** was sent off for a tough looking challenge on Harrow's **Simeon Akinola** and with the extra man advantage, Harrow pushed forward putting **Lee Pearce** under constant pressure. With just seconds of injury time left, Harrow were 2 – 1 in front, then Greenford defender **Danny Bennell** found the ball at his feet and put it into the net to give the team a replay.

It was just three days later when the replay took place – no resting time in non-league

Dial-a-Cab's Lee Pearce...

BACK ON THE F.A.CUP TRAIL



DaC's Lee Pearce practicing – just in case!

football. Like the first game, it was Harrow who again started best, forcing Lee Pearce into immediate action – especially one save after 15 minutes that came right out of the top drawer. But Harrow still went forward and it was no surprise when they took the lead midway through the first half through **Rhys Murrell-Williamson**.

Then into the second half, NGU manager – former Chelsea and Southampton legend **Neil Shipperley** – made what turned out to be a match-changing double substitution when bringing on **Danny Bennell** and **Liam Hind**.

Sure enough, with an hour on the clock, **Liam Hind** scored the equaliser with a stunning thirty yard drive and soon after, **Danny Bennell** made it 2 – 1 to NGU to take them into the second qualifying round and just 12 matches away from a Wembley final!

After the match, Lee – who captained the team for both games – told *Call Sign*: “We deserved the victory. We never gave up even when we were 2 – 1 down and with just 10 men in the first match. That says a lot about the spirit in this team. If we can take that into the league as well, this could be a really good season for us...”

London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children

Guests at Run for your Wife – The movie!

In honour of the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children, the team behind 'Run for your Wife' hosted a gala screening "...to toast the cabbies dedication to our roads and their exceptional charitable endeavours."

The **London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children** and guests were recently invited to a charity screening at the Stratford Picture House of the new movie **Run for your Wife**. The film stars **Danny Dyer, Sarah Harding, Denise Van Outen, Neil Morrissey, Kellie Shirley, Christopher Biggins, Lionel Blair** and many other famous names from **Cliff Richard** to **Su Pollard** to **Dennis Waterman**. Every other face leaves you saying: “Was that really him/her!” And it probably was!

The idea originated when writer and producer **Ray Cooney** and his team, along with executive producer **Vicki Michelle**, decided to make a film of the original 1970 play and turn it into a charity night for the children's fund. The Fund was introduced to them both along with **Emma Barton** and **Kellie Shirley**.

For those who never saw the stage production, the story centres on a London taxi driver who lives a double life being married to two different women. The film is full of hilarious mishaps and misunderstandings as John Smith (Danny Dyer) tries with the help of his friend Gary Gardner (Neil Morrissey) to have his cake and eat it!

It comes highly recommended for a good laugh

and the LTFUC would like to thank **Ray Cooney** and his team for making us his charity for the night and donating £1,000 from the film's proceeds. We would also like to thank the Stratford Picture House for the venue and also **Abundant Ltd** who first contacted us with the idea.

Thanks also go to all the taxi drivers and their respective partners who turned up on the night to support us.

Malcolm Shaffron
LTFUC Honorary Secretary



Middle four on the front row: **Emma Barton, Kellie Shirley, Ray Cooney and Vicki Michelle**

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Next year will be the 100th anniversary of the start of **World War One** and I am currently researching and writing a **London War Tour** to offer tourists and Londoners alike in 2014. So **Call Sign** readers...help! In the spirit of **Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener**: "This London Tour Guide needs you!"

As you would expect of a panoramic War Tour of London, it will include buildings with surviving bomb damaged pot holes – and that's where I seek your help.

I have quite a list already – so don't send me the obvious such as the plinth of the Sphinx of **Cleopatra's Needle**, which was the result of shrapnel hitting it after a gas main was ruptured in a WW1 **Zeppelin** raid. The driver of a passing tram was killed instantly in that explosion.

Incidentally, does anyone remember the **Nevill Arms** in Stoke Newington? That pub is a private residence now – on the corner of Nevill Road and Osterley Road – but the very first bomb to fall in London from a Zeppelin raid landed in the beer garden on 30 May 1915. Fortunately, nobody was supping a light ale at the time!

I also have the damage to the walls of the **Victoria & Albert Museum** - plus slightly lesser damage to the **Science Museum** in Exhibition Road – as a result of a **Blitz** raid in WW2. Likewise, the clearly visible pot holes on the wall of **St. Clement Danes Church** - plus the bomb damaged wall in **Mansell Street** on the corner of **Prescott Street**, as a result of enemy Blitz airstrikes.

What I need are similar examples to the above, because I know I will have missed some – particularly in parts of London away from the centre.

Also – and probably aimed at older readers - any other quirky information relative to both conflicts. The sort of anecdotal material I'm looking for are public air raid shelter signs still visible as in the one in **Lord North Street** – or the **Emergency water supply** sign painted on a wall on the **Albert Embankment** near the junction of **Black Prince Road** - the water was held in **White Hart Dock**.

I would also like to hear of any war stories handed down – similar to the one regarding the direct hit on the public bomb shelter in **Kennington Park**. This was a grisly story involving a **Lambeth Council** 'cover up' as the shelter was hit by a 50lb bomb. Some bodies were pulled out, but eventually the remains were covered in lime and no official death toll was announced at the time. The remainder still lie unidentified beneath the park.

I have one such story of my own that was told to me by a neighbour where I grew up in Lambeth. One day during WW2, a **Nazi** paratrooper was shot down and landed on the council estate near the **Oval Cricket Ground**. He was badly injured and about to take a further bashing as all the women-folk headed towards him with pots and pans aiming to finish him off. And they would have done had it not been for a quick thinking **ARP Warden** who managed to protect him until emergency services arrived!

So do you have any more quirky anec-

As we get ever-closer to the 100 year anniversary of the start of WW1 hostilities, Call Sign's Bob Woodford is asking readers to help him create...

Bob's War Tour



Can you help Bob find war examples for a tour? This one is at Aldwych...

dotes and stories? If yes, please email me at: rob@blackcabheritagetours.co.uk.

I have already been reminded of **RAF Hornchurch** by the **Call Sign** Editor, which was strategically located in 'bomb alley'. Alan tells me the site is now a private housing estate, having closed in the 1960s and he also revealed that he has an **Anderson** bomb shelter at the end of his garden!

How about this one? Where in London can you visibly see a **Swastika**? Well the next time you are heading round **Aldwych**, check out the wall of **India House** to find a reveal-

ing plaque. But before you get up in arms about it, you have to realise that the symbol was still an intriguing sign from the east long before **Hitler** appropriated it!

As a start, can anyone confirm that **Upminster tube station** once had a **Swastika** motif displayed within the floor tile pattern in the ticket office?

It would be great to hear from you!

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

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In response to **Barry Spear's (Y16)** question regarding how many requests for **Vito** taxis we've received, I can report that there were 2,500 requests for a Vito between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2013, which is not quite as many as Barry estimated (between 5 – 10,000). What was interesting to note were the number of requests received for **TX** taxis, which amounted to 14,918. Unfortunately, we do not have figures for occasions when a client requires a Vito and because the controllers were unable to cover the trip, we cancelled and re-dispatched it to the rest of the fleet. These trips when re-dispatched, have to have the attribute removed and more often is the case that two taxis are sent in because of the number of passengers travelling.

As for the DaC Board creating a two tier system, well I have to say we actually have a three tier system because there is an attribute for **Metrocabs** as well. It's not the Board creating different tiers, it's the designers and manufacturers of the vehicles that give drivers the choice to purchase.

But it is the Board's responsibility to recognise that drivers do make a choice as to what vehicle they buy and if there is something different that vehicle can offer a passenger over another, then surely it's all about trying to meet customer demands. This is not something new either, as I'm sure Barry can remember when taxis were first fitted with seat belts. There was a huge demand by customers to supply those cabs and the only way to differentiate between vehicles was to use the attributes.

If the **Nissan NV200** comes into production and can offer something different to other cabs, then the Board will have to reconsider the attributes to match the vehicle.

With regard to lead times, I can see Barry is making a point using his own personal perspective. But what he is not aware of is how long the pre-booking trips can take to be covered at times. Recently we have seen some busy mornings and trips have taken up to 45 minutes to an hour to cover and that is with increased run-ins, large premiums offered and with the destination unmasked. If every pre-booking in every area was accepted promptly without being rejected too many times, then I would agree that lead times could be reduced, although probably not by as much as a third.

Now if all trips were made non-rejectable, I'd be the first to suggest reducing them. But as long as drivers have the choice to reject, then you need lead times to be longer rather than shorter.

Lead times are only griped about when the driver is on top of the trip, but the same drivers never say a word when lead times work in their favour to give them longer to reach the pick-up. When drivers offer an opinion, they are giving it with hindsight, but Controllers do not have that luxury, they have to pre-empt and guess what the situation will be. Their

DaC driver Barry Spear (Y16) has asked a question in this issue about Vito numbers. The answer is longer than the usual Mailshot reply so Control Centre Manager Keith Cain has answered it here...

Vito Numbers



decisions are made working to worst case scenarios because over the years they have found themselves in the same situation as the day before.

Their focus must be to offer the client the best possible service and I like to think that members feel the same because no matter what you say about this Society, it was drivers that started it and it was the service drivers gave that got us to where we are today. I hate to say it, but that is not always the case now. Where once upon a time the majority of members worked that way, it has changed to the minority working this way and the majority doing only what suits them. Drivers seem to be far less Society-focused than ever before, which could be a recipe for disaster.

But what I will never understand is why a member of this Society would be prepared to accept a trip via an App on their phone, run to the pick-up with the meter off, be prepared to wait for up to five minutes before starting the meter and then pay 10% for the privilege! Yet, when undertaking a Dial-a-Cab trip, they are not prepared to give any free time whatsoever, knowing full well our trip will return far more to them. That beggars belief in my book.

I do understand that when work drops off, drivers have to look to wherever they can to earn a living, but when the work picks up as it is starting to do now, then surely it's all about taking work that returns the higher yield.

All the lead times set for every zone have been in place since the introduction of our computerised dispatch system. I am fully aware that as fare tariffs increase, the run in amount will cover less distance, but it all comes down to meeting the client's request of having a vehicle outside their address when they want it. Without seeming to harp on about the early days, when we dispatched work by voice there had to be a lead time when the dispatcher began allocating his pre-

bookings. We worked then to allocating to the closest cab and the same scenario applied then as to how it does now. The first booking called was the furthest away from the booked time and the driver who took the trip had to adjust his run in and in some cases wait without the meter on. It is exactly the same to this day.

Like Barry, other drivers have spoken to Controllers giving the same views and they have adjusted the lead times, especially in some zones during the morning period between 6 and 10am. It was agreed to reduce the lead times in certain zones but on the understanding that if we experienced problems of cabs arriving late, the lead time would be reset. This has been done a few times and unless a driver works during these times, they wouldn't notice the changes.

Coverage for the rest of the day with the lead times set as they are is very good and it is rare that we have any significant coverage problems.

There was also a situation recently which I think sums it all up. A trip in SW11 going to E1 took 45 minutes to allocate to a driver. It had the destination showing, the run in had been increased and a £20 premium was added! The driver who took the trip was 20 minutes away and prepared to run to give a service. While the trip was being constantly rejected, a cash trip in SW11 fired in and was also being rejected. The decision was taken to unmask the cash trip, which I hasten to add went to LAP. Do I really need to explain what happened next? It was taken immediately from a driver who arrived in 10 minutes. The cost of both trips could not have been that far apart but I'll let you all decide who received the best possible service and why...

Keith Cain
DaC Control Centre Manager

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This issue barks back to a 1957 issue of the ODRTS bimonthly Newsletter...

ODRTS NEWSLETTER, December 1957



Mr Martyn controversy

ODRTS Chairman, Mr Bonnie Martyn, has resigned and is going to Bermuda to help introduce two-way radio, something of which he knows much about...

However, there are some that claim he should not leave us at this time, but should they not put themselves in his position before deciding? It is surely an honour for our organisation that another country knows of our success. Mr Martyn's drive and initiative were recognised in London in 1952 when the ODRTS was founded and he was made Chairman. Many consider him responsible for the sound position of our organisation. It is sad that some now should castigate him for leaving. Mr and Mrs Martin leave for Bermuda on the Queen Mary on December 28 and surely all at ODRTS will join us in wishing them God-speed and a Merry Christmas.

Frank Duncan,
ODRTS Treasurer

Letter from Mr Calcott

I learn from the Pentonville Road office that our Chairman, Mr Martyn, is resigning with deep reluctance and going abroad and that some fellow drivers are castigating him for his decision. Under these circumstances I feel compelled to write and express my deep regard for him.

I would like to thank him for the untiring work and effort he so generously gave to the London taxi trade. I confess I have often wondered how he had so much patience and energy to do all the things that he has so admirably done for us all in the radio world. I realise only too well what a task he undertook in 1952, having myself been associated with the cab trade since 1924 and I venture to tell you, old boy, that without your guidance and good counsel, the ODRTS Ltd would in my humble opinion have been a complete and utter flop.

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

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

R.W.Calcott,
Black 17

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Being the owner of a taxi plated on 1st March meant that due to the new Tfl regulations, my second MOT would be due on 1st September. As in March, I booked the taxi into a local MOT station and of course it failed. Thinking back, the garage I previously used had forecast that my cab would fail on the usual things like track rod ends displaying too much play and the discs being too thin.

Well six months later it passed on the discs again, even though the Tfl examiner had commented on the state of them as well and even though at the Tfl part of the process, there was not much he could have done.

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

Kupkake's Korner



I don't like bikes!

I can't understand this obsession with bikes when many of 'em just go and do as they like!

I almost hit one every night....
Whist others are angry and ready to fight!

I wish there was a better plan
to educate the cyclist clan.
Or better still there should be a ban
unless they passed a test!

All dressed in black they wobble along
ear phones in as they listen to songs,
I know for sure that it's so wrong
for them not to have bright lights!

Don't even mention the Rickshaw scum
I've no idea where they come from.
Blocking roads as they wait for their prey
Drunks and others who think it's OK,
not caring at all how much they pay
to ride with those miscreants night and day.

We're told we need to show some grace
for all the cyclists that spit in our face.
They tear along as if in a race
With no regard shown at all for *our* space.

Too often we hear one has died
when a cyclist overtakes along the inside,
as a lorry turns the cyclist has tried
to get in front and failed to survive.

Boris wants to expand this trend
he's got the dosh just to spend
on more blue lines for his cycling friends...
When oh when will it ever end?

Kopyright Kupkake 2013

Richard Potter looks at Taxi MOTs and asks: Are they...

RAISING OR LOWERING STANDARDS???



Richard asks: Have MOTs lowered the standard?

the MOT at a time that suited me. In some ways, I was pleased that I hadn't needed to replace the front discs unnecessarily and incur an extra cost and I was pleased the taxi garage found some issues that kept the standard and safety of the taxi up to a level I would expect.

What I was not so happy about was that it appears standards have lowered. Maybe it was a one off. Maybe there are drivers and fleet owners out there who looked forward to a lowering of standards to keep costs down. It was well known in the trade that if you were a musher and got a taxi garage to do your overhaul, the standard was set much higher. So there was me previously moaning about taxi garages, now heaping them with praise. Guess you can't win!

So what should I do next time? I want the taxi to be passed at a reasonable standard without feeling let down by the garage. Well how about taking the cab to a taxi garage which does its own MOTs. But I thought the standard of all MOTs was meant to be the same?

I don't know whether MOT centres that are not used to dealing with the trade really want to be involved with us, but I suppose they are not allowed to turn you away. Some people also look upon MOT stations as being vested interests because they, in theory at least, create work for themselves by failing vehicles. But there are so many test stations, so if someone was not happy they'd just go elsewhere. Musers, though, tend to be a loyal bunch and regularly moving from one taxi garage to another can sometimes make things worse.

Taxi MOTs are here to stay, but the jury is definitely still out on whether it will have long-term benefits for the taxi trade. Let's hope so...!

**Richard Potter
Call Sign Online**

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Gerry Tobin (L32) has only been on Dial-a-Cab since June 1993 – a mere twenty years – because quite honestly we had assumed he was old enough to have been at the first ODRTS driver's meeting at Great Portland Street's Albany Tavern in June 1953.

In fact, we even wondered whether Gerry was at the amazing 1951 launch of Lew Levy's York Way Radio Cabs, when they held their ultra-swish dinner at Mayfair's Empress Club in 1951 – the same Empress Club that just one week earlier had seen Hollywood stars Frank Sinatra, Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh join another star who was later to become a regular DaC user from her Knightsbridge apartment, Ava Gardner.

Crikey! Call Sign's lay out man, Danny, even wondered why – trying to be as subtle as he could – it was that in 1948, Gerry wasn't used to test out the first radio in a taxi by Marconi, who instead asked Stratford cabbie

HE DOESN'T LOOK THAT OLD!

MHC/203 R (Part 2) – Taxi Driver Licensing Renewal Form

Badge Number: 31768 Licence Type: MHC
Expiry Date: 18/01/2014

Current Record	
Surname/Family Name	Tobin
Forename(s)	Gerald Lawrence
Driving licence no.	TOBIN/411 [REDACTED]
Valid from date	01/01/1900
Telephone Number	Please Provide

Gerry's new licence is dated from January 1900!

But LTPH said they didn't know the answer but wished Gerry well in his future cabbing. But just to make sure they covered all eventualities,

Alf Smith.

What's that? You want to know why someone who has been around that long is still driving? Well we asked London Taxis and Private Hire, because if anyone might know it would be the organisation that Gerry would have known better as the Public Carriage Office some 65 years ago.

his latest Taxi Driver Licensing Renewal Form (see photo) arrived recently giving the licence validation date as from 1 January 1900.

Responding to Call Sign's question as to whether he had any retirement plans, Gerry was definite in his answer – before February 2086...!

DaC drivers 'thumbs up' to new size PowerPills

Well, looks like it's a 'thumbs up' for the new size Alpha PowerPill with feedback from Dial-a-Cab drivers all being positive. Drivers also seem to like the new 'Zip Lock' packaging in addition to telling me how much more convenient the new 35 litre PowerPills are to use.

One comment – similar to many others – read: "I love the zip lock and no more lost pills. With my big hands, it was fiddly breaking the old packaging to get at the pills. A good move! I always top up with 30 / 40 litres so one new shaped pill, instead of breaking the old one in half, is great for me."

For those that don't know, a pack of 10 large Pills conditioned 700 litres, now a box of 20 smaller pills covers the same 700litres. But even with the small half-size, there is still one thing that stops the Alpha PowerPill from working - forgetting to put them in! I'm sure we have all been at the pump filling up and suddenly realised that the PowerPills are still in the glove box!

Another DaC driver suggested that a small but high viz label be stuck near the filler as a reminder and as a test, labels will be sent out with all new orders. But what do you think? The benefits of using Alpha PowerPills have been testified to in Call Sign many times, but how do we remind ourselves to put them in?

Please, if you have a suggestion then call me on 020 3239 6101 or email steve@OnlyCabs.co.uk.

There's a free box of PowerPills for the best suggestion, but keep them clean as we've already thought of all the rude ones!!

I had an interesting question from one DaC driver. He said that he used the pills but always filled up at his local garage,

which was around a mile from his home. He asked if switching the cab off for the night within minutes of filling up and using a pill affected the taxi's performance?

The simple answer is no, it makes absolutely no difference to the pills performance. Let's imagine that PowerPills dyed the fuel blue, so when we go to fill up, the fuel already coming out of the injectors going into the engine and detonating is blue.



REMEMBERED
THE
POWERPILL ?

Now at the garage, a PowerPill (blue dye pill) is put in the filler tube and clear fuel pours over and dissolves it, turning all the new fuel blue. So now we have a tank full of the same colour fuel ready to be used. This cycle just goes on and on. I hope that clears the matter up.

Always here to help...

Steve Vale
Alpha PowerPill

TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR

Annual dinner and dance

There are still tickets available for the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity annual dinner and dance

It takes place on 30th November 2013 at the

Holiday Inn London Kensington Forum, 97 Cromwell Road SW7

The price: £62.50 per person (includes welcome drink at reception, 4-course meal, half a bottle of wine per person and tea/coffee. Tea/coffee/Danish pastries will also be served later).

Dancing to a live band!

We have arranged a special deal if you would like to stay at the hotel overnight. For more information please call (phone/fax) 020 8952 1357 or mobile 07850 056 765

All money raised is split between the five taxi charities...

Russell Poluck MBE (T55), TDoY Charity Fund Hon Chairman

I've only driven one TX2 (not my own) in the last eighteen months after years on the Fairway and TX1 and I don't suppose it breaks down any more than the other cabs I've had. I thought the problem with the timing belt had ended when the last FX4R was buried with a wooden stake through its heart, but like Dracula, it has risen from the grave.

And what about those drive belt pulleys? The first one broke and snapped the belt as I was going at about 5MPH, so the fact I had virtually no brakes or steering wasn't too much of a problem! And on a lovely Sunday morning in Abbotsbury Road I wondered where the awful noise was coming from. Then the cab ground to a halt. That was number two. But that's not what I'm referring to...

Our esteemed Editor rightly pointed out some time ago that tipping is becoming less common, with even Americans being reluctant to bung. How different to those British films of the 'thirties.

Out of a cab would step Robert Donat in top hat, tails and a white silk scarf.

"How much is that cabbie," he would ask the moustachioed stereo-typical Cockney?

"That'll be a shillin' sir, if you'll be so kind."

"Here you are driver and there's thruppence for yourself."

"Gor Blimey Guv'nor, you're a real gent and no mistake." says the old boy before driving off into the fog.

Another true story from Geoff Levene

I BLAME THE TX2...



So what's all this got to do with the TX2? Passengers used to pay through the luggage door window. They gave you a note, you gave them the change and that bit of contact encouraged them to tip. But that tray where the partition used to be means they can scoop up all the coins - even the 5pences - and be gone. Of course, in TV Soapland, nobody asks for change! And talking of Soaps, I'm a bit worried about Streetcars the 'Taxi' firm in Coronation Street. They haven't had a call for weeks!

We've all got tales of tipping or otherwise. Like the chap I took to Wembley one evening for a vital World Cup game in the

early 'seventies. After crawling through the traffic, we arrived with five minutes to spare and the grand sum of £5 on the clock. He gave me a fiver, then another one and then a third. Fifteen pounds for a five pound job! That's like getting £180 for going to the airport!

Or the man I took to Broadcasting House. £19 on the meter, he hands me a £20 note and asked for ten pence back. Why?

But my favourite was in the late 'eighties when the City was awash with money. I was taking a man to London Bridge and heard him on his early mobile.

"Hello darling...I think they're going to sign. It's going to be a thirty day consultancy at £1000 a day. If it goes through, we can get that house."

Two thoughts went through my head. Crikey, that's big, BIG money... and I think he's going to legal me off!

We got to the Station with £7.60 on the meter. A tenner comes through the near-side window, £2.40 goes back into his hand and he starts to walk away. But for some reason, he looks back and I smile and raise my eyebrows. And he knew I'd heard. So he gave me the forty pence back!

He didn't hear me say "Gor Blimey Guv'nor, you're a real gent and no mistake..."

Geoff Levene (W32)



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Hello ladies and gents

As the work picks up from now till Christmas, I do hope you give Dial-a-Cab your best service in covering the work offered to you through your terminal, or

ALL WHITE WITH GARRY...

the various cash marshalling functions / parties we get asked to cover by our top clients.

Selling cheap

There still seem to be some Dial-a-Cab drivers that don't understand the damage it does the Society when displaying logos of app-based booking systems on liveried DaC taxis. Apps have come into the taxi trade selling your services cheaply. You've studied to do your Knowledge of London at great lengths, only to work like a private hire driver, making the app company money at the driver's expense!

Some drivers are apparently prepared to run for free, wait for free and then give up 10% of the fare + tip if given! Customers will use the service, but who are the silly ones - them or the drivers doing the work?

Pick up locations

When doing a credit ride and you find you're not able to park outside or be seen easily by the client, please use your **parked** button to advise dispatch of your location. This saves unnecessary calls between client and dispatch and of course queries on POB cost

Long Serving Member

Allan Evans and I attended the funeral of **John Ward (D63)** at Southend crematorium on Friday 6th September. John was a long standing member of the Society, who will be sadly missed by his family and friends in the cab trade. *RIP...*

Be lucky.

Garry White
DaC Board Member

UP, UP AND AWAY

With Tony Osborn (S45)..

"Who would have thought that erecting marquees could give me so many free air flights," **Tony Osborn (S45)** suggested when he met **Call Sign** recently...

"In a life before taxis, I erected tents and marquees all over southern England, some fairly small and some *really* big ones!" Tony stretched his arms wide apart to emphasise his point.

"And when people walk into them, they just do not realise the work that goes into putting them up. There's the safety side, especially so they don't collapse on top of them, being strong enough to support lighting - sometimes heavy chandeliers - and level flooring so guests do not trip over wobbly chunks of wood!" Tony burst out laughing as he continued.

"At bigger events, it can take several weeks to erect those huge versions, especially an event with such a high profile as the **Royal International Air Tattoo**, which is held annually at **RAF Fairford** in Gloucestershire.

"Returning there on a regular basis, you get to know the people involved in the show and I was lucky enough to be invited to be a passenger on several flights during practice runs around the airfield. Mind you, I chickened out when I knew the pilot was likely to do a *loop the loop*," Tony told us giggling!

"One particularly memorable flight was a circuit including a *touch and go* manoeuvre when the pilot comes in to land, barely makes contact with the ground before opening the throttles and takes off again to complete another circuit. I think they call it kissing the runway. That move takes your breath away... when whoosh, you're up in the

air again! I can tell you that there was a danger of me feeling touch and go as to whether I left something unpleasant behind in the plane!

"Another time, while at **Biggin Hill** and putting up a marquee, I was invited to ride in a helicopter and we *buzzed* large areas of Kent and London. It really is amazing to see landmarks from the air that we are more familiar with from down at ground level. Everything takes on a totally different viewpoint.

"Funnily enough, while driving my **Dial-a-Cab** taxi, I had taken a passenger to the private side of **Luton Airport** and after he spoke to security, I was given special permission to drive right up to the aircraft. I casually remarked to the passenger that it was a nice airplane and he agreed - adding that it was his! Then to my amazement he invited me aboard! There were executive style seats for the very few passengers and



Tony nearly left something unpleasant behind after a touch and go manoeuvre!

two individual beds fully made up. I was introduced to the pilot before bidding farewell to the

passenger. Those **Learjet** people really know how to make an executive airplane!"

Tony ended his tale with the only apt expression he could think of. "Yep, the only way is...up!"

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CALL SIGN TALKS TO...

GEELY CHAIRMAN LI SHUFU

Li Shufu is fifty years old, the Chairman and also founder of what is now the second largest private automobile manufacturer in China, Geely Holding Group – an organisation we in the taxi trade just know as Geely. Perhaps more importantly to UK taxi drivers, Li Shufu was the man who took Manganese Bronze out of administration at a reported cost of



£11.4million and guaranteed the continuation of what many recognise as the London taxi icon. Call Sign spoke to Li Shufu...

Call Sign: Thank you for speaking to *Call Sign* Mr Li and can we start with taxis. Although Geely already owned 20 percent of Manganese Bronze Holdings from a 2006 deal, what made you decide to buy the other 80 percent from the administrators last year and at what point following administration did you decide that the TX4 was worth saving?

Li Shufu: We were attracted by:- History of the company and the car, its iconic design, which is part of London culture, and the professional taxi culture behind it.

We are a responsible owner, serious in business and we are taking an optimistic view about the future prospects for the **London Taxi Company**.

Being able to leverage within the group and use our investment to put The London Taxi Company back on track and for a better future.

Call Sign: Soon after the MBH deal went through, you were quoted as saying that Geely was a “long-term and committed investor and we believe the illustrious past of the London black cab can be matched by a successful and healthy future.” Some have wondered whether the plan is to build up the company again and then sell it for a quick profit. Do you still stand by your ‘long term’ quote?

Li Shufu: Yes. We are a responsible owner and strategic investor in The London Taxi Company. We want to build The London Taxi Company into a global business and have no intention of selling it. We have a strong belief in its future

and have agreed the right business plan for its future.

Call Sign: Geely appear to be very successful at exporting the TX4 with countries as far away as Azerbaijan and Saudi. Indeed, the September *Call Sign* reported on the “home” sale of 500 TX4s to the ancient Chinese capital of **Nanjing** in time for next year’s youth Olympics, after Mayor **Ji Jianye** saw the cab at last year’s London Olympics. Are we slowly heading towards a time when all TX4s will be built at the Shanghai factory and the export tally will then also include the UK?

Li Shufu: We will always keep the production capability in UK for its expertise and unique taxi culture here in the UK, but use our Chinese factory to build left-hand drive vehicles for the Far East market. We will develop more synergy with the group and leverage the advantages between the two manufacturing sites.

Call Sign: Is it true that the 500 TX4s sent to Nanjing are to be converted to run on natural gas and how do you see the progress to lower emissions for the London version? Are we heading towards a time when the London TX4 will not rely on diesel?

Li Shufu: Nanjing vehicles run on petrol not diesel. You can switch easily between petrol and LPG to reduce fuel costs. Green solutions are the right direction for all vehicles including taxis. We are working on the light-weight and new powertrain options for the London Taxi. This is in the best interests of this company and London as well.

Call Sign: In the shorter term, what do you see as the next development for the TX4?

Li Shufu: It will retain its iconic design and be more light weight, with improved reliability and driveability; it will also have improved fuel efficiency and be a green solution. These are the success factors for the next generation of black taxis.

Call Sign: We notice that **KPM** have been reinstated as main service agents. As **Eco City Vehicles**, they are surely the biggest

competitors to Geely UK with their sales of the **Mercedes Vito**. Was that done as a business judgement or just to help drivers?

Li Shufu: It is not unusual in the UK for car dealerships to hold more than one franchise. **KPM** have been the service agent for The London Taxi Company for many years and there has been no change in this relationship. We are focussed on ensuring that all of our service agents provide excellent servicing and parts to our customers.

Call Sign: Can we end with a non-taxi question. Around three years ago, you bought the **Volvo** brand from the **Ford Motor Company** for a reported US\$1.8billion and set yourself a domestic Chinese Volvo sales market target of 2000,000 vehicles by 2015 – all built in a Chinese Volvo factory. How is that progressing and do you think that the Chinese government’s plan for all Chinese home car sales to be built in China is a workable idea?

Li Shufu: We aim to make China the second home market for Volvo. Localised R&D, sourcing and manufacturing are crucial for Volvo’s success in China. We have strong momentum for Volvo in China during the first half of this year and we are confident for future prospects. The nature of the automotive industry means that that localisation is the best way for development in a large market like China.

Call Sign: Thank you for your time Mr Li...

LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE



With Tom Quigley (Y33)

fish and birds etc that will eat food on the go.

But us? I'm sorry to say that the human race has gone backwards in our concept of this evolution. Never has a time been more appropriate for us to take time out, to sit down and have a proper break. There are infinitely more open spaces in our parks, cafés and endless numbers of restaurants together with more free time to enjoy the experience of eating.

The takeaway chains of our choice will supply us with plastic cutlery, serviettes and everything else to enjoy the package of their food. Supermarkets do the same; all we have to do is to take time out to eat it, but it seems we cannot be bothered to do that.

How often do we pass by a perspective good fare because they are eating a kebab, burger or some other takeaway? Then a passenger will get into your taxi and almost like a magician, pull out a sandwich or some other fast food item, generally with a lovely smell to stink the cab out! Our industry is full of drivers moaning that it's dead, yet are too busy to stop for lunch as they scoff and drive at the same time – highly unprofessional looking. We have all met the type; as soon as they stop at a rank, they get out and all the compressed, undigested food is relieved. You can but hope you are upwind of them!

On the underground full of dust, dirt and a variety of smells, someone will always be eating. Then there are the young boys, girls, city gents or ladies who it seems believe that food has to be eaten while walking.

I am of a certain age in that as far as I am concerned, all food should be eaten sitting down, preferably with cutlery. The only exception to this is at the seaside with a portion of fish and chips with, of course, a little wooden fork! We'll skip the newspaper wrapping...

Talk ain't cheap...

There's a saying that says 'talk is cheap'. Well, as I look at my regular outgoings to talk, it doesn't seem that cheap to me!

There's a landline phone costing circa £15 a month sitting in hall and only used to reject PPI claims. The average mobile package, with all strings attached, costs another £30. Plus, if you add on the other family member's phones, even though I don't pay them, the wife's is £20, two sons starting at £30, then we are looking at start-up costs of over £120 to talk to one another and obviously everyone else. Then having paid out all this money to talk, what do we do? We text... because it's cheaper!

Where's my taxi...!

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

Look out...

There's a courteous flasher about!

Regular readers may recall an item in *Call Sign* from October 2010 headed *Crash for Cash*. It detailed how extortionate claims were being made after an apparently simple contact had occurred between vehicles. Yet they had then escalated into a major claim for extensive vehicle damage and personal injury such as whiplash and a course of physiotherapy! However, all that actually might have happened would have been a simple 5mph nudge!

One year later, *Call Sign* Editor Alan Fisher went to court to fight a third party claim against him over an alleged accident that never actually happened – not to save himself money, because he had a protected maximum no claim bonus, but because he felt annoyed by another motorist inferring that there had been a collision between the two when there hadn't even been a slight touch! Alan won the case.

Now a recent news item has warned of a new development known as *Flash for Cash*, where an apparently courteous motorist travelling on a main road, flashes another vehicle that is waiting patiently in a side road to join traffic on the major road, but then promptly and deliberately bumps the rear of the very vehicle that they have just allowed to join the major road! The major road driver then claims that the minor road car pulled out without looking and a tiny collision occurs. But the result is a huge claim and 'readies' in the pocket because being flashed does not give you the right to pull out.

The resultant insurance claim is of course hyped up and as the vehicle exiting the minor road is deemed to be at fault because due care should have been taken to ensure the road ahead was safe to join, the 'innocent' driver could have quite a problem explaining what really happened.

Drivers operating these scams are careful who they pick to crash into; executive cars, those with personalised number plates, lone women drivers or those with children, where there is every probability that the victim's vehicle is insured and a decent sized claim will be met, not to mention the resultant intimidation of the errant driver if the opportunity arises.

The insurance companies estimate this current trend is costing in the region of £400million a year, reflected of course, in ever higher insurance premiums to motorists. However, there is also the suggestion that insurance companies are themselves putting in gigantic claims to other insurance companies even though the motorist may have put in a modest claim and the vehicle repairers keep their own costs to a minimum. So it could be that the insurance companies are playing the very game they so readily decry.

When involved in an accident, try always to take photographs of any damage to either vehicle. One recent trend has been to fit security cameras into taxis in order to substantiate or refute insurance claims.

An article in the July *Call Sign* identified the benefits of a Novus CCTV camera in your taxi, including cheaper insurance and of course, indisputable proof on the severity or otherwise of any accident you may be involved in. Passed by TfL for taxis, you can get more information on Novus with no obligation by contacting Jason, James or Aimee on 0208 515 7827.



One of many CCTV cams available, although this one, the Novus, has been passed by TfL

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

"In Israel, everybody is in the IDF - the **Israel Defence Force**. There is no choice," **Sid Nathan (K88)** told *Call Sign*. "So at 18 years of age I was conscripted into the army like so many before me - and to the present day, you are proud to serve your country."

I did my three months basic training before being sent off on a driving course that involved cars, lorries, trucks and an assortment of other vehicles, always with the possibility of war in mind and the use to which those skills could be usefully employed in the service of my country and to save life.

"During my National Service time, I was assigned for a day to drive **General Moshe Dayan** - he of the black eye patch - to a new residential settlement called **Lachish** in the lowlands of the **Judean Hills**. He was due to give the inhabitants a speech of encouragement to help raise their morale. I was driving a large American *Studebaker* car and was told to drive very carefully and slowly, so as not to generate any dust as we rolled along the desert tracks because if Dayan had got his uniform dirty because of me, I would be in the 'slammer' for much longer than I would like! So I drove like we were on ice! It was good practice for driving a taxi in London!"

"During the journey, we chatted and he asked about my family. I must have done a reasonable job because I didn't get into any trouble! Neither did I ask for his eye patch as a souvenir!"

"One time, while out on a training march in the desert, we were told in no uncertain terms that we should not drink from our water bottles until we had reached our destination, which was many kilometres away. Our sergeant checked the full water bottles before we left our barracks and off we trekked. But the heat from the baking sun was too much and many of us took a swig from the bottles, even though we had been told otherwise. So, nearing our destination we filled the water bottles with desert sand, which of course sank to the bottom of the bottle and brought the water level up to the neck of the stopper. When we reached our objective, the officer checked our bottles again to see the water levels which were, of course, right up to the mark. I'll never know whether they guessed what we had done or if they decided to let it go. I'm just pleased they didn't force us to drink it all and to then turn it upside down so the sand came out."

"On another occasion I was on a patrol deep in the **Negev Desert** when we came across an elderly **Bedouin** man and his wife, shepherding two heavily laden donkeys. We suspected armaments or bombs, so we stopped them to check. The man begged for mercy while we thoroughly checked out their cargo on the donkeys and their personal bags, but found nothing sinister so we let them go on their way. They were very grateful, waving goodbye, and we were able to relax having done our job."

As a reservist, I was called up again during the **Suez Crisis** of 1956. I was driving a **Sherman tank** in the **Sinai Desert** near **Abu Ageila** when we were ambushed and came under heavy attack with shells hitting us from all directions.

As we head towards the anniversary of the start of WW1, *Call Sign* continues with its series on DaC drivers who have seen military action. Previous issues have covered Europe and the Falklands. This month sees Israel and Sid Nathan (K88)...

DAC WAR HEROES

From tank driver to taxi driver



Sid had to drive Moshe Dayan to Judea



The air inside the tank was filled with smoke and acid fumes and the only way I survived was to push open the lid at the top of the tank and gulp in air before quickly sliding back into the driving seat to control the vehicle and make a hasty retreat. That's what saved me, gasping for air as best I could. It was a very tense moment

and one that I shall not forget. "I'm sure most people remember **Chaim Topol**, who played *Tevye* in **Fiddler on the Roof**. Well he was ten places in the queue behind me when we signed up! Much later, he returned as a member of an entertainment troupe that visited many communal settlements (*kibbutzim*) around southern Israel and I was assigned to be their driver. Once, while en route to a kibbutz, we were ambushed and machine gun bullets were flying everywhere. It was probably my war driving training kicking in that helped to save us as I flew down into a Wadi (valley) at great speed and roared up the other side out of harm's way. Thankfully, nobody was hurt and we survived to entertain again!"

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

IT'S A CABBY'S LIFE!

The London taxi trade can rightly feel a tingle of *shadenfreude* given the embarrassing plight of our esteemed superior, the hapless Sir Peter Hendy.

It has widely been accepted that the Olympics were deemed a success, but the taxi trade was decimated by the way visitors were manipulated with free travel on the Transport Commissioner's pet modes of transport - buses and the underground. Then there was the 'thoughtful' Freedom Pass tagged onto all Olympic-goers tickets.

There were proclamations from Sir Hendy *et al* that it would be foolish for we taxi drivers to take a holiday and miss out on the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fill our boots with lucre. And then the blanket coverage on all media outlets began; warning everyone not to take vehicles into London!

That had the desired effect, turning London into a ghost town. A death blow was the result. Restaurants and Theatreland were deserted - and so were our cabs!

Tube train and bus drivers were awarded a bonus for doing their job. Sir Hendy was awarded £319,000 for doing his job. Was his fragrant lady friend awarded for doing her job?

I understand Sir Hendy is known to be a good egg, so perhaps he can soften when making decisions that directly affect the taxi trade...

Arbatpinigiai mano vestuvems – which means 'where's me tip!'

1st August; the wife and I plus the children

took our usual sojourn to Lithuania to spend two weeks away from the stresses of London Town, while staying at my wife's parent's farm in Trakai - a picturesque part of the Eastern European country.

The farm nestles among pine forests and natural lakes in a regional park, providing amazing vistas from every window and vantage point.

There were also pigs, cows, horses, goats, chickens, dogs, cats, a combine harvester and tractor there to feed the curiosity of our children. We spent time foraging for wild mushrooms and blue berries in the forest, swimming in the natural lakes and eating all that was produced on the farm. An Enid Blyton time was had by all.

On entering our favourite restaurant overlooking Trakai Castle, we saw a cardboard box with scribbling in Lithuanian prominently positioned on the bar, which read *Arbatpinigiai mano vestuvems*. I asked my wife what that meant in English and she said it was *Tips for my wedding*.

Clever emotional blackmail we thought. I mused whether I should try such a cunning trick to increase my wad in the cab, although an impending wedding might not seem believable from such an old buffer. Perhaps *Tips for divorce* could pull at my passenger's heartstrings and add some reality, considering all those hours in the cab trying to eke out a living at night while our partners are playing away. Although, touch wood, that doesn't



apply to me... where the bloody hell is the wood!

But I digress; we ordered *svyturys* (a popular Lithuanian beer) and sat outside gazing at the castle while slowly sinking into a comatose state.

"Why don't we sell up, our kids love it here," I said. "Look how excited our boy gets on the combine harvester!"

My wife retorted that the machinery would have to be maintained.

"But they love the animals," I replied.

"Yes," said she rather irritatingly, "but are you going to feed them!"

"But the land," I responded with what remained of my confidence, "our kids can run around in safety."

"That land has to be worked," she rather droned before using her trump card. "And don't forget the winters are minus 27 degrees!"

Naaah! Perhaps life wasn't so bad driving around in my metal coffin...

Stephen Berndes
Call Sign Online

Steve Shaller was on DaC for many years before finally entering semi-retirement in Spain. He has written many articles for Call Sign and has now put finger to keyboard again to write about...

CYCLISTS AND LONDON STREETS...

It's been a long hot summer here in Spain. The garden is dry through lack of rain, the car is dusty, the mosquitoes are having a field day buzzing around my ankles and the ink is running out of my biro. Just as well I am writing this on my word processor.

Nothing, however, can stop me reading *Call Sign* on line. Very much in the news and one of the main topics written in recent issues, involves the unfortunate deaths of cyclists on London's streets.

Like the editor, I too have very little love for cyclists, especially those who treat the Highway Code with contempt and believe it is there only for motorised vehicles.

When a vehicle, irrespective of size, has an accident with a cyclist, it is invariably assumed that it is the driver of the vehicle that is at fault. In many cases it may be - but not in all.

No doubt there will be many more cyclists dying on our roads before the politicians do anything constructive to alleviate these tragic incidents.

Whether you drive a taxi, car, motor bike or lorry, the one thing that we all have in common is that we all undertook a driving test to confirm our proficiency on the road. The same cannot be said of cyclists.

The blame for these cyclist's deaths lay with the many politicians who put their popularity and careers before the lives of those whom they profess to represent. They dare not introduce laws to govern cyclists for fear that it may cost them valuable votes.

Many years ago, the **Cycling Proficiency Test** was a test given by **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)**, which served as a minimum recommended standard for cycling on British Roads. It has now been superseded by the **National Standards for Cycle Training** also known as **Bikeability**.

These Government schemes are recommended, but not compulsory, and therein lays the problem. It is ludicrous that anyone can jump on a **Boris bike** without head protection, some form of insurance, an eye or proficiency test or without having been asked questions on the **Highway Code**. Yet they can jump onto the bike and wobble all the way along the highway, in and out of the traffic.

It's rich when we motorists are told that we must educate ourselves to the needs and safety



Steve relaxing at home in Spain but thinking about cyclists in London!

of cyclists, when in fact it is *they* that need to be educated.

Their financial contribution to the upkeep of the roads are zero, yet they expect so much for nothing. Not unlike so many people in today's society.

In the meantime, our roads get smaller at the expense of cycle lanes while our road tax gets bigger.

Steve Shaller (Ex-F34J)

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Covering London and the Home Counties

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

The Brethren of the Whip

Wary of Lady Waring...



Lady Waring was always using cabs. She was a very busy woman and would be on the go from 9:30am to 7:30pm. She would travel around London using the same driver all day. She would have been quite popular with the cab trade in 1900 – if only she paid her fares!

The first cabman to raise her ire was **Frederick Roberts**. On May 23rd he had taken her to various locations in Covent Garden and to Gresham Street, before returning her back home to 48 Upper Bedford Place. She offered him 1s 6d (7p) but he demanded an extra 1s 2d (6p). Roberts summonsed her for the outstanding amount and gave the magistrate his version of events. Lady Waring replied that Roberts was “half-boozed, screwed and insulting...” She denied even getting out of the cab at all in Gresham Street. Roberts replied he had waited 10 minutes there.

“Oh you shocking liar,” replied Lady Waring, “You ought to be prosecuted for perjury. You are a dreadful man. I am a teetotaler and he was drunk.” Roberts denied that he’d had too much to drink – but not that he’d had some drink.

The magistrate advised that for 5s (25p) each, they could have the ground measured. Lady Waring slammed her two half-crowns onto the table.

“Yes I will have it measured for the fun of the thing. I hate to be bullied by these fellows.”

As it was the time and not the distance that was in dispute, the magistrate suggested that time flies rapidly when two women are talking to each other.

“That may apply to some ladies, but I am like lightning,” the lady responded.

The magistrate then pointed out that she could not be seen as quick as she claimed, she again reiterated her lightning speed claiming:

“I make them all come out to me – even bank clerks!”

When he stopped laughing, the magistrate suggested she did not waste her money having the ground measured and that she should just pay Roberts. This she did and was fined 8s (40p) costs and had to pay Roberts 5s (25p) for his loss of earnings.

Two months later, in August 1900, Lady Waring was back in court again. Before the case came to court, she agreed to pay

the cabdriver, **John Atkins**, what he claimed and she left the court to get some money - but she did not return. The case was adjourned until the following Friday and still Lady Waring was not present. As Atkins stood up to give his case, Waring rushed into court and told her solicitor that she was willing to settle up with Atkins. The two parties retired to a separate room and Atkins later returned to the court - minus Lady Waring.

“Where is she,” enquired the magistrate? “Playing about outside,” replied Atkins’ solicitor, **Mr Pattinson**. The warrant officer stated that she’d gone to get change, the same excuse she had given previously. This led Pattinson to remark: “She has been getting change all week!”

Atkins gave his evidence without Lady Waring being present. He had driven her around London for 4½ hours and charged her 10s 8d. Waring only offered to pay him 8s 6d. He said that he would take that on account but Lady Waring flew into a rage.

“Unconditionally, unconditionally,” she demanded while damn you was her reply when Atkins refused to agree to her terms. The magistrate found for Atkins and ordered her to pay the 10s 8d plus 13s costs. But the day was not quite over for Lady Waring...

There was then another cabman in court that same day. **George Ager** claimed £1 18s 2d for two days hire. Pattison, also representing Ager, stated that he was in fact owed £2 0s 6d but had not brought the earlier claim to the court within the required seven days.

Lady Waring eventually returned to court, reluctantly paying the fine for bilking Atkins. Even more reluctantly she later paid what she owed Ager as well as his costs.

The following month Lady Waring was back before the same magistrate. She was remanded for having obtained goods by deception. At her subsequent trial it was found that her bank account held 2d, instead of the £10,000 she claimed. She owed money for her lodgings, 45 cheques had bounced and she was not even a Lady!

Gertrude Waring, a seamstress from Bayswater and recently released from a mental asylum without being declared sane, was found not guilty of the theft of jewels as the prosecutor had apparently had an intimate relationship with her and must have realised she was as mad as the proverbial batter...!

Sean Farrell (B39)
Call Sign Online

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Most Dial-a-Cab drivers are aware of the scams involved when being sent emails from people you know but which just give a website. By clicking on it, you are risking the contents of your mailbox. Other emails claim you are the beneficiary of a ridiculously obscene amount – perhaps akin to several £million or more. Eventually, after a friendly exchange, you will be required to give out your bank details to have the money transferred into. That will usually be the last time you see your own savings, let alone the £millions!

There are also been many begging letters, usually from a sad lady in Africa with an incurable disease who needs a donation in order to feed her children. She should consider selling her PC perhaps! But these begging letters have now taken on a new look. They are apparently sent by people you know. As an example, *Call Sign's* Bob Woodford recently sent this email to the Editor. Needless to say it wasn't Bob, but it had his email address on it. He "wrote;"

"I'm writing this with tears in my eyes, my family and I came over here to Manila, Philippines, for a short vacation. Unfortunately, we were mugged at the park of the hotel where we stayed, all cash and credit cards were stolen from us but luckily we still have our passports with us.



We've been to the Embassy and the police here but they're not helping issues at all and our flight leaves in few hours from now, but we're having problems settling the hotel bills and the hotel manager won't let us leave until we settle them. Well, I really need your financial assistance please. Let me know if you can help us out? Am freaked out at the moment." Robert

For a brief moment, we wondered if it could be genuine, after all, it came from Bob – until we looked at the email address and noticed a slight difference. Then just one day on and another email arrived from a different driver. Because we couldn't contact this driver, we are keeping his name secret.

"I really hope you get this fast. I could not inform anyone about our trip, because it was impromptu. We had to be in the Philippines for a tour. The program was successful, but our journey has turned sour. We misplaced our wallet and cell phone on our way back to the hotel we lodge in after we went for some sightseeing. The wallet contained all the valuables we had. Now our passport is in custody of the hotel management pending when we make payment.

I am sorry if I am inconveniencing you, but I have only very few people to run to now. I will be indeed very grateful if I can get a short term loan from you (\$1,950). This will enable me to sort our hotel bills and get my sorry self back home. I will really appreciate whatever you can afford in assisting me with. I

"Scam and a half!"



Bob Woodford (inset) hasn't even been to the Philippines!

promise to refund it in full as soon as I return. Let me know if you can be of any assistance.

Asking for the amount in \$ somewhat confirmed what

we already knew. It was a scam and no doubt once anyone pays into the account they will send details of, your bank details will become known and suddenly shrink. As Bob Woodford put it; this is a scam and a half and he was now never going to the Philippines on holiday!

Perhaps Bob knows "Eric Anderson" who wrote to *Call Sign*: "I want to place an

order in your store and would like to know if you ship to the Philippines. Do you have credit card facilities? Get back to me with your website. I will await your prompt response."

'Eric' didn't mention the email that claims you have won the Canadian lottery first prize of \$10million even though you never bought a ticket! Send them your bank details anyway and they'll pay it in! Honest! We think you get our drift. And beware of anything to do with the Philippines...

Michael Toomey
Call Sign Online

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Most Dial-a-Cab drivers will know of G4S – not surprising, perhaps, as they are the largest security company in the world. They have also probably lost more money in the last 12-month period than any other security company has ever managed to do before.

It made a name by being given the London 2012 security contract, only to announce before the Games that they couldn't provide enough coverage, resulting in the British army having to go in to make up the difference. That alone resulted in G4S suffering a £70million loss in addition to a further £18million that they claimed was due to charitable donations, external fees and sponsorship costs.

Then in July, an audit discovered that the global security firm had been overcharging for electronic tagging of UK criminals, for which it had a contract.

In order to help balance their books and cut the debt, G4S has announced plans for a new shares issue and says it will sell off some divisions. But nowhere do their problems mention Dial-a-Cab driver Paul Charters (J08) helping them to recoup some of their losses! Yet Paul's story seems to suggest that G4S will be looking to recoup funds from any source!

The original incident between Paul's taxi and a G4S security van occurred on 30 January at Canary Wharf outside a DaC account client's premises, when the two vehicles touched. Both Paul and the female G4S driver agreed that there had been no damage. Paul has been a London taxi driver for 22 years with not one fault accident in that time. But Paul told Call Sign that had there been even a minimal amount of damage, he would have held his hands up because he believes in being honest.

Then on 24 June, Paul received notification of a £240 claim for damage to one of their security vehicles by G4S. It also happened to be the date his insurance renewal came through. That was followed several days later by a notification from his insurance company of a £500 'late reporting' fine, which after Paul complained, was dropped to £200 before finally being cancelled when Paul told the insurance company about a chance

Does honesty pay???

Don't ask DaC's Paul Charters because you may not like the answer..



G4S are said to have lost £70million on London 2012. Is that why Paul 'copped' it?

meeting around two weeks later with the same G4S driver.

It was 10 July and Paul immediately recognised the driver of the G4S vehicle parked outside the JPM building. He asked the driver why she had claimed there was damage caused by the taxi when there patently wasn't. The driver swore – but not at Paul. She said she couldn't believe the company had done that after she had told G4S in her report of a touch, but had added there was no damage.

Another two weeks on (25 July) and insurance company WNS informed Paul they had paid out after he had expressly asked them not to, because he was prepared to fight the case and even pay for his own defence. WNS' only response was that Paul could reimburse them in order to save his no claims.

On 26 July this year, an independent garage told Paul after being shown photos of the alleged G4S damage, that there was no evidence in the security company's pics to prove damage to the van's T-bar. G4S had submitted a claim for a replacement T-bar cap at £30. According to Paul, two can be bought for £10.92. There was also a claim for 2 hours 40 mins labour when the independent garage said the work should be

comfortably completed in 30 minutes.

"That," alleged Paul, "always assumes that the damage actually exists in the first place." As with most small claims, insurance companies will find it easier just to pay out than spend man-hours investigating a case that would cost them more than the actual claim. But where does that leave the driver and his no claims bonus? Probably in the same position that Paul found himself.

In the end, Paul decided to pay the £240 and get a letter from the insurance company to guarantee that his no claim bonus would be unaffected.

"I couldn't see what else I could do," a disappointed Paul told Call Sign, "other than to just put it down to experience. Hopefully that experience might help another Dial-a-Cab driver avoid a similar occurrence.

"Some time after, I was told unofficially by someone at the insurance company that I should have just denied being involved and then I wouldn't have had to pay. But I was always brought up to tell the truth. Sadly in life, not everyone follows that mantra..."

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

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Don't want to spend hours looking through old issues? There is a simple answer - the Call Sign Internet Library! Log on to www.dac-callsign.co.uk or www.dac-callsign.com Then either browse through every issue of Call Sign since 1998 by using the Search facility or type in a clue and let our search engine do the rest...

If you want to read each complete issue with ads et al, you can now do that as well. Since May 2006, Call Sign has also gone online in a PDF version. Just click the PDF logo. No search facility for that though!

There are also issues from 1967, 1977 and 1987 as a reminder of the old days! Happy searching!

THE CALL SIGN INTERNET LIBRARY

Worshipful Company of MAGICAL TAXI TOUR

On 20 September, a hundred licensed London taxis made their way to Canary Wharf for the 20th anniversary of the Children's Magical Taxi Tour to Disneyland Paris.

The trip is funded via various charity events such as the Company's Christmas Gala Ball, which raised around £2500, together with substantial donations from both within and outside of the trade.

Added together, it meant that around 200 children, many of whom suffer with life-threatening illnesses and along with their carers, parents and a team of medics, got to go on a memorable weekend to the Disneyland Resort theme park in Paris.

Many of the volunteer drivers and organisers were 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.

And so it was that following the traditional 'Big Breakfast' at Canary Wharf's East Wintergarden, the Lord Mayor of London, **Alderman Roger Gifford** praised the work of the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers and then cut the red ribbon to send the convoy off for that amazing weekend with **Mickey Mouse** and friends – and judging by the smiles on the faces of the 200 children on their return, it was exactly that... amazing!

DaC driver and former Master of the Company, **Jim Rainbird (T55)** told *Call Sign*:

"It was an absolutely brilliant weekend. The children's smiles said it all and made all the work involved worth it. It's also just amazing to think that this is the twentieth Disney trip."

Just look at the photos and you will see what Jim means...

Photos: Sandie Goodwin



Twenty years!



Lord Mayor of London Roger Gifford cuts the ribbon



Janet Ramsden (G25J) makes sure her cab is ready for the trip



And off we go!

Hackney Carriage Drivers

AT DISNEYLAND PARIS



Excuse me Donald, can I have your autograph?



So I said to him, leave my friends alone or I'll bite your nose!

Guess where we are!



It's me folks!



Yes, 'tis I – Minnie Mouse...

A smiling competition!



Will LTC Vice-Prez Peter Johansen ever look the same again!



Aren't you a bit old to believe in a talking Mouse!

COMPLIANCE OFFICER'S REPORT



Ladies & Gents,

Providing a service...

I have mentioned many times previously that in a hugely competitive market such as ours, it is imperative that we provide a service that is second to none.

There are services out there that now offer a cheap comparison at the expense of the drivers, but if you compare what we at **Dial-a-Cab** offer as an overall package for driver and client, you are certainly not comparing apples with apples.

Our run-ins are there to help you arrive on time, but please remember that the maximum should not be above £4.20 at the booked time or on arrival when on an ASAP trip. The run-ins are captured on all trips and appear on in-house reports, but more importantly, they are shown on client's invoices.

Showing amounts that exceed the agreed sum causes a major problem, especially if the figure is excessive.

So please can I remind you once again that you must adjust the meter accordingly and if the figure on the meter is higher than the permitted run-in amount, then reducing the final fare at the end of the trip is an obvious no-no and the only correct way is to restart the meter.

Can I also impress on you that the *arrival* button must be pressed outside the pick-up location and not half a mile away if you reach the £4.20 at that point. I'm sure you get my drift and that I do not have to spell it out. This is a cause for concern and will be monitored very closely by the Control Centre in what we hope will be a busy run-up to the festive season.

It really does seem so strange that drivers are happy to have no-run ins and pay a ten

per cent premium to do so on other trips carried out for App organisations (and while showing our door logos), yet push the boundaries on genuine DaC trips that offer you, the members, so much more.

As I said at the beginning, there is an awful lot of competition out there and we need to show that cheapest is rarely the best, so please play your part.

Society logos

Finally, can I please remind you that it is a procedure rule that the Society door logos must be shown at all times. It is the **Dial-a-Cab** branding, many people recognise it and together with the members that are carrying the 'superside' ads, they are both there for a reason - to be seen out there in the work place and to generate additional work.

I have to say it yet again; there is now so much competition and we must all do our bit to help keep our share in a demanding and cost conscious market place. Our service is still the best but we continually have to prove it!

Be very lucky and drive safely...

Allan Evans
DaC Compliance Officer

TX4 hits Australia!

Dozens of special-edition TX4 'black' taxis are set to roll onto Australian roads - but they won't be black!

The first distinctive consignment of London-style cabs, all painted white, arrived at **Fremantle** port recently having been imported from the **Geely** factory in Shanghai, China. They are now set to be trialled in Oz over the coming months in a bid to convince local authorities around the country to purchase fleets of the world's most famous purpose-built taxi.

Evan Simeon, chief executive of the Australian **London Taxi Company**, which imported the vehicles, said they were in negotiations with various states to see where the cabs would be trialled.

"When you have a look at the majority of taxis in Australia, they are converted sedan cars which were not built to be cabs and so are not fit for purpose. We will do our due diligence - as will the Australian States and hopefully these taxis will be out on the road somewhere soon."

These TX4s include beefed-up air conditioning, bigger batteries and radiators, together with larger alternators. They have been in use in the Middle East for several years.

In a report into the Victoria State taxi industry, it was recommended London-style black cabs be allowed to operate in the State, with the government suggesting it might give 50 taxi permit holders a subsidy of A\$20,000 each to buy one.

Meanwhile, the Western Australia government is about to embark on a four-year trial of purpose-built taxis in Perth, with expressions of interest from vehicle companies having closed last month.

"I am going to presume that some of those taxis on the wharf are destined for Perth and let us presume some of them go elsewhere too," **Olwyn Williams**, head of the WA Taxi Council said.

It has certainly been an astonishing year for Geely and the London Taxi Company...



TX4 hits Oz

Airport taxi fiddle...

*That's Dulles Airport Washington DC!

Other than about the actual taxi, **Call Sign** doesn't usually report on other countries individual taxi business, but this story caught our attention because going back to the early days of London taxi radio circuits, some drivers suspected that there was too much risk of hanky panky! But those suspicions were some 40 years ago and probably untrue anyway - certainly on **Dial-a-Cab**.

But now in 2013, a former manager of a taxi company serving Dulles International Airport outside Washington DC, has been sentenced to a year in prison for taking bribes from cabbies wanting to work at the airport.

Arthur Boulette was sentenced to the twelve months after pleading guilty to accepting \$106,000 in bribes from drivers who wanted to work on the potentially lucrative airport routes.

Boulette was general manager, overseeing some 700 cabbies for Dulles Taxi Systems, one of three contractors that has a deal with the airport authority to operate cabs at Dulles under the Washington Flyer name.

Cabbies looking for a contract to work Dulles paid bribes of \$2,000 to \$7,000. Boulette said he turned down bribes for years before acquiescing starting in 2009.

Mailshot

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

Weekly payments

Dear Editor,

I write to ask who benefits from the decision to pay credits weekly instead of over a longer period. I can see why the Society benefits from subscriptions being collected more frequently and the effect this has upon the cash flow, but where is the benefit to the actual driver and majority share owner? In my case, the downside is a cluttered inbox, the need to print off more often and in particular the daunting prospect of being in debt to the Society more often than not over these particular r e c e n t months. Aside from which, if the Society can afford to pay drivers weekly, why is the roller bond still stuck at £1000, instead of say £250? For my part, going back to monthly payments allowed for time off for holidays and low rates of credit work to even themselves out – although I would settle for a subs sabbatical for August next year out of profits! A coherent answer might assuage my misgivings...

Jon Tremlett (Y32)

Brian Rice replies: Jon, you have been around long enough to remember the unprofessional way in which Dial-a-Cab used to pay Members; some were paid weekly, others fortnightly and some monthly, some were paid by BACS into their bank account while some were even paid by cheque which they then cashed at a nominated bank. As you can imagine, it was a nightmare but over the years and step by step, we tidied the system up so that everyone was paid fortnightly by BACS. There were complaints from some Members and even a petition by other Members to go to weekly payments. We persevered with the fortnightly payments in an attempt to streamline our Finance department and with some success. I can assure you, Jon, it would be better for the Finance department to retain the status quo as they would only be doing two payment runs a month instead of four!

There was just one reason why we decided to go back to weekly payments and that was to ease any cash flow problems Members might have. Our Finance department was against it as it obviously entailed more work for them. But we are also very keen to promote the use of credit cards and felt that by paying Members weekly, it might encourage them to cover more credit card work as they would be paid quicker!

So Jon, you are not correct when you say weekly payments will benefit the Society because subs are collected more frequently, it is more of a burden on our

finances as we are paying Members every week instead of fortnightly and I can assure you that payments to Members far exceed income from subscriptions. I can also assure you there was only one reason we did it, much to the dismay of the Finance department, and that is because we felt it was of benefit to Members!

Regarding the roller bond, as you know it was originally introduced to finance payments to Members and it is popular with Members as a way of saving for January and July and yes, even holidays. You would be very surprised at how many Members actually pay more than the minimum amount into their roller bond, but I suppose we could abolish it and have an equipment bond that would only be repaid to Members when they leave!

Jon, it was lovely to see you the other week, although under very sad circumstances. Anyway, I hope you will think my answer is coherent enough and that I have 'assuaged' any misgivings you might have had!

Palestra and licensing

Hi Alan

I still find it hard to believe the story I'm sending to *Call Sign* because it is just so ludicrous. My taxi driver's licence was due to expire and I had the completed form and rather expensive cheque ready to post. But I was passing Palestra at Blackfriars and as it was coming up to a Bank Holiday weekend, it made more sense to quickly drop it off rather than to risk the post. So I stopped, went in and told security that I just wanted to drop my completed application off.

You'd have thought I had insulted them and their families because of the sheer rudeness in their responses to me. Had they just said they were sorry, but they couldn't accept it for whatever reason, then I would have had to accept that. But no; they let me know in no uncertain terms that they wouldn't accept my envelope, that I had no right being there or daring to ask them to accept it.

Is it stupid or is it stupid that we are controlled from a nice looking, multi-storey office block in the City who send us reminders to renew our licenses, but who won't accept them when we want to drop them off personally with the obvious safety factor attached! They seem to consider it safer for us to post it with the possibility of it going astray.

I really thought that the old days of 'them' and 'us' had gone. Obviously I was wrong... Mark Tiller (K90)

Dems the rules Mark! However, while it certainly isn't 'them' and 'us' anymore, there are some decisions that seem rather silly and this is one of them. However, while Call Sign has had several complaints from drivers in recent years

saying that security had refused to accept their licenses and suggested that they go "over the road to the post office," I haven't heard of rudeness before. I suspect you went on a bad day when their wives/partners had forgotten to pack their yoghurt with their crisps and sandwich! ...Ed

Dream Villas

Hello Call Sign

My husband is Charlie Goddard (B49). He has been a member of Dial-a-Cab for many years and I always read his copy of *Call Sign* with great interest, so I thought I would write to you following our holiday in Florida in July/August. I have often seen the Dial-a-Dream ad for their 'Dream Villas' in *Call Sign* so this year we decided to rent the 4-bedroomed villa for 3 weeks for our family holiday.

We booked the villa in January 2013 and Bob Heath (Ex-F44) and his wife Jacqui could not have been more helpful. They took care of the car hire for us and sorted out any queries that we had, both prior to and during the holiday.

The 4-bedroomed villa exceeded all our expectations! We had our own pool and a games room for our 7 year old grandson that included a full sized pool table! The villa was equipped with everything you could wish for - I do not think there was anything overlooked. The cleanliness and maintenance of the villa was first class - it was everything we could have wished for and more. It was also very close to the Disney Parks with great access to supermarkets, shopping malls etc and also some very good restaurants. My husband, myself, my daughter and her partner and most of all, our 7 year old grandson Charlie, really did have the dream holiday. It was a real wrench to leave the beautiful villa and come home and we all hope to go back again someday.

I cannot recommend Dial-a-Dream highly enough - the work they do for sick children is extraordinary and if you are considering a villa holiday in Florida, please look at the advert which runs in *Call Sign* each month. Having experienced the dream first hand, I would urge anyone to choose one of these villas for your holiday experience.

Barbara Goddard (Mrs B49)

Thanks for taking the time to write Barbara. The last I heard, there were three villas available for renting – a two bedroom (+2 bathrooms), four bedroom (+2 bathrooms) and a six bedroom (+5 bathrooms) villa. All are close to the Disneyland theme park, golf courses and restaurants etc. These beautiful homes



Mailshot

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are owned outright by the Dial-a-Dream charity, which originated many years ago at the offices of DaC by Tom Whitbread and Bob Heath after a group of children were heard to have been badly let down by another charity.

Dial-a-Dream makes wishes come true for children with life-threatening illnesses and when not being utilised by the charity, the three villas are rented out at very reasonable and competitive rates. They advertise in every issue of *Call Sign* but as you are already on this page (!!!) then to make an inquiry about renting one of the villas, call Jacqui now on 020-8530-5589 and she will give you any details you may want. I've heard they are nothing less than fabulous ...Ed

New terminals

Dear Alan

My poor ears can't take much more of the bleeping from our new state of the art machine! Do I really need to know every time when the signal drops and returns? Yet the main sound I'm interested in is when there is a job and that is so quiet I normally find I'm booked off unless I happen to be looking directly at the screen. I know there is a volume control, but you need to keep it high so that you have half a chance of hearing a job. And it's hit or miss when you do a cash or account ride; the computer can't tell your meter is on so POB will not work or you can find you're being offered a job when miles out of the zone with a cash fare on board. I'm sure that with time this will all be sorted out, but it's a shame more testing wasn't done. I'm sure most drivers won't worry about a few things not being quite right at the start, but not to be able to hear the jobs is the big problem. Hopefully, it's only a software thing and can be sorted. I must say that the screen is now much better in sunlight.

One thing I can't understand is why my O2 phone seems to have a much better coverage than our system. Between South Woodford and Chingford there is no reception in a distance of about 3 miles - not that I need it there - but I have to sign off early or press the *off* button, which can clear the data and I would then have to go back to Roman Way.

Steven Bryant (Y41)

Steven, read Brian Rice's reply to Richard Barford's letter re signals. As for the volume, I have been told that the next upgrade will include a volume control for trip offers. Hope that makes your ears feel better ...Ed

Discounts...

Dear Alan

The Chairman said in his *September Call Sign* article that some of our clients are making demands of us such as no run-ins or gra-

tuities, but that he had explained to them that these were needed in order to encourage drivers to give the high standard clients they currently get. The obvious reasons clients mention it is because they can see other circuits / apps now offering free pickups, free waiting and no gratuities etc. But getting out on the cab gives you a different perspective of how things are out on the road. I wonder what the BoM would think if they sat on any rank for any length of time, even when you are booked into a zone at number one for over 30 minutes and still not get offered a job.

So once again I say that the waiting time and tips should be removed as well as the surcharge we charge for stations and theatres. We are supposed to be the number one circuit, but things have changed - especially when you get Hailo and now another taxi circuit offering no run-ins, no gratuities and free waiting times - so you are left just sitting there. I know some drivers say we shouldn't drop the charges I have mentioned above, but if you don't get work, you can't save. One idea which I also don't think will go down well is to offer discounts to account clients who guarantee to spend a minimum amount. Perhaps we could offer them 5 percent off their service's charge?

I don't profess to have a business mind, but any sort of offer to encourage more use of accounts, could mean we would get more work...

Ivor Belkin (C97)

Thanks Ivor, see the letter below and Brian Rice's view in response to Richard Barford ...Ed

Why???

Why is it I never get a job with a premium? Why is it when I pick up from a theatre or station it says this account does not carry a surcharge? Why is it my TX4 engine blew up not once, but twice? Can you answer or agree with me that I'm just bloody unlucky!

On a more serious note; I read the Chairman's report re accounts now requesting no run-ins and a free five minutes waiting before engaging the meter. Unfortunately, in the present economic climate they call the tune so we have to make best of a bad deal. Hopefully we will not go down that road, but if we have to then it should apply to ASAP trips only and only from the account address.

Hailo, as I understand it, do not accept bookings so why should we? It isn't our fault that management at banks are totally inept and unprofessional. If they really knew what they were doing why did they need bailouts that we have paid for once and now have got to pay again?

Stephen Field (F68)

Hi Stephen, Have you thought that your woes may be nothing to do with luck, but just that no one likes you! Naaah! You aren't too bad so yes, it's just bad luck combined with good coverage! In addition, I've lost count at how many drivers

have suggested we get rid of the station and theatre charges to make us more competitive! Enough said! As for the rest of your letter, you should also see the Chairman's response to Richard Barford's letter below ...Ed

Hailo and DaC

Dear Call Sign

Just read Brian Rice's article with regards to tendering in the September *Call Sign*. DaC are in a very difficult position due to Hailo and I agree with Alan Fisher's Editorial, Hailo is not good for our trade. I must be honest and say that like most drivers I have downloaded it, but you soon get to realise you don't get that many decent trips on it. I worked one particular Sunday where I had completed five Hailo jobs for £30 - an average of £6 a job and on top of that I had to give Hailo £3. What's that all about!

People say that Hailo is winning work back from Addison Lee. I disagree. When I tried it out, the majority of the jobs were local, so of course it makes sense to order a Hailo taxi rather than an A/L with their minimum fare of £11 as oppose to £5 with Hailo.

I remember writing an article once before saying how hard it must be for DaC's sales team and with the new apps, it's probably even harder. But I think we have to listen to our customers. It's ok saying what we want, but if they're not prepared to pay for that service then we won't have any customers. I'm sure that when work is busy, Hailo cannot and will not be able to cover their work. We cannot offer our clients a no run-in, especially during the mornings as work will just not get covered, that is the reality. What I propose is going back to our clients and saying that when we pick up at the account address, we will only start the meter at the pre-booked time or when we have been informed via *Advise Arrival* that the passenger is coming down on an ASAP. We could also reduce our lead times for the city to 10 minutes and I would say to 5 minutes in Canary Wharf. At least this gives them something to think about. I don't think we can just sit back and say take it or leave it, especially as the way work is now. Yes, we might lose £1.80 on every job that we do, but surely it would be better to do that than lose our two largest accounts, especially as I assume they are both at the Wharf! I personally am waiting longer on DaC to receive a job, so surely it's better to lose £1.80 than having to wait longer for jobs. I'm sure statistically we arrive at our pick up destination on average 7 minutes before pick up and with jobs with a 15 minute lead time it could even be



Mailshot

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longer.

Work is getting harder and quieter; for those cab drivers that work in the Chelsea area, I'm sure they would have noticed the 16 seater pick-up coaches (GoGutsi) cruising along the kings road and picking up clients. Look at their website to see the competitive prices that they charge! I still find it frustrating that we cannot offer our clients a fixed price taxi to the airport. I know a few months back GetTaxi got a mention in *The Sun* newspaper for offering this service, wouldn't it have been nice if Dial-a-Cab had been given that free publicity. I used to take a customer of ours to the airport every 2/3 weeks; he used to go home every Friday. In August, after driving around for about an hour without a job, I saw the customer getting into a minicab going to the airport! I would rather have a fixed price job going to the airport than having to drive round empty for an hour! I've just had the new terminal fitted, let me just say one thing, I'm heading up to Scotland as by the sounds of it you're able to get a signal up there because you're certainly not able to do that in London! I hope things improve on that front, as losing the signal is very frustrating, but I have faith that the problem will be addressed very soon... Richard Barford (R39)

Brian Rice replies: I can't disagree with much of what you say, Richard, however there are one or two points! Starting the meter at the pre-booked time? What about ASAP's? If the meter is started when the 'passenger coming down' message is received as you suggest and they are on *Aspect*, that could be within seconds, so ASAPs will become dearer than pre-booked trips and more clients will start to pre-book, causing drivers to wait even longer with no meter on. But the driver still has to run the same distance to get there?

Reducing lead times on the Island? Most of the work from there is ASAP at night from the *Rolling Ranks*; Members know where the work is coming from so run-ins should be negligible anyway. I do not agree with scrapping run-ins because the customer should pay for a service and not the driver. If run-ins are scrapped, then we will lose accounts through bad service and it will not really be bad service, it will be because the Member is not getting the right return for his labours!

If the Apps cannot supply a taxi, then that's tough on the cash customer - try again later! Try telling an account customer we do not have a taxi available; it's a totally different story. The Apps offer a cheap economy service at the driver's expense, whilst the radio circuits offer a *Business* or *Club Class* service at the customer's expense. The customer should pay a little extra for that. Where we

encounter a problem is when a DaC liveried taxi does a cheap App ride, the customer then believes if a driver is prepared to run for nothing, wait five minutes for nothing for the App ride, why won't he do that when he is working for DaC - it's the same driver and the same cab?

Richard, I am also a little confused you state: *I used to take a customer of ours to the airport every 2/3 weeks; he used to go home every Friday. In August, after driving around for about an hour without a job, I saw the customer getting into a minicab going to the airport! I would rather have a fixed price job going to the airport than having to drive round empty for an hour!*

How did you manage that? Anyway, we won't dwell on that. But as you know, when customers are going further afield they tend not to use a radio circuit or one of the Apps, they revert to the cheaper minicab. But I can get you fixed price minicab work to Heathrow. How about London Wall to Heathrow for £36? Mind you, if you wish to travel in an E class Mercedes, then that is an extra £3 - fancy that? No, neither would I!

Finally the signals. I am very disappointed with the signals we receive from O2; our biggest complaint from Members in the past was signals and I really believed that when we went to O2 everything would be resolved. However, I have been in contact with the other two circuits and they are experiencing exactly the same problems as us with O2 and we are endeavouring to approach O2 from a united front.

I would like to assure you that our IT department are doing everything they can to address the problem. As a layman, I believe it might be something to do with O2 upgrading to 4G. We have tried many avenues in an attempt to resolve our problems, including altering timings on our host computer and introducing new firmware on the test modems. Resolving the signal issue is our number one main priority. I hope the signal was better in Scotland, Richard...!

Don't go down the Hailo route...

Hi Alan

No run in, five minutes free waiting time, no gratuities! So imagine that you have booked into a zone and waited 30 minutes to be offered a job, then you struggle through the traffic for 10 minutes to get to the pick-up point, then you are expected to wait another 5 minutes before setting your meter. A total of 45 minutes before earning a penny and paying annual subs of £1872 for the privilege! Would any job offered under these conditions be rejectable without penalty? Would anyone accept them? I know that a lot of drivers are wondering whether it is

viable to remain on the circuit, this could be the final straw.

I am in no way an apologist for Hailo; we both agree that their pricing structure undermines the trade. My point is that we should not go down the Hailo route, as this would be unfair to the driver and be detrimental to service levels as it would make street work more attractive vis-à-vis the r a d i o .

Mick Kennedy (M30)

Hi Mick, you are agreeing with Brian Rice then when he argues that once you give away gratuities etc then you will never get them back. Eventually you have nothing else to give and clients will start on the price. And that probably is the case.

As for your example, it really is an extreme one - albeit the one most drivers give me! The chances of you struggling through traffic for ten minutes and still having to wait another five before setting the meter on isn't likely to happen too often.

However, even though Brian has given his view, the question still remains - what if the only way to retain a huge account is to get rid of gratuities or run-ins or even both! I wouldn't be surprised to see one or both of the other circuits offer that in their tenders. Do we go all-out to retain the account or let it go as a matter of principle? I have two points of view. The first one is that we do whatever we have to do in order to keep the account and then there's my second point; after keeping the account, would I want to cover a trip with no run-in, no gratuity, free waiting time and God knows what else? ...Ed

Hailo and goodbye...

Hi Alan

I was on the point of the Kings Cross rank; a male passenger walked-up and gave me a destination in Whitehall. When we got there he got out, said thank you and casually walked off without paying as if he did it on a regular basis. I called after him and he promptly returned to the cab. He then paid me off and apologised saying that he was in his "Hailo" mode." Later that same day I was on the point of Marylebone Station when I was hailed by the doorman at the Landmark Hotel. Technically I was hired, so I set the meter in motion as I pulled off the rank and swung around towards the hotel. But I was delayed getting to the hotel door due to a bus and other traffic in the immediate area. I finally arrived at the hotel, the doorman put the lady's luggage into the cab and then she got in but immediately asked in a curt



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voice when I had started the meter? There was £3 showing and she suddenly bundled her suitcase back into the doorman's arms and got out of the cab again mumbling something about you don't get this with Hailo! I decided that her decision to exit my taxi saved me from inviting her to get another cab. By now of course I had lost my point position on the rank and was also £3 worse off! If the travelling public want a professional, reliable taxi service they had better start realising they can expect to pay the appropriate rate!

Alan Green (E52)

I must be honest and say that I wouldn't have put my meter on until I got there in case the passenger changed their mind for whatever reason and I would then have booked myself off the DaC zone I was in. But the main point shows the damage that Hailo has already caused by making drivers work at cut price rates. They now expect us all to do it. Amazingly, their poor coverage doesn't seem to have made too much difference to them. Passengers don't moan when they get a cab coming to pick them up at their front door charging even less than Addy Lee ...Ed

Battle of the batteries 1

Hi Alan

Just read the letter from David Lessman (D19) in the *September Call Sign*, but I'm afraid his battery life record of six years and two months is beatable. I had to change mine after six years and four months! Surely that is unbeatable? Keep up the good work sir...

Alan drew (L33)

Thanks Alan, er, surely no one can beat that! Who am I kidding! ...Ed

Battle of the batteries 2

Hi Alan

Re David Lessman's (D19) letter in September's *Mailshot* in which he said he beat your taxi's battery life of almost five years with one lasting six years and two months; well I still have my original TX4 battery after six years, six months and two days! Is this a record?

Terry Meares (M63)

This is Dial-a-Cab mate! There will always be someone who beats it! What I'm looking for is someone who still has a Beardmore with its original battery and the bag the cab came in! ...Ed

Hackney Carriage rules

Hi Alan,

I've read in back issues of *Call Sign* that Yellow badges have to be in their own licensing area to be allowed to pick up a radio job. How ComCab and Mountview police this is

their problem and it is up to the rest of the drivers who have done the full Knowledge to sort that one out. My question however refers to the '99' zones on our circuit. According to our own rules, they are physical zones and we have to be in them, which would usually mean that we are not within the MPD. Any thoughts on that?

On a similar vein, a Bishops Stortford cab driver recently set down a fare at neighbouring Stansted Airport. As he was leaving the airport, he was pulled over by the police and asked why he was not wearing a seat belt. The driver explained that as a Hackney Carriage driver he was exempt whilst working. The policeman replied that as he was licensed for East Herts and the airport was in Uttlesford, he could not be said to be at work as he was outside his area. Result was three points on his licence.

Sean Farrell (B39)

Hi Sean, an interesting letter. I believe that Yellow badges are allowed to pick up outside of their sector providing they are IN their sector when accepting a trip. As for our zones, you can be in a back-up zone providing you can reach the furthest part of the primary zone within 15 minutes. But outside of the Met, you could only pick up a radio job.

As for seatbelts, we are supposed to wear them when not working - not working including any time when you are out of your area and out of radio control, even travelling to and from your home. In theory, you could be in Dundee and with the new terminal be booked into NN99, but according to LTPH you would be out of your licensing area and unless you had a passenger, would need to wear your seatbelt....Ed

Heathrow trips...

Alan

I have been told that there is a company called London Airport Transport that is under-cutting everyone. Heathrow trips have dried up...

David Heath (Ex-W27)

Hi David, this summer must have been a brilliant one to live in Brighton! As for London Airport Transport, put that into Google and 1001 companies come up all offering cheap prices with their own chart where you can enter details of your pick-up point, destination and calendar. I put in Islington to Heathrow (T1) for a Monday and the average price was between £40 and £50 depending on which car I wanted. So no, I don't think that if this new company exists, it would make any difference to the licensed taxi business. They'd be competing against other minicab companies because those using us do so because they want a taxi and not a minicab. Nowadays, very few minicab outfits bother comparing their prices to ours. However, I still hear reports of minicab drivers not turning up and if they do arrive, getting lost in



trying to find their way to the M4. Like most things in life, you get what you pay for ...Ed

Flashback column

Hi Alan,

I was somewhat stunned to read **Flashback** in September's *Call Sign*. I can't believe its 33 years since **Johnny Thwaites'** death! I well remember picking him up in the 1970's - in Florence Street N1 if memory serves - to take him to work. He was a real character and **Alf Townsend's** article reminded me of Johnny's despatching....all those famous names he used and woe betide anyone giving a false position. Even Alf Townsend's name itself made me think. Having enjoyed his columns for years, I often wondered if our paths would cross, maybe on a multi-cab job, but he left DaC before they ever did. Multi-cab jobs themselves are a rarity - when were you last given a choice of jobs? Neither do I recognise most drivers these days. Perhaps there is a higher turnover of drivers than in the old days.

The Flashback column does stir those little grey cells...

Alasdair Kay (C47)

Pleased you enjoyed it Alasdair. Johnny Thwaites certainly was a one-off, especially considering his amazing knowledge of London streets and that he had never driven a cab in his life! ...Ed

Vito numbers

Dear Alan

How excited was I to see in the *September Call Sign* the number of trips undertaken in the first three weeks of July by **Vitos**. It may have been hot then, but July is quiet overall so can a Board Member tell we poor drivers that don't own a Vito how many trips are requested annually for this vehicle? I estimate the figure as being between five and ten thousand and by having a Vito attribute, the Board has created a two-tier system. The Vito taxi is already covered by the 6 seater attribute, so why do they need their own one and as I understand from one Board Member that there are no attributes left to allocate one for the Nissan NV200 when that vehicle finally comes out. If the Board is happy with this two-tier system, perhaps we could have a two-tier system for subscriptions to make it fairer for non-Vito drivers.

My next gripe is one I've moaned about before regarding lead times being too long. In reply to a previous letter in the December 2010 *Call Sign*, **Keith Cain** stated that lead times would be monitored and changed when needed; well in nearly three years I haven't seen them change once. With three

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meter rises in that time and a further downturn in work, waiting time before starting the meter has increased, so drivers spend more of their time earning nothing. I believe lead times should be reduced by a third across the board, perhaps for a trial period and I'm sure coverage would improve.

Barry Spear (Y16)

See Keith Cain's response on page 15 of this issue ...Ed

Stansted set-down

Hello Alan

Lucky for me I got a Stansted Airport from town recently but hadn't been there for a while and couldn't find anywhere to drop my passenger off. So I had to use the Express drop off, for which they charge you £2. Are they for real, as the free drop off is 2 miles away and you have to get a coach back! How long before they start charging at LAP?

Also, having dropped off at LCA in the morning recently, the marshal approached me and asked if I would do an Excel East job for him. Funny in that he never offers me the same option when I get on point! This is the second time I have been approached when dropping off, as the last time was a credit card to E14. I was always under the impression that at LCA, the point cab takes the first job but obviously not. Never again and this probably explains why the rank moves so slowly. Could it be a perk if your face fits!

Richard Potter (T51)

It was Gary Cox (O46) who first pointed out the charge for setting down passengers at Stansted and as that was back in the March Call Sign, it looks as though it is permanent ...Ed

David Frost

Hi Al

I was saddened to hear of David Frost's passing. I picked him up at his Kensington High Street office a couple of years ago and took him to his house in Carlyle Square. He was a great fan of DaC and said he believed he

was one of our earliest account holders. I told him I'd seen him play football (he was a good player) at Ilford FC in about 1962 for what was known as the "Showbiz XI", and after fifty years of a career of the very highest profile, not only did he remember the game but named the team! I told him he'd missed a trick with a memory like that and that he should have done the knowledge!

RIP Sir David.

John Addis (K97)

I agree John and had already written a piece on my Editorial page ...Ed

Taxi stickers

Hello Alan

I received my 'think bike' sticker from the Mayor's office. There is now only one window left in my cab before every single one has a message of some kind on it! So I wonder what that last one will be? Perhaps it could be one to say that passengers shouldn't forget their belongings as there are no police stations left open in which the cabbie can deposit lost property!

Jon Robinson (E88)

So long as you aren't being sarrry Jon! ...Ed

And a sticker letter to the Mayor...

Hi Alan

I thought you might like to share the letter I sent to Mayor Boris Johnson about the door stickers re cyclists. It would be interesting to see what other drivers think...

Clarence Ishmael (R54)

This is the letter Clarence sent to the Mayor ...Ed

Dear Boris,

I don't suppose there will be a blind bit of notice taken of this email, however I feel compelled to respond to your letter dated 13th September 2013 regarding the safety of cyclists when passengers open taxi doors.

I have been driving now for 18 years and this is a perennial problem that has been a thorn in the backside of all London taxi dri-

vers for ever and a day! Obviously you want to focus on the safety of cyclists because it is your particular obsession right now, but it is not just about the safety of cyclists; it is also about the safety of pedestrians, other motorists and the financial impact of a door being smashed by an oncoming vehicle to the taxi driver concerned who has to foot the bill and lose a considerable chunk of his *No Claim Bonus*. All because of an ignorant and selfish passenger, of which there are many.

Forgive me, but I am a little bit sceptical as to the effectiveness of a little sign on the door suggesting to passengers that it might be a good idea if they think about bikes before they launch themselves out of the offside of a taxi, which is what they usually do in their haste to get to wherever it is they are going. In my experience, passengers do not take any notice whatsoever of the multiplicity of signs that already exist in your average London taxi.

Now here's the controversial bit. My suggestion and challenge to you, Mr Mayor, is to start licensing more manufacturers of taxis with sliding doors and over a period of time make it a compulsory element of the *Conditions of Fitness* that all new taxis have sliding doors. That includes those manufactured by The London Taxi Company.

This may not go down too well with the traditionalists, but some of us have to actually attempt to inhabit the real world and not get too hung up on the dim and distant past of early 19th century London. Only then will we enact any meaningful change where safety is concerned.

Yours Sincerely

Clarence Ishmael

Licensed London Taxi Driver



FUEL PRICES TO FALL?

According to **Brian Madderson**, Chairman of the **Petrol Retailers' Association**, with the calming down of immediate threats in Syria, fuel prices may begin to fall – albeit fairly slowly.

Mr Madderson told **Call Sign**:

"The sudden price hike in both Brent crude oil and UK wholesale fuel prices has thankfully receded as the likelihood of US and UK intervention in Syria subsides. This once again demonstrates the volatility of the UK's road fuels market as traders and speculators cause instability in prices. However, wholesale prices increased so quickly during August and early September, that pump prices did not reflect the full scale of the changes. Therefore, whilst fuel prices will fall, the Petrol Retailers' Association believe the reduction will happen gradually over the next few weeks.

"In addition to the recent geo-political events, demand for petrol across the UK continues to wane as motorists cut back on non-essential journeys and drivers opt for better performing diesel engines.

"On the other hand, demand for diesel is rising and this, together with seasonal increases for heating oil which comes from the same middle distillate in the refining process, is likely to limit the price reduction of diesel at the forecourt. Sadly that might not be what Dial-a-Cab drivers want to hear.

"However, it is important to remember that the geo-political tensions in the Middle East have certainly not been settled and any new disruptions could immediately impact oil prices again with consequent pressures on UK inflation rates. The Monetary Policy Committee needs to tread warily."



Brian Madderson:
"Fuel prices may start to fall."

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