

August 2015



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

A DaC driver tells Call Sign about pressure...



“Hey you DaC guys, you can win 2 pairs of VIP tickets to see us play live at the O2. Who are we? One Direction - the biggest band on the planet!”



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

August being a slack month, here is a list of some events that are on and where possible, the burst times

Venue	Event	Day	Date
Fulham	v Crystal Palace (Burst 16:45)	Sat	01/08/2015
Royal Opera House	Cubanía (Burst 21:40)	Sat	01/08/2015
Wembley Stadium	SSE Womens FA Cup (Burst 16:45)	Sat	01/08/2015
Olympia Grand	PURE LONDON 09:30-18:00	Sun	02/08/2015
Royal Opera House	Cubanía (Burst 19:10)	Sun	02/08/2015
Wembley Arena	Generation Next Live in Concert	Sun	02/08/2015
Wembley Stadium	FA Community Shield (Burst 16:45)	Sun	02/08/2015
West Ham	v Werder Bremen (Burst 16:45)	Sun	02/08/2015
Olympia Grand	PURE LONDON 09:30-18:00	Mon	03/08/2015
Olympia Grand	PURE LONDON 09:30-16:00	Tue	04/08/2015
Oval	v WORCESTERSHIRE	Tue	04/08/2015
Traffic	Proposed UG Strike	Wed	05/08/2015
Round House	Russell Brand	Wed	05/08/2015
Traffic	Proposed UG Strike	Thu	06/08/2015
Lords	MIDDLESEX v NOTTINGHAMSHIRE	Thu	06/08/2015
Lords	MIDDLESEX v SUSSEX	Fri	07/08/2015
Royal Opera House	Casablanca (cinema/orchestra) (Burst 21:10)	Fri	07/08/2015
Brentford FC	v Ipswich (Burst 16:45)	Sat	08/08/2015
Charlton	v QPR (Burst 16:45)	Sat	08/08/2015
Chelsea	v Swansea (Burst 19:15)	Sat	08/08/2015
Leyton Orient	v Barnet (Burst 16:45)	Sat	08/08/2015
Royal Opera House	Casablanca (cinema/orchestra) (Burst 21:10)	Sat	08/08/2015
Arsenal	v West Ham (Burst 15:15)	Sun	09/08/2015
Brentford FC	v Oxford (Burst 21:30)	Tue	11/08/2015
Charlton	v Dag & Red (Burst 21:30)	Tue	11/08/2015
Millwall	v Barnet (Burst 21:30)	Tue	11/08/2015
Olympia Grand	GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL 12:00-22:30	Tue	11/08/2015
Olympia Grand	GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL 12:00-22:30	Wed	12/08/2015
Royal Opera House	Ben Folds with yMusic (Burst 21:25)	Wed	12/08/2015
Olympia Grand	GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL 12:00-22:30	Thu	13/08/2015
Olympia Grand	GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL 12:00-22:30	Fri	14/08/2015
Fulham	v Brighton (Burst 16:45)	Sat	15/08/2015
Millwall	v Coventry (Burst 16:45)	Sat	15/08/2015
O2 Arena	A. R. Rahman	Sat	15/08/2015
Olympia Grand	GREAT BRITISH BEER FESTIVAL 11:00-19:00	Sat	15/08/2015
QPR	v Cardiff (Burst 19:00)	Sat	15/08/2015
Tottenham	v Stoke (Burst 16:45)	Sat	15/08/2015
West Ham	v Leicester (Burst 16:45)	Sat	15/08/2015
Lords	MIDDLESEX v GLAMORGAN	Mon	17/08/2015
Brentford FC	v Birmingham (Burst 21:30)	Tue	18/08/2015
Leyton Orient	v Stevenage (Burst 21:30)	Tue	18/08/2015
Millwall	v Barnsley (Burst 21:30)	Tue	18/08/2015
Lords	MCC v CLUB CRICKET CONFERENCE	Thu	20/08/2015
Charlton	v Hull (Burst 16:45)	Sat	22/08/2015
Fulham	v Huddersfield (Burst 16:45)	Sat	22/08/2015
QPR	v Rotherham (Burst 16:45)	Sat	22/08/2015
West Ham	v Bournemouth (Burst 16:45)	Sat	22/08/2015
Wembley Arena	Dance Afrique Summerfest	Fri	28/08/2015
Brentford FC	v Reading (Burst 16:45)	Sat	29/08/2015
Chelsea	v Crystal Palace (Burst 16:45)	Sat	29/08/2015
Leyton Orient	v Bristol Rovers (Burst 16:45)	Sat	29/08/2015
Millwall	v Chesterfield (Burst 16:45)	Sat	29/08/2015
Tottenham	v Everton (Burst 19:15)	Sat	29/08/2015
Wembley Stadium	Challenge Cup Final (Burst TBC)	Sat	29/08/2015
O2 Arena	Bollywood Showdown	Sun	30/08/2015

The Proms are on each day during August at the Royal Albert Hall. They are not listed for space reasons and burst times are unknown. A fuller list of 153 events can be found by visiting www.nashsnumbers.co.uk

from the editor's desk

Uber's phone number

I try to keep any writing I may have put on internet sites separate from those in *Call Sign*, but comments made by TfL representatives at the latest GLA meeting at City Hall on Wednesday 8 July did irritate me, so I'm repeating what I said on the Licensed London Taxi Drivers internet list, a closed group on Facebook.

The previous Sunday (5 July) on LBC, Leon Daniels had wriggled out of giving the Uber landline telephone number - even though he admitted that the regulations said they had to have one. He claimed that they did have one; he knew what it was and had even used it! However, he kept repeating that there was no requirement for it to be made public, even though its purpose was for members of the public wanting to pre-book a car. Presenter Ian Collins, who made no secret of his liking for black cabs, continually pressed him to reveal what it was, saying that Uber customers had a right to know it. But he refused and kept saying it wasn't difficult to find... but he just wouldn't give it out.

Then the story moves on three days and from LBC to City Hall. Sir Peter Hendy has now moved on to his 4 days-a-week job for Network Rail at around £25k a day, leaving Mr Daniels and his sidekick Garrett Emmerson to answer the same question, this time from the Deputy Chair of the London Assembly's Transport Committee and Mayoral candidate, Caroline Pidgeon. She asked why he hadn't given out Uber's number when Ian Collins asked him on live radio. Astonishingly, he suddenly gave it out - not once, but twice! He then announced to the mainly taxi driver audience that he hoped that would be an end to people asking him for it!

So my concern is twofold; what exactly happened between the Sunday and Wednesday to suddenly make TfL's MD of Surface Transport happy to give the number out after doing everything he could to avoid doing so just three days earlier; and secondly, do Uber want it made available because if you do get through, the chances are that you will get a pre-recorded message telling you to email them. So much for a pre-booking facility - something PH are supposed to have a landline for.

If they don't want it publicised - and it doesn't appear that they are too keen otherwise they would advertise it themselves and anyone who has tried to find it will tell you how difficult that is - then should we do the unthinkable and publicise it all over the internet? So for those that would like to make use of the Uber landline number, it's 020 33 22 8237. For those who missed that, it's 020 33 22 8237. But if you do tell anyone about it, tell them not to tell anyone! After all, it's apparently a secret! If you do, you will be invited to leave a message...something nice please!

And to the GLA Transport Committee Chair, Val Shawcross, how dare you refer to TfL as flabby and unprofessional... we wanted to say it first!

At last!

Well we waited long enough, but it did finally look as though our services were being required again out there on London's streets - but as usual, just as it got busy, the schools break up and we suffer again! But it brings back to me the number of letters *Call Sign* received from drivers saying how they would be prepared to run



substantial distances with no run-ins and then cover trips at possibly reduced fares.

All noble stuff and I'm sure genuinely meant by many. But I often asked what would happen to coverage if it got busy again and those same drivers said that account work was their priority and that so far as Docklands was concerned, drivers "were there anyway." Of course, if it were to get busy then they *wouldn't* be there because going back several years, we often had to struggle when it was busy. It was of little use to have 20 drivers booked into E14C when 22 jobs were called at 9pm and traffic outside was heavy, as it often is. But I digress...

I was recently at a special performance of the totally brilliant *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* at the Gielgud Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue. Linda and I were surrounded by celebrities from the worlds of television and pop with the only difference between us being that we had to pay for our tickets! If you haven't seen this play, then you really must. But still I digress...

Coming out of the theatre at just before 10.30 and seeing a row of up-market minicabs, I knew that getting a taxi wouldn't be easy so we walked a short distance away from the theatre but still saw no empty ones. So I decided to use the *Call Sign* account - not something I do very often - as it was a hot evening and just standing around looking for a cab isn't much fun. So I phoned, gave my account details etc and waited... and waited. After 15 minutes I phoned the dispatcher just to confirm that the job had been covered. It hadn't been but he told me to hang on as six drivers were looking at it - no, I don't know how they do that either - but who were obviously empty or they couldn't have looked!

Sadly, none of the six apparently fancied going from Shaftesbury Avenue to *Dial-a-Cab* in East Road. Why? Well they probably wanted to stay in town or go to busy areas such as Chelsea etc. However, that isn't much consolation to an account holder who doesn't have access to dispatchers but just has to wait. Hearing that, I looked again for a passing cab. They were still few and far between until a cab with no light on stopped and asked if we were looking for a cab and which way we were going. After thinking about it, he decided that East Road wasn't too far away from his route home to Ilford. I cancelled my DaC booking and later found out there had been 27 rejects on it.

For one brief moment, I could understand why people were using other carriers. They don't look at safety, knowledge of the streets or even a nice car - they just want to get home. It left me wondering whether any of the six drivers who took a look whilst I was hanging on (and how many others out of the other 21 rejecters) had written to me when it was quiet telling me

how little they were prepared to work for rather than lose accounts. Rant over and I feel better now. Your comments are welcome...

New Horizons and the Mayor

Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated by space travel and wondering what was up there and whether we were alone in our solar system. By the same token, over the past decade I have been fascinated by the Mayor of London and constantly wondered what he actually had up there below that blond thatch. I make no bones of the fact that I like Boris and voted for him, probably thanks to his visits to taxi watering holes as he strove to win his initial term. I believed much of what he told us at the time.

Surprisingly, Boris and the recent incredible NASA mission to photograph dwarf planet Pluto have much in common. Firstly, the *New Horizons* mission has taken almost nine years to reach Pluto - well it *is* around 3 billion miles away. And the way things are going with the building of the Mayor's cycle superhighways, it will soon take around nine years to travel along the embankment from Temple to the Tower - around 2.5 miles!

Then there are the emissions caused by traffic around town anywhere the Mayor's cycle lanes are being built. They are horrendously high, bringing with them the regular huge fines we have to pay to Europe for massively breaching NOx limits. But when *New Horizons* reached Pluto at its closest point on 14 July at 11.49am, a hit record from the 1980s - *The Final Countdown* - was played in celebration of the achievement. Who recorded that hit? Glam rockers Europe! However, *New Horizons* passed Pluto at 28,000 mph, whereas we can but dream of travelling to the Tower at an average 2.8mph on a good day!

The journey to Pluto has mesmerised me and astonishingly, there is still a third link between *New Horizons* and BoJo. On 4 March 2011, the ship passed Uranus. Many believe that the Mayor should have passed it as well...

Friends... who needs 'em!

Passed to *Call Sign* by several *Dial-a-Cab* drivers, this *Tweet* comes from the Editor of a newspaper that has always supported London licensed taxi drivers. Stephen Pollard has been the Editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* since 2008 and is a *Spurs* fan, which should make him a nice guy, used to putting up with suffering! But I think he lets himself down with his *Tweet* - and I quote:

"When Uber arrived, I stopped taking black cabs. Cheaper, faster, more comfortable, better all round. Boris and @TheLTDA can't stop the future."

Perhaps the good Mr Pollard should take a look at an issue of *Cosmopolitan* from a few months back where they published an article on Uber headlined: 'Uber have introduced handy hints on how not to get raped in their taxis!' He could also see our *Tweet* of the Month on page 25.

Everyone is entitled to their view. Mine is that *Jewish Chronicle* readers who pay the horrendous weekly cost of £1.90 to read the paper should consider the freebie options carefully because they are easier to read, cheaper and better all round. The JC and @stephenpollard can't stop the future.

Hang on, where have I heard that before...! And to Cosmo; it's 'cars' not Taxis...!

reflections of the chairman

Cashless payments

As many of you are probably aware, there has been a *Consultation* process undertaken by **Transport for London** regarding the acceptance of **Credit Cards** in all London Taxis. I believe the outcome will be a foregone conclusion in favour of that happening. I also believe that Tfl will want to implement this change as soon as possible, probably by the end of the year - although I would have thought next April to be more realistic.

Whilst on the subject of cashless payments, there seems to be another way of making a cashless payment - one that is appearing with the utmost regularity. Currently at **Dial-a-Cab** we are in a position to take Credit Card and Contactless payments, however there has been another form of cashless payment around in the form of **Barclays 'Pingit'**. The only problem with this method of payment is that the driver has to carry a bespoke **Quick Response Code (QR Code)** so that we can match the trip to the driver in order for payment to be made.

In the meantime, **Apple Pay** has appeared on the scene and looks like it could become highly used by members of the public, being a system that appears to be somewhat less cumbersome to operate.

The manufacturer of our **Chip and Pin** machines, **Ingenico**, have been working on a project which was originally named **Spider** but for some unapparent reason has now been renamed as **Snoopy!** I must say these IT people do love a codename - and the Dial-a-Cab IT department are no exception.

Snoopy will be the process of pre-authorisations for Credit Cards and the ability to be able to receive a payment by Apple Pay; both these processes will be dealt with by **Barclaycard**, but at the time of writing Barclaycard has not yet authorised or passed the Ingenico-built software.

They are both currently in the process of testing and there is little we can do until Barclaycard accepts and passes Ingenico's software. The situation is out of our hands - or anyone else's come to that - until Barclays recognises Apple Pay which they surely must do in due course. So until that day arrives, we are not in a position to accept Apple Pay, but please also bear in mind that an Apple Pay transaction is limited to contactless readers such as the PEDs you have in your taxis.

I am led to believe that the Apple Pay system is extremely secure and will not have a limit on transactions, although I'm also told that most vendors will initially limit the spend to £20, the same as contactless, although the £20 limit will be increased to £30 in September of this year.

Merger

There is not too much news to relay to you regarding our merger with **Mountview** other than to say that they have put their proposals to us, proposals that we did not consider appropriate. Consequently, we then put some counter-proposals to them, which they are currently considering.



At the time of writing they have not yet come back to us, but in their defence they will be moving their operation to new premises in Southgate at the end of August and no doubt they are a little pre-occupied at present! But of course, we look forward to hearing from our north London friends.

Logos

At the time of writing, we have in excess of 150 mobiles sporting our new Logos. We are not actually recalling the fleet at the moment, but if a taxi goes to **Roman Way** for any terminal problem then we will automatically fit the new logo. However, if you happen to be in the vicinity of Roman Way then you can also make a visit to have the new logo fitted.

I must say the response from Members to the new logo in the main has been very favourable, much better than when we introduced our old logo after which I was inundated with complaints. They finally subsided after three months, so this time around the acceptance has been much better.

Finally, we are in the process of designing a new website to coincide with the new logo, as you can no doubt appreciate we need a site that coincides with our new logo. But for the time being we are sporting two logos.

Tfl's Routemasters battery problems

Sometimes life throws you unfortunate aspects that you can't help but smile at. One such incident occurred recently when we were informed that **Mayor Boris Johnson's** new **Routemaster** hybrid buses - those that he so proudly announced to the world not that long ago - have suffered battery malfunctions.

There are about 800 of them currently in service and their diesel/battery hybrid engines were supposed to mean that the diesel would be used infrequently; only at such times that the battery ran out of power and that wasn't supposed to happen very often.

Now Tfl's **Leon Daniels** has confirmed that the power supplies on up to 80 of the Routemaster have had to be fixed or replaced. He also admitted that concerns had been previously raised about the battery performance on earlier vehicles.

Of course, we shouldn't laugh, but after everything Tfl has put this trade through over the years, a small smile could be in order!

Holiday Season

We are now well into the holiday season and although the work has been quiet in recent years due to several different factors, we all expect that the next few weeks will be even quieter with everyone appearing to be away on holiday. No doubt many of you with children of school age will also be away on holiday, so perhaps a sizeable chunk will be taken out of the quiet period for the rest. But on the down side, you have probably had to pay more for your holiday due to it being the height of the season! If you are going away, I hope you have an enjoyable break.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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With a spate of rumours concerning the Mercedes Vito rear steering upgrade doing the rounds on DaC, we decided to ask Penso – who are doing the upgrade in Coventry – what the truth was...

VITO UPGRADES IN COVENTRY

Quite a number of Dial-a-Cab Vito drivers have been talking about the new upgrade to their rear wheel steering system. All this has come about after the demise of KPM as a Mercedes dealer and Penso, along with Mercedes-Benz, had put a deal together to engineer a whole package of improvements to the system on the rear wheels of a Vito at the beginning of 2015.

Initially, the new improvements were being completed by Mercedes dealers in the London area, but now it seems that Penso's own engineering team in Coventry has taken over. One DaC member, Robert Jones (H74), who went up to Coventry for the upgrade to his Vito, told *Call Sign*:

"At first I thought Coventry was an awfully long way to go to get these changes to my cab, but when I saw they were putting two men on the job and were changing the whole of the rear wheel steering system, I was pretty impressed. It was all done in half a day, so I really didn't lose more than a day off the road. Since then I've been using the new system and it is much better and quieter. So far, it really works very well."

When *Call Sign* contacted Roy McMaster of Penso, he told us that the package of changes to the rear wheel steering included a series of measures to reduce water ingress to the system, as well as design changes to other components to make the whole rear wheel steering mechanism smoother and more durable. As for coming up to Coventry, Mr McMaster told us:

"We ran a pilot scheme with the Vito Taxi Club and around 20 of their members. It went so well that it was agreed by



DaC's John Davis (inset) was one of the first to take his Vito to Coventry

all concerned that coming up to Coventry, where we had our own engineers and electronics people to hand, was a faster more efficient way to do quite a major job. The work is being offered to all Euro 5 Vito owners, whether you are in or out of warranty. It is being done as a goodwill gesture."

Penso are running two slots in the day for drivers: One at 7:00am in the morning for early starters and the other from midday. Roy McMaster added: "You definitely get the work done and can return back to London within the day. We've now booked over 400 jobs up here and for those who've had the work completed, the reac-

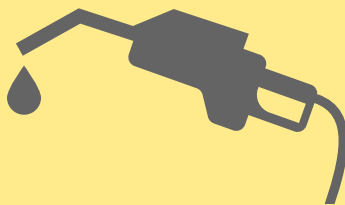
tion has been exceptionally positive. We try and ensure we book all drivers before their annual inspection date is due, but demand has been very high. As a result, we're upping our capacity to do more upgrades and that means we expect to have the whole of the fleet upgraded within a year."

Another DaC member, John Davis (V41), who had the upgrade to his Vito completed on 19th June, told *Call Sign*:

"The upgrade has been entirely successful on my cab and I feel so much more confident about using the system. The visit to the factory also gave me a greater insight into how the rear wheel steering system works and I think all Vito drivers should be pleased at what Penso has done for their cabs."

If you are a Euro 5 Vito owner, you can arrange an upgrade by calling on the Upgrade direct line on 02476 217762 or the Penso offices on 02476 217760.

Diesel rip off?



Diesel may have come down a bit of late, but its wholesale price has fallen below that of petrol, yet taxis and diesel car owners are not seeing that reflected at the pumps.

According to the AA, fuel retailers are "plundering" motorists' wallets with unjustifiably inflated diesel prices in garages, so much so that in their estimation these unnecessarily high prices have seen British drivers overcharged by around £250 million!

Now, with the support of 32 across the board MPs, campaigners have demanded a competition enquiry following claims of 'opportunistic and unfair profiteering' within the industry. The AA, RAC and FairFuel UK are all seeking an urgent response from competition authorities.

The AA considers that drivers are being ripped off by up to **6p per litre** of diesel and that it should sell for around 2p a litre less than petrol, yet on average the pump price is around 4p more than petrol. According to the RAC Foundation, that means retailers have been making almost six times more profit from every litre of diesel than from petrol and costing taxi drivers around £7 a week more than it should.

Call Sign

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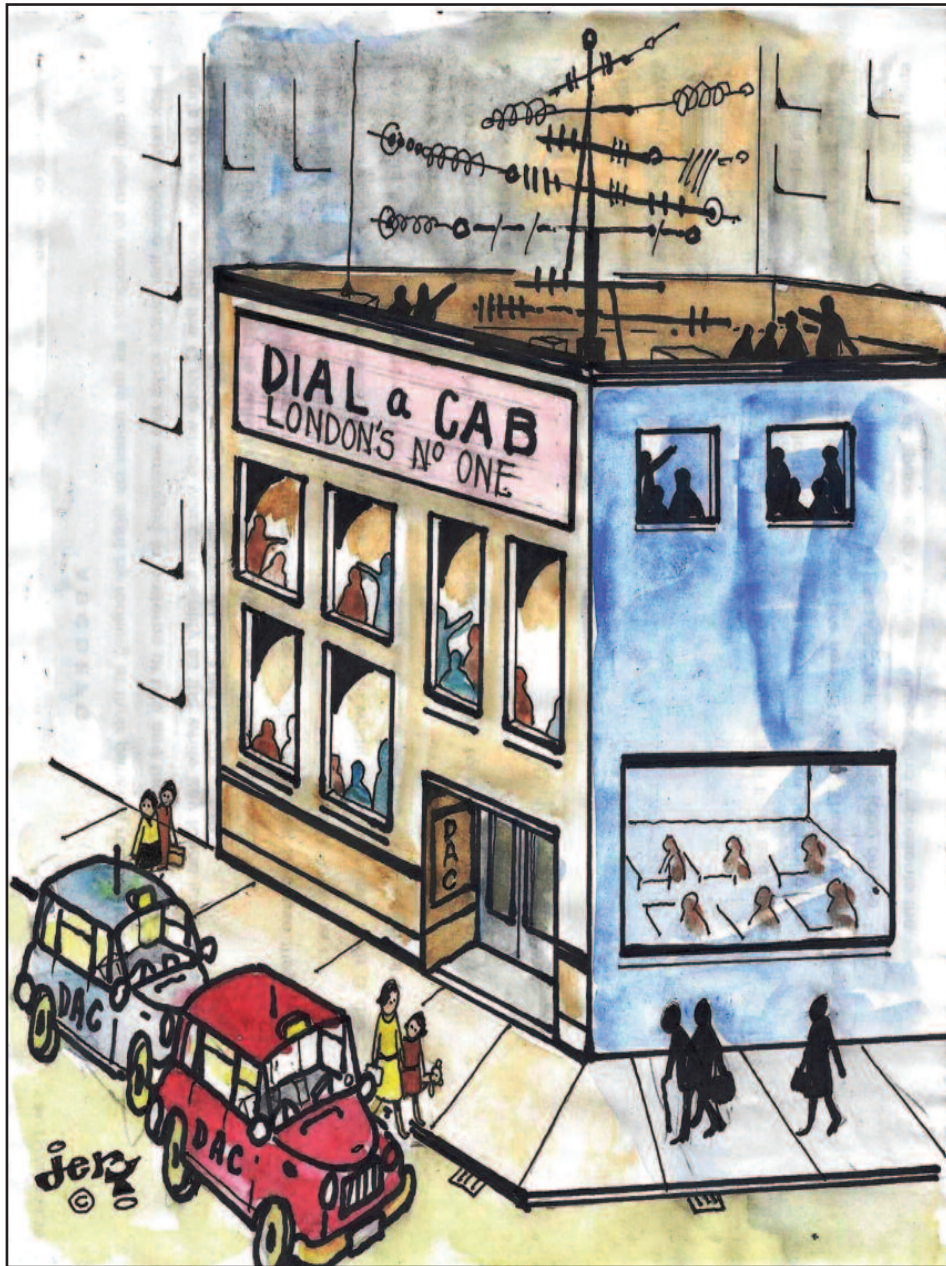
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Jery's World



"Thanks to the Mayor's cycling superhighway, we've had to come from Dalston to DaC via Vauxhall! Bet MI6 was suspicious!!!"

KEVIN GILBY

8 Dec 1962 - 5 Jun 2015

In last month's Call Sign, Richard Potter (T51) wrote of the death of taxi driver Kevin Gilby who was so tragically killed in a two vehicle collision in Chislehurst on the morning of 5th June.

Kevin's wife, Amanda and her family would like to thank everyone in the trade for their support.

Amanda says she has been overwhelmed by the kindness of Kevin's fellow taxi drivers both from leaving flowers and messages for her and the family, to the support - including taxis - at the funeral.

As Richard said last month, we all send our sincere condolences to the family...



LA BELLE FRANCE BANS LE CHOMP!

...or no eating while driving!



The land of le fromage, le baguette and l'escargot, ie la belle France, has of all things banned eating - well eating while driving to be precise. The new legislation will see drivers caught having a chomp while motoring hit with a €700 fine (around 500 baguettes at £1 a throw)!

French authorities have also banned other activities including the application of make-up on the move(!!!), listening to music that can be heard outside of the vehicle, wearing a blue tooth / headphones and reading a map. It also applies to cyclists.

Dial-a-Cab drivers travelling through France won't be able to plead ignorance and that includes not smoking in the vehicle if a child under 12 is in there. That is in addition to the regulations introduced in 2012 when the government made it compulsory for drivers to carry in their car an alcohol breath test kit, a warning triangle in case of breakdowns, headlamp converters if it isn't a French car with the correct headlights and a hi-vis vest.

And just for those who have updated their satnav devices to detect speed traps during their driving holiday in la belle France, it is also illegal en tant que responsable d'une voiture (ok, while in charge of a car!) to use any form of speed camera detector - even if it's built into your satnav or you have a smart-phone app. If caught using either device, you could face a fine of up to 1000 baguettes!

And to save you asking, *Call Sign* has discovered that the ban even applies to the lovely Haribo fizzy Schtroumpfs and even the same makers Frites! Is nothing sacred!!!

If you do intend driving through France, then you have been warned...

Win tickets to see One Direction at the O2!

They're the biggest band on the planet bar none and when they play you can be certain that tickets are at a premium! Well not to Call Sign readers because we are giving away two pairs of tickets to watch Louis, Niall, Harry and Liam play live in concert at their 'On the Road Again' world tour at the O2 arena on Tuesday 29th September in a simple to enter competition.

If you have been to the O2, you will know that with a capacity of over 15,000 you can be seated so high up that instead of an interval ice cream, you could well prefer some Oxygen! But have no fear, *Call Sign's* tickets are in the VIP section, where not only will you be close to the stage and have an excellent view to this totally sold out gig, but you even have your own entry point to save queuing as well as access to the VIP restaurant.

To win one of the two pairs of 1D tickets, just tell us the name of the talent competition that in 2010 they finished in third place and went on to be the biggest band on the planet!



Was it:

- A. *The Voice*
- B. *X Factor*
- C. *Opportunity Knocks*

The competition is open to all drivers,

members of the Dial-a-Cab staff and their families (please say who you are related to). The tickets are only for Tuesday 29th September and under no circumstances must they be sold.

The Editor's decision is final.

Hammersmith flyover renovation almost complete

The final major piece of work to complete the renovation of Hammersmith Flyover will take place over the August weekend of Friday 7th until Monday 10th. It is to finish the replacement of the two five tonne expansion joints within the carriageway that allows the structure to flex as traffic moves across it. The eastbound closure is between 22:30 Friday to 05:00 Sunday, while for westbound traffic the closure is from 22:30 Saturday to 05:00 Monday...

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GARY AND A DAY WITH THE MET POLICE!

...for a motorbike ride!

Oh dear! Being a member of any club has its ups and downs, so when a message dropped onto my iPad inbox from the **Herts and Beds Advanced Motorbike Club**, I did what I normally do - scanned it and forgot about it! But what later caught my eye were words that would contain wisdom a few months later: "Fancy a day with the Metropolitan Police?"

Those few words would cause alarm bells to ring in the ears of any **London taxi driver!** Not since I bought a pair of *Farab* trousers down **Millwall** thirty years ago - only to get them home to realise they were seconds and the zip was where the pocket should have been - have I ever had anything to worry about from the Met Police... well maybe once or twice while on a **Dial-a-Cab** job!

I'm sure that like me, you could pick out some bits of the job the Police do that you have fancied, like riding a horse down **The Mall** - albeit only on a Wednesday morning, or maybe wizzing down **Park Lane** on a motorbike. Personally speaking, I've always fancied bursting through a gangster's door, standing at the end of the bed and calling out: "Get your trousers on son, you're nicked!" And if it was the bloke who sold me those *Farabs*, then even better!

But the words **Metropolitan Police Bike Safe Day** had an attraction. So with some trepidation, I signed up and fully expected to see a retired octogenarian sucking a peppermint and smelling of *Deep Heat* rub-in cream, dressed in a white shirt and obscure bowls club tie with a set of pens in his top pocket for all occasions and secreted somewhere on his person, a **Vick ram-it-up-your-nose** stick!

As 0845 on the duly appointed Sunday arrived, I found myself at the *Metropolitan Sports Centre*, Bushey. With its 1970s theme, they must have spent a fortune on the décor - or then again, they may have saved a fortune on just not refurbishing it since the 1970 World Cup! Having said that, I'd just like to do a quick support ad for the rehabilitation wing for injured officers; I am informed that you can rent the facilities fairly cheaply.

With a Swedish *Yamaha* bike festival going on in the grounds, half of those there looked dead to the world, while the other half were staggering in for breakfast dressed like **Iron Maiden** - and old blokes queueing for the loo after ten pints and a curry the night before isn't a pretty sight to behold.

Even before we had the school register, one instructor remarked that they had great cricket pitches there and it would have been worth the £35 entry fee (including lunch) for the **Bike Safe Day** just to see his face when it eventually dawned on him that he may well have someone camped on the spot where he once hit a six! But Bob - who turned out to be the joker in the pack - just dived with gusto towards the window to check before returning to set the pace for the day ahead.

The day started with the words: "*This is not a test and you're not here to be tested, just to give you a few pointers.*" After all, **bikes take up only 2% of road space but take up 24% of accidents** - although I never did find out how many were pizza delivery



Gary and PC Cosham (really!)

riders! Each module was taken by a different officer in his own style, which made it far from boring or a lecture. The parts I found most interesting - especially being a cab driver - were those that your eyes miss when you focus on what you think is the whole picture.

After the classroom talks, even though they were done in the social bar, it was out on the bikes - don't be stupid... your bikes not theirs - around town centres with two riders and one police officer. I just knew I had drawn the short straw when paired with a young female secretary from St Albans called **Kat** and **PC Cosham** (really!) who had already told me he rode sports bikes in his spare time - or at least when his wife let him out. Oh dear, a copper with a sports bike and a sense of humour!

I was now just chomping at the bit to do some country lanes; this was going to be funny as I just knew there would be no time for a comfort break along the way. The thin

blue line was about to be stretched with me at the back.

The second of the two rides after lunch (included) in Hatfield was the best bit. But did I learn anything? Well yes. Was it a good day? I can sum that up with the words I sent to the Bike Safe London team on their *Facebook* page: "That was a great day out, thanks guys."

And I never thought I'd say this, but thanks to **TfL** for standing by the Bike Safe London team. But Mr Mayor, if you could spare a little more money for the likes of **PC Cosham** (really!) who in 8 hours did more for road safety and public relations than any poster on the side of a police wagon could do in a hundred years.

And to Officer Cosham (really!); I owe you a cup of tea and a cake at the very least...!

Gary Cox (O46)
Call Sign Online

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London must choose between chaotic Uber or its heavily-regulated but safe black cabs because the two could not operate side by side, a Tory MP has warned. **Charles Walker**, MP for **Broxbourne**, said that while cab drivers had to pass the Knowledge and undergo background and financial checks, Uber was brazenly ignoring the rules and flooding the capital with minicabs.

He warned that City Hall officials were having to deal with up to 1,200 new minicab registrations every month, while Uber straightforwardly ignored most regulations. Mr Walker said that if Uber was preferred, there should be a genuine free for all releasing cab drivers from the current regulations on themselves and allowing them to put "any old piece of rubbish on the road."

Speaking in a late-night Commons adjournment debate, Mr Walker said: "For 400 years, London has recognised the need to have a properly-regulated and licensed taxi service. I suggest our predecessors were not fools in this matter. London can't have it both ways; it can

Tory MP warns...

Choose between black cabs and Uber



MP Charles Walker: "London must choose...!"

try but it will end in tears."

He continued by saying that without the enforcement of regulations on all kinds of taxi, fares would rocket, cars would be unsafe, disability access would be hit and people would be less safe. He said that enforcement officials had neither the resources nor the sanctions available to properly uphold the rules - telling MPs there should be the ability to get rule breakers off the roads for good. He said there was currently no penalty for not meeting the rules.

"I want to be clear; I want to derive reassurance from a licensed and regulated black cab taxi trade. Of course, it's not a perfect trade but it's a very good one. I want to know that when my children are out in London, they will always have the option of easily finding a black cab to take them home or back to the place they are staying. And I want to know they will pay the price on the meter, not a meter price artificially inflated through surge pricing as Uber drivers did during the 2014 Sydney hostage crisis and in London by 300 per cent during last week's tube strike. Thank you Uber, thank you for nothing! I want to know my children are being driven by a professional with four years' training, because my children's safety is important to me."

He continued: "Why shouldn't fares be left to the discretion of the driver? Only the fools will be left to pay the higher rates and that's

their punishment for being stupid, weak, old or frail. This is not the London I want to live in, but unless we take regulatory enforcement seriously, I fear it is the one we are going to get."

Transport minister **Robert Goodwill** said he understood Mr Walker's desire to raise his concerns in the Commons, but added that licensing was the responsibility of **Transport for London**.

He said: "London's taxi service is recognised as one of the best in the world, with high vehicle standards - including disabled access and skilled drivers. By learning the world famous **Knowledge of London**, the taxi drivers therefore earn the unique right to ply for hire on the streets of the capital. Private hire vehicles offer a different service, also with high standard but allowing a customer to choose who they travel with. This combination of taxi and private hire ensures that the needs of as many Londoners as possible can be met."

He added that the market was changing due to new technology and that the industry had to adapt while pointing out that change brings challenges. He said TfL and other licensing authorities were faced with accommodating 21st century technology in 19th-century legislation.


Mr Goodwill said a consultation had been carried out in the capital which may deal with some of Mr Walker's concerns, adding that the results would be published later this year.

Renting or sharing a DaC taxi


Several Dial-a-Cab drivers have written over the past few months of the difficulty in obtaining a second hand taxi after their cab hit the 15 year limit. As a result, *Call Sign* will be happy to give the details of any driver whose cab will soon be approaching the end of its life and who is looking to permanently rent another driver's cab in the next few months.

However, if you are thinking of buying a new taxi and would rather go into a deal as partners with another DaC driver, then we'd also be happy to put your name, mobile phone number and the area you live in to see if there is anyone near you with similar thoughts. Post your details to Call Sign at DaC House or email us at callsignmag@aol.com.


Terry Catherall (Y90) has a two year old Vito with one year left on the lease. He is undecided as to whether to give it back, buy the other half on his own, buy the other half of the Vito with a partner, lease another new Vito or just rent a cab. If you would like to talk to Terry about possibly sharing, let *Call Sign* know and we'll pass along your interest. Terry lives in the Elm Park (Hornchurch) area.



James Griffin (T97) has been on DaC for 10 years and is interested in the joint purchase of a new taxi. James lives in the **Carshalton** area.



Bernie Silver (G08) has been on DaC since 1975 and will be looking for a cab to rent on DaC from 24th August. He lives in the **Barkingside** area has a full no claims bonus to transfer if that helps.



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DAC staff barbeque

Although it was missing from last year's calendar (did someone burn the sausages), the Dial-a-Cab staff barbeque returned this year with the Board doing the donkey work of cooking – although we were assured that none of the cooked items consisted of donkey!

The sun was shining, food and drink were in plentiful supply and of course there was the opportunity of seeing Chairman Brian Rice in a pinafore rather than his usual attire of a suit!



Keith Cain:
"Dis is how
you cook da
horse's head
in da Family.
Nothing
personal, it's
strictly
business!"



Joe Brazil joins the IT department getting ready for a free nosh-up



Anything you can do I can do better!



Jeni, Jackie ad Gary. Will they join Mike Son's cricket team!



Allan Evans issuing instructions on how to accept sausages from the Chairman!



Jahar waiting to get a word in among Carole, Bernadette and Heather!



Call Sign's photographer can snap away while Albert looks after his cab!



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Service update

Since I last wrote to you (*May Call Sign*), there has been a great deal of activity within the Sales department. On 1st July, an account we previously serviced in the City commenced using us again. We have also since attended a 'supplier's day' at their offices where the DaC team demonstrated our online booking tool and showed how simple it is for account holders to set up their individual profiles.

We also demonstrated to them how quick and easy it was to order a taxi with just three simple clicks and I have to say that seeing the surprised look on their faces at the simplicity of being able to order our taxis is a credit to DaC's IT director, **John Bankes** and his team. Bearing in mind it was designed and written in-house, that really is an excellent achievement.

We have recently completed two tender documents from major taxi and car users, where they have asked us about supplying a booking platform. Their focus this time has been on the functionality and flexibility of the system, together with how it can automatically manage the business rules of the client – 'business rules' being the control the system has of managing their personnel.

Recently we had the opportunity to view other company's platforms and reports from our IT team have been very positive about our own in comparison to those. Some think we are behind in our technology, but I have to say that in many areas of this subject, we are streets ahead.

Another recent pleasing discussion I had with a client was with regard to our main private hire competitor having problems meeting service levels. It was the case that on many recent occasions their drivers were arriving around thirty minutes late for pre-booked trips. We all know why that is and long may it continue, but their clients are becoming dissatisfied at having to wait for what they regard as a cheaper option.

We are pushing the longer journeys for costs below the meter. We have contacted a vast number of clients regarding this and are seeing some repeat business. It goes without saying that the corporate sector want to use – and indeed prefer to use - a black cab for their travel around London, but often use private hire purely because of the perceived cost. Having reviewed many trips since being back in Sales, it is very clear to me that for journeys of up to 5 miles, the black taxi is very competitive. It's between 6 and up to around 18 miles where it differs considerable. For journeys over 18 miles and with us offering fixed mileage rates, we have certainly become far more affordable.

After the Lord Mayor's Show...

After that positive news, it was rather disappointing to hear that the Sales team have received some difficult feedback from account clients, which has been problematic to deal with. These involve drivers being critical and very opinionated to their passengers about the cost of a particular fare. Not knowing who the individuals are in the back of your taxi, it really is not acceptable to do that.

Not only is the driver bringing the Society into disrepute, but this type of

DaC Sales Report

With Keith Cain

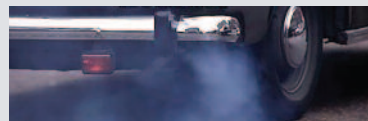


conduct can be prejudicial. While it may be frustrating to accept a fixed price journey that actually goes a lot less than the meter, we ask members to please refrain from making comments to passengers. All that does is make them feel uneasy and force them into looking at using alternative suppliers. I am still trying to understand the reasoning behind drivers making these types of comments, but one thing for certain is that it will not see fixed prices being increased. It is in fact doing the complete opposite.

The vast majority of **Dial-a-Cab** members give an excellent service and it is they that sustain our account base while encouraging them to use us again and again. To the few who believe their practise is correct, well it isn't. Please don't do it. If the Sales team or Account Managers receive any more complaints about drivers voicing their criticism to account clients, then I'm sorry to say that a complaint will be issued and the driver(s) responsible will have to face their fellow peers and attempt to justify their actions in front of them at a Complaints meeting.

I know this has been said time and time again, but it really does take months - sometimes far longer - to negotiate with clients to open an account. A few words spoken during a 20 to 30 minute journey can be all it takes to close that account within days. Every one of our drivers is a Public Relations officer for Dial-a-Cab and as I said, we appreciate the vast majority who do all they can to help. But please, even if you feel that something is wrong, do not take it up with the passenger...

Keith Cain
Head of Sales



OR



Call Sign asks...

THE POLLUTION KILLER: BUT WHICH IS IT?

A new study by **Kings College** commissioned by **TfL** and the **GLA** has confirmed that not only is pollution a killer, but that so far as London is concerned, twice as many people as previously thought lose their lives each year due to long-term exposure to it.

According to the study's findings, two key air pollutants are responsible for the deaths; they are the fine particulates known as **PM2.5s** and the nitrogen dioxide (**NO2**). They are said to come mainly from diesel vehicles and there is undoubtedly much truth to that.

A previous study in 2008 put the number of deaths due to long-term exposure to air pollution as 4267, whereas by 2014 the figure had risen to 9500. London Mayor, Boris Johnson, said:

"This is a snapshot of the true impact of air pollutants on our health. I've been criticised for cleaning up taxis, upgrading bus fleets and my plans for the world's first Ultra-Low Emission Zone in 2020, but this study shows imperatively why these bold measures are required."

The Mayor announced that 9,000 zero emission capable taxis would be on the road by 2020 and that more hybrid buses would be put into London's fleet with 1,400 older buses having already been retrofitted, thereby reducing their emissions by up to 88 per cent.

Call Sign's question to the Mayor is this: This survey hasn't taken two minutes and **City Hall** must have known that pollution was getting worse. You need only stand close to many of the numerous sets of roadworks killing London to see and indeed smell that. We understand about the tragedy of deaths caused by pollution and although 9500 on its own is just a number, taken individually that means 9500 people have left devastated family and friends.

So could the Mayor's office explain to us the logic of building cycling superhighway lanes that will take around 12 months, cause more pollution than this great city has ever known before and then tell us that cyclists don't actually have to use them?

Yes, taxis and buses do contribute to pollution – but they always have. The question is why the number of deaths from pollution has doubled? Mr Mayor, just look around London; look at the myriad of unnecessary roadworks and then ask yourself again why the tragedy of 4267 people has risen to 9500. Yes, we accept some of the blame, but then again we have never had a choice of vehicle. But you had the choice of virtually stopping London's traffic and causing chaos in order to build lanes that don't need to be used and wasting £0.2billion in the process. Is it just me or are we being hoodwinked into believing that we are the cause...

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online



The London Taxi Company confirms pricing for its...

CLEANEST TX4 EVER

Following two years of development and an investment of more than £10 million, the London Taxi Company has confirmed that the Euro 6 compliant TX4 will go on sale from 1st September 2015. It will retail at £42,795 for the company's most popular model, the TX4 Elegance Automatic.

The price of the Euro 6 TX4 reflects the increased build costs involved in producing a vehicle that delivers superior environmental performance. The new model offers a NOx emissions reduction of two thirds compared to the current model through the introduction of a new 2.8 litre diesel VM engine.

Commercial Director, **Richard Gordon** said: "We have invested heavily to ensure the Euro 6 TX4 delivers much lower NOx emissions than its predecessor, making it the cleanest cab we've ever produced. This comes



"In developing the Euro 6 TX4 we have focused not only on meeting the latest regulatory requirements but also on delivering to our customers a taxi that will be smoother, quieter and more efficient than its predecessors."

Further details about the Euro 6 TX4 will be announced at the time of launch. Euro 5 TX4s are available at

at a time when we're also spending significantly to develop our Zero Emissions Capable taxi for 2017.

£39,195 while stocks last.

Contact: ukenquiries@london-taxis.co.uk for further information...



Peter Johansen

LTC welcomes Mayor's support for the taxi trade

The London Taxi Company has expressed delight that Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has reinforced his support for the licensed taxi trade by keeping the 15 year age limit and introducing an £8000 grant to anyone buying a new Zero Emission Capable (ZEC). In addition - but not attached to the £8000 deal - there is

to be a taxi scrappage scheme beginning at £5000 for anyone scrapping a 10 year old cab, going down to £1000 for a 14 year old cab. This is, of course, in addition to any value remaining in the taxi. The makers of the iconic TX4 are also pleased with TfL's announcement that they are to double their enforcement team in the capital's war on illegal touting.

Commenting on the announcement, CEO of The London Taxi Company, Peter Johansen, said:

"The Mayor's announcement should provide a confidence boost to the licensed taxi trade in London following a tough first half of the year. The proposal to continue with the 15 year age limit will enable drivers to better plan their buying cycle and bring back some much needed certainty to the market.

"The confirmation of taxi grants and a potential scrappage scheme for older vehicles is another vote of confidence in the significant investments the London Taxi Company is making to bring about the next generation of ultra-low emission iconic London taxis.

"These latest developments follow impressive work undergone by trade organisations in collaboration with manufacturers and policy makers to support the trade as we move forward with new technologies and products.

"We now urge TfL and the Mayor's Office to deliver on these proposals and to conclude the final stages of the age limit consultation quickly so the trade can focus on delivering the low emission, high technology future we all want to see."

The London Taxi Company's parent company, Geely, is investing £250 million to research, develop and assemble a Zero Emissions Capable taxi here in the UK, which will meet new emissions regulations being rolled in London and other major cities across the world. The future London taxi will be available in the UK in late 2017 and will set a new global benchmark for purpose built taxis and environmental performance.

The project is the largest-ever investment in the UK taxi industry and follows significant spending to develop a new Euro 6 compliant taxi on sale later this year.

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Contact Debbie (W18) on

07956 317040



THE NEW LONDON TAXI! BOARD GAME

Your chance to win a game...

The London Taxi! Board Game is a new game full of fun and knowledge for all the family of 12 years and up. It goes on sale for the first time later this month.

Created by an Edinburgh black cab driver, the game was first piloted in Edinburgh and Glasgow, where it outsold the local Monopoly and Trivial Pursuit in major stores throughout Scotland. Now with new features and a redesigned board and box, the new London edition is about to be launched.

Taxi! Board Game contains 600 local history and general knowledge questions about London and just like driving a taxi, the better your knowledge is, the better your tips and the more you earn. When your fare ends, you must answer a question on London to gain a tip.

As all members of the public know, taxi drivers have an opinion on every subject so if you land on one of the Sound-Off squares, then it becomes your turn to sound-off like a cabbie – or if you are a Dial-a-Cab driver already, then just do what you do anyway and sound off! Sound-Off cards contain a hundred varied subjects and on being told the ‘Sound-Off subject’, you have 30 seconds to mention as many of the six key words printed on the card as you can. Every key word you mention increases your takings.

As you in DaC-land already know, driving a shift in a taxi is a combination of luck and knowledge; turn left you may get a £5 fare, turn right and you could get a £40 tour! This is reflected in the ‘Taxi! Board Game’ by the Give or Take squares. Keep the card for yourself or pass it to a fellow player. Is your luck in? You may gain... OR you may lose!

The winner is the player who has earned the most money at the end of the agreed shift time, eg 1 hour or 90 minutes.

For more information about Taxi! visit www.taxiboardgame.co.uk or contact: gordon@taxiboardgame.co.uk. The game will be available to buy soon from London retailers and is currently available on Amazon UK.

Call Sign has two copies of Taxi! Board Game to give away. To win one, just answer this question taken from the game correctly and your name will be entered into the prize draw.

A £4 tip question: Guess Who I've had in My Cab? This former World Darts Champion was known as 'The Crafty Cockney'.

Please email your entries to callsign-mag@aol.com or send them to the usual Call Sign address at Dial-a-Cab House by Monday 13 July.

Good luck...



You can win one of two Taxi! Board Games

LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

Free Travel for Taxi Drivers

This may seem like a sweeping statement, but are we the only *bona fide* employees of Transport for London to *not* receive some form of concessionary travel? We pay for the privilege of being a part of TfL yet don't receive any of the other benefits and perks that the direct labour force of this group enjoys.

You may ask why we should get anything of that nature anyway. Well I don't think I'd be too far wrong in saying that the vast majority of we taxi drivers live in the green badge suburbs of Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Essex. There will also be a proportion of drivers entitled to a freedom pass or over 60s pass. Has the Mayor's office and the emission groups ever stopped to calculate the amount of pollution that all of we Taxi drivers put into the atmosphere via our normal and daily routine of coming to and fro to start our shifts? And if not, why not?

If we all live an average of 40 return miles from London, that works out to around 5 million miles of emissions between 25,000 taxi drivers working a normal 5 shifts per week. Surely it would be in the best interests of all of us for the Mayor's office and Green groups to review the situation.

They should be looking to provide ample and free safe parking areas for us to park our taxis alongside a concession, or even free travel pass to our local home areas.

This point of view may seem radical to some, but look at the savings just to us - let alone the country in lower emissions. There would be less fuel used, less wear and tear on the taxi, less maintenance and lower servicing costs. And of course, there would probably be a longer working life for those taxis that struggle to even get to 15 years. But the bottom line would be far less emissions caused by our dead mileage. But then again, I may have missed the point; all the above could produce monetary savings to the wrong people...



Sunday Shopping

The debate is going ahead about increasing Sunday shopping hours to try and boost the economy. Those arguing in favour claim that more money will be spent and more part-time jobs created.

In the centre of London and many other major shopping cities, there is no doubt that tourist money would be spent over longer shopping hours on a Sunday and those in favour would probably have a case. However, as I watch all the major supermarkets delivering door-to-door in my suburbia house every day of the week - especially Sundays - with more and more people buying online, I wonder if the change in legislation is actually worthwhile.

I do however question, when arguments are being raised about Sunday shopping, why London is always burdened with the responsibility of increasing UK revenues.

Over recent years, my wife and I have spent a lot of money visiting various destinations in Britain. After spending a day sightseeing, we get back to our hotel and nothing riles us more than wanting to go and have a peruse around the local shopping centre and to probably spend some money, only to find that unlike London, the shops are closed at 5.30!

It's hardly surprising that tourists flock to our major cities to see our wonderful sights, but isn't it just as surprising that most of these cities close so early. The target should not be increased Sunday hours, but increased weekday hours; this in turn will increase employment opportunities nationally...

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

After 15 years on **Dial-a-Cab**, **Ann Watkins (M78)** has had her share of trips that involve far more pressure than you'd like! Then thinking about it briefly, she admitted to *Call Sign* that a job she had done recently certainly fell into that category.

"An American gentleman came up to me at **Paddington Station** and asked how long it might take to get to **City Airport** and whether I accepted payment by credit card. I said yes to the card payment and estimated about 45 minutes for the length of the trip - but quickly added that depended on the traffic conditions. That was just as well as it turned out," Ann told us.

"As we got under way, the passenger explained that he had been travelling all night due to aircraft delays, had jumped on the **Heathrow Express** into **Paddington** but had still missed his planned **London** meeting and was now trying to catch up by flying straight to **Dublin** for further meetings; so time was of the essence to catch his flight from **City**. I quietly prayed all would be fair sailing. I hadn't heard of any major problems, so it was fingers crossed!

"We made steady progress until reaching **Commercial Street** where the traffic seemed unusually bad - even for there - so I suggested we turned into **Hanbury Street** to make our way through the back streets to return onto the main road. The passenger agreed, but as I turned into **Hanbury Street** and was committed to the manoeuvre, my already

Ann and a Pressure Trip!

beating heart sank further. There in front of me was a large lorry completely blocking the road and leaving me stuck!" Ann's voice relayed her exasperation of the time.

"As I shuddered to a stop, my passenger threw open his door, jumped out of the cab and ran towards the truck driver remonstrating with him to move out of our way as he had a plane to catch and that otherwise he would call the police. His choice of words was not repeatable for a family magazine," Ann told us with the first glimpse of a broad smile at the memory!

"I overheard a none-to-pleasant exchange of words, which quickly turned into a slanging match as the truck driver pointed ahead and that's when I realised that the lorry was itself waiting to get through - its path blocked by another lorry in front of it - and then us!

"Eventually we got back on track and I hoofed it into **City Airport** with literally seconds to spare. I offered to reduce the fare by the credit card charge given the delays, but the passenger refused my offer and just thanked me and simply said that he appreciated I had done my very best and that he was there in time.

"I breathed a sigh of relief as the pressure slowly vanished and I watched the passenger



run off towards the terminal. But I also felt good that I had achieved a high level of customer satisfaction!" Ann drove off still grinning at something that probably happens to a DaC driver somewhere each and every day.

© Call Sign Magazine MMXV

London: World's most expensive short break!

It may be the **City** that so many still want to come to that has often made it the world's most popular **City**, but **London** now has another title; but this time a not quite so welcome one - the most expensive place on earth for a short break!



Expensive but loved!

According to a recent survey compiled by **TripAdvisor**, our **City** topped a city break table, followed by **Paris**, **New York** and **Stockholm**. Also up there for cost were **Copenhagen**, **Zurich**, **Helsinki**, **Toronto**, **Oslo** and **Sydney**. But none were as expensive - according to the survey - as **London**.

The cities were judged according to cost of a meal with wine for two plus cocktails, two short taxi journeys and a one-night stay in a four-star hotel.

The cost of the short break package for **London** was £312, with **Paris** on £306, **New York** £301 and **Stockholm** fourth with £287. The **London** meal for two with wine came to £77, the two cocktails setting visitors back £23, two taxi journeys of two miles each costing £22 and a hotel room at £189.

Of the top 10, **Stockholm** had the most-expensive meals (£103), **New York** the dearest hotels (£218) and **Oslo** the most-expensive taxis (£34). The least expensive city was **Hanoi** (Vietnam) with the short break costing just £92, with the meal coming to just over £20.

TripAdvisor spokesman **James Kay** said: "This year's results show that Asian destinations are still the most affordable, while European destinations continue to top the most expensive list."

Of course, one problem with cities such as **London**, **Paris** and **New York** is that however expensive they are, tourists still love them and surveys such as these are really just page fillers!

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TONY ARNOLD AND TWO WEDDINGS!

At the time when HRH Prince Charles was getting married to Lady Diana Spencer, Dial-a-Cab driver Tony Arnold (F03) was sent to collect the bridesmaid's dresses from account customer of the time, Elizabeth and David Emanuel in Davies Street, Mayfair.

Tony told *Call Sign*: "Thanks to that account trip, I got to visit St James Palace twice with the dresses and each time I had to wait within the Palace for the *Ladies in Waiting* to make adjustments to the dresses before I had to return them to the Emanuel's. But quite amazingly, whilst waiting for the dresses to be tried on by the bridesmaids (Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, Sarah-Jane Gaselee, Clementine Hambro, India Hicks and Catherine Cameron), I was offered and accepted to have tea and sandwiches with the Queen Mother and Prince Charles equerry!

"My grey taxi of the time with its DaC stickers on was parked in the grounds of Marlborough Road for all to see. Certainly one of my more pleasing taxi account rides!"

But now Tony has celebrated a wedding of his own when daughter Samantha married

her long-time partner Mark, with guest of honour being their son and Tony's grandson Alex.

"As lovely as the day was when I picked up those dresses in 1981, it just couldn't hold a candle to seeing my beautiful daughter get married to Mark. That really was totally magical."

Tony Arnold has been on DaC for many years and in the *October 2002 Call Sign*, we began a series that followed Tony and two Chinese students from Beijing (China) to where Tony's cab had been flown to by Chinese TV station CCTV, all the way back to Trafalgar Square via Russia and Finland!

Several years later, we reported on Tony and his taxi visiting both Ghana and Australia, where he had been commissioned to teach the local cabbies how to drive like London's taxi drivers do.

Our congratulations to Tony...

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online



Tony with daughter Samantha at her wedding
Inset: The other wedding in 1981!



New York cab driver Michael Higgins writes for Call Sign...

Uber... shmoober!

This is a classic example of what famous TV 'sewer worker' Ed Norton means when he says...

'Down in da sewer, we have an old saying... all that glitters is not gold!' INDEED!

I believe a few calls were made and a few golf games played in order to get simultaneous editorials into allegedly competing newspapers on the fourth of July holiday weekend!

That happened over here in the New York Daily Post and its supposed rival, The Daily News when on the same weekend both laid into the taxi business in favour of Uber. Ring a bell in London, does it?

Anyway, I just wish the **News** and the **Post** would use softer paper (if ya get my drift)! They have degenerated into worthless rags and have the nerve to charge \$1 for a freggin' newspaper that my cats won't even wipe their asses with!

You **Dial-a-Cab** guys in London want to know what's it about? Well **Uber** is finally feeling the heat over here and their investors are asking a few serious questions about finance... like wtf is going on? Where's their money going and why are there riots in the streets? Uber is even looking at Chinese investors because their American investors ain't that keen on the deal anymore!

You couldn't help notice that the two 'editorials' came soon after a City Council hearing and on that holiday weekend.

What about America? Our troops? Our history? Nope, it's all Uber, all the time. That's the playbook. Uber is just hyped-up globalist crap. Their 'work' is drying up, their drivers are going broke with depreciating vehicles to show for their 'sweat equity'.



Editorials slammed NY taxis in favour of Uber

What about **Gett**? What about **Lyfte**? Why didn't their companies get mentioned in these so-called editorials? Just Yellows! First generation immigrants and people of colour have always made a great living and future in the New York City Yellow cab business. Don't let a few West Coast shills destroy our City... and our industry with their globalist, elitist, apartheid share-ride scam!

Michael Higgins
Editor, New York City Taxinews
Call Sign Online



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Ladies and Gentlemen

Due to the *Call Sign* sabbatical, it has been some time since I last wrote to you. So I'd like to give you a further view with regard to activities within the **Dial-a-Cab** Sales & Marketing Department. I can tell you that with Keith in charge of the department, we have been working extremely hard to secure more work for the membership.

Although very difficult, often due to unfair competition, we all have to deal with the extremely cheap costs PH offers; nonetheless I do believe we are making some improvement. I'm aware that many of you may not see an immediate financial improvement, but let me assure you that everything possible within the resource of Sales & Marketing is being undertaken and in the coming weeks we are hopeful that there will be some noticeable progress.

It really is important to realise - if indeed you don't already - that for many people the use of credit cards is now the preferred method of payment for goods and services. It amazes me when I'm on a rank or flagged down by a cab passenger at how many drivers still refuse that form of payment.

It is not only non-radio drivers who refuse credit card payment, even some of our own members still do. I have to say to those *Refusniks* that you are definitely missing a trick. Not accepting credit card payments allows **Uber** and the like to take more work from right under your noses. I know things are tight, but you do get paid for the trip the following week.

Also, you will read in both **Keith Cain** and **Allan Evan's** article about fixed price trips. You may be offered fixed price fares which could be below the meter fare. The trip will have the

Mike Son asks...

Are you missing out?



compete in London with over 82,500 mini-cab/private hire drivers in over 65,500 licenced vehicles and over 3,000 private hire operators.

Transport for London

For so long now, various trade organisations and their representatives have been battling hard to save the London taxi industry and together with Licensed taxi drivers, have organised demonstrations against TfL's *laissez-faire* attitude towards the Licensed black cab industry. There have been hundreds of **Uber** complaints from the public, press releases sent to media outlets about the possible demise of our trade, yet it still goes on. So what is the next step should any impending court rulings be detrimental to our industry?

It's possible there could come a time when London taxi owners have just about had enough of the unacceptable attitude of **TfL** towards both the public and the taxi trade and even consider taking off their Licence plates. They could continue to serve the public, however it most certainly would be a free for all with no fair pricing structure and no licensing authority. It most probably wouldn't happen in my lifetime, but it could happen if the livelihood of London taxi drivers was even more at risk than it currently seems to be

Mike Son
DaC Sales Dept

An occasional review from a struggling 14 handicapper at some of the marquee golf courses I've had the privilege to play in my golf days away from the taxi...

SIMON'S GOLF COURSES

Have you ever played a course that is bunkerless? **Berkhamstead** is one, but the sheer majesty of the **Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Course** situated just a few miles from **East Grinstead**, in my humble opinion just cannot be matched. There are two courses here; the shorter *west* course is ideal to play in the morning if playing 36, which would be a very fine course if you only played that. But the main course - *The Old* - is really the one you must play.

The course has a rich history; Abe Mitchell was an artisan member here and that's the chap who stands upon the Ryder Cup and the old country mansion clubhouse. It simply says 'class'.

Play it in late summer with the Heather in bloom (an abundance of the purple club grabber here). I've not played a more picturesque inland course anywhere.

Onto the links and you may think that the lack of bunkers make it an easier days golf? But nothing of the sort! The **Open qualifying** was played here until recently and although it begins with some makeable par holes, the course soon bares its teeth.

If they allow you, then play off the white tees - though many *carries* to reach the fairways are long, the tees from the back are usually elevated and provide some stunning vistas. I can't think of a better view from the high 11th 'par 3' 249 yarder in all my years playing.

One of my favourite holes here - the 17th - is a long 486yd 'par 4' blind tee shot that needs some draw, leaving a long iron or wood to a green with a bank to the right and a fall-away to the left.

Most of the greens are surrounded by humps and hillocks all covered in Heather. They are framed superbly and trying to play a precise shot shows what a frustrating game this can be.

I'm going back in September 2016, a date in my diary that has been underlined in bold felt pen!
Happy golfing...



The 11th hole is stunning in its beauty

Simon Wallis (M11), Call Sign Online

TfL consultation on...

Taxi licensing changes ahead of ULEZ



Transport for London has launched a Consultation on proposed changes

to taxi and private hire vehicle licensing ahead of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), which will be introduced in central London on 7 September 2020.

The Consultation, which closes on **Tuesday 11 August**, contains two key proposals. The first is that, from 1 January 2018, all newly licensed taxis – and new Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) – must be **Zero Emission Capable (ZEC)**. The proposals will be supported by a £65m fund secured by the Mayor to encourage the take up of new vehicles that will make the Capital's taxi fleet the cleanest and greenest in the world. The fund comprises of two parts; to help drivers upgrade to the next generation of ZEC taxis and to 'decommission' the oldest vehicles from the fleet.

A ZEC taxi is considered to be a pure electric or hybrid vehicle capable of running in zero emission (at tailpipe) mode for all or part of the time (maximum 50g/km CO2 and minimum range of 30 miles).

TfL is working with a number of manufacturers and is confident that ZEC taxis will be available for sale from 2017, well ahead of the proposed requirement in 2018. With the number of manufacturers involved, the market is set to grow and so give cabbies unprecedented choice in selecting vehicles. As part of the proposal, funding would be made available to enable up to £8,000 in grants for cabbies wishing to buy ZEC taxis (a £3,000 'top-up' to the £5,000 **Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV)** plug-in car grant).

Following discussions between the Mayor, TfL and the two trades, PHVs would still be required to be ZEC (i.e. plug-in hybrid or better), however the Mayor is proposing to align the PHV ZEC criteria to match that of the Government's Plug-in Car Grant criteria. This will allow a greater choice of vehicles including popular models such as the Toyota Prius and Mercedes-Benz S-class. PHVs purchasing

these vehicles are currently eligible for up to £5,000 plug-in car grants from the Government.

Whilst the new ZEC PHV criteria will allow a greater choice of vehicles, at present there are no suitable models in the marketplace that can be licensed to carry six or more passengers (although some full electric vehicles exist). Therefore, TfL is proposing a two year sunset period exemption from the ZEC requirement for PHVs licensed to carry six or more passengers until 2020.

The specifications for ZEC taxis and PHVs will be confirmed once the final licensing requirements have been agreed.

The second proposal is to retain the existing 15 year age limit for all taxis and to encourage retirement of the oldest most polluting taxis through a voluntary decommissioning scheme. From 2017, drivers of taxis over 10 years old would be able to claim up to an additional £5,000, with the precise amount depending on the age of their vehicle. This is intended to reflect the current challenges facing the trade while tackling London's air quality in the most effective and sustainable way.

In March 2015, following a positive Consultation process, **Mayor Boris Johnson** confirmed that the world's first Ultra Low Emission Zone would be launched in central London on **7 September 2020**, significantly improving air quality and helping to protect the health of Londoners. It will require vehicles travelling in the Congestion Charge Zone of central London to meet new emission standards 24 hours a day, seven days a week or pay a daily charge.

By 2020, TfL is committed to ensuring all 300 single decker buses operating in the ULEZ are zero emission (eg electric) and all 3,000 double deck buses will be hybrid, including 800 of the Mayor's new Routemasters. In addition, TfL are now proposing the retrofitting of 400 Euro V buses that operate outside the ULEZ to bring them up to Euro VI emission standards, delivering air quality benefits well ahead of 2020.

With the new proposals, the overall ULEZ package is projected to nearly halve emissions of nitrogen oxide (NOx) from vehicle exhausts in central London. This means more than 80 per cent of central London is expected to meet the NO2 annual legal limits in 2020. The ULEZ would also lead to significant reduction in the number of people living in areas of poor air quality (where levels of NO2 exceed legal limits) by 72 per cent in central London and 54 per cent London wide.

Dial-a-Cab drivers living within the ULEZ will be granted a three year sunset period with a 100% discount to give them more time to change their vehicle to meet the required standards.

The Consultation ran for a total of 6 weeks, and closes on Tuesday 11 August. It will be available online at: www.tfl.gov.uk/ultra-low-emission-zone.

TX1 gas conversions

Last month's *Call Sign* revealed that those drivers on the verge of reaching the 15 year limit of their TX1 cabs can now have them converted to LPG from diesel and gain the cab an extra five years of licensing. Ever since then we've had drivers asking if it was genuine and the answer is definitely yes.

The first **Dial-a-Cab** driver to have the conversion was **Garry Farr (R87)**. He told us that his engine was now noticeably quieter than his old diesel one and that there was now a noticeable improvement in acceleration. Garry said he was delighted with his cab's conversion.

The company carrying out the conversion is **Battersea Autogas** in **Elcho Street, Battersea**. It can be done on TX1s only and needs to be completed anytime up to one day before the 15th birthday of the taxi according to the date of first registration on the logbook - not according to the plate.

Bookings are required from up to 2 months in advance due to the number of drivers that want the gas conversion to LPG. There is very little administration involved and you do not require any **TfL** authorisation to have the cab converted because Battersea Autogas are approved by TfL and as long as your cab is within the above criteria, the TX1 can be converted and you will be able to get the extra 5 years out of it.

The cost is £6000 + VAT, which takes it up to £7800. It sounds a lot but means that your cab's extra 5 years will cost you £31 a week – substantially cheaper than renting, even adding the usual expenses. The price includes an engine replacement for a radically modified and fully reconditioned engine that has been converted from diesel to one that runs on **petrol** and **LPG**, but from the same **Nissan TD27** family. It comes with a warrantee of 20,000 miles or one year.

**Enquiries to Battersea Autogas on 0208 871 2233
1-4 Elcho Street, Battersea, SW11**





Another true story from Geoff Levene...
DRIVER, CAN YOU DELIVER THIS...

Ask most people what cab drivers do and they'll probably say we take people from A to B. And that is largely true. But there is another side to the job and that's deliveries. Not so much these days, but they do make a welcome change and there used to be some cream jobs.

One of our customers was **Thorn EMI**. Their London base was a factory on the **Great Cambridge Road** with another factory in **Gosport**, Hampshire to where we sometimes delivered. We often had to pick up packages from railway stations first, with the general rule being that if there were less than 18 of them then you took them to the **Red Star** parcel office at **Waterloo**. If there were more, then it was that trip down the A3!

And then there was **Longmans the Florist** beneath **Holborn Viaduct**. They were regular clients as well – especially on **Valentine's Day!** Actually it was quite fun. They would load the cab with flowers (lots of **Roses** naturally), give you a delivery sheet and off you went around the City. You then presented the blooms to smiling and often embarrassed young ladies, while their colleagues looked on either grinning or even hiding some jealousy. When you finished that first lot, you went back and got some more. At the end of the day it worked out around **£5** a delivery with little mileage.

But occasionally there were problems. A friend of mine had a radio job to pick up a three feet long **terracotta** plant holder. He got it into the cab with no problem and arrived at the customer's house in **St Johns Wood**. The

front door was up half a dozen steps, so he hoiked the thing up onto his shoulder and started up the steps, which were steeper than he thought! It started to slip and then... **CRASH!** Another account lost!

At a **third floor flat in Little Venice**, a woman asked if I could deliver a **five foot diameter pine table top** to **New Kings Road**. I said I would have to charge a bit more for that job!

"Why," she screamed?
 "Well, how many guys brought it up to here," I asked.

"Three," came her reply. I ended up bouncing it down three flights of stairs...

But the king of deliveries - as well as of all other work - was the **BBC**. All manner of stuff was picked up or delivered - usually starting or finishing at the **TV Centre**. There were flags from **Stratford**, cakes from **Charlton**, historic newspapers from **Barnet** or heavy cans of film from top floor cutting rooms in **Wardour Street**. There were also many other set-downs in the area such as **Kensington House**, **Woodstock Grove** and **Sulgrave House**. One evening I had to take something to the rather grand sounding **Night Despatch** at **Lime Grove**. I'd never been to this one before and imagined a hectic place full of leather clad couriers. It turned out to be a cupboard!

On another occasion I had a pick-up off **Uxbridge Road**. A guy came out and lined the back of the cab with plastic sheeting before then loading it up with freshly dug spinach and me then taking it to the **Eastenders** set at **Elstree**. They then put it on the fruit and veg stall – leaving me with snails crawling up the cab windows!

We and the rest of the trade eventually lost the **BBC** account. Things were not helped by the activities of a driver and part-time despatcher I will call **Dave** – mainly because that was his name. He told us that if he had deliveries going to, say, **Stratford, Ilford** and **Romford** then he would go to **Romford** first! We didn't believe him but it was true and the **Beeb** got wise. He was swiftly kicked off...

It was a winter's afternoon at around the time I began wondering what culinary delights the good lady wife was preparing, that I was allocated a delivery from the **City to Mill Hill**. Yesssss!

It was from the venerable and long established law firm of **Tregunter, Cathcart and Fawcett**. I waited at reception for the package. The lift doors opened and out stepped a pretty young woman with glasses perched on the end of her pert nose and an envelope in her hands. She wore a white shirt and very close fitting jeans.

"Hi," she said, "**Iona Tyte-Jeggings**." Well I could see that... but what was her name! "Please give this to **Mr Greengrass** personally."

I arrived at a dilapidated semi with an overgrown garden and paint peeling off the window frames, behind which hung filthy nets. I could just detect a dim light burning inside so I rang the bell and eventually a man opened the door half an inch. He was unshaven with wild hair and despite the cold weather, he wore a T-shirt and shorts.

"Yes," he asked through the tiny gap? I gave my best **Dial-a-Cab** smile, showed him the envelope and asked politely if he was **Mr Greengrass**. He studied it closely before replying that no one of that name lived there and never had.

"He sometimes gets letters sent here, but it's not me." And with that the door slammed shut!

I reported back and was told to try again but got the same result. I then realised that I was attempting to serve him with a legal document but that he was refusing to take it! I was told to put it through the letterbox. So in the noble tradition of the London cab driver, I started up the engine, ran up the path, posted the letter... and then drove away as fast as I could!

Geoff Levene (W32)
 Call Sign Online

Call Sign's Danny in British 10K run

Danny Fresco has been working on **Call Sign's** lay-out for as long as **Alan Fisher** has been the Editor, so he deserves a worthy mention following his successful run in the recent **British 10k** run through the centre of London. It was the eighth time he had run in the event.

Danny was running in aid of the **Sue Lion Leukaemia Fund** and completed the course in a very respectable 55 minutes 37 seconds.

Danny (on left) after his 10k charity run



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LTFUC 2015 So

If you thought you spotted a Honey Monster running around Sainsbury's (Low Hall) Chingford car park on the morning of 1st July - the hottest day for nine years – you weren't hallucinating from the heat, he was there to have fun and to wave off 300 very excited children on the 49th LTFUC legendary annual outing to Southend-on-Sea!

The Committee, together with 113 drivers including a number from **Dial-a-Cab**, arrived at 6am to decorate their cabs. **Sainsbury's (Low Hall)** kindly made us their charity for the year and we are very grateful to Manager **Andy Smith** and his team for all their help and support throughout the year, particularly on this outing. Special thanks also for letting us use their car park, supplying breakfast and water for the outing and to the Sainsbury's staff that came along in the cabs as helpers.

On hand to entertain the children were clown **Jolly Jack**, the **Furry Tail Folk**, **Miss Ballooniverse** and the **Honey Monster** from **Halo Foods**. Our sincere thanks to them all for keeping the children entertained. We were also delighted to be joined by the **Worshipful Company of Tin Plate Workers** (alias Wire Workers) in the shape of **Master Jeremy Balcombe**, who was accompanied by **Peter Wilkinson**. Our thanks go also to the **Mayor of Waltham Forest**, **Cllr Saima Mahmud**.

At 10am, the balloon-decorated taxi convoy set off with horns blaring. We were unable to have a police escort this year, but thanks go to Police from the Valley Ward, NPT North C Team; PS Tony How, PC Loraine Verghse, PC Karl Kitchen, PC Siraj Nasir, PC Sam Manzur and PCSO Shashi Tailor for escorting us at the beginning. Thanks also to Green Flag and the Red Cross for joining us and also Ears Communications for the loan of their radios for the day.

We arrived in Southend just after midday and drove along the sea front to be greeted by hundreds of waving sun worshippers, many who had left the beach to come and watch the convoy. Many later sent lovely comments on social media. Arriving at **Cliffs Pavilion**, the children were met by Southend's adorable **Salvo the Clown**, more **Furry Tail Folk** and clown **Jolly Jack** and we thank them all so much for entertaining the children in that severe heat, especially the furry clad animals – phew!

After lunch the children were ferried down to **Adventure Island** for a fun filled afternoon and we thank the management and staff there for their help and assistance. Thanks here must also go to **Brian Houssart MBE**, Hon President of the **Southend Taxi Charity Fund for Children** for his support in supplying the transport and also to **Southend Council** for the use of the **Shorefield Road** car park.

As I walked around Adventure Island, all I could hear were screams of excitement! Vouchers had been given for ice creams, donuts, candyfloss and drinks so no wonder the children had continuous smiles on their ice cream covered faces! I must give extra special thanks to all the wonderful drivers and helpers who made sure that the children were looked after. Special thanks also to Cab 104 **Marvin Houston** and his helper **Michelle Scully** for supplying a welcome extra 250 bottles of water.

At 4.30, the tired and weary drivers and children returned to the Cliffs Pavilion for tea and a disco, where we were delighted to welcome the **Mayor and Mayoress of Southend**, **Councillor Andrew Moring** and his wife **Louise** and we thank them for giving up their valuable time to be with us.

Then it was time for the presentations by the Mayor and Mayoress. The *best dressed taxi* went to Cab 52, **Matthew Ellis**. He won the **Terry Stapleton Rose Bowl**, a bottle of Champagne and a voucher for £150 or a cab service and MOT. Out thanks to **Vince White Taxis** of Waltham Abbey for donating this prize. Matthew's helper, **Faye**, received a box of chocolates. Second prize for *best dressed taxi* went to Cab 113, **Bonnie McCormack** and she received a Shield, a bottle of Champers and her helper **Megan** received a box of chocolates. The third prize was a general draw into which all the drivers' names had been entered. The winner was **Darren Pearson** and he won an overnight stay for two at Mayfair's **Connaught Hotel** and our thanks go to the management for their generous donation. Darren later told me it was the first outing he'd been on and he loved it so much that he wondered whether we were doing one the following week!

Then it was disco time and we thank **Dave Davies** and his team who once again did a



Kids and helpers having a great time along with the Honey Monster



Gotcha! LTFUC Committee member, Alan Cohen, is 'arrested' for allowing too many children and helpers have a great day by the seaside! He was released with their thanks!



for Underprivileged Children

Southend Outing



DaC's Colin Greaves (M09) leads the 120 taxi convoy to the seaside



Some of the DaC drivers on the outing: L-R Lee Wood (T18), Graham Leonard (J20), Ivan Sobell (P69) and Alan Yuchetel (L44)



magnificent job. There wasn't a space on the dance floor and as much as try, I still can't master the *Macarena*! Out in the foyer, children were queuing to have their faces painted and we thank brilliant face painters, Jacqueline Walsh of *A Wacky Jackie* and Hannah Clark of *Fable Faces*. Thanks also to Jackie's son Jake for doing the balloons. Southend's Salvo the clown was also in the foyer making balloons and had an endless queue all afternoon and our grateful thanks go to him as well as the video team, Paul, Ellie and Victoria for working tirelessly all day and capturing some magical moments. Special thanks go to LBC's Steve Allen for giving us some wonderful mentions on his morning show. They also go to Heart Radio for their coverage and to Hayley Print for their very kind assistance. Then there are our sponsors who we thank for their wonderfully generous support and we include the anonymous donor who covered the costs of the driver's diesel.

But all good things must come to an end and at 6pm a conga lead the children out of the room! Before leaving, each child was handed a stick of Southend rock and we thank Councillor Paul Van Looy for kindly donating these to the children. Sincere thanks as always to all our brilliant helpers for taking care of the children, especially in such severe heat.

We have received numerous letters and emails since the outing and would like to share one of them with you:

One of the taxi drivers, Claire, wrote saying: "The kids I met and cared for on the day touched my heart. I've only ever helped blind people to cross the road before, so spending the day with a blind child literally opened my eyes to another side of the life that we take for granted. I'm so proud to be a cabby and so proud to take part in such a beautiful charity."

Well Claire, we're proud to have you and all the wonderful drivers who gave up a day's work to make this outing possible. Claire also informed us that a little boy called Lewis in cab number 50 had made a song up about the day and Abba's *I believe in Angels* was changed to *I believe in taxi drivers*. Pure magic!

We welcomed many new drivers this year, some who said they couldn't wait for next year! We can't emphasise enough just how grateful we are to all of you. Without you, there would be no outings!

Unfortunately, our Hon President Bill Tyzack BEM (ex-C06) and his wife Grace were unable to join us on the day and due to circumstances beyond their control, Hon Chairman Sim Yiannikaris (ex-E53) and two other committee members were also unable to be with us. All were missed.

It was an amazing outing and the smiles on the children's faces all day long were a joy to behold. I know the children would want me to say a great big *thank you* to everyone for enabling this magical day to take place. And of course, well done to the Committee on another great outing!

We're proud to say that next year we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of our legendary outings to Southend-on-Sea. So bring it on....!

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer



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

Norman Beattie lives in Canada, but is probably one of the world's biggest experts on the history of the London taxi business. He often sends interesting facts to *Call Sign* but a recent piece forwarded onto us from the 19 May 1887 issue of Canadian newspaper, the *St Andrews Bay Pilot* – which Norman believes was probably copied from a UK paper of the time - posed an interesting question for this magazine involving former *Dial-a-Cab* Board Member, **Marie White**.

Marie had come to DaC in 1983 via *London Wide* – the forerunner to *ComCab* - and replaced **Alun Roberts** in our 1988 Society elections. For almost two years, Marie ran the DaC welfare scheme. But she was not only the first DaC female BM, she had also been the first female taxi driver to gain a coveted **Green Badge** - achieving that distinction in 1977 when some of her biggest detractors were actually the taxi drivers of the time! They were convinced that a lady taxi driver would be bad news, often quoting the old chestnut about what if a male passenger wanted a *lady of the night*!

But Marie wasn't fazed; her husband Jack was already a taxi driver and nothing was going to put her off. Her only problem was that she didn't like the idea of going around on a moped, so she did the first 10 months of the **Knowledge** in an Austin Mini and often spoke about the number of times she was stopped by police who would ask why she kept stopping and starting. She once admitted to *Call Sign* that she was afraid that someone might accuse her of looking for male clients!

When she passed out, she and Jack became the first-ever married couple to both drive a London taxi. Speaking to *Call Sign* many years later, Marie smiled at the memory of male faces when they saw a woman driver pull up at a time when there was just her...

"I remember one gentleman whistling through his teeth to attract my attention when I was going in the opposite direction

Marie White mystery



Was Marie White the first lady taxi driver?

*This female **Jebu** who for many years wore conspicuously the badge of a driver and held the reins in skilful competition with the men, who no doubt vociferously*

along Bayswater Road. I did a u-turn, but when he saw me he apologised and told me that the whistle was aimed at the cab and not me personally!"

Her husband Jack had died some years earlier and the sight of Marie with her pet terrier in the front of the cab became a common sight with drivers as she couldn't bear leaving it at home alone. Marie became ill and died of cancer in 1993, however her legacy as being the first lady Green Badge driver lives on. But therein lays the new mystery...

The St Andrews Bay Pilot article from 1887 read:

*The only woman cab driver in England has just died. Visitors to Epping Forest will recall, as one of the peculiar institutions of that vicinity, the female **Jebu** who for many years wore conspicuously the badge of a driver and held the reins in skilful competition with the men, who, no doubt, vociferously denounced at cab stands and railway stations this demonstration of a woman's rights.*

Or, according to the Newtown Register (New York) on 26 May 1887:

denounced her at cab stands and railway stations, has recently died, but not before she demonstrated a woman's rights.

Norman was researching something totally unconnected and the clip just popped up on *Google*. So the question must be who this woman, described as **Jebu* was?

Norman told *Call Sign*: "I remember reading about Marie White, so the question is did this 1887 lady have a London badge or did other municipalities issue them? Did she get the badge legitimately or did she appropriate a badge originally issued to a man? One would think she'd have to be legitimate given the hostility to women documented in **Phil Warren's** book and referred to in the snippet; it's not likely she would have been allowed to get away with anything illegal.

"**Sean Farrell** may have to change the name of his column to *Brethren and Sisteren of the Whip!* Seriously though, there must be quite a story behind her and Sean looks like the guy to dig it up."

According to Wikipedia, someone who drove a horse-drawn cab for hire was a cabdriver or **Jebu.*

Looking after your leased cab...

GETTING TO THE 'HUB' OF THE MATTER

"If you decide to lease your cab rather than buy it outright, there are some things I've learned along the way that might be useful to others," Mark D'Arcy (O44) told *Call Sign*. "While my own experiences relate to the Mercedes Benz Vito, I would think similar guidelines probably apply to the London Taxi Company TX4 as well.

"For instance, when you collect your new vehicle, the leasing terms will be made clear and in the case of MB, they have produced a video explaining what they expect of their leaseholders. These include very limited body damage and things like scuffed bumpers or scraped wheel caps being pitfalls that leaseholders need to be aware of. As one example, the tight turns at St Pancras Eurostar can be disastrous for hubcaps, so be cautious there.

"My only gripe is that the video features a commercial vehicle rather than a taxi, and while I accept that a taxi is on the road an extended number of hours too, I believe that taxi drivers tend to take that bit more care with their vehicle as it is in their own interests to do so!" Mark grinned knowingly.

"So in my case, I spent £800 bringing my previous cab up to scratch before I took it back prior to collecting my current taxi. I had the bodywork brought back to MB requirements and generally made sure things were neat and tidy - all at my own expense. When I collected my new cab a few days ago, I immediately put the brand-new hub-caps supplied with the new taxi onto my old vehicle as I handed it back. Then I placed the old hubcaps that I had taken great care of, onto my new cab. If you leave the old hubcaps on, MB will possibly charge you £58 for each one - a staggering £232 for the four - and any bodywork repairs will be at Merc's charges. So you may find yourself better off to have any work done yourself to bring the cab up to scratch before you swap it for a new leased cab.

"The old KPM didn't seem to be quite so picky, but MB appears to have tightened their Terms and Conditions, so it pays to be careful and know the score or you may find an unwelcome letter on your doormat several days after returning a lease cab in which MB will say they have had to bring the cab up to return standard. This can be potentially costly!

"Yes, perhaps I am over-cautious, but that's better than being at the mercy of Mercedes Benz; so the watchword has to be: Carefully does it!" Then Mark drove off - very carefully - with his unmarked hubcaps still glistening!



Mark has useful advice on leased cabs

Alan Green (E52), *Call Sign* Online

Boxing trainer and 10-year Dial-a-Cab driver Alec Wilkey (W83) has told Call Sign that his fighters had "a successful May." Sorry to disagree Alec, but after four of his fighters picked up titles in the space of a week, we would call that absolutely sensational!

But it has to be ladies first because his first female boxer, Greek fighter **Areti Mastrodouka** sensationally captured three World Titles in her hometown of **Athens** after beating her Spanish opponent, **Loli Munoz**, via a unanimous points decision. Areti came away with the **WBF, WIBF and GBU** World Championship belts after an exciting super-featherweight unification match at the **Panathinaikos FC** stadium hall. At the final bell, it was unmistakably Mastrodouka's hand that would be raised by referee **Toni Tiberi**. All 3 judges voted in her favour and the Greek southpaw was presented with the **WBF** and **WIBF** belts to the delight of the Athens crowd to add to the World GBU title she won last time out. She can now really call herself the World Champion!

Another fighter from Alec's stable, former Southern Area Champion **Danny Connor**, captured the **British Masters Lightweight** title at **York Hall** by stopping **Andy Harris** in the 3rd round after Harris suffered a cut above his left eye. Connor, 29, displayed slick boxing skills set up by an effective jab and landed punches at will to cause damage to Harris, including a real stand-out uppercut in

In a sensational championship winning month for DaC's boxing trainer, Alec Wilkey...

ARETI UNIFIES THREE WORLD TITLES!



Alec (centre) and his Championship winning stable with Areti proudly holding her 3 World Championship belts!

the 3rd round. The referee was forced to stop the contest and Connor was declared the new champion!

The third of Alec's fighters to take a title came when 22 year old **Johnny Coyle** won the **Light-Welterweight Southern Area** belt at **York Hall** after beating the previously undefeated **Phil Bowes**. Southpaw Coyle showed his superior boxing skills, especially on the inside with his uppercuts and hooks. Johnny claimed the title over the 10 rounds, although the slick Bowes remained a constant threat. Alec told *Call Sign* that he believes Johnny Coyle now looks ready to fight for bigger titles.

But Alec Wilkey's stable still hadn't finished in this sensational month when welter-weight **Adam 'Raw' Salman** scored a sensational KO victory on the same show, halting **Michal Voskya** with 1 second left of the first round to take

the vacant **International Bronze Masters** title. Salman proved too quick and strong for Voskya after landing heavy right hands throughout and with Voskya flagging on the ropes, the Morden man pounced and unloaded a barrage of punches causing referee **Lee Cook** to step in and save Voskya further punishment.

Congratulations to Alec, to his fighters and especially his World Champion, Areti Mastrodouka...

**David Wilkey
Call Sign Online**

In this series, Cab Guide, City of London Guide and City of Westminster Guide Bob Woodford looks at infamous peace time London explosions...

Blast!



During World War Two, about 25% of the housing in the old London Borough of West Ham was destroyed as a result of enemy bombing. In fact, some 14,000 houses were destroyed and over 500 acres of land was cleared following a devastating Blitz period. Most of the houses that survived were in poor condition and without modern amenities. How many *Call Sign* readers are old enough to remember outside toilets?

In the post-war period, the Council implemented modern building programmes but by 1965 when the London Borough of **Newham** came into being, there were around 8,000 names on the Council's housing list. So a reminder to those not too familiar with East London local authority politics – the old Boroughs of **West Ham** and **East Ham** were combined to provide the new Borough of **Newham**. The Architects, **Taylor Woodrow Anglian**, used the newly developed **Larsen-Nielson System**, which was a rapid industrial building technique providing a solution to the housing shortage using a high degree of prefabrication. It was chosen for the construction of over 1,000 new homes in Newham.

The first phase of the rebuilding programme started with the demolition of the **Clever Road** area of Custom House – the result being that **Ronan Point** in Butchers Road was one of nine identical tower blocks that were constructed.

They all stood over 200 feet tall, with 22 floors and containing 110 flats. Ronan Point was assembled from pre-fabricated concrete panels lifted into position by crane and held together by bolts. It was an easily assembled structure that was more like a giant **Meccano** set than a serious work of architecture. It was handed over to Newham Council on 11 March 1968 and like most 12-year old boys, I had hours of fun with my own Meccano set back home in **Bermondsey**.

But disaster struck at approximately 5.45am on Thursday 16th May 1968 on the 18th floor flat rented by a 56-year-old cake decorator, Miss Ivy Hodge, when there was a Blast!

The force of the explosion blew out the non-load bearing walls of the kitchen and living room and also the load bearing outer walls of the kitchen and bedroom. The consequence of this was the corner

flat on the floor above no longer had support, causing one corner of the block to rip through and collapse like dominoes just before 6am. It resulted in the deaths of 5 people that morning. It happened when most people were still asleep, but had it been an hour or so later with many in their kitchens having breakfast, the death toll could have been very much higher. Amazingly, Ivy Hodge survived the blast and was later treated in hospital for shock, cuts and burns. But she'd had a very lucky escape and many of her neighbours were left wandering around at ground floor level in their nightclothes even though the lifts had stopped working, totally dazed and confused.

Volunteers at a nearby school handed out food and clothing for those who were immediately made homeless and police cordoned off the area to locate other survivors and secure the public from further danger. Local stevedores and dockers were quick to respond to help clear the rubble as doctors and nurses helped treat the injured.

Home Secretary James Callaghan was on the scene within hours and immediately ordered a team of experts to find the cause within 24 hours. An inquiry into the cause of the disaster discovered that gas had escaped into the flat due to a sub-standard brass nut joining the flexible connection from the gas cooker to the gas supply pipe, and the explosion occurred when Miss Hodge struck a match to light her cooker.

Younger readers need not go in search for Ronan Point and its neighboring 8 tower blocks – they were demolished in 1986.

**Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online**

It was sad to hear of the death of Sid Gold (E20). I only met Sid once other than in passing and that occasion was, oddly enough, when I felt sympathetic towards someone being punished for breaking the rules.

It was nearly 30 years ago. I had just joined the Board and was fairly new to chairing Complaints meetings. On the list of one such meeting was Sid Gold. It was in the days of two way voice dispatching and there was a gap between when the Moorgate Rank finished and the Finsbury Rank started. During that gap, several lucrative trips were dispatched from known addresses within the city. It was also in the days of the notorious *Finsbury Mafia*.

I personally only went on the *Finz* once; that was when I first joined the circuit to get experience of how the various ranks would benefit me. And on that one occasion I was on the rank, multiple jobs were called and I was allocated a trip to **Gravesend** from **Royex House**. I was in the process of taking details from **Barbara** on the back channel when one of the faces in front of me stuck his head in my cab and said to me: "Are you new on the circuit mate?" I said yes. He then said: "Well, er, Fred here does the Gravesend's and you will do **Bromley**."

I still had my finger on the button and asked Barbara if she'd heard it? She said yes and the guy walked away.

I didn't go on there again; I just couldn't be doing with all the agro. But not Mr Gold! He was apparently getting fed up with all the shenanigans going on and decided to play the faces at their own game.

Following the death of DaC stalwart Sid Gold at the age of 93, Allen Togwell looks back at a time long since gone...

Sid Gold and the Finz!



On the day in question, a regular trip came out from a City address at 8:45 to **Sittingbourne**. The dispatcher was taking positions from the *faces* who had it all set up, when suddenly out of the blue the dispatcher heard Sid come in with his E20 call sign.

"Where are you E20," asked the dispatcher? Sid said he was outside the door, when in actual fact and unbeknown to the dispatcher, he was about two miles away. But he was allocat-

ed the trip. When Sid arrived outside the door, there were several very irate faces waiting, fists were thrown and that continued into the reception. But Sid didn't back off, bruised and battered he met the passenger and completed the trip.

The faces however, intent on controlling the *Finz*, used the rules ironically that they were forever breaking and put Sid on complaint for giving a false position. The Complaints officer at that time said he had no choice but to put Sid in front of a Complaints committee - and one that I chaired.

Sid didn't deny it and after lengthy deliberations by the committee, I had the unfortunate task of telling Sid he was being suspended for two weeks. He didn't complain and accepted the punishment like a gentleman.

As for the actions of the *faces* against Sid, it didn't do them any favours because several weeks later after details of the incident had reached the Head of Transport, the account was closed.

**Allen Togwell
Call Sign Online**

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 is from the July 2006 Call Sign...

THE SUFFRAJETS (AND??) TO BLOW AWAY THE CHARTS!

From their rehearsal studio in **Corsham Street** behind DaCs HQ at **Brunswick House**, four gorgeous, feisty young ladies transform themselves into a mind-blowing all-girl hard rock group whose latest single, **Worthy**, is about to storm up the charts. These are **The Suffrajets**.

Worthy has been playing on **MTV** and **VH1** before even hitting the stores and is a hot favourite that according to pop music Bible **NME** is a certainty to hit the number one spot! The Suffrajets started out as an idea in the minds of two thirteen year old teenagers - **Gemma** and **Alex Gillings**. They had long fantasised about being in a band instead of doing schoolwork! But fantasies sometimes come true and at the age of 19 they signed up with **Sony Records** and recorded in Los Angeles with **Mark Stein**, **Tim Bogert**, **Vince Martell** and the man described by many as the world's greatest drummer, **Carmine Appice** - together better known as **Vanilla Fudge**.

A **Channel Four** documentary - **We Are The Suffrajets** - followed them on the road and captured the passion and enthusiasm the band had for their music, whilst exposing them to a whole new audience. Even legendary **Iron Maiden** front man **Bruce Dickinson** became a fan of the band, booking them in for several sessions on his northern radio show. But just as things were taking off, the band suffered a tour bus accident on the M25 that saw them nursing broken bones. Soon after, Gemma left to join **Pete Doherty's Babysambles**, playing to huge crowds and attracting media interest. But she missed The Suffrajets and as soon as they were back in one piece, she returned!

Speaking to the girls, their friendliness and willingness to pose for a **Call Sign** photo shoot or just talk to a magazine that they knew hardly had a huge circulation, impressed us. Perhaps it was the honour of being photographed with Chairman **Brian Rice**! We think they'll go far.

Brian told **Call Sign**: "**They are really nice girls who look as though they have the ambition and talent to go a long way. If ever they want a taxi, they know where to come. And I'm always happy to hold Gemma's stick...!**"

Photo: L - R Alex Gillings (rhythm guitar/vocals), Vicky Kingston (bass guitar), Gemma Clarke (drums - together with a strange looking man in a suit holding her stick) and Claire Wakeman (lead guitar/Vocals)



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

Brethren of the Whip



1915
Last August, *Brethren of the Whip* looked back 100 years to the start of the Great War and its effect upon the taxi trade. This August we once again go back a century and look

at how the trade was bearing up to the first full year of war.

The only meter in use in taxicabs was the German manufactured Bruhm meter. That caused much resentment among drivers and their passengers. The secretary of the London Motor Cab Proprietors Association asked that the patent protecting the hiring rights of the meter and of its design be suspended. The LMCPA proposed that they form a manufacturing company with the proprietors being the shareholders. The English distributors of the

taxi meter said they would go bust if the patent were to be suspended, but the Comptroller of the Patent Court didn't believe them and allowed the LMCPA to pursue their plan.

Cabs were becoming scarce as more and more cabmen signed up to join the Army. Over 3000 cab drivers from London (around a quarter) had already joined the colours and recruiting sergeants were regularly seen trying to enlist more cabmen whose expertise in driving and basic mechanics would be invaluable to transport regiments. Those drivers joining up left just a few driving the cabs and one large cab firm claimed they had 300 cabs sitting idle in their yard. There were calls for women to fill this gap.

For the first time, women were going into occupations that had been a male reserve since time immemorial. No trade or profession - except for London taxis - was beyond these early pioneers of female emancipation. The Home Secretary was repeatedly asked why no women were permitted to drive, his only response being that the Commissioner of Police would not licence them. It was later revealed that as a condition of the enlistment of cab drivers and other transport workers, there would be no change to licensing conditions whilst they were away fighting. This appears to be the only reason why women were not driving cabs. Why temporary measures could not be introduced for the duration of the war does not seem to have been considered.

War conditions caused their own problems on the streets where black-outs were maintained during the hours of darkness. Quite a number of people were allegedly killed after being hit by cabs in the darkened London streets, including several soldiers on leave from the trenches. Unfortunately, in a number of these cases the driver did not stop. Some were eventually caught but others appear to have escaped punishment.

Henry Phillips hit and killed an 82 year old woman whilst driving on the wrong side of Harrow Road. He didn't stop, but not too far away he crashed his cab into a lamppost. When the police arrived, they found him to be drunk. In court the 27 year old pleaded guilty to manslaughter and amazingly he was spared a prison sentence. Mr Justice Darling remarked that although the cabman was a married man, he could perhaps redeem his character by joining the army and perhaps inspire men younger than him that they should do something for their country.

One man who tried to enlist was Richard Roberts, but he failed the medical because of a weak heart and he feared his cab driver's licence might be taken away from him. In July 1915, two women insulted Richard for enjoying the easy life whilst men were dying fighting for his freedom. These "white feather

women" would harangue any man in civilian clothes and give him a white feather to show that he was a coward for not being in uniform. It was too much for Richard Roberts - he committed suicide that evening.

1915 also saw London bombed from the air for the first time ever. In a Zeppelin raid on 13th October, an unidentified cabman who wasn't working at the time was found dead in the street having died from blast injuries.

Whistling for a cab...treason!

With the ever-increasing numbers of soldiers returning from the front with injuries, more and more buildings were being converted into hospitals and convalescent homes. Such places were to be found all over London but all suffered from the same blight - the cab whistle! It had been custom for porters and linkmen to give a series of blasts for a cab - one for a taxicab, two for a Hansom and three for a growler! With fewer cabs on the road, competition between the porters and linkmen to get a cab increased into a cacophony of noise that lasted most of the night - much to the disturbance of the wounded soldiers. Hundreds of column inches were written on "The Cab Whistle Menace." Eventually a law was passed that made it illegal to whistle for a cab (in case it was confused with an air raid siren warning!) It was included within the *Defence of the Realm Act*. Whistling for a cab could then be classed as treason.

Sean Farrell (B39)
Call Sign Online

Tweet of the month

Call Sign is often sent copies of Tweets doing the rounds, but we think that this one deserves an award as **Tweet of the Month** as it shows **Uber** to be a "young" company. That's probably why they had the excellent **LTDA** radio ads banned by the **Advertising Standards Authority**. The ads told how good taxis were... but should have mentioned how young Uber drivers were!



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Area Covered - Hornchurch and 8 miles out - others by appointment

Call Sign recently heard that Dial-a-Cab's longest serving driver had turned 80 and although he doesn't go out quite as much as he used to, Alan Lewis (A44) does still go out onto those London roads to cover work – just as he has been doing since joining what was then the Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service on 30th August 1962. On day one he became A44 and retains that same callsign.

The sprightly 80-year old, who looks much younger and with a clarity of mind belying his years, told *Call Sign* of the days when our offices were at 172 Pentonville Road by the corner of Affleck Street and about Alan's Cafe, which was owned by Aldo Boca and just across the street. The young Alan Lewis and his ODRTS friends would all meet up there for tea breaks and a natter. In fact, during the really early days, Founder-Chairman Bonnie Martyn would have Board meetings there! Renowned DaC names and stories from the past flowed from Alan's tongue as if it were only yesterday. Former Chairmen Jack Taylor and Martin Gellman were just two of them.

"The Boca brothers started on the Knowledge after we cab drivers began visiting their cafe. We'd go into the ODRTS radio office to collect our credit money and then nip across the road for a cuppa and a chat," he continued. "I actually brokered a 'marriage' there between Bill Tyzack (ex-C06), who was looking for a day-man to share his cab with and a friend of mine, Harry Barrs, who was looking for a nightman to work with. I was also partners with my late brother Phil Lewis, a nightman known as Phil the Pipe, before going on my own for a few years and then joining up with Laurie Klein for over 30 years."

Going onto Dial-a-Cab specifically, Alan added: "I absolutely love it; I would not be without the radio - not just any radio because ours is by far the best. I know you would expect me to say that, but it's none the less true! It isn't just the work, it's how we are treated.

"For example, when I had an eye operation for a detached retina some years ago, DaC Chairman Brian Rice personally phoned to chat and check on my welfare, which I thought was really nice and it certainly impressed my wife Helen into the bargain!

"Then there was the time I developed a serious illness and there were rumblings about me possibly having to leave the circuit because I was unable to complete my quota of trips. It was very busy at the time and terminals were in short supply. To his eternal credit, *Call Sign* Editor, Alan Fisher was instrumental in keeping me on the circuit and I have never forgotten that gesture." Alan's voice broke with emotion as he thought back to those times.

They were tough times back then and of course it was really hard on the family as

Alan Lewis: 53 years on DaC!



The young Alan and his TX3 about to join ODRTS in 1962

for the day and expect the same cab to be waiting for him upon his return!

"That same scenario could happen at Victoria Station also when the client decided to visit Brighton or even the continent! There

well. But little touches of humanity such as those can make you feel that bit better."

Talking of the time he bought his first cab, Alan said he had bought a four-year old FX3 from Levy's Garage at York Way in 1960. "In those days you had to wrap up really warm in the winter or you could freeze. Fingers and toes would often go numb and there were draughts everywhere!" "Today's cab is like travelling executive class by comparison!"

Alan went on to recall some of the more eccentric account clients of those distant times, including one individual who he said would book a cab to Liverpool Street Station as a wait and return. The client would then put a chalk mark on the tyre of the cab to ensure the cab did not go anywhere and then he would go to Cambridge

was no Eurostar in those days – or the type of traffic wardens we get nowadays!

So why does he still go out to work? "Well to be honest, I can't stand shopping whereas Helen does like it. So she goes out to the shops and I go to work! Then we're both happy!"

Alan's hobby is playing Bridge. "Perhaps when I do eventually decide to hang up my -, I will have more time to pursue the game. But I don't foresee that happening anytime too soon, because it would involve leaving DaC and that would be hard – very hard indeed."

Currently Alan's health hasn't been the best and we wish him well...

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

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Primary sponsor: Grahame Morris. Other sponsors were John McDonnell, Ian Lavery, Teresa Pearce, Jeremy Corbyn and Kate Hoey.

An **Early Day Motion** is a motion expressed as a single sentence and tabled by Members of Parliament that formally calls for debate "on an early day." Although they do not get debated in the House too often, they often draw attention to particular subjects of interest. In this case, London taxi drivers were lobbying MPs on passenger safety and PH regulation and to define plying for hire.

Several of the drivers were from Dial-a-Cab including Marc Turner (R97), Chris Allen (Y27) and Adam McGann (J09). Marc told *Call Sign* about the day when London's finest lobbied MPs for ED 142...

"In every dustbin there's a 'daffodil'. On Tuesday 14th July, in the elegant grandeur of Committee Room 11 at the House of Commons I observed the blooming of a daffodil that may ultimately save our trade.

We were all assembled for a lobbying / meeting regarding EDM 142, an initiative two years into the making of Mike Bailey, Chairman of RMT taxi division and John McDonnell MP (Hayes & Harlington) to define and enshrine in law our exclusive right to ply for hire. The occasion was graced by participation of 8 labour MPs, amongst them was father of the House Gerald Kaufman, Mayoral candidate David Lammy (Tottenham), former taxi driver of 11 years Clive Efford (Eltham) and to my absolute delight, my own MP Wes Streeting (Ilford North) who probably has the highest number of taxi driving constituents in the land!

The Tories were conspicuous by their absence! Helen Chapman (TfL) also attended and at times appeared rather uncomfortable at the continual lambasting of her masters. Lewis Norton (RMT branch secretary) impressed – he being a young man who has held his badge for just 3 years. He made the point that putting into law our right to ply for hire would define terms and conditions of our employment. Every other industry has them, so why not us?

David Lammy MP, a man of obvious oratory stature honed during his years as a barrister, held the room in raptures until veering off into electioneering and was then abruptly halted by an indignant RMT committee member. David spoke of his time as a young man in Tottenham and how his mother would have gone ballistic had he used a black cab; until he discovered for himself of taxis being one of the joys of life!

During the meeting, everyone that wanted to speak had their say. One topical question asked from the floor was whether the recent UCG demos were working, to which John McDonnell replied that whilst he wouldn't have wanted to see us all arrested, the demos did work. The resulting applause was deafening... not to mention heartening!

MARC AT THE HOUSE FOR ED 142

Early Day Motion 142: Passenger Safety and Private Hire Industry Regulation



Marc outside the HoC expressing the views of most taxi drivers

A fellow driver next to me, 86 years young Bob, clapped and hollered like he had another 86 years left in him. Most trade reps spoke; the LTDA, Unite and GMB. LCDC Chairman Grant Davis best conveyed my feelings when telling all those present how he now felt more optimistic for the future of our trade now than he had prior to his arrival that day.

So Dial-a-Cab drivers and indeed those who read *Call Sign* online, it's up to us to now urge our MPs to sign and support EDM 142. With its hopefully eventual placement in law, it will be easier to get to grips with tech disruptors who are currently riding roughshod over us.

Can I also add a thank you to RMT Chairman Mike Bailey. I had turned up with Chris Allen at Parliament not expecting to be allowed in, so we would like to thank Mike for facilitating our entry - even though the HoC security took away my whistle! I had it for the RMT procession that took place from TfL's Windsor House in Victoria Street to Parliament itself. Unfortunately I was a bit late and missed the walk, but security gave me a receipt for my whistle when they confiscated it and returned it on my way out! All very civilised as you'd expect from the Mother of all Parliaments...

To everyone out there, be lucky..."

The wording of ED 142 was:

That this House is concerned that smartphone apps such as Uber are circumventing the law governing the taxi

and minicab industry; supports the existing regulations whereby private hire vehicles (PHVs) may only pick up passengers when pre-booked rather than from a rank or in response to being hailed; recognises that such regulations provide passengers with important safety protections against unregulated drivers who have not undergone extensive criminal record and medical checks or had to pass a formal taxi driving assessment like licensed taxi drivers; welcomes Transport for London's public opposition to any move to confuse the distinction between the two services; notes with concern, that in spite of this, TfL is failing to carry out its licensing and enforcement functions and is allowing PHVs to operate within the immediate hire market; believes that this is primarily due to the absence of a statutory definition of plying for hire; further believes that this will undermine public confidence in a safe and secure licensing regime and will ultimately undermine the viability of the current taxi service; further notes that the number of people applying to study The Knowledge, the geographical training for licensed taxi drivers, fell from 3,326 in 2012 when Uber started operating in London, to 2,159 last year; and calls on the Government to bring forward urgent legislation which provides a clear statutory definition to protect the distinction between taxis and PHVs.

OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Hello Ladies & Gents, Price policy and longer trips...

The competition are offering prices that are difficult to compete with, so much so that our new fixed price policy is quite probably more important than ever before if we are to make the positive inroads into the existing market.

We know that there are many clients who prefer to use our taxis and with our new pricing policy we have certainly been offering some longer trips to you, the **Dial-a-Cab** members. Many more airport trips are going to licensed taxis and we hope that the increase in numbers will continue as the year progresses.

Please remember that **all Fixed Prices** are rejectable without penalty. They are based on the most direct routes to be as competitive as possible and like any other similar type trip, so long as you accept the price in good faith then the route you take is not set in stone.

At this particular time, we are concentrating on trips to all airports as well as journeys going to and coming in from areas outside of the M25. If during the journey you are asked to go onto a further location, please contact the dispatchers who have the ability to check and amend the price if need be.

It really is important to bear in mind that without your help, this will not work; but after talking to many drivers over recent months, it does seem that most of you are in agreement with this project and I hope that

With Allan Evans



you will continue to support it.

It is time that we tried to regain some of the longer trips and put them back into our taxis, journeys that will take you home or bring you in. It is, I believe, what many of our regular account customers would prefer if given the choice.

New logos

The new logos and seat ads are now available to be fitted at Roman Way and it will make much more of an impact if as many of you as possible display them on your taxis.

It seems that just lately there are a number of vehicles that have been spotted without the DaC logo and as you are aware, it is a rule of the Society that all cabs display them at all times.

It is even more important during the present climate that all trips are regularly monitored and run-ins and booking-in procedures are correctly followed. Clients have regular access to trip reports that show this information and I am sure you agree that it is very important that the data is true and correct.

'Street' credit card trips

Can I please remind you that if you're clearing a 'Street' card trip, it is most important not to allow the passenger to leave your taxi without first checking that the trip has cleared correctly. If the receipt is void or the transaction has been cancelled and the authorisation code is not showing, the payment has failed. With an authorisation, the trip can be processed manually at this end if necessary; equally, with a printed and signed manual receipt, the trips can also be presented to the clearing bank.

Holidays

I guess by now many of you are looking forward to a hard earned holiday after what can only be described as a particularly volatile year in our trade. Hopefully it will help to recharge your batteries for a much busier period when the schools return to normal...

Allan Evans
DaC Operations /
Compliance Manager

Complaints results		
A complaints meeting took place at DaC House on Tuesday 21 July 2015. These are the results.		
NFA means no further action...		
<u>Name/call sign</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Verdict</u>
Anthony Coleman (J06)	Driver books into SW19 for long periods of time and accepts a regular trip, rejecting many alternative trips in the zone. Rules: 2, 3, 6, 11	2. Warning 3. Severe reprimand 6. 2 weeks susp 11. 1 week susp
Richard Levy (Z50)	Driver repeatedly signs on at home address in E50N, puts meter on and STC EC2. Rules say you must be able to reach furthest point of zone in 15 mins. Rules: 2, 3, 11	2. Reprimand 3. NFA 11. 2 week susp
Ronnie Taylor (F88)	Driver regularly books into EC5 from various locations when outside the zone. Rules say you must be in EC zones for EC5. Rules: 2, 3, 11	2. Reprimand 3. Reprimand 11. 3 week susp
James Forrest (P05)	Driver booked in WW00 from Hammersmith flyover, at M4 (junc 1) and M4 (junc 2). Rules say you must be within Perimeter Road Rules: 2, 3, 11	2. Reprimand 3. Reprimand 11. 3 week susp

The recent series of demonstrations by London's taxi drivers against Transport for London were finally being taken seriously by the Mayor and his underlings at City Hall, even to the point where drivers sporting the Totally Failing London stickers on rear cab windscreens were having their photos taken and receiving warning letters from the licensing authority. The trade organisation behind the original demos was the United Cabbies Group and they have now put out a press release signed by UCG secretary Angela Clarkson explaining why the protests that had been scheduled for a further two dates in July, were cancelled. This followed a UCG meeting with West Bromwich MP Tom Watson, who offered to help but said that the demos needed to be put on hold first...

"As you are aware, the UCG Committee took the decision last Wednesday to suspend the demos planned for July 14th and July 28th. This decision received a mixed reaction. The main reason for the disappointment / incredulity from some members and non-members was understandable; they thought the reason we had suspended action was because MP Tom Watson was going to write a 'Get a grip' letter to Boris. That *was* not and *is* not the case. The letter to Boris was merely the first of a list of assurances received from Tom.


We were asked not to divulge the details of the meeting in order that procedures could be put in place. We are now in a position to give full details of our meeting of July 1st where Tom Watson gave us the following assurances:

JIMMY PULLUM

Jimmy Pullum Senior left Dial-a-Cab in July 2008 and within 3 years had retired altogether from the trade. Sadly, Jimmy was later struck down with cancer but as if to show that he wasn't forgotten, his cremation service on July 21 at Eltham took place in a hall where not only was every seat taken, but many were left standing in any available spaces that they could find. The car park was filled with taxis, many bearing the DaC logo.

A poignant piece from Jim's son and daughter, **Jimmy Junior** and **Suzanne** brought tears to many and showed how missed Jimmy will be.

To all his family, we send the condolences of everyone at Dial-a-Cab. RIP Jim...



The United Cabbies Group explains...

Why taxi demos were cancelled



Tom Watson MP

Merralls, our Campaign Manager, made it clear that we reserved the right to resume action at any time and without notice

1. He would write without delay to inform the Mayor he had now taken up our concerns against TfL. As he said in the letter, he could see we had genuine concerns about an inadequate regulator and demanded to know why an MP from West Bromwich had more interest to help the iconic London Black Cab than the Mayor of the very city they work in?

2. He will meet with the new Chair of the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee to discuss the less than transparent relationship between TfL and Uber. As we all know, something is - shall we say - curious about the inaction of TfL to ban Uber when so much evidence is available.

3. He will ask the Transport Select Committee to conduct a full inquiry into TfL, their management and the findings of the GLA Report that found them 'not fit for purpose' and 'woefully inadequate'. Those of you that have seen a Parliamentary Select Committee in action will know that these people have teeth and bite extremely hard. No one relishes being called in front of a Select Committee.

4. He will table questions to Parliament, both written and spoken. Three questions have been sent to the Secretary of State for Transport already. These were:

1. 2nd July: What discussions has the Dept for Transport had with representatives of TfL, the Mayor, the Licenced London Taxi Trade and Uber in the last 12 months?

2. 2nd July: Will he place in the Commons Library all correspondence between his department and Uber within the last 12 months.

3. 3rd July: Will he bring forward legislation to amend the definition of plying for hire in the Taxi industry.

He will also ask questions on the floor of the House where, under Parliamentary Privilege, the most searching and embarrassing questions can be asked and answers sought. Tom Watson was the MP that exposed phone hacking in the Murdoch empire and also the Westminster Paedophile Ring. He is a man who fights for truth and transparency.

Tom's reputation and the assurances he gave were the reasons we decided to give him a chance to do what is needed. Trevor

should our agreement be broken.

However having met Tom twice, I do not think he will let us down in anyway. Had this offer come from another politician, we would have refused point blank. Every trade organisation at the inaugural meeting with Tom Watson found him to be a man of integrity and trustworthy. This brings me onto the next reason for our decision.

Trade unity is the keystone to the success of our battle with TfL. It is also the thing that TfL do not want. They thrive on fragmentation. All agreed on June 15th that we would like Tom to help us. Had we continued with direct action after getting a senior politician to fight our corner, it may have destroyed the unity built up during the last few weeks. The aim of the demos was to bring to the attention of and seek help from the highest body in the land and this was achieved much more quickly than we could have envisaged. We gave ourselves five demos to start with, but achieved it in three because of the incredible support from the trade. Drivers from ALL orgs stepped up to the plate and got us to where we are now. This would have been impossible without their help.

Finally, may I say Uber is not the problem, they are simply a symptom of the disease known as TfL. Sort out TfL and you sort out Uber.

So ask yourselves one question. What is more likely to bring TfL to account; two further demos by us or intervention by Parliament, which can change laws and the structure of our so-called regulator?

We are currently lobbying London MPs directly and the fruit of that should be announced soon. We are also in discussion with other Hackney Carriage organisations in London and crucially, nationally. An escalation may involve co-ordinated action with these nationwide organisations.

Ladies and gents, we made a judgement call and think we have called correctly. If we do not see progress in sensible timescales (always mindful that there is a parliamentary recess in a few weeks) we will invoke our right to resume direct action. We will update you on the situation as it unfolds."

Mailshot

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

Heart and heartless...

Hi Alan

I thought I would keep you up-to-date with my medical condition. On or around 23rd May 2015 I received a phone call from Tfl giving me news of results they had received from their medical assessment department. Low and behold it wasn't good news for me. The nice lady at the end of the phone explained that it would be best for me to send in my Badge voluntarily, rather than Tfl having to inform me by post. So I sent it in voluntarily - but they still then wrote asking me to surrender it!

The reason for all this was because after my medical last October and following some tests, the doctors said that my heart muscle was only working at 20 to 25%.

On the medical form it says the LVEF (Left Ventricular Ejection Fraction) should have a reading of 40% minimum. Hence they've asked for my licence. Yet I have not had any symptoms to tell me anything was wrong and even the doctors don't know why this has happened. So they are sending me for an MRI scan at the Royal Brompton Heart hospital to see if they can see anything else. They say that with medication I can get back to normal, although of course they can't guarantee it.

So my message to all those lovely Dial-a-Cab drivers out there is to get plenty of exercise so as to keep that heart pumping at its maximum.

Chris Passfield (Y25)

Hi Chris, I hope the MRI helps you get your badge back. Please keep us informed ...Ed

Attempted bilks

Hi Alan

I read the story in the *July Call Sign* (Passenger bites DaC driver) about Roy Carter (H79). I think I must have had a lucky escape because going by Roy's description, I think she was also in my cab having jumped in at Goswell Road while I was waiting at a set of lights. A cab in front wouldn't stop for her! She asked for Santander in Tottenham Court Road. When we got there, I was told to wait outside while she went in. There had been £10 on the meter when we stopped, but because of the large queue inside by the time she came out that had risen to almost £20. But she didn't then come back to the cab; instead she tried to slink away. But I'd been watching her, jumped out and made her pay by calling out in a loud voice: "Oi,

where's my money!" On a packed street with people suddenly watching, that did the trick - although probably only because she had just withdrawn some.

She is overweight, not very clean, wears a Parker coat, has a passing resemblance to Waynetta (the character from *Harry Enfield's* show) and looks a bit like you'd imagine a druggie would look like. Judging by the end of Roy's article, I doubt we'll be troubled by her again...

Jon Robinson (E88)

Anyone have a story about an unusual bilk? I suppose I could always tell you about my bilk to Manchester! ...Ed

Sharing a new cab

Hi Alan,

After reading the *July Call Sign*, I'm glad to see I'm not the only driver thinking of sharing a cab due to the way things are at the moment. Please add me to the list in the next issue.

I have a two year old Vito with one year left on the lease.

My options are open, as to whether to give it back or buy the other half, rent a cab, buy the other half of the Vito with a partner or lease another new Vito.

The main sticking point for me is if I were to give up my DaC membership; that would mean losing any cash benefits if we merged or sold the circuit. After being a member since May 1985, I was looking forward to zero subs from two months ago but lost that before I even got it! I suppose the only way around this would be a rule change. I know you can be a journeyman, but that is not full membership.

Please forward this to the Chairman for me; I'm sure other drivers feel they are in the same boat.

Terry Catherall (Y90)

Brian Rice replies: You've stumped me there Terry. I don't know what to say because everything you state is quite correct! However, if you do decide to share a cab then Membership can be in joint names, but there will have to be a 'lead' Member regarding the joint names who will be the only one that can vote or receive any cash benefit. But no doubt there would be an agreement between the two...

Sid Gold

Hi Alan

I have just read the touching remembrance story that you wrote about my Dad in the *July* issue of *Call Sign*. Thank you so much for writing it and also putting Dad on the cover of the Magazine. I also have such great mem-

ories of Dad's time with ODRTS as it was and how much Dad truly loved being on the circuit.

I remember his good friend **Bernie Conway** who became a dispatcher and how Dad would sign on in the old days by pushing a little round black button on the dashboard of his cab and say: "How's me?" The banter over the radio waves was like listening in to a huge family rather than a company. Dad smiled so much when working with you guys. He loved being a London cabbie and told so many stories from a lifetime out there on the streets. There were his early days in a **Beardmore** taxi and the time he took a fare all the way to **Bradford**, only to have the passenger - who had said he was ill - jump from the taxi at the other end, run into a house, never to be seen again! When Dad called the police, the people in the house denied ever seeing anyone going in there. Dad was skint as his money had gone into buying the petrol to get there, so the policeman that came to investigate gave Dad money for petrol to get back to London! Dad phoned us at home to say he would be back very late, finally arriving home at around 4am.

There were so many stories from a lifetime out in the cab, like the night Dad and Mum came home after going out for the evening. It was raining hard and outside Dad's house was a guy and his wife with the bonnet of their car up. Dad asked if they were OK and the guy said he was waiting for the AA, so Dad told them to come in and have a cup of tea in the warm while they waited for the breakdown to arrive. While having tea, Dad asked where they were going to and the man said they lived in **Downing Street**. "Really," said Dad? "What number?" The man replied that it was number 10 and that they had an apartment on the floor below **Maggie Thatcher's!** He was in charge of number 10 and Dad and Mum and Peter and his wife became good friends. Every Christmas Mum and Dad would get a Christmas card from 10 Downing Street with a picture of the different rooms in the Prime Minister's house. Amazing!

As I said, Alan, thank you so much for your lovely article about Dad and your continued friendship to him over the years. He had so many great things to say about you. When speaking of you, he'd call you a wonderful man. Thank you so much for all you did for Dad.

Larry Gold

USA

I'm not that good, but thanks anyway Larry! Sid Gold was a character - something we don't see so much of nowadays



Mailshot



because we have all become so alike. There is another story about Sid inside this issue (page 24), this one told by former BoM member Allen Togwell ...Ed

New logo

Dear Ed

Is it me; I thought the idea of a new logo was to help us stand out from the rest or at least be easy to identify from a distance. But who on earth thought this was a better logo? If we can't get this right, no wonder we are struggling.

I fully agree with you that the "dial" had to go, but it could have been so much better. It needs to be recognisable; if you compare with other circuits then it's just not there. It's a job for an expert to sort out and I feel the key to a good logo was completely missed. Steve Bryant (Y41)

I disagree Steve. Although I never disliked it, I wasn't mad on the new logo at first because I wasn't sure that it told you anything - and in all honesty, as you get older you become less keen on change! But as I have got used to it, I've realised that logos no longer give you information; they are purely for identification and this identifies us and gives the website. It also looks good in the dark with just street lighting on. But Steve, it's all down to personal choice. I've spoken to other drivers that have your point of view and to just as many - probably more - who like it. But I do remember that when the last logo came in, drivers were up in arms over it calling it gaudy and a few other choice names. But as those same people got used to it, they came to like it. I'd be interested to hear your view in around six months or so when the whole fleet will have been fitted for some time ...Ed

And...

Hi Alan

I have yet to get the new logos fitted onto my cab, but from what I have seen on the cabs of those who already have it on, I think it looks good and possibly more importantly, it looks up-to-date. The old one looked nice but was becoming rather passé and certainly tired. Well done DaC...

Alex Constantinou (N05)

See what I mean Steve! ...Ed

Retirement

Dear Alan

I read with interest Steve Shaller's view on his retirement (*July Call Sign*). I have to say that I have never regretted retiring - not even for one minute - so much so that I have not renewed my Bill! So I am now after 42 years officially no longer a London Taxi Driver. Which is just as well, because I am truly shocked at what is happening to the trade when a friend of mine tells me the extra hours he is having to work and the money he takes. I tell him I was earning that 15 years ago!

Over the years, a few people (mostly young men) have asked me whether it was worth doing the Knowledge and my answer was always yes; work hard and you'll always make a decent living. Recently a friend's son asked me that question and for the first time I said no, because the long term future of the cab trade looks bleak. When I was doing the Knowledge, older cab drivers would often say: "You're wasting your time son, the game's finished." Perhaps after all these years, they are finally right?"

Terry Farmer (ex-T55)

Enjoy your retirement, Terry. I don't know whether you are right or wrong about this trade but I do hope your decision to give up your Bill was the correct one. I have been asked that question many times over the years and my advice has always been the same; if you can afford to renew your Bill then do it, because you never know when a few weeks work may come in handy. If you are not likely to be in a position when you might need extra money, then just enjoy retirement ...Ed

Gas cabs

Hi Alan,

I just wanted to thank you so much for the article on Battersea Autogas in *Call Sign*. The number of enquiries for LPG conversion has grown a lot lately and I am sure the page caught the attention of many. We believe our gas technology in cabs is such a game changer that many drivers still need to hear about it to fully understand its advantages, so we are obviously delighted to have our business recognised and to inform owners of TX1s that they do not need to take their taxis off the road because after our conversion process, they can claim an extra five years.

Marco Giachino

Battersea Autogas

For those interested in gaining their TX1 an extra five years of licensing, there are details on page 20 ...Ed

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