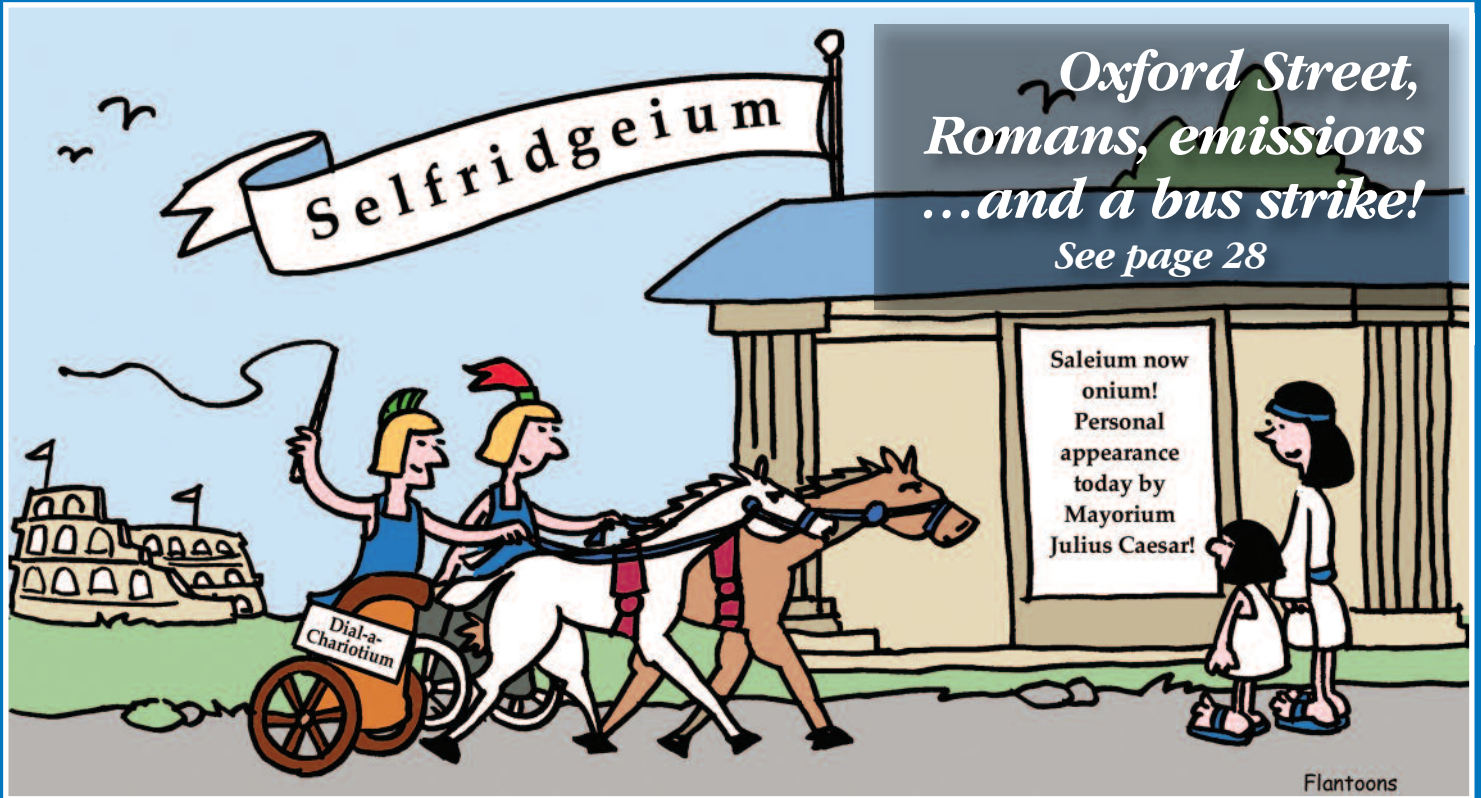




Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*Oxford Street,
Romans, emissions
...and a bus strike!
See page 28*



*AGM time: Mergers and property development!
Whatever next? Taxis???*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

This month an update on "24 hour Police Stations" and others that open for less than 24 hrs. There is not enough room here to specify their exact opening hours or Met. Police contact points. Last published 2013 I have checked every borough and the news is there has been no change.

Police Stations open 24 hours per day			
Acton	250 High Street, Acton, W3 9BH	Kingston-u-T.	5 High St., Kingston-u-T., KT1 1LB
Bethnal Green	12 Victoria Park Square, E2 9NZ	Lavender Hill	176 Lavender Hill, SW11 1JX
Bexleyheath	2 Arnsberg Way, DA7 4QS	Lewisham	43 Lewisham High Street, SE13 5JZ
Brixton	367 Brixton Rd, SW9 7DD	Notting Hill	99 - 101 Ladbrooke Road, W11 3PL
Bromley	High Street, Bromley, BR1 1ER	Plumstead	200 Plumstead High Street, SE18 1JY
Charing Cross	Agar Street, WC2N 4JP	Romford	19 Main Road, Romford, RM1 3BJ
Chingford	King's Head Hill, E4 7EA	South Harrow	74 Northolt Road, HA2 0DN
Colindale	Grahame Park Way, NW9 5TW	Newington	33 Stoke Newington High St., N16 8DS
Croydon	71 Park Lane, Croydon, CR9 1BP	Sutton	6 Carshalton Road, Sutton, SM1 4RF
Dagenham	561 Rainham Road Sth, RM10 7TU	Tottenham	398 High Road, Tottenham, N17 9JA
Edmonton	462 Fore Street, N9 0PW	Twickenham	41 London Rd, Twickenham, TW1 3SY
Forest Gate	350-360 Romford Road, E7 8BS	Uxbridge	1 Warwick Place, Uxbridge, UB8 1PG
Hammersmith	226 Shepherds Bush Road, W6 7NX	Walworth	12-28 Manor Place, SE17 3BB
Hounslow	5 Montague Rd, Hounslow, TW3 1LB	Wembley	603 Harrow Road, Wembley, HA0 2HH
Ilford	270 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1GT	West End Central	27 Savile Row, W1S 2EX
Islington	2 Tolpuddle Street, N1 0YY	Wimbledon	15-23 Queens Road, SW19 8NN
Kentish Town	12a Holmes Road, NW5 3AE		

All other Police Stations open less than 24 hours			
Barking	6 Ripple Road, Barking, IG11 7PE	Kensington	72 Earls Court Road, W8 6EQ
Barkingside	1 High Street, IG6 1QB	Kilburn	38 Salisbury Road, NW6 6LT
Barnet	26-32 High Street, Barnet, EN5 5RU	Limehouse	27 West India Dock Road, E14 8EZ
Belgravia	Buckingham Pal. Rd, SW1W 9SX	Marlowe House	109 Station Road, Sidcup, DA15 7ES
Berlin Underwood	90 Windmill Road, Croydon, CR0 2XR	Mitcham	58 Cricket Green, CR4 4LA
Brick Lane	25 Brick Lane, E1 6PU	New Malden	Cl Tower - Dukes Ave., KT3 4HN
Catford	333 Bromley Road, SE6 2RJ	Paddington Grn	2-4 Harrow Road, W2 1XJ
Chiswick	209 Chiswick High Road, W4 2DU	Peckham	177 Peckham High Street, SE15 5SL
Copperfield Hse	Maple Road, Penge, SE20 8RE	Plaistow	444 Barking Road, E13 8HJ
Deptford	114 Amersham Vale, SE14 6LG	Richmond	18-20 Kew Road, Richmond, TW9 2NA
Ealing	67 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, W5 5SJ	Shoreditch	4-6 Sheperdess Walk, N1 7LF
Eltham	20 Well Hall Road, SE9 6SF	Southall	67 High Street, Southall, UB1 3HG
Enfield	41 Baker Street, EN1 3EU	Southwark	323 Borough High Street, SE1 1JL
Fishmongers	287 High Rd, Wood Green, N22 8HU	Stratford	18 West Ham Lane, E15 4SG
Fulham	Heckfield Place, SW6 5NL	Streatham	101 Streatham High Rd, SW16 1HT
Hayes	755 Uxbridge Rd, Hayes, UB4 8HU	Teddington	18 Park Road, Teddington, TW11 0AQ
Holborn	10 Lambs Conduit St, WC1N 3NR	W. Wickham	9 High Street, W. Wickham, BR4 0LP
Holloway	284 Hornsey Road, N7 7QY	Walthamstow	191-193 High Street, E17 7BX
Hornsey	98 Tottenham Lane, N8 7EJ	Wandsworth	146 Wandsworth High St., SW18 4JJ
Kennington	49-51 Kennington Rd, SE1 7QA	Worcester Park	154 Central Rd, KT4 8HH

Excluding Westminster that has 2 x 24 hour police stations, there is only one 24hr police station in every other borough.

from the editor's desk

DaC elections and democracy...

So that's another AGM out of the way – I think it was my 39th out of the 42 years I've been with **Dial-a-Cab**. I've probably seen most things at those meetings from drunken drivers to virtual riots to comedy performances that beat anything on TV! Indeed, there was one moment this year involving age that had the HAC first floor rolling around with laughter - and no, it won't be on YouTube!

I've seen attendances range from 60 up to almost 1200. Nothing really surprises me and so far as most AGMs go this one was fairly interesting – and by recent standards well attended with standing room only. At five hours, that must have been as difficult as sitting on a hard chair for 300 minutes!

Of course, it is always sad to see a Board member lose their place – although I suspect that after his well-publicised illness for much of 2014, **Tom Whitbread** will count it as something of a blessing – although not those that made such good use of his contacts in the world of freebie theatre tickets!

By the same token, well done **Joe Brazil (K16)**, who after several attempts has now made it onto the Board. Joe has had many years of working at Brunswick Place as a Senior Systems Supervisor, including long spells as a dispatcher and I'm sure he will become a valuable member of the BoM.

Everyone wants to be liked – including me - but I suspect that some may have jeered me had I mentioned this at the actual meeting, so I slept on it to make sure my view didn't change - not to mention my need to fill up a page! There was one aspect of the meeting that I disagree with and that was for a Board member to oppose the sitting Chairman for no reason other than because he or she fancied a crack at the job. This piece applies to Board members in general but will automatically be linked to **Garry White**, because he was the BM that threw his hat into the ring. That is coincidence.

I've spoken to Garry many times and I understand his reason as to why he opposed Brian for the Chairmanship – because he says he is ambitious. But DaC isn't a board (sic) game; it's a real business that operates for and on behalf of its members – that's us! If I was an outsider rather than a driver with the Society and heard of a Board member opposing the Chairman, I'd assume something was going on, because in reality it was nothing less than a vote of no-confidence by a BM in the Chairman.

It has to be said that Garry doesn't see it that way, but it is the way the challenge is perceived outside of the Society that matters, because if I was the MD of a large company that considered giving DaC its business and heard of disruption within the Boardroom to the extent of the Chairman possibly losing his position because someone else fancied a go, I would probably look elsewhere.

I remember in years gone by when we almost lost a large account – based in Aldermanbury – because they didn't like the fact that our then yearly elections meant that they could never be certain as to who they would be dealing with.

I don't blame Garry for being ambitious and wanting to push himself forward, but in my view it was wrong because of the signals it sent out and I wouldn't be surprised if some of our clients hadn't heard via the "grapevine" that the Chairman was being opposed and how it could affect the stability of DaC.

Following the result being announced, Garry walked straight up to Brian and congratulated him – which is what you would expect of the gentleman's circuit. Garry admitted to me afterwards



that perhaps he did run before he could walk, but he would also have seen Brian Rice not only control a meeting that lasted five hours, but also have the answers to a multitude of questions put to him during the meeting - without once having to look up an answer.

But of course, one day we will need a new Chairman. So that brings me back to the question of democracy and while not everyone will agree, this Society embraces that concept as much as it is possible to do so. *Call Sign* is uncensored and drivers can say what they like within reason just as any member can stand for the BoM. This year's results – just as did that of two years ago - showed that just being a sitting member is no longer a guarantee of victory.

My belief for future AGMs is this; if there is going to be someone opposing the sitting Chairman – and that is democracy - then the person should be proposed from within the Boardroom by a majority of BMs unless the sitting Chairman does not intend standing again. Then perhaps it might end up as a free-for-all, although a unanimous agreement would always be best.

Just because things aren't tearing busy, it doesn't mean we should treat being a Board member as akin to taking part in a game. As I said at the beginning of this piece, Garry just happens to be the BM that enabled me to bring up the subject. It isn't a dig at him personally just another extension of the democracy this Society operates under. The question is how far it should be allowed to go...

The above text was sent to the Board prior to publication.

Who are you?

"Who are you" is an oft-heard chant at football matches, but in this case it applies to an off-shoot! If you were the driver I had a brief chat with at **Spurs** recently and you told me an interesting story about your wedding ring, then the reason I haven't contacted you isn't because I didn't like the story, it's because I have forgotten your name and lost your phone number! Sorry...

LTDF (sigh)...

Yes, it's them again! Following my piece in the February issue regarding the *London Taxi Drivers Forum* chat site, two long emails and a short third appeared there involving me and they were again passed over to me. Apparently there was quite a lot more but in all honesty I couldn't face reading it – not because it worried me, but it was beginning to bore me. However, as the posts contained a number of inaccuracies, I decided to answer them here...

The first email was apparently from **Mickey Walker**. I have had several email exchanges with him in the past away from any internet sites and he

struck me as being a fairly sensible person who cared about the trade just as I do. But he is incorrect in his assumption that I sign on to that site using someone else's name. I don't. I was shown the site and its contents by a member of that group while looking over his shoulder. On this occasion, the emails I am writing about were forwarded onto me. He also tries to justify why that group should be allowed to slag off anyone they like whilst using aliases. Sorry Mickey, it rarely happens in *Call Sign* because I disagree with it. But the biggest load of tosh is reserved for his comment of several members of DaC being expelled because of their views on an internet forum. Never mind several, Mickey, give me just one name of someone expelled for their views and I'll try to find out if it has any truth. *Call Sign* via **Vince Chin** put the first UK taxi forum (**Discuss**) on line in 1999 and it would upset me greatly if I thought it had any truth to it. I'm not even sure if you have ever been on DaC, so how you would know anyway is something of a puzzle. But if you have any details about such an expulsion, then send it to my email address.

Then there is former driver, **Mark White**. This is the man who is apparently proud that he nicked one of our old terminals after being expelled. He claims it sits "proudly" in his home in a box. Wow! Does that mean that it wasn't really stolen but justifiably not returned? Nope, regardless of his reason involving the printer, it was stolen. If his email wasn't so long and boring (around 720 words) I'd have reprinted it just for comedy value.

Apparently I was one of the drivers on the Complaints Committee that expelled him and according to Mr White I did that to rule myself out of sitting in Arbitration on him. Who'd have thought I was that clever! It apparently meant that he had 'only' 9 names to choose the 5 needed to sit on the Committee!

I was also "upset" because he refused to speak to me when I said hello at a press visit to the Olympic Stadium prior to the Games. No Mark, I wasn't upset. I was with the editors of **Taxi Globe** and **Taxicab News** and we were just laughing at your sheer childishness. There are a few I may disagree with or who disagree with me, but we can talk and even share a joke. But I guess that's not you.

He also says that if he had the funds, he would have sued DaC and sued me "for defamation of character, libel and slander." Mark then "hoped" DaC would take him to court! Well surprise, surprise; unlike him, I'm delighted to say that this Society had far more sense than to waste a fortune in getting an old terminal back – even though the principle was important. Nevertheless, the terminal had very little value – although some would say that still made it worth more than Mr White! But it cheered him up as he says that his nicking it stopped DaC earning an income from it and that means he got his own back. He obviously doesn't put his worth as being very high.

To those drivers that tell me to disregard the LTDF, sadly that isn't me. If someone has a dig then I reserve the right to answer back – especially to those that like to criticise while hiding their names. Of course, if no one tells me about them, then I won't know and then can't write about them!

But it isn't just me and *Call Sign* they have a pop at. Someone on the LTDF called **Deci** described the majority of DaC members as "lazy minded fools." Obviously he isn't a member or he would have to include himself! Ah well, at least they're having fun...!!!

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

reflections of the chairman

AGM

On a personal level, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members for returning me as Chairman for a further two years.

I thought this year's meeting went very well and considering that there were nine candidates standing for five Board positions and with two candidates standing as Chairman, the amount of time the meeting took to conduct was not overly excessive given the number of topics on the Agenda.

Bearing in mind the extremely traumatic time our trade has experienced during the past seven years or so and the considerable downturn in our work, I thought the meeting was quite mellow and certainly very productive.

After over twenty years as a Member of the Board of Management, **Tom Whitbread** was replaced at this election by **Joe Brazil (K16)** and it would be remiss of me not to thank Tom for his valued services to this Society, covering a number of varied positions within the Board over those years. As many of you are probably aware, Tom has not been in the best of health in recent times, so I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say that we all hope Tom can now take things a little easier and return to full health within the near future.

So we now move on to our new Board Member, **Joe Brazil**. I have known Joe for around twenty years because he worked in our Contact Centre when I took over as Chairman in 1996, until he left the employ of the Society to drive a taxi full time in 2004.

On a more personal level, I sold Joe his first taxi and with it he also took over my old call sign of King 16 - one that he still retains. I am not sure if there is a moral there somewhere!

I have had an initial meeting with Joe and explained some of the ways that Dial-a-Cab Board Members are expected to behave, although I do not believe he was unaware as he worked within Brunswick House for probably around fifteen years. I am extremely optimistic that Joe will be an invaluable addition to the Board, after all he has a fairly good idea regarding the ways of Dial-a-Cab albeit that probably some things have changed - not to mention even the building itself - in the ten plus years he has been away from the Society. However, I am confident Joe will not endeavour to run before he can walk; I have been through that scenario with him and he seems quite comfortable with the situation.

As I explained to Members at the meeting, we are now in a situation where Dial-a-Cab employs professionals and in reality there is no longer the need for five elected Board Members. However, we will do our utmost to accommodate Joe for time within the building so that he may once again acquaint himself with Dial-a-Cab and its procedures.

Drivers contacting the customer

For some time now, many Members have requested the facility to telephone the customer when there is a problem contacting them. By the same token, many customers are reluctant to have their telephone numbers disclosed to anyone other than when it is absolutely necessary. I have no doubt that some DaC Members hold exactly the same sentiments regarding their own telephone number.

But our IT department have now commenced a dialogue with a company that will alleviate that situation and make it possible for two parties to speak to one another without either party divulging their telephone number to the other.

What they actually do is to distribute a telephone number to the two parties concerned, so that when either party telephones the number that has been supplied to them, it automatically contacts the other party's personal telephone number and the conversation can then commence! But of course neither party are aware of the correct tele-



phone number of the other person they are speaking to.

We are very hopeful that we can implement this system in the not too distant future as it will be of obvious benefit to both parties.

London Assembly

There has been much talk in recent times regarding the **Transport Committee** of the **London Assembly** and their enquiry into Taxi and Private Hire services in London.

The report was quite rightly damning of TfL and their administering of Taxis and Private Hire in London and there isn't any doubt in my mind that the committee understands and sympathises with our predicament.

By the time you read this piece, a meeting would already have been held at **City Hall** on February 25th where there was a questions and answers session with **Sir Peter Hendy**. Hopefully, I will have attended that meeting.

Although the meeting will have taken place by the time you read this issue of *Call Sign*, I urge all Dial-a-Cab Members to attend all Public meetings concerning the Taxi Trade that are held at City Hall and wherever possible, to contact your MP and bring the findings of the Transport Committee to their attention.

The Transport Committee have done a sterling job in producing the report; it is now up to the trade to put as much pressure on TfL as we can in an attempt to make sure they adhere to some of the proposals in the report, rather than sweep them under the carpet, which given half a chance they will attempt to do!

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab



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Tom Whitbread loses seat at AGM

As DaC welcomes new Board member Joe Brazil

The AGM of two years ago when Allen Togwell lost his seat on the Dial-a-Cab Board to Garry White by a solitary vote, showed that anything can happen at the meeting and that contrary to what used to be said, voting on the day can and probably does make a difference. The 2014 AGM – perversely held in February 2015 - showed that to be correct yet again when Tom Whitbread lost his seat to Joe Brazil by just 14 votes.

Tom has been with the Society for forty years and this was his second spell with the BoM, having famously resigned in 1985 when he disagreed with the company DaC intended doing business with for our first foray into data dispatch (Dowty). In the end, Tom was proved to be right and we went with MDI. Tom was re-elected to the Board four years later and he has stayed there until this AGM.

He had spells as Complaints Officer, Control Room Liaison Officer and as Training Officer. He was also in charge of our 'tracking' system in the old days when we had 'animals' trying to disrupt voice transmissions by holding their talk-buttons down and shouting. Back at our Shirland Road days, he ran the Control Room evening shift for six years.

Dial-a-Cab owes Tom Whitbread a huge vote of thanks for all he has done and the round of applause he got at the meeting showed that quite well.

But as one leaves, another comes in. This time it was Joe Brazil (K16), who has Brian Rice's old call sign. Joe had worked in the DaC Call Centre from 1987 as a telephonist before leaving in 2004 to become a full-time DaC taxi driver by which time he had become Senior Systems Supervisor. He had passed the Knowledge several years earlier, but remained at DaC because he enjoyed it so much although eventually needed to buy a new cab and that involved working his taxi on a full-time basis.



But what might not be so well known is that on Father's Day in 2004, Joe got a gift from his two children that turned him into the Honourable Lord Joseph Gerard Brazil of Loch Borrallan!

The estate of Loch Borrallan is situated on Scotland's northwest coast, just north of Ullapool in Inverness and has been associated with a number of various Scottish clans over the centuries, with several clan wars tak-

ing place and ownership of the estate changing hands frequently. Even more intriguing is the nearby ancient graveyard where still exists to this day a small cell where Bonnie Prince Charlie hid from the English troops!

The good news is that the title will be handed down from generation to generation of Joe's family – the not so good news is that his "estate" only covers one square foot! However, whichever part of that area Joe stands on, he can truthfully say that he is the Laird of all he surveys!

Call Sign has it on good authority that Joe will not be wearing ermine for Board meetings and will not expect any of his fellow Board members to go on their knees – but not because some may have trouble in getting up again!

Well done Joe and sincere thanks to Tom...

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

Brian Madderson is Chairman of the Petrol Retailers Association...

Fuel prices on the way up again?

"The wholesale cost of unleaded petrol has risen by nearly 3.5p per litre since 26 January, which will inevitably stall further falls in pump prices," Chairman of the *Petrol Retailers Association*, **Brian Madderson**, told *Call Sign*.

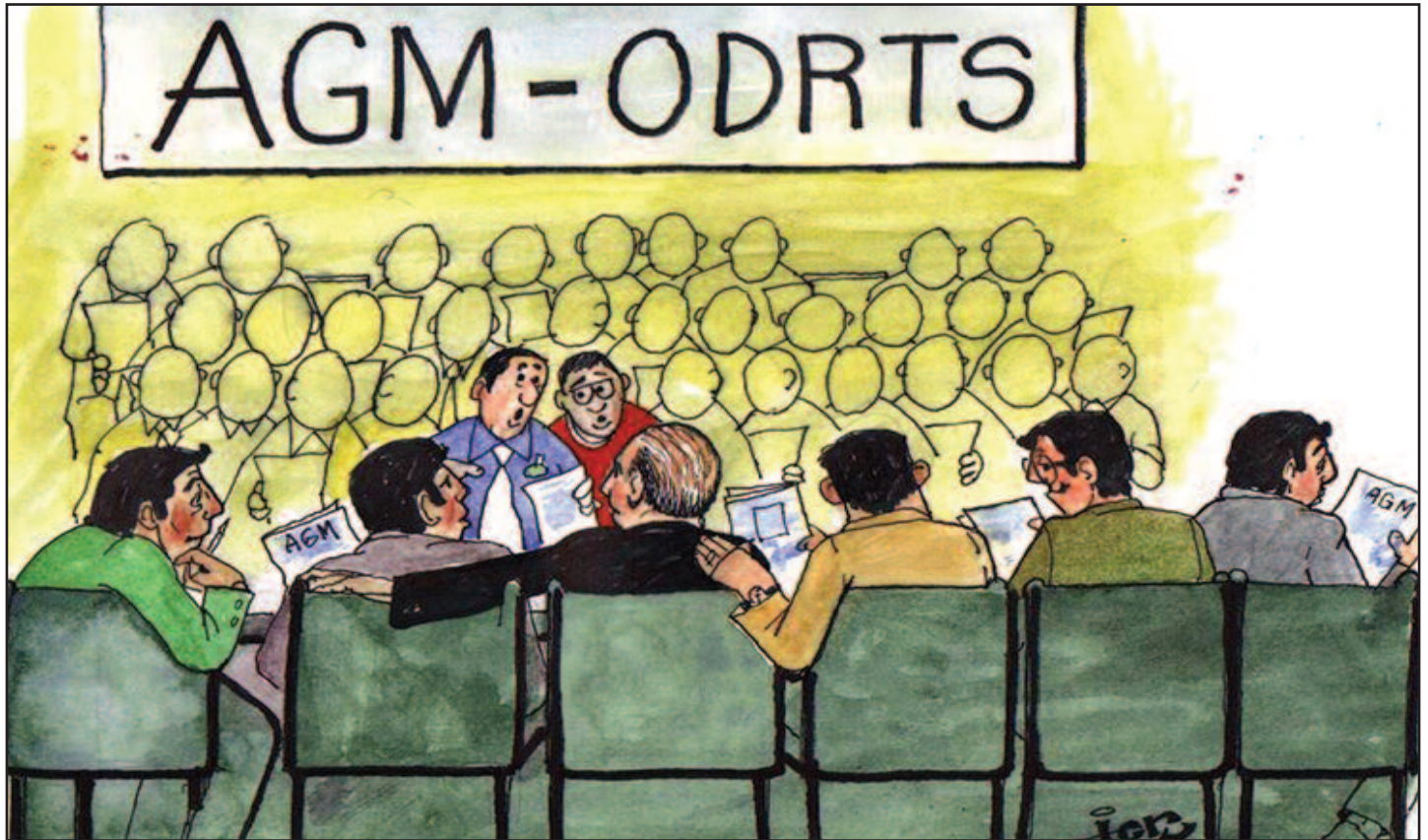
Energy Minister, **Amber Rudd**, recently raised the prospect of petrol dropping below £1 per litre ahead of the general election as crude prices continued to fall. However, from the low point of \$45 a barrel for **Brent Crude** in mid-January, there was a significant rally back to \$54/barrel by the beginning of February. By mid- February, Brent Crude had topped \$60.

Mr Madderson continued: "The PRA has always felt that crude oil needed to drop to \$40 or less per barrel for a sustained period for petrol to consistently be priced at below £1 per litre across the UK and averages today remain stubbornly above 106p. With this rebound in wholesale costs, we are going to see pump prices heading north again fairly soon. The current market is unsteady and predictions can quickly be overturned by events. We are questioning what short term impact will the strike by refinery workers in the US have on European wholesale costs and will the changing regime in Saudi Arabia affect their draconian pricing policy for crude oil?"

"There is growing sentiment in the city that the bottom of the crude oil market may have been reached and the rebound has now commenced."

Brian Madderson

Jery's World



"Mr Chairman, we don't want to waste time talking about taxis – can we move straight on to Mergers and Acquisitions and then Property Development!"

GLOBAL WEBSITE FOR A GLOBAL ICON

The London Taxi Company has launched a brand new global website to provide news, information and updates for a global audience at www.london-taxis.co.uk. The new website contains all of the information available from the Coventry-based Black Cab manufacturer and retailer's former websites - a UK-focused site and an internationally targeted portal – amalgamating all content into one global online presence.

This move follows the decision to streamline all online and digital communications, including the company's *Twitter* streams which now sit solely within the @LondonTaxiCoUK feed.

The new website provides visitors with the functionality to:

- * View the latest finance deals available direct from **The London Taxi Company** and **Black Horse Taxi Finance**.
- * Build their own vehicle using an updated configurator for both UK and International customers.
- * Discover the myriad features and benefits of the iconic Black Cab.
- * Work out possible Hire Purchase monthly payments using a Finance Calculator.
- * Search available Used London Taxis across the UK.
- * Request 'first choice' of specific Used London Taxis using a Vehicle Matching Service.
- * Search for International Partners, both distributors and operators, across the globe.

The new website also has the following new features, aimed at both London Taxi drivers as well as their passengers:

- * A new Approved Service Dealer section with even more information on the products and services available from this dedicated UK network.
- * Book a service online for The London Taxi Company's Brewery Road dealership.
- * Dedicated Passenger Centre with interesting facts about the trade, FAQs and contact details of Black Cab fleets across the UK.
- * Improved history and heritage section detailing the company's origins and iconic vehicles.
- * Links to prominent publications and titles - such as *Call Sign* - that report on and support the licensed taxi trade.
- * Information on licensing official LTC merchandise.

The website has been designed as an effective online global destination, which the company intends to continually improve and build on during the coming months. It was built in conjunction with Crasmundo – a digital and online services agency with a wealth of specific expertise and insight.



Call Sign recently heard of the death of Margaret, loving wife for 45 years to Call Sign's Alan Nash, who has been editing Nash's Numbers since 1997. Alan gives his own tribute to the woman he knew simply as Mags...

MARGARET NASH

Margaret - or Mags as she has been known for the last 35+ years - had only ever been admitted to hospital twice in her life, and that was to give birth to our two boys.

Whilst nowhere near being what could be called a fitness fanatic, she ate, drank and exercised sensibly. In late October 2014 she developed a stomach ache that lasted longer than any normal stomach ache should. Our wonderful GP acted very quickly with blood tests, ultrasonic scans, an endoscopy and finally a CT scan. The CT scan showed up, just a week before Christmas, as an inoperable pancreatic growth.

On Christmas Eve, Mags had a biopsy and by New Year's Eve she had been admitted to hospital with deep vein thrombosis and urinary infections. The prognosis was terminal and palliative care was the only way forward.

After discussing it with Whipps Cross Hospital, I agreed to have Mags discharged so that she could enjoy some home comforts and to have her family and friends close during her final hours.

The decline was rapid and she passed away in my arms peacefully at 6:30, on 9th February 2015. She is now in peace.

Alan Nash (A95), husband for 45 years...



In addition to Alan, Margaret will be sadly missed by her children, their partners, her five grandchildren and many friends. If anyone would like to make a donation to either of two very worthy charities, then you can.

In 1975, Call Sign enlisted the help of four Dial-a-Cab drivers who assisted in taking patients to and from an east London hospice. That led to the funding of the first MacMillan Nurse - now their name goes before them with the wonderful help and support they offer - just as they did with Mags.

You can help Macmillan Nurses at www.justgiving.com/magnash

There is also Alan's daughter-in-law Louise, who has recently been successfully treated for breast cancer. She will be running along with her two daughters, Holly and Amy, in aid of Cancer Research: Race for Life.

You can help Cancer Research: Race for Life at: www.justgiving.com/louisenash7

To Alan and his family, we send our sincere condolences...

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Frazer-Nash Research and Ecotive, the makers of the all-new Metrocab, are proud to confirm that the Metrocab has become the first zero-emission-capable taxi to be licensed by Transport for London to operate on a trial basis as a London Hackney Carriage.

The first few Metrocabs are already on the streets of London transporting fare-paying customers around the capital for the first time. Metrocab chairman, Sir Charles Masefield, said:

“The Metrocab has received numerous accolades and plaudits across the board in recent months, but now it is official – it is the first licensed range extended electric cab for London and indeed, the first in the world. We’re proud and delighted with the Metrocabs’ performance, economy and range at the hands of the first few London cabbies to be operating our range extended electric taxis.”

The first London taxi driver to operate the Range Extended Electric (REE) Metrocab, Preston Morris, said: **“It’s great news for me and for cabbies across London that the Metrocab is now licensed to work in the capital. The cash savings on fuel are significant, the ride and comfort outstanding and my first customers are thrilled with the new cab. With its air suspension providing unrivalled comfort, panoramic glass roof for views of the city and silent powertrain, what’s not to like?”**

The Metrocab has also been shortlisted for the London Transport Awards 2015 in the **Taxi & Private Hire Innovator of the Year** category. Keynote speaker at the awards presentation, to be held in London in March, Sir Peter Hendy CBE, said: **“I am delighted, as always, to support these awards, which recognise all that our industry does every day to deliver transport innovation and progress for London and the UK, and congratulate those organisations and individuals nominated for their achievements over the last year.”**

British designed, engineered and built to help London meet its air quality targets, the Metrocab is a new generation zero-emissions capable range extended electric-powered taxi and represents the cutting edge of green transport technology, with styling both evolutionary and sympathetic to the iconic black cab. The Metrocab’s Range-Extended-Electric (REE) technology delivers a range of 560km, typically saving a London taxi driver £20-£40 per day based on the average cab duty cycle in the capital.

London Mayor **Boris Johnson** has described the Metrocab as **“superb and absolutely beautiful - a masterpiece of British engineering, the Rolls Royce of taxis that can do 100mpg.”**

About the all-new Metrocab

The purpose-built all-new Range Extended Electric (REE) Metrocab taxi represents the cutting edge of green transportation technology. The vehicle incorporates the latest technology for comfort, performance and safety, providing unrivalled efficiency and economy with significantly reduced daily operation and maintenance costs together with customer benefits, including full disabled accessibility, panoramic roof for views of the city, increased luggage space and unrivalled comfort for up to seven passengers (optional seventh passenger seat in the front).

The taxi is driven by two electric motors, range extended with a 1-litre petrol engine coupled with a generator to recharge the battery pack (which takes as little as 10 minutes while driving).

ELECTRIC METROCAB READY!

First three already licensed and picking up passengers!



Charging is also available via any mains electric outlet, providing even lower fuel consumption. Speed limit 80mph (restricted).

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- * 75% less CO₂ than comparable current London taxis.
- * New Metrocab 50g/km CO₂.
- * 560km combined range.
- * Significantly lower running costs, typically saving a London cabbie £20 – £40 per day.
- * Zero-emissions mode and home charging via standard mains outlet.

See www.newmetrocab.com



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Following his successful election to the Board at the recent AGM, Joe Brazil writes his first official Call Sign article

BRAZIL CALLING...

On election to the Board, you are afforded little time to rest on your laurels; deadlines move at an extraordinary rate and our esteemed Editor, Mister Fisher - as he tells me to address him at all times - ensures there is no slacking in the prose department!

Being elected to the Board affords you the privilege of addressing the membership and

allows me a chance to talk directly to everyone, for that I am immensely grateful. The first thing I must of course do is to thank you, the subscriber, for your fantastic support on the run-up to, and during the election; the sheer surge of energy and willingness to trust is a potent force, I intend to repay that trust.

Of course to my proposer and seconder **Darren French (F63)** and **Roger Kensit (W31)**, my eternal thanks. Your words and actions and sheer belief in the company stay with me always.

To **Tom Whitbread**, who shook my hand shortly after the election, my best wishes for the future. I was allowed to thank him for his service to **Dial-a-Cab** and Tom responded with the stoic rhetoric he has become well known for, showing himself to be the true gentleman we all know. I'm sure we all wish him good health and long and fruitful future.

As you may not be aware, I am writing this

less than a week after the election. **Brian Rice** welcomed me to the office personally, telling me the levels of conduct and expectations required of all elected members, his pride for **Dial-a-Cab** is obvious and after withstanding a challenge to his Chairmanship, showed the personal qualities he holds, proving that leadership and learning go hand in hand.

My first Board meeting will be within the next few weeks, ideas that I have will be brought to the table and I look forward to the discourse. It will hopefully become an ongoing discussion, an exchange of views. As part of that committee, I'm sure we can forge a bright future together.

Again my thanks to all of you for this opportunity. I will not let you down...

Joe Brazil (K16)
DaC Board Member

An occasional series from DaC's Simon Wallis (M11) on the golf courses he has played

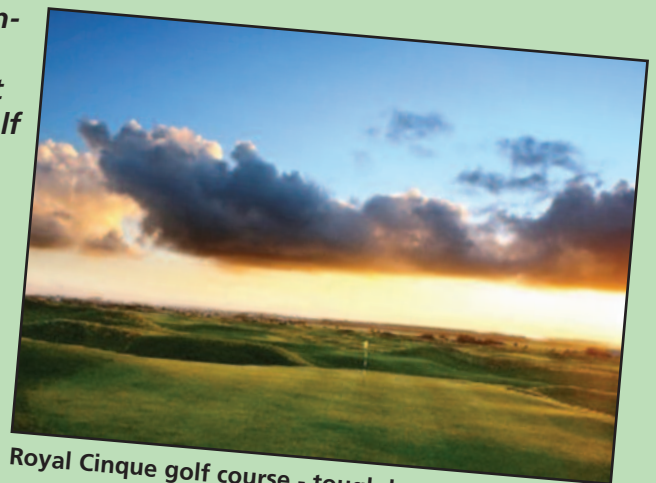
SIMON'S GOLF COURSES



Welcome to 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 cab...

Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club

During winter, we tend to look forward to sunnier



Royal Cinque golf course - tough but fun!

times and possibly seaside golf. Links golf is not for everyone, but it is the purest form of the game, with one of the finest examples being **Royal Cinque Ports** at **Deal**, on the Kent coast.

I've played this course in both the winter and summer and it really is worth a trip down there. So let me tell you Dial-a-Cab drivers why.

You arrive at the old style clubhouse (fine breakfast there) and it's worth taking a look across the links from the upstairs balcony where there is an old brass telescope for your use. What you'll see is possibly the most raw rugged terrain with holes all the way out and back again.

The front 9 - or even up to the 12th hole - offer up some birdie opportunities, but be warned that this is where you *must* score as the last 7 holes are usually played into the wind. They have been described as possibly the sternest finish at any links - and not without reason!

Of the front 9, the 6th offers a good chance to pocket a birdie and if you're brave or perhaps a bit foolish, you can go for the green on this short par 4.

I make no bones about it - there are so many fabulous holes at RCP, but a special mention has to go to the par 5 16th, the best hole on the course and my personal favourite par 5 anywhere.

For the long DaC hitters, you can 'just' go for the green in two, but for most of us mere mortals, it's a drive long iron to the valley short of the plateau green. **Bernard Darwin** once described this as the Valley of Indecision and you'll soon learn why when you are there!

Above all else, it's actually tremendous fun and you go home wanting to go back for more

Simon Wallis (M11)

It was just before Christmas; I was out working driving my **Dial-a-Cab** taxi around town trying to keep as busy as possible while listening to the **Robert Elms** show on **BBC London**. He was interviewing a lady from a homeless shelter who was talking about the work they do, especially at Christmas. One of the things she mentioned was that they needed volunteers to help out, especially at night, over the Christmas period. I thought it sounded like a good thing to do but like those people who when hearing what we do for a living say: "Oh you're a cab driver! I was going to do the Knowledge but... I didn't do anything beyond think that I'd like to do that."

A week later, I heard that my friend **James** was on his way to volunteer at the **Crisis** shelter in **Paddington**; a slight tinge of guilt set in because *he* was actually doing something to help.

James was so moved by the experience of his two nights talking and helping the many rough sleepers at Crisis, that it inspired him and his friend Rachel Frodsham to set up The Sleeping Bag Appeal.

The Sleeping Bag Appeal was set up on **FaceBook** on 29th December 2014, its aim being to provide as many rough sleepers with a dry, warm sleeping bag as possible. The initial interest was amazing; the appeal received 300 bags in the first two weeks with celebrity endorsements from **Sam Faiers** (TOWIE and Celebrity BB) plus **Louisa Zissman** (Apprentice and Celebrity BB).

James then asked for my help; he'd been out in his own car but found it difficult to get out to reach as many people as he wanted to, a taxi would be perfect! So we loaded up my cab with around 100 bags.

Then with help from Rachel, we drove around town handing out bags and chatting to rough sleepers wherever we found them.

We started at 6pm, covering the likely spots from **Temple** to **Charing Cross**; I stopped where I could while the others went out to the homeless sitting in doorways etc. We moved on to **Leicester Square**, where I was able to park the cab and take some bags out myself. I recall one young woman called **Emma** who had lost her home before Christmas when a bad relationship got even worse. Another poor soul had lost his finger tips to frostbite, yet managed to keep his dog warm in a blanket.

One of the saddest stories came from a gentleman in his 60s who we found on the **Southbank**. He sat on some steps by the **National Theatre** with a dog. He'd lost his wife a few years previous and as a consequence, his own life fell apart until he ended up homeless. The dog had been his wife's. When James got back to the cab, he found a slightly better bag and went back to offer it to him but he wouldn't take it. He just said to give it to someone that needed it more

With overnight temperatures still cold, Darren Hawley (A80) appeals to DaC drivers...

SLEEPING BAG APPEAL



Darren with some of the donated sleeping bags!

than he! The striking thing about that was that his reaction wasn't uncommon – a homeless person receiving a bag would often say no thanks if whatever they were using was ok and to give it to someone else. Or they would alert you to where some others may be in need.

We stayed out till 1am, covering areas from Hammersmith to Hoxton to Camden to the Southbank and returned home with just 10 bags!

Our last bag was given to **Martin**; Martin was in the **Texaco** garage on **The Highway** westbound. James spoke to him and got him some food while I waited. I met Martin again when I stopped for him outside **Tesco** in **Eastcheap** (his two regular spots). He remembered us from before and thanked us for our efforts. I spoke to him for a while; he's from Manchester and was a chef. He sleeps rough in the city now. If you see him, say hi, he's really a nice guy.

I kept the 10 bags and told James I'd carry that many each day to work from then on and hopefully won't miss a flyer, as my luggage compartment looks like a **Go Outdoors** store-room! I hand out bags from my cab every day I work and the sleeping appeal has now been getting gloves, hats, hand-warmers and even dog coats! I hand them out too. I've got to know a few regulars from where they pitch up and often stop for a quick

chat and to top up their supplies.

I get to hear their stories and I often get told how they end up where they are, the common theme is a loss of a partner, lost job, family or personal issues; things we all can suffer. After all, who is born on the streets...!

I'm constantly amazed at the level of humility and often hope that I get from our rough sleepers, most have a positive slant on life and often say to me that it's what it is and you have to make the most from life. When you've got what seems like nothing, an attitude like that is priceless.

The **Sleeping Bag Appeals Facebook** page has so far received **5000 likes**, been viewed by **130,000** people and has received around **600** bags from as far away

as **Australia**. It's a totally non-profit organisation; it's not a charity and doesn't accept monetary donations.

If you would like to read some of our homeless people's stories, donate a bag or other items (there is an **Amazon** wish list), or just share the site with your contacts, that would be a great help.

The appeal would like to reach out to other areas in the future, so please follow **The Sleeping Bag Appeal** on **Facebook**

Keep Safe

Darren Hawley (A80)

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All you need to know about the 2014 AGM

Sunday 8 February 2015 saw the 2014 Dial-a-Cab AGM held again at the HAC Barracks on City Road. What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by Call Sign Editor Alan Fisher. It is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. Some paragraph grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the report as compact as possible. Approximate attendance was 167, not including the BoM...



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

2013 Minutes

Minutes of the 2013 meeting were passed. There were no matters arising...

Annual Report including the Chairman's Report and Financial Statement

There were no matters arising...

Auditor's report on the Financial Statement...



Mike Tovey then spoke about the **Chantry Vellacott** Auditor's Report. He said that considering the way things were out there, we still had considerable reserves in the bank (£5.5million) and a building worth around £7million. Although he said the financial report could hardly be described as good with income from clients down by 11% and re-equipment included, there were many companies out there that would love to have had one like it considering current trading conditions. There were a number of subscribers wanting to question Mike...

First up was **Stephen Field (F99)**. He asked Mike what the business rates for the building were. He was told around £100,000.

Next up was **Gerry Harris (D58)**. He asked what was included in Operating Costs and was told that among other items, they included the cost of aerial sites and staff transport etc.



John Rubini (F55) then asked whether it had been worth upgrading terminals etc considering how things were out there and what the financial costs involved were. **Brian Rice** answered say-

ing that the cost of the terminals and the PEDS was around £3.4million. The reason for upgrading was to hopefully improve signals. Brian added that the original terminals had begun their fitting program in 2000 and were very old for that type equipment and that their original life had been estimated at around 5 years. John suggested that an App would have been better but Brian said that the terminals had been ordered long before there was such a thing as Hailo or Uber. He also added that we now had our own App for credit card and account customers and that it had become very successful. When John suggested that we could have been £3million better off had we not had new terminals, Brian's response was that half of the old ones would not have been working by now.



Trevor Denton (Y51) continued with the subject of terminals and asked why we had 400 terminals over. Brian explained that there was no way of knowing how things would be when you

begin ordering terminals 2/3 years before delivery. There were fewer drivers than we had at the time of ordering but he also added that the manufacturers advised that a number of spares be kept because of computer problems or cracked screens etc. Brian inferred that if you could order and collect at the same time then you could order exactly what you wanted, but it didn't work that way and you had to order well in advance and there was no way you could know how many you would need several years into the future. He added that we had been paying £160,000 per year on maintenance costs on the old terminals and in response to Trevor asking what the maintenance costs on the new terminals were, Brian said that there were none at present.



Bernie Silver (G08) asked why there had been an increase in Legal and Professional fees from £32,000 up to £96,000. The answer was that our Human Resources department had been closed down and outsourced, so the HR staff's wages were taken off the wages bill but the

new outsourced company's costs now came under Legal and Professional. Brian Rice added that on our behalf, Chantry Vellacott had made an application to **HMRC** for a rebate for Research and Development re our new terminals. That came to £128,000 of which Chantry Vellacott got 20% leaving us with £102,400. Bernie enquired whether ongoing talks with the **Radio Taxis Group** had incurred any costs yet and the answer was no.

Next, **Mike McGlynn (F60)** came to the lectern and supported the Chairman's answer regarding how many terminals we had ordered and he agreed that because they had to be ordered so far in advance, it was impossible to gauge exactly how many would be needed several years into the future.



Robert Stroulger (Y50) asked how much road testing had been carried out on the new terminals. Brian explained that the IT department had their own taxi, which has three terminals fitted and they would drive it round to different areas. In addition, there were a small group of drivers that had the terminals first and they reported any problems found. Then they were fitted to ten cabs at a time and these drivers were asked to give feedback on the terminal's performance and any problems. These initial groups were also used to test any updates and upgrades needed and asked to report problems etc to the DaC House IT department. That procedure is ongoing. Robert suggested that the old terminal was much easier and thereby safer to use. Brian invited Robert to come to the office and act as a tester. He added that going onto a public network with O2 should have made a huge improvement to the system, but it hasn't.

Robert asked if we could go to EE and Brian said that stress testing showed that they would be no better, but Robert thought we should investigate and also have testers who went out at times when phone signals were at their worst and when terminal signals were affected most.



Former data dispatch tester, **Barry Groner (V30)** was up next. He brought up the fact that the old terminals ran on Windows 98 and there is no longer any support from Microsoft for that system so there was no way we could have continued with the old system.

Stephen Field (F99) then returned to the lectern and said that he likes the new terminal but went onto ask if we could pre-authorise credit cards as we used to. Brian Rice said that no one could get that other than hotels, but he was trying to speak to the bank at the moment. He added that our credit card was now our biggest account. The Chairman also

All you need to know about the 2014 AGM

said that there could be a new update that meant details could be kept in the PED if a signal wasn't available until it returned.



Richard Chamberlain (C96) then spoke and asked **Mike Tovey** how long we could sustain losses such as the one this year. Mike said that our funds could sustain losses such as this

one for many years but that circumstances change. Richard then pointed to the loss of two big accounts in Docklands inferring that it would affect next year's figures. He suggested that we have a referendum on whether we should close the doors, sell up and share out the money among drivers! Brian reminded drivers of the days in the early 90s when DaC was operating on a day-to-day basis and said that nowadays, however tough things have been over the past few years, Dial-a-Cab was still here and still had substantial reserves even though we had been – and still were – under sustained attack from **Hailo**, **Uber** and 70,000 minicabs. He then pointed to the demise of **LTI**, **Just Taxis** and **KPM** and said that we were still here. He said that **Radio Taxis** were struggling and that **ComCab** had to spread their costs on to **Metroline buses** in order to show a profit. He added that our operating costs and staff costs had been cut every year over the past five years. He said that the taxi trade's best chance was if TfL began protecting the licenced taxi trade as they should have been doing, otherwise it would be a race to the bottom! The Chairman admitted that the loss of the two E14 accounts had shaken us and said that the result was that other accounts are now asking for no run-ins and no gratuities having now seen what our competitors had offered in order to prise away the accounts from us. He continued his answer by assuring Richard that we had learned lessons from this – not just from the account losses but from whom we had employed as account managers. He also asked how, when completing a tender, we could now include run-ins etc. Our competitors had killed that. However, he also said that laying blame on anyone was pointless and that everyone in the licensed taxi industry had to band together and fight what TfL were doing to us. To applause, Brian said that this would never have happened under the old PCO administration. He said that there were now civil servants who were riding roughshod over us and that although he wasn't a fan of **Ken Livingstone**, at least the former Mayor listened and you could get an appointment to see him! Brian had been to the public forum in January following the GLA report on TfL where they had been branded as being woefully inadequate, whilst **Mayor Boris Johnson** admitted that he hadn't even read it. Brian thought the Mayor's inaction re the report was ludicrous and said again that the trade needed to stick together and to fight together.



Pat Keefe (G01) was next and returned to the question of the 400 terminals that were over and queried why we couldn't sell them on. Brian responded that we would be able to use

them for spares etc but hoped that our driver numbers would increase because of all the work behind the scenes that was being done by the Society. Pat also asked about the possibility of using a roving Sim card that would enable terminals to switch between incoming signals. Brian said they were looking at the possibility, but that during tests they had found it was taking up to 15 seconds to switch between companies and that must have felt like 15 minutes. However, if that could be sorted out and the asking price was right, it was something DaC would consider.



Next up was **Steve Hutchinson (S49)**. He asked about the loss of an EC5 account that had been "taken by ComCab." Brian corrected Steve in that it was Brunel that had taken the account by

putting their platform into the account, but that any taxis used by the account would be from CC as there were to be no run-ins etc. Brian added that we were now talking to that particular account client. He reminded everyone in the hall that we were the first to build a platform back in 2004 (Concierge) and warned at the time that lots of the competition out there would be trying to catch us up - and now they all have. He added that it was possible to buy a ready-made platform off the shelf and car companies were indeed buying them. In response to Steve then asking why we didn't match CC, Brian said that we were unaware at the time that anyone would be selling their services with no run-ins etc and that we were never given the opportunity to go in and match them. In response to Steve then asking if we would now be offering no run-ins etc to all our EC5 accounts, Brian said that he was a big fan of giving the driver a bit extra, but that DaC had now been given no choice because of the actions of our taxi competitors. In other words, if we fail to match our competitors, then we would have no chance of getting accounts back again. Brian also surprised many when he said that our relations with one of the E14 accounts was still very friendly and that when he and **Keith Cain** visited it recently, they were told that they weren't overly happy with the new service. The question of a third account at Cabot Square was mentioned and Brian said this company were determined to use no taxis with the person in charge of transport saying that he didn't like taxis or the drivers! The Chairman went on to tell those at the AGM exactly why we had lost the two Docklands



accounts. Steve then suggested a referendum among drivers to see whether they would be happy to operate no run-ins and gratuities, but Brian intervened and said that it was too late for that and that customers were now demanding no runs etc and if we wanted our share of the work, we would have to give them that.

Robert Stroulger (Y50) then returned for a second go. He spoke of last year's meeting and about knowing that clients were looking for no run-in accounts because Brian had mentioned it. But Brian said DaC had been assured that the account he was referring to would definitely be renewing it. Unfortunately, the person we had been dealing with suddenly left and strangers took it over. Brian reminded Robert that two subscribers at last year's meeting asked for a vote of those present as to who agreed that we should offer no run-ins, but out of 108 people there, just five voted yes. But things had now changed dramatically and that looked to be the way things were going to go. Robert ended by telling Brian that people cared about DaC and that he shouldn't take criticism personally. Brian assured him that he didn't but made one proviso, and that was from non-members on various forums – some of them former members – who get very personal. To applause he said that everyone at the meeting had the right to say what they wanted, but those who were on forums and not even members did not have the right to become personal.

Russell Poluck MBE (T55) brought up a Point of Order saying that we had gone totally away from the subject ie questions re the Auditor's report.



Gerry Harris (D58) then came back to make a further point; he said that drivers were taking a big downturn but that the BoM were taking a far smaller downturn judging by the

totals. Brian explained that he had cut down on the number of BMs that come in every day as used to happen. Now two come in just one day a month (for Board meetings only) while one comes in just once a week. He reminded Gerry that when things were good and drivers were rewarded with cash bonuses for covering work at Christmas, the BoM got no extra at all. We bought a building that has doubled in value and no one said that the BoM should be rewarded for good business. It is taken for granted that is what they do, he said. "You can't have your cake and eat it. If you want a Board to run the Society then it has to come at a cost." After saying how we had learned lessons when employing Sales staff who when leaving, took away a list of accounts with

All you need to know about the 2014 AGM

them, Brian said that was why it was important to have the person dealing with Sales coming from the Board. The Chairman then asked whether we actually needed so many on the BoM and whether in reality we needed more than three. But he added that he would not be proposing that because he knew what some would say – ie he was trying to get a little clique together that would become unbreakable and that if a reduction ever happened, it would be because a member had proposed it. Brian said that he was always trying to do the best he could within the parameters of the rules we operated under.



Last up under the 'Accounts' heading was **Gary Cowderoy (N17)** who said that as the current accounts only included three months of the lost E14 accounts, could Mike or Brian give a

projection of what the losses might be for a full year of the loss. Brian answered that it would come to around £300,000 off the bottom line if nothing else replaced any of it. That was on a turnover of around £3million. Brian said that we were intending to now spend some of our many on getting more work. That included a young lady whose remit was marketing and that we would also be rebranding.

Questions to the Auditor ended at 12.35

The Report was voted on...

To reappoint Chantry Vellacott as Auditors to the Society

This was then voted on...

Rule changes

There were no rule changes...

Propositions

There were no rule changes...

To elect a Chairman



The meeting was then handed over to Company Secretary, **Howard Pears**. Two candidates were standing for the position of Chairman of Dial-a-Cab for the next two years. They were the current Chairman, **Brian Rice**, and the current Compliance Officer **Garry White**. Both spoke with neither using their proposers or seconders.



Questions to candidates

First up was **Mike McGlynn (F60)** who made a statement rather than ask a question. He said he had been on ComCab for many

years and had seen the way that company had gone down and he didn't want DaC to go the same way. He suggested that we were going through a tumultuous period with also the possibility of a merger with Radio Taxis on the horizon and asked if it would it not then make sense to keep the status quo and keep with those we already had and who knew what was currently going on around us.



Next up was **Kevin O'Connor (T75)**. He read out a list of accounts that he claimed no longer used us but Brian corrected him and said that we were, in fact, used by several of those on the list. He asked what was the last account we had won and Keith answered with two names. Kevin then said that when Brian had first been elected, he had only been on the Board for two years just as Garry White had been here now. Kevin then asked individual Board members if they would work under Garry White's leadership. **Mike Son** said that although he thought Garry was a nice guy, he didn't think Garry could act as Chairman and would not work under him. The rest of the BoM said they would work under him if they were elected. **Keith Cain** said that as a respect to the membership, he would work under Garry. **Allan Evans** agreed with Keith adding that he already worked with Garry but that although he would work under Garry as Chairman, he didn't consider that Garry was good enough to do the job but that he would be prepared to assist him as best he could. **Tom Whitbread** said he would work with Garry as Chairman because there would be the need for a strong Board if a new and inexperienced Chairman were to be elected and that he had never been afraid to tell any of the Chairmen he had worked under that they were not good enough. Kevin ended by saying that we had the chance to vote in a younger man with more energy and that subscribers should consider that when voting.

John Rubini (F55) was next up and said that Mike Son had "made a rod for his own back" with Tom Whitbread's answer being the only sensible one. While Mike replied that he didn't want to be two-faced, John said that the question should not have been asked and that the Board worked with the Chairman while Mike said that the Board were trustees working for the membership. John then said that Brian had only been on the BoM for two years before being elected and that up until this year had never faced a challenge to his Chairmanship before. He said that Brian to his credit had grown into the job and there was no reason why Garry couldn't do so as well. John also said he couldn't understand why there should be any rebranding when there was the possibility of a merger on the horizon. Brian explained that any merger would take some years to make two companies into one and that both would probably act as individuals for some time to come, should it ever go

through. He then went on to tell John that during his two initial years, he had been given several Board jobs to do including Driver Training, Driver Recruitment, Head of Marshalling and Buildings Manager and that he believed he had shown the BoM at the time that he was capable after building up a large portfolio of various Board duties. He also had a good head for figures thanks to his previous employment with the Inland Revenue and as a Civil Servant.

Joe Brazil (K16) was next up and after cracking a joke about the Chairman's beloved **QPR**, he said that we were facing difficult times with Uber etc, so he asked Brian and Garry what representations they had made to the authorities on our behalf. Brian Rice answered first and said that he'd had meetings with Palestra mentioning those that he had actual meetings with and suggested that he was trying to get more joint meetings with the authorities. He called Tfl a disgrace.

Garry said that he had emailed and had written correspondence with his Thurrock MP, **Jackie Doyle-Price**.



Next to speak was **Terry Buffin (S16)**. He asked what would happen to Brian if he were to be struck by lightning on his way out. Brian said that the Board would select a temporary Chairman

until a postal ballot could be organised. Terry then changed tack and said that he had been worried because **Call Sign** had allowed three people to write about the election who were not members and that the magazine should be unbiased. He said that no one had written in favour of Garry White while someone had cast a smear over his actions by inferring he had not carried out his job regarding a complaint he had dealt with. To applause, Terry suggested that he considered this to have been a dirty campaign and that the rest of the Board appeared to have got the hump with Garry because he was standing as Chairman.



In response, **Call Sign's** Editor **Alan Fisher (F07)** got up and said that he hadn't made anything up and that anything that went in, did so because it was sent in. He added that had anyone sent in something nice about Garry, then that too would have gone in. He said that he was an editor and not a politician so if it came in then it went in. He implied that this was not a general election but an election to choose a Chairman for a radio circuit and as such, he felt that drivers should be able to read the views of others. He was asked by a subscriber from the 'floor' why he published a letter from **Allen Togwell**, who was no longer a member? Alan replied that he was happy to publish all letters in the Mailshot pages,

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although he refused to publish it on the pages that had been put aside as specific questions to BoM candidates. As a result, Allen Togwell's letter appeared in the Mailshot pages, whereas subscriber's questions appeared on a separate page headed **DaC Elections: Drivers Questions Answered**. He added that he felt drivers were clever enough to make up their own minds. Brian Rice added that the Editor was given carte blanche to run *Call Sign* and that it was completely uncensored. He continued by saying that the only sections he reads before it goes to print are reports from the Board.



Next to speak was **Gary Cox (O46)** who said that he had written a number of controversial items for *Call Sign* and not once had the Editor turned round to say that it couldn't be published. Some things he even said that he was surprised to see go in but more often than not, his articles had received praise for being so honest. To applause, Gary finished by saying that we needed *Call Sign* just as it was.

Terry Buffin then spoke again saying that his comments were not an attack on **Alan Fisher** but brought up an article by **Richard Potter (T51)** who in his article had said that with the possibility of a merger, we would be better with the Board we had rather than changing it around. He thought that was wrong. Brian mentioned a meeting he'd had with former Minister of Transport for London, **Steve Norris**, who had said how much he enjoys reading *Call Sign* and went straight to the letters page to look for bold type that said 'Brian Rice replies' "because you never knew what would be there!" Brian also mentioned the published letters that had attacked him and he accepted that as the freedom of the magazine.



Javid Raja (N72) spoke next and asked both candidates what their strategy was for fighting Uber. Brian gave a rundown of what Uber had done in London so far and said that all we could really do was to keep lobbying TfL who had chickened out, and to make a nuisance of ourselves. He added that the Transport Committee of the GLA had taken that on board and it was now a matter of getting it across to Boris and hoping that he comes down in our favour.

Garry then responded to Javid and said that he had emailed both his MP and the Mayor and complained how the Mayor had let the trade down.

Robert Stroulger (Y50) then paid his third visit to the lectern and asked whether both candidates had any plans to reinstate the driver forum meetings that DaC used to have. He

agreed that *Call Sign* published everything but said that not everyone wrote to the magazine just as night drivers didn't get opportunities to get to the East Road office. He said that we all drove cabs and were all affected by various aspects and problems in the trade. So if we brought back forums, those drivers would get an opportunity to question the Board on anything that was on their mind involving the trade. Brian said that if drivers wanted forums, then they could have them, but reminded drivers that in previous times when forums were held, they were so poorly attended that they became a waste of time. Brian added that in addition to writing to *Call Sign*, members could email him and that he would always reply. Someone (who *Call Sign* couldn't see) called out that they were told they couldn't speak to Brian when they asked to speak to the Chairman. Brian suggested he had asked the wrong person because this was the first he had heard of it and that he was always available - even if that meant the following day.



John Davis (V41) said that he had gone to the office to ask if he could speak to the Chairman for five minutes about something and was given an hour!

Robert continued by saying that forums would stop problems of not being able to see the Chairman or miscommunications; Brian responded by suggesting that if drivers couldn't be bothered writing an email or phoning, would they take the time to attend a forum? Robert suggested that they would and that with a few of them together it would take any fear out of a one-to-one meeting, because not everyone was an eloquent speaker or able to put a good email together. Brian then brought up *Call Sign* again and pointed out that no one had ever seen a poorly worded letter in the Society magazine as the Editor always made sure that no one looked clumsy. Robert agreed but added that if someone wrote a lengthy letter, then Alan would have to go through it to make it look ok. Brian reiterated that he thought forums would be a waste of time and said that both he and



Allan Evans always answered driver's emails. He added that he always spoke to new drivers and told them that if they needed to know anything, then they should come back

and that if the person they spoke to couldn't help then they should ask to speak to Brian. He would never refuse to speak to anyone even if he couldn't at that particular time. Robert assumed that meant that Brian's answer to bringing back forums was no.

He then asked **Garry White** the same question. Garry said he thought forums could work and suggested advertising a meeting via



driver's terminals to get an idea of how many would attend. Then if the forum did go ahead and something came up, they could act on it very quickly. He said that Robert was correct in that not everyone would want to speak to a Board member about a problem that affected the Society, whereas they would do so at a forum. In answer to Robert, Garry then said that yes, he would bring them back.

Acting Chairman Howard Pears then asked those that were eligible to vote because they had not voted by post, to hand their voting papers to the representatives of the **Electoral Reform Society**. It was now 1.30pm and a short 10 minute break was called.

Some 15 minutes later, Howard Pears called the meeting to order and announced the results of the vote for DaC Chairman.

The voting was Brian Rice 773 and Garry White 385. To a big cheer, Howard announced that Brian Rice had been duly elected to serve as Chairman.

Garry was the first to congratulate Brian, who then went on to make a short thank you speech and took the meeting back from Howard Pears.

The next item was to announce the result of the vote to approve the 2013 AGM minutes. There were 1115 votes received, with 1112 voting in favour.

The next item was to announce the result of the vote to approve the Annual Report. There were 1115 votes received, with 1101 voting in favour.

The next item was to announce the result of the vote to reappoint Chantry Vellacott as company auditors. There were 1113 votes received with 1063 voting in favour. All three items were carried.

Election of Board Members

All prospective Board members then spoke with the option of seconds speaking if required, although none did. Because the subject of planning permission for luxury apartments at Dial-a-Cab House was brought up by **Joe Brazil**,



the re-elected Chairman brought up a Point of Order and explained the situation while Joe gave his view. **Jim Edwards (E76)** came to the lectern and pointed out that

it wasn't the building that was important, it was the land and that all we needed was an architect! Brian told the story of how we had bought our current building for £3.7million. He also said that should the situation go any further, then a series of forums would be held.

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Questions to candidates

First up was **Stephen Field (F99)**. He said that **Keith Cain** as Sales Manager shouldn't be involved with any talks on any possible Radio Taxis merger and perhaps should even have an office at Canary Wharf. Brian explained that he had asked Keith go with him to a meeting because he was the longest serving Board member and Brian felt his experience and input would be important. Brian also added that he never went to meetings of this kind alone for reasons he said we could all appreciate.



Tony Sam-Yorke (W95) then spoke and said he had been on DaC for 30 years and was upset because as **Pat Graves (L53)** had said in her speech, we wanted to see bums on seats and Tony felt that the BoM were "letting go" while things out on the road were desperate. He said that it was a shame that more drivers didn't come to AGMs because they probably didn't care and that those attending were the ones that cared. Tony made the point that saying we tried to get work isn't relevant and that out in the business world, if you didn't get results then you were sacked! Brian responded that it wasn't just DaC, it was the whole taxi business. Tony brought up DaC having an App and Brian explained about our App but said that we didn't really want a cash App because our cash coverage wasn't good. Tony ended by saying that it was the Board's job to get us work.



Last on this section was **Steve Thomas (N10)**. He asked **Keith Cain** what his Sales budget was should he be elected. Keith said that until such time as the elections were over, no individual budgets had yet been discussed because if he were not to be elected, then the whole scenario could change. Brian explained that he and Howard Pears sit down every year to plan a budget for the following 12 months but individual budgets couldn't be planned until after the elections.



Russell Poluck MBE (T55) then announced that the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity had raised £420 in a raffle held prior to the meeting and gave the results. To total disbelief and much laughter, the first of several winners was Brian Rice! Russell then announced the rest of the winners. **Ticket 331 - 335** also won, but the driver wasn't there. If you have that ticket, go to Driver Services

Brian then told drivers that they should vote for the Board members they would like to see elected with a maximum of five selections each. There followed a short break.

Any Other Business

AOB began at 3pm and first up was **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)**. He said he had brought up the subject of better name boards at last year's AGM and he was told that the Board would look at the suggestion. Brian responded that they had indeed done so and brought out new ones that were now in the office. These had the DaC logo in colour. Russell also thanked Brian for the help and support he always gives the TDoY charity and Brian said that it wasn't him but was on behalf of DaC. Russell also said that he thought we had too many messages put out during busy periods and unless important, that they should be kept until quieter periods.



David Marks (R22) was next up. He asked whether the two accounts lost in E14 had said anything to Brian regarding the service from **Brunel** and **ComCab** as the two companies that had taken them. He made special mention of ComCab as they were using **Yellow Badge** drivers. Brian said there had been some complaints re the YB drivers use, but any complaints went to CC and not us. Brunel seemed to be coping, but they had asked us if we would be prepared to act for any taxis required and we agreed provided that did not involve us going onto their platform. He added that the account did not differentiate and if they wanted a taxi, we got the job regardless of where it went. He said that rumours we only got the locals that Brunel couldn't cover were untrue.



Stephen Field (F99) then returned to what was becoming his second home! He began by thanking **Call Sign** Editor **Alan Fisher** for the assistance he had provided following problems Stephen had with his Vito and said that he hoped as a result of that, Vito owners had received letters confirming the resurrection of their service plan after the demise of the original KPM policies. Stephen's second point was to ask whether we had given any thought to having a permanent site at **Canary Wharf**. Brian said the expense of renting premises would be far outweighed by the fact that DaC was less than 30 minutes away. Brian added that because most large accounts now go out to tender, there would be little advantage in having a permanent presence in E14.

Gerry Harris (D58) was next and brought up the question of the new subs and how it

had affected him, especially as he had previously been on £1 per month. He said he had spoken to **Garry White** about giving drivers the choice of paying the new percentage subscriptions or going back to a fixed monthly amount. Otherwise Gerry said he would, when busy on the streets, go for that work rather than account work regardless of radio work being better quality, because he was paying 9% (including VAT). Gerry then brought up the Supersides and the discount for those that had them on their cabs and asked why they were not offered to the 30 year drivers, or at least charge those drivers the same rate as those with Supersides. Brian explained what the subscription rates consisted of and at what rate they kicked in, saying that drivers had to do a lot of radio work before they were paying more than before and that in fact it was costing the Society money to have this subscription rate. Gerry came back to say that older drivers should have had the Supersides with any discount they offered but Brian said that they were intended to advertise the Society so that the drivers that did the longest shifts were the ones that had them as their cabs were on the roads for the longest periods.



Peter Doyle (P60) then spoke. He said he had spoken the previous year about looking after our account clients better and that uncovered trips should be mentioned on the terminal sooner rather than later. He also said that rather than saying a job was uncovered in a zone, the actual street should be used as for example; cab needed in SW1E wasn't worth advertising, but if you said, for example, Carlisle Place, then even drivers in SW3 could be interested. Brian agreed and said that it was up to the individual controllers and that they had all been spoken to about it. Peter then spoke about credit cards that were affected by a bad signal. Brian said that the PED should store the signal but that it was really an **Ingenico** problem and it was they that needed to sort it out.



Next was **David Ford (E10)**. His first point was to ask if Roman Way could be given a credit card that they could use to check PEDs. Brian asked Allan Evans if he could arrange that. David then asked if the Board could do something to reduce the £2 minimum charge on credit card trips. The Chairman responded that all the circuits charged it and that as it took the customer up to £20, it wasn't unreasonable and pointed out that DaC had to pay the charges whether it was £6 or much higher. David then said he had read in **Call Sign** that we would be switching to a GPS system soon and Brian confirmed that testing the system would get

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underway by the second quarter of this year. David then asked about an account ride he covered in the City where the details said not to use DaC. Brian explained that the EC2 company concerned was divided into separate departments, one of which used cars only and that message went out on trips for that department. If a taxi was required then we got it.

To laughter, David then looked around and wondered if everyone had been on £1 per month "as you all look so old!" He said it was nice for so many old people to show so much passion! He then turned to the Board and said he hadn't been as close to them as this before and they too looked really old! There was more laughter than had been heard for the whole of the previous four hours! He said that he had been watching a lot of history programmes on TV and being in the hall was like living history! He said that it worried him because Garry looked like a teenager compared to everyone else. He then spoke about E14 account Morgan Stanley who he had been told by one of their staff were looking to use Uber. Brian said that the US side had started with Uber and were trying to encourage this side to use them as well. David finished by telling Brian that his mum thinks the world of the DaC Chairman, but that he was starting to look like the late **Bob Crow** and she wanted him to go back to looking like **Ron Atkinson** again!



Next up and returning us back to normality was **Alan Hall (B48)** who asked about our App. He spoke of Hailo and Uber and said that it was galling to see people with phones in hand waiting for their App cab. Alan asked if ours was the same. Brian said ours was as good but it would be better if every trip was As Directed because customers could see if we had cabs available just by looking around, but the App could say there were none in the area if drivers didn't fancy the trip. Alan said that AD could be the way we had to go then. He also asked if we could send an automatically generated response to callers that linked to our App use. Brian said that they would look into the possibility. Alan also suggested offering money off vouchers for a users' first trip. Alan then spoke about DaC moving into the property business referring to luxury apartments being built on the top of our East Road office and said that could be the future. Brian said that while he agreed, we were talking "big, big bucks!" He also reminded members of what happened in 2007 when prices went through the floor. He said we were taxi drivers and not property developers, but DaC would certainly look into it. Alan said this opportunity could provide a legacy for every single Dial-a-Cab driver. Brian said that the building on the corner was going up to 39 storeys and that we would have to get professional advice. Mike Tovey added that the Society would have to demutualise first should we move in that direction. Alan Hall referred to it as being possibly the 'Golden Goose...'

Javid Raja (N72) was the penultimate speaker and said that he had designed letters for drivers to send to their MPs regarding Uber. "I've done all the hard work for you," he said. "all you have to do is put your name on and send it to your MP. Javid gave the letters out after the meeting.

He also complained about the map freezing and then needed to be updated to return it to normal. Brian said that the terminals had been tested against heat, but perhaps it had been too cold. Javid then asked Brian about the possibility of DaC being registered overseas to help us pay less tax. Mike Tovey came back and said that we weren't paying any tax at the moment, but Javid said he was talking about individual drivers and not the Society as a whole. Javid then asked if the Society could somehow reduce the VAT we pay and Mike answered that it was as low as it could be, but as he worked for the Society as a whole and not individual drivers, he couldn't really help any more than that. Javid made the point that "shysters" such as **Uber** and **Google** were taking full advantage of our tax laws so why couldn't we? Mike said it was because we didn't have offices in every major city around the world!

John Rubini (F55) was the day's final speaker. He said that he understood that Brian's hands were tied to a certain extent, but could he give us any timeline re the possible link with **Mountview**. At what point would our drivers become involved and how did Brian envisage the set-up of any new company. Brian said that so far all that had happened was that a few meetings had taken place, in addition to RTGs financial people with Mike Tovey. Brian said that the Non-Disclosure Agreement meant that he couldn't say too much. However, what he could say was that if it went through, then Mountview would sell their building, get rid of any debt they had and whatever money they had left over would go into a pot which would be matched by DaC. Any money that DaC had over would be distributed to members and then we would either sell the building and lease it back or we'd sell the building to NewCo and take a mortgage on it while operating both organisations individually from DaC House. However, Brian also added that it wasn't written in stone and was just the current "loose" thinking. The Chairman ended by saying that there was a time element because developers would obviously want to move into the RTG premises. He added that the initial approach had come from RTG and not DaC but because there was our AGM on the horizon, the process had become rather stationary. He expected another meeting soon after the AGM, but added that nothing would be done in terms of a link without driver's forums etc. He also went



into some detail about how a new company would look in terms of who would run it etc but added that for the initial period, the two companies would be run as separate units. Brian



ended by saying that there were other options that he had spoken to **Geoffrey Riesel** about and these would all be explained when and if forums were needed. **John**

Rubini urged drivers to think very carefully before voting to demutualise – which would have to happen before any merger could take place. Brian agreed saying that it was a good point because any new company would be set up to earn money. He then went through how the voting procedure would work should it go that far...

Board of Management Election Results

The meeting ended with the BoM election results. They were:

Allan Evans 857	Elected
Garry White 767	Elected
Keith Cain 721	Elected
Mike Son 625	Elected
Joe Brazil 585	Elected
Tom Whitbread 571	Not Elected
Pat Graves 341	Not Elected
Michael Parkins 211	Not Elected
Javid Raja 152	Not Elected

Brian Rice then thanked Tom Whitbread for his long service to Dial-a-Cab and there was a round of applause. The meeting ended at 4pm...



Alan Fisher,
callsignmag@aol.com

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Another true story from Geoff Levene...

GUESS WHO I HAD IN MY CAB!



Not for the first time, I was stuck at the bottom of **Gower Street**. I don't know what the plans are for this route when they turn **Tottenham Court Road** into a cross between **Rodeo Drive** in Beverly Hills and the **Corniche** in the South of France, but I'm sure things won't get any better. I suggest if you want to go north or south it might be best to...go somewhere else!

My mind wandered to an earlier occasion in similar traffic. I was driving *the famous rock star* from his **Primrose Hill** home to **Denmark Street**. I'd read various estimates of his wealth - everything from £20 - £80million! Suddenly he called out that there was already £15 on the meter and that he was getting out! What was amusing was that he said it in the same shrill frantic voice that he used in his biggest hit. I didn't get a *whole lotta love* from him.

But I digress. I had become fascinated by the driver of the cab in front - long blonde hair falling onto slim shoulders. Every so often slim fingers flicked, twisted and played with those flaxen locks. Cab drivers have certainly changed since the days of **'Twiggy'** **Barraclough** and **Jack 'Trousers'**!

Anyway, I was determined to get a closer look at this vision of loveliness, so I managed to pull alongside and glanced across. It was a bloke but he had a 'boat race' that would have caused an SAS platoon to screech to a halt and crawl away, howling in horror! It shows that you just can't tell!

Moving on, I was surprised to see the name of the passenger when I received the details of a **Dial-a-Cab** account job. If it was the same man, then he had been one of the top people in the Security Services. It was rumoured that he smuggled a Russian defector out of East Germany in the boot of his car. Basically he had been a spy. His name and photo had been in the papers and it was certainly him. But was he a tall and suave *James Bond* type? Well no. He was average height and slightly thick round the middle. Quiet and still, he was a real life version of **John Le Carre's George Smiley**. When he got out, he was careful not to get in anybody's way. After all, you never know who's standing next to you - especially if they are carrying a broolly!

Then there was that ninety year old chap who had been sitting on a bench at the shopping centre and who was once a lean young man storming a beach in Normandy. Or perhaps he was the dapper old boy I dropped off at that tower-block at the end of Warwick Way. He had worn a smart blue blazer emblazoned with the badge of the **Burma Star Association** - meaning he had fought in the Far East. About half-an-hour later, I noticed an open envelope lying on the back seat. Inside were several black and white photos showing battleships and sun-tanned soldiers and sailors. On the back of one were the poignant words: "My best mate." These were precious war-time memories that I needed to get back to him.

So the next day I went back to Warwick Way and hung about for a while hoping he might appear. I asked a few people if they knew him, but drew a blank. I was certain that if I handed the envelope into a police station, they would never be claimed but decided I had no choice and would have to do that. I was now at the other end of Warwick Way and suddenly I spotted him! I went up to him and said that he had left his photos in my cab the previous day. Without breaking stride he popped the envelope back in his pocket, said 'oh thanks' and just carried on walking. I didn't expect anything more than a thank-you, but if a complete stranger returns some property that you didn't even know you'd lost, wouldn't you look a bit surprised?

So you can get the wrong idea about people, but you can also do the same about yourself. I had an early appointment in the East End. I wasn't working that day so armed with my Freedom Pass, I walked round the corner to the station. I changed at **Euston** to get to **Liverpool Street** but there were problems at Moorgate and we had to get off and walk down to 'The Liver'.

I did what I had to do in **Hackney Road** and then made my way back to Liverpool Street. I sat on the Metropolitan Line train for an age and then decided to try the Central Line to **Oxford Circus**. So by the time I got there and onto the Bakerloo Line, perhaps I was looking a bit hot and flustered - and that was when a most terrible thing happened - something that shook me to my very soul.

As I stood there, a very pretty young girl of around 25 stood up and asked if I would like to sit down! I politely refused her offer while inside I was screaming: 'Oh God, I'm old and I look it. I'm finished!' I'm ten months short of the 'three score years and ten' but I don't feel it and I've been told that I don't look it. Mind you, the person that told me had just asked to borrow a tenner...

Geoff Levene (W32)
Call Sign Online

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igloobooks

LTC moves into an Igloo!

Nope! No snow in sight, but while you can expect to see images of the **London Taxi Company TX4** on apparel in the **Ted Baker** range, in addition to new die cast models, you will soon be seeing the Coventry based company with its Chinese leaders, **Geely**, featured in children's books.

LTC and **Bulldog** have negotiated a licensing agreement for **IglooBooks**, which will see a range of titles featuring London Taxis. **Bulldog** group Managing Director, **Rob Corney**, said:

"IglooBooks is the perfect publishing partner for this iconic brand. With their knowledge of the taxi industry and strong array of formats, we are sure that this will be a successful partnership on a global scale."

DaC Sales Report

with Keith Cain

I would first like to say a big thank you to all those members who re-elected me to the Board. The future for the Society will be challenging and I just wanted to reiterate that I will continue to work hard on behalf of the whole membership.

I have been asked to respond to the letter sent to *Call Sign* by David Fletcher (O15). I can truthfully say that the most common reason for clients both large and small to stop using our services, is cost. Well, that's what they tell us! There is nothing to say that what prompted some to start searching the market for an alternative supplier was attributed to poor service.

As we all know, the morning coverage has been a problem for a long time and when coverage is poor we can honestly say that there is no discrimination between clients. I don't need to inform you, the members, that offering a tremendous service during the day, evening and through the night will not be enough to sustain a poor service to clients when they are having to get to work on time, attend meetings or meet trains and planes.

As for the major clients, they will regularly go to tender every three to five years. The types of questions they put into the tender do relate to fleet size, response times and even



how you deal with complaints. Of course, the last part of any tender process is to price the example trips.

I can assure David that the tenders we have completed over the past year have been offered with reduced admin costs and prices that take into consideration journey costs without gratuities and run ins. But it all comes down to the journey cost. It's so hard to offer a journey cost that car companies offer £18 for when our meter reading without a run shows £30. There is only so far that we can set a journey cost, knowing what members will be prepared to accept. It is a fine line at the moment but as I have said in my articles before, we have a £20million business made up of customers who are very happy to use our service and pay a reasonable charge

for it. That's why we must be mindful of the service we provide on a 24/7 basis.

The Chairman stated at the AGM - and I have to agree - that while we can look at removing or reducing the gratuity, we should do everything we can to try and keep the run in wherever we possibly can. We see this as a major part of being able to supply a service and it encourages drivers to want to be on the circuit and take the work.

I reported that last year how I visited clients who felt that the car companies they had chosen as their preferred supplier because they were offering a much cheaper service, had started to show they had taken on too much work. In these instances, they were being forced to use us and although the journey cost would be higher, the service was becoming an important factor in their business.

In general, we are now offering clients an administration charge much lower than ever before. Journey costs for longer trips especially are based on similar mileage rates to those offered by car companies.

Regular journeys for taking staff to and from work have been reduced, together with journeys to stations and airports. I believe the future will require a combination of both, more competitive journey costs and good service...

Keith Cain
Head of Sales

Everyone but taxis...

Transport for London has now approved £160million to deliver London's series of cyclists Superhighways. The claim is that the scheme will provide around £75million in benefits, including health improvements and a "reduced absence from work." The scheme will give cyclists two lanes segregated from vehicles at junctions and on designated roads.

Against that will be increased journey times, which *Call Sign* assumes will probably lead to more aggravation and frustration, leading to more absence from work and poorer health!

Looking at the long term, the TfL Board's claim is that within 30 years, around £277million in benefits will be delivered by bringing in Europe's longest cycling road program. However, an internal report has suggested that some of the positive effects brought by the scheme will be off-set by the economic impact of increased journey times for taxis and cars and that the cost of bus operations will also increase. The report suggests that there could be a £200 million negative economic impact caused by the 18-mile east-to-west stretch of segregated roadway.

The original suggestion had motorists coming in from the east of London during the morning peak time having an extra 16 minutes added to their journey because of the Superhighways. TfL now say that thanks to their engineers, that could be down to 6 minutes - although looking at the proposals, you would have to expect an extra 5 or 6 minutes could be tagged on just trying to get along **Victoria Embankment** and then negotiating **Parliament Square!**

The length of queue of those attempting to avoid going to the Square by turning right at Northumberland Avenue doesn't bear thinking about. That will also probably also lead to a U-turn ban along **Whitehall** for those using **Horseguards Avenue**.

Call Sign was told two months ago that the taxi industry would receive £40million to help those affected if the Mayor's new ten year plan replaces the current fifteen year maximum life of a taxi. But details as to how that would happen are rather sketchy as to be almost invisible. However, buses will definitely receive some 2400 hybrids and 300 electric buses. Cyclists will definitely see their Superhighways cause mayhem as they ride along their merry way with undoubtedly many of the quicker ones ignoring the lanes because they won't move fast enough for them. We actually wrote to the Mayor's Cycling Commissioner, **Andrew Gilligan**, and asked whether cyclists would have the choice of not using the Superhighway lanes and instead use the main section of the road reserved for cars, taxis and buses etc if they felt the cycle lane wasn't moving fast enough for them. We weren't disappointed with the answer because we never expected one - and never got one!

Of course, it could be that the £40million said to be allocated to taxis actually exists and we would be delighted to be proved wrong, but it just seems that buses are given precise details of where their money is going - ie into new buses, while cyclists will be able to see the chaos their scheme will cause as the Superhighways cause their disruption during building work and then when the scheme actually starts. Yep, everyone but taxis!



A TfL projection shows the bike Superhighway causing no problems at Parliament Square. Will the reality be as serene?

Michael Toomey, Call Sign Online



The London Taxi trade is currently engaged in a fight for its life on multiple fronts; under attack from a \$billion multinational company out to destroy the worlds Taxi trade - a technology company with no respect for Taxi regulations anywhere in the world, who also believe themselves to be above the law.

Under attack from environmentalists who see our only manufactured, only authorised vehicle as the devils child, with a Mayor about to introduce (in 2018) conditions of fitness that no current produced vehicle can meet.

Worst of all, under attack from our own licensing authority who have bent over backwards to make legitimacy easy for big money operators that do not meet the required conditions of fitness and who operate in a grey area outside the *Private Hire Act 1998*.

Sir Peter Hendy's present directorate refuses to accept responsibility for adequate on-street enforcement, which has seen minicab related crimes including serious sexual assaults, spiral out of control. To add insult to injury, they have manipulated statistics in an attempt to justify their lame actions. The Met Police have openly admitted that sexual attacks that go unrecorded have gone from 80% in 2010 to 90% at present. This gives a false reduction in recorded statistics.

Tfl presently have a team of 68 cab enforcement officers. In a 12 month period last year, they were responsible for a pitiful 34 convictions for illegal touting. Other cities around the country realise this figure just over a busy weekend.

We have seen the line between Taxi and Private hire eroded in the media to such an extent that the BBC's *Inside Out* London documentary, presented by Louise Hulland, found that 90% of night revellers didn't know the difference between licensed Taxis on a rank and a line of un-booked minicabs outside a night venue - one of the major causes of minicab predator sexual attacks.

After a mass of complaints, the GLA held a review of Tfl's handling of the Taxi and Private Hire trades. The transport committee's report found Tfl 'woefully inadequate' and has submitted 19 serious recommendations.

If the situation continues as at present, we could see the complete demise of the world's best taxi service (a title awarded to London's taxi trade for the past six years). The London Taxi service is the gold standard that other Taxi services around the world aspire to.

The best taxi service - with the worst regulators!

By 'Taxi Leaks' Jim Thomas

Since Tfl took over the responsibility of administering the Taxi trade from the Met, the trade has more or less suffered in silence. But the worm has finally turned. There seems to be a new fire in the belly of the rank and file driver and 2015 is about to become the year the trade fought back.

After five years of carrot and stick management where Tfl - with the help of an unfair engagement policy - managed to keep the trade representative orgs and unions fragmented, their greatest fear is about to be realised as the orgs and unions finally strive to achieve unity. An historic meeting took place at the LTDA's **Taxi House** recently where previously excluded groups were invited in for talks.

If Tfl fail to respond to the GLA recommendations by March and the Mayor pushes the trade for a 5 year reduction in the present 15 year Taxi age limit, our drivers will have no option other than to use the only weapon left in their arsenal.

We have the ability to bring the working capital to a complete full stop on a regular basis. Obviously this is the very last thing we want to do, but we will if we have to. The next few months are critical to our survival. We will not go down without the fight of our lives.

Our trade is self-financing and drivers have gone through the arduous Knowledge of London, a process that turns out Taxi drivers of the highest standard. The Knowledge is completed at the driver's own expense and carries no cost to the tax payer. The trade receives no government subsidy, unlike other modes of transport.

We do this to win the sole right to ply for hire and all we ask in return is for our right to ply be protected and policed by our licensing authority.

Jim Thomas
Aka Thomas the Taxi
Taxi Leaks blog

Nissan cab sunroof shatters over passenger!

Nissan may have put their NV200 on hold so far as London is concerned, but as **New York's Taxi of Tomorrow**, it is still part of the scene including its specially designed sunroof that gives passengers a unique view of the skyscrapers as it sails past them. But what the drivers would never expect is for the sunroof to shatter and come crashing down over the passengers!

It happened when a manhole cover exploded as the cab was passing Grand Central Station, causing the sunroof to shatter and fall in on top of the passenger. A witness told a news TV channel about what the impact did to the sunroof.

"The passenger couldn't get out because both passenger doors were jammed shut as well, but the sunroof actually collapsed in, so he climbed out through the top of the sunroof and I escorted him down."

According to New York attorney **Ethan Gerber**, who represents owners of city cabs:

"Why they needed a panoramic roof we don't understand; why they need a glass roof we don't understand, but we know cabs and we know they need to be durable over NY's rough streets and to have a glass roof is a really dangerous, bad idea."



NV200 - NY's Taxi of Tomorrow

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

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



Blast!

In 1980, any Knowledge Boy or Girl would have been able to tell you where the Royal School

of Needlework was. What they couldn't know was that everyone inside that Princes Gate establishment on the afternoon of 30th April was to have visitors that would shatter their peace.

It was from this most genteel of society headquarters that Deputy Assistant Police Commissioner **John Dellow** set up his command post with a deployment of police marksman in order to deal with a "little scuffle" that was developing just a few doors away.

Six members of a terrorist group from the oil-rich Iranian province of Khuzestan – which they called Arabistan – had taken over their country's embassy at 11.30am that morning.

The gunmen were demanding independence for Khuzestan and the release of 90 of their provincial countrymen from jail - but essentially they were attacking the year-old Islamic regime of **Ayatollah Khomeini** and were reported to have had the backing of Khomeini's arch-enemy, **Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein**. You may remember him!

Armed with submachine guns, Browning 9mm pistols and Russian-made hand grenades, they initially held 26 hostages, including **PC Trevor Lock** who had been on duty outside the Embassy and two BBC employees who had been applying for visas so that they could head out to Iran - a real focus of world attention at the time. The leader of this band of despots was known as **Oan**. He announced that if their demands were not met, then they would blow up the Embassy, together with their hostages.

This was going to be a real test for **Margaret Thatcher's** recently elected Government – the heroics of the Falklands War was still 2 years away and Dellow's team would have to eventually give way to some very special servicemen, who had been on 'stand by' from their own headquarters that they had recently set up at Regent's Park barracks.

The gunmen had released 5 hostages in return for minor concessions - but any hope of a peaceful outcome ended at 7pm on 5th May when they shoved the body of an Iranian journalist out of the front door and **Oan**, who had been his assassin, announced that further hostages would be killed if their demands were not met.

That was more than enough for Mrs Thatcher. She gave orders for Home Secretary **Willie Whitelaw** to deploy the SAS, who were more than ready for the challenge. *Top Gun* **John McAleese** led the black-clad SAS team, which blasted its way into the Embassy overlooking tranquil Hyde Park on 5th May - 6 days after it all started. Coincidentally, the **Balcombe Street** siege (covered by *Call Sign* in the last issue) also lasted the same length of time.

Blasted their way in? It was going to be the only way to free hostages held by the Iranian terrorist group and the dramatic assault, broadcast live on TV, in what became iconic images, turning the SAS overnight from a shadowy, secretive regiment to one with national and international hero status.

It took just 17 minutes for Lance Corporal McAleese and his team to break in, secure the remaining 19 hostages and to execute 5 of the 6 terrorists without the niceties of asking any questions.

Those of us watching the drama unfold on TV when *the man in black* blew up a window and burst in, with the explosion being the signal for other members of the squadron to abseil in from the back and storm the building, didn't mind the **World Snooker Championships** Final being interrupted!

Thereafter, Sterling-born McAleese, unmistakable with his chiseled features, Zapata moustache and lowland Scots accent, served in Northern Ireland, the Falklands and Bosnia before appearing in documentaries and TV shows including **SAS: Are You Tough Enough?**

In a 2008 documentary on **Channel Five**, McAleese said: "We knew



SAS soldiers waiting for the signal to enter the Embassy

what those guys were like. They kill people. They'd killed others. They're baddies. They were on our home soil and they were the invaders. My only job at that point was to get onto the balcony, place the charge, get back, blow it, turn around and go back in through the window." Describing how he took out one terrorist who had been holding a grenade, he memorably said in the best thriller writer fashion: "I could tell by the look on his face that he knew he was dead."

Just for the record, McAleese died of a heart attack at the age 61 in **Thessaloniki**, Greece in 2011. The newly crowned World Snooker Champion the night that John blasted his way to victory was **Cliff Thorburn**, who edged the late great **Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins** 18-16 in a different thriller, while the **Society of Needlework** is now far away from any Embassies - inside the apartments at **Hampton Court Palace!**

Next month: A Blast at a Clerkenwell Prison leads to one of London's most infamous of hangings

LTDA plan to clean up London taxis



The Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) and Clean Air in London (CAL) have called on London Mayor **Boris Johnson** to implement an eight point transformation package to encourage private hire and taxi companies in the capital to use electric vehicles on their fleets.

Aimed at reducing air pollution in London, the package says all newly registered private hire vehicles should be plug-in hybrid or fully electric with at least a 40-mile electric range immediately and that this should be in place for taxis by 1st January 2018.

It calls for a fund of **£150m** to offer drivers a **£10,000 discount** or the removal of VAT from new vehicles that meets the requirements, on top of the existing **£5,000 Plug-in car grant** for the **Vehicle Excise Duty and Benefit in Kind** system to recognise particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide emissions, as well as carbon dioxide.

The 15-year (and proposed 10-year) age limit for new registrations and the 25-foot turning circle requirements should also be scrapped, according to the report and geofencing near areas of high pollution should not be allowed.

Finally, the package would include 500 rapid charging points across Greater London exclusively for use of PHV and Taxis, offering a 30-minute, 80% charge at little or no cost.

Steve McNamara, general secretary of the LTDA, said: "London taxi drivers want to be able to purchase and drive clean modern taxis. With the right incentives and by working with the trade, Boris has the opportunity to ensure that London is the first city in the world to have a taxi fleet comprised exclusively of Zero Emission Capable vehicles."

Call Sign says:

One of the eight points is to scrap the 25 foot turning circle requirement from the Conditions of Fitness and while Call Sign can see the benefits of that, we can also see the downside – that eventually PH will drive around in the same vehicles as we do and that WILL be the end of the trade...

I had never considered buying a new Vito, especially after following one along Chelsea Embankment one evening and seeing it crabbing with its front wheels in the near side lane, crossing the white lines with the rear wheels and drifting into the oncoming lane. But then on Christmas Eve 2011, a minicab changed all that when it ploughed into the back of my trusty TX1 and wrote it off. I needed a month off work with a very sore neck and shoulders, while the two grand I got paid out for the TX1 wasn't going to buy me much of a replacement.

My long term girlfriend also decided that now would be the perfect time to trade me in for a younger model and fled to foreign parts taking our son with her, so I needed something to cheer myself up and what could be better than a shiny new cab that comes with a promise of 3 years trouble free motoring.

I weighed up the comparisons of a new TX4 to a Vito and the Mercedes agility deal came out on top as the most cost-efficient way of getting me back on the road. My biggest concern was always the **Rear Wheel Steering** and all the horror stories I had read about it. But **Heydon**, the salesman at **KPM** reassured me the RWS problems were a thing of the past and nothing to worry about.

I often kick myself for being so naive in looking forward to 3 years trouble free motoring while believing the salesman telling me the RWS had been completely re-engineered and that everything apart from the obvious ie tyres, brake pads etc would be covered under warranty. But it still came as a bit of a shock when I returned to KPM just 2 weeks later with failing electronic rear steps, only to be told I would have to pay for any repairs as they weren't covered under warranty. Not even a polite plea for goodwill could encourage the KPM team to take a look at it for free, as they reminded me that "this is not a genuine Mercedes part," so Mercedes would not take responsibility for the useless seals that allowed grit to clog up the mechanism. So, against manufacturers advice, I cleaned it out with my *Karcher* and that solved the problem - albeit temporarily.

In fact, from the first day I collected my cab from KPM, the "non-genuine Mercedes parts" failed and continued to fail throughout the whole 3 years I had the damn thing. I'm sure any Vito driver who has had RWS problems has heard the line: "It's not a Mercedes part" more times than they can remember. So far as I'm concerned, if Mercedes approve and fit the parts, Mercedes should take responsibility for them!

We can disable the RWS?

Over the 3 miserable years I owned my Vito, the RWS failed on a daily basis. Even after countless repairs and upgrades, it continued to malfunction eg the alarm going off daily, disabling it until reset manually or it wouldn't work at all, or it got stuck at an angle while trying to use it resulting in a Merc call out. At the last count, my RWS was in for repair at either KPM or more commonly S&B Welham Green some 40 times. It could have been far more, but I just couldn't afford the time off the road. Their favourite solution was to disable the RWS and be done with you! But I wasn't prepared to be fobbed off that easily; I paid for a cab with RWS and I wanted one to do what it said on the tin! At a rough estimate, I guess it cost me at the very least 100 days off work due to some kind of upgrade or repair. Every single repair failed and I was sick of taking it in for the

We're all owner drivers on Dial-a-Cab, but Gary Johnson has had more problems than most...

MY VITO & ME



same technicians to do the same job time and time again. Even the rear door locks could not be repaired and it failed one annual inspection because of this. Basically, it was an intermittent fault and the passenger doors did not always lock, so unless the fault happened in front of their very eyes at Mercedes, it could not be addressed; but obviously *Sod's Law* made it happen at an SGS test.

I contacted management at every department I could think of and pleaded with them to get my taxi fixed once and for all, but to no avail. Mercedes seem to have a knack of passing the buck whenever they can, making it so difficult and frustrating to speak to anyone who is able or prepared to help. Occasionally they'd promise me that the 'top man' would be taking charge of the next repair, but when the 'top man' also failed to make any improvement, those 'top men' faded away into the darkness never to be seen again.

On one particularly memorable occasion, I had picked the cab up from S&B Welham Green after yet another RWS repair. I immediately noticed the steering wheel feeling really heavy, so before leaving the premises I asked a technician to take a quick drive in it to confirm it was ok; he said it was fine and sent me on my way. I was really tired due to sleepless nights and financial worries, so I thought maybe I had been imagining it all. But the steering became so difficult to control, I knew something was wrong. If I was hailed and pulled in to stop for a passenger, it took extreme force to straighten up and avoid knocking the passenger down! That's how serious it was.

So I booked it back into S&B and they diagnosed the problem as a steering rack and after another week off the road, they fitted a new one under warranty. At this point, it's worth mentioning that I believe S&B still get paid for every job they do in your cab, whether it works or not. The new steering rack made no difference whatsoever, but they were still happy to return the cab to me in its dangerous condition and as usual, with a bundle of wires hanging down in the luggage side footwell. Such was the care I had become used to receiving at S&B. Eventually it was realised someone had inadvertently programmed the cab into ECO MODE, thus dis-

abling the power steering. Problem solved with a few clicks on a laptop!

Two Big Macs and a strawberry shake please!

On another occasion, I witnessed dashcam footage of a technician blatantly using my cab for a trip to McDonald's drive-thru at Hatfield Galleria to pick up a load of burgers and drinks for the lads. I guess they called that a test drive! All in all, these bungled repairs cost me a fortune in unevenly worn rear tyres not to mention the cost of diesel getting to and from garages and the 'test drive' of a 9 mile round trip to McDonald's!

Another incident I feel worth a mention is when S&B harassed me for a £240 towing-in fee. My rear wheel steer had locked itself at a dangerous angle making the cab impossible to drive. Fortunately this happened outside my home, so I called Mercedes 24hour breakdown cover; after a mere 5 hour wait the guy turned up and got to work on my cab. This has happened many times previously, so I felt no need to oversee what he was doing. He then handed my keys back telling me the job was done "but I needed to book in at S&B to have it looked at."

I thought no more of it and assumed it was now safe to drive. Coincidentally, I felt quite ill that day (probably the stress of losing more time off the road) and was unable to drive for a few days. Then when I got in the cab for the first time, I realised it was still crabbing drastically and was certainly unsafe to drive. I called Merc's 24 hour assistance again and requested the cab be towed in for the repair. A few days later, a bill came for £240 and they were adamant that I had to pay it because the cab had not been in for repairs since the first call out. I tried to explain that the first technician had not made the cab safe to drive and it had done no mileage in between, but they weren't interested and continued to harass me for payment. It seems Mercedes brainwash staff into believing that all technicians are perfect and do not make mistakes. Eventually after many phone calls, the darlings at head office agreed to pay my towing fee as a "gesture of goodwill."

continued on page 23...



Hello Ladies & Gents,

Can I start by thanking you for your support at the recent AGM elections and for having the confidence to vote for me yet again to represent you on the Board of Management for a further term in office. I would also like to congratulate **Joe Brazil (K16)** who as you know, was elected to join the Board at the meeting and wish him all the very best for the future. There is a long learning curve that every Board Member undertakes and I am sure that Joe will treat his new position with the integrity it deserves. It is a privilege and I'm sure Joe will treat it as such.

Joe replaces **Tom Whitbread** who served for many years as a Board Member and I hope that whichever path Tom takes in the future, he will be blessed with good health. I have worked alongside Tom for the past fourteen years and I think we'd both agree we never always saw eye to eye on some situations, but we always shook hands and moved on afterwards and there was never any malice.

Contact Centre

I have mentioned in previous articles about my implementation of a number of changes throughout 2014 and all members of staff have responded extremely well to the restructuring, which I truly believe has been for the betterment of both members and clients alike.

It was always my intention to make the Contact Centre a more driver-friendly environment from all sides and get rid of any 'us and them' scenarios. In the main I believe it has been successful and well received by the staff. I, more than anyone, know that there is always room for improvement and taking on board suggestions from some of the membership, I will continue to make these changes.

Credit Card Bookings

Credit Card Bookings are steadily rising and I ask you once again to please give out the new hand-out cards and display the seat adverts in your taxis. Both the cards and ads are available at **DaC House** and from **Roman Way** and as I have mentioned before, the 'proof of the pudding is in the eating' and trip totals are increasing day by day with quite a number of passengers setting up personal profiles in order to regularly use the service. So yes, the new CCB system seems to be going down very well with you, the DaC members, and in answer to a few driver queries, each of these

OPERATIONS MANAGER REPORT

And chat from the Contact Centre

journeys are now included in your weekly trip total. But we cannot just rest on our laurels because there is so much competition out there – so please carry on giving those cards out.

Barry Hooper

Although it was just before Christmas, I can't finish this article without also mentioning the sad passing of **Barry Hooper**. I have been a member of the **LTDA** for many years and have known Barry for a long time. He was always more than happy to help and assist not just LTDA members, but taxi drivers across the board.

On many occasions I spoke to him on behalf of our own members who needed advice and assistance and he was always more than help-

ful, irrespective of whether they were members of his organisation or not - he was that type of person, honest and straight to the point.

It was so obvious from the numbers of attendees at his funeral on 5th January that Barry was held in very high esteem amongst all his peers. It was good to see the trade come together, it is just a pity it takes such a sad occasion to make it happen.

Barry you will be sadly missed and you have certainly left your mark on the taxi industry...

Allan Evans,

**Contact Centre Manager
Operations Manager**

MY VITO & ME CONTINUED...

Going back to the early days of my Vito, the cab began losing coolant at quite a dramatic rate. I needed to top it up every day, costing me around £20 a week. KPM told me they couldn't fix the fault for about 2 weeks, so I asked if they would supply me with some coolant *gratis* to keep me going. It was no real surprise when KPM staff lived up to their reputation of "goodwill gestures" and refused! While making the booking for the coolant repair, I asked if they would repair the inner wheel arch / splash guard (or whatever it's called) as it had been hanging down slightly since the day I bought it and inevitably at some point I knew it would catch a speed hump and get dragged under the tyre. I also asked if they could do something about the TAXI sign on the roof, which rattled like a woodpecker when on motorways. It seemed to make sense to get all the jobs done at the same time.

No swearing please!

I also booked a KPM courtesy cab to enable me to work while my cab was in the garage and as usual it came as no surprise when I arrived for my appointment to be told there were no cabs available, as someone had yet again forgotten to reserve one for me. So, and incidentally for the third time in a row, I lost another day's work and had to pay for a train to get home. When I picked the cab up, the coolant leak had been repaired but apparently it was my error that the other faults weren't looked at as I should have made a separate appointment with the body shop. It was obviously too much effort for them to book it in for me internally and I suppose I should blame myself for assuming it was their job to do so. On top of that, when I dared to mention - as politely as I could be very aware of the KPM policy of not tolerating abusive language - that I was very unhappy about the condition of my cab, the cocky staff member told me that every cab leaves KPM's showroom in A1 perfect condition, so the wheel arch must have been something I had damaged myself! Needless to say the wheel arch / splash guard *did* soon hit a speed hump and tore a sizeable chunk out of it.

I contacted **Heydon Williams**, the salesman at KPM who had sold me the cab. I told him about how frustrating the situation had become, asked him if he could pull a few strings to get the work done and get the rear steering sorted once and for all? I had recently read an article Heydon wrote in a trade paper telling readers about how he was more than a salesman, he was there to help and how aftercare was too important etc. So far as I am aware, he did absolutely nothing and a follow-up courtesy call would have been nice, but it didn't happen. So I lived on with the woodpecker up on the roof and the damaged splash guard and vowed to never return to KPM again.

I know our brilliant editor, Alan, is itching to add the line "well, you pays your money" etc, but there is one saving grace I can take away from this disgraceful episode; some of my minuscule contribution to the might of Mercedes Benz went in some way to funding **Lewis Hamilton's** Mercedes world championship! Cheers Lewis... but I'll never be buying a Merc again...

Gary Johnson (P28)

February issue update:

In last month's Call Sign, Stephen Field (F99) also complained about the RWS and the warranty accompanying it after buying a Vito from the old KPM. He has now been given confirmation by S&B at Thurrock, Essex of five free services because he has never used anything other than authorised Mercedes dealers. Stephen says that S&B at Thurrock have been excellent and he recommends them to Call Sign readers.

We believe that Mercedes are looking to TfL to get rid of the need for the 25foot turning circle...

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

Brethren of the Whip



The Resurrection Men...

“Then I got a corpse - you can always get a body in London if you know where to go for it. I fetched it back in a trunk on

the top of a four wheeler and I had to be assisted up to my room.”

So wrote John Buchan in his classic novel **The 39 Steps** in 1914. The best place to find a corpse is a graveyard and the best way to get it from there to a surgeon is - as Buchan alluded to - in a Hackney coach!

The fresher the cadaver could be received by the anatomical surgeon, the better. He may want a fresh corpse for his own research or for the income it would raise from teaching medical students the art of anatomy. Sometimes the body was not even buried before being taken to the surgeons. There could be an affray following an execution between members of the deceased's family wanting to give the unfortunate felon a decent burial and body snatchers who, as their name implies, wanted to snatch the body and cart it away as quickly as possible.

When **William Russell** and **William Holden** were found guilty and sentenced to death in 1728, Russell struck a deal with his fellow street robber:

“I'll provide a coach for carrying off our bodies, and your fraternity will preserve our bodies from being carried off by violence.”

Holden had been a Hackney coachman and as such, given the large number of coaches that would attend a public execution; there was little chance of his body being snatched. Russell on the other hand had no such allegiance to the fraternity of the whip, but by ensuring that his body and Holden's would be taken away from the gallows together, no one would try to get hold of their bodies. What happened to them after they were buried is anybody's guess.

Stories of resurrectionists and the Hackney coach trade were legion throughout the 18th century and no doubt the subject will be revisited at a later date. For now, however, we jump forward to 1823 and the account of an unnamed Hackney coachman and his unusual fare.

The talk of the town at this period was the murder of a man named **Griffiths** by his son, **Abel**. The latter then decided to “terminate his own existence by blowing his brains out.” The parricide and suicide, as Abel was now labelled, was according to custom, buried at a crossroads between two parishes. The unknown coachman may have been discussing the case with his fellow jarvies whilst waiting

on a stand in **Oxford Street**, when he was approached by a gentleman who told him to drive further along the street. He stopped twice in Oxford Street, each time picking up another gentleman. When all three were in the Hackney coach, they directed him to drive to **Grosvenor Place**. Whether this is the present thoroughfare or part of what is now Grosvenor Street is not clear, as there were at least three thoroughfares by that name in the Mayfair and Knightsbridge areas at the time.

The coachman could see that the three gentleman were digging and there was little doubt about who his fourth passenger was about to be. After quite a long time, the three returned carrying with them the body of **Abel Griffiths**. The coachman was then directed to drive to **Foley Street**. Before he did so however, one of the grave diggers took out some paper from a pocket and folded it over the Hackney carriage plates. Once done, they told the driver to proceed.

At Foley Street, the three living passengers got out, leaving the coachman with the lifeless

fourth. Although they said they would not be long, the coachman began to panic and after five minutes drove with all haste to **Bow Street**, office of the famous **Runners**. They took down a few details but told him to return to them at 11am, it being now 6am. In the meantime, he was to take the body to the local mortuary - **The St Martin's Bonehouse**. Unfortunately for him they would not accept it because as far as they were concerned, it was the property of **St George's, Hanover Square** parish. He then took it to the Bonehouse in the latter parish where, much to his relief, it was received.

The driver did not turn up for his meeting at Bow Street and nothing more was heard of him. As far as the authorities were concerned, the body was back in safe custody and there was no point in pursuing the point any further.

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

NEW INTERNET CHATROOM

A new internet chatroom – **London cabbie chat** – has been launched for London taxi drivers. The idea is to freshen up the social media that taxi drivers use by making a more open and accountable forum which taxi drivers can enjoy using, as well as find informative.

Anyone wishing to join will have to register in their own names. There will obviously be sections of the forum which will be political, but also sections where drivers can discuss musical tastes etc. A section on traffic news can be updated instantly.

Many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers are keen cyclists, so a section to discuss makes of cycles, planned rides etc, whilst of course taxi sales, mechanical tips and help and the best garages are also included.

Everyone is welcome whether you are in the LTDA, Unite, RMT, DaC or any other licensed taxi circuit.

The forum can be found at: londoncabbiechat.proboards.com

Richard Potter (T51)

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Tom Whitbread looks back at the taxi driving life of Stevie Marks, who sadly died in January...

STEVE MARKS 1932 - 2015

It was towards the end of the 1970's, the time was just after 1am and a voice called in on the voice channel. He used no call sign because most drivers out there knew I had a good ear for the different voices.

"Who's in front this morning?" This was the regular early morning contest between Stevie Marks (G12) and Michael Walsh (C77).

They would come out every morning in the Kenton area and race towards the West End to see who could get the first job on the way in. Then they'd work through until 6am before stopping for breakfast at the café on Addison Bridge. The amount of credit work these two drivers did was so helpful for the Society, not to mention how helpful it was to us dispatchers and as a result, the clients would keep phoning us and it would help in keeping the account open. The duo didn't worry if it was going to the airport, although if it was then that was a bonus.

Stevie was a gentle guy who I rarely heard raise his voice and I don't think I ever heard him bad mouth anyone; yes, he had his gripes but he always went through the correct channels. Usually this meant giving me an ear bashing, as I was the one Board Member that all drivers had access to being the night despatcher for over 8 years.

Stevie was born in 1932 and in the early 1950's did the Knowledge. Like most of us, he got a cab by working on the meter for various garages around Stamford Hill and Dalston. Then around 1971, he bought his own taxi to go



mushing and joined ODRTS (Lords). This was a few years before Brian Rice and I joined.

I was dispatching on voice and soon realised that Stevie was prepared to run anywhere to help cover work. On one Sunday morning, I recollect him running from Waterloo to Carshalton Beeches on a hotel staff pick-up, even though he knew he had to be there in just 20 minutes. How he achieved it I'll never know, but we needed drivers like Stevie.

Steve was married to Adele, having 2 wonderful children in Nicky and Adrienne. They were married for 58 years. On their 25th wedding anniversary, their children paid for them to go to Paris and celebrate the happy event.

Each year he would drive to Italy for their

annual holidays and it was not until his later years that he used other less stressful ways of traveling, so that he was more relaxed when they arrived. His other passion was his garden at the house that he bought in Stanmore and where he and Adele spent many happy years.

Stevie survived a by-pass operation in 2001 - even though he had a heart attack on the operating table and slipped into a coma for five days. In the years that followed, he was fitted with a pacemaker and then a defibrillator. Then in 2006 after missing a medical, he was summoned by the PCO and after some discussion, had to hand his Badge in due to the heart problem.

Although he enjoyed his retirement, he still yearned to be out there driving his taxi and meeting the group of friends and clients that he had built up over the years.

Stevie died on 25th January 2015 soon after being admitted to Northwick Park Hospital due to further heart problems. He was 82. His burial took place at Bushey Cemetery on 26th January. He will be sadly missed by all his family and friends, of which I'm proud to say I was one. I'm sure he's up there looking down and saying to himself that if they don't cover that credit ride, they'll lose the account!

On behalf of everyone at Dial-a-Cab, I send his family our condolences. May he rest in peace...

Stevie Marks - a real ODRTS man...

Tom Whitbread

JACQUELINE HART COUNSELLOR

BA (Hons), Dipl in Transactional Analysis

MBACP, EATA

- Do you feel as though things are getting on top of you?
- Do you find yourself becoming increasingly more angry ?
- Do some of your thoughts burden you and get in the way of day to day activities?
 - Do you find yourself asking "why does this always happen to me"?
- Are you noticing your behaviours changing, maybe using alcohol, food or drugs to make you feel better?
- Are there any of your relationships ie with your husband, wife, partner, boss, manager, son, daughter, mum or dad that make you unhappy and question yourself too often?

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Richard Potter (T51) and a few things that are...

ON MY MIND!

Dial-a-Cab accounts

I read through the **Dial-a-Cab** accounts that dropped through the letter box and they were not pretty reading; but what I found interesting was that the turnover figure went up in 2011 as against 2010 but have been on the decline since then. Personally, I feel that austerity has taken a heavy toll on this Society but that the lack of work isn't necessarily all down to bad service and cost. If there was more business taking place between companies, this trade would obviously benefit because I don't believe that any of the big companies use Private Hire by choice, but are just bound by *best value* led accountants.

T-attributes

One of the downsides of doing **T-attribute** trips is having to listen to punters complaining about the coverage they get from cars and then having to remain silent when they tell you how much the car company would cover the trip for. We know you get what you pay for, but these people truly believe that even though PH does jobs at a cheaper rate, the service levels should still be the same as ours.

You can only really manage the public's transportation expectations if those companies make promises they can keep - and we know some are so small that they simply can't!

It was also good to read that we still have 1300 loyal subscribers. Whether we still have 1300 loyal subscribers after the merger pay-out is yet to be seen, but I do hope so. Any new company should be bigger, better and hopefully worth staying on the radio for.

PPI for all???

Over the past few months probably like most **Dial-a-Cab** drivers, I have received numerous PPI texts and phone calls; so I thought the only way to stop them would be to relent and pass over some information.

One company wanted money up front, so that went nowhere. Then I agreed to use **Stanton Fisher**, you may know their radio advert: "Have I got PPI.com." After filling out the forms and having a courier come to my house to collect the signed paperwork, I was looking forward to some good news. Well after all, the phone representative said that **Black Horse** was one of the worst offenders - although, apparently, along with all the other 15 finance companies I had used over the last 15 years!

One by one I received letters saying that each finance company had no evidence that PPI had been taken out. Of course I

knew that, as PPI can't be claimed by the self-employed and I had told Stanton Fisher that at the time. So in the end I got nothing. Well at least I know now that nothing was owed to me and it didn't cost me anything.

But who really has a claim? The word mis-sold is puzzling, because if you never took out PPI in the first place then you get nothing; so the people that got some money must have taken it out! So what did the finance companies do wrong?

I was told that some had ticked boxes after agreements took place, but how would they know this? Perhaps selling PPI to those that didn't need it or adding it on without them knowing and increasing the interest rate, so they inadvertently paid for it? Who knows, but the average pay out is £3k and maybe those people that got a rebate actually wanted the PPI anyway! Well at least the phone calls have stopped - although I'm still none the wiser!

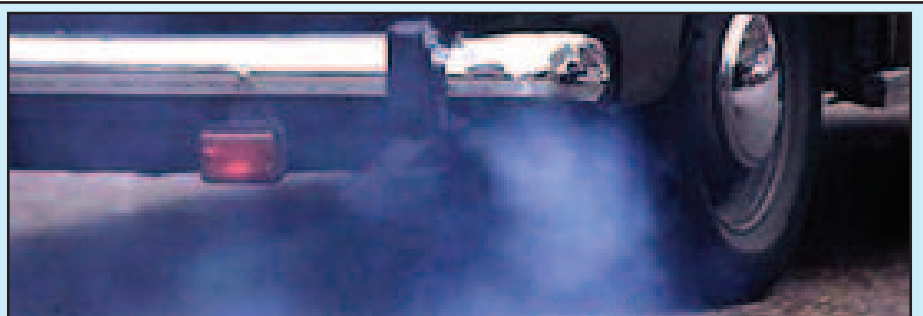
Mayor's admissions

As mentioned in the last issue of *Call Sign*, the GLA Future Proof document was damning; but at Mayors question

time, Boris enraged taxi drivers by admitting that he hadn't read it! Then he admitted that TfL had got it wrong over **Uber** and that they should never have allowed them an Operator's Licence. But what's more alarming is the number of taxi drivers aged over 55 who will retire in the next 15 years. With it taking 4 years plus on the Knowledge, we are going to have a big deficit and should the economy pick up and an inconsistent supply not meet the demand, we could end up with a one tier system. There were times years ago when there was shortage of taxis, punters would hire a cab for most of the day rather than lose the driver. TfL simply would not allow that to happen today.

Finally, as bus drivers strike again over pay parity, those taxi drivers who work for App companies that pay the drivers less should go and speak to those on strike. What they would do for what we have... but some drivers can't see past the end of their bonnets.

Richard Potter
Call Sign Online



EXTRA TO PARK YOUR TAXI AT HOME?

Who'd have thought it...Islington say no!

If you live in the London borough of Islington, it may well cost you more to park your diesel car outside your home from April - which can already cost you up to £434! London Mayor **Boris Johnson** is said to support the idea from the Borough famous its humps and choice of restaurants, where they now want resident parking charges for owners of **diesel** vehicles to increase by a further £96 per year on top of the current resident charges.

It is claimed that there are around 9000 diesel vehicles in the borough, which would bring the council in another £864,000 in extra residents parking charges - enough for a further nine humps to be placed on top of any they currently have that don't already cause enough damage to vehicle's undercarriages!

And for any **Dial-a-Cab** drivers laughing because they own a diesel car but don't live in Islington, the Mayor's **Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ)** pollution crackdown could mean that other boroughs will be watching the scheme and using it to rake in even more loot from London's already over-penalised car owners.

So unless you have bought an electric taxi, then you would normally be liable for the charge. But believe it or not, the borough have made taxis exempt, quoting our own oft-used and true excuse that we have no choice as to what vehicle we drive. Even Euro6 diesel vehicles are not exempt - and they are said to be the next taxis available before electric.

So whilst the London penalising of diesel owners goes on, we should thank Islington for realising that what we have said for many years - ie we have no choice as to what vehicle we drive - is actually true!

A recent article in a motoring magazine cited the case of a motorist who strayed into a yellow box junction to allow the passage of an emergency vehicle that had its blues & two's going full blast - clearly being on a shout. A PCN duly arrived through the motorists' letterbox and caused months of grief before the matter was finally resolved.

Every day on the busy streets of London and indeed up and down the country, well-intentioned road users face a similar dilemma. Do they stay their ground and hope the emergency vehicle can find a way around them, knowing that every second of delay could jeopardise a life? Or do they move into denied territory - be that a yellow box, mounting the pavement or even going through a red light - in order to let the vehicle go on its urgent way with the minimum of hindrance?

Call Sign conducted a short survey to gauge the opinions of some Dial-a-Cab drivers that were chosen at random before then asking the AA...

Alex Winters (Y86):

"I assume that if an emergency vehicle has its sirens and blue lights going, it is effectively like being directed by a police officer, so yes, I would get out of the way provided my movement would not endanger anyone or other road users. I think that would be ok. Why would you obstruct or delay an emergency vehicle? Surely that could be regarded as wilful obstruction - but knowing TfL or Camden Council...! No, I don't want to give them ideas!"



Colin Sostman (H46):

"It's simple; yes I would mount the pavement or enter a yellow box - in fact whatever it took - to allow free access to an emergency vehicle."



Antony Goddard (C34):

"I would mount the pavement or do whatever else I could in order to assist an emergency vehicle to get through. Of course it really depends on who is checking the cameras and whether they have the common sense to realise what is happening and why."



Stavros Demetriou (M3):

"Yes, I'd risk it and do whatever it reasonably took to get out of the



Would You Risk It?

way. Obviously I wouldn't do anything dangerous such as moving into the path of oncoming traffic across a junction, and I would also be aware of pedestrians and cyclists. But you would expect a yellow box and/or major junction to be protected by a camera that would allow the observer to see what I had done - and of course, why."

Mark Compton (G45):

"No I would not risk it. The emergency vehicle would have to find a way around me. I've heard of other law abiding motorists that have been penalised because they thought they were doing the right thing by going into a box junction to allow emergency vehicles through, only to find themselves then caught on camera and fined. So no, I would not chance it."



So **Call Sign** asked the AA for their view. They told us:

"Our figures show that nearly one in five (19%) of Londoners wouldn't stop in a yellow box junction to allow emergency vehicles to pass. That compares to 13% nationally, which isn't surprising as London is the only part of the UK where yellow box junctions have been enforced with cameras.

Furthermore, one in six car drivers would not go into a bus and taxi lane to let a fire engine, ambulance or police car through - even if the sirens were wailing and the beacons flashing. Then you realise that most UK cities fine drivers £60 (£30 if paid within 14 days) for entering a bus lane, whereas in London the penalty charge is £130 (also halved for early payment). Stopping in a yellow box junction also sees similar fines.

However, our AA survey shows that more drivers are prepared to carry out riskier

manoeuvres to help emergency vehicles on their way, with 48% prepared to go through red lights and 31% to exceed the speed limit, but in those cases they will lay themselves open to prosecution by the police.

Overall, 39% wouldn't worry about bus lanes, red lights, box junctions, speed limits or pulling up onto the pavement if an emergency vehicle needed to get past. With most AA members (and other drivers) feeling that the risk the chance of a penalty charge in order to possibly save a life is worth it."

AA President **Edmund King** added: "Most drivers will believe that there but for the grace of God go we - because the next time, that emergency vehicle could be for us. But in return, too many bus lane, yellow box junction and moving traffic offence enforcers will seize on the opportunity to dish out a penalty charge. Inevitably, some drivers won't take the risk and it only takes one to block and hold up an ambulance or fire engine. Councils operating enforcement cameras say that they take the presence of an on-call emergency vehicle before issuing a penalty notice, but, too often, that's not the case."

**Call Sign
March 2015**

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 Printers: Premier Print Group
 25 - 31 Violet Rd, London E3
 Design: Aldan Publications
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OXFORD STREET EMISSIONS

Is it taxis... or is it really buses?

As those **Dial-a-Cab** drivers that work during daytime and early evening hours will testify, traffic levels in town on **January 13** made driving far more of a pleasure than it usually is. Streets such as **Oxford, Regent** and **Piccadilly** were suddenly free moving. The reason was that members of the **Unite** union at 18 bus companies had walked out complaining that there were 80 different pay rates for drivers doing the same job.



A normal day in Oxford Street, so who causes the emissions?

As one member of the Tfl Board said following the second bus strike on **5 February** when a further 1000+ buses ignored the union and problems were still at a minimum, perhaps there are just too many buses? And surely, whilst we agree that electric taxis are the way to go, there is no reason to lower the 15 year rule that in itself will see a natural departure

We didn't think much else about it until a week or so later when **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Jon Robinson (E88)** phoned *Call Sign* to ask if we had seen **Jeremy Clarkson** on **Top Gear**, because the **BBC's** controversial presenter – who once road tested a taxi and compared the results to driving a tank - had commented on how low emissions along Oxford Street had been without buses and just taxis running along the UK's premier shopping street.

We hadn't – but we did remember Mr Clarkson writing in mid-2014 about the view that if you stood at a street corner on a sunny day and watched a diesel-powered vehicle pull away, you would see a haze made up of unburnt particulates that then worked their way into children's lungs and killed them. He added that walking down Oxford Street was the same as smoking a thousand cigarettes an hour for two hundred years!

But he then went on to write: “Sensible motor-industry bods point out that a hundred modern diesel cars produce the same amount of polluting elements as just one that was made in the seventies. They say that modern cars have filters which capture 99 per cent of all particulates and that nitrogen oxide (NOX) emissions from cars were reduced by a whopping 81 per cent between 1990 and 2010.”

Moving on, **Lonely Planet** is probably the largest travel guide book publisher in the world. Following the January 13 bus strike, their magazine commented on the fact that suddenly London was showing lower levels of pollution than usual, with scientists believing there was a “strong possibility” of the bus strike being the reason for the sudden environmental boost.

The **London Air Quality Network** measures pollutants from 50 various sites around town and on strike day recorded particularly low levels pointing out that nitrogen dioxide emissions, which are mainly emitted by diesel vehicles such as buses and taxis, were at a much lower level than on each of the previous seven days.

Citing **Oxford Street** in particular – known to be one of the world's most polluted roadways - at midday on the day of the strike, **NOx** levels were well down on usual readings yet there was **no reduction in taxi numbers**. Perhaps even more pertinent was the fact that **London's black cab fleet** was moving along at normal speeds as against the usual crawl when buses are present.

The **Met Office** added to the debate by claiming that because it had been quite windy throughout the week, that could have kept emissions down. Of course it had been just as windy for the four previous days but emission levels hadn't dropped anywhere near as much as they had on strike day!

So what is the answer? Ban buses from Oxford Street? Of course not! But perhaps someone in the Mayor's office could look at the ultra-high number of buses travelling along that street – most well under half full – and think about cutting them down to a more manageable number.

from diesel without the hardship that Mayor Johnson looks set to try and impose on us. How about getting rid of all 18 bus companies and bringing back **London Transport** – that would also sort out the differential in pay rates. They could then get **Sir Peter Hendy** back to run the new group – undoubtedly his first love! Sorted!

Oxford Street in Roman times was known as **via Trinobantina**. Several years ago it was estimated that the average bus speed along there was 3.7 mph, which was similar to someone walking at a reasonably fast walking pace. We bet that **Romans** out for a drive in their chariots along **via Trinobantina** in **AD50** wouldn't have put up with a 3.7mph speed!

See cover for a better look!

Jamie Corum, Call Sign Online

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Mike Higgins not only edits New York's Taxi Talk magazine, but also runs a chat show for cabbies on NY's public service MNN1 TV channel. He also writes for Call Sign about problems in the NY cab trade...

Uber's Fuzzy Math...

So, lemme get this straight. There have been 300,000+ postings and articles on the internet for the last six months containing the words *Uber \$40 billion*. Now Uber have just confirmed 'new' financing from The Goldman Sachs 'death star' for an additional \$1.6 billion.

Now - 'as per' - their alleged value is only \$41.2 billion!

Huh?!?!not \$41.6 billion - just \$41.2 billion. After a 'real' infusion of \$1.6 billion in new capital.

To recap, that good 'ole \$40 billion figure doesn't add up. It should have risen to at least the value of the additional new capital and their overall value should have jumped substantially with the 'feel good' infusion of new capital from a heavy hitter like Goldman Sachs.

It appears that Uber et al have been outted as tellers of tall tales – porkies as you Dial-a-Cab drivers would say – to say the least.

That news also reflects what we've suspected all along - that Uber et al is an over-glorified hype machine, and that the wonderful folks at Goldman Sachs have been keeping their gas tank filled.

I mean if Uber HAD \$2.4 billion in start-up cash and just got *another* \$1.6 billion in start-up cash...wouldn't that logically raise their company's value by about 65% (proportionate to the *new* investment capital)??!?

Hmmmm...

See ya soon...



Michael Higgins, New York City

SAVE OUR TAXIS

Boris Johnson and **TfL** have imposed a **15 year age limit** onto our taxis to reduce emissions in London. This taxi age limit was introduced without proper testing to prove it would be of benefit. MPs and London Assembly Members asked for the testing to be carried out, but it was never done.

We as London taxi drivers would love to replace our current vehicles with taxis that are fully electric or zero emissions capable, but these are not yet available. So the Mayor in his wisdom has decided that we have to scrap our 15 year old vehicles - even though they meet current standards - and purchase new diesel taxis costing up to £40,000. But these new taxis still will not meet the standards of the **Ultra Low Emissions Zone** that will be introduced in 2020.

Please go to the website below and sign the petition to help get the age limit on London's black cabs removed. If a taxi is fit for purpose and passes current emission standards, it should be allowed to stay on the road. Please go to...
<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-london-s-iconic-black-cabs?bucket=&source=twitter-share-button>

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Mailshot

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External advertising

Hi Alan

I have just been reading the February issue of Call Sign and after reading Garry White's piece on rooftop taxi advertising, I had a thought that might be useful. When tendering for new business, how about if we offer for Dial-a-Cab taxis to display digital advertising of the name of the firm where we are picking up from? Obviously we would have to change the adverts manually for each client, but it would give the clients free publicity and perhaps be something that could give us an edge over car companies.

Ricki Rands (M81)

Garry White responds: Hi Ricki, partnership advertising is something we could explore for our clients that like a high profile presence on the High Street; this would be good where corporate events are taking place and a marshalled rank is requested, showing DaC to be the preferred supplier of taxis. Wouldn't it be nice if we could get an airline on board where we carried their logo on our cabs when picking their passengers up to and from the airport. However, doing this with a roof top sign fitted by DaC would be costly but digital name boards or additional stickers on the front doors of your cab to promote an event/charity or welcoming new clients? Why not!

No run-ins

Dear Alan,

I note with interest how over the last six years or so, different people within the membership (Board Members included) have offered up a multitude of reasons for the decline/loss of our large corporate account customers. As is often the way in life and especially business, I feel sure it is not simply one reason alone. There is however often a red line or deal breaker that could stop negotiations in their tracks. The most common reason offered to me by a couple of Board Members and others working in the office is price, not coverage, the age of cabs, drivers wearing shorts, cabs without logos etc. No, the most common reason I hear is price and yet people constantly talk as though other issues are the deal-breakers, especially coverage. So if price is the problem, why is it as soon as someone suggests we compete on that level, the old mantra of 'it's just a race to the bottom' rears its head and the debate is closed down? Would it really be the end of the world if we tendered for a large corporate account with no run-ins or gratuities before say 8pm and then went under the meter after 8pm and especially after 10pm?

Of course it would only be for a high usage account and minimum fares would need to rise a touch. Yes, of course cover-

age would suffer at times, but then poor coverage by our PH competition has not halted their relentless rise has it?

David Fletcher (O15)

See Keith Cain's article inside this issue
...Ed

Transport for London

Alan

In the February Editorial page of Call Sign there was an article about touting and it quoted the number of offences committed by 'cab drivers' and only by the threat of a Freedom of Information request by you did they then tell the real figures ie the number of private hire drivers committing offences compared to the number of licenced taxi drivers. The number of taxi drivers could be counted on two hands, whereas the number of minicabs caught touting came to around 1100. Why are they both lumped together? Do they get backhanders from private hire operators?

I was on my way to a holiday in September and reading an article that claimed the number of sexual assaults by London's taxi drivers last year exceeded 1000. To say that I was furious would be an understatement! At the time, I was at 36,000ft and there was nothing I could do anyway. But I assume these figures are given to the press by TfL - lumping us in with them. Why? Is it the Brown Envelope Syndrome? Perish the thought! TfL are not enforcing the law. For some reason they want to lump us in with PH. I know that many working at TfL are not the sharpest knives in the box, but they must be able to distinguish between taxi drivers and private hire drivers - or is it down to that Brown Envelope Syndrome. Again, you go onto the web and type in London taxi and you are inundated with adverts for private hire. I thought the Trade Descriptions Act said you must get what you ask for. Why is this not enforced? Is it again the BES... perish the thought! The government goes on about corruption in public office; but they need look no further than Blackfriars Road.

This is a warning; if I happen to win a few £million on the lottery or Euromillions, I'll put a few million aside and will take TfL and the people in it to the cleaners. There will be a few employees with difficult excuses to come up with and many more will be out the door clutching their P45s. Please don't take that as a threat; it's not... it's a promise.

Name and call sign provided

It is on very rare occasions that I allow letters to be published with no name and call sign, but for obvious reasons I made an exception for this DaC driver. I know his identity ...Ed

Stevie Marks

I knew **Stevie Marks (G12)** very well and was so sorry to hear the news that he had died. He was a good radio man and when I used to give **Mickey Foust** his dispatching breaks in the early hours, it was Steve who used to run everywhere to help me cover a lot of work. He had more business sense

then the other cab drivers out there. If I was calling Teddington to the TV Centre and he was at Shepherds Bush, he would run out there empty and return with the job. The other drivers couldn't understand the logic.

May he rest in peace...

Steve Shaller (Ex R75)

Spain

Mailshot and Satnavs

Hello Alan

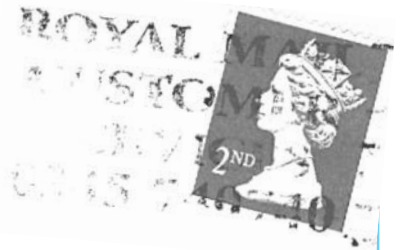
I thought last month's Mailshot was a little disappointing with not many letters. I also wanted to ask how often do you use your DaC Satnav? Have you driven the routes it suggests? No wonder I'm a poor cabbie! How do you stand with TfL and complaints if you use the Satnav's suggested routes? For example: St Pancras rank to Kensington Square W8. There's Euston and Marylebone Roads, Bishops Bridge, Westbourne Grove, left at Hereford Rd, into Ossington Street, right Bayswater Road and Notting Hill. Then left at Ken Church Street! Surely Sussex Gardens and through the Park?

Jon Robinson (E88)

Sorry Jon, unlike some other organisations, my letters are genuine and 99.9% have a name with them. If that's all there was then it's because that was all I had!

As for the Satnav, the Ossington Street route isn't bad. But your letter reminds me of an incident with Satnavs long before we had them and at a time when I was campaigning against drivers having them on show on their windscreens. I considered that it gave an incorrect impression of our undisputed knowledge of London.

I had ordered a DaC taxi to take me from the Victoria Palace Theatre after watching the magnificent Billy Elliot, to take me back to Dial-a-Cab where I had left my car. The ultra-smartly dressed driver held the door open for us - impressing Linda greatly - and then proceeded on his way. He was obviously using a Satnav. I expected him to shoot along the Victoria Embankment and then up through the City. After all, at 10.30, the journey shouldn't have taken too long. But no, he went up Grosvenor Place, Hyde Park Corner, into Park Lane, turned right at Upper Brook Street, took us through Hanover Square, Cavendish Square and Portland Place, went right into Euston Road, Kings Cross and then down City Road to the office. It took forever, but do you know what Jon? When I checked the route at home, it was the correct way to go! End of story ...Ed



Mailshot

AGM

Hello Alan

I've been on DaC for nearly 18 years and in that time I had only seen two changes; Allan Evans and Garry White. Now it's three with Joe Brazil. Although it's always sad to see a Board member leave (and I'm sure we all thank Tom for his years of service), I do believe it's healthy for a Board to have different views and ideas and for the Society to move forward; otherwise we remain stagnant...

Simon Wallis (M11)

There is an article in this issue regarding Tom's departure and Joe's arrival ...Ed

AGM

Hi Alan

I was very impressed with Brian Rice at the AGM. I thought he was eloquent and firm in his rhetoric. As he stated, he won't make the same mistakes again. My only concern is that if Keith Cain is handling the sales process brief, then he has to do it 100% and leave Radio Taxis to someone else. Just get our market share! I do not agree with this proposed merger, however I do agree with demutualising and selling the building with planning permission and possibly buying Mountview for £5 - and that amount is over-generous! I am also totally opposed to forums; we elect a Board of Management. Let's just allow them to manage.

Good luck to our new and old Board members; I wish you every success...

Stephen Field (F99)

Nice seeing you at the meeting Stephen and your thank-you to Call Sign was appreciated. I'm just pleased I could help. I have to say that I'm not totally against forums, but I remember them well last time round because I attended every single one of them. On one sad occasion I was actually the only member that turned up. There were three Board Members ready to answer questions and it became a discussion on whether Spurs would ever win anything again! ...Ed

AGM

Dear Sir

We sat and listened to both old and hopeful new Board members advising us why we should vote for them. What is the point of this as most of the votes were in by 6th February? So would it not have been beneficial to hear from the Board before we voted?

With regard to the merger; rather than spend good money in talks with Radio Taxis re a possible merger, we should have asked the drivers whether they think it advisable to go in with Radio Taxis or go it alone as a new company. In all due respect, the two companies in the running for a merger / takeover are both deeply in debt.

Paul Hammett (V42)

Paul, I'm not sure if this is a wind-up but I'll assume it's serious. The November

issue of Call Sign contained a half page listing every candidate and then a further three pages containing CVs that the candidates had sent in. The December issue then had a list of questions that drivers had sent in - every question received went in - whilst the January issue had no less than five whole pages given over to candidate's answers. Sadly, most drivers choose not to attend the AGM and that is their choice, but so far as I am concerned all the information they needed was provided well before February. Even then, there are a number of drivers who choose to vote on the day with prospective Board members addressing them in the hall. Indeed, there is a good chance that the final place may well have been decided in the hall as there were just 14 votes in it and far more drivers than that voting on the day. In fact at the last election there was just one vote in it. So if that isn't democratic enough, well I guess it's just the way it is!

As for the merger, nothing will happen without drivers saying yes or no. And incidentally, if you consider that having £5.5 million in readies at the bank and owning a £7million building in the city that according to the AGM has planning permission to build upwards - as Dial-a-Cab has - then I just wish I was that skint! ...Ed

AGM raffle

Hi Alan

Can I thank all the drivers for their support in buying raffle tickets at the recent Dial-a-Cab AGM. We raised £430 for the **Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund**, which will now go into the pot and be divided among the trade charities at our annual dinner and dance on November 7 2015.

Incidentally, one winner must have left early and doesn't realise their ticket was a prize winner. If you had ticket numbers 331 to 335 then just go to Drivers Services at DaC House and claim your prize.

Russell Poluck MBE (T55)

Holy smoke!

Hi Alan

It's a shame Martin Freeborn is retiring (February Call Sign); he was a credit to DaC and the cab trade in general. He always had a new cab, it was always clean and he always wore a collar and tie. Also, if the media wanted a spokesperson for the cab trade and they got him, they were upset because he was smart, well-spoken and articulate, not the usual moron they usually find to speak on our behalf - which brings me to a true story that was related to me by **Phil Hewson**. I used to be a regular at his gym in Woodfield Road and subsequently in Wapping. In the 1960s, it was finally discovered that smoking was bad for you; I remember in 1964, I was 13 and most of my mates smoked because it made them look big and older. In fact everybody smoked. I tried it because all my friends smoked and of course I wanted to be like



them. When I lit one up, it made me feel dizzy and sick and I realised that I had paid money to feel like that! I threw the cigarettes into the bin and thought to myself that I would be different and I wouldn't smoke. The best days work I ever did!

Now the story: The LTDA had organised a forum about the then new found dangers of smoking and had an eminent person give a lecture about the dangers of smoking (to cab drivers only). So Phil Hewson decided to go. Phil has had a lifetime of keep fit, being a master of Tai Chi and Leviaicol (an Indian martial art), a black belt in Karate, an ex-professional boxer and an ex-army PTI. The eminent person gave his lecture about the dangers associated with smoking and then asked if anybody had any questions. A few hands went up and questions were asked and answered. Then the moron the media always finds stood up and spoke. He said: "I think this is a load of old crap because my dad smoked 40 fags a day and he lived till he was 65." The eminent person replied that was perfectly possible, but said that had he had not smoked those 40 cigarettes a day, his dad may well have lived until he was 85. The moron replied: "No, he was knocked down by a bus!"

There was an undercurrent of sighs and groans as everybody thought the same thing - how on earth did this person do the Knowledge...!

Brian Marcantonio (R73)

I sometimes wonder how I did the Knowledge with my memory! ...Ed

On the way out!

Hi Alan

As my Y-reg cab is due for the scrapheap in a couple of years, I thought about the gas engine that TfL said would extend the life of my cab for 5 years. They are now talking of getting rid of cabs in 10 years. I can't seem to get an answer regarding if the gas engine is still an alternative to scrapping my cab. Have you got an answer?

Keith Hancock (R47)

The man to speak to about gas engines is Stanley Roth. Email him at gas-taxi@gmail.com. As you can see from this issue, the Metrocab electric taxi is said to be getting close ...Ed

Wharfside car wash

Can I give a mention to two car washes called Wharfside. One of them is in Canary Wharf, car park level -2 and the other is at 170 Marylebone Road. Opening hours are from 7am till 6pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 5pm on Saturday. It's £7.50p for in and out. Both are very good and friendly...

Gary Mankelov (A67)



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