

October 2015



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



Is this garage 'milking' the cab trade???



The trade declares war on the Mayor!



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Restaurants this month... but different from the usual! It's expensive eating out in London and difficult to find good reasonably-priced restaurants. Here is a list of affordable to mid-priced restaurants that scored at least 3.5 out of 5 by customers - one even scoring 5/5 (although that one is only open lunch times)! All in postal areas and type of menu for reader's ease of use...

	Restaurant	Address	Menu		
E11	Provender	17 High St, London, Wanstead E11 2AA	informal french bistro	££	4.1
E2	Beagle	397 Geffrye St, E2 8HZ (11-3pm)	British	££	4.1
E2	Bistrotheque	23 Wadeson St, E2 9DR	French	££	4.0
E2	Rochelle Canteen	Rochelle School, Arnold Circus, E2 &ES	modern menu	££	4.1
E8	Berber & Q	338 Acton Mews, E8 4EA	BBQ	££	4.3
EC1	Foxlow	69 St John St, EC1M 4AN	Modern European	££	4.3
EC1	Moro	34 Exmouth Mkt, EC1R 4QE (12:30-3:15pm)	N.African	££	4.5
N1	Caravan King's Cross	1, Granary Building, Granary Square, N1C 4AA	Eclectic	££	4.2
N1	Grain Store	Granary Square, 1-3 Stable St, N1C 4AB	Vegetarian	££	3.8
N1	Oldroyd	344 Upper St, N1 0PD	various	££	4.5
N1	Ottolenghi	287 Upper Street, N1 2TZ	Pâtisseries	££	4.0
N1	Trullo	300-302 St Paul's Rd, N1 2LH	Italian	££	4.1
NW1	Anima e Cuore	129 Kentish Town Rd, NW1 8PB	Italian	£	4.1
NW5	Bull & Last	168 Highgate Rd, NW5 1QS	British	££	3.9
NW5	Shoe Shop	122 Fortess Rd, NW5 2HL	European	££	3.5
SE1	Arabica Bar & Kitchen	3 Borough High St, SE1 9AF	Middle East	££	3.6
SE1	Baltic	74 Blackfriars Rd, (Cnr The Cut), SE1 8HA	Eastern European	££	4.2
SE1	Casse-Crouete	109 Bermondsey St, SE1 3XB	French	££	4.3
SE1	Pizarro	194 Bermondsey Street, SE1 3TQ	Spanish/Tapas	££	4.3
SE1	Zucca	184 Bermondsey St, SE1 3TQ	Italian	££	4.3
SE15	Artusi	161 Bellenden Rd, SE15 4DH (12-3pm)	Mediterranean	££	5.0
SW2	Naughty Piglets	28 Brixton Water Ln, SW2 1PE	international	££	4.5
SW4	Bistro Union	40 Abbeville Rd, SW4 9NG (9:30-4 & 6-8pm)	British	££	3.6
SW4	Dairy	15 The Pavement, SW4 0HY (12-4pm only)	Bistro	££	4.3
SW8	Boqueria Tapas	278 Queenstown Rd, SW8 4LT	Tapas	££	3.9
W1	Bao	53 Lexington St, Soho, W1F 9AS	Thai	£	4.5
W1	Barnyard	18 Charlotte St, Fitzrovia, W1T 2LY	British	£	4.0
W1	Barrafina	54 Frith St, W1D 4SL	Tapas	££	4.5
W1	Bó Drake	6 Greek St, W1 4DE	Asian	££	3.8
W1	Bocca di Lupo	12 Archer St, W1D 7BB (12:30-3:15 & 5-9pm)	Italian	££	4.3
W1	Burger & Lobster	29 Clarges St, W1J 7EF	Burgers & Lobster	££	4.2
W1	Ceviche Soho	17 Frith St, W1D 4RG	Latin American	££	4.2
W1	Ember Yard	60 Berwick Street, W1F 8SU	Mediterranean	££	4.2
W1	Honey & Co	25A Warren St, W1T 5LZ	Middle East	££	4.2
W1	Kirazu	47, Rupert St, W1D 7PD	Japanese	££	3.7
W1	Koba	11 Rathbone St, W1T 1NA	Korean	££	3.9
W1	Pitt Cue Co	1 Newburgh St, W1F 7RB	U.S. ribs & pulled pork	££	4.3
W1	Polpo Soho	41 Beak Street, W1F 9SB	Italian	££	4.3
W1	Twist at Crawford	42 Crawford St, W1H 1JW	Tapas	££	4.8
W1	Zoilo	9 Duke St, W1U 3EG	Classic Fare	££	4.6
WC2	Bai Wei	8 Little Newport St, WC2H 7JJ	Chinese	££	3.8
WC2	Dishoom	12 Upper St Martin's Ln, WC2H 9FB	Indian	££	4.4
WC2	Flesh & Buns	41 Earlham St, WC2H 9LX	Japanese	££	4.0
WC2	Jar Kitchen	176 Drury Ln, WC2B 5QF	British Food	££	4.5
WC2	Smoking Goat	7 Denmark St, WC2H 8LZ	Thai	££	3.8
WC2	Terroirs	5 William IV St, WC2N 4DW	Mediterranean	££	4.2

from the editor's desk

Luddites? Us?

The **Luddites** were 19th century self-employed weavers who feared the end of their trade and protested against new labour saving devices. Generally speaking, referring to someone or a group of people as Luddites is considered to be an insult.

At City Hall on Wednesday 16 September, **Mayor Boris Johnson** in a moment of pique, referred to the most respected taxi service in the world as Luddites when answering a question on electric taxis at Mayors Question Time. So let me explain something to Boris: There is only one Luddite here and that is you. There is only one person here who has spent multi-millions on bringing back the two wheeled transport that was so popular around 100 years ago. There is only one person here who in order to clean our atmosphere of pollutants, has introduced more roadworks and traffic congestion than we have ever seen before. London is now choking and at a standstill. There is only one person here under whose reign the capital city is getting speed limits more suited to the horse and cart. And it's all down to you, Mr Mayor! If you stay at City Hall much longer, we may see the reintroduction of the horse and cart, because we are undoubtedly going backwards.

So is there anything you can do to help? Well you could admit that your tenure has been an abject failure and that your legacy has been to bring London to a halt and make Londoners afraid to breathe in. And perhaps you could do us all a favour and go now. We'll cope without you....!!!

Luddites... or a nation of wusses?

TfL and the Mayor have announced a doubling of Pedestrian Countdown crossing sites by this time next year when around 800 London crossings will have a Pedestrian Countdown clock.

In addition, there are to be eight new 20mph speed limits pilot schemes on the TfL Road Network added to the 25% of all London roads that are already 20mph. Lambeth and Hackney will be introducing 20mph on their roads later this year.

As no one else will say it, let me be the first: We are becoming a nation of wusses! Don't get me wrong, every single one of the 64 pedestrian deaths in 2014 was a tragedy; many have a family to whom that person isn't just a statistic but someone who was loved. The same applies to the 13 pedal cyclists that died. Every single one is a tragic death, but should those untimely deaths mean that the whole way we drive changes? I'm sorry to say that my answer is no...

How many times have you waited for a set of traffic signals to change to green, even though no one was crossing and you just sit there watching the clock count down? By the same token, how many times have you seen pedestrians take their lives into their hands by dashing across the street in between traffic? How many times have you seen cyclists totally disregard lights or speed along in and out of slow-moving traffic and hit - or almost hit - someone crossing the road? In fact, is there anyone on **Dial-a-Cab** who can honestly answer "never" to the above three questions? Of course there's not, so isn't it about time that pedestrians and cyclists took some responsibility for themselves. Why should today's hi-tech cars have to go along at a ridiculously slow 20mph - in a manual drive car it actually forces you to drive in a lower gear and pump out even more emissions.

If the Mayor truly believes that the deaths are the fault of motorists, why doesn't he reduce the speed limit to 5mph or even ban us all. Perhaps as



a *Freedom of Information* request, it would be interesting to ask how much TfL earn from taxi and minicabs, compared to how much they earn from cyclists... and then find out who they spend the most money on???

Syrian refugees

You would have to have a heart of stone not to feel sad about what is happening in Syria. Those Syrians lucky enough to get out of their war-torn country - even luckier if they have managed it with their family intact - then have to find somewhere to go. There was never any doubt that the UK would take a large number because that's what we do. If the cause is just, we support it.

It reminds me of the work cancer charities do; medical research teams are coming up with the most amazing treatments that can help prolong the life of those patients that have been affected by any form of cancer. Is that thanks to the government? Well yes, some money does go into research, but it's the individuals who donate to charity that provide so much of the money they need - albeit never enough.

So I have a question that must be asked; at the time of writing, no one really knows the exact number of Syrian refugees that will come to these shores - even accepting the 20,000 over 5 years - but going by TV news reports, these are not beggars and they will be looking for work so that they can provide for themselves without being a drain on the state. That begs the question as to where those jobs are, because contrary to government figures there are many who already just cannot find a job. So will they then make their way to **Caledonian Road** to sign up with **Uber**? You say no, because they will not be able to provide the **Disclosure and Barring Service** requirement (formerly the CRB) or the three years driving experience needed before they can operate a **Private Hire** vehicle. But you'd be wrong, because **Transport for London** say refugees who have applied for asylum will not be required to undergo such checks!

This country needs to do what it can to help these people, but whatever work they eventually find must NOT be in connection with driving a PHV unless they can provide the same documents that we and legitimate PH drivers have to have before gaining a licence.

Can Uber and taxis work together?

Ok, it's a stupid question and the answer is obviously no. In fact there is more chance of us linking up with **Addison Lee** - and that is so unlikely as to be almost irrelevant! Nevertheless, inside

this issue, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Marc Turner (R97)** reveals that at least one garage owner sees nothing wrong in supplying both us and the U-men and in full view of everyone - well in front of Marc's camera!

Even Marc admits that the garage concerned is doing nothing wrong, so for drivers who agree with that sentiment, just ignore Marc's article and carry on looking downwards, hoping that someone else will make everything ok again.

Travis Kalanick's Uber could be aligned to the proverbial snake in the grass; but the question is whether they should be looked on as a legitimate part of London's transport system as per TfL's requirements.

This magazine has reported on at least two occasions on Addy Lee drivers doing something stupid. On one occasion that included deliberately running someone over in Knightsbridge! But let's be honest, we've also reported on two taxi drivers - neither of them on DaC - who were found guilty of rape. Sadly, it's the numbers game. There are 25,000 of us and the law of averages says the a few will be wrong 'uns. The same with Addy and co because as painful as it is to admit it, they are a respectable private hire company who will do whatever it takes to become even more successful - but will not do so illegally.

So compare that to Uber; a recent *Freedom of Information* request to the **Metropolitan Police** asked how many times Uber had been mentioned in crime reports for the 12 months up until March 2015. Anyone fancy having a guess? Twenty? Fifty? A hundred??? Would it surprise you to know that TfL's baby has been mentioned no less than 600 times! But of course, as we all know, TfL treat them exactly the same as any other PH company. Mind you, they'd be hard pressed to find any other company mentioned that many times in crime reports to actually compare Uber with!

They do say that the whole world is mad except me and thee - and even thee is a bit daft! Hmmm...

And another close-down

If you work on Sundays, you will be used to the traffic problems caused by the closure of the Royal parks and the constant messages on DaC terminals asking if The Mall is open yet.

There were the four consecutive Sundays when **Regent Street** closed to traffic and no one could move. Disabled passenger wanting to go shopping? Tough! That was followed soon after for a complete weekend closure thanks to the **RideLondon** event when even taxis and buses were stuffed if they wanted to cross the river - or even cross the A4 at Cromwell Road. If you worked that weekend, then you either reduced many of the fares through the embarrassment of how much simple journeys came to, or you just cut your losses and went home - which many did.

Then we saw the cycling **Tour of Britain** on Sunday 13 September with road closures all over the centre again, especially in the Whitehall and Westminster areas. Want to get to Waterloo? Not over this bridge mate!

We have to accept that as one of the biggest tourist destinations in the world, we are always going to have big events taking place. So if we say that RideLondon put us on the map and so did the Tour of Britain, why did Regent Street have to be closed for four Sundays. And more importantly, shouldn't taxis be given some kind of priority? What's the point of our wheelchair access?

Mr Mayor, can you yet see why no one in this trade believes a word you say....???

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections of the Chairman

Politics and the Cab Trade

It was **Harold Wilson** who said a week was a long time in politics. Well it certainly is, as it appears that politics and the licensed taxi industry in London can be turned on its head within just 24 hours!

On 15th September, there was a debate in Westminster Hall regarding the London Taxi industry and the unfair competition we face. It's probably fair to say that most MPs that spoke were in total agreement and extremely complimentary regarding our trade. Of course we had total support from new MP for Kensington and Chelsea, **Victoria Borwick**. But as most of you are aware, she has *always* supported the taxi industry in London - not only when her husband Jamie was Chairman of Manganese Bronze, but at every opportunity since and especially when she was Deputy Mayor at the GLA and Member of the **London Assembly** on the **Transport Committee**.

Other notables that sang our praises were the debate's instigator **Zac Goldsmith**, MP for Richmond Park and North Kingston and **Sadiq Khan**, MP for Tooting. Both these politicians warned of the dangers that the London trade faced and were extremely supportive of our cause.

I'm sure both these gentlemen are sincere with their sentiments, but I can't help but wonder if both - being professional politicians - also have their eye on a bigger picture; **Zac Goldsmith** as the prospective Tory candidate for the Mayoral election next May and **Sadiq Khan** when standing for the Labour Party. Now whilst I agree with most of what they said, I can't help thinking back to the Mayoral election in 2008 when a certain **Boris Johnson** courted the cab trade, visiting our watering holes and was extremely complimentary towards the trade. He also did a job on the **LCDC** because if I remember correctly, they even went as far as having receipt pads printed that were in support of the then prospective Mayor. Seven years on and there is not any doubt in my mind that **Boris Johnson** has *not* been a friend of the taxi industry during his term in office and to this day I don't believe he even understands our industry. When he says he will put a cap on minicab licence numbers, he can't because it is illegal and then he goes on to say our trade operates in a free market; that just proves how little he understands the issues facing us. Taxi drivers spend on average 4 years and 2 months completing the **KoL**. We are then told what vehicle to purchase that by law has to be wheelchair accessible and then what tariff to charge. How on earth is that a free market?

I'm hopeful that my scepticism is wasted on our two new friends and whomever is elected in May supports us as they did in the House of Commons when they were looking to gain support from taxi driver's votes.

I've neglected to mention the leader of the Lib Dems on the London Assembly, **Caroline Pidgeon**, the only reason being is that she is not an MP and was not present at the debate. This lady is a *real* friend of the Taxi industry and has been since she was elected to the London Assembly back in 2008. However, reading through the transcript of the debate it appears



that Messrs Khan and Goldsmith do have a good grasp of our trade, the latter even stating that it was illegal to cap PH licences and that the only way to cap their numbers was for them to complete a watered down **KoL** - which would also ensure that English was spoken. Not sure where he got that idea from - must be from that chap that writes every month in **Call Sign**!

We then move on the 24 hours I wrote of earlier with the venue moving from **Westminster Hall** to **City Hall** where we have **Mayors Question Time** and members of the public can attend. This had been widely publicised and hundreds of extremely concerned taxi drivers attended and were packed in like sardines, with the upstairs overflow having to be opened. Even so, many drivers were locked out.

Val Shawcross, a great ally to the taxi trade, met the drivers outside and informed them there was not much on the agenda regarding taxis, but that she'd point out to the Mayor why so many drivers were there. Anyway, that great friend of the taxi trade back in 2007/8 - ie Mayor of London **Boris Johnson** - entered the auditorium to be welcomed by a lot of booing! Naturally, **Boris** just smiled.

The debate discusses the reduction in the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the Mayor takes a real grilling, the

atmosphere turns tense and the Deputy Chair threatens to clear the auditorium. After 15 minutes, it became noisy again and the occupants were told to leave - no one did. The Mayor then went on to call taxi drivers **Luddites** and that was the straw that broke the camel's back. You can just imagine the reaction. City Hall Security moved in and although a few drivers got up to leave, they were persuaded to stay by the remainder. The police then arrived and persuaded drivers to leave; some still wouldn't but police reinforcements arrived and the meeting came to an abrupt end.

The Mayors behaviour towards the trade was appalling; the man who courted us in 2007/8 had the sole intention of antagonising the drivers that were present - and he succeeded. We forget that **Boris Johnson** is a professional politician and he achieved everything he wanted to by infuriating drivers. We, in turn, played right into his hands by reacting to his remarks. He knows the trade's morale is at an all-time low and that taxi drivers are angry and worried about their futures. He knew it wouldn't take too much for drivers to react.

I'm told that a Security Guard was injured when a door was opened and he tripped, but that was not how it was reported in the news that day. That claimed angry taxi drivers demonstrated at City Hall and a Security Guard was injured. In an interview, the Mayor backed that claim up. But I am led to believe that that wasn't what happened.

I totally support the drivers that attended and agree with their sentiments, but we must learn from this episode and not put ourselves in a position where experienced politicians can turn the tables on us and make us look like the aggressors, whilst they are the victims.

So there you have it; 24 hours in the life of the trade and where we are turned from heroes to villains by professional politicians.

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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MAYORAL CANDIDATES PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION ON TAXIS

Tuesday 15 September saw a 90 minute debate in Westminster Hall on the future of London's taxi fleet called by Tory MP for Richmond Park and London Mayor hopeful, Zac Goldsmith. This was exactly 24 hours before the trade gathered en masse at City Hall.

Without efforts to balance the playing field, the capital would lose its iconic black cabs, Mr Goldsmith warned. He said that London's taxis were famous around the world and remained an absolutely vital part of the capital's transport system. He went on to call for more clarity in the regulatory system as he voiced concerns that London taxis could become "extinct in a matter of years" unless action was taken.

Labour Mayoral candidate and MP for Tooting, Sadiq Khan, said that both TfL and the Government had failed to enforce existing legislation and also failed to provide new regulations to ensure new entrants to the market operated fairly.

Mr Khan added: "Rather than a race to the bottom in deregulating the black cab, shouldn't there be innovation of regulation of the private hire vehicles and Uber in particular, to make sure there is a level playing field?"

He went on to warn that the rise in numbers of private hire vehicles in London would lead to problems of further congestion, pollution, illegal parking and the "death of the black cab as we know it."

He urged Government to bring forward legislation which provided a clear definition to protect the distinction between taxis and private hire vehicles, claiming that it was really important that the Minister and the current Mayor responded "...because if they don't, then the next mayor will."

Mr Goldsmith said costs were piled onto black cabs by regulation and they were already the most regulated taxis in the world by far, while standards among private hire vehicles needed to be raised. He said he wouldn't think twice about putting any of his children into a taxi, but worried that they could become extinct in a matter of years.



Zac Goldsmith

Mr Goldsmith, who is also a staunch environmental campaigner, said that taxis could ply for hire, wait at ranks, had fares and stringent service standards set by TfL; while PH vehicles had to be pre-booked, could not legally ply for hire, did not have fares set by TfL or have to pass *The Knowledge*.

He said: "The emergence of Uber has turned the system onto its head and because of the speed of the Uber App, their cars are effectively hailed by users, thereby evaporating the one key advantage enjoyed by black cabs."

The Tory Mayoral candidate said that licensed black cabs should be helped to switch to *contactless* payment systems, while also adding that there was a case for subsidising the process. He added that taxis were already adapting quickly and from 2018 all new taxis would be zero emission capable.

He said: "I think we need to try and find a way to maintain the two tier system that distinguishes between (mini)cabs and taxis. I absolutely do not want to deny people the choice that they clearly want and need in London, so there's no question of banning Uber, but I do think there is a need to have more clarity in the regulatory system."

"It is an unarguable fact, in my view, that without efforts to balance the playing field we will lose the black cab in London... and London, I have no doubt, will be a lot poorer for it."

Transport Minister **Andrew Jones** said that London's taxis were the *gold standard* right across the world. He said that there was currently no legislation in London - or anywhere else - that would allow the number of private hire vehicles to be limited. But he added that officials were working closely with TfL and said that he thought we needed to look at the issue and develop the evidence required to consider whether legislation needed to change.

Mr Jones said that new technology was challenging traditional operating boundaries between the taxi and PH trades and was straining the relationship between TfL and the industry. He said Government was fully aware of changes and challenges that were affecting the taxi and private hire vehicle industry in London and elsewhere within the country.

He ended by saying that he could not yet give a date for when the Government would be responding to the **Law Commission** report on the issue, but added the work had been "extremely powerful."

Labour MP **Grahame M. Morris** brought up the question of what damage the huge influx of minicab drivers had on air quality and congestion in central London, while new Kensington and Chelsea MP and GLA member **Victoria Borwick** gave a rundown of her family's involvement with the licensed taxi trade and gave an eloquent speech on why this trade is unique and should be preserved.

Perhaps the best points so far as this trade's drivers are concerned came from Tottenham MP **David Lammy**. He spoke of visiting **Courtney Connell's** Knowledge school in Bethnal Green and what those attending had to go through in order to get a Badge. He spoke of the dedication needed and referred to it as an institution before speaking of Uber and saying that the Government's slightly relaxed attitude to international companies that do not pay tax in this country "had to stop."

He added: "Of course such a company can undercut established institutions. It is well known across the world that people can arrive in London, get a second-hand vehicle, jump through very few hoops—the bar is so low—go to the Uber office, get the technology and for very little training, they too can be part of the explosion that we are seeing across the city which is now polluting our young people's lungs. Of course the city is congested; it is all the private hire vehicles that people are picking up. In this economy, where one in four young people in London is still unemployed, we are seeing many young students doing this as well. Is that right? Is that good? It cannot be."

Hammersmith Flyover refurbishment completed

Major work to strengthen the **Hammersmith Flyover** has now been completed. The refurbishment took two years and the flyover is now fully restored and strengthened. Work often continued through the night to try to keep disruption to road users and residents to a minimum. Some **Dial-a-Cab** drivers may disagree after getting caught in some horrendous hold-ups on weekends when the flyover was shut, but it undoubtedly could have been much worse.

TfL say they are continuing to work closely with **Hammersmith and Fulham Council** to make Hammersmith gyratory safer and more accessible for cyclists, as part of their wider borough cycling improvement strategy.

Jery's World



"Look Ponsonby-Smythson, I specifically warned you that on October 5th taxi drivers might get quite touchy when asked if their meters are as good as Ubers!"

Fifteen more touts prosecuted

TfL has successfully prosecuted a further fifteen drivers in July and August as part of its on-going crack-down on illegal taxi and private hire (TPH) activity in London. Their Compliance team carry out thousands of checks on licensed vehicles and driver licences across London to help keep the public safe and stamp out illegal TPH activity in addition to undertaking hundreds of investigations into complaints from customers and from the legitimate taxi and private hire trade.

Among those caught was **Ian Vassell** who was caught on **Charterhouse Street** illegally plying for hire, accepting a private hire booking without a PH operator's licence and for using a car for PH use on a public road without the correct insurance, PH vehicle licence or PH driver's licence. He was found guilty of all five offences, fined a total of £330 and ordered to pay TfL's legal costs of £500. He was disqualified from driving for 12 months.

Peter Emeka was convicted after being caught in **Charterhouse Street** for the same offences as Vassell. He was fined a total of £800 and ordered to pay TfL's legal costs of £360 and disqualified from driving for six months.

Kwaku Yamoah Kesse was convicted after being caught in Clapham High Street for similar offences and found guilty. He was fined a total of £1,210 and ordered to pay TfL's legal costs of £500. He was disqualified from driving for three months.

Dosso Costea is a taxi driver who was convicted at Westminster Magistrates' court on 22 July 2015 after being caught in central London working after the expiry of his driver's licence and using a vehicle for passenger hire on a public road without the correct insurance. He was found guilty of both offences, fined a total of £550 and ordered to pay TfL's legal costs of £150. His DVLA licence was also endorsed with six penalty points.

These cases led by TfL's TPH Compliance and Legal teams are in addition to prosecutions which are put forward by London's policing agencies for touting and other cab-related offences, through the criminal justice system, to improve taxi and private hire safety across the Capital.

Anyone wishing to report touting can do so by going onto the TfL website using this shortcut:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/forms/12368.aspx>





"What can I do next!!!"

This magazine is non-political. Who **Dial-a-Cab's** drivers vote for is no one's business other than the drivers themselves, but over the past year **Call Sign** has found itself unable to keep quiet on the question of how well – or otherwise – **Mayor Boris Johnson** has done during the 7.5 years of his 8 year tenure.

Two months ago in the Editor's column, **Alan Fisher** compared Boris to **NASA's New Horizon** mission to photograph dwarf planet **Pluto** and jokingly compared it to the cycle superhighways the Mayor is so proud of. Whilst Alan's comparisons were deliberately frivolous, the article correctly inferred that the Pluto mission took nine years to arrive at the furthest (dwarf) planet in our Solar System from Earth! He then "suggested" that the mayor's policies would soon mean that it would also take 9

Call Sign has been saying it constantly over the past year, now the FT says it too...

Politicians take London into gridlock!

years just to crawl along the Embankment at 2.8mph – comparing it to New Horizon's 28,000mph as it bypassed Pluto!

He went onto to write about the emissions the lanes were causing with their horrific hold-ups because slow moving traffic pumps huge amounts of carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide into our overloaded atmosphere, which not only breaks Euro agreements but also costs a huge amount in fines.

Then last month, the Editor re-printed a question and answer session he had with the Mayor in 2007 prior to his election, and now in 2015 asked readers if they considered that Boris had kept his word so far as his answers were concerned. The apparent answer to that was no!

Now the Financial Times has joined in with an article from Tanya Powley and Andy Sharman headed 'Cab Apps and vans reduce City to a crawl'.

The article starts by saying: "London is stuck in a jam. A rash of roadworks, sprawling bus and cycle lanes and a taxi app revolution have made the British capital one of Europe's most congested big cities."

It continues by comparing traffic levels since

the Congestion Charge came in and calls any improvement meagre, adding that the congestion threatens to worsen London's air quality – which already breaks legal limits since slow moving traffic produces more pollution than free flowing does.

Transport for London say that in the CC's first few years, it helped to cut delays by around 26 per cent. But the FT says that snarl-ups have returned with road space being "gobbled up by other projects such as the **Cycle Superhighways**." It goes on to talk about congestion added to via roadworks.

Then they came to **Uber** and the app revolution adding to the worsening congestion, explaining that PH numbers have jumped by 26 per cent in the past two years – and that is according to Department for Transport's own figures.

Boris Johnson now wants his TfL to limit the number of private hire vehicles – a bit late now we think. The only limit we think his 8 years deserves is a 6 month cut in his time in power...

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online

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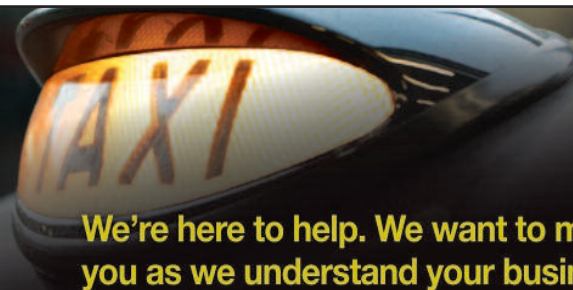
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The same garage renting out Uber cars and licensed taxis? Marc Turner investigates...

“Milking” the taxi trade???

A few months back, I began hearing rumours about a West London garage that was apparently renting out vehicles to both licensed Taxi drivers and also to Uber drivers. Whilst sceptical, I decided to put feelers out and within virtually no time, I was being sent info and links revealing evidence of truth...

I hastily contacted Gurinder Dhillon, the owner of Premier Cabs, Indigo Taxis, (Belvedere) and Otto Cars PH but Mr Dhillon was on holiday. However, his spokesman confirmed the worst and said he would email Dhillon, who would then contact me on his return. He didn't!

On Tuesday 25th August at 3.45pm, I brazenly entered the 'traitors' den with its licensed taxis and Toyota Priuses side by side in the yard and workshop. It would be fair to say that Gurinder Dhillon was not best pleased to see me and very quickly tried to berate me on his perception of my "conduct on Twitter."

I explained that I was doing an article for *Call Sign* on his unique perspective of the taxi/private hire industry and it would be with or without his acquiescence. I hoped it would be with it, but he looked uncomfortable and was rather uncooperative throughout our unscheduled and strained meeting.

Dhillon tried to illicit my address, but had to be content with my mobile and email on his seeming pretence that he needed another week to think about talking to me. He refused outright to be photographed or recorded during our exchanges.

With all his front, he was unwilling/unable to defend what I as a licensed taxi driver would call the indefensible. Mr Dhillon never did contact me. My first impressions of him being disingenuous, disobliging and even dishonourable seem to have been proved correct.

While on the premises of Gurinder Dhillon, I observed unwitting taxi drivers arriving (apparently sent from Westminster Insurance judging by snatches of conversation I overheard) to have Taxi Witness CCTV installed. If they'd had an inkling as to what was going on at Depot Road W12, they might have thought twice before handing their hard earned money over.

While in the yard, I decided to take photos of cars, taxis and the garage front - with no name sign apart from Unigate (see cover pic). But Mr Dhillon took exception to this, ran out and ordered me off his premises. Could his be a man with something to hide? At that point I decided take my leave anyway.



Ubers and taxis in the same garage. Marc asks if that is right...

In conclusion, I must state that Gurinder Dhillon's disloyalty to the taxi trade is not unlawful; nor is it illegal – even though some might say it was mightily immoral!

Whereas Mayor Boris Johnson and the incompetents at TfL are just inept, Gurinder Dhillon's activities are more pernicious and fuelled by the pursuit of a quick buck, which makes him culpable in the present 'race to

the bottom' - a man willing to sacrifice integrity and reputation for personal gain in the name of business.

It's now out there and in the court of taxi drivers to make up their own minds. Personally speaking, I could never trade with someone who was contributing to the downfall of my own beloved industry...

Marc Turner (R97)
Call Sign Online

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Mayor insults taxi drivers at Question Time as

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE AT CITY HALL!

With so much advanced publicity via notice boards and online, the Mayor's Question Time on Wednesday 16 September was always going to be a touchy meeting, but it was far worse than that after Mayor Boris Johnson insulted the chamber of London's taxi drivers with hundreds waiting outside on a day named the International taxis day of action when world-wide anti-Uber action was planned. The chamber was also diluted by TfL apprentices, obviously to keep the numbers down.

At 9.55, just prior to the commencement of the meeting, Val Shawcross walked out to speak to some of the drivers and explained that there wasn't much taxi business scheduled, but that she would point out why so many taxi drivers were there. Within minutes, the meeting began and the Mayor walked into the chamber to a chorus of boos. His response was a BoJo smile!

Ten minutes later, the Mayor was asked about the proposal to cut 1000 PCSOs from London. To hoots of derision, the Mayor said he hadn't heard of any such plan, even though it was pointed out that the plan was already under discussion. London Assembly member Joanne McCartney called the Mayor's statement "astonishing" considering that he was the Chair of MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime).

The Mayor claimed that it wasn't true and that Joanne had just listened to a press release. Ms McCartney responded: "Are you calling me a liar?"

The Chamber became even noisier and Val Shawcross asked drivers to be quiet because there was a danger of the meeting being halted. A question was then asked about electric taxis and the Mayor's response was to call the drivers Luddites for not being prepared to move into more advanced taxis. Drivers whistled and jeered and within seconds, City Hall's security moved in, followed within minutes by police.

More police soon arrived – many with dogs – and the building was cleared. One person – said to be a member of City Hall's security staff – was said to have been knocked unconscious as more drivers piled in.

Drivers who were unable to get in due to there not being enough room were said by police to be attempting to storm the building and police advised people to keep clear of the area. But no arrests were made, although the head man of the "Mayfair Mob" (Mickey 'Deathwish') was briefly arrested, although soon released to cheers from drivers.

The demo then moved onto Parliament Square, but not before bringing the surrounding roads at City Hall to a standstill. Chairman Brian Rice's daughter Carla, who works in Tooley Street, told *Call Sign*: "There were riot police outside my office! The whole office stopped and watched. I went outside and saw Tooley Street completely gridlocked!"



Taxi drivers were inside the chamber and also at the grounds outside

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OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Hello Ladies & Gents,

As you know, for the past six months we have been offering fixed price account journeys to all Airports as well as trips that end up or begin outside of the M25. The fixed rates are based on mileages and also the length of time a trip should take to complete. It is very difficult to compete with certain incredibly low prices, but experience tells me that many clients still prefer to travel by taxi for many reasons and at the prices we are offering, we are certainly generating a lot more of these types of journeys from many of our regular accounts.

There is always a need to be driven safely and professionally and there is no travel safer than being in the back of a licensed taxi.

As I have previously mentioned, the fixed rates are priced according to the length of the journey and the fixed rate will remain at all times. However, any excess waiting time or additional mileage will be adjusted at the end of the trip. This is done purely to make the fare more competitive and with so much competition out in the workplace, it is important that you try to understand why we are taking these aggressive measures.

Please remember to call the Contact Centre at the completion of the trip if you have any additional destinations or you incur waiting time. Waiting time is calculated at £27 per hour (45p per minute) pro rata to the minutes that you wait after the booked time. As you are aware, there is no reject penalty on Fixed Priced rejects but I can honestly say that we have processed a lot more airports over the last few months and some very nice trips to destinations outside of the London areas, so it seems to be working; but we need your full support!

With Allan Evans



Coverage

Now that the school holidays have been and gone, coverage in the South West areas especially is becoming a problem once again. SW18, SW15, SW11 and SW4 are four zones that cause the dispatchers great difficulty and I am at a loss as to what else can be done to provide many of our biggest accounts with an acceptable and reliable level of service. Messages are sent out way in advance of the required times on both Pre-Bookings and ASAP trips, actual pick up locations and destinations are given on the job offers and run-ins are increased, but on many occasions to no avail.

Sooner or later these clients will say enough is enough and look for alternatives. I am once again asking you all to assist us, because if trips are continuously timed out or rejected, we will lose these accounts.

Contactless trips

You may not be aware that as of the beginning of September you were able to process a Contactless Credit Card transaction through the system up to a combined amount of £30. There is a very quick software upgrade required to the PED which takes a few minutes, so please pop in to **Roman Way** who will be only too glad to assist you.

Finally, can I please remind you once again that booking-in procedures are now closely monitored and the small minority that feel they can exploit the system to gain an unfair advantage over fellow members will be dealt with in a true and proper manner. The 'Procedure Rules' are designed to not only protect the Society, but to make it fair and equal for all of us; it is my job to make sure that these rules are not violated in any way...

Allan Evans

DaC Operations / Compliance Manager

LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

With Tom Quigley (Y33)

Careers Officer

I have often thought about what was probably the first serious interview that I ever had. My memory seems to recall it as meeting the Careers Officer.

Somewhat anxious, this meeting was to propose and direct me into the best way forward to earn a living, which would in turn lead me to be able to support and raise a family. And in all honesty, back in 1970 most of what would I had been advised I actually had no interest in - or even a clue as to what was to lay ahead.

It was a time of full employment, when CVs for the ordinary man in the street hadn't even been thought of and agency work was virtually non-existent - except in the White Collar sector. If a shop or factory advertised a job, you were interviewed or taken on as a trial. The thought of making a career in just one particular industry was never in my mind. That's just as well, because as I recall it I was told that a career in a bank or insurance company would suit the particular skills I had shown in school, as believe it or not, I was quite an academic.

What I never knew then, nor indeed did my Career Advisor, was that despite the skills I had shown, the thought of spending my life enclosed in an office looking at the same walls and nowadays a computer as well would have felt totally alien to me. Having spent my first year of



employment in Tesco's before moving on to working on the 'black stuff' - ie tarmac laying and concrete gangs where like so many others before and after me, I even stood on the corner of **Cricklewood Lane** in the early hours waiting for any lorry or van drivers who were looking for labourers for a day's pay; a far cry from what was recommended and at the time I probably regretted the advice offered.

But I digress. I assume that there are still Careers Advisors / Officers in schools and it gets me wondering: Is the advice given still the same with the obvious of submit a good CV, apply on line for a job that is probably already gone or taken and only being advertised to make the company look impartial and fair and to further their image as an employer of young people.

It even gets me thinking as to who advised

the Career Officer to become a Career Officer? How would the interview go?

"Well you seem to have no idea about what to do; perhaps you can use that skill in persuading others to do exactly that!"

Young Taxi Drivers

The old saying goes that as you get older, the policeman get younger. That proverb had a lovely twist to it when one of my recently passed-out Knowledge students - 24 year old George - picked up a somewhat worse-for-wear young lady in Camden on a Friday night in his cab. The young lady soon started being sick and George immediately pulled over. Whilst not too happy, George had the good sense of not putting himself in the vulnerable position of getting into the back of the cab in order to try and help the young lady.

Amazingly, George saw a policeman walking along so he ran over and asked the policeman to come and help. The policeman came to the cab, looked at the girl, then looked back at George and asked: "Where's the taxi driver?" When George replied that he was the driver, the copper said: "Bloody hell, mate, you're a bit young for a cabby...!"

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online



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Dial-a-Cab driver and Vito owner, Gary Cox, looks at the current spate of catalytic converter thefts and offers Call Sign readers some advice...

WHERE'S MY CAT!

seem to be quite so busy these days. Well it is a means to an end.

The following may give you some ideas as to why you're so attractive to ugly men – the type that steal catalytic converters from Vito taxis...

A diesel engine, when working, will produce via exhaust gases what is commonly known as black soot. So a catalytic converter is fitted internally within that exhaust system to catch those offending gases. The part of the exhaust holding the 'cat' can be seen if the wheels of the Vito are turned onto a full lock - just handy for a scallywag to get into with a hacksaw blade, which in turn will also cause much damage in the process. The 'cat' has in its centre a honeycomb core made up of *palladium* - which is silvery white in colour and ideal as an alternative to gold and silver, alongside platinum and the equally rare and expensive member of the platinum family, rhodium. Say no more!

So the only problem your little scallywag will have left is shifting it once it

has been removed from the taxi, as scrap metal dealers tend to give customers cheques and not cash. Hmm, I wonder why that is?

So if you decide to follow my advice, go into a garage and ask for a 'cat lock' but expect to pay just under £200. Or you can always take the gamble of losing a couple of grand for a 'cat' replacement – not to mention two days off work at the least and a trip to the **DaC credit union** in Hackney Road!

Then again, you could buy a proper cab and watch the nasty little man trying to crawl under it as you laugh to yourself; after all, if the new Vito engine is all it's cracked up to be, you could be tempted perhaps? The only question is how much? How much!!!

"Hello can I book my cab in for a cat lock please. When do I want it? Er, yesterday please..."

**Gary Cox (046)
Call Sign Online**

Taxi Driver Of The Year Dinner and Dance

'Remembering those less fortunate than ourselves'

The *Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund* presents their *Annual Dinner and Dance* on Saturday 7th November 2015
It will be held at the: The Holiday Inn Regents Park, Carburton Street, London W1W 5EE

Reception 6.15pm for 6.45pm dinner. The cost of tickets has been held at last year's prices: £65.00 per head. As usual, tickets will include an excellent four course meal with half a bottle of wine per person and of course the evening is complemented with dancing to an excellent live band.

With your support, *The Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund* is able to make substantial donations to the taxi trade charities that support them.

Don't be the one to miss this great night out; come along to the Holiday Inn Regents Park and enjoy the good food and great company.

This event will prove to be an enjoyable and memorable occasion for all.

*Please complete and return the form together with your cheque made out to TDYCF to: Russell Poluck MBE (Hon Chairman)
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Sorry officer, it was worth a try!

Along with around 200 supporters and many others who joined in, Call Sign was at the SaveTaxi demonstration in Whitehall right opposite the gates to Downing Street. Brilliantly organised once again by taxi driver's wife Artemis Mercer, the Prime Minister – wherever in the world he was – would have heard the cacophony of noise consisting of taxis, cars and bus drivers hooting.

Like the recent one outside TfL's Victoria Street office at Windsor House, in addition to drivers, the demo saw families gather to make a point, but always with a smile on their faces – although the South African World Cup has a lot to answer for when it introduced the vuvuzela to the world! They blasted out non-stop for the whole two hours – mainly blown by driver's children with seemingly boundless energy and apparently huge lungs!

Once again the event was covered by TV news and Artemis put the trade's case forward in a succinct manner. TfL via their COO of Surface Transport Garrett Emmerson again claimed that they apply legislation fairly and equally and that Uber complies with private hire licensing requirements.

With a breakdown of talks, further demos have been organised. One is on October 5 at Windsor House between 14:00 – 16:00. Others are "rolling" demos. They are on 13 October from the TUC to Friends House and return (15:00 – 17:00); 19 October from Hogarth - Hammersmith between 08:00 and 10:00. There is also one on October 28 from Tower Bridge to Wandsworth Bridge via all the Thames bridges. That one is scheduled from 16:00 to 19:00.

Cliff Giffin (C55) asks Call Sign to quieten the vuvuzelas!



Well I am part of the taxi trade!

The PM wasn't in!



Reply to David Lessman

In the Mailshot section of the September Call Sign, David Lessman (D19) asked a question that was taken to the following month's Board Meeting by Company Secretary Howard Pears for discussion. David wrote:

"I have been fortunate to cover a couple of fixed price account rides recently and whilst I bemoan the fact that some have been considerably under-priced, on a time basis they represent reasonable value. However, I regard it as most unfair that not only do I then lose 7.5%, I have to pay VAT on top, making a 9 percent deduction. Would the BoM consider removing the variable subscription on fixed price rides?"

Howard Pears told Call Sign: "Further to David's letter regarding fixed price trips attracting 7.5% subscription, I can confirm that I presented his letter at last Friday's Board Meeting (4 September) and the principle of removing the variable subscription was considered by the Board. After an in-depth discussion, the Board agreed that as fixed price job offers do not attract any penalties if they are viewed and rejected and that members are fully aware of what they receive for completing the trip (including the 7.5% subscription), the current system and pricing policy should be maintained.

What must also be remembered and considered is that weekly fixed subscriptions are currently £10 plus VAT compared to £30 plus VAT previously charged."

Mike Son leaves the DaC Sales Department for Buck House to become a...

TOURIST FOR THE DAY

And then a (grumpy) taxi passenger as well...!

On 10th September it was my wife's birthday and I decided to take her to somewhere she has always wanted to visit - **Buckingham Palace**. And what a great day it was!

I assumed that we'd have to queue to get into the Queens Gallery, Royal Mews or the State Rooms, but no. Yes, security was strict but that didn't interfere with the staff's eagerness to help. Even though there were hundreds of visitors, any questions were answered with courtesy and a smile.

Visiting the Royal Mews was fascinating. Again we had a very knowledgeable and friendly guide who told us about the history and many other aspects of the Royal Carriages. Being close-up and personal was quiet an experience. The most recently built Queen's Royal Carriage was built in Australia with a battery operated heating system and electric windows in addition to a CCTV camera!

Until recently changing over to a new **TX4**, I was the long-time proud owner of a fairly well-used (ok, old) **Metrocab**. So as you'd expect, I was intrigued to see one of the Queen's Limousines on display - an absolutely pristine example of how a limo - also not new - should look. As some **Call Sign** readers may know, former Board Member **Tom Whitbread** was a member of the late **Queen Mother's** chauffeur team. Looking at the limo in front of me, I had to wonder if that was the car Tom used to drive because he was always a stickler for keeping his cab ultra-clean.

Ok, so that's the tourist bit done and you may well ask just what the relevance of a Buck House article is with regard to Dial-a-Cab? Well, quite a lot actually; there's courtesy, cleanliness and good business sense for starters!

I have been a licensed London taxi driver for fifty years and like you, I often feel angry with the manner in which **TfL** and our 'mate' **Boris** are apparently indifferent to the plight our taxi industry finds itself in. And again, like you, I often feel spirited about our future.

But - and it's a BIG but - that doesn't make me want to be rude to our passengers, because they are our business. But downright rudeness was something I experienced a while ago.

I had to take a cab from **Fenchurch Street Station** to **Hackney**. The result was that I received a volley of verbal abuse from the driver - not one on DaC I'm pleased to say. He told me that he didn't want to go to Hackney and that it wasn't worth his while because he'd now have to sit in traffic coming back to the City. I looked at this dope - perhaps unsurprisingly dressed in a filthy shirt and shorts, with a partition window so dirty that it wouldn't have surprised me to see mushrooms growing through it! But I needed to get to E8 and had to insist that he took me.

On route he continued to give me 'verbal' about his life problems and traffic conditions, while throwing in the occasional obscenity. I really had taken all I could stand and as politely as I could, I asked if he would mind being quiet and just to get me to Hackney.

When we arrived, I decided to let him know I was a London cab driver and didn't take kindly to his manner and the fact his clothes and the state of his cab wasn't doing our trade any favours. To make this story more exciting, it really needed for him to tell me that he couldn't care less and that I should just 'eff off'! But he didn't and actually apologised for his behaviour. Dull for **Call Sign** perhaps, but at least a small saving grace for the trade.

Quite astonishingly, a few weeks later I saw the same guy again on the rank - although it was he that recognised me and he again apologised. This time his cab was clean and so was he. I didn't ask why he had been like that, but assumed that perhaps it had just been a bad day. But would that have been an excuse? Sadly not, because we all have the occasional bad day and can't just take our anger or annoyance out on passengers.

Even though drivers feel they are being disenfranchised by Transport for London in favour of minicabs, we still need to represent ourselves to the public and business sectors as courteous, smart and knowledgeable. There are too many cab drivers that are scruffy in their clothes and whose cabs are filthy. We are supposed

to be the finest taxi service in the world and we need to show that not just by being knowledgeable, but also by being courteous and smart.

Back to Sales

I work within the DaC Sales team under Keith Cain and we are constantly trying to open new accounts, but that is proving to be much more difficult than it ever used to be due to the ever-increasing cost reductions of the competition. However, there *has* been an increase in the number of accounts opened but drivers should understand that account clients are constantly asking for reductions in their total travel costs, which of course include taxis.

As you may already be aware, we do offer 'Economy' trips that are in the main are for longer journeys but which sometimes can be up to 25% below the metered fare. This is proving to be of interest to both existing clients and others who are getting to know about our cost saving strategies via word of mouth. Everyone in the Sales team is working hard in introducing DaC to potential clients, completing very complexed Tender documents for large corporates (*see Keith Cain's article on Tenders in this issue...Ed*) and following up when accounts are opened, so what is really soul destroying is when many drivers reject so many trips - especially in the morning peak hours.

Perhaps it's time to think about withdrawing the 'reject' facility. Remember Private Hire drivers don't have an accept/reject button and take it as read that every offered trip is automatically accepted?

Remember Private Hire drivers don't have an accept/reject button and take it as read that every offered trip is automatically accepted?



Mike Son
DaC Sales Dept

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**Dangerously overloaded???**

Call Sign has asked that question many times. We know who reads this mag by our mailing list and the constant requests for extra copies from various governmental and licensing departments. We even know the answer because we've heard it many times. It isn't that they don't care, but there's nothing they can do about it! What we don't know is why no one can do anything. What are we talking about? Pedicabs' apparent invincibility against prosecution.

Call Sign has spoken to the police and the inference seems to be that Pedicabs don't pose any threat and cause no real problems. TPH / TfL seem to suggest that they are out of their sphere because they aren't licensed. We, London's taxi service, considered to be the finest in the world, are licensed. We cause no trouble when doing our job, but that doesn't seem to stop our drivers receiving PCNs for setting down, picking up or waiting for their passengers.

Call Sign has never stopped in our battle against minicabs. Not regarding their existence – we have long accepted that those companies with nice cars and drivers that obey the rule of law are a fact of life. What we don't accept is that they are the same as us and we never will.

Pedicabs have now not just become a nuisance; they have taken over the streets. Look at them on any dry Friday / Saturday night when they swarm around the West End like flies, stopping where they want, driving wherever they want regardless of road signs and constantly providing danger to other road users and pedestrians. Numbers of incidents regarding them hitting other vehicles are only low because they don't hang around and you have no chance of catching them in London's traffic.

Call Sign October 2015

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TfL? The Police? The Mayor?

PEDICABS: DOES ANYBODY CARE?

Let's just hope that there isn't another emergency inside a West End theatre or in the pedestrianised Leicester Square or Covent Garden, because Pedicabs just wouldn't be able to clear the routes they constantly block. Yet no one will do a thing about it.

The LTDA showed in a DVD some years back what would happen were a Pedicab to have a crash with a taxi. Call Sign has also seen instances of Pedicabs going over and another where the scarf of a Pedicab passenger became caught up in the bike's wheels. Yet no one seems to care.

Just look at these two photos sent in by Dial-a-Cab drivers. One driver followed an overloaded Pedicab for a mile and said it was so dangerous that he was amazed that they actually completed the journey without turning

**A policeman totally disregards a pedicab parked on the pavement**

over, because it looked as though they would on several occasions. The other shows Pedicabs parked on a pavement with an officer of the law just ignoring them. As the headline asks: Does anybody care?

Perhaps someone, somewhere, will have an answer and show that they DO care...???

Alan Fisher

Editor, Call Sign Online



Call Sign says...

TfL and OnRoute *But surely the numbers are OffRoute...*

TfL's new monthly magazine, OnRoute, recently hit the internet and we have to acclaim it as a well-produced and professional mag. It covers all aspects of Transport for London's business but is aimed mainly at Taxis and Private hire.

But the first issue of OnRoute caught our eye for one specific reason; it contained several items under the general heading of 'numbers' within TfL – needless to say the one concerning Taxis and PH was the one that not only interested us, but then shocked and frightened us as well. The figures are said to be correct as of 24 August 2015 when there were 85,742 licensed private hire drivers! Is that something TfL are proud of? We can't imagine that any of the larger PH companies are too happy with that either, but we wouldn't mind being TfL's bank manager, because that is one hell of a lot of licence fees! It's certainly a shrewd way to boost circulation as well! OffRoute or what???

25,067 Licensed taxi drivers

22,359 Licensed black taxis

85,742 Licensed private hire drivers

68,955 Licensed private hire vehicles

2,934 Licensed private hire operators

And as of mid-September 85,742 had become just under 88,000!!!

Face it, coming in from the suburbs first thing in the morning nowadays, the chance of finding a job - whether from the computer or on the street - is somewhat unlikely. Time was when you could sign on and get something straightforward, but that is now the stuff of legend.

So there I was at 5.45am in the Uxbridge Road, Harrow Weald when I saw a middle-aged woman waving from the other side of the road. Crikey! To be honest, I didn't think she was going to Canary Wharf but my immediate impression was that she'd probably just missed the bus to her early morning cleaning job.

So I did a 'uee', put the window down and smiled expectantly... until she said it: "Looking for business, love?" Well, a new sexual proclivity! Can you be turned on by a lady wearing rubber gloves, carrying a scrubbing brush and bar of carbolic soap! And I thought it was just me!

Although we're struggling, there is always someone worse off. Like the passenger I heard on his mobile recently. He was telling his friend: "Yes we're still house-hunting. We were looking in Barnes - Lonsdale Road actually. It was no good, not big enough for our wine cellar." How sad!

Anyway, the lack of work is a worry. A recent contributor to *Call Sign's* *Mailshot* reckoned he had the answer - ban drivers from wearing T-shirts. Really? What does he think would happen if the *Dial-a-Cab* Sales team said we could offer lower prices so long as customers didn't mind drivers turning up wearing a sombrero, clown's suit, six inch stilettos and carrying a trombone? I have a feeling they might say "Bring it on!"

But although I don't think a dress code

Another true story from Geoff Levene

GOLFING WITH MORRY THE MENSCH?



would make any difference, I did see a sight recently that set me thinking. It was during the hot weather; I had noticed a driver get out of his cab to buy a drink. He was quite short and wore a polo shirt and grey shorts made from tracksuit material. Nothing wrong with that, but there was something else that made me turn away with embarrassment. It was his underpants - they were longer than the shorts. Had he not noticed... or didn't he care?

So what can we do to make life less stressful? Both the good lady wife and I are classical music fans - actually we like all music from **Bach to Chas 'n Dave**. I also like **London Greek Radio** because listening to that music is like being on holiday!

I know Mark Twain said it was the perfect way to spoil a good walk, but golf is very popular with the Cab Trade. I've never played it myself, but for some reason I was reading the memoirs of that doyenne of Jewish-American golf, Drewster 'Droozie' Goldberg. The book - 'Schmooze with the Droozie' recounts his

time at Kaplinsky's Hotel in the Catskills. He was there on the day when a special foursome set out to play. It comprised Meyer Lansky, Frankie Nussbaum, Morry the Mensch and Sollie Schvitz. Lansky was leading when Sollie birdied the 17th by chipping in from 25 yards. So Sollie won. Lansky took it in good part and it was said to be just coincidence that Sollie was found in a block of concrete the next day.

My friend Joe plays every Sunday. So on one particular occasion, he enjoyed his round, grabbed a salmon beigel and arrived home to find he had a full house. As well as his wife Sally, son Ricky and daughter Michelle, there was Uncle Lew and Aunties Rose and Sylvia. It was decided that they would all go out for tea. Sally's coat was hanging over the bannister at the top of the stairs. She went almost all the way and then reached up. And that was when it all kicked off. She overbalanced and fell down the stairs. Michelle began having a panic attack; Lew started clutching at his chest as Rose sat down with a bump. Joe ordered Ricky to get a bag for Michelle to breathe into. He quickly came back - carrying a plastic Tesco's carrier!

"A paper bag, you muppet," Joe roared, "I want to save her, not suffocate her!"

Joe phoned 999, explained and left the operator to ask: "So how many ambulances do you want???"

There's nothing quite like a nice relaxing round of golf...

Geoff Levene
Call Sign Online

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Winner 2010

Winner 2011



Licensing fiasco!



Call Sign's September Editorial told the distressing story of a driver (we'll call him **Bill**), whom we didn't name at his own request and who after using the Post Office 'Check and Send' service to renew his licence, then rather stupidly forgot about it and during a police check in Docklands was pulled up as to why he couldn't produce his licence. He showed them the Post Office confirmation and receipt for payment and the police allowed him to carry on working. One week later, he was arrested by firearm carrying police for fraud because he was driving without a licence – even though he had paid for it and the police had previously said he could continue. The delay was with the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service). The police later told the driver that no charges would be laid against him, yet three months later and he still could not work as no licence had yet arrived.

Now **Call Sign** has heard of a similar story, but on this occasion the driver is happy to be named. **Paul Lashmar (B21)** – whose dad **Bob** has been on the circuit since 2000 – called us and relayed a sad story.

Paul's licence was on the verge of expiring and he, like **Bill**, applied via the Post Office service. His licence was due to expire on 12 September and Paul admitted that he was late in applying – although most people would say that 6 weeks before the date should be more than enough. In Paul's case, a very close family bereavement was the reason that everything got put onto the back burner. However, the DBS – who Paul had both written to and met personally – advised him that it would be months rather than weeks before he could get his licence! Paul told **Call Sign**:

"I've got a family, a mortgage and bills to pay; being told that I would be unable to work until the licence arrived was terrible news and I really didn't know what to do. It

wasn't that my payment hadn't arrived – they'd already had it for 44 days – but they said they couldn't do anything until 60 days had passed.

"I first contacted the **LTDA** and asked if my trade organisation had any way of helping me get my licence. The short answer was no! Their only advice was that if I needed to go to work to feed my family, then I should just go. I couldn't believe they were telling me I should break the law. They did add that they would support me if anything happened – ie if I was caught! But who would then have the police record – the **LTDA** or me? What if I had an accident and my passenger got hurt? Would my insurance pay out and would I be charged with driving while uninsured? What if the injuries were much worse? Surely that advice is wrong because it is encouraging people to break the law and that could affect the rest of their working lives. There was no way I was going to risk my licence."

Paul then spoke to an advisory service that is part of the Met Police and they told him that re-licensing was running "months behind and not weeks."

Paul phoned **Call Sign** and told us his story and the reason why he had been late in applying, but there was little we could do to help other than to write a letter to **London Taxis Private Hire** explaining Paul's circumstances, including the bereavement, and to ask if they could do anything to speed up the system. But we advised Paul to think very carefully before going back out to work because of what occurred to **Bill** in the first case and the treatment he later received – ie being arrested and then waiting even longer.

From 17 June 2013, the Disclosure and Barring Service (which was formed by the merger of the Criminal Records Bureau and Independent Safeguarding Authority) introduced changes to the way they operated. The result appears to be ever-longer delays

because current advice is that applicants who haven't yet received one, should apply for a renewal pack around four months before their current date expires.

So we have to wonder why a process that should be simple in today's modern hi-tech world is taking almost one quarter of the year – and for some drivers even longer. Perhaps we should also ask ourselves whether the sudden influx of private hire drivers – according to last month's **Call Sign** up to 2400 per month – is affecting the time our licence renewals are taking because four months is ridiculous.

However, in Paul's case there was a happy ending. He told **Call Sign**: "My licence is on its way and I can't thank you enough for your emails to **LTPH**. But can I say to **Dial-a-Cab** drivers that when it comes to your licence renewal, give yourself plenty of time. You may well need it. But without your licence, the problems will quickly mount up..."

Following the now infamous City Hall meeting called off after the Mayor decided that the taxi drivers present were Luddites, the meeting reconvened later in the day. Labour GLA group leader, Val Shawcross told the Mayor about the appalling situation re licence delays and suggested temporary licenses after some drivers had waited up to 18 weeks, paid the fee, completed all the necessary paperwork, but could not go to work. The Mayor blamed a shortage of 20 staff and said there was a backlog of 37,000 applications after admitting that was partially due to the number of PH drivers entering the trade. He said he would act immediately. The headline of Licensing Fiasco is probably an understatement...

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

Call Sign competition winners collect!

Four lucky winners collected their prizes in the latest **Call Sign** competitions with **Paul Churchill (A04)** and Call Centre controller **Curls Villiers** picking up their **London TAXI board game** prizes, while **Paul Pavlou (W11)** and **David Ballard (N28)** struck gold by both winning a pair of VIP seats at the **O2** to watch one of **One Direction's** last ever concerts before splitting because after Wednesday 3 December, they will have toddled off in four directions!

The London Taxi board game is available at Amazon, but make sure you put London in before Taxi.



Brian Rice presents Dave Ballard with his One Direction tickets while Paul Churchill takes his Taxi Board Game home to play!



STOPPED TOO SOON...



Daren Morley gives some useful credit card advice

As the **Contactless** credit card upgrade continues apace, an easy enough procedure, some drivers have enquired what happens if they have already stopped the meter at the end of the journey and the passenger then offers a credit card, because they can't seem to process the card normally by selecting 'To Card' at that point?

So *Call Sign* spoke to Daren Morley, Dial-a-Cab's in-house trainer, who advised the following...

"If the meter has been *stopped* prior to the passenger offering a credit card when the driver is expecting to be paid in cash, simply press the 'To Clear' button and the MDT will revert to the choice of 'Clear' or 'To Card'. Press the 'To Card' button; fill in the 'Pick-Up' and 'A/D' Zones as you would normally when accepting a credit card trip and then process as normal. If you re-start the meter, it means the MDT won't read the original trip and therefore correct meter reading, leaving the whole process open to question because the driver has input the fare manually.

"Alternatively, treat every trip as a possible credit card journey and fill in the 'To Card' fields at the very start in preparation for processing normally at the end of the journey. You can always go 'To Cash' if you're handed the readies," he advised with the Morley smile!

"The other obvious option to maintain provenance of the correct meter reading is to leave the meter in the 'hired' mode until either cash or a credit card is produced by the passenger, and then proceed as you would if it had been made clear to you that the

passenger was intending to pay by card from the outset. I doubt if anyone is going to object if you then manually reduce the metered fare by 20p or so if the meter were to over-run by a unit," he told *Call Sign* "and keeping the passenger happy makes for a pleasant atmosphere all round!

"This latter option is probably the safest bet, because if several passengers get in without making it clear that there could be multiple drop-offs and you stop the meter at the

first drop-off, you're going to have a problem when the remaining passengers give you further destinations, meaning you could lose out monetarily!

"Clearly, with the recent increase to £30 when passengers pay via their **Contactless** card facility, that is easier and quicker all round and a welcome improvement," Daren concluded.

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

PEDESTRIAN COUNTDOWN CROSSINGS TO DOUBLE

...and more 20mph zones to come in

The Mayor and TfL have announced that the number of **Pedestrian Countdown** crossing sites in London will be doubled by the summer of 2016. The Mayor had set TfL a target of upgrading 400 of the crossings technology by April 2016. That number has already been surpassed with more than 430 sites upgraded and TfL have now stretched the target by a further 400 sites, meaning 800 crossings - around 20% of all pedestrian crossings in London - will have Pedestrian Countdown by summer 2016.

The work forms a key part of the Mayor and TfL's road safety target to halve the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on London's roads by 2020, compared to the Government baseline. During 2014 the plan helped reduce the number of pedestrian KSIs by 7% compared to 2013.

The news comes one year after London's first Pedestrian Safety Action Plan was published. Across the Capital, huge improvements for pedestrians are now well underway with hundreds of junctions improved to make them safer.

Mayor Johnson said: "Ensuring that London's streets are safe for all road users, including pedestrians, is a top priority. Statistics show that we're heading in the right direction, but we've got to do more to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. This is part of the action we're taking on a number of other fronts, including significant improvements to major road junctions and working closely with London's boroughs to ensure roads with high footfall are even safer to use."

Added to that, almost 25% of all London roads are now 20mph and earlier this year plans were outlined for eight new pilots of 20mph speed limits on the TfL Road Network. Lambeth and Hackney are also seeking to introduce 20mph on their roads later this year.

See page 3, 'From the Editor'



Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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Tenders

Activity of the **Dial-a-Cab** Sales team during August is normally very lean due to the holidays, but I am pleased to report that we have been kept very busy dealing with a couple of tenders, one of which is so in-depth that we have six people working on it! I have completed many tender documents in my time, but I have to say this particular one is by far the most testing of them all.

To give a bit more understanding about what I'm referring to, before Christmas we demonstrated our booking platform to this particular client and in the New Year they held one-to-one meetings to gather more of an understanding as to how it worked. Some weeks later they compiled a questionnaire in which we were asked to participate by answering. Fortunately our response was accepted by the client and we were short-listed onto the next stage.

That next stage consisted of us answering a company risk assessment, which covers all aspect of our own company security. This document wanted answers about the security of our own systems, from entry to the building, security of our computers and our data security. All these documents are very concise and contain pages of questions. Many questions simply ask for a yes or no answer, but it does become complex when you answer yes and are then instructed to give a full explanation about how we carry out our procedures.

Soon after the Risk Assessment arrived, we received the Request for Information document. This document covers all other areas of our business and operation.

In addition to answering the questions, we are also asked to attach our own business documents such as a *Business Continuity Document*, *Health and Safety* and *Environmental Policy*, which concerns our carbon footprint etc. We have also been asked to supply proof of our Staff attending data security training sessions. We have to include flowcharts that show our operation procedures; these have been regarding from how we handle bookings, to how we process a trip query from a client. The pressure on us at the moment is to complete both documents in the time frame set. We will do it, but it does take senior staff away from their day-to-day activities, which in turn can hold back other important projects slightly.

I think it's fair to say that major clients and indeed the smaller ones are starting to follow the same procedures. You just cannot take any type of risk in not carrying out due diligence on prospective suppliers. Once these documents are sent in, another evaluation takes place and the successful supplier will be invited to participate in a pricing exercise. That successful supplier will be made aware of the decision in November, with the contract going live in January 2016.

We can only hope that the clients final choice is us, but despite all of the hard work being put in by people here, it could be all for nothing. But hopefully it does show that to win an account really takes a great deal of time and effort.

Fixed prices

There are more fixed price journeys going through the system and I'm pleased to see that some clients are ordering more of these trips with us, which is obviously good news. However, drivers have been expressing their

disappointment to us when they see that the meter reading was far more than the fixed fare. It is unfortunate that we have had to offer clients some fares at low prices, but with everyone being cost conscious it really is a case of doing that or not getting the trips at all. Although these trips are going further out of town, it is difficult for us to show on the trip offer the area or place rather than just the post code. We do understand that post codes do not always mean much to some drivers, but if you do accept a longer trip and are not sure where it is, just ask the controller to assist you and if you feel for any reason you are not happy to do it, they'll take it off you and re-dispatch it.

No rejects?

I was disappointed to receive feedback from the Contact Centre that in the first week back after the holidays, coverage in the morning in the south west areas was causing us serious problems. So much so that clients were threatening to close accounts. I found it difficult to believe about the type of trips being affected, but to say it didn't impact on my feelings would be wrong. This may sound like an old cliché, but I have just tried to explain the lengths we have to go through to win accounts and service from staff and more so, from you the driver, is what keeps them using us.

I have never been an advocate of forcing drivers to do trips, but my frustration at this time is being pushed to the limit and I am now thinking that perhaps it may be time to consider that. We have to look at the morning procedures and changes must be made. We are renowned for our service, but if it breaks down we have to fix it - no matter how difficult a decision that is...

Keith Cain
Head of Sales

DaC Sales Report

With Keith Cain



Off with the old!

Signifying the **Dial-a-Cab** re-branding, the new taxi door and seat logos are being steadily rolled out across the fleet, endorsing a bright modern image and 'reflecting' the DaC taxis presence on the roads of the capital. As the evenings draw in, potential passengers cannot fail to see our cabs' new logo reflected in even the dimmest street lighting!

But what few subscribers will realise is the full extent of the re-branding process and the attention to detail that was involved.

Not only was great care taken over the design of the door/seat logos, the update extends to the small nameplates affixed to the MDT itself and credit card PED fitted in the cab.

At DaC House, much of the stationary has already been changed as the process of modernisation continues to proceed, with even the computer monitors in every office throughout the building displaying the new logo as the default screen saver image.

A spokesperson for the company told **Call Sign**: "Every facet of our operation is steadily being changed to our updated logo to reflect the bright modern design of the 21st century and drivers are requested to attend our Roman Way depot at their earliest convenience to facilitate the change over to the new logo onto their taxis."

And whilst there, you can have the PED updated so that it can accept the new maximum 'contactless' payment which recently increased from £20 to £30...



Roman Way technician Satha carefully removes an old DaC logo before fitting the new one...

Alan Green (E52), Call Sign Online

In the last of this series, Cab Guide, City of London Guide and City of Westminster Guide Bob Woodford looks at another infamous peace time London explosion...

Blast!

I am sure many readers will have noticed the memorial (pictured below) on the North Woolwich Road underneath the Docklands Light Railway line close to Pontoon Dock Station when taking fares to or from London City Airport.

At 6.52pm on the evening of 19th January 1917, London's biggest ever explosion took place and destroyed a large part of the area of **Silvertown** – which back in those days was in the borough of **West Ham** in Essex and today, of course, falls within the London Borough of **Newham**.



A quick glance at the date and you'd assume that this **Blast** was a result of **First World War** enemy action – but that was not the case. Silvertown was once a huge industrial area nestled on the banks of the **River Thames**, directly to the south of **Victoria Dock** and east of **Bow Creek**. It was developed in the mid-19th century and took its name from **Sam Silver**, one of the first to set up a factory there.

Silver's enterprise imported natural rubber from India, which was instrumental in producing some of the first **Bell's** patent telephones in the 1880s. Dangerous and toxic products were handled and made in the Silvertown enclave, such as caustic soda, sulphuric acid, creosote, petroleum and manure – so you can just imagine the kind of stench that filled the air!

Workers and their families lived in rows of densely packed terrace houses between the docks, railway lines and industrial premises. Now here's the clincher – a Silvertown chemical plant owned by **Brunner Mond & Co** adapted its plant in 1915 for the production of **Trinitrotoluene** (known to most as **TNT**) – a highly explosive substance in great demand on the Western Front.

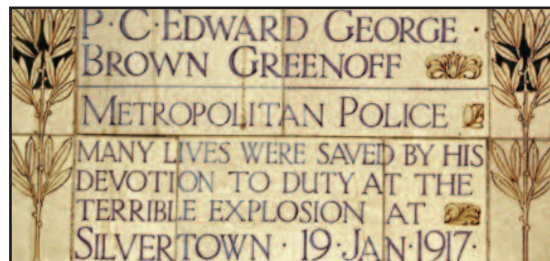
Initially the company resisted the official approach from the Government because of the factory's proximity to residential housing – **TNT** was extremely hazardous and many munitions workers found that it turned their skin canary yellow, caused vomiting and chest pains.

On this catastrophic night, a fire started at the factory resulting in the detonation of high explosives – **Blast!**

A large part of the munitions works was instantly destroyed, together with several nearby buildings and streets. The damage was felt on the opposite bank of the Thames when a gas holder exploded on the **Greenwich Peninsula** (now the site of the **O2 Arena**) – the **Blast** was heard over 100 miles away.

As you can imagine, there was an immediate response from the local community, but the geographical isolation of the area hindered the rescue work. The casualty list was a tragic 73 people dead, over 300 injured and as many as 60,000 properties damaged to some degree with the cost of the damage estimated at over £250,000, an enormous sum in the early part of the 20th century.

Check out the photo of a fire fighter's dwelling on Fort Street, which you will find next to the old Fire Station. And whilst looking for the memorial, the old Fire Station (thank Boris for shut-



ting it down) has a plaque on the wall (see pic) dedicated to the firemen and their families.

In **Postman's Park (Little Britain)** there is a plaque (see pic) dedicated to **PC Ed Greenoff** who helped to evacuate the factory.

An enquiry into the incident judged that Silvertown was a totally unsuitable place for a **TNT** plant – the report had been kept as top secret until the 1950s. I recall many years ago, an episode of **Upstairs, Downstairs** when the maid, **Ruby**, showed up at the house covered in soot and shaken by the **Blast** and although she received some sympathy from household members above stairs, the **Mr Hudson / Mrs Bridges** combo ordered her in no uncertain terms to 'pull herself together'!

Go and check those memorials out if you are unaware of them.

I saved the biggest **Blast** for this final article in

the series. Next month sees my new series: They think it's all over – **IT IS NOW!** which will take a look at 'London's Lost Sporting Heritage'.

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online



Keith Reading
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According to recent figures from the Department for Transport, the number of private hire vehicles in London has risen by 26 percent since 2013 with 62,754 private vehicles operating in the capital. The figure had increased up to more than 67,000 by July with the number of licensed PH drivers up to 83,300 – and in the two months since then they have increased by another 4,500. Taxi licenses are pretty much the same as they have been for the past few years – round about the 25,000 number with licensed vehicle numbers hovering at around the 22,300 mark.

Then three months ago, London Mayor **Boris Johnson** suddenly announced on LBC radio that there might have to be a limit on the number of actual PH drivers in London and that he was considering forcing drivers looking to drive a minicab, to pass a Knowledge-like test to prove their geographic expertise – albeit much easier than the Knowledge test London taxi drivers have to undergo.

As a by-product, the topographical tests – carried out by TfL rather than the proprietors – would also confirm that the driver could speak and understand English.

Many taxi drivers – including the Editor of *Call Sign* – long believed that a test of this type would give too much respectability to PH drivers. **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Ken Comerford (F89)** has given his view in this issue's *Mailshot* and he too is against a mini-PH KOL. Views are – and will probably stay – divided, but it does look as though the test will come to pass. When I asked **Alan Fisher** if he still thought the tests were unnecessary, he admitted that he had changed his mind and that even though he still believed they would give PH more respectability, in his view they were now a necessary evil and he now believed that they should be backdated by 12 months and that every PH driver licenced in the past year should have to be tested by TfL.

But Boris wasn't the first to come up with the suggestion of a topographical test; there is one person on DaC whose view hasn't changed. DaC Chairman Brian Rice has maintained for years that we should have just such a test, warning *Call Sign* readers over the years that without such a test, numbers could go through the roof. That has now happened and instead of cutting the numbers, TfL have just made the roof higher!

In 2006, the then PCO released a document putting forward a PH Topographical Knowledge test. In his **Chairman's Report of March 2006**, Brian criticised it claiming that their version involved just the ability to read a map and added that any institution able to satisfy the PCO's requirements for carrying out the assessment would be allowed to do so and that included the PH operators, who could then test their own drivers! The Chairman went on to wonder in print as to how many would actually fail! He added a somewhat tongue-in-cheek comment: "I suppose the idea of just testing yourself would be something of a non-runner!"

Brian ended the report by saying: "I must say it makes me smile just a little when I think of how hard our licensed industry worked during and after 1998 in an endeavour to get

Topographical Testing for Private Hire?



2006 and Brian Rice was querying in *Call Sign* why PH didn't have to have a topographical test

'Topographical Testing' included in the Act. I think we really hoped it would be a watered down version of the Knowledge but which at least would have consisted of some effort on the applicant's behalf. What we have actually got is a map reading exercise."

Over the following years, the Chairman continued to mention his belief in *Call Sign* of having a topographical knowledge for PH drivers. In 2012 he expanded his views to outside of DaC by including them in the **End of Year Report**. We were already in an economic downturn, yet minicab numbers were growing unabated, passing 65,000 compared to the 25,000 in the taxi trade. Three years on and that taxi number remains almost the same! According to Brian, the reason for the expansion in minicab numbers was because

of how easy it was to acquire a PH licence. He said that the test to gain their licence should become more complex, reiterating it to the 1998 Act which stated that PH drivers should undergo a topographical knowledge test. That wasn't in the original draft, but was eventually included after lobbying from the **London Taxiboard** and the Radio Circuits in particular. The London Taxiboard no longer exists, but the debate goes on.

The Chairman added that the test at that time was a simple map reading exercise, which did not demonstrate a topographical knowledge. He said it should be replaced immediately by LTPH as it was in the legislation and that he believed LTPH were not testing PH drivers to the standard the Act suggested and ended by saying that entry was just too easy.

One year later and the DaC Chairman was at a Taxi Drivers open forum held at TfL's **Palestra**. Brian again brought up the fact of a topographical knowledge being originally part of the remit to become a Private Hire driver. It was 'noted'!

Now at last the Mayor seems to agree and has come up with 'his' suggestion for a topographical knowledge! Would a topographical knowledge test suit Uber? A spokesman said they agreed with the Mayor re language requirements but were currently happy with their own in-house testing. What a surprise..

Michael Toomey
Call Sign Online

"Not enough ranks at UG stations"



Leaders of the Labour group at the London Assembly, **Val Shawcross**, has said that whilst a 24 hour tube service in the capital will be good news, with just 77 out of a total of 142 London Underground stations having taxi ranks outside, how will passengers get to their homes if they do not live close to the stations.

She has called for taxi ranks to be put in at stations currently without them.

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Earlier this year, one of TfL's seemingly never-ending Consultation documents asked for views on whether passengers should be able to pay by debit or credit card in all London licensed taxis. It closed in July and we are awaiting the result.

But unlike previous Consultations, this one caused a split in driver's views with many saying that because they were individual businesses, any decision on individual taxis acceptance of cards or otherwise should be a personal one and totally dependent on that driver's point of view.

Other drivers have pointed to **Uber** and suggested that many of the undoubted passenger numbers they have taken from us went to the app not because of cost, but because they knew they could pay by card without having to ask several taxi drivers and hope that one would say yes.

Bus and Tube users can pay by card and if you actually offer cash to a bus driver, he/she will be unable to take you – something that many would say is every bit as bad as not accepting cards.

According to TfL, around 50% of taxis currently accept cards but their research also suggests that a huge majority of taxi passengers (83%) want to be able to pay by card in all licensed taxis.

The licensing authority also gave reasons given by drivers as to why they did not want

Should credit card acceptance be compulsory?

to accept cards. These included that it should be up to the driver if they accepted card payments; others said they didn't like the fee charged for processing the cards or that it was unsafe and they had security concerns. Some said passengers were still happy to pay cash while other drivers quoted the perceived difficulty or cost of installing the card payment equipment as a good reason not to go that way.

TfL have said that should they decide to go ahead following the Consultation, then it could be in all newly licensed taxis from October 2015 and in all licensed taxis from April 2016.

This letter was received by *Call Sign* from our former music correspondent, **Mickey Lappin...**

"There were five cabs on the hotel rank I was putting on with me being the fifth. One of the other four drivers was TAXI Newspaper columnist Alf Townsend who was standing with the other drivers close to the hotel entrance. Passengers approached them and then started walking back to the hotel reception; suddenly one of the other drivers spotted me at the back and asked if I took credit cards. I said yes and they sent the passengers over to my cab. The job came to £30 and

they gave me an extra £5. As for the other drivers, they were probably remarking about how the game was finished while letting a £35 job almost disappear into a PH vehicle.

Alan, it really will be dead if we fail to quickly realise that it is a customer-led industry that we're in. I know loads of fellas like those four. They rant and rave at how we are letting the trade down and then come out 'for a few quid' and twist the knife that's already in our backs by not moving with the times.

Alf is a great one. I remember his article about being unable to get a cab at Sainsbury's on Finchley Road. He slaughtered cab drivers and he had to - of course he did - eventually phone for a minicab."

All radio drivers are fitted with credit card machines, but that doesn't mean that everybody accepts cards. *Call Sign* would like to hear your views on why they should or shouldn't become compulsory...



Mickey Lappin thinks we are letting the trade down by not making card acceptance compulsory

Learning the drill!

Regular visitors to **Dial-a-Cab House** will be familiar with the construction work going on next door. Previously, demolition activities of the old office block did not really affect us other than the noise of **Bob the Destruction Worker** busily tearing down the bricks and mortar that was, in order to clear the site for a new residential property to be created on the fringe of the City of London and right on our doorstep!

Every new property needs new foundations to support the intended new development, so the bigger the proposed property, the stronger the foundations need to be and that's why a **Rotary Piling Drill** - akin to something out of TV puppet series **Thunderbirds** - had to roll into town!

Not quite **International Rescue** but this machine does a similar job by drilling deep down into the ground and excavating earth to allow reinforced concrete to be poured into the remaining orifice to support the building that will ultimately sit on top. Big buildings need big foundations and that means a B-I-G drill!

On the day *Call Sign* visited **Dial-a-Cab House**, the Piling Drill was right up against our party wall - uncomfortably close to the Society's office and car park below. So close, in fact, that the immediate area of the rest hut and parking spaces alongside the wall had to be cordoned off for safety reasons.

A spokesperson for DaC told *Call Sign* that sometimes the drill was working so close to our building that when standing on our roof it was possible to actually step onto the drill's platform at the top of the drilling machine... 'If you were so inclined,' the spokesperson added with a grin!

Because cracks have already appeared in the party wall on our side as a result of the ongoing building works adjacent to the office, the party wall is now monitored every 20 minutes while the drilling continues to operate so close to our property. Monitoring markers are also mounted on the building works side of the wall to check the stability of the brickwork.

There's a drill to be learned – but not one we expect to need again!



Big drill for big drilling!

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

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**Covering London
and the Home Counties**

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

Brethren of the Whip



Jehu and Jarvey

You may recall that a couple of issues back that our colonial troublemaker, **Norman Beattie**, sent the editor a clipping of a newspaper from 1887

concerning the case of **Mary Hanniwell**, who it is alleged drove a cab in London disguised as a man. I looked into the case of Mary and other women associated with the trade in the *September* issue of *Call Sign*, but this month I am concentrating on the description of Hanniwell, given by that 1887 newspaper clipping as "...this female Jehu."

Older readers may recall a series of trade anecdotes by **Jehu** - the pen name of **Simon Hogan** - that appeared in *Taxi* magazine in the 1990s. In what was probably the best-ever collection of personal memories regarding the history of driving a cab, Simon used the full wealth of his 90 years, most of which was behind the wheel and continued writing until he passed away in June 2000.

Hogan used the pen name Jehu as it had been popular within the Victorian press in describing a cabman, sometimes as an honorific title, other times as a pejorative.

It is in the *Old Testament* book of *II Kings Chapter 9* that Jehu (pronounced Yeh-hu), having been appointed king, drives in a chariot towards the city of **Jezreel**. A watchman on the city walls warns that "...the driving is like that of Jehu, the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously."

Jehu is then reported as killing **King Joram** who came out from the city in his own chariot; then he chased after and killed **King Ahaziah**, the king of **Judah**, who tried to flee from Jezreel. Once inside the city walls, Jehu, observing Joram's mother **Jezebel**, looking out from an upper window, ordered three *eunuchs* attending her to throw her from the window and down into the street. Jehu then drove his chariot over her body - "trod her underfoot" - before going to have a celebratory feast.

It was therefore an easy link for scribes in the 19th century to associate the furious driver from the Bible to the furious driving of the hackney cabmen and coachmen, but the link with the trade goes back even further.

The earliest reference I am aware of in describing a hackney coachman as a Jehu dates way back to 1636 in a pamphlet entitled *Coach and Sedan - Pleasantly Disputing Place and Precedence*. The pamphlet was very much against the rise in hackney coach-

es and was published just two years after **Captain Bailey** set four cabs on an impromptu stand near the May Pole in the Strand. On page 38, a vicar accuses coach, a personification of a hackney coach:

"If you have gotten your cup (like Jehu) ye drive as if you were mad and become dangerous in the night."

The cup the vicar refers to was the one that was poured over Jehu's head, thus anointing him King. For coach, it meant that the hackney-men of the day drank far too much beer and were a danger to one and all.

The term **Jarvey** - describing a cabman - is harder to pin down, though it was used in much the same context as Jehu. Latter sources imply the term arose from the cabmen themselves after it was felt that a cabman named **Jarvis** was wrongly convicted of manslaughter on the testimony of several children.

In 1878, **Charles Jarvis** was tried at the **Old Bailey** for driving over two men, close to his home in **Effingham St, Pimlico** (later demolished to make way for the **Churchill Gardens Estate**), killing one and injuring the other. Many of the witnesses who identified Jarvis were children ranging in age from 9 to 11 years, all of whom knew Jarvis as a neighbour.

There are two problems with this theory; firstly, Jarvis was acquitted despite the evi-

dence of the children - a cabman testified he was still on the rank in **Lupus St** at the time of the accident. And secondly, the term dates well before **Charles Jarvis** ever saw the inside of the **Old Bailey**.

In 1810, a clergyman somehow managed to leave £800 in a hackney coach. After realising his loss, the unfortunate man killed himself. A few days later it was noticed that a hackney coachman "...who had been poor, was now driving a new coach with two horses."

Police arrested him and on the understanding that if he returned the remaining £700, the £100 he spent on his coach and horses would be treated as a reward. Jarvis immediately produced the £700! The name of the coachman is not revealed, but as early as 1810 the press were using 'Jarvis' as an embodiment of the whole trade.

In less than a year 'Jarvis' had been corrupted into 'Jarvey' even though the two terms were still used synonymously with the trade, before the latter became more prominent.

Jehu and Jarvey; neither a firm of solicitors nor a comedy duo, just another piece of history that is all but lost...

**Sean Farrell (B39)
Call Sign Online**

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Summer's here and what could be more enjoyable than a short golfing break to some not-too-distant places in France along with some golfing pals. Last month, Simon played at Hardelot les Pins on his first day, around 35 minutes from the Eurotunnel shuttle...

Day 2

After hopefully a good night's sleep following the Hardelot les Pins round, you will be ready to take on the magnificent Belle Dunes Golf Course at Fort Mahon Plage - a 30 minute drive from our Le Touquet base. And that's what we did on the second day of our short break.

This course was opened in 1992 and I played it soon after that. It already felt mature back then and it is even more so now.

It isn't far from the sea, although Le Manche is never in view. But it's a course that is both links and pine wooded at different stages of the round. What you will also find are huge sand dunes on almost every hole and when the wind picks up, the low whistling sound created certainly adds to the experience!

In summer, the greens at Belle Dunes are lightning fast; try to be below the hole or a missed downhill four-footer becomes an uphill ten-footer! But nothing is perfect and the one possible thing that lets it down are the par 3s, which are much the same length -

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

SIMON'S GOLF COURSES



The beautiful backdrop to one of the par three holes

not that they're poor, just too similar.

However, you *will* be tested here. Keep on the Fairways; precise iron play to the contoured fast greens is the order of the day.

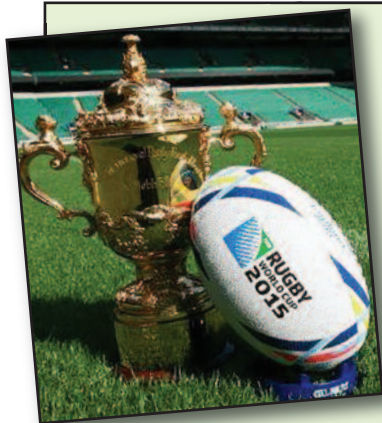
Then it's back to your choice of the Hotel Bristol or Le Nouveau Caddy Motel at Le Touquet and then out to one of the many restaurants such as Le Paris, where I recommend Le Coq Hardi - rustic French cuisine

all served up by the owner at a very reasonable price.

Next month sees our third and final day of golfing just the other side of Le Tunnel. See you then...

Happy golfing...

Simon Wallis (M11)
Call Sign Online



Rugby World Cup

For the next four weeks, London will continue hosting two Rugby World Cup venues as well as a number of Fanzones. During that time road changes will continue and special arrangements are in place for taxis (and private hire vehicles), but roads in the area will be exceptionally busy...

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Montfichet Road and Westfield Avenue will be closed when matches take place at the Olympic Stadium. Road closures come into effect around 45 minutes before each match ends and once in place, taxi ranks in Montfichet Road (Stratford Station) and Westfield Avenue (Cow Pub) will not be available. Instead, a marshalled taxi rank will operate in Warton Road / Montfichet Road. Access will be from the High Street and Warton Road. Ranks in Roundhouse Lane and Meridian Square will continue to operate throughout matches.

Twickenham Stadium

Taxis can drop off passengers in London Road between Cole Road and March Road before kick offs. There are two ranks in operation at Twickenham Stadium: London Road (rank opposite March Road

extending back to Cole Road for approximately 24 taxis). There is also one at Arragon Road. This rank is for approximately 31 taxis.

A shuttle service will operate from London Road for any disabled taxi passengers who need assistance getting to the stadium.

Several roads around the stadium, including a section of the A316 between London Road and Hospital Bridge Road will be closed to general traffic for three hours before kick-off, during the match and two hours after the match.

Fanzones

There are Fanzones at both venues. The Olympic Park Fanzone is next to the Stadium and the Twickenham Fanzone is in Old Deer Park. There will also be a Fanzone in Trafalgar Square with rugby-themed activities taking place. The Final on 31 October will be screened live at Trafalgar Square and roads around there will be closed between 12:00 and 22:00.

London match dates:

Saturday 3 October: England v Australia, Twickenham 8pm

Sunday 4 October: Ireland v Italy, Twickenham 4.45

Wednesday 7 October: South Africa v USA, Olympic Stadium 4.45

Saturday 10 October: Australia v Wales, Twickenham 4.45

Saturday 17 October: Quarter Final, Twickenham 4pm

Sunday 18 October: Quarter Final, Twickenham 4.45

Saturday 24 October: Semi Final, Twickenham 4pm

Sunday 25 October: Semi Final, Twickenham 4pm

Friday 30 October: Third Place play-off (Bronze), Olympic Stadium 8pm

Saturday 31 October: World Cup Final, Twickenham 4pm

On October 5th, the High Court in London will start to untangle the legal position regarding London. DaC Board Member Joe Brazil looks at some of the relevant facts...

To strive, to seek, to find... and not to yield!



vehicles. Under current law this is not possible because, apart from bringing criminal prosecutions, licensing officers can only take action against vehicles licensed in their own area. Our proposed reforms will make it possible for licence conditions prescribed as part of national standards (which will form the entirety of Private hire licence conditions as well as the minimum core of taxi conditions) to be enforced by any licensing officer against

any licensee.

Now as you can imagine, this could work in our favour if it removes PHVs that are obviously touting to a great extent throughout their working day, but would this alleviate the problem of "a perceived lack of interest in enforcing existing rules?" **Transport for London** would, I'm sure, disagree. I would proffer that without the introduction of new rules, you would imagine bit of a catch-up on existing statutory regulations would be a breath of fresh air.

Existing regulations regarding disability access have been glossed over with a PHV culture pervading London. You have to ask why, with the introduction of as many as 85,000 licences being issued to PHV drivers, there has been no enforcement regarding disability access within their fleets? If TfL truly want to reduce those PH numbers, enforcing disability access on all vehicles is the way forward.

Enforcement regarding the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** is inadequate and surely not to be condoned; calls of shame should be directed to all the authorities involved. The terms in the following act seem unambiguous in their description of vehicles; they neither use the term taxi or PHV but use

the term *transport service*. Surely that includes services that describe themselves as ride sharing? Within existing regulations, this following description relays the letter of the law:

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

1995 c. 50 PART III Goods, facilities and services Section 21ZA

"Transport service" means a service which (to any extent) involves transport of people by vehicle.

Pretty clear cut, I would have thought, so let's have a real bit of enforcement; one that doesn't just involve newly prescribed offences and let's get the authorities to move forward with us. These regulations exist now. Transport for London should not allow the implied criticism of "a perceived lack of interest in enforcing existing rules" to be the headline that condemns all authorities for not imposing or acting now, future actions are supported by law at this time. We comply. We bought the vehicle or had it adapted at our own expense, we changed the face of London to a more caring community and a more inclusive London. The introduction of non-compliant vehicles lessens London as a whole.

We remain the gold standard for taxi transportation across the world, whilst our competition instead reaches new depths with the race to the bottom mentality that is pervading London's PHV transportation. Let the standards be raised to that which we have achieved, or, non-compliance should be punished. These are national standards after all and London, as we know, should at all times be open to all.

Starting on October 5th, the High Court will start to untangle what is the legal position regarding London. We know where we stand. Where we finish, greater minds will decide...

Joe Brazil
DaC Board Member

Inside Dial-a-Cab, you see the industry in its totality. You watch the machinations of government and law meddling incessantly with an industry that has taken hundreds of years to reach the worldwide gold standard, that of which we have achieved. What follows are my thoughts regarding some proposals and the state of some of the regulations at this time...

When you take the time to view the **Law Commission** reports, you soon come across areas that could have far reaching implications for us as taxi drivers. It shouldn't come as any surprise that steps are in place that could create problems and add expense to our industry; as usual, this comes in the manner of a double-edged sword that could end up monetising indiscretions by all. And whilst we may be carrying out our lawful business, we will be under even more scrutiny than usual. Below is an extract from a Law Commission report. The fixed penalty possibility is of special interest...

The Law Commission (LAW COM No 347)

Enforcement (Chapter 13)

1.42 As with the administration of the licensing system, enforcement is carried out by licensing authorities. However, most of their powers only extend to their own licensees. Furthermore, many licensing enforcement officers told us that their powers were not sufficient to tackle the breaches of conditions and licensing law they encountered.

1.43 Many of the problems with enforcement derive from the lack of adequate resources and a perceived lack of interest in enforcing existing rules. These are not issues that legal reform is apt to address. On the other hand, we make a range of recommendations to enhance licensing officers' powers, including granting them powers to stop a licensed vehicle on a road without the need for a police officer to be present; to impound vehicles for touting and to issue a fixed penalty notice to a person whom they have reason to believe has breached any provision in national standards.

1.44 We also recommend that such powers should apply in respect of out-of-area

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Terry Vandome (V26) has been driving a cab for 30 years, the last 25 of them with **Dial-a-Cab**. But it wasn't that part of his life that *Call Sign* wanted to know about. On this occasion it was his personalised number plate: **M1 WFE**.

"It all started some years ago," said Terry, "I hankered for a **Porsche** sports car, specifically a **911 Carrera** and have to admit to being something of an anorak, but my then-wife gave me an ultimatum - it was either her or the car so I never got to get that Porsche!

But years later I heard about the number plate and it brought back memories of not getting the Porsche. But it certainly grabs the attention," he said smiling as he pointed to his pride and joy.

"Other cab driver's say they can relate to it, having to spend so much time on the road to earn a living - especially with the downturn in business of late and the high costs associated with running a household, not to mention a young family growing up fast and needing to be fed and clothed!"

As Terry pointed to M1 WFE, he continued with his story...

"I regularly get comments from younger cab drivers saying that they know what I mean, referring to the long hours many find necessary to work when supporting a family,

MARRIED TO THE CAB!



Terry and his number plate

pany up north and went through the usual DVLA procedure and have now had it for around five years. But my thirty years in the game have shown me how it was and how it is now for taxis. The economics have certainly changed over those years.

while ladies often throw me a wry smile. I even get requests from people to take a photo alongside the cab. Usually it's tourists, who get a picture of themselves with the iconic London taxi to show off back home - while at the same time they ask to also get in my unusual, personalised number plate into the bargain!

"I bought the number from a coach com-

"The late **David Kupler** - 'Kupcake' to most long-timers on DaC - was going to write a poem about me and the number plate but never got around to it, and now, of course, sadly it is too late. He is sorely missed," Terry said thoughtfully.

Alan Green (E52)
Call Sign Online

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK



This issue goes back 48 years to a Joe Toff Editorial from the August 1967 issue of **ODRTS News Magazine**...



EDITORIAL

Lords and Mountview amalgamation?

In the July issue of the **ODRTS News Magazine**, a letter from **Radio Taxis (Southern) Ltd** was published offering their thanks for the co-operation of **ODRTS** when **Mountview** experienced a power failure. This goes to prove just how much closer the two major London radio circuits are working. This of course is extremely gratifying and one must wonder why all this didn't happen sooner, nevertheless the possibilities of being even closer are imminent. Amalgamation cannot be dismissed and one's eyes must surely boggle at the thought.

The business potential is boundless and makes one's heart beat a little faster. Of course there would be many obstacles to overcome; for instance the administration differs a great deal, the set-up is different, even the calling of jobs is different. But the drivers and the cabs are the same. At the next meeting of the **Joint Radio Committee** (consisting of **Mountview** and **Lords**) one item on the agenda will be to discuss ways and means, pros and cons, possibilities and analysis of amalgamation.

It is not the intention of the writer to sway you one way or the other, but if ever there was a reason for you to write in your views, this must surely be it. Providing sufficient space is available, every letter will be published. Now is your chance to give your opinion. This invitation also goes out to any of our friends on

Mountview who care to drop us a line.

This brings me to the point of apologising to **Radio Taxis Southern Ltd**, as their address published in error by the printer in our last magazine was our one at **144 Shirland Road**! This prompted **Mr Freddy Franks**, **Mountview's** Secretary, to enquire whether a pantechinon was available to enable him to bring all their office equipment over to us. Sorry Freddy!

Once again please note the extreme caution you must exercise with your radio sets in the boot of the cab. It appears that the last warning went unheeded as a report came in a few days ago that a set had been saturated in oil and it was only with the co-operation of **Pye** in cleaning up the mess that the subscriber was not presented with a bill for a very large amount of money. So take care; if you do carry oil in the back, make sure it's well wrapped up otherwise it works out about £100 a pint!

There are one or two points I would like to make, mainly for new subscribers and also to refresh the memories of some of the old 'uns. **POB** means that you are technically **POB** until your meter is in the *for hire* position. One new driver received a reprimand for coming in on *open* call when his meter was still not cleared although he stated he had been paid off. As far as this circuit is concerned, while the meter is still engaged or on stop, you are **POB**. One other driver was given seven days suspension for not having his radio on. He was on a credit account job and was called to be re-directed but could not be contacted and the Society was put to an extra expense of over £3 to send a second cab to pick up. As many of these credit accounts are important news items, delays can be serious as well as expensive. Continual contact with the driver is one of our main assets and of vital importance to some of our customers. Please bear this in mind and also that a suspension for any period means that no radio service will be given to the offender, but subscriptions must still be paid.

As you are aware, there have been some changes made in the Control room, the most important of which is that there is now a manager on *both* day shifts - namely **Bill Browne** and **Reg Frost**. We wish them both luck and hope for your continued co-operation with them.

And of course, the best of luck to you all...

Joe Toff (B04)

ODRTS News Magazine Editor



Simon, Martin & Phil

DaC drivers respond to last month's article...

In the last issue of *Call Sign*, we published the aims/promises of **Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson – Boris** for short – as given to this magazine just a few short months before he became **London Mayor** in 2008. We remembered how he had courted the taxi trade's vote by paying visits to our watering holes, drinking our tea and constantly referring to us as the best taxi service in the world. As he enters the last part of his term in office, we asked if his aims/promises to this trade matched up to what he had actually done...

Simon Scott (O40): No, not done too well as far as I can see. I think he treats it like a Saturday morning job!

Martin Adkins (F47): Definitely failed! Got us to vote for him but not fulfilled his promises.

Phil Butcher (A98): I don't think he's kept all of his promises, so it's a 'No' from me.

BORIS: How did he do?



Francis, Andy & Tony

Francis Robinson (G18): He's making progress yes; but with little time of his term left, he's struggling.

Andy Dale (L57): No, unsuccessful. End of...!

Tony Coleman (J6): Successful? No, he totally shafted us!

Trevor Wright (G13): Just two words. Failed miserably!

Dave Ellis (J11): No, he has not kept his promises. He openly campaigned for votes as a 'friend' but has not delivered.

Brian Tredler (D79): He has only been successful for private hire in my eyes, certainly not for taxis!

Jackie Kott (Y88): All those promises, yet he has done nothing for the taxi trade. He had the



Trevor, Dave, Brian & Jackie

power to limit the explosion of private hire, yet did nothing. We have now been referred to by him as Luddites, which my dictionary describes as one who is opposed to change or innovation, but he *has* changed by not keeping the promises he made post his election!

As of publication time, just one opinion came out in partial support (see above from Francis Robinson). We also had many drivers who offered their opinions, but whose responses were unprintable in a family magazine!



© Call Sign Magazine MMXV

Win £100 for a caption!

Dial-a-Cab drivers have to pick up in some difficult places while often completing difficult manoeuvres! If you can think of an amusing caption to this photo of one such example, send it to Call Sign at callsignmag@aol.com or drop it into Driver's Reception for the Editor's attention and the best caption will win £100.

Captions via snail mail or email by Tuesday 13th October and the best one will receive £100...



Royal Wharf introduction with free brekkie!



Royal Wharf is a new development in **Docklands** that comprises almost 4,000 new homes and a free breakfast introduced it to London's early morning taxi drivers recently by developers **Oxley Holdings and Ballymore**. The cab drivers pulled up alongside the Royal Wharf information centre and went from being peckish to contented within minutes!

The development will be on the corner of North Woolwich Road and Barrier Point Road – near Pontoon Dock DLR station.

Completing what has been the biggest 'Bash Boris' issue *Call Sign* has ever put out, we cannot allow the response to Boris Johnson's "Luddites" insult to the London taxi trade from LBC's James O'Brien go unmentioned! In his morning phone-in, Mr O'Brien said:

"Boris Johnson is a disgrace. His insult to taxi drivers at City Hall was one of the most reprehensible single public postures that I have seen anybody take, but as I said, I thought that he was pretty rotten before! He insulted every taxi driver in the country and I wish I had an objectivity switch so that I could come to it completely cold and fresh. But I can't because I have this belief – it may make me sound a bit undergraduate, a bit Citizen Smith, a bit mad leftie – but I can't help what I believe.

I believe that there is a class of people in this country, indeed right across this planet, who look at money and don't think that anybody else deserves it! I know it sounds mad, but I believe that **Goldman Sachs** and the people that set up **Uber** and Boris Johnson and all of his banker mates and politicians, I think they all look at London cab drivers earning in some case around the £60 or £70,000 a year mark – please don't phone to tell me you earn only a fraction of that – I know and I'm going back in time a bit as well. But just like the tube drivers – how dare ordinary people earn that sort of money. How dare tube drivers earn that type of money? They're peasants! Do you remember the rhetoric! And that's what I think they believe when they look at taxi drivers. £60 or £70,000! These people don't need that sort of money! How can we get our hands on some of it?

They see this huge ocean of cash that washes up every year in a city like London actually going into the pockets of the people doing the work and they ask themselves how they can get a piece of the action? In fact, you know what they say to themselves? How do we get *all* of that action? How can we get people to do the driving for peanuts, allowing us to trouser the difference?

If you are one of my friends behind the wheel of a taxi at the moment and if I said it to you in theory about another profession a couple of years ago, you'd have shot me down in flames! And that's where my politics comes into it, because I truly believe that they pick us off one by one. Look what they've done to the tube drivers, look what they've done to the teachers. If teachers go on strike over the poor pay they receive, the nation is successfully turned against them. We've been turned against absolutely everybody. It is expressing audacity to believe that even if you're not a member of their funny little club that you should still be able to earn a decent living.

Even if you drive a tube train, you should still be able to earn enough to live in the city where you work. If you drive a cab you should still be able to earn enough in the city where you serve, but "they" hate it! And this unholy trinity of Boris Johnson, his friends in the media and the banking sector have conspired to create an environment in which the taxi drivers of London are being filleted, gift wrapped and served up to the hedge fund managers

JAMES O'BRIEN LASHES OUT AT THE MAYOR!

"Luddites insult is a disgrace!"



and investors in the City. And if I sound like a Communist, then call me a Communist! I'm not, I'm the very opposite to a Communist; I think every taxi driver in the City should be able to operate independently and continue to earn a decent living.

I thought there was a chance they'd win until it happened at City Hall and the Mayor called the taxi drivers Luddites. No, it's not a four letter word or a particularly profane intervention; it's not a particularly pungent insult... but my God it was a carefully considered one! Boris Johnson has dedicated his entire life to creating an image of someone who bumbles from one encounter to the next and is almost taken by surprise when he finds himself standing on a stage bumbling to thousands. Absolute fraud! He knew what he was doing at City Hall. I think it was an act of deliberate provocation.

You have a few hundred cab drivers who turned up to make a perfectly valid protest and the Mayor effectively insults them and then looks surprised when they get cross in return and calls off the whole meeting in retaliation to their retaliation! A reaction to their reaction. That is almost Victorian in terms of the contempt it displays for the ordinary man and woman. What's that? You don't like being insulted? We'll close the meeting then.

The first taxi drivers in the world to use an App to take bookings were London cab drivers. Luddite means you don't like new technology. So it wasn't just a fraudulent posture, it was a lie.

And yet for me – and I want to be wrong – it's huge because that is him giving 'the finger' to the taxi trade. That is not him saying anything that sounds remotely like he wants a happy resolution. I think this is his parting shot to his friends in the City.

"Before I go chaps, here's the taxi trade, yes, absolutely marvellous! We'll have to pay the drivers a little bit, but the minimum wage should cover it!"

And that's what he's doing; he's gift wrapping you, he's putting a stamp on your backside and he's dropping you in a letterbox marked: My friends in the City!

Here are the three areas of offence: If in

your youth you had decided to pursue a profession that involves three or four years of training, a hefty investment and a lifestyle that is very specific, if you had done that and you'd paid for it and signed up for it and you signed a contract promising x, y and z for a, b and c and then they just offered a, b and c to anybody who hadn't done the training, made the investment or lifestyle choice?

And that thing about no one else being able to use a meter; yes we were just joking! We know it's been enshrined in law for decades, but I'm Boris Johnson and I'm going to instruct TfL to completely ignore it. You know that thing that protects your entire profession from being picked off and filleted, well we're getting rid of it! Well we're not even getting rid of it, we're just bringing in a new company funded by Goldman Sachs and letting them ride roughshod over all the regulations that you signed up for when you took that decision to invest and train.

This conversation is not just about taxi drivers, this conversation is about nurses, it's about teachers and tube drivers, railway workers, it's about soldiers, police officers, it's about fire fighters; it's about absolutely everybody who does a job that is not dedicated necessarily to producing profit for private investors.

That's why they hate the taxi drivers! It's because "they" are not getting a piece of the action. And that's why they hate the tube drivers because they don't think that peasants should earn £50k a year. And that, ultimately, is why they hate all of us and laugh and rub their chubby little hands with glee every single time they succeed in turning us against each other.

Taxi driver; you, my friends, have been a big part of that problem over the years and now it's your turn, so you'll get the same defence that all those other constituencies deserve. At least you will here.

Do you think the insult by the Mayor of London to the Capital's taxi drivers was a nail in the coffin of the cab trade? And in the interest of balance, you can give me a ring to tell me why you won't mourn it. I will! I took two cabs yesterday. The first was a black taxi to go and meet some friends in the pub. The black cab cost me quite a few quid going from east London crossing the city towards Camberwell but he absolutely knew where we were going and even the pub we were being dropped at. The second was an Uber that my friends booked; we got into it and you can just insert your own nightmare!"

His callers then took over...

Thanks to the **Dial-a-Cab** driver who sent us a review on **The Times CEO Summit** that was held in July and for some reason, **Call Sign** wasn't invited to! Because of that obvious oversight, it meant that we missed a speech from the Government's Business Secretary, **Sajid Javid**, that mentioned this trade alongside that of our "friends" at **Uber**.

Mr Javid said that the Government would continue supporting innovation and disruptive tech because it would "lead to higher productivity." That led him onto **Travis Kalanick's** baby, **Uber**, which after destroying the taxi business in **San Francisco**, is now attempting to take over the world regardless of who or even what stands in his way.

At the time of the meeting, there had been violent protests from **Parisien** taxi drivers that led to its **UberPOP** ride-sharing service that used unlicensed drivers, being banned in France. The same happened with the German service.

Back to the meeting at **The Times** offices and **Sajid Javid**. Obviously not wishing to antagonise London's taxi drivers, whom he knew were already upset at the apparent favourable attitude **TfL** were treating **Uber** with, he announced that the Government –

Now we know who we're up against



Uber founder Travis Kalanick wants to take over the world!

obviously with the full knowledge of Prime

Minister **David Cameron** - would not bow to pressure from British taxi drivers!

He added: *"Berlin and Paris might want to ban Uber, but we welcome disruptive technology of that type and others. We want the best deal for customers. They will decide, and they have already decided with their wallets that they want to pay for that service. We can't stand in the way of technology. You can either embrace it and try and work with it or you can push it away. We benefit from promoting new technology, because ultimately it's in the interest of consumers..."*

Well, one good thing is that at least now we really know what and who we are up against. Don't we Mr Cameron???

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

London taxi drivers were at City Hall as demos took place all over Europe and the rest of the world. Call Sign's Mike Higgins reports on the Day of Action in New York...

Taxis World Day of Action – US Style!



On September 16th, members of the **New York Taxi Workers Alliance** held a professionally run demonstration with their members - and friends of the cause - in front of Governor **Mario Cuomo's** office on 41st Street and 3rd Avenue in **Manhattan**. The drivers' enthusiasm at the rally was a glaring contrast to the grey, bleak eye-sore of a skyscraper that the Governor has apparently decided to call his political home. The demo addressed many of the talking points that drivers are concerned with today in regards to the assault by the multi-billion dollar corporate *Death Star* known as **Uber**. Many speakers voiced their opinions about how the **Uber** fuzzy math is lowering ALL driver wages and creating a global, part-time 'gig' economy - and destroying *real* jobs. However, one of the things that immediately struck me was the pointed attempt by the **NYTWA** leadership to address the problems of yellow cab drivers, green car drivers, black car drivers ...and **Uber** drivers! What? Huh? Screeeeeee! Uh... ya kinda lost me on that last part, gang!

I was there as a **yellow** cab driver to support the cause of helping exploited yellow cab drivers! Isn't it a bit early in the game to start singing kumbayah with every driver in the City? And, speaking frankly, I'm not exactly in

'hug therapy' mode to help 'drivers' who have been ripping me off every day and who are now in the financial jack pot because their little scheme is apparently going down the tubes!

Where was their support... for me? For us? On Fifth Avenue during rush hour stealing street hails??? At Terminal 4 JFK hustling tourists??? Oh puhleeeeee! Would you DaC guys come out in support of minicabs? Thought not...!

I think that's another reason why there were only about 1,000 drivers at the rally out of 55,000 valid hack licenses. They *want* to support a just cause; they *want* to support solid leadership. But with all due respect to the great people trying to help, there have to be some *basic* distinctions between representing folks who are being driven out of business, versus trying to bring them under one tent with people who are putting them out of business (in my opinion). Where was that in the dialogue? In any event, it's another example of just how far we have to go and how lazy we – yes we - have all been in addressing these issues. So to those tireless organizers who truly want to help, let's get back to basics and support the yellow cab drivers first; then we can deal with the Workers of the World.

Mike Higgins
NYC Taxi News for Call Sign Online

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Mailshot



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Phone numbers

Hi Alan

I think it may be helpful if the DaC number was printed on the new door logos. A few customers have asked if there is a phone number (when handing out our cards) as they prefer to phone. I think it would have been an extra advertising tool at no extra expense and maybe it's not too late to make an amendment?

Shawinder Singh (H66)

Both phone numbers – credit cards and cash – are on the back of the handout cards and also on the “fingertips” ad on the tip-up seats. There are no current plans to incorporate it onto the door logo and I think the old logo with its optional cash strapline ad shows that very few drivers would have it put on if offered, because very few did! Sorry Shawinder ...Ed

Peter's tea stall v the hotel!

Dear Alan

A large hotel chain are refurbishing the building behind **Anne and Peter's tea stall** on the north east corner of **Finsbury Square EC2...** and guess where the entrance / drop-off point is going to be? Yep, you've guessed; right outside the tea stall's back door! So it will be interesting to see if **Islington Council** stand firm in the defence of the small businessman and woman and your cheap cup of tea.

One thing is certain; Anne and Peter are not going to back down and go easily into the night for anybody. Besides, just look at all the extra business they could pick up from hotel guests. I mean, can't you just imagine Peter being asked to send over two bacon rolls and a mug of tea for room 86!

Gary Cox (O46)

There are lots of DaC drivers that use Peter's tea stall among the many taxi drivers who work after 6pm and late into the night. While Gary's point may have been laced with his irrepressible humour, it's important that small businesses aren't totally steamrollered in the same way that TfL are trying to rid London of the worlds' oldest – and still best – licensed taxi service. It really wouldn't look too good for the hotel if Peter's had to close and taxi drivers

decided to sit in the hotel lobby to eating their packed lunches before forming a queue outside for the hotel loo ...Ed

Minicab prices

Hello Alan

I only pass this on as it was told to me, but a friend of mine (not a cab driver) said he was quoted £98 by **Addy Lee** from **Heathrow** (terminal not known) to the **Westbury hotel**. He had enquired, as a cousin of his was arriving from Australia. I said I thought our price (from the rank) would be between £60 and £70 depending on traffic. However, his wife works for the **Sunny Hill Private Clinic** in Hendon and as a special favour (!!!) their usual local minicab firm wanted £58, which also included parking at Heathrow.

Michael Harris (F79)

Hi Mike, I think most now realise that Addy Lee are not cheap on cash but chop the price for account clients. But I'm sure someone from DaC would take them to LAP for £58 if it was at a time when traffic was reasonably light, but I doubt you'd cover it if it was a meet and greet from the airport back to town. And what about the Docklands minicab company that does LAP for under £40! And we never even mentioned the U-know-whats...Ed

Merger 1

Dear Sir

Can you please thank Mr Tremlett for an open and truthful view - and my own personal thoughts on our merger! Maybe this is a time for an open and honest discussion for all drivers to attend together with Board Members, if legally allowed.

Gerry Mulcahy (W78)

If it ever goes beyond the talking stage, then there would have to be a number of meetings - including one to change our status ...Ed

Merger 2

Hello Alan

In the last issue of *Call Sign*, there was a reference and brief discussion about the possible merger. Without doubt, I am sure that our most capable Chairman is dealing with this in the best possible interests of the Society and its members. However, the idea that two failing organisations would become a successful enterprise when combined seems strange to me, and not a policy usually recommended by management consultants or business schools. Yes, I am familiar with the concepts of economies of scale, improved efficiency, reduced overheads etc, but our problems are more to do with sales and demand for our

product than proficiency and capability.

It is of course possible that a satisfactory outcome may not be achieved; the legal, structural or financial terms offered may in the end be unacceptable, or Radio Taxis may find another partner. Indeed, some of the delays could be because they are also negotiating with a third party. Do we have a Plan B in place, or at least under consideration?

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Brian Rice replies: That's fair comment Laurence, but I believe economies of scale could make two or three loss making businesses into a viable proposition. RTG approached us with their thoughts, which we did not believe were acceptable. Consequently we went back with our own suggestions just before they moved premises and we have not heard anything since.

Are there other plans? Well there could be, but as you stated earlier who wants to get involved with failing organisations? When you state "...our problems are more to do with sales and demand for our product than proficiency and capability," I couldn't agree with you more. We offer a first class service that is unfortunately being undercut by 85,000 minicab drivers that are increasing at the rate of 2,500 per month and whilst that system prevails then all licensed radio taxi circuits will struggle to survive.

Live and learn!

Alan

Having now given the *September Call Sign* a full read, I got a chuckle out of reading my little contribution in Mailshot and seeing some interesting info on the 'TX3 that I did not know.

I also liked the article on my good friend **Bill Munro's** retirement. He is an amazing repository of knowledge on vintage taxis and a pillar of our club, the **London Vintage Taxi Association** - in addition to being a really nice chap!

John Freeston, LVTA Vice Chairman Windham, New Hampshire, USA

My office library has several of Bill's excellent reference books on taxis constantly staring down at me, yet for some strange reason I spelt his name Monroe instead of Munroe. Sorry Bill! Perhaps a book on how to spell the names of taxi trade celebrities should be considered! ...Ed

Authority???

Hi Alan

This is in response to Brian's Chairman's Report re a PHV topographical knowledge...

Mailshot



Brian, I sit uneasy about your ideas for PHV taking a topographical test. I think it will give them a credibility they don't deserve and water down our own KOL. TfL should just stop issuing licenses. Fact is it's a huge income for them - more so than ours I suspect; *Ergo* gridlocked roads, empty buses, empty Taxis and empty PHVs. We need to be more robust in our demonstrations. By 'we' I mean all traffic vehicles that are goods services: Buses, Taxis, PHVs, Construction and Emergency services to help get rid of this shower in City Hall. Surface transport also, including Gas, Electric, Sewers, Fibre Optics, Maintenance and Repair / Upgrades. The old GLC pandered to influential lobby groups (no, I did not have time to reply to the Cycle Consultation). They were deemed not fit for purpose! Let's get rid of TfL and GLA and bring back sensible authority.

Ken Comerford (F89)

Brian Rice replies: You made me smile Ken; you reminded me of Wolfie in Citizen Smith with his 'Power to the People' and that's not being facetious. However, you might be too young to remember the television programme.

As you are probably aware, I am not a big fan of TfL and they should be doing so much more to protect our highly regulated trade, but regarding them ceasing to issue PH licences, they can't as that would be illegal. If a person meets the criteria of obtaining a PH licence, then TfL will have to issue one. There is not a limit on PH licences, just as indeed there is not a limit on Taxi licences. Consequently, I believe we should raise their standards and make it much more difficult for them to obtain a licence; it is not acceptable for a PH licence to be issued to everyone that applies. Our standards should never be lowered; we should endeavour to raise theirs. But it will come as a cost.

Regarding their credibility Ken, a licensed PH driver already has that in the eyes of the public. They believe that if he is licensed then he is ok, what we should be doing is trying to make it much more difficult to obtain that licence. I don't believe the new 'more qualified' PH driver will command more credibility with the public than PH drivers do at present.

Regarding having sensible authority, I couldn't agree more. But whoever it is will pander to influential lobby groups. It is a great pity that our fragmented Trade is not one of those groups!

Figures

Hello Alan

I read with some interest your article under the above heading on page 23 of the *September Call Sign*. I was wondering where you obtained the stats from as for some time I have been curious as to how the 15 year age limit is affecting the number of taxis on the road. I wonder whether you could help in this regard.

David Fletcher (O15)

The figures were genuine, David. They came from TfL at Palestra ...Ed

Terrible for London!

Hi Alan

Who among us would have ever thought that we could look back with almost fond memories of those days when the London licensed taxi trade was controlled by the **Public Carriage Office**? So now does TfL stand for Terrible for London?

Rodney Lewis (aka D77)

Hi Rodders, pleased to hear that your recent illness is now on the way out ...Ed

More on Sid Gold!

Dear Alan

Thank you so much for sending me the **Early Years of ODRTS**. It will come in really useful if my book on dad's life comes about because the Society really was a large and important part of Dad's life. When he first joined ODRTS, there were no such things as mobile phones or WiFi etc, but being able to keep in contact with Dad when he was out working through the ODRTS radio control room was absolutely incredible and a big weight off Mum's mind. She often sent messages or found out when Dad was coming home by phoning 'The Office'. It was OUR mobile phone system....lol! It was also reassuring to know that whenever Dad was out working, he had constant contact with the dispatcher and that a *Mayday* would bring him almost instant help.

I remember one incident when a driver and his passengers cut right in front of Dad, catching his car's rear bumper onto Dad's front bumper and they became locked together. Both vehicles came to a halt and Dad and the occupants of the other car got out. They were pretty big blokes and threatened Dad straightaway. He called in a *Mayday* and in no time other cabbies appeared from everywhere. One of the bigger cabbies then grabbed the guy who was threatening Dad and said that if he wanted to start with Sid, then he would have to start with him first! The attacker turned white, started bumbling and tripping over his

words. Then they gave Dad some money to fix his cab and they left with their tails between their legs. One for the good guys!

It's so hard not speaking to Dad any more, I spoke to him every day on **Skype** from **Florida** and miss him more than I can say. He was a Gentleman with a heart bigger than himself and my hero; the last 14 years without Mum had been so hard for him but he never complained about anything. They don't make them like that any more and if he is looking down, he'll have that wonderful smile on his face and be remembering his great times with ODRTS.

Thank you so much, Alan...

Larry Gold

Kissimmee, Florida

There are still a few copies of the **Early Years of ODRTS** brochure available. It details our early history from 1953 until we went over to Data transmission ...Ed

Next London Mayor

Hi Alan

Re the article in *September's Call Sign* on the Mayor's broken promises, when the next prospective Mayoral candidates write in our magazine touting for votes, can you ask him / her if they are going to shaft us every way like the present Mayor has...

Stephen Field (F99)

Oh ye of little faith! ...Ed

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