

March 2014



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



AGM time again!





NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

"Full Monty please, cabbie." Where's it on? Don't know? Well this article could help. Also, where possible are the burst times, so you can get a bit of extra work... and boy do we need it.

London Theatre Guide

Burst Times Calculated from published start times and length of show, actual burst may be a few minutes later than shown.

Show	Theatre	Sun	Sun	Mon	Tue	Tue	Wed	Wed	Thu	Thu	Fri	Fri	Sat	Sat
Bodyguard	Adelphi Theatre			22:00		22:00		22:00		22:00	19:30	23:00	17:30	22:00
Stephen Ward	Aldwych				16:50	21:50		21:50	16:50	21:50		21:50	16:50	21:50
"1984"	Almeida Theatre			✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Stomp	Ambassadors Theatre	16:45	19:45	21:45					16:45	21:45		21:45	16:45	21:45
Wicked	Apollo Victoria Theatre			22:20		22:20	17:20	22:20		22:20		22:20	17:20	22:20
Ghost Stories	Arts Theatre	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Richard III	Barbican			✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Matilda The Musical	Cambridge Theatre	17:40				21:40	17:10	22:10		22:10		22:10	17:10	22:10
39 Steps	Criterion Theatre			22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00		22:00	18:00	22:00
We Will Rock You	Dominion Theatre			22:10		22:10		22:10		22:10		22:10	17:10	22:10
Coriolanus	Donmar Warehouse			22:10		22:10		22:10	17:10	22:10		22:10	17:10	22:10
Charlie & the Chocolate Factory	Drury Lane, Theatre Royal			22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00
Tell Me on a Sunday	Duchess (Closes 8/3/14)			22:00		22:00		22:00	16:30	22:00		22:00	16:30	22:00
Jeeves & Wooster	Duke of York's Theatre			21:40		21:40	16:40	21:40		21:40		21:40	16:40	21:40
Woman In Black	Fortune Theatre				17:00	22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00	18:00	22:00
12 Angry Men	Garrick (Closes 15/3/14)			21:55		21:55		21:55	17:10	21:55		21:55	17:10	21:55
Blithe Spirit	Gielgud Theatre			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Knightss of the Burning Pestle	Globe Theatre	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Being Shakespeare	Harold Pinter (Closes 15/3/14)			✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Phantom Of The Opera	Her Majesty's Theatre			22:00		22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00
Hero (Closes 15/3/14)	Leicester Sq. Theatre					20:30		20:30		20:30		20:30		20:30
I Can't Sing	London Palladium			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Lion King	Lyceum Theatre	17:15				22:15	17:15	22:15		22:15		22:15	17:15	22:15
Thriller Live	Lyric Theatre	18:00	22:00			22:00		22:00		22:00		22:00	18:30	22:30
War Horse	New London			22:10		21:40		22:10	17:10	22:10		22:10	17:10	22:10
The Full Monty	Noel Coward Theatre			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mamma Mia	Novello Theatre			22:15		22:15		22:15	17:30	22:15		22:15	17:30	22:15
Other Desert Cities	Old Vic Theatre			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Othello	Olivier, National Theatre	17:20		22:35		22:35	16:50	22:35		22:35		22:35	16:50	22:35
Commitments	Palace Theatre	17:30	21:30			22:00		22:00		22:00		22:00	17:30	21:30
Shadowland	Peacock	15:30	19:30			21:00		21:00		21:00		21:00	15:30	21:00
Once	Phoenix Theatre			21:50		21:50		21:50	17:20	21:50		21:50	17:20	21:50
Jersey Boys OPENS 14/3/14)	Piccadilly Theatre	19:35			17:35	22:05		22:05		22:05		22:05	17:35	22:05
Monty Python's Spamlot	Playhouse Theatre			22:00		22:00		22:00		22:00	20:00	23:00	16:30	22:00
Jersey Boys (Closes 9/3/14)	Prince Edward Theatre	19:35			17:35	22:05		22:05		22:05		22:05	17:35	22:05
Book Of Mormon	Prince Of Wales Theatre			21:50		21:50	16:50	21:50		21:50		21:50	16:50	21:50
Les Miserables	Queen's Theatre			22:30		22:30	17:30	22:30		22:30		22:30	17:30	22:30
Mistress Contract	Royal Ct. D.stairs (Closes 22/3/14)			21:30		21:30		21:30	17:00	21:30		21:30	17:00	21:30
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels	Savoy Theatre			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Urinetown	St.James Theatre			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mousetrap	St Martin's Theatre			21:45	18:15	21:45		21:45		21:45		21:45	18:15	21:45
Here to Eternity	Shaftesbury (Closes 29/3/14)			22:20		22:20	17:40	22:20		22:20		22:20	17:40	22:20
Ghosts (Closes 22/3/14)	Trafalgar Studios 1			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
The Act (Closes 29/3/14)	Trafalgar Studios 2			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Billy Elliot - The Musical	Victoria Palace Theatre			22:30		22:30		22:30	17:30	22:30		22:30	17:30	22:30
The Weir	Wyndham's Theatre			21:10		21:10	16:40	21:10		21:10		21:10	16:40	21:10

Key - ✓ = Show on but unknown finish time. No shows have a Monday matinee

A similar but more detailed article is available as 'Part 16 of the UID' which also includes theatre addresses. Go to: www.myfav.co.uk click the 'taxi' link under the 'Left Screen Selector' column and a whole page of taxi related tiles/icons will appear. Just click on the Part 16 tile for Theatres. If you have never visited this page before, have a good rummage through all the links for loads of information.

from the editor's desk

The case against London cabbies

I was sitting by my laptop awaiting the imminent appearance of the February issue of *Call Sign*, when the familiar click of an incoming email hit my ears. The heading asked if I had seen the attached article from **The Conservative Party** publicity machine at **The Spectator** magazine. Within 60 minutes, I'd had the same article sent to me another dozen times by **Dial-a-Cab** drivers.

I hadn't realised **The Spectator** had so many taxi driver readers – but I needn't have overly concerned myself, because every one of the cabbies had pilfered the article off the 'net rather than from the mag! Of course, by now the trade press will have read and taken the article by **Harry Mount** – who presented his case against London Cabbies – to pieces and told him just what they think of him after he claimed his taxi driver went an incorrect way from Bloomsbury to his Kentish Town abode by failing to use Royal College Street.

After all, let's face it, who would go through Camden High Street to get there when you are at the southern end of RCS? So I think Mr Mount is right to condemn all 26,000 of us because that driver with the mental blackout obviously represented the rest of us.

So I'm here to ask all Mr Mount's detractors to leave the poor chap alone, because he makes valid points when he also accuses us of deliberately not getting stuck in yellow box junctions in order to lengthen his journey. In reality, we should consider it an honour to pay the £120 fine associated with that misdemeanor. After all, we're not just talking about any passenger here; Mr Mount is a second cousin to the PM and amongst other writings, 'twas the good Mr Mount who let the cat out of the bag by penning **A Lust for Window Sills** (*Little Brown* £12.99). Of course, that doesn't make him a bad person. What he does in his private life is of no concern to London taxi drivers.

And let's face facts; this former student from Oxford's **Magdalen College** was a member of the infamous **Bullingdon Club** along with one of his heroes, **Mayor Boris Johnson**, so he must be an expert at throwing brickbats – or at least buns!

How can we argue with his logic when he reminds us of the appalling 2009 case of **John Worboys**, who was found guilty of drugging and sexually assaulting 12 women. And his claims that thanks to Worboys, our "reputation for safety" has gone! That plainly doesn't apply to our opposition who he refers to as "highly efficient taxi and minicab apps like Uber, Addison Lee and Kabbee." Yes, ok, so he doesn't know that none of those are taxi apps, but that doesn't make him a bad person either! Neither does his obvious inability to read the cheaper newspapers where he could read reports about that opposition on a weekly basis that almost make John Worboys look normal. But again, that does not mean he is anything but an upstanding citizen from Kentish Town. After all, how do we know that window sills don't have feelings! However, he is still entitled to his view that "the exclusive privileges given to black cabs must go."

Yes, we know that members of the **Bullingdon Club** are well known for maintaining high principles during jolly japes – known better to members as "boisterous rituals." These include such quaint customs as trashing restaurants and college rooms but always offering to pay! I'm sure it doesn't apply, because anyone who lusts after window sills must surely be an honourable person.



But just in case he has been in your taxi and trashed the passenger compartment but simply forgot to mention it while also looking out for some nice window sills, just have a quick peep. However, please don't bother the offices of **The Spectator** because they have their own problems, having lost around 15,000 readers per issue since 2011. That really is surprising considering the wealth of intelligent articles such as **Harry Mount's The Case Against London Cabbies!**

And please don't hassle his second cousin; Mr C is toning up his bun throwing arm in case there is a reunion of the **Bullingdon!**

Fare increase time

For several years, I have been asking through this column for the trade to consider rejecting one year's fare increase for the sake of gaining some welcome publicity, rather than accepting an April increase that would probably cost us money in lost fares while adding a paltry amount onto each journey. Much of the country has been struggling just to keep their jobs while this trade has continued increasing fares as though we were back in the busy times.

But we aren't and we often hear the cry of just how expensive we are. In fact, next to Tokyo we are the most expensive city in the world for taxi fares. And that isn't a proud boast! Are we good value? Well yes, we probably are, but we can no longer deny that the competition have never been so strong. No longer do they continually get lost – albeit with the help of technology – but they are also cheaper and the biggest kick in the derriere is that their vehicles are no longer old bangers!

The answer isn't to do what Hailo has done and to kill our fare structure by taking a chunk of commission from your fare, it is to refuse this year's fare increase and make sure that a good publicity company puts the story out there. *Bus fares up! Train fares up! Taxi fares remaining the same!*

But someone will undoubtedly phone me and say how important it is that we keep up with the standard of living. In the meantime, we are seeing more and more PH cars with jobs in that used to be ours. Is that because they are better drivers? Nope. Is it because they have better suited vehicles for London? Nope. Is it because they are cheaper at a time when this country is still struggling to come to terms with a recession that we haven't exactly flown away from? Sadly, the answer is yes but that is also partly perception of how much a taxi fare is. We are expensive but perhaps not quite as much as some seem to think. Would not the publicity of a fare increase rejection serve us better than another increase and frightening even more passengers away? This year's increase is 0.7% – an average of 10p per trip on rate 3. Is it worth it and would it not be better to

cancel it and gain hopeful publicity. Is there a chance of it happening? Well if those pigs stop flying...

Showing your badge and Bill

Being asked to show your badge and Bill can sometimes be an irritation to licensed taxi drivers and you may well feel like asking why they are picking on you. It certainly seems like it at times and indeed I have asked the question before in this column. But remember that although you have nothing to worry about, someone else probably does have and in several issues of *Call Sign* we have published stories on persons who have been illegally plying for hire using false taxi papers. There have also been instances of drivers "forgetting" their front and back licence identifiers who when challenged by police or the **Cab Enforcement Unit**, have turned out to hold a yellow suburban taxi licence. Read the Chairman on the Yellow Badge consultation on page 4.

An article in this issue on touting as part of **Operation Safer Travel at Night**, tells of over 170 arrests and undoubtedly most of them were minicab drivers. Many will say that 170 isn't a huge amount, but it still means 170 fewer touts – even though some will try their luck again and again.

The unit also gave away thousands of leaflets about how to get home safely at night and even though licensed private hire are a fact of life, the leaflet explains there is only one form of hire vehicle that you can hail in the street – us!

I remember many years ago having a disagreement with the late **Cecil Selwyn** – who was a long time driver on DaC. He found it to be an irritation that **Canary Wharf** security used to ask to see our Bills, while letting cars just go straight in. I argued not that they shouldn't ask us for Bills, but that we should ask them to have random checks for every fourth or fifth car regardless of what it was. Cecil – as an **LCDC** Committee Member and DaC Board member – agreed and said he would take it up. I'm not sure whether it was his efforts that did it, but that's exactly what happens nowadays.

We sometimes have to do things that we feel are unbecoming to us as taxi drivers – and in many cases they may well be – but if it's for the greater good then we just have to swallow our pride and when approached by a member of the constabulary or the enforcement unit, just smile and say certainly when asked for our Bill! Those that don't probably have an ulterior motive as to why they are out there...

AGM

You can read all about the 2013 DaC Annual General Meeting inside this issue, so I won't say much here. However, what I would like to say was how enjoyable it was! For the first time in some years there were very few empty seats, but judging by the questions it wasn't out of dissatisfaction, it was because drivers wanted to come! Because there was so little voting or questions on the first part of the meeting, it left extra time for *Any Other Business* and made it one of the most interesting meetings for several years. But the most important part was the friendly aura surrounding it – except for one brief moment when things warmed up slightly but recovered quickly. It's all inside this issue.

See you next month...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

2013 AGM

The AGM held on Sunday 9th February went extremely well. I thought everyone behaved equally well and that led to a very constructive meeting.

What certainly came across clearly was the animosity held by most of the Members present towards the Apps. They seemed to feel that the only advantage they had over the Private Hire industry was their right to ply for hire off the street and that advantage was being surrendered to the Apps.

The general feeling seemed to be that the Apps were re-cycling much of the street work and so what was the point of doing the Knowledge and to be available for hire off the street when the public were not hailing off the street but via their App instead. And drivers were paying 10% of the fare for the privilege of picking up passengers for nothing!

It was also very apparent that many took exception to those DaC drivers advertising an App on their windscreen or back window. Consequently, I agreed to abide by our Rule Book which states:

Rule 5(b) 'Members will not, except with the written consent of the Secretary, allow his or her taxicab or taxicabs to carry external advertising other than that authorised by the Society'.

As a result, any Member who has external advertising that advertises another product or service, would they please remove the offending advertising immediately as failure to do so could result in a complaint against you for failure to abide by our Rule Book.

Members were obviously also interested in offers that have been made to Dial-a-Cab, but of course this topic was not discussed as *Non-Disclosure-Agreements* (NDAs) have been signed.

However, what I could inform Members was that since the date I had sent the original letter out informing them of the interest in the Society, I have also been approached by a third organisation that is interested in purchasing the Society. They have now received the necessary information from us, so we may receive a formal offer from them in the not too distant future.

Suburban Taxi Licensing Consultation

Some of you may be aware that the above consultation has been released by LTPH. I believe it is extremely important that as many of you as possible read the consultation and also complete the survey. You have until the 11th April to complete it and you can access by going to: <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/tph/suburbantaxis>

This survey could have very far reaching consequences for the London Taxi industry and you should not leave it to your respective organisations to make representations on your behalf, you



should also participate as an individual.

There are some really contentious issues contained in the survey and I urge you to participate, as this topic could actually alter the future of our trade.

Some of the contentious issues as far as I am concerned include the following:

*** Allowing Yellow Badge (YB) drivers to pick up in town off the radio or via an App.**

*** Allowing YB's to pick up in town during busy periods and also allowing YB's to enter the course for the KoL Green Badge on either 28 or 56 days, as they already have experience of driving a taxi. Consequently, their 'Green' KoL would be shorter than someone enrolling for the KoL for the first time.**

The above is by no means an exhaustive list of proposals that have been put forward,

there are several others. But as you can see, some are extremely contentious, so please have your say and do not leave it to others alone to voice their opinion. Then - and something that is often indicative of the taxi business - they complain when the new legislation is introduced! It could by then be too late! So please complete the survey.

In my opinion, if this is ever brought into fruition, it could be a 'game changer' and it all seems to have come about since the yellow and green identifiers were introduced. Of course, that could just be a coincidence... couldn't it?

As an observation; over the past forty plus years there has occasionally been some animosity between YB's and GB's, but in recent times it does seem to have come to a head. I'm not really sure why this should be, although I do have my suspicions. Perhaps someone somewhere has an agenda that we know nothing about.

The last thing we want is for a division between YB's and GB's, but it does seem to be heading that way. Perhaps that might suit some, but it would be very unfortunate for the trade as a whole.

So remember, have your say regarding the survey, it is no good locking the stable door once the horse has bolted!

Again, please go to <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/tph/suburbantaxis> and complete the survey...

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

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TDOY Charity Fund Make Charity Single!

In last year's September and October issues of *Call Sign*, we were asked by **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund** President and **Dial-a-Cab** driver, **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)**, if we could place an ad asking if there were any **Dial-a-Cab** drivers out there who could sing. Russell and wife Barbara had long wanted to have a charity single recorded by taxi drivers with any funds used to help the charities that this trade is famous for.

One of the drivers that read the ad was **DaC's Jim Edwards (E76)**. He told *Call Sign* that he always reads the mag and noticed the ad.

"While I wasn't sure about my singing voice," he told *Call Sign*, "I quite liked the idea of having a go and helping to put something back. It's been quiet for a few years but most of us have good reason to be thankful to our trade, because through good or bad times it has provided us with a living when so many have found themselves out of work."

"We had a few rehearsals in a back room kindly provided at **John Anderson's** new **Royal Oak** eatery in Paddington before making our way to the **Galactic Studios** in **Biggin Hill** to have a few final rehearsals and to make the charity single itself. Although there were six of us cabbies doing the actual singing, I have to say that **Barbara Poluck** worked behind the scenes like a real Trojan. She just never stopped! I don't know where she gets her energy, but I'd like some of whatever she has for breakfast! And with the ITV



The London Cabbies ready to record!

cameras popping in to watch us, we had to be on our best behaviour!

"We also have to thank Galactic's **Tony Adams**, not just for the amazing gesture of letting us have the studio facilities for nothing, but for also providing the necessary staff – and of course the unlimited supply of coffees – whilst we made the recording."

"And while in thanking mode, we need to thank the world famous **Totes Umbrella's** for their very welcome sponsorship."

Barbara Poluck told us that she and

Russell had been thinking about a charity single for around two years and it was while walking in Richmond where they overheard someone talking about producing musicals that it suddenly looked to be possible. They got together and from that moment everything began to fall into place.

"The recording took place on a tube strike day," Barbara added, "so we were slightly concerned that the drivers may have wanted to go to work or even be unable to get to Biggin Hill, but we needn't have worried!"

The single is called '**We'll take you there**' and is by – no shock here – **The London Cabbies**. The track is about London and the taxi drivers that take people around town – including from Manor House to Gibson Square! Can't think where we know that one from!

In addition to **Jim Edwards**, the group is made up of **Nick Greer**, **Sharon Sanders**, **Ron Geraghty**, **Lee Scarborough** and **Frank Raggett** and we expect that they will be making a few guest appearances when the record is released.

Galactic Studios have made a name for themselves over the past few years in producing music for shows such as **The Big Reunion**, **Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway** and **Surprise Surprise**. In the recording business, their production camp known as **Audiofreaks** is known worldwide, so for the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity to be given the use of their expert facilities was really appreciated by Russell and Barbara and a huge help.

The record is due out shortly and TV appearances will hopefully follow. Good luck to 'The London Cabbies' and well done to Russell and Barbara...

DaC drivers complain that the apartments are too expensive for them at the 50 storey...

ONE BLACKFRIARS ROAD

At the recent **Dial-a-Cab** AGM, two drivers told *Call Sign* that apartments at **One Blackfriars Road** – the soon-to-be-renamed **Blackfriars Tower** – were going to be priced at horrendous amounts and that they would probably cause the whole of that area to become unaffordable except to corporate billionaires – with even millionaires no longer considered wealthy enough now!

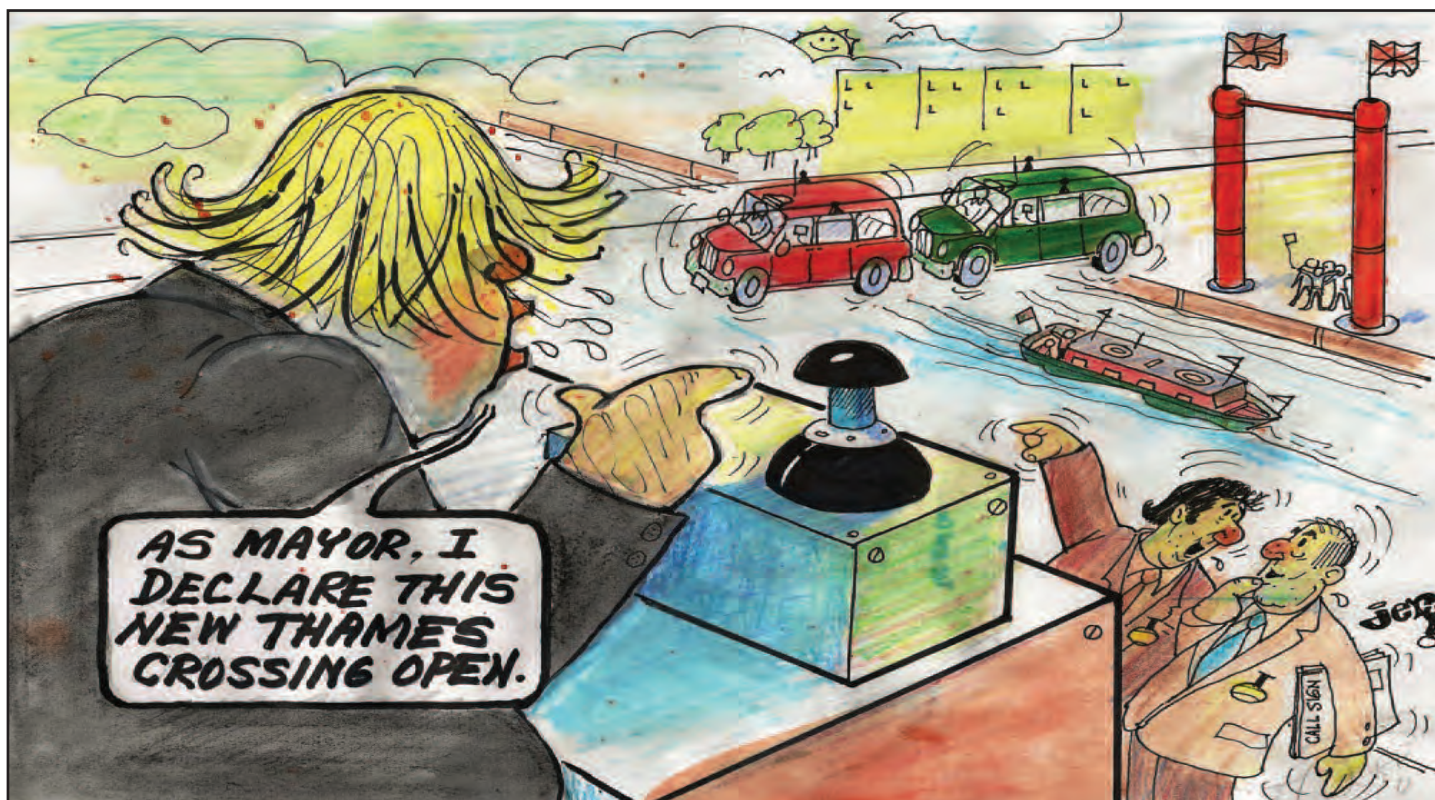
Prices for the apartments – many of which haven't even yet been built – begin for one bedroom flats at £1.275million with three bed apartments being touted at over £4.5million! However, small studio apartments will be available at a giveaway £960,000 – so all is not lost!

Not surprisingly, there will be no affordable housing out of the 274 flats and penthouses, but the developers – taking a leaf out of the **Candy Brothers** Hyde Park development in Knightsbridge – have paid the council to build those types elsewhere, the amount to Southwark Council said to be approaching £30million...



Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

Jery's World



Well I suppose if you can't afford an electric taxi, then this way doesn't make much in the way of emissions!

Bond in Motion

007 The largest official collection of James Bond vehicles ever exhibited in London!

007

The London Film Museum and EON Productions are delighted to announce that the **BOND IN MOTION** exhibition, the largest official collection of original James Bond vehicles, will be on display for the first time in London from 21 March.

This exciting family exhibition will transform the entire London Film Museum space in Covent Garden and will allow Bond fans and members of the public to see the most up to date collection, including for the first time in the UK, the 1/3 scale model of **Agusta Westland's AW101** helicopter used whilst filming 2012's **Skyfall**. **BOND IN MOTION** will also feature a wide range of vehicles, miniature models, action sequence boards, vehicle concept art and props from all the James Bond films.

Iconic cars that have featured in the all-action Bond vehicle chases will also be on display, including **Wet Nellie Lotus Esprit S1** from **The Spy Who Loved Me** (1977), the **Rolls-Royce Phantom III** from **Goldfinger** (1964) and the **Aston Martin DB5** from **GoldenEye** (1995).

The London Film Museum is at 45 Wellington Street, Covent Garden WC2. The exhibition will be open 7 days a week from 10am - 6pm (last entry 5pm), Saturday from 10am till 7pm (last entry 6pm). The Museum Shop and Café is open during Museum opening hours. Tickets can be purchased at the venue on the day but to avoid the queues you can go to: www.londonfilmmuseum.com or www.ticketmaster.co.uk

Adults: £14.50, child: £9.50, family ticket: £38 (2 adults 2 children under 16), under 5s free.

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Yes, we all know that the past five or so years haven't been the best and the incidents of people standing on street corners with arms outstretched mouthing that magic word of 'taxi' haven't been as often as perhaps many have been used to! In fact, until quite recently it seemed that more and more taxis were sitting on ranks waiting for those passengers to go to them!

Stephen Barry (A20) has seen the good and bad times with *Dial-a-Cab*, having been with the Society since August 1989, and is now

Taxi licence fees frozen

Following the annual review of Taxi (and Private Hire) licence fees by the Transport for London Board, the vast majority of licence fees for taxi (and private hire drivers) will be frozen for 2014/15.

This includes taxi and private hire vehicle and driver application and licence fees which will remain frozen at 2013/14 levels.

However, there will be increases in both the Knowledge of London appearance and written test fees to reflect the cost of administering the process. The appearance fee will rise from £300 to £350 and the written test fee from £150 to £175.

Taxi and Private Hire licence fees are reviewed annually and all funds generated are used to cover licensing and administrative costs. The new licence fees will take effect from 1 April 2014.

How to pass a recession!



hoping that those good times are slowly returning. But other than the fact we all work to get money, Stephen managed to pass the extra waiting-around time quietly and calmly.

"I'm an avid reading fan," Stephen confirmed to *Call Sign*, "a real book hound! On average I get through about a book a week on my *Kindle* device and I am always searching Amazon's library for e-books to upload and devour. Amazon has a huge selection of titles on the topics that I am particularly interested in. These include biographies, auto-biogra-

phies, life stories about people's experiences of one sort or another and my main topics of attention - war stories and history. I read only books that relate to true events - no novels or fantasies for me!"

Continuing with his one-man relaxation technique, Stephen added that he is a big fan of *BBC Radio 4* and especially *The Book Programme*.

"I note down the title of anything that takes my fancy and then upload it to my e-reader from the Amazon Store and put it in the internal library for future consumption," he explained.

"The big advantage of these electronic reading devices is that they can be read in the dark, for example in bed without having the room light on, so that you do not disturb your partner who may be sleeping beside you!"

"I can get home late at night, slide into bed and read for a while without waking the wife. And the rustling of paper as I turn the pages is also a thing of the past as well as you just slide your finger across the illuminated screen to read the next paragraph!"

"Then there's the convenience of portability for reading when away on holidays. It is certainly much flatter than a 300 page paperback - although I'm happy to cut down reading time on ranks with it seemingly starting to get busier. Perhaps some of the returning passengers may even recommend a good book!"

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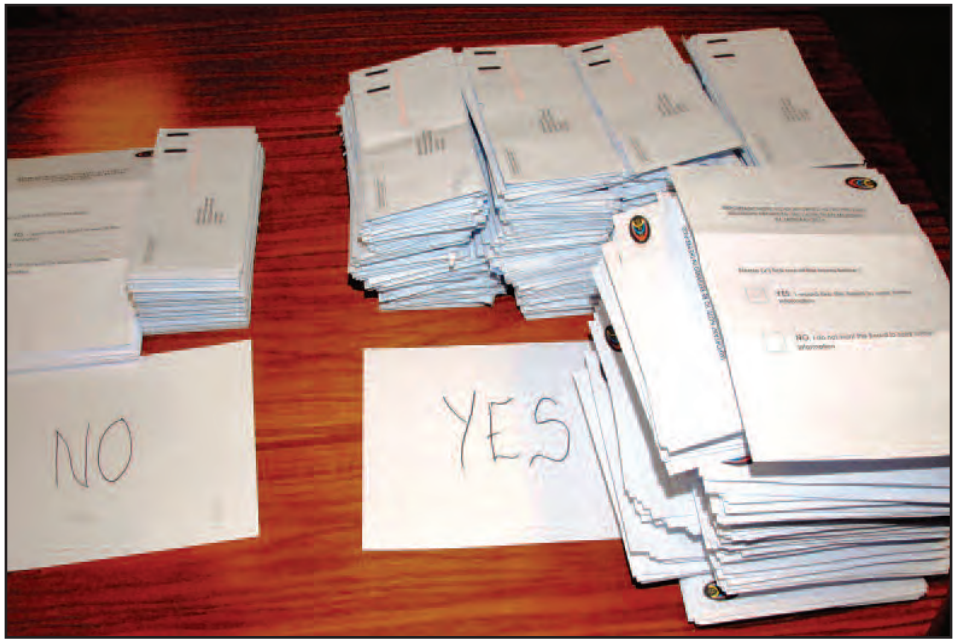
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The Big Vote Count!

Together with a letter sent to Members last month by **Brian Rice** on behalf of the **Dial-a-Cab** Board of Management regarding interest shown in purchasing this Society by two organisations, a questionnaire also asked for a simple yes or no as to whether the Board should seek further information.

On the morning of 28th January 2014, all votes were counted and witnessed by a Society Arbitrator. Despite an open invitation to DaC members to come to the office to view the counting process, no drivers showed up. However, *Call Sign* was there.

A total of 85.2 percent of the questionnaires sent out were returned by members. The 'Yes' and 'No' voting papers were kept in two separate piles and each pile was counted three times by a different member of the counting staff to verify the accuracy of the count. Of those 85.2% of questionnaires returned, 90.51% said 'yes' to the Board seeking more information on the interest shown in Dial-a-Cab as a business venture.



It wasn't difficult to see which way the votes were going!

Call Sign asks...

WILL THEY NEVER LEARN???

By the time you read this issue of *Call Sign*, you will undoubtedly have heard of the lucky escape of actress **Lydia Huhne**. Whilst the mainline newspapers made a big deal over the fact that her parents are former disgraced cabinet minister **Chris Huhne** and **Vicky Pryce**, we prefer to focus on the fact that she is an actress who also co-runs the respected **BurntOut** traveling theatre company that specialises in taking classic and Shakespearian plays to historic venues in the South of England. They have also raised £thousands for charity at each performance.

Why do we tell you that? Well it's to show that the 24-year old Ms Huhne is an intelligent woman who, even though admitting to being "a bit merry" after leaving her friend's birthday party, should have known better than to jump into a car just because the person behind the wheel claimed to be a minicab driver.

Within minutes, the driver – who she described as a "stocky Afro-Caribbean man" had pulled over and put himself into the back of the car with Lydia, locked the doors and tried to sexually assault her. She may have been a bit merry, but she knew enough to realise what this driver was trying to do and head-butted him – probably picked up from fight scenes in some of her plays. She also told the attacker that she had a Stanley knife in her pocket and would use it. She admitted afterwards that it wasn't true! Fortunately she then managed to get out of the car while the driver sat there laughing.

You may say that she wasn't to know, but her statement afterwards says otherwise when warning others against taking what she described as unlicensed cabs.

"That's the first time I had ever used a non-

licensed cab. However close you are to home, however safe you feel, you must never get in those cars. They are just touters. I feel quite lucky that nothing really serious happened, but I'm pretty shaken up by the whole event."

And what about the person who called the car? Did they know that the car was unlicensed and even if it had been, shouldn't have been hailed?

The Met Police Safer Transport Command is investigating, but however brave Lydia Huhne was, *Call Sign* has to ask the same question we have asked so many times before...

Lydia : Lucky escape but why was she in the car?
Will they never learn??? *See page 12 for tout squad update.

*Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online*



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Patsy makes his plea at the AGM

As a current and long-serving member of the circuit, I turn on my terminal to start work and the first words I see are *The Gentleman's Circuit*, so please boys let's try and prove it. I'll give you a scenario:

Imagine being on the circuit for over forty years or more. A life dedicated to **Dial-a-Cab** and all it stands for, with decades spent making friends and feeling like a long-standing member of a family - the size of which could give my family (and its seven daughters) a run for its money! Unfortunately, time goes on, times get hard and through financial difficulty and dwindling credit rides, you are left with no choice but to leave the family you've spent years nurturing. Then 3 months, or even a matter of weeks (or in one case one week) later, a letter arrives on your doorstep detailing proposals for your company to be bought by another - a deal which would have left you with the sort of sum that would have eased so many of your financial pressures and made life just that little bit easier. If only you'd just hung in there for few more months - or even a week!

I know some of these drivers personally. I've known them to run from Bayswater to Prince of Wales Drive to pick up and cover a new account ride. As, God rest his soul, the late **Manny Conway** used to say: *From acorns, grow oak trees*. And it's the acorns that have made **Dial-a-Cab** our multi-million pound oak tree that it is today.

If, and I stress *IF*, the sale of the Society goes

Patsy McCarthy (C01) made an impassioned plea at last month's **AGM** - one that was rejected. But he wanted those that didn't attend to see the point he was putting across...

Takeovers... and those that left DaC early?

through, there must be some way for our philanthropic family to give our ill-timed, long-serving ex-members a slice of the pie. For example, for those who left within the last four months from the date of the letter of proposal and who have been on the circuit for a specified number of years, we could let them have an *ex-gratia* payment. Because I personally - and I'm sure every sympathetic, good-hearted driver out there - would deem it fair. And, I'm sure my good ol' friend, **Dave Kupler (Y74)** could well have written this rhyme...

From his window he watches as cabbies go and come on their way,

Hoping to get a job homeward, as he often did in his day,

He remembers the dark of the morning, and the nights in the rain,

The good times, the bad times and the friends he knew that he may never see again.

At night when the streets are deserted, except for the takeaway signs,

He remembers the men that he worked with, for the Beeb, the House of Commons with their chimes.

He made so many friends in the shelter, that no one would feel all alone,

And maybe if there were less success stories, he may well have got a job home.

He can never explain quite what happened;

years seemed to pass like a day,

Was it the fumes of the traffic that took the strength from his limbs away?

Sometimes he thinks of the job, he got from Hounslow to Park Lane,

And the friends he made at Ealing Back Gate, he may never see them again.

As he makes his way back to his home town, rain starts to fall on the ground,

And a young man just finished the Knowledge, asked him where work could be found.

He said, "Son, take a long look at Patsy and remember, whatever you do,

That tired and worn out old cabbie, was once a young fella like you.

P is for *p*owerful when put to the test.

A is for *a*lways doing your best.

T is for *t*rying to see if it can be done and

S is for *s*taying when working was done.

Y is for *y*earning to see you again, proud to be cabbies and hardworking men.

"Cabbie, remember whatever you do, you're the rock that London stands on."

So I appeal to the Board of Management and all our drivers, please, *please* consider this proposal.

Patsy McCarthy (C01)

After manager Neil Shipperley is forced to resign from North Greenford United, Lee Pearce tells Call Sign...

DaC's Lee: I'm off too!



The last time Lee played under J.B. Bates, he was in a Championship-winning team!

Dial-a-Cab driver and goalkeeper for **Calor League Division One Central** team **North Greenford United FC**, **Lee Pearce (J71)**, has left the team following the departure of the team's manager, former **Chelsea** and **Southampton** star **Neil Shipperley**.

Although the team haven't been playing well and are currently just two places above bottom team **Ashford (Kent)**, Lee has been regularly saving them from real maulings by his outstanding form. In fact, his form has been so amazing at times that following a 4 - 1 loss at **Dunstable Town**, a local newspaper still made Lee the man of the match following a

string of top drawer saves!

Whilst Lee couldn't pretend that Neil Shipperley's position wasn't in danger, he was upset when learning that Shipps was going to be sacked - because the manager himself hadn't even been told. Lee told **Call Sign**: "Yes, I liked Shipps as a person, but when

the bar staff know that the manager is to be sacked before the man himself, then you know it's time to leave."

Lee has now joined **Bedfont and Feltham FC** of the **Combined Counties League Div1**. The team are currently still in two cups and 9 points behind a promotion spot, but with a game in hand.

"I'm looking forward to playing there," Lee told us, "It also reunites me with Jon-Barrie Bates, my skipper when we won the league title with **Bedfont Green**."

Neil Shipperley resigned after discovering he was to be fired...



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

Brethren of the Whip



...the younger they fall!

Hackney Coachman **Thomas Clare** was halfway through his shift when he pulled up outside his usual watering hole, the aptly named **Coach and Horses** in **Charles Street** (now **Wellington Street**), Covent Garden. He parked opposite and asked the waterman, **William Wilson**, to move the coach onto the rank as soon as a space occurred.

Clare went to the rear of the pub to answer a call of nature, then went into the tap room and ordered a pint of beer. Shortly afterwards, Wilson came in and informed Clare that he was fourth on the rank which was around the corner in **York Street** (now the eastern end of **Tavistock Street**). The two then - as was custom - shared the pint of beer between them - apparently a half pint of beer being the going rate for putting a coach onto the rank.

They walked out of the pub together and Clare walked up to where his coach should have been, only to find that there was another coach lying fourth in the rank. He went back to the waterman who protested that he had definitely left it on the rank. Clare now had the unenviable task of telling his masters, **Mr and Mrs Cannon**, that their hackney coach and two horses had been stolen!

About half an hour later, off-duty hackney

coachman **George Smith** was walking by the junction of **Fenchurch Street** and **Gracechurch Street** when he noticed a hackney coach going past him towards London Bridge and being driven at a rapid rate. The coach slowed down as it went round the bend and as Smith was walking in the same direction, he ran up behind the coach and jumped onto the back springs to cadge a free ride. The coach soon accelerated at speed over the bridge.

From the chocolate brown colour of the coach and its gold trim, Smith realised that the coach must belong to **Mr Cannon of Aldersgate Street**. At the rear of the coach was a small opening, ostensibly for the passengers to look out from whence they came. Smith peered through this opening and saw that the carriage was empty. Puzzled as to why an empty coach was travelling at such a fast pace, he carefully stood up on the springs and looked over the roof of the hackney. He was surprised to see that the driver was no more than what he later described as a "dirty boy." He sat back down on the springs and waited for the coach to stop.

Eventually the coach came to a stop on the coach rank outside the **Kings Bench Prison** (then situated on the corner of **Borough Road** and **Newington Causeway**). Smith jumped down and made as if he had been walking from **St George's Fields**. As the boy got down from the seat, Smith questioned him about what he was up to.

"My master is here," said the boy, "we have just set down a fare at the corner; he has given me six-pence to ride with him tonight."

Smith said he knew him to be lying and that

he believed he had stolen the coach. A Watchman was called in order to take the boy, named as **Charles Jones**, into custody. Smith later testified that the boy told him twice to *slow it*, which he took as meaning that Smith should let him go and forget about it. He added that the boy confessed to taking the coach from **Charles Street**, so Smith then asked him if he had earned any money for the driver. Unemployed people would often take a coach from a rank, with or without the drivers compliance. They would earn several shillings before returning it, usually paying the driver 50 - 75% of the takings or sometimes just abandoning it altogether, much to the driver's loss. **Charlie Jones** was not acting as a buck; he had stolen the hackney coach - probably under orders from an elder person.

Smith drove the coach - with the Watchman and the erstwhile artful dodger in the back - to the yard at **Aldersgate Street**. **George Cannon**, who had seen the return of his coach and horses within just a few hours, was in no mood for mercy. He told the Watchman that the boy should be taken to the Compter (a small prison).

On 15th December 1792 at the Old Bailey, **Charles Jones** was found guilty of animal theft. The value of the two horses was put at £30 and he was sentenced to death. There were no recommendations for mercy and the sentence was duly carried out.

Charles Jones was just 12 years old...

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

Over-ranking at London Bridge

London Taxis Private Hire has told *Call Sign* that taxis over-ranking at **London Bridge station** are causing problems. An **LTPH** spokesperson at the **Blackfriars** office told us:

"There have recently been a number of incidents reported where taxis have obstructed the entrance to **London Bridge bus station**, preventing buses from being able to enter the station and reach stops and also resulting in bus passengers having to alight at the entrance to the station instead of at the designated stops.

Taxis obstructing the entrance to **London Bridge bus station** have a serious impact on traffic in the area, preventing taxis as well as buses from being able to enter the station to safely drop-off passengers and may create a safety risk to pedestrians.

All taxi drivers are reminded that if there is no space on the taxi rank, then they must move on and not stop or obstruct the station entrance.

Enforcement action with the police is planned to tackle this problem.

There have also been reports of taxi drivers being abusive towards bus station staff and any incidences of abuse or other complaints will be reported and investigated."



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The biggest but still the best



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

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

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



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

so equipped with fully computerised diagnostics systems.

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

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

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



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

Since I last wrote in *Call Sign*, the **Dial-a-Cab** Sales team have been busy completing a number of tenders. As much as I would like to keep you better informed, we do need to keep all our cards close to our chest at the moment.

Needless to say the completing of a tender is very time consuming in asking us to supply various types of information. Evaluation of a tender is completed using a scoring value relating to how one answers each question. Every question has a contributing percentage towards the total score, but the question that can hold up 60 percent of the overall score is the one describing the actual cost. How we offset our carbon footprint costs, which we need to do to maintain our accreditation, can be as little as 10 percent. I smile at that because it is compulsory within the tender for us to do it.

As I write this, I have received notification about one tender we completed and for which we have been shortlisted and requested to give a presentation. Hopefully, this is a start of better things to come.

January was busy, as I thought it would be, with account enquiries and requests for opening accounts. Each one has been sent our terms and many have been returned for opening. While these may not spend vast

DAC SALES REPORT

With Keith Cain



sums, they are clients and we must be mindful of the fact that they have chosen to open an account with DaC.

As I gauged the feeling of members attending the AGM, I have taken on board what was said about gratuities and run-ins. I can assure you that I will do whatever can be done to gain more work and I will judge each new client on their proposed spend and size. It's a tough market out there, especially as many private hire companies on their websites bla-

tantly advertise they are 30 percent cheaper than black cabs. But where most cannot beat us is fleet size.

During the recent tube strike, one car company simply told their clients they could not take any more bookings as they were full. In situations like that, it shows up the men from the boys.

With the request from JPM to extend our service, it has delayed **Carol Carpenter** joining the team. However, by the time you read this Carol will be with us in her **Customer Relations** role. As much as we are proactively searching for new business, Carol will be focusing on our existing clients - an area we so need to develop and ensure our clients know what we can offer.

All I can ask of you is to keep delivering the service we are renowned for. Take the trips that are offered to you and ensure your cab only has the Dial-a-Cab logos on...

Keith Cain
DaC Head of Sales

Illegal cab touting crackdown...

Over 170 drivers arrested!

Over 170 arrests have been made for cab related offences during two crackdowns as part of Operation Safer Travel at Night, a joint initiative by the TfL funded Metropolitan Police Service's Safer Transport Command (STC) and City of London Police (CoLP). A spokesperson told Call Sign...

"Minicabs picked up off the street without being booked through a licensed minicab operator are illegal, unsafe and pose a danger to the travelling public, including the risk of sexual assault. The arrests were the result of continued targeted enforcement against un-booked minicabs (also known as touts or illegal cabs) and other cab-related offences across the capital as part of Safer Travel at Night - a partnership between TfL, the Mayor, MPS and CoLP to reduce cab-related sexual offences.

In conjunction with Safer Travel at Night's two main periods of activity - during the new academic year in September and over the festive period in December - officers from the STC, CoLP and TfL's Taxi and Private Hire compliance teams stepped up activity to help raise awareness of the dangers of using un-booked minicabs. In addition to the arrests, officers stopped and checked over 5,000 taxi and private hire vehicles and drivers. TfL's face to face teams also engaged with over 77,000 students during September, which included a presence at 24 university 'freshers' fayres across London.

TfL's Cabwise app saw download figures double to 53,000 during the festive period - with total downloads now standing at 92,000 since its launch in 2012. Face to face teams also visited around 50 bars, pubs and clubs in hotspot locations, engaging with over 55,000 people and handing out 138,000 'Z cards' - information leaflets on how to get home safely.

The Safer Travel at Night partnership was launched in 2002 and aims to improve the safety of travelling at night via cabs through industry

regulation and licensing, enforcement and education. The communications campaign aims to make people travelling at night aware of the dangers of picking up un-booked minicabs off the street, as well as informing them of the best ways to get home safely.

Acting Chief Superintendent **Rob Revill**, Safer Transport Command, said: "These results demonstrate our commitment to tackling touting and other illegal cab activity in London. Our dedicated Cab Enforcement Unit will continue to be out on the streets of London, all year round, using a variety of tactics to disrupt, deter and detect cab related offences."

Inspector **David Aspinall**, from City of London Police, said: "The City of London Police are pleased to have supported this year's Safer Travel at Night campaign, as we have done previously. Over the past year we have been undertaking enforcement and compliance activity amongst black cabs and private hire vehicles, making sure that they are roadworthy and that we know who is driving them.

We have also worked with the public providing advice on the best ways to get home safely. We also continue to send a strong message to those drivers who plan to operate cabs illegally, it will not be tolerated in the City and we will catch them."

With the Lydia Huhne case (see page 8), we do not envy them their task...



Another tout is nicked!

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DaC's Network Administrator, Jon Winterburn, looks at the best Apps around and all tried by him first. This month to help your children with their maths.....

JON WINTERBURN LOOKS AT...



Top 5 Basic Maths Apps

If you have children still at school, you'll know how much of a battle it can be to get them to do their maths homework (unless they're one of the lucky ones for whom it comes naturally). Whilst the more complex stuff like Algebra is important, maintaining a good command of the basics is paramount. Kids love technology, so why not use it to help their maths skills?

Here is my list of the top 5 maths apps currently available for iPad (sorry, none of them are available on Android yet). My 11 year old son has extensively played with each of these on an iPad 2 and has enjoyed them. Each App is ideal for 8-12 year olds.

Functns is an iPad App for practicing and learning multiplication tables. Linear progressions of the Times Table provide pattern recognition while a random or shuffled table progression develops memory retention. Students earn achievements to represent completion of specific skill sets related to both styles of times table progression. The achievements – some of which are very difficult to attain – lend the App a game-like feel which appeals to kids. Functns is a gorgeous App, and best of all it is totally free!

Available on iOS for FREE

Quick Maths improves arithmetic fluency and promotes development of mental strategies for addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and mixed operations. As all answers must be written on the screen by hand, it also improves handwriting skills. With a focus on self-improvement, Quick Maths provides feedback on the student's progress as they develop arithmetic skills at their own pace. Just like Functns, Quick Maths has a game-like feel to it.

Available on iOS for £1.49

Long Division Touch takes one of the most hated, painful maths disciplines and turns it into a fun exercise. Students can learn the mechanics of long division with a touch interface. Drag digits down, slide the decimal into



Maths Mage

the correct position and tap to identify repeating decimals. With loads of lessons and randomly generated problems to solve, your kids will conquer long division in no time.

Available on iOS for FREE

Oh No Fractions! is a fractions App which lets students explore and learn about fractions with a simple and intuitive interface. Compare and visualise two fractions and guess which one is greater, reduce fractions and visually explore fractions with pie charts. Basically, this App provides everything the kids need to take the pain out of fractions, using simple visuals.

Available on iOS for FREE

The Math Mage is an action-adventure game that transports you back to the middle ages, where a magic spell has unleashed all manner of monsters in your village. Only you can defeat all the monsters thanks to your math skills by casting spells using mental arithmetic. With more than 200 equations to solve and 4 difficulty levels, The Math Mage is a top quality role-playing fantasy game with stunning visuals. Your kids will enjoy it so much; they won't feel like they're learning!

Available on iOS for £1.49

Jon Winterburn
DaC Network Administrator

MOON BEEVER SOLICITORS

Do you know the importance of making a Will? Are you sure that those you intend to inherit will do so if you haven't made a Will? And do you know if tax will have to be paid on your assets on death? You may be surprised at the answers if you have no current will.

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To discuss Wills, Inheritance Tax planning, Executorship, Trustee and Attorney matters, long term care issues or any related matter please contact Alexandra Bartrope or Julian Hay on 0207 400 7770
Or email abartrope@moonbeever.com or jhay@moonbeever.com

To discuss conveyancing and all property issues please contact Daniel Moore or Ahmed Anwar on 0207 400 7770
Or email dmoore@moonbeever.com or aanwar@moonbeever.com

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Have you ever had a question that you, even as the world's finest taxi drivers, couldn't answer and just didn't know who to ask? Passengers who couldn't speak English? Someone who wanted to know the opening times of a Wren church? Where is the nearest free-to-use loo?

Well let me point you to the very place where all these answers and more can be found: The **City of London Information Centre (CIC)**. I spoke to Deputy Manager **Andrew Bright** who took us through some top tips on how to help your passengers get the best out of their time in London...

"The **CIC** is where visitors can come with no idea about where to go or what to do and leave chock-full with so many ideas that a return visit to the capital becomes a must. Whether they've got an hour or a week to fill, we're the people to come to for suggestions. We're located right next to **St Paul's Cathedral** on **St Paul's Churchyard** and are on hand daily from **9.30am to 5.30pm** and **Sundays from 10am to 4pm**. The only days we're closed are Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

But I hear you cry *Parlez-vous Français?*

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

Kupkake's Korner



Splintered???

London cabs - the best by far,
Diamond geezers – each a star,

In our City, no matter where you are,
They're always better than a hire car.

But even as I begin to write,
Emission rules will make us fight,

As the posts are moved from the light,
By those that think they're always right.

We're just another trade that's splintered,
Like the firemen – and the printers,

So who is next for the redundant pile?
Take a guess... Sit on it a while...

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Looking for a tourist office since the London Visitor Centre on Regent Street shut its doors? Call Sign's Bob Woodford asks the City of London Information Centre what they are about..

**Parla Italiano,
Sprechen Sie Deutsch...
HELP!!!**



The CIC at St Pauls

Parla Italiano? Sprechen Sie Deutsch? Mais oui, whatever the language spoken is by our many visitors - and we average over 400,000 per year - the chances are that we'll speak it. French, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, Romanian, Lithuanian, Polish, Basque and most recently Chinese, mean that whatever the question, not only do we have the answer but we have the language for it as well.

We're also a one-stop shop. We offer anything and everything a visitor will need for their trip to London. Discounted tickets to top West End shows? *Check*. Oyster cards? *Check*. No hotel for the night and doesn't want to traipse around town looking for somewhere? *Check*. Passenger in a rush to visit the Tower of London, Madame Tussauds or any other leading attraction and wants a fast-track ticket (and to save money at the same time)? *Check*. Or even have a day away from the big smoke and head into the countryside for a trip to Stonehenge and the Cotswolds? *Check!* Perhaps they just want to know who the best taxi drivers in the world are. *Check!*

As you might expect, we're also experts on the **City of London** itself and if visitors are at a loss at where to explore, then we'll jump at the opportunity to talk about hidden gems like the **Guildhall Art Gallery** with its **Roman Amphitheatre**, the **Clockmaker's Museum**, a favourite hidden City pub or a wander through the oldest part of London with our free **City Visitor Trail map**.

We're also passionate about the rest of London. Each and every one of us knows something special about the capital so that when we come together as a team, we know almost everything that's going on - whether that's something to do with kids, where to

watch the weekend's big match, what's playing at some of London's best fringe theatres and lots more besides.

Do you remember the **Britain & London Visitor Centre** that was at **1 Regent Street**? With that now closed we are the only official tourist office in central London, so we're by far the best place to come for some advice on where to go for a weekend away outside London. We're also stocked with maps and brochures available for free or to buy. Across the team we have over 70 years' experience in the travel & tourism industry, so who better to advise on how to have the time of your life in London and the rest of the country?

And, of course, we've also had some of those questions that are a little trickier to answer. Some of our favourite questions on the odder end of the spectrum include being asked where Sherlock Holmes is buried, what time the clowns perform at Piccadilly Circus, if we could recommend a plastic surgeon and even where horse tranquilisers could be bought!

So our message to taxi-drivers would be: come in and say hello when you're passing by and even test the team and we'll find you an answer! So when you're next asked if there is a tourist office in central London, you now know the answer. Send any questions our way and we'll be delighted to help.

And finally...we don't like to brag too much but we have previously been endorsed by licensed black cab drivers who have been known to say that if anyone else can find an answer, we can!"

So there we are guys – it's there for you to use...!

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

All you need to know about the 2013 DaC AGM

Sunday 9 February 2014 saw the 2013 Dial-a-Cab AGM held again at the HAC Barracks on City Road. What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by Call Sign Editor Alan Fisher. It is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. Some paragraph grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the report as compact as possible. Approximate attendance taken by Call Sign was 105, not including the BoM.

The meeting opened at 11.00 with Chairman **Brian Rice** asking for the traditional one-minute silence to remember those that had passed away during the previous 12 months. Approval was then requested and given for the presence of a sound engineer and two young DaC ladies, **Jacqui Chart** and **Shelagh Adkins**. The Chairman pointed out that those who had already voted by post should not vote again...

2012 Minutes

Minutes of the 2012 meeting were passed with 98.8% of the total membership voting in favour. There were no matters arising...

Annual Report including the Chairman's Report

There were several questions regarding the Chairman's Report within the Annual Report and the Report itself.

First up was **Laurence Kelvin (W88)** who pointed out that our terminals depreciate in value each year, but that the value of the building was surely going up. Yet in the accounts, it is shown as depreciating. **Brian Rice** answered that it was to save getting a new valuation each year. He assured Laurence that should the building ever be sold, then it would be correctly valued and would be worth far more than the £4.7million valuation in the report. Brian added that the building had already increased in valuation by around £2million since we bought it. **Mike Tovey**, from DaC accountants **Chantrey Vellacott** added that when there was no intention of selling, getting a valuation would be pointless. It was only if DaC House were to be sold that you'd get it valued and gain a correct price.

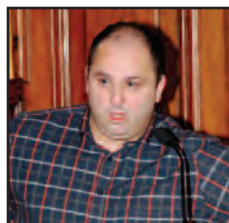


Colin Jenkins (Y22) was next up and asked which members of the DaC senior staff classified for a pension? Brian told the meeting and added that the Board were not among those that would receive one. The Chairman explained that to entice top people into working in high profile jobs such as IT, you needed to provide items such as pensions.

Gary Cowderoy (N17) asked what plans the BoM had to try to reduce any further losses, especially after the loss of our Dockland account. Brian responded that we would look at our overheads and possibly subscriptions but that nothing had yet been decided. He also added that **Keith Cain** had recently moved to head the DaC Sales department and was very experienced in that field. But Brian also said that while the current market dictated that customers wanted more for less, there had been a slight but noticeable improvement and he hoped that would be maintained, especially as signs suggested that the economy was picking up. If that proves to be the case, Brian said, then we would come into our own again with customers paying for service, whereas they are currently getting it "on the cheap."

Gordon Bennett (Y91) asked whether our Concierge system was also bringing in less money. The Chairman replied that it had, together with the general economy and named the accounts that used it.

Next up to the lectern was **Steve Hutchinson (S49)**. He asked about the **Citigroup** account, having read in *Call Sign* that it too was up for Tender. Brian said that they were also looking to save money and although they would be using DaC as their taxi provider, he believed that they would be using more cars at night. Brian added that there seemed to be no continuity on these big accounts and that the people brought in to deal with any cost savings were not those that actually used the account and in fact told the meeting that for both main Dockland accounts, those dealing with the Tender results had been brought in from other countries – New York in



one case with Budapest and Costa Rica in the other. Service has apparently no bearing on who they use in the future – purely cost. Brian also gave a personal viewpoint that if the company gave more work to cars, then he didn't think they would be able to cope and that any loss would be short term. He quoted the case of the HoC/HoL account which went to a car firm, but it soon became apparent that the car firm may have been cheaper but they just couldn't cope. He also added that the House was also out to Tender. Steve came back and asked whether the JPM loss was purely because ComCab had offered no run-ins and no gratuity and when Brian said it was, Steve asked whether we should consider doing the same? Brian came back and said that it made no difference to the Board if there were no run-ins etc, but also added that it would mean our service would become abysmal and we would end up losing the account anyway through that bad service. He told Members present that the service offered by **Hailo** earlier that week when there had been the two-day tube strike, had been "zilch." Drivers, he said, would not pass work when there was no run-in if it was busy out. He compared that to drivers running to the Island at night when the Limehouse Link was closed and said that it would undoubtedly affect service.

Brian then spoke about the AGM in 2003 when there was something of a downturn and drivers at that AGM had asked him to "go in cheap" for the then HoC Tender and that they would put up with lower prices in order to keep the account. So DaC went in with low prices. The result was that we couldn't cover the work. He did add that although he was a firm believer in run-ins and gratuities, he admitted that there was room to reduce gratuity if it made a difference. Steve then mentioned that he would be against paying the 10% as Hailo charged and Brian said that if drivers wanted it, they could do away with subscriptions and charge a 10% "fee" for every trip drivers did, but added that it would probably cost most drivers far more than the £30 (+ VAT) a week subs they currently pay. He said that drivers wanted to do what was best for them as individuals and he understood that, going so far as to say that he didn't blame them but said that the BoM had to do what they felt was best for the Society as a whole. He told the meeting that had DaC worked on the 10% as against subscriptions in the last accounting year, then it would have earned an extra £80,000!

The Financial and Chairman's reports were then passed with 99.1% of the total membership voting in favour.

Auditor's report and reappointing Chantrey Vellacott

Mike Tovey then spoke about the **Chantrey Vellacott** Auditor's Report. He said we had a strong balance sheet and generous reserves

All you need to know about the 2013 DaC AGM continued from previous page

in the bank and had done well considering outside circumstances. But he warned that there were still challenging conditions out there.

Adrian Landau (T14) was first up to question Mike and brought a few smiles when he asked if Chantrey Vellacott still



used Dial-a-Cab! Mike responded that they did but on a reduced level, Brian chimed in to say that they were much like other accounts – their useage had gone down. Adrian then asked why we had changed our bank account and Brian explained it was purely that we had substantial cash funds and this bank had offered us a far higher interest rate on those funds. Brian brought another smile when adding that he supposed we were doing to our old bank what our account customers had been doing to us - and putting cash first! Adrian pointed out that the bank we had moved back to had almost put us out of business during a much darker time for the Society and yet we were now moving back to them. Brian agreed but said that in reality a bank was a bank and that they were all pretty much the same – they would lend you an umbrella when the sun was out but would want it back when it rained.

Russell Poluck MBE (T55) was next and asked what percentage DaC earned from credit card charges. Brian said that we charged an extra



10% and out of that there was a merchant fee plus administration charges. Russell then brought up the previous week when the tube strike brought chaos to London and the 'bid' zone was filled up – many of them being credit card trips but with no destinations. Russell asked whether it would have helped coverage had they been unmasked? Brian replied that he understood Russell's point, but it was the way the system has been programmed and to change a program for just two days would not be worthwhile. He queried why so many reject trips weren't accepted when drivers were close to the pick-up anyway, but added that evening drivers were much better when it came to covering work than the day men – although he also said that he accepted some of that could be down to traffic conditions.

Ray Sorene (A53) was next and queried the difference between this year and last regarding cash in hand and said £3 million



appeared to have vanished! Brian put his mind at ease when he said that was the bond that caused us to move due to low interest at the previous bank. He assured Ray that we still had it in our new account and it was just that they had to wait for an expiry date before transferring it.

Last under this section was **Gerry Harris (D58)** who asked why the Board had "only cut down their wages by



£7000?" Brian said that they had made savings last year of over £700,000 and asked how Gerry thought these would be made if the BoM were out driving cabs rather than being in DaC House and working on those savings. Did Gerry want the BoM to work on making those savings and at the same time take a pay cut? Brian took Gerry back to Christmas 2007 when DaC paid subscribers over half a million pounds in bonuses to cover the work. He said that he didn't remember Gerry getting up at an AGM and tell the Board that we'd had a brilliant time and that the BoM deserved a bonus. Brian also added that it had been far easier to run the Society in 2007 than it was now, yet the Board hadn't taken a wage increase for almost three years.

The Auditor's report was then passed and Chantrey Vellacott reappointed with 98.2% of the total membership voting in favour.

Rule Changes

There were none this year...

Propositions

There were none this year...

Any Other Business

Pat Keefe (G01) was first up with AOB questions and asked whether we had missed a golden opportunity



before getting new terminals with most drivers having smartphones, of just selling our building and moving into a railway arch with just two girls (with miniskirts) in it? To laughs, Brian asked whether drivers would be able to stop there for tea! Taking a more serious look, Brian spoke

about the progress of technology but said that we were doing what we had always done for the past 61 years and that technology wasn't just about that moment. As one example, the DaC Chairman said that clients liked the fact that the meter was connected to the terminal and they knew that no one could just add money on. With smart phones, you couldn't do that and many accounts without the facility of knowing what was on the meter at arrival and at the end of the trip would just move straight over to cars where they don't need meters because they can always get fixed prices.

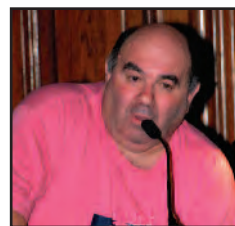
Pat went on to say that he felt we should also have gone to a GPS system and that he had written to Call Sign about that. Brian said that was our next project and the reason we hadn't done it earlier was because we were in the process of developing the new terminals in addition to designing an App – not to mention the new accounting system and call taker screens that were both built in-house. Once they had been achieved, a new dispatching system featuring GPS trip distribution was next on the 'to do' list. The only item on the 'to do' list that never went ahead was a driver App where after discussing it, the BoM felt that taking outsiders could put our standards down. Brian took the opportunity to remind drivers that when they received a credit card trip on their terminals, that may well have come via our App as the terminal shows no distinction between that and a trip ordered via the Control Centre.

Russell Poluck (T55) then returned to the lectern and suggested that our welcome boards were not professional enough. Brian asked **Allan Evans** if he could oversee production of a better name board as soon as the current batch was gone. Russell went onto say that it was about time



DaC drivers smartened themselves and their taxis up comparing us to the more upmarket PH companies. He said that the public liked a smart driver and vehicle. Brian said that he agreed but added that it would have to be up to the individual.

Max Arnold (D66) followed Russell and suggested that accounts on the Island needed an incentive to use us and that



our only problem was when the Link route was shut. He added that he wasn't an advocate of getting work at any costs, but suggested that Rate 3 after 10pm was ludicrously high and possibly worth looking at. He

also asked about our... where the customer... end of the trip. He... most of the time but... he did involving our... town where the... accepted. Max asked... go back to pre-au... agreed with Max and... in touch with our cl... subject. He said the... businesses were all... rise. One was hotels... car hire companies... inclusion as a special

Paul Heatley (V09) was next up. He said he had been on DaC for seven years but was upset that the £1 subs for thirty year drivers had been taken away

the advert for new c... put into the trade p... ting and one month... that he bought a n... have been availed t... had written to Brian... replied that it was si... offering incentives... but not existing on... our loyalty was bei... said that the £186,0... away the £1 and re... subs had been re-in... fully liveried taxis v... (those drivers get... rebate). Responding... claim, Brian said th... vers were now pay... plus VAT and that w...

There was some b... Paul mentioned tha... Tweet the previous... that he had read i... content of Paul's Tw... it apparently denigr... connection to the tu... replied and Tweeted... had been greatly up... comments made to... or non-arrivals occu... and that some of th... been brought to tea... Paul's Tweet, Brian... n't usually put out... access – tweeted tha... vice levels had fallen... ed to complain the... union leader **Bob**... staff and call takers... they could. Paul clai... political statement, I... hadn't been politica... making it into one... and then Brian add... the Tweet denigrati... emailing Paul to say... bad, how come he h... credits in January. H...

credit card readers didn't pay until the admitted it was ok then spoke of a job many miles around credit card wasn't and why we couldn't authorisation. Brian said that we were hearing house on the at currently only 2 owed to pre-author while the other was . We've applied for al case.



ay. He also spoke of drivers that DaC had press offering free fitn free subs. He said ew cab and should those two perks. He n and the Chairman similar to Virgin or BT to new customers es. Paul asked how ng rewarded. Brian 000 saved by taking placing it with 50% vested by putting 50 with our App ad on t a monthly 50% ng to Paul's loyalty at those 30 year dri- ying £15 per week as very good value. brief acrimony when t he had sent out a day and Brian said t. Whilst the actual eet wasn't read out, ated DaC and was in be strike. Brian had t that our call takers oset by some of the them when delays rred on those days he female ones had rs. So in response to - who said he does- DaC Tweets but had t he was sorry if ser- but if anyone want- it should be to RMT Crow and that our were doing the best med that had been a but Brian said that it al and that Paul was The two disagreed ed that after seeing ng DaC, he felt like y that if we were so ad taken so much in However, he decided

not to write it. After some crosstalk between the pair, they moved on to Paul's next point. He said that our reputa- tion for service was second to none but that we would have to start being more realistic with our cost to cus- tomers and that we should look at run- ins, gratuities and administration charges. He admitted he had written a letter to *Call Sign* before Christmas say- ing that we had to keep run-ins. However, he had now changed his mind claiming that we would never prosper with these charges in place. He then suggested a pay-as-you-go system - although not the 10% that Hailo charged. Brian responded by saying that he knew why Paul didn't want the 10% charge - because it would cost him money compared to what he was currently paying in subs. Paul suggested a weekly charge of £7 and then a charge per job depending on its distance, simi- lar to the system employed by GetTaxi. Brian said that if Paul's system were to be introduced while drivers were given destinations, they would become very choosy and say that certain jobs weren't worth that cost and our service would fail. Paul thought that this system would encourage younger drivers to come to the Society. Brian then said that he had looked at RTG's new system of £5 a week and then 10% per trip covered up to a maximum of £66 per week (includ- ing VAT) and smiled as he said he wouldn't be opposed to doing that but asked Paul if he would like that, the inference being that those who did a substantial amount of DaC trips would be paying far more than they do now. Paul said that the charges could be capped at £30 per week plus the initial £7. As he said that, a large groan broke out from the floor and Brian thanked Paul and called for the next speaker.

That was **Trevor Denton (Y51)**. He had two points; the first one was that we should follow up on those accounts that suddenly used us on tube strike days after using us rarely for some time or perhaps had not even used us at all. Trevor said he assumed that it would be to do with price. Brian replied that DaC Sales Officer **Keith Cain**, together with **Natalie Ezekiel** and **Carol Carpenter**, had already begun doing that. Brian then mentioned a letter sent to *Call Sign* from **Jon Robinson (E88)** in which he said he had gone to pick up a passenger from an account address and mentioned that he hadn't picked up there of late. They told Jon that they used *GetTaxi* when it was quiet as they were cheaper but used us when it was busier. Brian said that it proved his point that when it came to service, they were prepared to



pay if it got busy and that if as hoped, things started to get busy again, then that morning and evening busy period would last the whole day. To applause, Brian reiterated his point that once you give something away, you will not be able to get it back. He added that he was totally against giving up run-ins and gra- tuities, but that he had slightly softened his views on gratuities depending on the spend of an account. He added that all the major banking accounts had three- monthly service meetings and knew what others were paying, so if you gave one account no run-ins etc, within weeks they would all be knocking on the door demanding no run-ins etc. It was, he said, a domino effect.

Trevor's second point was to ask whether DaC had considered using a two tier system - one more expensive that would provide a better service. He queried why DB were still using so many cars when the service we provided was excellent. Brian almost repeated his pre- vious point about how when it was busy they wanted excellent service, but when quiet they wanted to pay as little as pos- sible. Trevor asked if we were losing accounts and Brian said that we weren't, but many were using us less.

Trevor then ended by saying that as an RMT member, he agreed with the pre- vious speaker re Brian's Tweet being "political." We were then treated to a review of the Tweet passage and both agreed that it might have been better had Brian said: "Complain to Bob and Boris" rather than "Complain to Bob Crow." Much to the relief of those on the floor who hadn't a clue what it was all about, the matter was then left to peace- ably go away and we moved on!

Making a second visit of the day to the lectern was **Gerry Harris (D58)** who asked whether the drivers who had the £1 subs increased to half should have had first option at the liveries, which would then have reduced their half subs by half again. Brian said that it was a very good point but that the only reason those drivers were not given priority, was because they tended to be drivers who were cutting down their hours and the purpose of the liveried cabs was to advertise our App and as such they need- ed to be on the road for as long as pos- sible each day. Gerry understood the rea- son and went on to his next point which was to compare two Brian Rice articles in *Call Sign*, one where Brian said that no one knew what offers other taxi com- panies had put in their Tenders and a second where he said he was against offering no run-ins etc. Gerry asked whether it could have been arranged for drivers to be given the choice and vote via their terminals whether we should have an attribute so that drivers pre- pared to work for no run-in would be given those trips that asked for it. Brian then asked Gerry what would happen if the nearest taxi was outside the account,

but hadn't signed up to no run-ins even though he would actually have no run-in on arrival? Brian said he felt it could become divisive. He said that in his opin- ion the BoM were there to make deci- sions otherwise we might just as well have a clerk sitting at a desk asking dri- vers to vote on any decision that were needed. Gerry came back to say that he was doing things now that he had never done before, such as ranking, because in the old days there was always another job round the corner. Times were now very tough. Brian came back, to applause, when he reiterated previous statements about why should we give excellent service for nothing. Gerry took the point.

Michael Tarr (R02) was next and began by saying that he was not anti- Board and loved DaC, wishing he could just do DaC work all day long! Brian, probably sensing a 'but', replied by saying that he loved Michael too! Mike's point was about the letter the BoM had sent out regarding the two companies interested in buying DaC. He asked what the process would be. Without naming any of the companies, he went through how the offers had come in and emphasised that there was no connection between the two but that it was just an amazing coincidence. He also revealed that a third party had now come in after hearing about the two offers. He added that the BoM had a problem in deciding which would be the best way forward. Would that involve forums where the three could put their points or should the BoM pick what they considered to be the best one and go forward with that. As he had signed a *Non-Disclosure Agreement*, he couldn't go any further but in response to Michael asking if we would have financial advisors on hand to assist us, Brian said that yes we would and added that we would also need legal advisors. To laughs, Brian added that he had learned something from account customers and would be getting a fixed price for their services! He added that nothing would be done with- out first getting professional advice.

Patsy McCarthy (C01) made his way to the mic and asked whether long- term drivers that had recently left the Society could also get a pay-out should the Society be sold. Brian gave a definitive no but added that he would try to have it written in that drivers who had left the Society through ill- health and were unable to work again or those that had genuinely retired and



handed in their badge and Bill, could be included, but definitely not those that had just stripped out. He said that when you left for reasons such as financial ones, then you were no longer a member and couldn't be included. Patsy then suggested that those drivers that did collect the money if a sale went through, might consider donating some of it into a fund for those that had put in many years and only just left.

Peter Bond (L67) then spoke and asked whether we had asked our accountants, **Chantry Vellacott**, to Tender for our work? Brian said that he had compared CT's charges with others and we were getting a good deal in addition to the fact that his relationship with **Mike Tovey** was excellent. He also said that this past year was the first time in four years that they had put their fees up. To laughs he also added that he shouldn't be too nice about them or they might put their charges up again!

Peter then said that he supported the BoM and that they were doing a very good job. He also jokingly asked where his car was, making reference to the fact that he once won one of three cars that were presented to DaC drivers over 10 years ago for covering work! He finished by asking whether Hailo and GetTaxi drivers were allowed on the circuit. Brian said that GetTaxi involved having their own hardware and was not allowed. He then said it would be churlish to try to sort out Hailo drivers, but in response to Peter, he agreed that those drivers should not be allowed to advertise Hailo on their taxis and it would be made a complaint. He added that if at any time Hailo were to bring into fruition a Business side where they took accounts, then the situation would change. Brian also took the opportunity to pass a personal point of view regarding Hailo. He said to applause that the only advantage we had over minicabs was the right to ply for hire and yet here were drivers who were destroying street hails by not only going to pick up passengers for nowt to save them going out, but who were paying 10% for the privilege!

Next up was **Graham Waite (B35)** who said that it was better to get 80% of something than 100% of nothing. He said that he felt we needed to be a bit more creative and suggested a high useage discount for customers. Brian said that we already did that and that high users get a smaller admin charge. But he added that it wasn't so much the small admin charge, it was the cost of the meter. Graham also suggested a regular driver's forum, but Brian said that we have had forums in the past and no one went. He also said that if anyone goes to see them or suggests it in *Call Sign* and it sounds like a good



idea, the Board would always look at implementing it. But what the Chairman said he didn't know, was how to make the meter cheaper to attract customers other than offering them fixed prices. He then quoted a letter from **Paul Charters (J08)** that appeared in *Call Sign's* January issue as an example where he did a morning trip from Bank Street E14 to Basinghall Avenue EC2 with a fixed price of £19.30. Paul hit a lot of traffic going through the Limehouse Link and was upset that the actual meter price came to £27.60. Brian said that the problem is that when F/PS are set, there is no way of knowing what the traffic will be like on any given day. But Graham came back and said that we needed to do something and if that meant more fixed prices, then so be it.

Jim Baptist (E06) was next to speak. He wanted to see a rule that said any driver on DaC with a sticker advertising another company, such as **Hailo**, should be put on complaint. He called it disgraceful when he saw drivers with Hailo stickers on their taxi in addition to the Society logo. Brian said that would be done and said they had photos of a DaC liveried taxi picking up at a **GetTaxi** account – the only major account the Chairman said they had – and the driver had the GetTaxi terminal fitted. To applause, he said that they could be expelled. Brian quoted a sentence from the DaC rule book, which said that there can be no exterior advertising other than the DaC logo on our taxis without the express permission of the Company Secretary. Jim came back and again called it disgraceful that Apps such as Hailo and GetTaxi weren't just taking radio work by having no run-ins etc, but were "stealing" work from drivers working the streets. Brian said the drivers were cutting their noses off to spite their faces and ended his reply to Jim by confirming that advertising would now be taken up as a complaint in addition to that already in force re other companies hardware.

Next up was **Robert Stroulger (Y50)** who spoke about any possible takeover of DaC and pointed out that as we had so much cash in the bank in addition to a valuable building, it sounded as though a company paying for the business would get so much back that they would be getting the business for nothing. Brian said that depended on how much they paid! Brian gave an example and said that if the business was worth, for example, £13million and someone wanted to pay £13million, then yes they'd be getting it for nothing. But Brian inferred that anyone making an offer would have to pay more than the paper value of the current business.

Next to speak was **Pat Keefe (G01)** again. He queried whether we were likely to attract carpetbaggers who would want to join purely



in case there was a buy-out and those drivers would cash in. Brian said a rule was already in place which said that drivers had to have been with DaC for two years before being allowed to participate in the process. Pat then asked how much the Board would get compared to drivers if the company was to be sold. Brian said it would be exactly the same. Pat then asked about the 10% credit card charge and quoted a private passenger he had for a week and who had to pay £36 on a £365 fare. He said that clearing it via an App would have only cost £14. Brian pointed out to much laughter from the floor that the App driver would have to pay that £14 himself and that had Pat been that upset, he could have knocked off the £14 he would have paid and then his passenger would only have had to pay £22. Brian inferred that anyone spending £365 on a credit card for a taxi fare was probably doing so on a corporate card and wouldn't overly worry about the extra cost. Pat came back and admitted that his passenger could well afford to be one of our possible buyers!

DaC Marshal Bill Chatterway (A43) spoke about run-ins and said he was totally against giving them up. One of the reasons in addition to just losing money was that as a Marshal, he had heard that taxis might be banned from parking near the Wharf unless they were on a rank and for hire and that any trips called would involve cabs running from whichever place they found to wait away from the actual Wharf – such as Limeharbour or Millharbour. Brian confirmed that the Wharf security had complained on several occasions about our taxis parking there and that they could actually kick us out. As an aside, Bill added worryingly that the security there kept records of any drivers having been warned and that they could ban you from entering onto the Wharf and you could do nothing about it.

Peter Doyle (P60) queried the 'bid' zone and that any trip in it could only be offered to one cab at a time with everyone else being given the 'no trip in zone' message. Peter gave an example of how he believed that could be improved when he said that although the bids showed an uncovered trip in NW6, if a message also went out saying a trip needs covering in the actual street, then many who may have bid and were not far from NW6 but a substantial way from the actual street – especially during the peak traffic hours – wouldn't bother, leaving it clearer for those that were fairly close. Brian said that he agreed with Peter 100% and would ask Control Centre Manager, **Allan Evans**, to speak to our dispatchers and to try to improve that situation.

Call Sign heard that it was implemented the following day and was considered to have been successful, although some dri-



vers did complain about the number of extra messages.

Brian added that both he and Allan Evans received data concerning scrubs and every scrubbed trip was checked to see whether anything could have been done to improve that particular piece of coverage, but that sometimes there was nothing more.

Laurence Kelvin (W88) then made his second trip to the lectern. He spoke of a letter he had written to *Call Sign* suggesting that perhaps part of DaC House could be rented out because he felt we no longer needed so much space. Brian said that he didn't think we needed to do that as we were cash rich and didn't really need the money. He said that our building was a credit to us and mentioned how **Jacqui Chart**, who is the Building Manager in addition to being Brian's PA, did such an exceptional job. Brian added that in addition to any damage an outside company could cause, there was also the matter of security with our IT department holding much valuable information. He said that the possible annual income for the one floor would be approx £100,000 and we would have to put that against the added risk of security problems. He did add that we moved from Brunswick House with its 30 position call centre to DaC House with its 80 position call centre, but that with modern technology (online bookings, Aspect etc), we only needed a 30 position call centre again! However, there was no current plan to rent any part of the build-

ing out.

Laurence ended by saying that there was a possibility that this could be the last-ever AGM of Dial-a-Cab and if that was the case he wanted to thank the Board for everything they had done for the Society over the years.

Trevor Denton (Y51) also made his second appearance of the day. He asked whether we would retain zones after switching over to a GPS system. Brian confirmed that we would have virtual ranks. That satisfied Trevor and it left just one more driver – which was just as well as the Editor's writing hand was beginning to turn blue!

Barry Groner (V30) had that distinction and if Laurence Kelvin was right, he could be the last-ever DaC driver to speak at an AGM! He also spoke about Hailo and GetTaxi and the fact that they have no run-ins or gratuities so that if a trip wasn't covered, there was "nothing in their tool box to encourage drivers to put themselves out." He said that we had run-ins and even premiums to assist in coverage and added that one of the reasons we were all on radio was because of the incentives. Brian replied that drivers could see what a contentious issue the run-in debate was.

A driver from the floor then asked the

Chairman to get a show of hands as to how many of the 100 + drivers present wanted run-ins scrapped. Brian agreed to that but purely for the sake of interest. He needn't have worried because just five drivers voted in favour of getting rid of run-ins!

Brian closed the meeting at 1.17pm and we all rushed home to watch Spurs play – well some of us did!

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online



Call Sign March 2014

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As part of their celebrations for 85 amazing years, the LTFUC Committee asked theirs and Dial-a-Cab Board Member, Mike Son, to organise a ball at the historic surroundings of the London Guildhall. It took place on the evening of Friday 14 February – Valentine's Day - 2014.

This year's LTFUC Chair and former DaC driver, Simeos Yiannikaris, had welcomed everyone and explained what the Fund has been doing for the past 85 years. That led to an excellent meal which preceded a silent auction.

The auction raised a significant amount of funds for the charity – with among the successful bidders being DaC Board member and Chelsea season ticket holder, Allan Evans, who purchased a signed shirt of Chelsea's Frank Lampard.

After the dinner and silent auction, everyone got up to dance the evening away to **Pulse** – a brilliant band who knew all the right songs to play! Special guests at the ball were former DaC driver and LTFUC President, **Bill Tyzack** (ex-C06) along with his forever-young wife, **Grace**. Bill joined ODRTS in 1962 and only finally called it a day last year.

DaC are always well represented at trade charity events and this event was no exception with Brian Rice, Howard Pears and Allan Evans together with their significant others. And doing a brilliant job as toastmaster was DaC's Keith Reading (W76).

It was in 1928 that taxi driver **Mick Cohen** fulfilled his ambition of one day returning to the Norwood home he had spent his young years at to take some of the children on an outing in his cab. Mick's idea was to find 2 or 3 other cabbies to join him and take a few kids on an outing to the zoo. He mentioned the idea to a few other drivers and 12 turned up to take fifty children on the outing!

This was the same year that UK women had their voting age reduced from 30 to 21, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, Herbert Hoover was elected US President and the LTFUC itself was founded at the Leicester Square taxi shelter. Three years later, the Fund made their first Southend outing.

Here's to the LTFUC and the next 85 years...

Dennis Latchett
Call Sign Online

London Taxidrivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children

Valentine's Night Ball

Photos: Alan Fisher



Organiser Mike Son with Brian Rice



Bill and Grace Tyzack



Dancing to Pulse in the heart of the Guildhall

Hello Ladies & Gents, Tube strike days...

Over the past month, a number of issues were brought to light during and after the tube strikes, and again by members at the recent AGM. The two strike days generated a lot of extra work for everyone; but traffic conditions, tremendously high demand for our services and at times a lack of working members put a lot of strain on us all. We tried desperately to notify passengers of the situation prior to the strike days, but long delays caused the inevitable frustrations from all sides. At certain times of the day - especially early mornings - the fleet size was surprisingly reduced and coverage was tough, to say the least, with demand far out weighing supply. But I must give praise to the Call Centre staff who did a great job under very trying circumstances.

General coverage

On a general day to day basis the south, south west and western areas have been a major cause for concern and it seems that no amount of effort from dispatchers and Call Centre staff seem to improve this situation. We have every different way of dispatching trips following your suggestions and now, ladies and gentleman, it is up to you to help us out. We have tried to implement all ideas that members have asked us to consider, adding street and road names to the pick-up addresses, unmasking trips so that destinations are shown and even giving times that trips in certain problem zones are due to be fired out. Most drivers have approved the new methods, with a minority voicing disapproval, but it is now getting to the situation where we must try to improve coverage during certain times of the day and from certain areas. I've mentioned it before, but I'm still at a loss as to why the same call signs still reject job after job in such a short space of time, especially when some are worth upwards of £45.

The lead-in times are set according to the zone location and although they may be adjusted depending on traffic conditions, the inner London postal zones (eg W1SW) are set at twelve minutes and the outer London zones (eg SW19) at eighteen minutes. Outlying zones within the M25 such as SE99 are forty five minutes and if outside the M25, are set for ninety minutes. With this in mind, I urge you to offer reasonable delays on trip offers so that the clients are offered a taxi and we let them decide if the delay is acceptable. It is always better to offer something rather than nothing.

EC5 and Temporary Off

For as long as EC5 (Finsbury Square) has been in operation on the data system, the **temporary off** button has not been active. The way the zone has operated and the method of booking-in may have changed over the years, but to prevent the rules being violated the Board have always felt that the **TO** button should remain disabled in this zone. Unfortunately, there were always a small minority of drivers booking into EC5 from far away locations and then holding

Operations Manager Chat from the Call Centre



their position in the zone by pressing the **TO** button, which was hard to regularly monitor even with the help of GPS.

As you know, when you activate Temporary Off, you not only hold your queue position but actually gain a lower QP as trips are dispatched to other members. As a Board, we can appreciate that if you leave the taxi for varying reasons, you could be offered a trip whilst out of the taxi that could result in being booked off.

In answer to **Ricki Rands (M81)** letter in this issue's Mailshot, the Editor's idea of holding a **QP** and regaining the original position back within the fifteen minutes is certainly not unreasonable; the problem at this particular time is that to implement this change on the present operating system will necessitate major reprogramming. The good news is that the IT department are well on the way to rewriting a new in-house operating system that will not only be GPS based, but one that will be so much more flexible and allow us to make these types of changes. I, along with the Board, can appreciate that certain members may benefit from similar upgrades, which may make their working day a little easier. It is a very reasonable request and one that will certainly be considered in the near future.

Be very lucky, drive safely and keep pressing the **accept** button...

Allan Evans

**Control Centre / Operations
Manager**

Book Review *** Book Review *** Book Review

On Wednesday 22 January 2014, Barney Curley became the scourge of bookies everywhere pulling in his third orchestrated horseracing coup and forcing them to pay out around £3million. It has been described as the greatest coup in horse racing history. Now you can read how it was done...

THE SURE THING

The Sure Thing (Hardback, Century £20) by **Nick Townsend** is the incredible true story of how gambler **Barney Curley** masterminded the biggest betting scam of all time – twice! If you are interested in horseracing, this book will fascinate you. But even if you don't care about the sport of Kings, you will still enjoy an amazing tale – perhaps even more because it is true!

The story begins with Curley's early life when he went from becoming a priest to a gambler and his 1975 win with **Yellow Sam**, who won at **Bellewstown** country track in Ireland where there was only one telephone. Curley had a friend act out a prolonged call to a fictional dying aunt, thereby blocking desperate attempts by off-course bookmakers to cut Yellow Sam's odds. Then there was his incredible 2010 gamble when he netted £4million. This story takes a unique look at a big time gambler and gives an inside look at the world of horse-racing, where despite the odds, anything is possible.

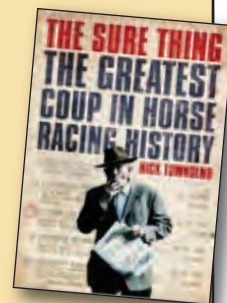
Barney Curley is a legendary punter - albeit a man of mystery - who has always delighted in trying to beat the system. But put his name into **Google** or any search engine and you will think you are following someone's mythical adventures.

It was Wednesday **22 Jan 2014** that Barney Curley became the scourge of bookies everywhere when he pulled in his third orchestrated horseracing coup and forced them to pay out around £3million. Curley has never divulged the full details of how he did it – but now *The Sure Thing* reveals the complete story of the months of planning and preparation, trials and tribulations that went into the biggest organised gambles in racing history. It's the warts-and-all story of Barney Curley's incredible life and the millions he has won. Some think of him as a folk hero – others as a card shark!

Nick Townsend is a long-time confidant of Barney Curley and tells a human story about the man behind the bet, about the beauty of chasing the exact odds, the perfection of having worked out all the possibilities for one unique time and the obsession of balancing every little detail to bring home as large a win as possible.

The book is an excellent read whether you like horse-racing or not.

The Sure Thing: The Greatest Coup in Horse Racing History by **Nick Townsend** was published on February 27 by Century at £20.



STICKY, STICKING, STUCK!

"I'm grateful the cab was still driveable," Dial-a-Cab driver **Graham Flitton (G66)** declared to *Call Sign*, his voice clearly relieved at being mobile again.

"I'd started to notice that the auto gearbox on my TX2 was beginning to get slower between gear changes once it had warmed up a bit, and so I decided to get the gearbox serviced at the earliest opportunity.

"Strangely to me, everything was fine at the start-up when the engine and 'box were cold, but then things went downhill after that. Before long I began having real difficulty changing up into the higher gears and soon after that the gearbox stuck solid in second gear - the engine revving away and me not moving very fast at all! So I called someone I know who runs a fleet of cabs, and he suggested I visit **Globe Automatics in Cudworth Street E1** as he'd been there and was very happy with their service.

"I know there are other auto gearbox specialists who also do a fine job, but as I was close to the City, I decided to give *Globe* a try. I gently drove the cab there at 9am and was back on the road by 4pm that same afternoon. How about that!" Graham's face beamed at the memory.

Continuing his story, Graham told us that **Globe Automatics** carried out some checks and had found metallic particles and other debris 'clogging' up the works big time. After the work had been done, Graham took the cab back after completing 500 miles for a final check and, yes, his gearbox problem had been cured.

So *Call Sign* went off to speak to **Globe Automatics**, where owner **Carl** greeted us warmly and gave us the story on Graham's woes.

"Firstly, we lowered the gearbox oil sump to see what 'dropped out' and in Graham's case, lots of metal bits did! These foreign bodies clog up the delicate, finely engineered passages of the governor valve and valve block, and that stops the gears from changing up and down as they should. The gearbox generates very high internal hydraulic pressures and considerable heat and as friction plates, clutches and bearings wear over time, those minute metal particles get thrown around



Old gearwheel on the left and a new one on the right

all over the place and find their way into those tiny and delicate valves."

Call Sign was shown some very worn and broken gears and other internal working parts of a rather complex automatic gearbox, and it was easy to appreciate just what damage can be done when things break up. Carl offered some advice to

DaC drivers...

"If things don't feel right, do not try to carry on driving the cab because you are likely to do further damage that will usually end up costing you far more. Graham was lucky that he was close by.

"In extreme cases a gearbox can be damaged beyond repair within a day. But I don't want to scare you, just to alert DaC drivers to the possibilities!

"I would recommend regular servicing so that the gearbox has clean, fresh oil, which in turn will extend the working life of the gearbox and save you money in the long run. Winter snow and road salt can be a problem too," Carl added.

"The electronically controlled TX4 gearbox is another beast altogether because it works in conjunction with the engine, so if it detects a problem with the engine, it will try to compensate and if it detects a problem within itself, it may have a bearing on the running of the engine. So you need to bear that in mind too."

Our thanks to Globe Automatics who can be contacted on 020 7377 577

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Hammersmith taxi rank

The February *Call Sign* contained an article about **Steve Thomas (N10)** winning his case against **Hammersmith Council** who had presented him with a PCN for over-ranking on the **Hammersmith Broadway taxi rank**.



DaC's former PCN guru, **Barrie Segal**, has written to us to say that whilst we considered the Steve's win to be a precedent, it should be borne in mind that the circumstances would have to be exactly the same for that to be the case and that the result could change if the council submitted the appropriate *Traffic Management Order* and proved that the double yellow lines were valid.

The only way to find out is to Appeal...

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Whilst I have never been on the London Taxi Driver's Forum, I have often been sent comments taken from it by our drivers when they concern Dial-a-Cab, Brian Rice or me!

The emails passed over usually come from one of two people on that list. However, I've mentioned a few times that unless they really are serious, then I have no interest in their petty insults. But this time several DaC drivers thought that a comment from the person, who is apparently the moderator of the list and who goes by the name of **Dizzy**, went beyond being described as petty. Perhaps vindictive, plain nasty or even actionable might describe him better.

I haven't a clue as to whether I know him or not, but as I'm not that keen on people who throw insults while being afraid to give their name, I hope that I don't because he sounds like a thoroughly nasty bit of work.

So what did he say that was so awful, because I have little doubt that the huge majority of drivers are not on that list? Well it follows on from a letter sent out to drivers from Chairman Brian Rice informing the fleet that two offers had come in for DaC. The letter from Brian included a separate sheet asking drivers whether they wanted the Board to investigate the offers further - and it was emphasised the both offers were from taxi orientated businesses. 91.5% of the 85% DaC drivers who responded voted in favour of looking further. But it brought an appalling response from Mr Dizzy when he posted a link to a letter that was sent to the **Taxi Leaks** blog site, which I believe is moderated by **Jim Thomas** aka **Thomas the Taxi**. I do occasionally look at that site and even though it is more than capable of having a pop, unlike the LTDF, it often contains interesting information for taxi drivers.

The letter came from **Lee DaCosta**. In it he said that rumours that were apparently circulating - although I hadn't heard them - were linking his **Cabvision** as being one of the two companies said to be involved. He said that had no basis in fact. He wrote:

"I can confirm that I personally have visited DaC and raised the 'possibility' of making an offer for the Company. Cabvision's interest did not extend beyond this point and it did not lead to a formal offer or a signing of a Confidentiality Agreement. I had a lengthy

discussion with Brian Rice, who explained to me the process of how any 'takeover' might work.

We have been surprised by the strong rumours that we are one of the two bidders announced in the letter to DaC members; again I stress that Cabvision has made no financial offer for DaC and did not advance to a stage where we would even receive any financial or management information. The rumours are totally unfounded and curious.

Cabvision are not bound by any confidentiality agreement with DaC. We have no idea where the rumour has come from or who leaked them, but we do remain an interested party and may revisit our position some time in the future."

Dizzy comes into the situation, but not because he placed a link to Lee DaCosta's letter. It's just that he labelled it as **"More of Rice's porkies."** In other words, he - the man who won't give his name - is calling the Chairman of Dial-a-Cab a liar even though Brian has never said Cabvision were interested. So how can he be telling lies? Of course, when people are too afraid to put their name to stuff they write, then those like Dizzy can just say what they like. Had Cabvision gone beyond just a general enquiry, DaC's subscribers would have been told. The fact that this article is giving Dizzy far more publicity than he would ever get otherwise, is irrelevant.

Brian Rice wrote to Thomas the Taxi and his response to Dizzy's "liar" accusation was also published. This is what he wrote:

"Regarding the statement made by Lee DaCosta, I agree with his statement, he did in fact visit this office with his father Peter as they were interested in Dial-a-

Cab and it went no further than that. That was probably the best part of two years ago, perhaps even a little more.

According to Lee, there are rumours regarding Cabvision and Dial-a-Cab, I would like to make it quite clear that I have never mentioned that Cabvision were interested in purchasing Dial-a-Cab. Consequently, I am at a loss to understand why an individual (obviously not Lee DaCosta) is stating that I am not telling the truth regarding Cabvision and Dial-a-Cab - that can't be right, as I have never said anything to anyone regarding the two companies.

Incidentally, in my letter to Members where I mentioned two organisations that were interested in Dial-a-Cab, neither of them were Cabvision. "

Perhaps Dizzy is a former driver and jealous of having lost out on the possibility of a windfall? But the bottom line must be just who really cares what he thinks. The only ones whose views really matter are those Members of Dial-a-Cab and it is they - not Dizzy - who are the important people in any possible sale. Dizzy's views are totally worthless and certainly not put online for the good of the trade, purely to start trouble. But that freedom stops when referring to people as telling lies - although in reality, it is Dizzy who is telling the lies. But of course my name is at the bottom of the page.

Incidentally, one rumour that I *did* hear became fact at the AGM when Brian Rice confirmed that yet another company has expressed an interest in DaC, and that isn't Cabvision either...

***Porkies - pork pies (lies)**

**Alan Fisher
Editor**

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This series commemorates 2014's centennial beginning of WW1 hostilities by telling of their time in the forces by those connected to Dial-a-Cab. This month, Mike Walsh...

DAC WAR HEROES

Called to the bar

The connections to Dial-a-Cab go back a long, long way for Mike Walsh (ex-C77), in fact to our earliest days at Pentonville Road...

"I joined ODRTS on 9th April 1961 at our then office of 172 Pentonville Road and enjoyed almost 52 years with the Society - firstly for 40 years as Charlie 77 and latterly as a journeyman, giving me I believe, the role of second longest continuous serving driver behind Alan Lewis (A44).

But eight years before my 'calling' to ODRTS, I was 'called up' to serve my country and do my National Service between 1953 and 1955. And of course I remember my service number - 22869880... Sir!

I joined the **Kings Royal Rifle Corps** as an infantryman after having passed my medical 'A1'. Co-incidentally, **Johnny Thwaites**, a well-known ODRTS night-time dispatcher from the past, was in the same regiment during WW2. But more of him later.

We did 12 weeks basic training in Winchester and were given various 'trades' choices, for which I had high hopes of joining the **RAF Maintenance Regiment** or perhaps the **Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers** - known as REME. But by the time my name was called out going in alphabetical order, it meant that my 'W' was towards the end and there wasn't much left on the list, so all hope of REME was dashed!

I was offered the posts of **Officers Batman** or **Sergeants Mess Barman** and thought it sounded ok - so there I was. To this day I can honestly claim to having been 'called to the Bar' although the Law Society might take a different view!

Those soft-sounding positions certainly didn't represent reality because we were forever being sent on various training exercises or manoeuvres. The firing ranges at Bisley - including live rounds field firing - took place at regular intervals. It was also the Army that taught me to drive, albeit a Bedford 3 ton truck, so pushing an **FX3** around the streets of London some years later came easily! But it might have been even easier had I remembered to hand in my *Certificate of Competence* and automatically qualify for a full civilian driving licence, so I had to go through the procedure again.

Later, I was promoted to **HQ Company Store man** while serving at **Sennelager Training Camp** in Germany. We went by boat to the Hook of Holland and then by rail. I guess that could classify as my first cruise!

While serving at the Mess bar, there were a couple of sergeants who were real jokers. One day the Regimental Sergeant Major informed the gathering there was to be a formal dinner and everyone was expected to attend immaculately attired in Full Dress Uniform for the occasion. This required a dress coat with tails as in formal evening dress and rather like a musical conductor's coat tails. To cut a long story short, these two characters arrived in their pyjamas with their day shirts hanging out at the back over their PJ bottoms, claiming they were correctly clothed as they were in evening dress complete with tails! The whole Mess laughed, but the RSM was less impressed!

Going back to **John Thwaites** at ODRTS; he'd be in the office overnight while I'd be in my cab for early mornings, so I would



Mike in 1953 and now



sometimes go down into the Control Room to say hullo and have a chat. That's when we discovered our common army heritage and we became friends.

Johnny was also something of a Cribbage player. Our regimental cap badge colours were red and green so I made a Cribbage Board from the butt of a Lee Enfield 303 rifle, a familiar weapon to both of us. I drilled Cribbage holes in the stock and mounted our regimental cap badge onto the end with red sealing wax. I took it to him expecting he would play with it during quieter moments

between dispatching shifts before returning it to me, but he must have liked it as a memento rather than Cribbage board, because I never saw it again..."

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BLACK CAB
Heritage Tours



Black Cab Heritage Tours

Black Cab Heritage Tours have some pre-booked corporate work in 2014 and we need to increase our list of associates to help cover that work.

We only use owner drivers - but our client has requested black (in colour) taxis only. However, your **Dial-a-Cab** logos are fine provided the taxi is black and has no other ads of any kind.

If you would like to join our contact list please email me (Bob Woodford) at:

rob@blackcabheritagetours.co.uk

No guiding skills are required and I should add that this client is a Kensington based events Management Company and fellow member (together with BCHT) of **UK Inbound**, so the trips are totally different from normal taxi work. Therefore there is not any direct competition whatsoever with Dial-a-Cab work.

Bob Woodford

rob@blackcabheritagetours.co.uk



My Lords, Ladies and DaC Gents...

Please be upstanding for the next great British experiment! We give you the **Frazer Nash** group of companies, current owners of **Bristol Cars** (which they took direct from the admin-

istrators in 2011 via another of their companies, **Kamkorp Autokraft**). It comes direct off the drawing board and has been tested by no less than the Mayor – of course it is the brand new **Metrocab** electric taxi, which has been developed by **Ecotive Ltd**, part of the Frazer Nash group of companies!

As much as I'd like to blow a fanfare for this "new" vehicle, I can't help but wonder if having read the words Frazer Nash energy systems, specialist in design and development of components and SUB systems for electric vehicles and hybrid electric – oh yes, and plug in hybrid vehicles – that the words have something of a familiar ring to the Mercedes rear wheel experiment about it?

We all know that **Geely** - that's the proper black cab to the public and us - and **Nissan**, not to mention **Mercedes**, are all wandering along the path of an inevitably electric future. But to me it all sounds a bit like **Geoff Kaley** (Chairman of Computer Cab and LTDA COM member at the time), who many years ago waved a piece of paper like **Neville Chamberlain** - that's the bloke who gave Churchill his big break in the war. Geoff proudly stood up and said we had a wider door in a wheelchair accessible cab, complete with ramps that would take the weight of a twenty stone man. The future was going to be bright and civilised.

Then we all watched the **TaxiCard** work roll in under **Ken Livingston** - until it dried up into a slow painful death, leaving us with the earache due to under-funding later on. Then the penny dropped onto the head of the cab trade overnight! The manufacturers - **LTI** and **Metro** - had in one swift move managed to say goodbye to all their old cabs while upping the price of a new taxi by a considerable chunk after informing us that the wheelchair access had added over £1000 to every new cab!

Some might say that getting the 2012 Olympics for London, could well have been won on such things as wheelchair accessible taxis, but that was soon forgotten when the Games arrived that summer, along with more special – but not taxi - lanes than a good party on a Saturday night in town!

Those who were around in the 1980s will remember **Ken Livingston** – then as leader of the **GLC** - dishing out a big fat cheque for the development of a new taxi to be built in Coventry, something for which we couldn't knock him. Then years later, that same cheque was returned with the words: *One cheque, thanks for the loan. Sorry mate, no new cab.*

Rumour had it that **Skoda** - or was it **Trabant** - would not play ball with the parts. Maybe they knew the Berlin Wall was coming down and the markets were their oyster shell. More like it was a lack of support from national government that saw the demise of the project. We did finally end up with **Jamie Borwick's** mighty **TX1** to give us some respite in the madness of life. God bless

Gary Cox looks at the influx of electric taxis and poses the Mayor a question...

Electric taxis: The cart before the horse?

him! In my eyes, he should have got knighted for that one (even though many years later he became Lord Jamie). After all, Sir Alex got knighted and cheered on in Milton Keynes and the Home Counties for far less.

I can't help but think that if Ken Livingston was Mayor today, the first question he would ask is whether the emergence of electric taxis were actually the return of the ice cream van with a cable run from a block of flats via a window to the van!

The second thing 'Red' Ken would have murmured is that he was not having 26,000 loose cables running over OUR city - makes it sound like Red Ken is my hero. God help us all if that's all we have to cajole Mayor Boris with but at present, I'll take anything that helps. Thinking about it, 26,000 live cables dangling around might keep the population of Feltham Young Offenders Institute down! I doubt anyone would find a way of borrowing the cables and switches to drop off down the scrapyard for the price of a fix and a can of Special Brew thrown in.

Then again, the folks blowing the biggest fanfare will come from the biggest 'House' in town. Let's face it; they are not actually going to be putting their hands into their own pockets to purchase this experiment while trying to balance the exes. It's down to us to try to drive a bargain - excuse the pun!

Nope, I've had it with experiments! Let **ComCab** take the gamble with credibility by offering drivers that wish to become sacrificial Guinea pigs on the altar of sexy science, a bed partner that only they seem to know anything about – ie the electric **Metrocab**. I wish them all the luck in the world renting it out and truly hope that in fighting it out with the boffins, they can get some money and help out of Boris along the way. I can't see anyone getting any money out of my pocket for this project unless the Mayor underwrites a guarantee saying that he will share the heartache if I'm left spending hours in a garage being fobbed off, holding the reins of a white elephant within six months of purchasing a golden promise ticket of a freedom pass to the electric board of my choice.

Now what was that bloke in the ad saying: You can charge it off a three-pin plug? Don't you believe it! If you live on a council estate, or share a cab, or you do a 40 mile return trip to work, at least you can guarantee 8 hours in bed at night. After twenty years, you should be a good golfer with all that time on your hands whilst you await the spark of life to ignite your world. Then again, you will need to factor in time to see the bank manager to get a loan for the new batteries.

A big job fitting in those batteries - you'll have to book it in, but tell you what son, you can run it on petrol for now until we can fit you in... possibly some time in the next two weeks.

When your partner told you to flog that moped, they were wrong for once. If you do pick up Boris, just ask him who's paying to dig up London for the cables for your new dream machine? Then smile your best and ask him if he's gonna charge up all those buses parked out on the road at night due to lack of space in the tram shed? He'll probably refer you to the big bus man, the recently knighted **Sir Peter Hendy**. The stock answer will be that the Mayor gets what the Mayor wants. Ping pong or is it whiff whaff? It's your call.

With a little help, perhaps I might be able to say that I'm ready to take on the next challenge, but understand this Mr Mayor; all that stuff that comes out of the Department for Trade about help for small businesses never seems to ring true when it comes to the London Taxi trade - unlike the buses and trains who get everything going.

You deal the cards in this game of poker - called politics - in London, I understand that. But you have to know when to show them, know when to throw them in and know when to walk away. This is not the time to walk away pushing your bike.

Me? I'm off to buy a moped quickly before the price of a second hand bike goes through the stratosphere. When she who must be obeyed asks why I need one, I can tell her why – it's because all the boys in the school lab have got one...except me!

Gary Cox (O46)

2014 taxi fare increase

TfL has agreed a well below inflation taxi fare increase for 2014/15. The 0.7 per cent average increase is the lowest since TfL took over responsibility for licensing taxis in 2000 and will take effect from Saturday 5 April 2014.

The new fares seek a balance between maintaining income levels for drivers while ensuring passengers still get a fair price for the high quality service provided by the capital's taxi drivers. The Board approved the changes following consultation by TfL with the taxi trade and others, including London TravelWatch, London Boroughs, London Assembly and London MPs.

The Board also approved the extension of a special provision linked to diesel prices. Since July 2008, a

special provision has been in place to allow taxi fares to be increased if diesel costs increase drastically. The Board approved an extension of this provision for the coming year and a 40 pence increase to all taxi fares will be implemented if diesel reaches 175.48 pence per litre.

A change will see the £4 Christmas extra charge automatically added to fares over the festive period from December 2016, which is currently added manually by the driver.

The Board also agreed to review the date when taxi fares and tariffs are reviewed with the possibility of aligning changes with those made on London's bus, rail and Tube network – so from January each year, rather than April.

*** See Editor's comment on page 3...**

Conalescing from his recent serious operation, Tom Whitbread gave us a few memories from years gone by...

With smoke coming from my cab's exhaust (and remnants of an Old Holborn roll-up exiting the driver's window) it was off to search the streets of 1980's Dalston for anyone with a raised hand and it wasn't too long before I got a job to Manor House, dropping off by the old Woodbury Down rank.

It was there I was approached by a large African lady in a colourful wraparound dress. She had to go to Haringey, pick up her luggage and continue onto the old BA terminal in Buckingham Palace Road. Little did I know then that this was to turn into a taxi driver's nightmare.

On arrival at a side road off Green Lanes, the lady asked for help with the luggage and as she was going into town, I didn't mind. I climbed the stairs to the first floor and was confronted with two very large trunks - the sort you'd use if emigrating. I knew there was no way I could get these wooden trunks down the stairs and into the cab on my own, but luckily a man on the ground floor seeing our plight, offered to help. Between us we struggled and sweated but eventually got the trunks into the cab - one on the floor and the other on the back seat. They felt like they were filled with cement!

However, they blocked the tip-up seats, so the lady had to sit on the trunk positioned on the floor with her legs up and use the other one as a backrest. The journey to SW1 was uneventful, except that the lady kept sliding sideways every time I negotiated a corner.

On arrival at the terminal we were met by Mr Jobsworth who, without any hint of a smile, said that they refused to handle anything over 15 kilos, adding that trunks that big had to go straight to the cargo village at Heathrow! So the choice was the passengers: Back to Manor House or onto Heathrow?

She elected for the latter adding that she only had a certain amount of cash on her as she'd closed her British bank accounts that afternoon. But it seemed enough so off we went and apart from her moans every time I hit a bump and her posterior crashing down onto her wooden seat, it was uneventful.

On arrival at the cargo village, we found the airline warehouse and she produced her documents. But the trunks needed to be weighed. The warehouse man and I struggled to extricate the two trunks from what had become their most recent resting place, although with all this heavy lifting I was becoming concerned about a part of my interior anatomy suddenly dropping down to my ankles!

The scales were in the warehouse floor so we dragged the first trunk over and onto the metal plate. The needle shot around the face of the scales with the speed of Apollo 10. It was when the man explained how much the cost would be to transport the item that I thought the lady was going to faint - and this was just the first of the two! We pulled it off the scales and struggled to get the second one on. The needle again tried to complete a full circle of the indicator face, so my passenger said that the only thing she could do was to take some

Tom's Tales



articles out of the trunks. As she released the latches, the lids shot open and I stared at what must have been all her worldly belonging inside.

She took out a large Singer sewing machine, an old Dansette record player and an Iron from the first trunk. The second was another Aladdin's cave of household items but the first thing she removed was a guitar. The warehouseman and I stood there with our mouths wide open in amazement, this amount of items were more akin to being sent in a large lorry container. The lady asked that I put all the retrieved articles into the luggage compartment of my taxi while she organised the payment and despatch of the two trunks.

However, after paying for the luggage to be sent, the lady did not have enough money to return all the way to Haringey by taxi and asked for a cheaper way. I said she could catch a train from Hatton Cross back into town, to which she agreed.

At Hatton Cross, the lady was in the process of paying me when two tall, well-dressed men strode up to the cab and brusquely asked for Heathrow, saying they were late. Call me fussy, but because of the omission of the word *please*, I rather coldly informed them that I was being paid off and they would have to wait. The two men became aggressive towards the lady telling her to hurry up as they were late. The

lady slapped the legal fare into my hand and scurried off towards the Underground entrance.

I drove the rude twosome back to the airport and received another legal. I was about to tell them they had forgotten their luggage when I realised the previous passenger had left her overweight items that should have been on their way to Africa. I felt well and truly peed off.

All I wanted to do now was get shot of the items and get back to work; I dismissed the airport police as too much aggravation and proceeded to Hammersmith. Parking outside the police station, I went in and spoke to a rather bored-looking police officer, asking if I could bring in some lost property. He just nodded without really looking but his boredom was about to vanish!

I began by bringing the sewing machine followed by the Dansette, guitar, iron and other oddments. The police officer began to turn a dark shade of purple while asking me in a not-to-friendly tone if I was taking the pee? I assured him I wasn't, so he proceeded to book every item in ultra-slowly; a child of six could have completed the forms quicker.

It was some 5 months later that I had to go to the PCO to collect a reward for some other lost property - 10% of the value of a camera that had previously been left in my cab. Whilst there I innocuously said to the lady administrator that they must get some odd things handed in?

Quick as a flash she answered: "Yes, there is one driver I'd like to get hold of; he convinced a police officer that a lady had left a sewing machine, record player, guitar and a load of household items in his taxi - probably offloading his own rubbish! I have to keep moving them around to try and make room for other stuff."

I wished her luck in looking for an idiot like that and assured her that most taxi drivers were sensible!

**Tom Whitbread
DaC Board Member**

THE CHILTERN FIRE HOTEL

It's always - well usually - nice to welcome a new hotel into London. No doubt many of you remember the fire station in **Chiltern Street W1**. That is about to re-open as the **Chiltern Fire Hotel**. So **Call Sign** popped in there recently to tell them about the service London taxis provide and how they have been voted World's Best Taxis for an amazing six years in a row.

However, a very pleasant young lady looking after the premises prior to the official opening informed our reporter that they wouldn't be requiring taxis as they had opened a contract with a car company!

Naturally this magazine would never wish to lower itself to a level of spite, so just because they are sending their clients in cars, that doesn't mean that you should tell any passengers going there that you can't take them to the door, because yes, that would be childish.

Now where is my Lego set...



Ron Yarborough, Call Sign Online

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

IT'S A CABBY'S LIFE!

DaC AGM

It will not be prescient to predict that it was the last AGM I attended.

Brian Rice conducted the Chairmanship in his usual capable combative style with aplomb. Once we dealt with the minutiae of terminal procedures and miscellaneous odds and ends, the proceedings livened up with an orchestrated intervention by two members of the **RMT** union.

There was something of the Twitter about them, a private matter that most members were not privy too. They eventually twittered off and finally the elephant in the room raised its benign head.

Brian Rice announced to loud whispers that there were now three bids for **Dial-a-Cab** on the table. Because of a confidential agreement, he was not at liberty to divulge the make-up of the bids but in the fullness of time the bids would be revealed to us shareholders when voting will take place. Sadly I sense a *fait accompli* has been manoeuvred.

The founder Chairman, **Bonnie Martyn**, who in 1953 set up **ODRTS** as a friendly industrial provident society, believed in the selfless ethos that all members have equal rights and can determine how the society is run, crucially deciding who is elected onto the Board.

To my mind, this is just as relevant or even more relevant today, giving up your self-employed mind set and working for a profit driven employer with expulsion at their fingertips.

Bonnie Martyn's vision has been betrayed by a city freehold property and a strong balance sheet.

Taking a gamble

One of my previous occupations was as a croupier working in London clubs, including a long stint in the Bahamas. I eschewed doing my money in because I have seen too many doing theirs on the tables or the dice and roulette wheel - often with me dealing!

Nonetheless, I was listening to the excel-



lent **Tim Vickery** on **talkSPORT**, the radio station's South American football expert. In his bullish enthusiasm, he said there would be lots of money behind **Chile** against **England** when they came to play at **Wembley**.

He predicted Chile to be the neutral's favourite at the **World Cup**, targeting a semi-final place. Now I know you should never bet against your own club or national side because it is seen as bad form and even, you may feel, unpatriotic. But friendlies are open game to me.

Soon after I heard that England's average side were further depleted by injuries to Captain **Steven Gerrard** and **Kyle Walker**. I promptly joined an internet gaming site and on noticing I could get 4-1 for Chile, I cravenly sought consent from *er indoors* and wagered £250 on a Chile win.

So to the evening of Saturday 15th November and the 8pm kick-off. However I deliberately avoided knowing the score and the next morning I walked up the road to collect my newspapers, inexplicably forgetting my bet. However, Chile *bad* won 0-2.

I cleared £1000, which I used towards my tax for the year, my first bet proper in seventeen years.

But *Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs* are not too proud to receive tax payments - even from a bet against England!

Last word...

Because of the precarious nature of our job and after twenty three year of driving a cab, I have finally succumbed to the protection we need by joining the **LTDA**. You can never under estimate security...

Stephen Berndes
Call Sign Online

KEEP FIT

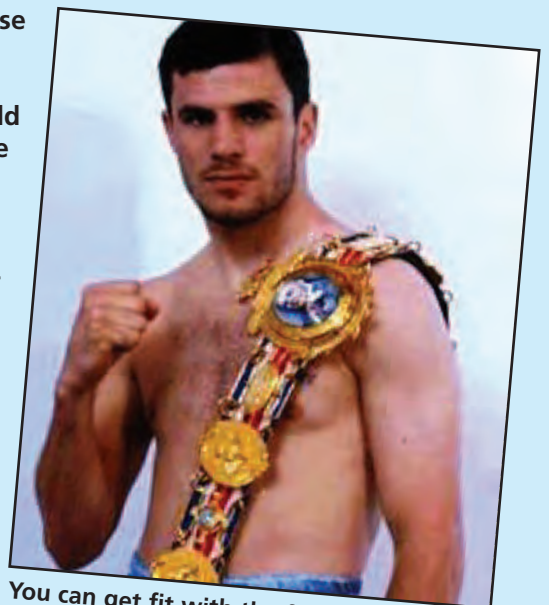
With former British boxing Champion Matt Marsh...

Are you still struggling to lose the weight you piled on at Christmas with all that delicious food? After all, you told yourself that once they were over, you would knuckle down to regain the fitness that may have mysteriously escaped after that third portion of Xmas pud!

Well you now have that opportunity as **Dial-a-Cab** drivers / staff members can get fit for 2014 with former super bantamweight **British boxing champion** and six times national champion, **Matt Marsh**.

Matt's gym is in Welling and he offers training based around pad work and circuits. There are one-to-one sessions or you can train in twos or threes.

You can call Matt on 07850 683 440 for advice and information on times etc. Mention Dial-a-Cab and you will get a special deal.



You can get fit with the former Super Bantamweight Champion of the World

St Johns Road open to taxis

Very few drivers can remember a time when **St Johns Road** by the old **Clapham Common taxi rank** was open to traffic other than buses. But following the removal of the rank to the side of the station, the road has now been opened up to taxis as well as buses.

The opening was part of a 'swap' deal in exchange for taxis clearing the centre of the road and agreeing to move across the road.

Reading about the stroke suffered by Dial-a-Cab driver Dave Hook (S80) in the January Call Sign struck a chord with me. I've never had a stroke, but like Dave I certainly didn't know what was round the corner on 3rd March 2011.

I'd had a good day and was on my way home. I had the cab washed and popped into the garage in Cricklewood to have a bit of loose bodywork secured (and on the taxi as well)! They completed the job in 5 minutes and I felt rather pleased that everything was set up for my next day's work.

I reversed out into the Edgware Road and headed north, but after a few hundred yards I realised that the gearbox wasn't changing up... but why not? It couldn't have been anything they'd done at the garage.

The gearbox was under warranty, but that meant a long trip in the morning to Bethnal Green. And it threw me! Suddenly my head began spinning. What was going on? By now I was on the Staples Corner flyover and I glanced down at the gearshift. Aha! I wasn't in *Drive* but was in second gear! I stuck it into *Drive* and the engine changed up. So that was it! There was no longer anything to worry about! But I continued to feel unwell.

I pulled off the road and waited a few minutes before starting to feel a bit better. I decided to carry on but almost immediately felt bad again and I was starting to lose it.

I needed something sweet – a Mars bar or something similar. Then I suddenly heard a scraping noise. Was the windscreen smashed? Why was I on the wrong side of the road? And how did I smash into that concrete bollard? That was the scraping noise. And why were people nervously approaching me? Was it because they thought I was a goner?

I had blacked-out, miraculously crossed the Edgware Road without hitting anything or anybody and hit the bollard hard enough to smash the windscreen. I staggered out of the cab, took a few breaths of fresh air – or as much as of it as is possible on the Edgware Road - and fell onto the back seat to await the Emergency Services.

The paramedics gave me an ECG and the police pushed the cab into a car park. Then I had my first - and hopefully last - ride in an ambulance. At Northwick Park I had another ECG together with an X-Ray. The A&E doctor decided it was a one-off but told me to see my GP - which I did the next day. The first thing she said was for me to stop driving until she could sort out what had happened to me and that I may possibly have to inform the Authorities if necessary.

I was then told to stop driving for at least 6 months and to hand in my Bill - which I did. Now I began a series of tests, saw a Neurologist and had a brain scan - yes they found one! I also had to wear a portable heart monitor for 24 hours before being booked in for a Tilt test. The Internet gave me a clue what to expect. The idea was to cause me to faint and if that occurred, then the problem was cardiac. If it didn't, it was neurological. I was convinced it would be the latter.

I was strapped to a bed - similar to a pris-

Another true story from Geoff Levene

Mystery on 3 March...



oner on
D e a t h
R o w
about to
receive a
l e t h a l
injection!
Then the
bed was
tilted to
an angle
of 60
degrees
with my
feet down

and head up. It doesn't seem too critical... does it?

I was spark-out immediately. The good lady wife was sitting just outside and heard the tannoy call for a doctor and watched with horror as one rushed past her and into my room!

I came round a few seconds later and felt

ghastly - much worse, in fact, than I did after the original incident. When they showed me the ECG, I realised why. There were the usual peaks and then when the tilting occurred, a period of 14 seconds when I flatlined and my heart had just stopped. It wasn't in the same league as footballer **Patrice Muambe**, who had collapsed during an FA Cup match at **Spurs** while playing for **Bolton Wanderers**, but it was 14 seconds longer than I would have liked!

"It's a no-brainer," said the Doctor, "you need a pacemaker. We'll do it tomorrow."

And they did. It regulates the heart rate. It's not something I need all the time, but it is supposed to kick in when I'm severely stressed. Two months later, the DVLA and TfL gave me the all-clear and the next day I was driving a cab again. So thanks Terry.

I just hope Dave gets his licence back as soon as possible as well...

Geoff Levene (W32)

Call Sign Online

Thump Start!

At DaC's **Roman Way** depot recently, a young driver astonished those around him when his new cab failed to start via the ignition key in the usual fashion. Instead, with the ignition switched to *on*, a firm hand was brought to bear down on the rim of the steering wheel with a resounding thump and, as if by magic, the taxi engine burst into life!

Call Sign later spoke to **Michael Andreou**, the specialist auto electrician from **M.A.M in Blundell Street, close to Roman Way.**

"Ah, yes, a fairly common fault" Michael suggested matter-of-factly, "it usually occurs in older TX4s but new vehicles are not immune either. The problem invariably lies in the transponder, the tiny chip in the ignition key that 'talks' to the immobiliser electronics in the steering column. When they *match up*, things are fine and the cab will start on the key as usual, but if there is a *mis-match* between the two, that's when the fun and games start!

"Banging the steering wheel to start the cab is a short term measure to get you out of trouble and is clearly an early indication that something in the immobiliser electronics needs attention. That attention is often to replace the suspect parts and then reset the system."

So there you have it. If the cab does not start instantly on the key, give the steering wheel a firm 'thump' and hopefully you will be on your way - for the time being at least!

Our thanks to Michael at M.A.M Auto Electricians who can be contacted on 0207 607 3915.

NOTE: No steering wheel, electronic parts or tools were harmed during the making of this article...

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Sometimes just a thump'll do it!

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

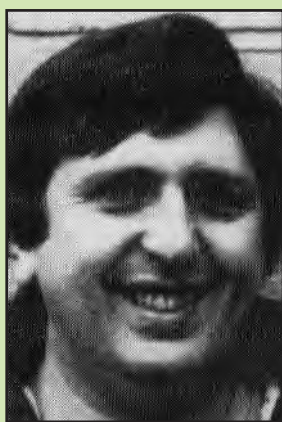
DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month's Flashback goes back to 1982 and a story involving former Board member and voice dispatcher of the time, Phil Messias, and current Call Sign Editor Alan Fisher...

From ODRTS News and Views March 1982

END OF THE WORLD!

ODRTS driver Alan Fisher (F07) has been on the Society since 1974, three years after getting his Green Badge. He was out



working recently on a very quiet Saturday evening at around 11pm and suddenly trapped a 'him and her' who turned out to be rather strange. He told *News & Views* about it.

"It was February 6th and I was still buzzing having earlier watched my Spurs wallop the once mighty Wolves by 6 - 1 with Ricky Villa grabbing a hat-trick and Mark Falco, Garth Crooks and a Glen Hoddle penalty racking up the half-dozen.

Later that evening I went out to work and even for mid-winter, it was really quiet and I found myself just reliving the Spurs goals. I came back to earth when I saw a hand shoot out just as I was level to them outside Dirty Dicks in Bishopsgate. I slammed my brakes on and a man and woman got in and asked for the Mount Royal Hotel in Marble Arch.

For several minutes, all was quiet, but I became slightly concerned when my passengers informed me that they were members of the Sons of Joshua. I told them that I was a member of the Woolwich, which they didn't seem to think was very funny (I can't think why not as it was one of my better jokes). Apparently the Sons of Joshua was their religion and they believed that at precisely 11.36pm on that Saturday evening the world would end in a puff of smoke! That left me just under 30

minutes to drop them off and look for a bomb shelter in the Hyde Park area!

One of the two passengers told me that it was my duty to inform our dispatcher so that he in turn could give our drivers at least 15 minutes warning of the impending doom, so that they could shoot off home and spend their last 15 minutes on earth as they would wish (take the rubbish out early perhaps)?

Anyway, as an upstanding citizen and ODRTS driver, I thought I would tell the dispatcher, in this case Phil Messias, what I had just been told. He listened and asked if I was serious? I assured him that my passengers had told me and for the sake of peace, I would appreciate it if he could placate them by putting the message out. I said I would turn up the volume so that the passengers could hear the warning go out. So Phil put out the following message...

"Gents, could I please have your attention. I have been told that the world is going to end in 15 minutes. Can you please make sure you clear your outstanding credit dockets!"

The duo accepted the message and nodded in agreement as it went out over the air. I assumed at that point that there was no way I was going to get paid - and I was right! When they got out at the hotel, they came to the luggage door and said that God was looking after their money and that he would give it to them when they got to heaven. They offered to give me a note to show when I got to heaven! I declined and said that while I didn't have a direct line to the Almighty, I did have the facility to call the police and that I would do exactly that if they didn't cough up the two quid. But they just walked away and up the hotel stairs. Then the doorman asked if there was a problem. I explained about the end of the world and with that, he ran up after them and dragged the male back down. He told him that he owed me £3, whereas the passenger said it was only £2. Alf (the brilliant doorman) informed him that the driver would be donating £1 to the end of the world fund! He threw in three crumpled £1 notes and stormed back up the stairs! He didn't seem to realise that by now it was almost 11.40 and we were all still here!"

If any drivers out there have an interesting story they would like to pass on to our 900+ drivers who all eagerly await the next copy of N&V, please write it out as neatly as you can and send to me at 144 Shirland Rd W9...

*Phil Emden (C84)
Ye olde N&V Ed*



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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

Ticket offices

I will put my cards on the table here, I am an RMT member, but what I'm writing about here are my own views and I have not attended any meetings in regard to recent matters that caused the tube strikes. I just can't comprehend why LU want to shut the ticket offices, regardless of how many tickets are being sold through them.

There is not an office, gym or any other building that I enter that does not have some sort of reception or security desk. If I have any query or problems, that is the place where I go. I book my holidays or short breaks online, but when I arrive at the hotel I expect to see a receptionist there to meet, greet and inform me of anything I may need to know. The fact that the receptionist never sold me the ticket has nothing to do with my stay. I also know that the receptionist will have all the right contact details I might need; hospital, emergency services, first aid details, layout of the hotel or office and they should be able to sort out a multitude of other problems as well.

I have been to many busy hotels and offices, but none of those are as busy as most of the London underground stations, so the thought of having to look for a staff member in an emergency situation on a massive

With Tom Quigley (Y33)



packed station would be like trying to find 'Where's Wally'...

Mother Nature rules

In the July 2011 issue of *Call Sign*, I wrote how Mother Nature rules. It included a few paragraphs on the maintenance of our waterways, ditches and tubular system. I criticised the government and local councils for trying to save money in vital areas and also for building supermarkets, housing estates and local playing fields on reservoirs, claiming that to be a flawed policy.

It now seems that some of my predictions have come back to haunt large parts of Surrey and West London with the problems of flood-

ing being exasperated thanks to inclement weather.

Whilst my points were not the only causes and explanation, it has now dawned on government, local council and the Environment Agency that they will now have to throw in large amounts of money to correct and put right the damage that will probably far outweigh the original figures they tried to save.

My own borough, **Waltham Forest**, is now number one on the risk of flooding in London. I know that this same borough is where one of our local playing fields, where whilst renewing a fence around a local sports field, gave up some land to the local residents because to have taken down the original fence would have cost more.

Unfortunately, this land also included ditches which the groundsman used to keep clear to help drainage. Well, the residents now have extra land and filled the ditches in bringing on drainage problems. This season, the sports pitches have not been played on (since before Xmas) and the gardens are flooded. That means a loss of revenue for the council, the sports club and problems for the residents. Carry this sort of policy throughout the country and it's no wonder we have the problems we now have...

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

PICTURE GALLERY

Call Sign is often sent photos by DaC drivers of strange, unusual or even irritating situations, so with a half page to spare we thought we'd put a few in...



'London Taxi' spotted by Gary Leaver (J54) while on holiday in Ontario, Canada



Several drivers spotted this online minicab ad. We have asked LTPH if they can spot anything!



Unidentified driver sent this and asked if Hailo were trialling an engine-free taxi?

Mailshot

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

The year of the taxi!

Hello Alan

With the Mayor recently launching the Year of the Bus for 2014 following 2013 having been the Year of the Tube, why not have the Year of the Taxi in 2015?

Graham Waite (B35)

Keep praying Graham because I have it on good authority that we are getting close! 2015 will be the year of the pedicab, followed in 2016 by the year of the brewery dray horse and 2017 by the year of the dead donkey. But we have been pencilled in as favourites to come onto the scene in 4039...

Temporary off at EC5

Hi Alan

The reason for this letter is to ask why we don't have the 15 minutes temporary off facility on EC5 like we do elsewhere. I, like **Tom Whitbread**, have diverticular disease and when it decides to strike it really does strike in an instant. How it has not happened with a passenger on board I do not know, but what I do is to go to the nearest hotel. This is where the 15 mins temp off facility would really come in handy as I have lost so many jobs because of it, sometimes after having done 35 to 40 minutes and getting down to a low number, when all of a sudden it strikes. Well I certainly am not going to book off, but when I come out of the hotel, I find that 9 times out of 10 I have been offered a job and knocked off, only to have to book on again and wait another 40 minutes. Could you please explain to me the reason we do not have this facility on EC5 as I cannot see any reason not to.

Ricki Rands (M81)

I asked Allan Evans whether it would be feasible to implement a system on EC5 whereby drivers needing a temporary off for whatever reason – even just to grab a cuppa, never mind going to the loo – could do so but would retain the position they held at the time and so there would be no benefit other than not being booked off. See Allan's report inside this issue for the response ...Ed

Kings Cross bus lane

Hi Alan

I'm afraid Mr Blackmore's *Mailshot* response to you over the situation at the Euston Road/Pancras Road eastbound junction does not stand up to scrutiny (*February Call Sign*).

He is right that there is a cycle turn built into the junction (for cycles wanting to turn right out of Argyle Street WC1), but they also enter the traffic

flow in front of the traffic lights outside Boots. So they are in just as much danger as any pedestrians crossing the road at that point when the lights they can't see turn green before those on the actual junction turn green (unless, of course, they actually all comply with the cycle traffic light sited there and we all know how compliant the average cyclist is to this)! They are far more likely to see that that junction lights are red and go regardless of what the cycle traffic light shows.

It would make more sense, if as I originally stated, for the lights on the actual junction to turn green first to enable any cyclists who have turned right out of Argyle Street to get away before the Boots lights change and which are holding back a very large number of vehicles most of the day.

Eddie Lambert (V37)

Hi Eddie, TfL are adamant that cyclists are safer this way and that the majority are law abiding thanks to the recent cyclist police checks - a regular one apparently often being sited at that and the next junction (York Way). I tried, but banging your head against a brick wall is a reasonable analogy for when it comes to getting TfL to admit that there is a better way! ...Ed

Tube strike and DaC

Hello Alan

Please pass on my thanks to the back channel guys and dolls. It must have been very stressful for them on tube strike days but they were always polite, always helpful.

Stephen Field (F99)

Thanks Stephen, I'm sure they will appreciate that. They came in for a substantial amount of abuse from those whose taxis were delayed but hopefully those drivers who had to wait that bit longer for a response on strike days will have understood the reasons why ... Ed

Bye Ray...

Dear Alan

As I said to you at the AGM, I have now stripped out as my cab licence has expired and I will not be getting another taxi due also to health problems. So I have decided to retire from cab driving and I am looking forward to putting my feet up in the future. I certainly will not miss getting up at 2am to go to work! My best wishes to you and all at DaC and thanks for the great time I have had...

Ray Sorene (ex-A53)

Ray arrived at ODRTS in July 1969 and was one of DaC's longest serving members. He was also the standby photographer for when *Call Sign's* happy snapper, Alan Green, was unavailable. Good luck for the future



Ray and for a long, happy retirement ...Ed

Online readers

Dear Alan

After many years of enjoying your online version of *Call Sign*, I thought I'd just say hello from Singapore. I am now in my eighties and when I lived in the UK in Kentish Town many years ago, I managed to get a job with ODRTS at Pentonville Road. Whilst I was fairly young and not particularly interested in taxis – I could only afford bus travel back then – as my time there developed, I began to take more of an interest and became much friendlier with those working there. Three names that spring to mind were **Bonnie Martyn**, **Frank Duncan** and **Adolfo Boca** – who we knew as **John**. I never did the Knowledge, but mixing with so many passionate people at the office, I began to feel part of a taxi service and really took a pride in the organisation and often went round to local houses and put our card through their doors.

When I met my wife **Xin Lin** in 1959, I soon realised that she was the woman for me and 18 months later we married. Two years on and we left the UK and went back to Xin Lin's birth home of Singapore. I have worked at **Comfort** and **SMRT** taxi companies over here but am now retired. Xin Lin died last year and I don't think I will ever get over that, but having the ability to read *Call Sign Online* gives me the feeling of still having a family out there somewhere. So for that I offer my sincere thanks.

My best wishes go to everyone at ODRTS / DaC and I look forward as always to your next issue. You may not realise it, but you are, and always have been, a huge part of my family. God bless you all...

**Liam Grosser
Singapore**

Thanks for the letter Liam, it's always nice to hear from former ODRTS employees abroad. The last time I looked, *Call Sign* had 8004 online readers – although I haven't a clue how that is calculated! The total included 5611 UK readers, 1382 in the USA, right down to 10 in China (London Taxi Company in Shanghai perhaps???) and even 3 in Poland! All I can say is that if you ever come to London for a holiday, I'm sure you would be welcome to come to DaC House to have a look around ...Ed



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