

January 2014

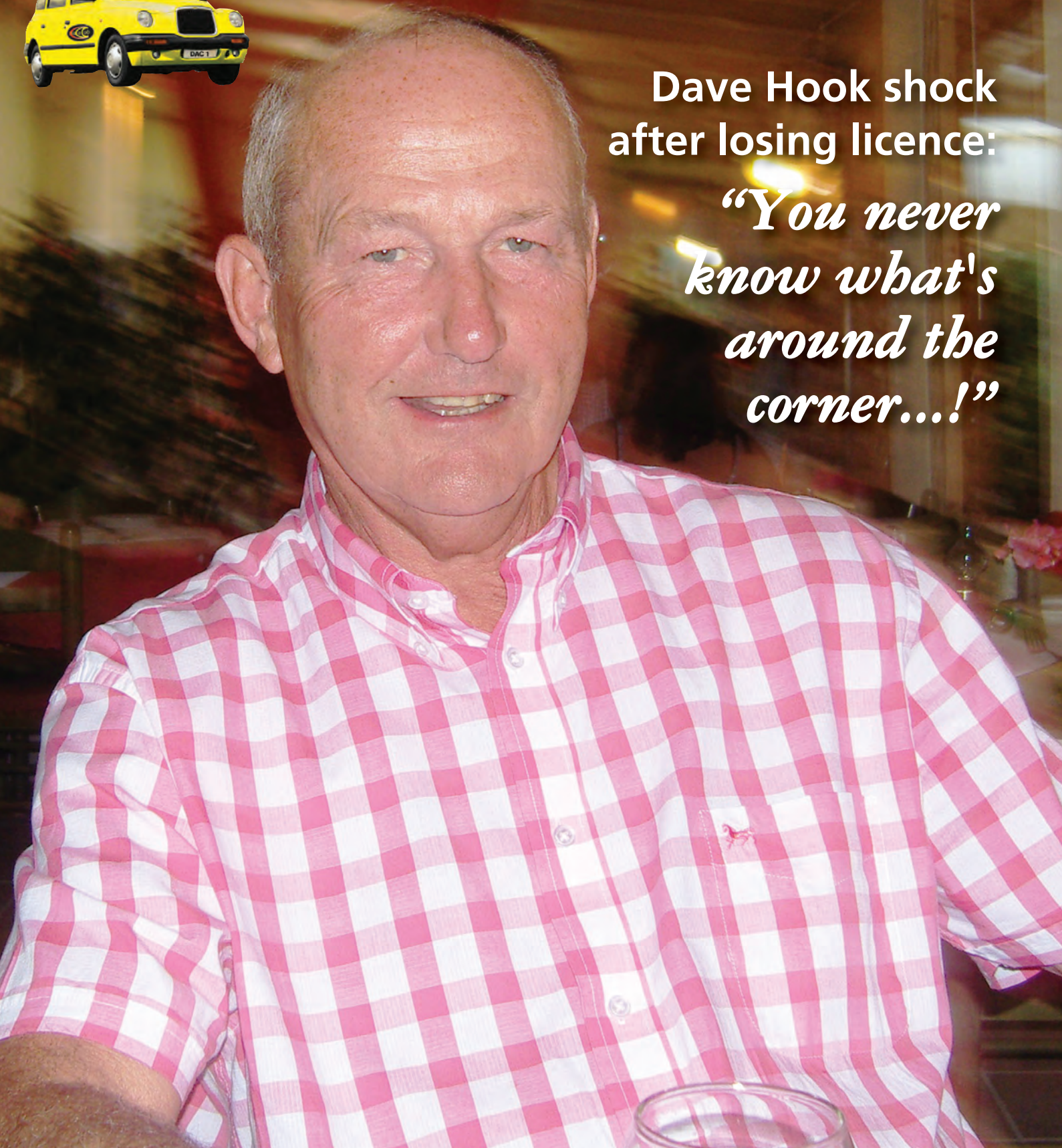
From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

Call Sign



Dave Hook shock
after losing licence:

*“You never
know what's
around the
corner...!”*





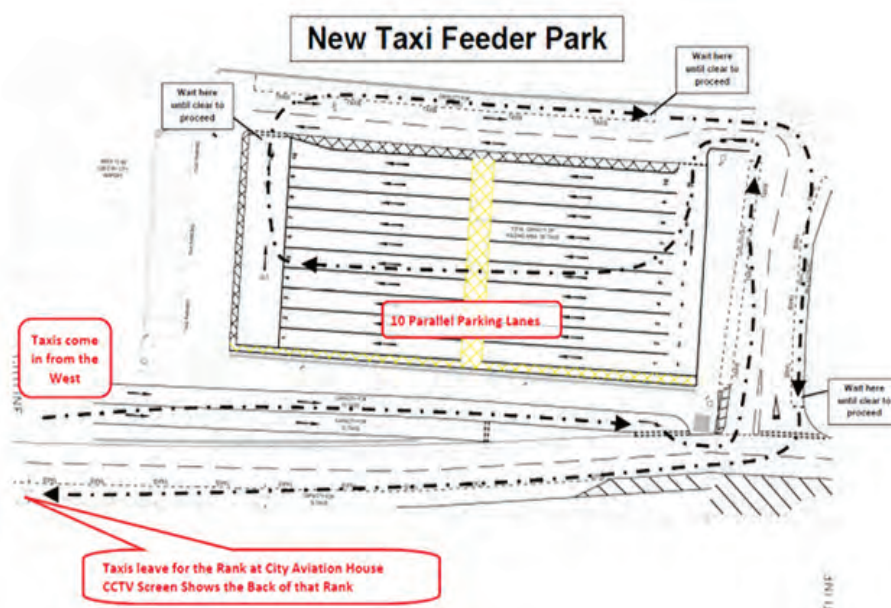
NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

I would like to wish you all a prosperous New Year. The 'slave driver' you all know better as Alan Fisher, wanted the January copy by mid-November due to printers Xmas closure. That's just a few days after preparing the December issue, so this is a bit of a rushed mish-mash. I cannot even do the new Eurostar timetable that starts 15/12/13 because at the time of writing, it was still not available. But see below how you can still get it...

London City Airport

All of you would have dropped off at City Airport, but most have yet to rank up there with the new arrangements. A new feeder park was put into operation in early October, so if you do venture to 'put on' in the new year, you need to go past the car park, the rows of hire cars and right to the end where you find the dreaded new 'Feeder Park' and follow the route as shown in the diagram below. Don't do a U-turn at the mini-roundabout thinking you were in luck!



Hotels

Just a quick update on hotels that may have you scratching your head with confusion...

MY hotel Chelsea, 35 Ixworth Place, SW3 3QX

MY hotel Bloomsbury, 11-13 Bayley Street, WC1B 3HD

ME hotel, 336 Strand WC2R 1HA (junction of Aldwych and Strand west side)

H10 hotel, 284-302 Waterloo Road, SE1 8RQ (Westminster Road end)

H hotel The Hemple, 31-35 Craven Hill Gardens, W2 3EA

W hotel, 10 Wardour St W1D 6QF (just north of Leicester Square)

Ace hotel, 100 Shoreditch High Street (was the Crowne Plaza)

Edition hotel, 10 Berners Street W1T 3NP (formerly Berners Hotel and thanks to Ray Sorene A53 for this tip)

Road changes

No left turn from Marylebone Road into Marylebone High Street. Cabs are still turning left and I guess by now PCNs are being issued.

Yes, you can turn left from Wells Street into Oxford Street. The old no left turn sign has been removed. Must be a first for TfL - their first positive action as opposed to all other traffic "improvements" being misnomers!

Heathrow

From 27/10/13: BA flights...

BA to Bangkok moved from terminal 3 to

Terminal 5

BA to Bucharest moved from terminal 1 to

Terminal 5

Eurostar

By the time you read this, the new Eurostar arrivals timetable should be online. You will find a new slicker, quicker, easier on the eyes MyFav page at www.myfav.co.uk where you can just click the 'taxi' link and you will find all the taxi related tiles. Click on the yellow Eurostar Arrivals tile/icon for a printable .pdf list of arrivals...

from the editor's desk

Welcome to my least favourite issue of the year! The reason – and I feel certain some of my contributors from the Chairman downwards will moan about it – is because the printers Christmas closure chops a week off my usual schedule! It means I'm now wishing you all a very Happy New Year in mid-December, but which you will hopefully read on or around December 28th. It'll be interesting if it works! But, anyway, press on we must...

London taxi watch

As we enter 2014 and **Dial-a-Cab** begins its 51st year, it finally seems as though the downturn that began around 2007 and put the UK into recession in January 2009, is coming to an end. Of course, the upturn we felt in November and early December was partly powered by the Christmas holidays – but from memory, Xmas came on the same day last year, the year before and the year before that. But work wasn't that busy in those years!

Will it now continue? Well hopefully - although of course we'll have those few weeks in January where the world appears to have died - but I think we are on the verge of our busiest winter for years.

But perhaps even more importantly, we appear to have become friends with the police again! At a press conference held outside City Hall – no, I don't know why it was held outside – representatives from the police and **Crimestoppers** asked taxi drivers to keep their eyes and ears open and to report any goings-on that we suspect may be a bit dodgy. No one had the nerve to ask how long it would take for a member of the constabulary to come out to check on any calls made by our good selves!

I had always assumed that any cab driver worth his salt would report suspicious events such as a possible burglary or robbery by calling **Crimestoppers** anyway, but apparently not, as the press conference/initiative was to ask drivers to support the charity (**Crimestoppers Trust** is a partnership between police, media and the community that was set up to fight crime).

No one else will say it, so I will. We all accept that the police have a job to do and that no one should be offered favours in return for assisting them. However, I can give you dozens of instances where drivers of DaC taxis have told me of petty pulls ranging from "tyre checks" to seeing if "the drivers badge was facing the correct way."

Helping the police make London a safer place is in all our interests and we should not expect anything in return for doing our part. But neither should unnecessary hassling of London taxi drivers be a part of the deal.

Crimestoppers is at 0800 555 111...

No more tax discs

So after 93 years of being affixed to British motorists' cars, lorries and taxis, the tax disc is to be scrapped and replaced with a modern electronic system, Chancellor George Osborne announced in his recent Autumn Statement. That means that as from October 2014, motorists will be able to pay for their vehicle excise duty via a monthly direct debit (+ extra 5%) in addition to the 6 month or yearly disc – except that you won't actually see what you are paying for.

The reduction from 10% to 5% for those that pay



half yearly is welcome, but I can't help wondering how many extra motorists will just take a chance and not bother taxing their vehicle. After all, will the police check every single car they pass because none will be showing a disc? The answer, of course, is no and before long there will have to be an amended alternative because this just won't work without costing HMG a fortune.

Then if you have a set and it turns out that the other vehicle didn't have any road tax, would they actually have any insurance? You wouldn't know until the claim went through.

It doesn't make any sense to me. But what would I know compared to a clever chap like Mr Osborne?

Extra 5 years for 15-year old taxis

Call Sign's exclusive story last month about taxis coming to the end of their 15 year lives seems to have created a substantial amount of interest. What it means is that if your taxi is about to reach its 15th birthday and about to become an ex-taxi, then you can now have an LPG engine fitted that will give your cab an extra five years.

Details have been repeated inside this issue and although the engine has been passed for use by LTPH, the more drivers applying could mean a longer wait than you would like. **Call Sign** was told that so long as the application was made before the taxi's fifteenth 'plate' ended, then the application should be ok. But you should be aware that cabs cannot be brought out of retirement in order to claim the extension. And they do need to be in a sound condition - not rusting away!

It was former Dial-a-Cab driver, **Stanley Roth (ex-Y53)** and a company called **Gastech** that developed the conversion. Both TX1 and TX2 taxis can have engines that are rebuilt to a **Euro 5+** standard and which will take the cabs up to a new quiet world, in addition to reaching that required European standard. Also the notorious TX2 timing chain is replaced with a real **Ford** timing chain that won't snap like the original ones often did.

The final passing came at the **Millbrook Emissions Testing Centre**. The engine is capable of operating on 100% LPG but can be switched to petrol if needed or if looking for an LPG garage.

Drivers with newer cabs, but who fancy driving a much quieter taxi, can also have the conversion if they are interested. Details inside this issue and from gastaxi@gmail.com.

Be lucky!

The expression 'be lucky' has been the traditional parting line from one cab driver to another for as long as I can remember – and I've been around this game for almost 42 years now. I don't suppose many that use the two words will mean

them as anything other than the awful 'have a nice day' or the more English expression of 'see you later.'

But this business we find ourselves in does need luck. How often – especially during the quiet times – have you been in a slowly moving queue of empty cabs, when someone rushes out of a doorway and hails you. To almost rub salt into the wound of those in front and behind your taxi, in a voice that sounds as though they have just run from Birmingham the passenger exclaims how lucky they are to have caught a cab so quickly! Perhaps it was the 'be lucky' effect.

But it doesn't work for everyone. Inside this issue you can read a story written by ex-DaC driver **David Hook (S80)**. He locked his cab up in July for two weeks of sheer rest – the first of them cruising the Med with a second week in sunny Turkey. Then it would be back to work feeling totally refreshed. Only it didn't work out like that, because on his second day back behind the wheel, Dave suffered a TIA – a Transient Ischaemic Stroke. In 'you never know what's around the corner,' Dave has bravely told his story to **Call Sign**...

And finally...

I have been editing **Call Sign** for quite some time now – in fact I am well into my seventeenth year in this particular hot seat. I hope you feel that the magazine always tries to be interesting, never just filling its pages with press releases and adverts.

You may not find every item interesting, but hopefully most of you will enjoy the majority of each issue – much of that will be due to my regular contributors from **Alan Nash** and the long-running **Nash's Numbers** to my photographer and daytime runner abouter (!!!) **Alan Green**. There are a number in the middle who month after month provide copy that they hope you will find interesting. **Call Sign's** poet **David Kupler** is another who has been with me almost from day one. My online man, **Vince Chin** also deals with the mag's website, which attracts around 10,000 readers each issue and is the most interesting in the trade with back issues that go right back to the sixties!

But there has never been a time when I just use **Call Sign** for my own purposes. I've had the occasional photo of **Linda** and myself at some trade function or other. However, I did use it earlier in 2013 when my son **Reed** died in January – not just because he was my son, but because he had also worked as a DaC Sunday dispatcher for 23 years.

So I hope you will excuse me just for this month, because as I approach the first anniversary of Reed's passing, I have used part of a page to show my grandson and Reed's eldest child, **Samuel**, as he tries to put the past behind him as much as he can, and shows the world which mighty football team he supports – and it isn't dad's West Ham! And congratulations to my granddaughter Imogen on winning a bronze medal at the recent London Gymnastic Championships. Daddy would have been proud.

Condolences

My sincere condolences to Chairman's wife Brenda Rice on the sad loss in November of her sister Rosemary. Their family is a very close one and it must have been an awful shock...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

Back again!

It feels that I have just finished writing my last report for *Call Sign* and almost immediately I am writing another! I'm reliably informed this is due to the closure of the printers during the Christmas holidays, so big Ed has been chasing me for an article – no doubt so that he can put his feet up for a prolonged period over Christmas! (*Ed's note: I can't believe you said that, Sir. For your information I shall be working very hard over the hols. Those bottles of red don't open themselves...!*)

Subscriptions

Yes, I thought that heading might attract your attention! The taxi trade has been turned upside down over the past two years with the introduction of the taxi Apps and there will be even more entering the market place, especially as the Apps offer a good, extremely cheap service to members of the public. However, that is at the expense of the driver!

The Driver supplies the equipment and pays for the air time, he runs to the pick-up for nothing, waits up to five minutes for nothing; there isn't a mandatory gratuity and he then pays 10% of the fare and any gratuity (if added) to the App supplier.

Whichever way you look at it, it is a fantastic service for the public - but a very poor return for the driver, so why would a driver subsidise the App? I believe there are just two reasons most drivers cover App work, however, the supplier of the App would like you to believe there is a third in that every trip you do via the App is taking a trip from a minicab - which of course is nonsense.

Much of the work is re-cycled street work that would have been ours anyway, except we now pay 10% of the fare to the owners for supplying very little!

Those two main reasons drivers cover the App work is because they are a 'fill in' during quiet periods and drivers are prepared to work more cheaply rather than sit empty. But during busier periods or heavy traffic conditions or indeed inclement weather, the coverage of the App work suffers as drivers are not prepared to work for a cut-price when their services are in demand.

During the run-up to Christmas when work got a little busier, coverage of the App work diminished; consequently, investors in the App were becoming concerned because they could see their 10 percent dwindling as coverage began to deteriorate. So in order to overcome this scenario, they introduced a minimum of £10 during the day and £15 at night in order to get the 10% going back into their coffers again, with total disregard for any legislation.

I still believe it is illegal to charge more than the metered fare and it will be the driver who will be prosecuted. However, after saying that I have absolutely no confidence in LTPH to stand their ground and invoke the legislation. Can you imagine the old PCO allowing the current situation? Not a chance. They would have squashed it immediately, even if the charge was only suspended whilst a binding decision was reached, but what have the current incumbents at the LTPH done? Absolutely nothing!



I must say that I am not at all surprised at that situation as LTPH appear totally disorganised and toothless. Maybe it's about time we took meters out of taxis and just negotiated the fare with the prospective customer before they take the journey, or perhaps have a £10 clock drop during the day and £15 at night? LTPH seem to have forgotten that meters are in taxis for the public's protection, but it would not surprise me if they were not even aware of that situation as they appear to be oblivious to most other things regarding our trade.

As I have stated, I believe drivers use the Apps as a 'fill in' when quiet and secondly, they seem to like Pay As You Go (PAYG). I am led to believe that one of our competitors in the Radio Taxi industry will be operating a PAYG system early in the New Year. I'm told that subscriptions will be £5 per week and then a cut of 10% of all the work they do. It will be capped at £55 per week plus VAT, which makes a total of £66 per week. Although that is the maximum figure, it

makes our £30 per week plus VAT, totalling £36, look a little paltry!

I estimate that if we went along similar lines, we would generate an extra income of approximately £450k per annum, which would go straight onto our bottom line. However, the above scenario would undoubtedly penalise the good radio man, although you could answer that by saying he should pay more as he is taking more from the system!

Anyway, it's something for us all to ponder during the New Year as it seems fairly obvious that all three circuits have lost drivers over the past six years and something needs to be done to encourage them back, otherwise more of our account work will be surrendered to Private Hire as we all struggle to cover account work due to the size of the fleet and as a result, accounts will be closed and depart over to the Private Hire side.

Unfortunately, our trade has gone into something of a downward spiral, some of it undoubtedly caused by price-cutting and we need pull out of this nosedive. But it can't be done without your participation.

Every trip and every customer is precious and you will need to put yourselves out in the short term in order to maintain our customer base. The competition is bigger and fiercer than ever and very often much cheaper. It is a pity that some of you are aiding and abetting others that would seek the demise of the three radio circuits.

Finally, I would like to wish you and yours a healthy and prosperous 2014...

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

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November saw the annual WCHCD Liverymen's dinner at the Cutlers' Hall in Warwick Lane with Deputy Mayor of London, Lady Victoria Borwick, as guest speaker. Before the dinner, the Master, Graham Woodhouse, clothed seven Freemen of the Company in the Livery.

These were Gavin Davis OBE, William Ives, Carlos Oliveira, Silvi Oliveira, Chas Reilly, Dean Thomas and Gary Wilcox. The Master then welcomed five new Freemen to the Company, namely Vasil Bagashki, John Coughlan, Lee Hilligenn, Martin Lyons-Applebee and Marios Stavrou. It was then the turn of 14 students who have recently completed the Company's Cab Guide Course to receive their certificates.

Following dinner and the Master's speech, Graham introduced Victoria Borwick. Displaying a wealth of knowledge about the cab trade as her father and her husband, former LTI Chairman Jamie Borwick, have both been involved in the business, Victoria gave an informative speech and in particular recognised the good work that the annual WCHCD **Magical Taxi Tour** carries out and the joy it brings to the children who go on the trip.

Lifetime Achievement Award

This was the first WCHCD *Lifetime Achievement Award* and the inaugural presentation went to **Bob Oddy**. Bob has been

Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers
WCHCD 2013
LIVERYMEN'S DINNER



Victoria Borwick with Company Master Graham Woodhouse

involved in the cab industry for many years, both as a driver and LTDA General Secretary. He passed the torch over to **Steve McNamara** last year but is still Steve's Assistant.

Bob has been actively involved in many issues affecting the taxi industry and was instrumental in the creation of the **Taxi Cost Index**, the formula used to decide fare increases. He has worked in the interests of his members throughout his time at the LTDA. Bob said: "I was delighted, and extremely surprised to receive the award. I'm sure

that there are many others within our trade who are equally deserving. The Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers does wonderful work for charity, in particular its organisation of the annual **Magical Taxi Tour to Disneyland Paris**. I'm confident the enthusiasm of the Company's members will drive its charity achievements to even greater heights."

One further presentation remained; that was the **Hitch Award for Bravery** and that went to **Dial-a-Cab's John Ward (R88)**. See page 12.

After the presentations, Liverymen and their guests joined the Master in the traditional **Stirrup Cup**.

The London Taxidriviers' Fund for Underprivileged Children

Valentine's Night Dinner & Ball

The Guildhall, Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HH

Friday 14th February 2014

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Jery's World



“A good night ‘Arry? I don’t fink so mate. That geezer sitting by the tree ‘as been my best job so far and ees left ‘is mark all over the back!”

Electric Cabs? About 120 years late!

With both **Geely** and **Mercedes** announcing that the future will be in the hands of electric taxis within five years, it’s interesting to note that the first of that genre appeared as long ago as December 1897.

They were invented by **Walter Bersey**, with his fleet of 75 soon-to-be named

Bersey cabs being powered by grid-plate batteries that could only be recharged at Bersey’s Lambeth garage where a hydraulic lifting system allowed for quick battery exchange. The taxi had a range of about 35 miles which was more than the average horse-powered cab could reasonably cover. It also had a top speed of 14mph – which some would say it isn’t much different today with all the extra traffic!

But Mr Bersey was to make a statement that will finally come true. He said in 1897: **“Whilst petroleum may become the motive power in country districts and steam will probably be used for very heavy vehicles, there is no doubt that electricity will be the most advantageous where the traffic can be located within a radius.”**

120 years on and Walter’s vision will come true!

The low noise sent out by the Bersey electric engine saw the cabs named as Hummingbirds, but sadly, the Bersey wasn’t to last. The tyres were far too fragile to take



the weight of a two tonne vehicle – similar to today’s **TX4** - and it became too costly for the firm to generate its own electricity. In addition, drivers of horse-drawn cabs became concerned for their livelihoods. The company’s first year saw a loss of over £6000 and within two years Bersey had become an ex-cab!

The photo is with the kind permission of the Science Museum. It shows the first Bersey and was taken in Hyde Park in December 1897...

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Covering London and the Home Counties

David Hook (S80) had been a member of Dial-a-Cab since August 1983 and now in his mid-sixties was enjoying the fruits of those long years of labour. But in just a brief few minutes near London Wall during his regular shift, his world came crashing down. Dave told Call Sign his story...

“Who would have thought whilst flying home on 1st July looking tanned and feeling rested after a week’s cruising followed by another week in a beautiful Turkish hotel, that just two days later - on 3rd July to be precise - whilst back working in my cab, I would suffer a TIA (Transient Ischaemic Stroke).

I had started work as normal on that day. At around 10.15pm I pulled into St Alphege Gardens in the City for a short rest whilst waiting for a job in EC5. Suddenly I felt light headed and within a few minutes all feeling had left my right side. I realised very quickly that I was having a stroke, but amazingly kept quite calm.

As most of you will know, St Alphege Gardens is pretty much deserted at night so I found myself struggling with my mobile to call 999. As thankfully my speech had been unaffected, I was lucky enough to see a security guard appear from one of the building sites. I called him over and explained my predicament; he kindly made the 999 call and subsequently contacted my wife, letting her know to which hospital I was being taken.

Within half an hour, I had been admitted to the Royal London Trauma Unit, by which time thankfully all feeling had returned to my right side. As I now know, if feeling returns within 24 hours, it is

Forced retirement through a TIA makes DaC driver Dave Hook tell Call Sign...

You never know what’s around the corner!



classed as a TIA - which is a minor stroke. I spent three nights in the Royal London receiving excellent treatment and travelled home with a bag of cholesterol reducing statins and blood thinning medication.

What followed within the next weeks was, for me, a shock almost as shattering as the TIA itself. I was told at the hospital that I wouldn’t be able to drive for a month, which I took to include my cab. As I had never spoken to anyone who’d had a TIA or never had any reason to even think about it, I was totally shocked to be told when informing TfL - as is a requirement - that I would have to hand in my licence and badge for a minimum of one year regardless of the individual severity of the TIA. After the year, I could if I wished, request reinstatement. That would then only be granted following a successful medical assessment.

I realise that public safety is paramount in such circumstances and now, almost six months on, accept these are the rules and that they are made for the right reasons. But initially, as I had no real after-effects, that decision was difficult to accept.

I had joined Dial-a-Cab in August 1983 and never felt the need to move to another circuit, hence completing 30 years continuous service and was looking forward to paying half subs. Although I will be 68 in December, I had every intention of continuing, albeit on a part time basis. But unfortunately, the decision was taken out of my hands.

I decided to sell my taxi and it remains to be seen whether I will apply for the reinstatement of my licence; at this moment in time I feel fit and well, my memory remains A1 and I have taken up golf. However, not being a cabbie has left a big gap in my life.

We all complain about our jobs, some more than others, but we shouldn’t take things for granted as we never know what’s around the corner. But one thing I can say in all honesty is that I was proud to be a London cabbie...”

Dave Hook (S80)

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The Holiday Inn London Kensington Forum recently celebrated the 2013 **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity's** dinner and dance, with all funds collected being equally shared by the trade's charities.

They are the **London Taxidrivers Fund for Underprivileged Children**, the **East London Cabbies Outing**, the **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled**, the **Albany and the Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Children**.

An excellent dinner followed by dancing to a live band ensured that this would be another great evening. **Dial-a-Cab's Russell Poluck MBE (T55)**, Honorary Chairman of the **TDOY Charity Fund** and his wife **Barbara** work really hard every year to organise this event and make sure that everyone enjoys themselves – even though the actual trade show seems to have faded from the calendar. But at least the trade charities still benefitted to the tune of £1000 each.

There were a number of **Dial-a-Cab** drivers there, including the always irrepressible duo of the now retired **Bill Tyzack (C06)** and wife **Grace**. As always, DaC took a table with places taken by **Brian Rice**, **Allan Evans**, **Mike Son**, **Shelagh Adkins** and **Garry White** and their respective partners.

Sadly, Brian's wife Brenda couldn't attend due to a family bereavement and their daughter **Carla** accompanied the DaC Chairman.

The results of the raffle:

Taxi Driver of the year dinner 2013



Brian and daughter Carla at the dinner

1st Prize:

£1000 Holiday Voucher – Suzie Taylor no. 02401

2nd-Prize:

Weekend at the Crown Plaza + 2 Theatre Tickets – Mel Cooper 03972

3rd Prize:

Mercedes Benz Watch – Clark Spillane 01671

4th Prize:

Vivienne Westwood Purse – Malcolm Cashman 03886

5th Prize:

Weekend at the Tara Hotel – Paul Warwick 03238

6th Prize:

Overnight Stay at the Connaught Hotel – Tony Rayan 03732

7th Prize:

Knife Set – Andrew Essex 01372

8th Prize:

Dinner Service – Melvyn Millenbach 02159

9th Prize:

Totes Gift Voucher – Helen 02629

10th Prize:

£50 Ocado Voucher – Micky English 02201

Russell Poluck told Call Sign:

“On behalf of the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity, I would like to thank everyone that supported our raffle and those that attended the dinner and all our sponsors.”

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

It's a cabbies life

Pungent odours!

In Regents Park Road some five years ago, I braked hard nearly shunting an out of control cyclist. This old gent was bicycle clipped, riding a replica 'Miss Marple' boneshaker. On closer inspection, I recognised the man to be **Stanley Johnson**, Mayor Boris's father. He looked like he'd seen hundreds of mishaps, but personally never knowing he'd been involved in any!

So I presume that's where Boris's free spirited approach to cycling developed, which is an admirable way to lead one's life, although not perhaps a very safe one. Perhaps the reluctance to push for commonsense mandatory safeguards like helmets and protective kit to be enshrined in law, seems kind of ignoble while curtailing feelings of freedom of expression.

British cyclist policy advisor **Chris Boardman** spoke out after the recent spate of deaths, saying that we should ban HGV's at rush hours – just like Paris does. He belittled the Mayor's suggestions to ban wearing headphones as playing to the gallery. He asked what we should prioritise – cycling and walking or cars and heavy goods vehicles. Yet all the time he is a pedlar of ludicrously expensive 'boy racer' recreational vehicles that are inappropriate for congested London roads.

Chris Boardman, who lives in the Wirral (Merseyside) asserts that we should model ourselves on Copenhagen, which compared to London is a twee and sleepy Danish capital but a Utopian, idealistic heaven for cyclists the world over. Apparently when it snows, the city is mandated to clear the snow from cycle lanes before car lanes, while traffic lights are coordinated to prioritise for cyclists. His answer for making the roads safer in London is perversely to double the number of cyclists, because it is

safety in numbers as in Copenhagen.

The recent **LTDA** sting, installing hidden cameras at junctions, proved comprehensively that the majority of cyclists jump red lights, whilst disproving the mendacious codswallop of the biking lobby that only a trickle of naughty cyclists misbehave in that appallingly dangerous manner.

Steve McNamara, the ITDA General Secretary, reaffirmed brilliantly his findings on **BBC Radio 5Live**.

The gifted **Boris Johnson**, who has revealed himself to be one of the "masters of the uni-

verse" with an IQ way beyond us thickies, has finally come up against his *Achilles* heel. Is he kowtowing to the cyclist lobby who emit methane gas (greenhouse gas) and pungent odour, or by the year 2020 a fleet of clean nitrogen or lithium battery contained taxis emitting droplets of water?

Stephen Berndes
Call Sign Online



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By the time you read this article, I would have been back in the role of Sales for just over a month. Initially I thought it was going to be quite daunting, but it's surprising how soon one fits back in.

I have undertaken the task to not only generate new business, but also to hold onto our existing clients.

With this in mind, I have brought **Carol Carpenter** on board. She has been an account manager handling customer care for many years. Carol originally joined us when we first had our unit at the Business Design Centre, where she was support for the sale representatives we employed at that time and I have no doubt that her experience will help retain a great deal of business.

During the month, I have needed to lean on **Natalie Ezekiel's** knowledge of where we are with new business and have been working with her on a number of pre-tender documents. She has impressed me with her work and I am confident we will be selected to participate in business tender processes. Completing them will give us quite a lot of work to do in the New Year. Hopefully the results will be successful and win new business.

Being asked to take on the sales role after

DAC SALES REPORT

With Keith Cain



What has become very clear is that customers are still looking very closely at costs and our margins are being constantly squeezed. Fortunately, our financial position is helping us to sustain the pressure. But one thing that is general out there is the service given by our competitors, because make no mistake, our service is very good and this has been proven by the return to us of clients that left for other suppliers because at the time they thought that cost was everything. But cheap with poor service is no use to them.

I have also been amazed at how clients are being hoodwinked into believing what our competitors can actually provide for them. Our aftersales, customer care and technical support is second to none and I will be making sure in the New Year that not only will our existing clients be made aware of this, but that more and more new clients will be introduced to Dial-a-Cab.

Keith Cain
DaC Head of Sales

receiving the disappointing news about JPM could not have made the task any more difficult and at the time of writing we are still awaiting news from our other major client on the island. I can assure you we have made every effort to hold this one, despite the tough tactics used by our competitors and as soon as we hear their decision, the news will be passed on.

FIVE YEAR TAXI EXTENSIONS

Last month's *Call Sign* exclusively revealed details of a new engine that has been developed by **Gastech** for fitting to older taxis approaching their 15th year or that were on their fifteenth and final plate. That would usually mean the cab was in the final throes of its life and on the verge of making its way to the eternal taxi scrapyards. As so many drivers have asked us about it, we are repeating some of the details.

The new engine was recently passed at **Millbrook** and LTPH/TfL will accept it for fitting into London taxis. It will also give the taxi an extra five years of life.

The engine runs on **Liquefied Petroleum Gas** with a small additional petrol tank with the ability to switch between the two. However and importantly, you cannot bring your taxi out of retirement once it has finished its 15th plate. But provided it hasn't yet reached that milestone and you want to convert it and gain the extra 5 years, then the cab owner must write to TfL and tell them they wish to convert the cab to the Gastech LPG system and up to Euro 5+ standard.

The *Gastech TX1* NOX emissions are 0.0254 gr/km. That is claimed to be 91% lower than diesel Euro 5. Their *TX2* has 0.014041 gr/km - some 95% lower than diesel Euro 5. It is significantly lower in



Stanley Roth – more info at gastaxi@gmail.com

Oxides of Nitrogen than any modern day diesel engine and there are zero particulates / smoke.

The price of the TX1 conversion is £6,300 plus VAT, while the TX2 is £6300 including VAT. Former Dial-a-Cab driver, **Stanley Roth (ex-Y53)** is one of the people behind the engine, having himself driven a gas cab for far longer than any other licensed taxi driver.

Those interested should email Stanley at gastaxi@gmail.com and he will furnish you with all the info you need. If you aren't sure, then Stanley will be happy to email you

general information about the Gastech engine by return...

THE ALPHA POWER PILL

Now even better!

Helps cut the cost of diesel – and reduce Emissions!

OnlyCabs.co.uk are pleased to supply Dial-a-Cab drivers with the amazing Alpha Pill

Order Today to take advantage of the special price of £16.95

Go to www.OnlyCabs.co.uk or scan your smartphone on the ad code

Or telephone your order to:
Stephen Vale at Only Cabs 020 3239 6101



Last month's Call Sign told the story of Laury Bartlett (L84) whose Vito failed at NSL after being told the text on the insurance certificate was too small. Now NSL's Chief Executive replies...

YES, SIZE DOES MATTER!



NSL Chief Exec
Mark Underwood

Laury Bartlett (L84) told the *December Call Sign* of a rather strange problem he came across at NSL's Crayford depot when attempting to get a new plate for his Vito. Two problems materialised that in his twenty years of musing, he had never come across before.

The day had started well for Laury. He'd fitted new tyres, gave the cab a good wash, it had been mechanically checked and it was going well. Besides that, it was only two years old. As Laury put it, what could possibly go wrong! Hmmm...

But it failed on two counts. The size of font on the insurance certificate was a size ten and it should have been size twelve so people can view it from the kerbside and the MOT

Certificate had one signature on where it should have had two.

Laury told *Call Sign* that he had not a clue that the font size on the Aviva insurance certificate had been reduced and whether it had just been a fault in the actual printing or if Aviva were trying to cut back on ink! But he didn't think the cab should have received a 'stop' for that. He also had a problem with the MOT Certificate that NSL said had only been signed once instead of twice. What upset the Dial-a-Cab driver was that the driver of the taxi in front had actually forgotten to take his MOT with and he was given a 'pass' and told to drop it in when passing.

However, Laury also told us of his gratitude to the NSL office manager who he said went "over and above his duty to help him get back on the road by getting him an appointment for the same day." But he wondered whether another driver who perhaps wasn't quite as pushy, might have lost several days work over it.

So *Call Sign* spoke to NSL Chief Executive, Mark Underwood, and asked him whether NSL were becoming overly fussy and taking us back to the days when cabs were failed for the most trivial of reasons, such as having an unauthorised sticker (AA or RAC etc) and where the old PCO would not allow you to remove them on the premises but would just fail the cab?

Mr Underwood told us: "I've had my guys check our records at Crayford against the vehicle module and drivers surname and your driver did present

his documents at 07:44, when it was discovered that his MOT certificate was blank and had not even been signed once. We then checked his insurance details and as you say, the font size was wrong. In an attempt to try and help Mr Bartlett, our team checked with TfL to see if they would accept the certificate, but they said no. Interestingly, we understand that the driver then went to rectify this and changed his insurance supplier saving himself £500 along the way!

With regard to offering drivers the chance to return, we do try and do this as much as we can, depending on the time of day and if we have enough free slots. Our records show that in this instance we did and Mr Bartlett returned at 14.22 with all the correct information at which point his taxi was passed."

We asked Mr Underwood whether this question of size was a major problem and in a broad Yorkshire accent he said that a quick sample check showed that this wasn't the first time they had seen the incorrect font used, but that it was by no means a major issue and they could only find a few instances where it had happened, but those appeared to be very random. He wondered whether owners were possibly printing a copy of the certificate at home and not realising that there was a stipulated size that TfL insisted on.

He ended by saying: "I'm pleased the matter has been brought to my attention by *Call Sign* because it gives your readers the opportunity to check their certificate before presenting the cab. Let me emphasise that we do not want to fail cabs and don't deliberately look for silly reasons to do so. But there are some occasions where our hands are tied and the insurance font is one of them."

As for Laury, he suffered a few hours inconvenience, but as Mark Underwood pointed out, he later found a new insurance company in **Quotax** and has apparently saved even more than Mark Underwood thought he had - almost a £1000 in premiums! And he told us that he now has a 'protected no claims' - which he never had before.

As Laury said after speaking to us, clouds do sometimes have that silver lining!

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

AGM REMINDER



All members should have received the *Notice of Annual General Meeting 2013* advising that the meeting will again be held at The HAC, Armoury House, City Road on Sunday 9th February 2014 at 11am.

The meeting this year will consider an agenda *excluding*

the election of officers, but *including* as usual, proposed Rule Changes and Propositions.

Any proposed Rule Changes and Propositions must have been received at Dial-a-Cab House on or before 09:00hrs on Thursday 5th December 2013 as per the Notice of Annual General Meeting 2013 letter.

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

Howard Pears
Company Secretary



THE HERTFORDSHIRE

Winter Pro Am Series

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

2014

Friday 17th January 2014

Friday 28th February 2014

Friday 28th March 2014

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

Each event will follow the below itinerary:

09.30 Coffee & bacon roll on arrival

10.30 Shot gun start

15.00 Two course meal

Team prizes and Individual cash prizes for Professionals

For team of 3 Amateurs visitors £135

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

(£25 for professional)

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

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

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

The biggest but still the best



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

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

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



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

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.

The WCHCD makes an occasional award for bravery, which can be presented at its yearly Liverymen's dinner. However, it is only when there is a genuine claimant that the award is given – and this year that certainly was the case when Dial-a-Cab's John Ward (R88) received the Company's Frederick Hitch Gallantry Award.

Readers of *Call Sign* will remember John's actions from our December 2012 issue where Her Honour Judge Patricia Lees said at Snaresbrook Crown Court that they almost certainly saved lives.

John had been on the A13 on his way home from work on 9 September 2010 at around 01.15 and driving steadily in the middle lane. Suddenly a BMW 640 coupe with the distinctive registration P1MP R 'undertook' John on the inside lane at high speed. It then turned into a BP fuel station and John continued his journey. Approaching Rainham Marshes, the BMW came out of nowhere – again very fast – and disappeared from John's sight. In court, the BMW speed was estimated at 155mph!

A little further on at the M25 junction, John saw the same BMW very badly damaged, obviously having been in collision with something. It had come to rest between the slow and middle lanes of the carriageway, the whole road was strewn with debris and there was a strong smell of petrol in the air.

John pulled his cab across the lanes at ninety degrees to the hard shoulder, put his hazard lights on and dialled 999. The BMW driver was at the passenger door helping the young girl passenger out. John looked around in the dark and spotted another car laying at a 45 degree angle to the road and facing up the banking. He saw a man slumped in the drivers' seat.

With fuel spilling out everywhere, John tried to force that car door open and to get the driver out. But the door had been crushed into the bodywork and would not give way. John wasn't to know but the driver had probably been killed in the accident.

John ran back to the traffic – still fast moving although thinning out due to the hour - and waved

DAC DRIVER GETS WCHCD BRAVERY AWARD

It's the Hitch for John after Call Sign passes over the story!



John Ward: Honoured but his only thought was for the dead driver's family..

down another cab and asked the driver if he would park his taxi next to John's so that between them they could try to block off the two nearside lanes. Traffic was still speeding past in the fast lane at 70 mph. A truck then stopped and John asked the driver to park sideways across the entire three lanes to block the road completely and help prevent further accidents or loss of life. The emergency services arrived and the BMW driver eventually ended up in court.

John told *Call Sign* at the time how amazed he had been at the lack of any apparent care

the BMW driver, 25-year old Shehzad Munir and his girlfriend showed as the other car driver, Sukhpreet Singh Chimber - a 30-year old father of three young children with a wife expecting their fourth child - lay immobile in the wreckage. Munir was later found guilty by jury of dangerous driving and jailed for seven years. He was also banned from driving for eight years.

Then earlier this year John was presented with a certificate of bravery from the High Sheriff of London at the United Kingdom Supreme Court in Parliament Square. The formal ceremony was witnessed by many dignitaries including the Chief of Police, several MPs and High Court Judges. John's award was one of just eight presented over the previous two years and his was the only one where his bravery had also involved saving lives.

John told *Call Sign* after the prestigious ceremony that while it was an honour, his only thought was for the family of Mr Chimber who had been left without a husband and father because of a young man in a sports car showing off to his girlfriend.

Following the court case, *Call Sign* passed over the issue that detailed John's bravery to the WCHCD for consideration and he was indeed honoured with the Frederick Hitch Gallantry Award. The bravery award is named after cab driver Fred Hitch, who on 22/23 January 1879 was one of just 150 soldiers who defended a tiny garrison against an estimated 4000 Zulu warriors at what became known as the Battle for Rorke's Drift. Fred was badly injured but survived and was later awarded the Victoria Cross by Queen Victoria.

LONDON TAXI WATCH



Sir Bernard: London cabbies are the best in the world!

At a meeting held outside London's City Hall on November 28, an initiative was launched by Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, which invited London taxi drivers to keep their eyes open and to assist the police by reporting any crimes they see or suspect were about to take place whilst out driving their taxis.

The London Taxi Watch initiative hopes taxi drivers can be persuaded to pass information to Crimestoppers anonymously and to alert the authorities of suspicious behaviour. Sir Bernard suggested that cab drivers could be in league with police officers when it came to ensuring that the streets of London were kept safe.

He said: "London's cabbies are the best in the world. With police officers, they are there

all hours, all weathers and all places. They can be our eyes and ears and help victims of crime."

Crimestoppers' London campaigns manager, Regan Hook, said: Taxi drivers could become everyday heroes by reporting crime. They may be aware of crime perpetrators, including those involved in vehicle-related crime or they may have information and intelligence about other serious crimes. They can help to keep London safe."

TFL WORK SURVEY

TfL are conducting a survey asking taxi drivers about when and where they work and take breaks etc as part of research they are doing into electric vehicles and charging points. The survey is at: <https://response.questback.com/energysavingtrust/x2z0li7nri/>

As part of the ongoing work to reduce harmful emissions in London and improve air quality, Transport for London have commissioned research to investigate the potential for using electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles as taxis (black cabs) in London. At present no electric or plug-in vehicles are available for use as London taxis, but it is possible that suitable vehicles may be available in the future.

It is important that we understand what infrastructure might be needed for such vehicles to be operationally and commercially viable.

To do this, we are asking taxi drivers to complete a short survey about their working patterns, working hours, areas worked and where breaks are taken.

As licensed London taxi drivers, your views on this matter are essential to the research and so TfL would be grateful if you could complete the survey. It should take around 15 minutes and all results are anonymous and confidential. The results will be used to help understand drivers' views on electric vehicles and potential locations for rapid charging points for electric taxis. Once you start the survey you can save it part way through and then return to it later.

Everyone who completes the survey will also be invited to enter a prize draw to win one of two £50 Amazon vouchers. The closing date for the survey is Monday 13 January 2014.

If you have any questions about it then please contact TfL on tph.research@tfl.gov.uk

CALL SIGN TESTS THE NV200



The December *Call Sign* saw Gary Cox (O46) road test the *Liquefied Petroleum Gas* update that is now available to any 15-year-old TX taxi and which will give it a further five years – always assuming it is in good condition (see the *November Call Sign* at www.dac-callsign.co.uk for more information).

This month it's the turn of the forthcoming Nissan NV200 for Gary to get behind the wheel of. It happened at Millbrook's track testing site in Milton Keynes...

"All two miles circumference of Millbrook's banked high speed circle with no holds barred! I did have a wry smile when going in the opposite direction to a Welsh Police / Heddu driver in his signed up car at perhaps just 15 or so mph over the national speed limit. Yes, I must have had confidence in the brakes! But the road was empty officer...!

Then there is the one mile straight 'get up and go' before slipping into 0.9 of a mile Belgian blocked circle route, via far more roundabouts and bends than the average Dial-a-Cab driver faces in any normal shift.

We now know that Nissan fancy their chances in the London cab market by the very fact that they let us pit their cab against a TX4



The NV200 out on test in London - the front was covered for the grand unveiling! and Mercedes Vito on the same track and on the same day. We also know that the new taxi will have a Nissan-sourced 1.6-litre petrol engine – although they say a diesel version will be available with an electric version on the cards within two years. Judging by the sound of the engine, I think I was given a diesel although they wouldn't confirm it. It was much noisier than a Vito and slightly more so than the TX4.

A master class Rudolph Nureyev turning circle that matches the Margo Fontaine spin on the TX4, is a feather in the NV200's cap and leaves you wondering why Mercedes can't (or won't) give us a 25 foot twirl too.

In the dry, the Nissan NV200 held up well when it came to gradients; mind you I would

love to have had the vehicle with five passengers and freight on board, in addition to taking a quiet look under the bonnet to confirm one or two things. But that was not to be – at least not on my own. But I think the engine could be a **Renault**.

We will only know if it's any good after that first year and driven by an airport-based driver or a doubled team. But full praise must go to Nissan for at least doing its research with the folks who are going to possibly purchase it in the near future. Sliding doors give it an easy, safe access to the five-passenger rear interior, while other highlights include a glass roof in the passenger compartment to give those on board an amazing view of the city.

It also has rear air-conditioning and even plug-in ports for charging smart-phones - and all as standard! It seems to add up to the most advanced and enjoyable London taxi yet.

But two words come to mind – proof and pudding. And of course, before you know if you are interested, it will have to be 'make your mind up time' and ok, I'll say it for you... How much, son?"

**Gary Cox
Call Sign Online**



London's newest, best lapdancing Club has just opened!

£20 per paying customer.

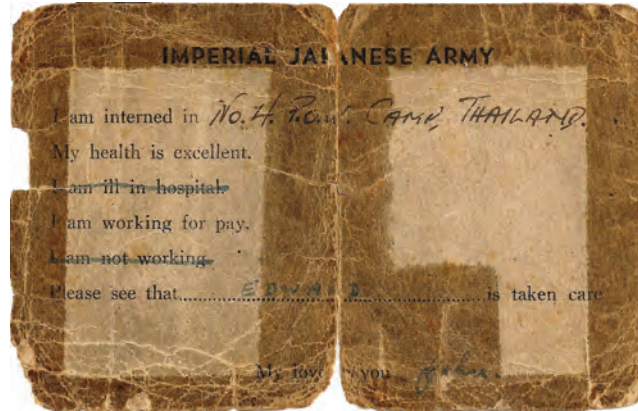
Open until 3am, Mondays to Fridays.

We NEVER disappoint drivers or customers. Try us first!

Four floors of riotous fun and gorgeous girls.

This series commemorates 2014's centennial beginning of WW1 hostilities and the heroics of those connected in some way to Dial-a-Cab. This month, the uncle of DaC driver Eddie Smith...

DAC WAR HEROES



Uncle John and the postcard he sent from the Japanese PoW camp

"No, he wasn't a *Dial-a-Cab* driver, but he was a war hero in our family and I have his fascinating story to tell," **Eddie Smith (Y56)** quietly announced to *Call Sign*.

"My **Uncle John** was taken as a prisoner of war by the Japanese during WW2 and sent to Number 4 POW Camp in Thailand where he spent three and a half years until the end of the War. He was forced to work on that infamous **Burma – Thailand Railway**, a project that cost the lives of some 6000 British servicemen as well as many thousands of Allied troops. Working conditions were atrocious and well documented," Eddie continued.

"My Dad, **Edward** and the rest of the family, were unaware he had been captured, having not heard from him for a long time and had to assume he had either been killed or was missing in action. **Eventually, a standard issue POW postcard did arrive to confirm Uncle John's fate, but more of that later because there is a story in that too.**

"Anyway, within the camp an American officer befriended Uncle John and somehow managed to get him assigned to kitchen duties, an act of kindness that almost certainly saved his life as it turned out. John's best friend was also in the camp and between them they made a pact that if one of them didn't make it home, the survivor would check up on the other's family. Unfortunately, Uncle John's friend was caught stealing medical supplies for sick POW's and the Japanese executed him by firing squad for the offence.

When Uncle John returned home, he checked out his friend's wife

to tell her what had happened, just as he promised his friend he would do. The upside of the story is that they became friends, before eventually marrying for fifty two years and having six children! As the storybooks tell, they lived happily ever after until Uncle John passed away in 1998."

And what about the postcard, Call Sign enquired?

"Oh yes," Eddie recalled, "the postcard finally arrived at my family home, accompanied by a letter explaining that the aircraft carrying the postcard had itself crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of County Galway and was seen to ditch by local fishermen who made their way speedily to the crash site. Some of the debris was saved by those fishermen, including my Uncle John's postcard, and taken back to their family homes to be dried out and pieced together as best they could before being forwarded on to the relevant families in the rest of the U.K.

My Mum recalls seeing the explanatory letter, which has been lost over time, but the postcard is saved as a family heirloom. And coincidentally, my Mum hails from County Galway and the name of 'Edward' is mentioned in the postcard and it refers to my Dad...!"

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LTFUC



Valentine Night



Ball



Come along and enjoy a wonderful evening in the City of London's most iconic venue, on the most romantic evening of the year – Valentine's Day at the Guildhall.

Enjoy food catered by the finest chefs and dance to Pulse, one of London's premier bands with all money raised going to help thousands of London's disadvantaged children. See ad on page 5 and the booking form is on page 31.

For more information Telephone Michael Son on 07710 388588.

AVAILABLE FOR RENT CLOSE TO DISNEY IN FLORIDA



2 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 4/5



4 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 8/9



6 Bedroom 5 Bathroom Pool home sleeps 12



Pool and conservation view at 6 bedroom home.

Three properties owned by UK Registered Charity Dial A Dream. Reg. 1011637

Your opportunity to rent one of these villas and at the same time making it possible for this charity to continue its work with children from all over the UK all of whom are suffering from a life limiting illness. All villas within minutes of the main Disney theme parks, golf courses and restaurants.

We can offer car hire and theme park tickets for you and your family at very competitive rates.

So, if you are considering a Florida based holiday in the near future then call us and you may be helping us to give a very sick child the will to say *"Let me live another day"*.

Prices from £56 per night through to £237 per night
(Prices are for the villa and not per person.)



www.dialadream.co.uk

Tel: 020 8530 5589

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

Kupkake's Korner



Happy New Year???

Years ago when things were good, Christmas trade was understood to be the best time of the year when account clients had no fear to spend on a party or corporate ball to have their cabs outside on call. But now the belts are tightly fast and good times now a thing of the past.

New Year's Eve was for the brave, when passengers spent money saved and forgot how to behave when out in London Town. Each year we see decline in trade we once owned, we once made, competition from every direction working hard with no protection.

Yet those with power to enforce Won't let the law take its course, they turn blind eyes to rickshaw touts with no regard for thieves about. Minicabs ranking outside venues Clipboard Johnnies stand in plain view. Now they want to use bus lanes is this really the END of the Game...?

One thing for sure is so clear Christmas is followed by New Year, unless of course it gets banned perhaps already something's planned by saying it's Politically Correct they cover themselves from neglect. But still we light up the West End I hope and pray it will never end...

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SPECIAL GOLF OFFER

At Ingrebourne Links, Rainham, Essex



Head PGA Pro Nick Moncur

Ingrebourne Links is a family golf complex in Rainham, Essex. This exciting new project is set on 350 acres of land and currently includes a superb 30 bay driving range and 9 hole 'mini links' par 3 golf course.

And we have a special offer for taxi drivers...

There are also 27 full championship holes with a major clubhouse in construction and we have the best practice facility and par 3 course in Essex! Our 30 bay driving range is fully covered and floodlit for lessons and practice all year round. There is also a chipping green and a putting green for you to get the most from your practice.

Ingrebourne Links also boasts a fully fitted coaching studio equipped with the latest technology for you to experience a premier service from tuition and/or club fitting, run by our Head PGA Professional, Nick Moncur along with our other PGA Pros Glen Brown and Darren Turner.

Our superb 9 hole par 3 course is a true links design by PGA Master Professional Alan Walker. The 'mini links' course is also the venue for the PGA of England East Par 3 Championship. There are rolling hills, pot bunkers, heather, gorse and small USPGA spec greens, similar to the famous postage stamp 8th hole at Royal Troon.

Just like the driving range, it has full irrigation, keeping it in top condition and also has excellent drainage making it playable all year round. It boasts spectacular views over the Essex countryside and the City of London, with the feel that you are by the coast on a genuine links.

This course can suit everyone. It's a great place to start your golf and for families to enjoy a sporting activity together, as well as test a low handicapper or Professional.

Open to the public, there is something for everyone at Ingrebourne Links. More info at:

New Road, Rainham, Essex, RM13 9FL, 01708 552054 or www.ingrebournelinks.com

WE ARE OFFERING LICENCED BLACK CAB DRIVERS 3 FOR 2 ON INDIVIDUAL LESSONS AND A MONDAY SPECIAL ON OUR GOLF COURSE – AN ALL DAY TICKET FOR JUST £5.00!



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10% discount for DaC drivers and staff

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DaC PCNs – and how to avoid them...

From DaC's parking expert, John Vigus

Box junctions

I have received several enquiries from drivers who have received PCNs for stopping in a box junction. There are several infamous box junctions in London that catch drivers out when they have a lapse in concentration or if they are not clear on what constitutes a contravention of the yellow box regulations.

Entering and stopping in a box junction when prohibited is an offence, which carries a fine and three penalty points on your licence if you are stopped and cautioned by the police.

There will probably come a time when the police start to enforce box junction regulations via the Magistrates Courts, as they are currently doing with traffic light cycle boxes.

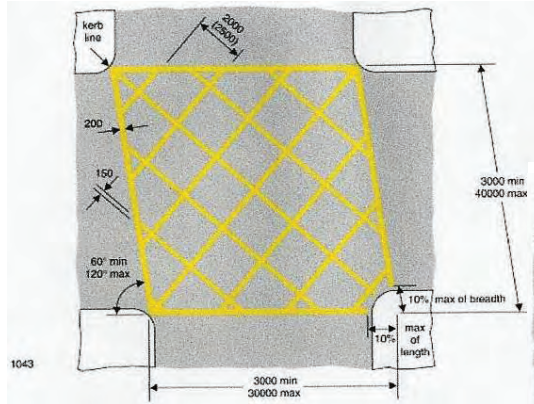
This is the regulation:

Sub paragraph (1) The road markings shown in diagrams 1043 and 1044 shall each convey the prohibition that no person shall cause a vehicle to enter the box junction so that the vehicle has to stop within the box junction due to the presence of stationary vehicles.

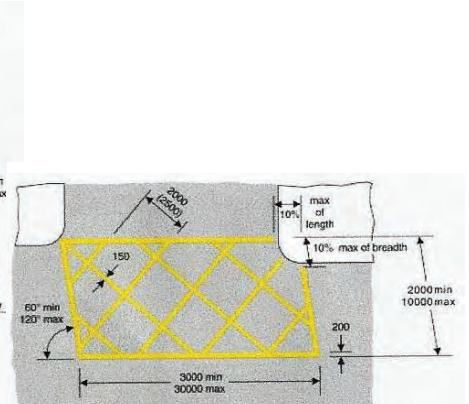
(2) The prohibition in sub-paragraph (1) does not apply to any person—

(a) who causes a vehicle to enter the box junction (other than a box junction at a roundabout) for the purpose of turning right; and

(b) stops it within the box junction for so long as it is prevented from completing the right turn by oncoming vehicles or other vehicles which are stationary whilst waiting to complete a right turn.



Crossroads box



T-junction box

Bagleys Lane/New Kings Road box junction:

This box has been extended across both carriageways to prevent the junction from becoming blocked and causing traffic jams along New Kings Road. If you are turning right out of Bagleys Lane, you must ensure BEFORE entering the box junction that there is sufficient space to accommodate your vehicle beyond the yellow box.

Berkeley Street/Piccadilly (Ritz Hotel) box junction:

If you are turning LEFT into Piccadilly, you must again ensure that your vehicle can clear the box junction BEFORE you enter the yellow box. This junction is unusual in as far as there is a choice of the third lane leaving left turning motorists stranded in the box and thus receiving a PCN for that contravention.

What should you do?

Because of the numbers of cameras used to capture these and many other contraventions, you must approach these box junctions with caution and leave sufficient space between yourself and the vehicle in front of you so that BEFORE you enter the yellow box, you can see clearly whether or not there is sufficient space beyond the junction to accommodate your vehicle. If you are in any doubt, then you should not enter the box and only proceed when you can clear the yellow box.

Always bear in mind that this contravention will cost you £65. The impatient motorist behind you pays nothing...

John Vigus
DaC PCN dept

PM visits Geely in Shanghai

Prime Minister **David Cameron** must have briefly thought he was back in London when paying a visit to the **Geely** factory in Shanghai during his China tour. Mr Cameron was shown around by Geely Chairman **Li Shufu** and also by **London Taxi Company** Chairman **Daniel Li**.

Geely, China's biggest vehicle manufacturer which also now owns **Manganese Bronze** as well as **Volvo**, has announced an £80 million investment into research and production of the new hybrid **TX5** model, which is expected to create 500 new jobs at the Coventry facility and quadruple the current number of workers there from 170 to 650. The hybrid taxi is expected to be the forerunner of an electric taxi – possibly within five years.

Standing alongside Li Shufu, Mr Cameron said: **"Black cabs are synonymous with London. Getting one in Shanghai today highlights how the links between the UK and China can bring rewards for both - Chinese investment helping British businesses to succeed and grow."**



Call Sign

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With the world still mourning the death of Nelson Mandela, Call Sign's Editor writes of...

APARTHEID WITHOUT MANDELA

I know that there is something of a danger of overkill regarding those writing of the death in early December of **Nelson Mandela**, South Africa's first black President following the end of the Republic's years of racial segregation (**Apartheid**).

Having spent a few months in **Johannesburg** in 1976, at a time when Mandela was in the middle of his imprisonment by the ruling **National Party**, I believe I saw the Apartheid system at its worst. I don't want to upset **Dial-a-Cab** drivers who don't fall under the category we describe as white, but I feel that I need to purge myself of some of the things I saw and heard at the time and Nelson Mandela's death seems to be a perfect time.

I was there visiting friends who said they were against the system, but who like most of those that emigrated there were enjoying the benefits of it – ie using cheap black labour. My friends treated their maid as well as they were allowed to. They paid her the going rate – which was akin to a 10-year old UK child's weekly spending money at the time - but at least gave her unlimited – albeit unofficial – access to their freezer so that she would always have food to take home to her husband.

What day is it?

But to really witness Apartheid, you had to go into the City centre and attempt simple things such as going to the post office. It was there that I had my first glimpse when trying to take a 16mm film outside the building. I was stopped from doing so by a hefty looking white man in khaki when attempting to film the sign that said **Blankes (whites) only**. I didn't argue but still have a four second silent shot of an innocuous sign – but one that perfectly described a country's philosophy. Even public conveniences were signed and segregated...

Several days later, I went to the **Brook Theatre** to see the brilliant African tribal musical, **Ipi Tombe**. We may be used to looking at a theatre guide in London to see what's on, but I was using this theatre guide to see what days whites were allowed to go. Of the six days, whites had four, Coloureds (mixed race) had one, as did Orientals (Chinese). Blacks (Bantu) had zero nights – even though they were the stars of the show! I asked the guy I was sitting next to why there was a Japanese family sitting in our row when it wasn't Oriental night? I couldn't really believe I was asking the question, but it slipped out as I looked around for any men in khaki.

I have often wondered whether that Japanese family knew the answer to my question, because they surely would have felt humiliation had they done so. Whilst Chinese had an Oriental classification, Japanese people were classed as 'honorary whites'. That meant they could do almost anything a white (or European) could do... but not quite everything. A Japanese person was not allowed to marry a white person. Some honour...

Speaking of the Brook Theatre; as we left, sitting on the floor outside was an elderly black beggar with long knotted hair. I have no idea how he got there because there was no sign of any supports – something he would have needed as he had no legs. Most people ignored him, but some brave souls put a few cents into his tin cup. A few seconds later I realised why most had just walked past him – a Jeep with four men in khaki pulled up. Two of them got out – one pushing people away while the second dragged the trunk of the beggar across the pavement by his long hair and then with the help of the other two, picked him up and just threw him into the back of the unmarked vehicle.

Again I questioned why that had happened? The old man was no danger to anyone. These men in khaki were the police and no begging was allowed. So why were they so rough? Apparently it was only me (and probably the few others that put money into his cup) who considered the treatment to have been rough. It was just another day in Jo'burg...

During my first month, I often thought about Apartheid although I never understood it. While blacks had their own buses (and taxis) and couldn't go to many white buildings, they flooded out the stores where shopping was mixed. Stores such as **Pick 'n Pay** earned far more from black customers than they did from white, yet these same people couldn't buy stamps in the post office. It was senseless.

I was there as a tourist and it's surprising how you can look the other



Even toilets were segregated

way after a while because you just accept things as they are. I have to admit I was no different and into my second month, just accepted that there was nothing I could do. But I still couldn't wait to return to the UK.

Let us into the World Cup...

One of the most astonishing examples of Apartheid came from the **Rand Daily Mail** – a newspaper that claimed to be

anti-Apartheid and supported South African sport in a big way. The 1978 football World Cup was two years away and the Republic were clamouring to be allowed to enter a team. The world still remembered back in 1968 when England cricketer, South African born **Basil D'Oliveira**, scored 158 runs for England against Australia and seemed certain to be picked by the MCC for the forthcoming tour of South Africa. But D'Oliveira would have been classified as coloured in RSA and rumours were that he would not be allowed into the stadiums, let alone play. Basil had already been offered a large bribe by a South African Tobacco businessman to "accidentally" injure himself and if selected to then make himself unavailable for the tour. But he refused and the MCC, to their eternal shame, refused to select him for the team. There was uproar around the world, but the MCC said they had selected the team "purely on merit." No one believed them. But then a player dropped out through injury and the MCC knew that there could only be one replacement and had no choice but to select Basil D'Oliveira.

The following day, South African Prime Minister **John Vorster** declared that it wasn't an MCC team but the team of the anti-apartheid movement. The tour was cancelled and until Mandela's release, South Africa lost all international sport. But in 1976 and while I was still there, an **Argentinian** football team agreed to play a match at Soweto's Rand stadium, provided it was against a team not consisting purely of white players. The SA government agreed and the RSA FA picked a mixed team. Some of the vociferously right-winged Apartheid supporters, mainly Afrikaans, were up in arms but the decision had been made and according to the **Rand Daily Mail**, this meant they had to be allowed to enter the next World Cup, which coincidentally was to be held in Argentina.

As a staunch **Spurs** fan who missed very few games home or away back then, I felt pleased that the sport I loved so much was helping to break down the walls of Apartheid. But I must have been stupid to have believed it! Spurs had no black players until **Garth Crooks** joined from Stoke in 1980 and became an all-time favourite at the Lane – especially when he linked up so well with **Steve Archibald**. Before Crooks, you'd have to go back to 1910 when a little known player called **Walter Tull** played. But the opportunity was at least there – albeit with something more of a battle to be noticed back then.

So RSA picked a mixed team, although ability never came into it. They selected representatives of all the classes, but it became obvious that the only players in the team with real talent were the black ones and they were good enough to defeat the Argentinians – captained by the brilliant **Antonio Rattin** – with the black star, hero worshipped by the soccer mad fans in Soweto, **Jomo Sono**, scoring four of the goals in a 5 – 0 victory. So what was wrong with that? Well, the spectators were still segregated – not as opposing supporters, but according to their colour. The RSA government were not prepared to allow the races to mix and regardless of the **Rand Daily Mail** editorials, those with commonsense could see the game did nothing to help the Apartheid problem. It wasn't until the year after Mandela's release that South Africa re-entered the international sporting arena playing a cricket series against India.

Soon after the match and to my eternal shame, I joined a coach tour of Soweto. I thought it would encompass the soccer stadium, but it was really a tourist coach to see how blacks – and not all of them poor - lived in tin huts they'd been banished to. They weren't allowed to buy houses in white areas.

Far worse things must have happened under the Apartheid banner than I ever saw in those few months, but I hope these small examples show why Nelson Mandela's release from prison was treated as the return of a God and why his death has been mourned so greatly around the world...

The problem with Albert was a simple one – he was skint. Of course, as a taxi driver cash was coming in at a decent rate, but unfortunately it was also exiting at the speed of bullets. The cause of this disparity was his love of gambling on horses.

He left the betting shop and sat in his cab with a face resembling a man who had inadvertently had the Blackpool illuminations added to his electricity bill. He owed money everywhere and his overhaul was due and on top of that, the kipper season was about to start. What he needed was a loan but there was as much chance of that as a speed camera at Piccadilly Circus!

Albert started the cab and a little while later a well-dressed man who looked familiar, waved him down and asked for Wapping.

“Well, well,” said Albert, “it’s Slip Dixon – long time, no see – where’ve you been?”

“Usual, mate,” said his fare, “the *Scrubs* this time.” However, despite his residence at one of Her Majesty’s hotels, it was obvious that Slip was doing a lot better than Albert. As well as a very smart white suit, he was wearing a nice bit of bling. Slip was a burglar and racing man and whenever they met at the races, he was invariably flush at the start and skint at the end.

“You must have backed a few winners,” said Albert trying to discover a reason for the prosperity?

“No, not really,” said Slip, “but I met this old biddy from Southend. She’s a do-gooder, a widow. The prison gave me her address. She helps ex-cons when they come out and lent me two grand to help me reform.”

“She lent you two grand,” repeated Albert, “that’s unbelievable! I could do with a loan like that myself.”

Slip told him to pop down and see her and to tell her he was an ex-con. He said that she wouldn’t ask for any details but that two grand was her limit and you were supposed to pay her back each month.

Albert said he assumed you had to pay interest, but at that point Slip gave a roar of laughter.

“Course there’s no interest and as for my repayments, there’s more chance of a steamroller winning a grand prix.”

Albert knew little about motor racing but enough to know this was very unlikely and asked where her security was?

“She hasn’t got any,” replied Slip, “well, apart from this little Japanese fellow she calls her minder. I tell you, if he was in a fight with Snow White, I’d back Snow White!”

Slip got out at Wapping Station, pulled out a swollen wallet and gave Albert a card and an extra tenner on top of the fare. “Do yourself a favour,” he said as he left, “go and see her.”

The next day, Albert did exactly that and found himself outside a Georgian terraced house with a heavy knocker. Its dull thud produced a tiny oriental figure in a butler’s suit. Albert said he had come to see Mrs Hobart.

A little protection?



“Come,” was all the little man said. But Albert was relaxed – the undersized dwarf was certainly nothing to worry about and in stark contrast to the large over-dressed woman who approached him.

“And what can I do for you,” she asked? Albert explained that he’d just come out of the *Scrubs* and that Slip had recommended he come to see her for some financial help. She then spent 10 minutes prattling on that kindness was the best rehabilitation for criminals and how privileged she was to be able to help. Looking round, Albert could see she had a few bob.

“Well,” he said, “if you can let me have the money, I’ll be off - £2000 would be great.”

The old lady nodded towards the butler who must have been standing behind a table leg, because he suddenly appeared and gave Albert a plastic envelope containing £50 notes.

“However,” said the widow, “I’m not a charity so it’s a loan and not a gift. There’s a note inside giving you instructions about the monthly repayments. Danyo here is very strict in this regard, you see honour is very important to him and he is devoted to me.”

Albert thanked her and turned to leave. As Danyo opened the door, Albert ruffled his sleek black hair. “Goodbye, little fellow,” he said with a smile!

The next moment, Albert was circling the air like an ignited Catherine Wheel before landing flat on his back. At first, he thought the Japanese midget had done it, but when he looked up the old lady was looking down at him. “You really must be careful; you just tripped on the step.”

Despite the fall and slightly puzzled about how it happened, Albert knew he was himself again when he wondered if he could make

the betting shop for the last race. Unfortunately, he did but only to see his selection finish last. He was soon making inroads into the widow’s cash. He paid for his overhaul and one or two bills until the only note left in the envelope was the one regarding repayments. This he cheerfully ignored until one evening there was a knock at his door and Danyo was standing there.

“Hello, Tiger,” smiled Albert.

“Ah, you remember me,” said an unsmiling Danyo, “I have note for you.” It read:

Dear Sir, you have broken the terms of the loan. The follow-up to default is a visit by my representative, Danyo. I strongly advise that you pay him the arrears of £200 immediately.

It was signed Mrs Hobart. Albert screwed up the note and tossed it on the floor.

“You don’t pay,” asked Danyo?

“Don’t have it,” replied Albert, reckoning the worst the dehydrated dwarf could do to him was to pummel his kneecaps.

“That bad for you,” were the last words Albert heard before darkness descended upon him. The paramedics reported that it was the worst case they’d seen since a farmer walked into a threshing machine. When Albert came round, his body was bound by either plaster or bandage and supported by slings and pulleys. The vision of the pocket psychopath returned and he called out:

“Help, I need to borrow £200 urgently. Is anyone listening?”

The person in the next bed was also heavily bandaged, but Slip Dixon managed to call back through swollen lips.

“Hello Albert, I’ve sort of been expecting you...”

LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

Red Route Deaths...

The pros and cons of writing a monthly column in today's modern world are that sometimes what you write can become outdated by the time the magazine is published. At other times, the chance of reflection before writing can hopefully give a chance of a more detailed piece.

Now into my third year of writing, the Editor has not once cut a story or report, just gives me guidance if I ask for it.

So, after a short series of articles on cycling and safety measures – and as a cyclist myself - I confirmed with him my passion to do another one as a follow-up to the recent tragic cycling deaths in London. My concern in most of these tragedies is where there has been much finger-pointing and knee-jerk reactions to solve an ongoing and serious problem, with all types of road user groups blaming each other.

It is blatantly obvious that there are bad practices carried out by lorries, buses, cars, vans and yes, taxi drivers, just as much as there are poor practices by cyclists. However and unfortunately, it's the latter group that normally come off worst as they, obviously, are the most vulnerable.

Having looked at the recent bike deaths, although not having access to full forensic details of each accident, I can only draw my own opinions and conclusions as to the possible causes, using my experience of cycling and general motoring, which includes past deliveries in large vehicles and obviously now, the thousands of miles I carry out when

With Tom Quigley (Y33)



driving a London taxi.

So is it a coincidence that the majority of these accidents happened on a red route such as Bromley-by-Bow, Millbank Southampton Row, Aldgate and Camberwell Road. And then was it another coincidence that they all occurred at a junction where the Route gives little time and space for a vehicle to turn left or right?

This drew my attention to the amount of distance and priority at crucial points such as traffic lights, where bus lanes go virtually up to the crossing, only allowing vehicles - and especially HGVs - a late turn from an outside lane to crossover a Bus Lane, giving them literally no chance of seeing a cyclist. They also have the added pressure that if they cross too early, they risk a PCN for encroaching.

To highlight this point, I'd like to point out one particular junction where as of yet there have been no serious occurrences involving cyclists that I know of, however, I have witnessed plenty of close calls. Outside St

Pancras Station going east, the Bus Lane runs right up to the traffic lights with bus stops immediately on the junction. This causes lots of problems for we taxi drivers when turning left into Pancras Road to set down at Eurostar, whereas cyclists may want to go straight on.

So imagine the stress and danger it puts on an HGV vehicle driver. The fact it is a railway station with shops, services and of course the need for engineering equipment involved in the running of the station, means that HGVs often have to use it. As an aside note, this is what causes the traffic to back up all the way along Euston Road.

There are many similar and dangerous junctions on London's red routes where I feel that TfL and the Mayor, who are responsible for the routes, need to have a rethink and come up with far better designed layouts. These would involve freeing up longer lengths of road for HGVs so they can get into the correct lane without facing the possibility of a money grabbing PCN whilst trying to make a safe turn. This will make them safer for all users. We must do something...

Whilst on the subject of cycling, why not try and get along to the Cycling show at Excel on 13th – 16th February, or at least service the rank. See the ad below. At least my wife now knows what her Valentine's treat will be this year!

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

THANKS DAC!



Adrian wanted to thank the driver in print

Dial-a-Cab account client Adrian Martin was thrilled with his present. It was just a wallet to keep his credit cards in, but it had been given to him as a birthday present by his 7-year old son Jack and as such, it meant a lot to him. He was heartbroken when he lost it.

He hoped that perhaps he'd left it in the DaC taxi he had just taken from Berkeley Square to Waltham Cross, because he had used the Charge Card that

he kept in it. But he wasn't sure.

In the meantime, the driver was on his way home to Romford after dropping Adrian off, unaware that the wallet was in a dark corner of his cab.

"I was really upset," Adrian told *Call Sign*, "because Jack had given me the wallet. I could have just cancelled the cards so that wasn't the real concern. But the sentiment was irreplaceable and Jack would probably have been just as upset as me!"

Adrian did have one advantage over the average account customer. His partner for the past 24 years is

Brian Rice's PA, Jacqui Chart and she managed to get the driver's mobile number to see whether he had the wallet. And he did!

The driver was John Goate (T12. He just turned around, drove back to Waltham Cross and returned the wallet to a relieved Adrian.

"I tried to give him some extra money, but he outrightly refused to accept it. You hear so much bad stories about cab drivers so I just wanted to say thank you so much to the driver and to make sure everyone knew about it..."

Triathlon Plus Show at ExCel The London Bike Show!

The London Bike Show will take place from 13 - 16 February at ExCel London.



The London Bike Show is the UK's largest cycling exhibition and in 2013 attracted over 38,000 visitors. Whether road cycling, mountain biking, BMX, cycle cross, a family cycle at the weekend or commuting to work is your thing – you'll find plenty to interest you and to have a great day out. There will be celebrities appearing, including Sir Chris Hoy.

More details/book at www.thelondonbikeshow.co.uk or ExCel.



DaC's IT Network Administrator, Jon Winterburn looks at...
SAFETY GADGETS

It's that time again when more accidents occur than at any other time of the year. With that in mind, I decided to find out what the latest safety gadgets are. Having researched dozens, the following three were what I consider to be the best...

Garmin HUD (Head-Up Display)

Garmin, the makers of satellite navigation systems for many years, have come up with an excellent product for drivers. SatNav devices are useful, but they do pose a danger. To check the SatNav visually, a driver has to take their eyes off the road. That second or so can be the difference between life and death. So Garmin came up with this nifty device which projects the SatNav screen onto your windscreen and into your field of vision. Now you can drive and check your SatNav without ever taking your eyes off the road. It also has Bluetooth connectivity, so you can connect it to your smartphone. The Garmin HUD retails for £129.99 and you can read more about it at:

buy.garmin.com/en-GB/GB/mobile/mobileaccessories/hud-head-up-display-/prod134348.html

Nest Protect Smoke Alarm

We all know how irritating it can be when you are rudely awoken at 4am by the smoke alarm chirping every 60 seconds to tell you the battery has died. What makes this even more annoying is that you know you changed the battery only last month! Apparently batteries lose a percentage of their juice temporarily when they are cold. Smoke alarms these days are very sensitive, so even though there is plenty of juice still in the battery, if it drops below a



The Garmin HUD projects the SatNav onto the windscreen

certain level, the alarm thinks it is dying.

Of course you should never remove the battery. Instead, have a look at Nest Protect – a new type of smoke and CO2 alarm that's coming to the UK soon. The blurb says:

"Before turning on a loud, howling alarm, Nest Protect gives you an early warning we call 'Heads-Up'. Nest Protect lights up yellow and speaks with a human voice. It tells you where smoke is or when carbon monoxide levels are rising. This gives you an earlier warning if there's an emergency, or allows you to silence Nest Protect if it's just a nuisance alarm like an overly enthusiastic toaster. People get so frustrated with low-battery chirps in the middle of the night; they take out the battery and don't replace it. Nest Protect will notify you long before its batteries get that low so you can replace them. And then get a good night's sleep." I like the sound of that! More info at: nest.com/uk/smoke-co-alarm

Tile: The world's largest lost and found

Tile is a revolutionary new GPS-trackable plastic tag that will help you keep track of your

possessions. It uses a first-of-its-kind community-oriented technology generated through its app, which allows you to find your items at distances greater than 100 feet (the typical connectivity range of Bluetooth). This means that if your bag or bike has been stolen, it will be traceable through other users' Tile apps, notifying you to its whereabouts via yours. Tiles are now available for pre-order (shipping in Spring 2014). They're a bit pricey at \$19.95 each plus shipping from the USA, but no doubt they'll come down in price when they become more readily available. More info on the tags at: www.thetileapp.com

A happy new year from all at the DaC IT department...

Jon Winterburn
 DaC Network Administrator

Samuel at Spurs!

Just one year on from the sad death of his dad **Reed**, the **Call Sign** Editor's grandson, **Samuel Fisher**, shows that he has carried on his father's love of football.

Reed, who was the Sunday dispatcher at **Dial-a-Cab** for 23 years as well as having been goal-keeper for the **Ford Motor Company's** soccer team, was a staunch **West Ham** fan, but Samuel has followed his granddad's life-long love of **Tottenham Hotspur** and had this photo taken just before a recent match...



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In early November, Melvyn Harvey (E87) decided to have a moan at Andrew Gilligan, Cycling Commissioner for London, who together with TfL and Mayor Johnson's office had sent out door stickers warning passengers about to exit taxis to watch out for passing cyclists. As Melvyn's letter was sent out before the recent successful use of extra cyclist police and the LTDA's excellent video of cyclists disregarding red stop lights, Call Sign thought Melvyn's exchange was worth passing on to its readers as it may well have had an effect on the Mayor's office...

From Melvyn Harvey

Dear Mr Johnson/Mr Gilligan,

Thank you for yet another sticker to put in our windows! I'm sure my passengers will take heed. But my problem is the lack of enforcement of the majority of cyclists who show total disregard to the *Highway Code*. I could take you to traffic lights, zebra crossings and no entry streets all over London and show you what your elite corp of cabbies see every day - cyclists who think they can do whatever they like and God help anyone who remonstrates with them!

They take their life in their hands when jumping red lights, with the major problem now being that even when we are indicating to turn left at traffic lights and pull away, the cyclists still fly up on the inside to go straight ahead. Absolute madness on their part, yet we get a mouthful of abuse if we don't brake in time - perhaps we could have a sticker for this to put on our cabs please?

Whilst recently sitting at Oxford Circus traffic lights, a cyclist smashed into the boot of my taxi, denting and scratching it. As he drove off through the red light, he told me to claim off my insurance (er, I have a £350 excess)! Until you make it compulsory to have cycles registered and insured, things will not change. Looking forward to your response...

Melvyn Harvey (badge no. *****)

From Andrew Gilligan

Dear Mr Harvey,

Thank you for your email to the Mayor. He has asked me to reply.

I agree with you that we need to promote the message that the *Highway Code* must be adhered to by all road users and we are strongly in favour of promoting the ethos of responsible cycling and mutual respect between cyclists and other road users.

One of our biggest aims is to broaden the range of people cycling, with more older people and women to reduce the testosterone levels of London cyclists.

The Mayor's Vision for *Cycling in London* includes several measures to tackle anti-social behaviour by cyclists. We are increasing enforcement, targeting particular hotspots and we are also giving cyclists better places to cycle on the roads so they are less likely to ride on the pavement. In addition, we will expand the Met Police's Cycle Task Force by more than a quarter from 39 to 50 officers. Cyclists can be fined up to £2,500 for dangerous cycling and up to £1,000 for careless cycling.

On your suggestions about introducing a requirement that all cyclists have insurance and are registered, these are issues on which

DaC's Melvyn v the Mayor's office...



Melvyn Harvey and Andrew Gilligan

the Government would have to legislate as it is not within the power of the Mayor or Transport for London. Some cycling groups do offer insurance to their members, so a growing number of cyclists in London are insured.

Please let me know if there are any other particular problem places that we should be targeting.

Andrew Gilligan

Cycling Commissioner for London

From Melvyn Harvey

Dear Mr Gilligan

Thank you for replying to my email on behalf of the Mayor of London, but in the words of tennis player, John McEnroe: You Cannot Be Serious! Testosterone! The reason motorised vehicles have number plates is for recognition and accountability, otherwise it would be like the old wild west - which is exactly what it is happening with cyclists. When you get away with breaking the law on a daily basis, it then becomes the norm. Women and older people are just as bad. Stand at the junction of Clerkenwell Road and Proctor Street west-bound and see almost every cyclist go straight through the buses only lane.

London is a thriving, bustling metropolis, not a theme park. Just slapping down blue paint to make racetracks (because that is

what they are becoming) and putting painted bikes on the road at one-way streets in the opposite direction, is a recipe for disaster. One example (of many) is at Portsoken Street E1 (one-way from Mansell Street). There is only just room for one vehicle alongside the parked cars, yet you see fit to have cyclists squeeze through in the opposite direction. Add *de rigueur* of headphones and it's no wonder cyclists are not aware of their surroundings!

On the topic of insurance and fines, could you please tell me the approximate number or percentage of cyclists insured and how many have been fined £2,500 for dangerous cycling or £1,000 for careless cycling? And when after scratching your vehicle - or as in my case denting the boot and being told they have no identification, insurance, money and a policeman is not around, what can I do?

Mr Gilligan, you and the Mayor should be pushing Government to legislate for the introduction of registration as a priority or the unfortunate increase in cyclist's deaths will only escalate.

Melvyn Harvey, licenced London taxi driver

As of publication, there has been no further response from Mr Gilligan...

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

Brethren of the Whip



2014 marks the 200th anniversary of the introduction of the ticket system for London's hackney coaches. The idea was simple enough; in order to prevent the frequent overcharging by hackney coach drivers,

Parliament decreed that every driver should carry a ticket - a form of receipt that would be issued to every passenger.

Tickets were issued in multiples of one shilling and 1s 6d (5p and 7½p respectively) and a combination of tickets could be issued to the amount of the fare. The ticket also had the proprietor's name and address as well as the name of the driver. This was a quarter of a century before the introduction of badges and represents the first ever registering of drivers. The tickets also bore an imprint of the Crown, thus allowing anyone producing forgeries to be prosecuted for treason.

Throughout July 1814, newspapers in London were extolling to their readers the virtues of the recent *Hackney Coach Act* and how it would work in favour of the fare-paying, and much abused, public. A passenger could demand to be given a ticket or tickets and would not have to pay until such a ticket was forthcoming. If there was an overcharge or abuse, the passenger had only to take the ticket to the Hackney Coach Office or a police court and issue a summons against the driver.

The drivers themselves were well aware of the Act and were about to drive the proverbial hackney coach and horse right through it...

The ticket system became a legal requirement on Wednesday August 31st 1814. On that day, Mr Hatcham of the White Horse Inn, Piccadilly, took hackney coach number 878 from Conduit Street to Charles Street (given in the newspapers of the time as being near to Cavendish Square, but may actually have been the eastern end of the present day George Street).

The un-named 878 coachman charged Hatchet one shilling - the correct fare - and Hatchet responded by asking for a ticket. The driver politely informed Hatchet that the Act was found to be flawed (which it was) and the issue of tickets had been cancelled (which was untrue)! Hatchet stood his ground. No ticket, no payment. The polite *jarvey* then let fly a torrent of abuse at Hatchet, who stood his ground and refused to pay unless a ticket was issued. The driver, realising that he was not going to get paid, drove off empty handed. Hatchet no doubt walked away with a



The day in 1814 that cabs were first registered

one or more of the tickets."

What the drivers had noticed and which had got past all the law makers, judges and politicians who framed the Act, was that by not giving a ticket, the driver basically had immunity from prosecution for any offence.

The Morning Post described the Act as "one of the most bungling pieces of work that ever came out of Parliament" whilst *The Examiner* stated: "In the matter of Hatchett against one of the Knights of the Whip, it appears that the descendants of Jehu knew the extent of the new Hackney Coach Act better than the man that framed it, and had, I find, before it took effect, determined to resist it altogether."

The drivers began insisting before their passengers entered the coach that they would only be carried if they agreed not to ask for a ticket; many passengers were forced to agree to the driver's terms.

The magistrates hit back by charging drivers under previous hackney coach acts for abusive behaviour and assault. The ticket system was all but withdrawn after only a few months, though it would rise again in one form or another in the future...

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

smile on his face; after all, he'd had a free ride because of the new Act.

But Hatchet was not quite finished with the driver of 878.

The following day he was at the police court in order to bring charges against the driver under the new Act. He also made sure the press were there to report on the proceedings as he very much had a vested interest in its outcome - it later transpired that it had been Hatchet that had been responsible for the introduction of the ticket system in the first place! He had gone out on the first day of the Act to ensnare a driver and thus reap the publicity of his actions. But he was about to be hoisted very high on his own petard.

The four magistrates looked at the case, then at the Act and informed Hatchet that whilst he was right not to pay as no ticket was produced, clause 34 of the Act stated:

"Any complaint for exaction [overcharging] or misbehaviour or for any other offence whatsoever shall [require]

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Mike Son – Accidental hero!

Quite by accident, *Call Sign* recently came across a local Essex newspaper from 1981. While it's always interesting to see how things have changed, one item shocked us because we assumed that had it been true, we would have heard about it by now!

It was interesting to read survey results on the shocking increase in average Southend house prices – jumping up to almost £25,000. And you could afford to go around to look at houses should you have been interested, with a gallon of petrol retailing at just over £1.32 or around 29p a litre!

But it was an article headed *Sea rescue by handy cabbie* that grabbed our attention. Could that be the same Michael Son as the Dial-a-Cab Board Member? We knew that he lived in Westcliff, but we had never looked on him as some kind of shy hero. So we asked Mike and while he confirmed the article, he typically tried to play it down. This was the article...

SEA RESCUE BY HANDY CABBIE

A cabbie paddled himself to a heroic rescue on the seafront of Chalkwell this week. A holiday maker saw a woman in trouble and waved to people on the beach for help as he thought she was being swept out to sea by the ebbing tide.

Mr Michael Son paddled his children's inflatable dinghy by hand to reach the stranded woman. When reaching the woman, who was in a state of panic, Michael threw her a lifeline and told her to



*calm down and tie the rope around her waist. Michael told her to hold on as he then paddled back to shore. They eventually made it back to the shore and a spokesman for the Southend Coastguard told *The Echo* that the woman could have been in serious trouble but for Mr Son.*

When they were safely back on the beach, the woman became reunited with her husband.

The Helicopter from Manston and the lifeboat were called, but neither were needed and returned to their bases.

So we asked Mike about the rescue and why it wasn't common knowledge?

"What actually happened," said Mike, "was that I was having a snooze on the deckchair, while our children were enjoying the great weather. I was

awakened by a man screaming that his wife was drowning. He noticed I had a children's dinghy and needed my help. I can't say I leapt into action as I couldn't find my spectacles!

However, I was urged on by the man who said that if we both used the dinghy, we could reach his wife. The plan was that he would push the dinghy and then jump in and I would continue paddling. However, within just a few minutes the other guy was nowhere to be seen.

So there I was paddling away, with everything a blur because I hadn't found the glasses and didn't have time to look. But I eventually reached the woman who was definitely in a state of panic and screaming that she was drowning. The dinghy was only suitable for one person, so I got her to tie the rope around her waist and headed back to the shore with the woman in tow. There were hugs and kisses all round, even from the husband to me!

I am aware that the currents at Southend can be dangerous, but on this occasion the sea was calm and in fact the tide was low and going out slowly. The upshot was that if the lady were to have stood up when she thought she was drowning, she could actually have walked back! I'm a bit of an accidental hero really, but the newspaper obviously believed in the maxim – publish and be damned!"

However, what Michael didn't say was that until he reached the woman, he couldn't know whether the water was deep or not. So accidental or not, that still makes him a hero in our book!

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This issue harks back to the September 2000 issue of Call Sign and was in response to the Editor's then-request for unusual items found in the cab... From Call Sign September 2000

A BRIEF CASE OF PASSION

BY G.G.West (V40)

The Editor asking for driver's unusual stories of items found in the cab reminded me of an incident that happened in my taxi some time ago when I had picked up a young couple in Shaftesbury Avenue and was told to drive them to Tedworth Square, Chelsea. All the way to SW3, the couple were being extremely passionate with each other.

"Ah," I thought, "the joys of Spring - even in wintertime!"

I dropped them off and they scampered quickly up the three steps - no doubt wanting to catch the end of Coronation Street! Several minutes later, another hand shot up and this time we were off to Croydon. We hadn't gone too far when my passenger told me that someone had left their briefcase in the back. I assumed that it had to belong to the last couple and as I remember the female holding it when she got in, it must have been hers. At Croydon, the passenger passed it to me as they paid me off and I thought that I'd have a look for any ID that would confirm it to be hers. So I pulled around the corner to take a quick peep.

Inside the briefcase I found a mobile phone, various credit cards and £2600 in cash. There was also a business card with a Cadogan Square address.

As I wasn't sure of the exact number in Tedworth Square I had originally dropped the couple, I decided to phone the number on the card. However, there was no answer so I left a message on the answerphone and started making my way towards Cadogan Square.

On arrival, I rang the bell and explained to the male voice who answered the intercom that a young lady had left her briefcase in my taxi going to Tedworth Square, but that there was a business card giving this address inside. I left out the part concerning their extracurricular activities! The male voice said that it sounded like his girlfriend's case and that he would come down.

A mental picture formed in my mind during those few seconds waiting. The young lady was very attractive and I had a picture of this guy being 30-ish, tall and handsome. Wrong! The door opened and there stood a shortish, 60-plus balding man who looked more like her father!

He looked at the case and recognised it immediately, even explaining that there was £2600 in it to pay the wages on a day's film shoot at the company which he was associated with. He gratefully accepted the case and gave me £60 from it as a reward.

He had a worried frown on his face - no doubt concerned that his girlfriend should have been so careless. I wondered how worried he would have been had he realised the circumstances in which the briefcase was left. I decided not to add to his worries and bade him good-night...

Flashback
2000

G.G.West (V40)

The Law of Averages decrees that during a career on the roads of London, we Dial-a-Cab drivers will at some stage fall foul of the boys in blue. I can recall three incidents - on two of which I was adjudged (rightly, I suppose) to have crossed a red light. And then there was that yellow box in Piccadilly...

It was a long time ago, so I barely remember driving through the box and changing lanes to avoid getting stuck. Or the young copper who stopped me for *entering a yellow box when my exit was not clear*. I've almost certainly forgotten the summons where it stated that I'd stopped in the box for so long, I had held up the traffic when the lights changed. Never think about it. Barely a memory! Completely gone! Oh my word yes...

But I must admit that the police have helped me more often than I've had a 'pull'.

There was that evening when I picked up two guys in the West End. One got out fairly soon and the other then asked to go to Clissold Crescent. He was small, Scottish and looked like a boxer - albeit an unsuccessful one judging by the state of his eyes and nose. And he coughed all the way to N16!

When we arrived at a small block of flats, he jumped out and announced that he was "just gonna see what's going on!" With that he disappeared inside.

I waited. And I waited. After 20 minutes I decided to investigate. If there was a back entrance, I knew I might as well just leave, but there was just the front. He was still there. There were only a few flats and I reasoned that I might hear that cough. Outside one door I heard loud drunken Scottish voices. That was the one!

It was pre-mobile phone days and I went back to the cab and called the DaC dispatcher, who then got the police for me. Two large guys arrived *poste haste*. My passenger was, it appeared, *known to the police*. They banged loudly on the door. A woman opened it just a crack, saw the blue serge and yelled out: "Where's yer warrant?"

"We don't need one," they called back through the gap, "we want to see the little Scottish feller."

"There's no little Scottish fellers here," she said - which was surprising, because despite her being somewhat broad in the beam, he was clearly hiding behind her!

Now a third character appeared. Tall and cadaverous, he pointed his finger at me and called out: "You're a *Yiddisher* boy, why are you starting trouble for us?" And then two policemen, a fat woman, an ex-boxer and this young cab-driver all stared in wonderment as that strange character began chanting Hebrew prayers! When this surreal situation had calmed down, a fiver was produced and I went back to work.

Another true story from Geoff Levene

Remembering the boys in blue...



Then there was that time when a young Irishman climbed into the back of the cab as I was being paid off and refused to leave. I took him to the police station where he complained that both I and the police had assaulted him. They arrested him for being drunk at a police station. As the station Sergeant so nicely put it: "That'll teach him to complain!"

But here's an odd one. It was a winter's afternoon as I drove home up Kingsbury Road and became aware of a small Asian boy with no shoes on running along the white line in the middle of the road. A police car going the opposite way failed to spot him. I pulled over and two passers-by grabbed the boy, put him in the cab and I suddenly found myself in charge of him!

It was soon obvious that he had learning difficulties because he couldn't speak and was screaming until he discovered the light switch and happily started playing with it.

I phoned 999 and the operator told me they'd had a report of a child missing from nearby Coniston Gardens. I naturally assumed the operator would send a kindly WPC to collect the young chap and reunite him with his loved ones. He told me to wait there and the police would come and find me. Half an hour later and I was still there, so I decided to find Coniston Gardens and get the thing sorted myself.

At the bottom of the road, a crazy scene greeted me. Two Indian women were rushing from one side of the street to the other in a complete panic. They seemed to be the sister and the grandmother. When the older lady saw the boy, she began shouting at him - might explain why he ran away - but then hugged him and collapsed into my arms. So thankfully it all ended happily.

Half an hour later, the police phoned me to ask if the boy had been collected. I explained what had happened, but he just said thanks and that was it!

I wonder if they really contacted the family.

**Geoff Levene (W32)
Call Sign Online**

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Yes, we know it's no longer called an overhaul and nowadays it involves a trip to NSL in addition to two MOT visits, but to those drivers that have been around more than a few years, getting the cab passed will forever be referred to as the annual overhaul. And as **Kevan Crowther (T47)** has been on **Dial-a-Cab** for over 25 years, that probably places him in that category! But it still needs passing...

"Yes," Kevan told *Call Sign*, "I pretty much did it all myself this time, although I did waste £40 in the process!" With that, Kevan explained all to CS readers...

"My one year old **Vito** was due for the annual 'overhaul' and as the cab generally seemed to be going well, even after 42,000 miles, I thought I'd be brave and put it through the system myself. After getting the necessary paperwork sorted, I checked the passenger steps were working properly, the Rear Steer mechanism was functioning correctly and that the usual items subjected to heavy wear - such as the front steering, wish-bone rubber bushes and tyres - were all in good shape and that the lights were fully operational. I then got the cab thoroughly valeted and took it up for what I thought was the obligatory MOT Test prior to the actual re-licencing procedure.

That's when I discovered I'd wasted 40 quid because apparently, if you present your one-year-old cab for re-licencing *before* it's 12 months old and the current licence is due to expire, you do not need an **MOT Certificate!** As I was presenting my taxi on the same day that its first year licence was due to expire (at midnight that day), it counted as being within the year. I could have saved 40 greenbacks!

Not wanting to mislead *Call Sign* readers, we decided to check and spoke to Alan Goldner, GM of Cricklewood Carriers, who are conveniently placed close to an NSL Inspection site.

"Yes, your driver is correct," Alan confirmed. "If the cab is less than one year old - even by a few hours - then an MOT Certificate is not a requirement. However, the cab will still need an MOT Test Certificate at the six-

HOW TO DO A 'DIY' OVERHAUL

And even save £40 for some drivers...!



Amazed his DIY overhaul didn't need an MOT

monthly halfway stage through its Tfl licence duration after that first year. The Tfl website and NSL guidelines appear unclear on the point that the cab must have a valid MOT Test Certificate throughout the duration of the Tfl licence, because my thinking based on advice from NSL, is that while the Tfl licence runs for the full 12 months, the MOT Test Certificate is valid for only six months, after 'amendments' made by Tfl some time ago requiring all cabs to undergo bi-annual MOT Testing. Failure to produce a valid MOT could jeopardise the Tfl licence, we suspect.

"There is no reminder sent out by any authority to advise drivers that the MOT Test is due and so my thinking is that without a valid MOT Certificate, the Tfl licence could

be deemed to have become invalid, even though it is dated for one year. So my advice would be for drivers to make a note of the start date of the Tfl Licence and get a valid MOT Test Certificate within 14 days either side of that Tfl plate date for continuity.

"And just one final point, the 15 year rule requires cabs to be presented for licencing *before* their fifteenth birthday, so leave several days to prepare the cab so that it can be presented before that magic date, and then if it fails for whatever reason, there is a breathing space to get things sorted in good time..."

Cricklewood Carriers can be contacted on 0208 452 5461.

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Lee's team get their DaC tops!

Dial-a-Cab driver Lee Pearce (J71) has been in *Call Sign* many times with stories about his goal-keeping involvement with several different non-league teams including last year when with Wembley FC, the team recruited some amazing former league stars in an attempt to get through a few early rounds of the FA Cup. Among Lee's team-mates were Argentinian world cup winner **Claudio Caniggia** and Premier league players **Graham LeSaux**, **Brian McBride**, **Ray Parlour** and a personal goalkeeping coach in ex-Arsenal favourite **David Seaman** - not to mention the team's technical advisor in no less than former England and Spurs manager, **Terry Venables!**

Lee is now with *Evo Stik* league team **North Greenford United**, who are managed by former **Chelsea** and **Southampton** star **Neil Shipperley**, and mentioned to *Call Sign* that the team were looking for

some sponsorship to buy matching tops and that for a relatively small outlay, we could have **Dial-a-Cab** put onto the shirts.

We did, they have and Lee is on the far right. Anything else you need to know!





?

I always enjoy reading Kupkake's Korner in *Call Sign*. But each time I do, it makes me recall an incident that happened in Queenstown Road many years ago when a punter became outraged that the 'bingo chart' on the taxi's partition screen had topped his taxi fare up. David Kupler just happened to be the despatcher at the time on Metro Cabs on the Isle of Dogs when I told him that *Angry from Battersea* had just ripped up the driver's bingo chart, although I doubt Kupkake would remember it. Bingo charts? Young drivers would have no idea what I'm talking about!

Anyway, the reason for mentioning Kupkake is because I have had my first (and last) ever go at a piece of poetry - although it could never be in the same league as the man himself..

Where's Joan?

He hailed my cab in Eaton Place
I thought I knew him -
something about the face.

"Just had a call from the trouble and strife
Le Caprice in St. James's - let's pick up the
wife!"

I waited in Arlington Street a while
Ten minutes later she emerged with a smile.
That cost a few bob did that fur coat
Even with the shades on,
I recognised her boat.

"Good afternoon cabbie, we
have errands to run."
Right thinks I - lets crack on my son.

For one issue only, it's...

WOODFORD'S WOES

Or Wupkake's Worner!

My first port of call was in SW3 -
"To M&S in Kings Road -
assuming you are free?"

I waited a while round the back of the store
Security wanted me away - oh what a bore.
I considered my punter's story to tell
The Dover Sole was ghastly,
she'd said with a yell

A little while longer,
him and her came back
It was Peter Jones next for this grateful hack.
I was asked if I could wait again once more
So I tucked myself in, round the back door.

She'd been on the phone to
her florist en route
Spent about a hundred or so to boot.
I tried to recall her films and her books,
Considering her age she still had her looks.

"Harrods will be our last stop today."
I needed a leak so hip, hip hooray.
I hadn't expected to have to wait again,
But the doorman asked that I wait for this
celebrity hen.

My bickering couple returned to my cab,
Back to Eaton Place -
I thought that would be fab.

I was beginning to think it
had been a long day
Now my celebrity punter's on the phone to
Jackie - in LA!

Tara was coming for afternoon tea
Percy had confirmed he'd decorated the
tree.
I set down my fare at a quarter to four
Alongside a Rolls Royce
outside their front door.

"Can you come back tomorrow - we're
going to Newbury race track?"
I had to inform them I could not go back.
My £70 fare was a reasonable one
And I was satisfied now that the
job was all done.

They would go to the Hennessy
Gold Cup without me,
I already had much nicer plans you see.
I tried to recall what she'd
been in at the flickers
But all I could think of was Dynasty and
Snickers...!

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

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Hello Ladies & Gents,

Now that Christmas has passed and we are in to a New Year, I would firstly like to wish all of you a happy and prosperous 2014. I have been in my new role for a month now and I must say that everyone in the Contact Centre has been more than helpful during my bedding-in period and have all responded well to the change of positions.

The staff have done a sterling job, especially during busy periods when demand for our services were at a premium. Answering more calls did mean that more trips were being offered out, which seemed to cause coverage difficulties in problem areas at certain times of the day. I have mentioned many times via this magazine or on your terminals that between 8am and 10am, the south west areas often suffer bad coverage. Battersea, Clapham and even Fulham seem to crop up time and time again and then we receive complaints from account customers of how bad our coverage is.

It doesn't help when the same call signs reject job after job and then either engage their meters or allow the trip to time out, when in fact all the trip offers were and are As Directed.

As a driver myself, I sometimes wonder what some members are looking for and why after waiting for trip offers, they are willing to lose a queue position and start all over again. Trips from SW11 and SW6 going to the city or further afield to Canary Wharf or even LCA are nice journeys, so yet again I would like you to not only help the Contact Centre but also yourselves.

In this highly competitive market, all

CONTACT CENTRE CHAT

With Allan Evans



so important to prove we are still the best!

Finally, although I am no longer the Compliance Officer, I would like you to be mindful of run-ins on all credit rides. Customers keep a sharp eye on the meter and exceeding the authorised amount on arrival has recently caused a problem and failure to follow procedures correctly has also been a cause for concern on certain accounts.

Once again I wish you and your families all the best for 2014, a year in which we hope that the slow economic recovery will continue at a faster rate.

Be very lucky and drive safely...

accounts are precious so please try your best to service these types of trips. Please remember these accounts will use our services all year round and when there are now so many options available, it is

Allane@Dialcab.co.uk
Call Centre Manager
DaC Operations Manager

PCSOs now able to fine cyclists for no lights or reflectors...

Clause 135 of the *Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill* will allow police community support officers (PCSOs) in England and Wales to stop and fine cyclists who do not have lights or reflectors fitted on their bikes. Reflectors must also be on the bike's pedals – even though clipless pedals don't have reflectors fitted to them.



The Bill completed its passage through the House of Commons on 15th October and is now subject to parliamentary scrutiny in the House of Lords. The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by the end of the session, in spring 2014.

The Bill also introduces simpler and more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour to provide better protection for victims and communities. The Bill also tackles irresponsible dog ownership and the use of illegal firearms by gangs and organised criminal groups, strengthens the protection afforded to the victims of forced marriage and those at risk of sexual harm.

However, so far as cyclist organisations are concerned, the Bill has been met with shrugged shoulders as they claim many cyclists remove reflectors from their bicycles even though the use of such reflectors - including on pedals - are legal requirements.

Police officers can already fine cyclists for not using lights and reflectors, but PCSOs had been powerless.

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THE CALL SIGN INTERNET LIBRARY

Want to look up something in an old issue of Call Sign?

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

Hell in my taxi!

It was back in 2000 and I was Dial-a-Cab's Complaints Officer. A young lady called **Toni Harman**, together with her boyfriend **Alex Wakefield** – who were and still are the owners of **Alto Films** - contacted me asking if I could find a taxi driver to make a short film that they wanted to enter into the **Raindance Film Festival** in London's West End.

The film, **Taxi Hell**, was the story of a man being picked up from his **Highbury** home and taken to his government office in **Westminster**. On route the taxi driver speaks of many subjects that were in the news and gives his views, some of which today could be classed as not politically correct, but in those days were considered as humour. DaC drivers know of my classes taken at the Bernard Manning School of diplomacy!

Then during the journey, the passenger in the back of the taxi (an actor) transforms by changing out of his office suit and replacing it with women's attire, including a wig and padded bra!

Toni, who had written the script, gave it to me on the morning and a short film it may have been to them, but to me it looked like War and Peace! After reading the first few paragraphs, I told Toni that no taxi driver would talk like that so she allowed me to adlib during the journey. This was hard for Alex, who was operating the camera from a crushed position inside my Metrocab's luggage compartment, because some of my ad-libbing made him laugh so much that he couldn't hold the camera steady. The 10 minute film took all day to record!

One of the funniest bits was in **Smith Square**, when the actor in the back was replacing his female attire with his men's clothing but had to get out of the taxi to get his trousers on. At a crucial time, the trousers slipped from his hand and ended up round his ankles, which unsurprisingly sent me into tears of laughter - although he wondered why I found it so amusing. I had to tell him that there were CCTV cameras on the **Conservative Party HQ** which were no doubt relaying his efforts to Scotland Yard!

The film was well received at the Raindance Festival, coming second to a film about apartheid that starred Beth Winslet, the sister of Kate.

I've since learned from Toni that the film has been shown in over 40 countries. Meanwhile Toni and Alex have become well recognised as

TOM'S TALES...



filmmakers and set up **Brighton Film Workshops** in 2008, aiming to help independent filmmakers get their first film off the ground. I, on the other hand, have only made a further three short films - but then I'm only a London taxi driver...!

The 22nd Raindance Festival takes place in London from September 24th to October 5th 2014.

Tom: By Royal Appointment

The beautiful glossy coats of the grey stallions shone in the evening sunlight, the polished leather and brass of the reins and bridles sparkling. They were pulling **HRH Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's** carriage as she left **Clarence House**, accompanied by **Prince Charles**. She was also escorted by the Cavalry from Knightsbridge barracks and followed by armed Royal Protection Police. Then came her Rolls Royce with **ladies-in-waiting**, while bringing up the rear was her Daimler in which sat **Billy Tallon**, her **Page of the Backstairs** with her beloved corgis.

As the procession entered The Mall, crowds cheered and shouted their approval, because the **Queen Mother** had reached her **100th birthday** and was on her way to be

entertained with a pageant depicting her life during those 100 years.

After the **Queen Mother** and **Prince Charles** had passed, the crowd fell quiet until the Daimler approached, then once again cheers and laughter rang out. This may have been why the **Protection Police** turned quickly around, as it was unexpected. The Daimler driver was also unsure what was going on behind, as there is no rear view mirror in the Royal car, so curiosity getting the better of him, he broke protocol by turning round to see what was amusing the crowd.

The spectacle he saw was **Billy Tallon** sitting in the back with one of the corgis on his lap, its paw in his hand waving it to the crowd! The following day a photo of the amusing incident appeared in most of the daily papers.

After all the celebrations, instead of the corgis on the return journey the passengers in the back of the Daimler were the ladies-in-waiting. One of them bore a striking resemblance to the **Princess Royal** and as the car drove up the Mall, the crowds were calling out to the person they thought was **Princess Anne**. They were not to know it was a lady in waiting, but it made them very happy to think they had seen yet another member of the Royal family.

How do I know these facts? Probably because I was the driver of the Daimler on that day! I had worked as a relief chauffeur alongside her three full-time chauffeurs for 17 years up until Her Majesty the **Queen's Mothers** death on 31 March 2002 at the age of 101.

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DaC Board Member

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Fixed prices

Dear Alan

I know this is not your department, but I'd just like to ask your opinion on a fixed price job I did recently. The trip was from a large account in Bank Street going to Basinghall Avenue at approximately 9.20 am with an f/p of £19.30. The passenger came out almost eight minutes after I arrived (it was not pre booked). The traffic was horrific, but it's like that every day from Canary Wharf to the City at that time of day. The job went £27.60 on the meter, so with a gratuity it would have been £30. I contacted the office but they said it was out of their hands.

Do you think this sort of thing seems like the beginning of the end? I would be interested to hear what you think of this as many drivers will probably have the same experience.

Paul Charters (J08)

Hi Paul, I understand exactly what you mean and I'm sure I would have been equally as miffed. But I'd like to use your letter to answer a few drivers who have told me that had we offered the account you refer to no run-ins or gratuities etc in our tender, then we may well have kept it after the end of January. The same drivers told me that most of them would have covered the work at what would be a much cheaper rate in order to keep the account. But as you point out, the f/p rate is often lower than needed when faced with vht. I'm sure you know the account I'm referring to, as the taxi company that won the tender has all but told their drivers the name. But DaC has agreed not to publicise the name until the contract has ended in January. To ensure acceptance of lower fares, I also believe the other taxi company has been recruiting East sector yellow badge drivers who perhaps would be more content with a smaller return.

Your letter suggests that not everyone would agree with a policy of working so cheap because it is very easy for drivers to say they will cover work, but the fact is that when it's busy and traffic is heavy, would those drivers run from the Tower to the Island for no run-in? No problem when it's quiet and drivers are queuing up at Cabot Square, but the business forecast suggests that it is getting busier – as indeed it is.

Just as Paul has pointed out, many drivers are already unhappy with current prices because of the traffic and waiting time. Without those two elements, the prices are reasonable. But sadly you can't wave a wand to get rid of traffic.

I don't know what else I can say Paul, other than perhaps drivers will understand why I am constantly criticising Hailo for what they have done to this trade. Every time a driver accepts a Hailo trip, they are helping to turn us into minicabs and our loss of this account proves that because not for one second do I think that other taxi company wanted to go down the road of no run-ins etc. I now wonder what the future holds and what future tenders will look like because in reality, a 200+ page tender could have been reduced to just one page and indeed with just one line on it and then just one question: How much??? ...Ed

EGM?

Dear Sir

Alter reading Mr Paul Hammett's (V42) letter in the November Call Sign, I'd like to add my own thoughts. Firstly, I too was a £1 per month subscriber but I do realise these are difficult times and if we are to survive, we must all pull together. I also believe we have a future on DaC, but if we are to move forward then I feel we need to hold an EGM to have a serious debate to see how we can best continue. Hopefully we will get some new ideas from some of our younger members. For example, do we have to restructure on a smaller level?

As for our trade leadership, I am sure we all realise that they are working behind the scenes. But it does seem that we are often presented with a *fait accompli* when each time a new policy is decided on without referring to us; after all it is our future. It seems our trade leaders spend all their energy attacking each other – and especially DaC. This has not been a very good example of trade unity. At least Mr Rice appears to reach out to all in a conciliatory manner, only to be met with deceit all round.

I will leave it at that for now and hope we have good attendance figures at our AGM in February.

B. Manfredi (F23)

Thanks for an interesting letter Bruno. Every year I virtually beg drivers to attend the AGM, after all it's just a few hours. But I still can't remember the last time the total at the meeting actually reached three figures! That tells me that drivers just don't want to go, so to force an EGM on them for what would be a general discussion is, in my view, pointless.



After all, if drivers really want to discuss anything, they could have put forward a proposition that would have involved a discussion at the AGM. Even without that, AOB can accommodate them. But even then there needs to be a large turnout and although I hope there will be one, I just can't see it. But the Board will read your letter Bruno and perhaps see things differently from me ...Ed

Picking and choosing?

Dear Alan

Dial-a-Cab's future has surely to be built on one thing - coverage. Individuals using Hailo and other apps are very cost conscious, but to large companies surely a cab outside their home / office within a few minutes is the most important thing. That's not to say cost is not important, but we should make sure we are putting the account customers first. I know one account in SE1W who knew that if he ordered a cab to W4 it would be covered, but a trip to SE1E would leave him waiting. He felt drivers were picking and choosing and his interest should have been put first. He closed the account.

The way I work is that if the pick-up is easily reachable, then the job destination is not that important. After all, you get the run-in and that's why it should remain. However, sometimes this is not the case and you should be able to reject for that reason alone. Instead of choosing a job destination, maybe we should have a system where the first three trips you cover each day are As Directed? After that, trips are unmasked as usual. I don't know if that is possible or even popular, but it would get more trips covered quickly, which must be our aim going forward. Coverage is king!

James Whiting (E83)

Brian Rice replies: You are right James, coverage is King. There isn't any point in having a cheap cab that doesn't arrive! Regarding your suggestion, it seems like a good idea. However, the problem we have is that if we introduced it, Members would revert it to the Status Quo at the first AGM. I believe that A/D Non rejectable 24 hours a day would be a good solution. I also happen to believe that Members would again reverse the decision at the first AGM, so what would be the point? Being a Mutual Trading democratic Society is our biggest strength - and also our greatest weakness.

We are starting to build a new

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despatching engine that will operate with the closest cab. When that has been finalised, we will definitely review the situation. In the meantime, James, keep doing what you are doing, that is how the radio should be used and I guarantee you will earn better than the 'cherry pickers'...

To Hailo or not to Hailo???

Hi Al

Most articles I've read recently are to banish Hailo – it being the demise of the taxi trade. However I think most articles are from drivers and management who have not tried the service. As an OAP and with DaC for 17 years, I've been loyal but unlikely to last another 13 years for the discount. I have been doing DaC and cash for the last 17 years and Hailo for the past 6 months. Is this unfaithful to DaC? We all do street cash work, which does not cost subs or waiting at pre-booked jobs. Are these drivers unfaithful by not covering all DaC offered jobs? We are all self-employed businessmen and women, this is our income and we have to work as smartly as possible to ensure it. Bankers find wheezes to increase profitability. DaC introduced Concierge, which provides another income stream (arguably) etc. If I were asked, DaC is the best provider of a corporate taxi service. Hailo is the best provider for a personal taxi service. Hailo has taken a lot of work from AL, but the downside is that business accounts want to jump in on the no run-ins and free 5 minute wait. For a big account this will give severe coverage problems as we just will not cover AD jobs. But for those who say Hailo is killing the taxi trade, I beg to differ. Here are some of my comments.

80% plus of passengers are waiting on the kerb to be picked up. 15% are in the cab within 3 minutes. 4% a wait of 4-5 minutes and only 4 jobs in over 500 jobs have I had to put the meter on before they got in. So on average the free 5 minute wait is nowhere near as bad as it is made out to be. Corporate accounts would abuse this facility.

If a Hailo job is scrubbed 1 min after it has been accepted, there is a £5 scrub fee. With a DaC account job, I doubt if the meter would be on within 1 minute of a job, hence no payment. They can scrub for free if you are more than 2 minutes late, but you wouldn't take the trip if the traffic's bad. If you are going to be late, most of the time the passenger will wait if you ring them. The personal contact by mobile is a great step forward. If you can't contact passengers by phone after 5 minutes, job scrubbed, £5 scrub fee paid. No waiting for someone else to ring them or told to sit for another 15

minutes with meter running on time only. Yes there is no run-in, but if the job is not close, just press 'No Thanks'. Rejects (or in Hailo terms, 'No Thanks') are not penalised.

I pay Hailo 10% for the privilege of running for free and waiting for the job but a) I don't run far and b) as shown above, the wait is not a problem. On the other hand DaC subs, whilst a static weekly charge, convert this to a percentage and my personal percentages are:- Year 08/09 11.1%, 09/10 14.1%, 10/11 13.8%, 11/12 13.8%, 12/13 16.9% (although I was also doing Hailo work for 4 months in this accounting year).

Hailo is not for the lazy who enjoy sitting around with meter on or off. The amount of work is plentiful, so most of the time your wheels are turning. Remember when BT was privatised, the public went wild that there was now competition. The cry that we should all use our local shops but how many of *you* spend more in your local Londis than Tesco?

Where am I going with this? It's not an advert for Hailo. Hailo and DaC are like a screwdriver and a chisel, both useful tools but with different uses. I believe we lost a number of 30 year plus drivers when the £1 subs were increased. Do DaC dare ban Hailo? I don't talk to many DaC drivers but when I do, they are either on Hailo or thinking about joining. Banning Hailo will result in losing many more drivers. So what should DaC do? My cab is free of any Hailo signage, this is best for DaC account work and not one Hailo passenger has queried my DaC signage. Possibly banning Hailo signage for DaC drivers would be acceptable. Also, don't accept cash bookings, especially pre-booked cash (don't say we don't as I have covered some). Difficult to cover and gives DaC a bad reputation. Then there is 'soon to clear' - a charter for cheating. It does nothing to help coverage, gives a false driver view of the cabs in an area and is a pain if you forget. Ban it. We should also move the EC5 changeover to midnight. Sitting on the EC10 St Bride St from QP 74 to be offered an EC5 non-rejectable job that goes from Ropemaker Street to the Angel is ludicrous.

Then there's A/D or not A/D. Other than 7 – 10 in the morning, EC5 and E14 after 21:00 being A/D, we have coverage problems. Why? Because a job that is local or shown as A/D which will be local (very few flyers) will be rejected due to waiting in a long queue of drivers and if nearing the front will wait for a better job. If the queue is not too long, it will be passed to an adjacent zone and comments about Hailo and running for free (our run-in is just an extra £1.80 and that's not very far). The only way to improve coverage is 'nearest cab' and all A/D. May not be liked but perhaps the Dodo didn't change to its local environment either. Having a nearby job offered out of the blue that nobody else has rejected is so



much more less demoralising than finding you are number 74 in a queue.

Alan Nash (A95)

Alan's Nash's Numbers is, and has been for many years, one of the most important pages in Call Sign where it provides drivers with information to help their working day. However - and I know Alan realises this – our views on Hailo differ greatly. Reading the Chairman's answer to James Whiting's letter above seems to suggest that DaC is planning to go the way Alan suggests in his final paragraph. I can't comment because I also knew nothing about it until I read it, but it does appear to be the way to go after years of holding out against every job being called as A/D or to be offered a trip when you are a few miles away but get it because you booked into the zone where the job was. I'm sure that Brian or our IT department will explain more very soon.

But I can comment on Hailo and I disagree with virtually all of Alan's comments. Most of my reasons are in the reply to Paul Charters. But I think a recent press article on Hailo said it all – it is only London and Dublin Hailos that are in profit out of the cities that use it. Coincidentally, it is only London and Dublin where the drivers rather than the passengers pay! No run-in? No gratuity? Free waiting? We give up cash work so Hailo can have it? Perhaps our cash coverage isn't brilliant, but Hailo's is far worse. You can say what you like Alan, Hailo has turned its drivers into minicabs and you really can't blame passengers for asking why a DaC taxi with a Hailo sticker can work cheaper for one but not the other. And speaking of that coverage, it appears that Hailo had no alternative but to bring in minimum charges as their coverage was so poor – and again coincidentally no doubt, it will increase their 10% 'take' from drivers – assuming LTPH ever decide whether it is legal or not. I too am a pensioner, but I would rather retire than work for a company that turns us into minicab drivers. And incidentally Alan, AL have had their busiest period for years, so the suggestion that Hailo has taken all this work from them seems to fall a bit flat. However, ask non-radio drivers about street work and many will say that it is down, since Hailo makes it pointless to go out on the street to hail a cab when it will come to you for nothing. And yes, the difference of £1.80 is not a fortune, but after 5 minutes when

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Hailo is on £2.40, a radio taxi can be on £6.20. And that, Alan, is closer to £4.00 and worth running for... Ed

Run-ins...

Hi Alan

After reading the letter from Clarence Ishmael (R54) in the December *Call Sign*, I have to say that I fully agree with him regarding run-ins and gratuities. If Dial-a- Cab did away with run-ins and gratuities, then I think I would have to leave the circuit. Whilst everybody wants things cheaper year on year (and I don't blame them), we charge a premium because we offer a premium service. At present, my gratuities pay my subscriptions, if I then had to pay subs from my earnings (without run-ins or grats), it would not be worth being on the circuit. If that happened I might as well go over to the 'dark side' and work Hailo and Get Taxi. That is not what I want at all. I love DaC and want us to prosper. It's a fine financial line we tread, that's for sure.

Paul Heatley (V09)

I've heard nothing about gratuities going Paul, but what if a huge account wanted to come to DaC but refused to consider tips? Would that make any difference? ...Ed

Marshals continued...

I would like to elaborate on my suggestion in the last issue of *Call Sign* regarding the permanent positioning of a Marshal at E14's Island.

The DaC marshal calls for a cab, cab arrives, driver's call sign is confirmed, the passenger is informed and the marshal tells the DaC driver to engage his meter. It is then up to the customer as to how much will be on the meter when the journey starts.

Elegance accounts: You will remember in the heat of summer that drivers were complaining in *Call Sign* that some customers were asking for a Vito because they all had rear aircon, so there is a market out there. Yes, I know about ComCab's Club.Class, but that was before 1/ Aircon, 2/ mobile phones and 3/ on-board computers. To save anyone asking, I drive an X reg cab.

I believe that all cabs on the Elegance account should be Vitos, TX4s (or TX5s if they appear) with all round aircon. It would be an executive account carrying an appropriate surcharge. If it works, drivers will upgrade their vehicles and certainly kick Addy Lee into touch and perhaps even Concierge. Minicabs can pay for their own marketing... in fact Elegance can replace Concierge.

Stephen Field (F68J)

Allan Evans responds: Hi Stephen, your points have been noted but I do believe that having a permanent Marshal on the Island would be quite an expensive project and not cost effective. Allocating specific types of taxis would also probably not be seen as a fair and equal system to a large portion of members and with competitors offering drastically reduced charges, I do believe that to add surcharges on to the meter in this current environment would be restrictive, especially if we are trying to generate new business.

Hailo and PCNs

Whatever your views are about Hailo, it's also worth remembering one thing. They will *not* under any circumstances pay for *Penalty Charge Notices* while you are covering their work...

Gary Johnson (P28)

Thanks Gary. Judging by reports about loads of work but very poor coverage in November, they wouldn't have that many PCNs to worry about ...Ed

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