

December 2016

The largest online readership of any Taxi magazine

Call Sign



That TfL has pulled a blinder! I'll tell 'im the card reader don't work and when he gets in the back, you grab 'im while I go to the front and grab his dosh!



See pages 4, 13, 14 and 25 and make up your own mind about TfL...

PLUS... Brian Rice throws nepotistic charge at the Institute of Economic Affairs! (See page 29)



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

'What's On' again; if anyone wants something different drop me a note to alan@myfav.co.uk. I can only state the burst time if venues state their start and duration, if no duration I can only show the start times. Can I also wish you all a Merry Christmas...

What's On: December 2016

Venue	Event	Date	Venue	Event	Date
Royal Opera House	The Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 21:50)	01/12/2016	Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (550 attending)	13/12/2016
ENO-Coliseum	Tosca (Burst 22:15)	01/12/2016	Crystal Palace	v Man. Utd. (burst 21:45)	14/12/2016
QPR	v Wolves (burst 21:30)	01/12/2016	QPR	v Derby (burst 21:30)	14/12/2016
Evolution	Christmas party (900 attending)	01/12/2016	Tottenham	v Hull (burst 21:45)	14/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (600 attending curfew 01:30)	01/12/2016	WHU	v Burnley (burst 21:30)	14/12/2016
Alexandra Palace	Skeptika (Sold out- finish 23:00)	02/12/2016	Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:35)	14/12/2016
Evolution	Christmas party (1200 attending)	02/12/2016	Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party	14/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party	02/12/2016	Royal Opera House	The Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 21:50)	15/12/2016
Royal Opera House	Les Contes d'Hoffmann (Sold Out Burst 22:15)	03/12/2016	Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:25)	15/12/2016
ENO-Coliseum	Tosca (Burst 21:15)	03/12/2016	Evolution	Christmas party	15/12/2016
Charlton	v MK Dons (burst 16:45)	03/12/2016	Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (450 attending)	15/12/2016
Crystal Palace	v Southampton (burst 16:45)	03/12/2016	Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:25)	16/12/2016
Fulham	v Reading (burst 16:45)	03/12/2016	Evolution	Christmas party	16/12/2016
Tottenham	v Swansea (burst 16:45)	03/12/2016	Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party	16/12/2016
WHU	v Arsenal (burst 19:15)	03/12/2016	Charlton	v Peterborough (burst 16:45)	17/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Exclusive Christmas party 400 attending)	03/12/2016	Fulham	v Derby (burst 16:45)	17/12/2016
Royal Opera House	The Nutcracker (Burst 14:20)	04/12/2016	WHU	v Hull (burst 16:45)	17/12/2016
Millwall	v Braintree (burst 15:45)	04/12/2016	Alexandra Palace	Club de Fromage (finish 23:00)	17/12/2016
O2 Arena	Red Hot Chili Peppers	05/12/2016	Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:25)	17/12/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Fashion Awards (Sold Out starts 20:30)	05/12/2016	Evolution	Christmas party	17/12/2016
Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 21:50)	06/12/2016	O2 Arena	Red Hot Chili Peppers	18/12/2016
O2 Arena	Red Hot Chili Peppers	06/12/2016	Roundhouse	Adam Ant (Sold Out)	18/12/2016
ExCel	FinTech Connect (finish 18:00)	06/12/2016	Tottenham	v Burnley (burst 17:45)	18/12/2016
ExCel	Info International (finish 18:00)	06/12/2016	Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:30)	18/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (1200 attending)	06/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 21:50)	19/12/2016
Wembley Stadium	Tottenham v Moscow (burst 21:30)	07/12/2016	Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:25)	19/12/2016
ExCel	FinTech Connect (finish 18:00)	07/12/2016	Evolution	Christmas party (1000 attending)	19/12/2016
ExCel	Info International (finish 16:00)	07/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Der Rosenkavalier (Sold out starts 18:00)	20/12/2016
Evolution	Christmas party	07/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold out starts 19:00)	21/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (675 attending)	07/12/2016	Millwall	v Charlton (burst 21:30)	21/12/2016
Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 21:50)	08/12/2016	Evolution	Christmas party	21/12/2016
Evolution	Christmas party (2000 attending)	08/12/2016	Evolution	Christmas party (700 attending)	22/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (650 attending)	08/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold out starts 13:30)	23/12/2016
Royal Albert Hall	A Kylie Christmas (Sold Out)	09/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold out starts 19:00)	23/12/2016
Alexandra Palace	Mosconi Cup Pool (finish 23:00)	09/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 14:20)	24/12/2016
ExCel	Skills (finish 16:00)	09/12/2016	Evolution	Party	25/12/2016
Evolution	Christmas party	09/12/2016	Arsenal	v WBA (burst 16:45)	26/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party (650 attending)	09/12/2016	Brentford	v Cardiff (burst 14:45)	26/12/2016
O2 Arena	Madness	10/12/2016	Chelsea	v Bournemouth (burst 16:45)	26/12/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Kylie Christmas (Sold Out)	10/12/2016	Leyton Orient	v Crawley (burst 14:45)	26/12/2016
Arsenal	v Stoke City (burst 16:45)	10/12/2016	Millwall	v Swindon (burst 16:45)	26/12/2016
Brentford	v Burton (burst 16:45)	10/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 16:20)	27/12/2016
Leyton Orient	v Accrington (burst 16:45)	10/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 21:50)	27/12/2016
Millwall	v Shrewsbury (burst 16:45)	10/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Nutcracker (Sold Out Burst 22:20)	28/12/2016
ExCel	Skills (finish 16:00)	10/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold out starts 19:15)	29/12/2016
Evolution	Christmas party	10/12/2016	Millwall	v Gillingham (burst 21:30)	30/12/2016
Finsbury Sq Marquee	Christmas party	10/12/2016	Alexandra Palace	Darts Championship QF (Starts 13:00)	30/12/2016
O2 Arena	Status Quo	11/12/2016	Alexandra Palace	Darts Championship QF (Starts 19:00)	30/12/2016
Chelsea	v WBA (burst 13:45)	11/12/2016	Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold out starts 19:15)	30/12/2016
Evolution	Private wedding (300 attending)	11/12/2016	Brentford	v Norwich (burst 21:30)	31/12/2016
ExCel	BBC Music Awards (finish 22:00)	12/12/2016	Chelsea	v Stoke (burst 16:45)	31/12/2016
Fulham	v Rotherham (burst 21:30)	13/12/2016	Leyton Orient	v Cambridge (burst 14:45)	31/12/2016
Olympia Grand	Horse Show (finish 22:30)	13/12/2016	Evolution	New Year Eves Ball	31/12/2016

This table only contains 106 events of the 360 I found. I encourage you to download the full listing in larger print complete with the day of the week as well as date. It's at www.myfav.co.uk/wodec16.pdf

from the editor's desk

UCG demo

In times past, the **United Cabbies Group** seemed to want nothing more than attack **Dial-a-Cab** while using pseudonyms. Nowadays they have matured as a respectable trade organisation under the leadership of **Len Martin** and recently organised a demonstration that was attended by several hundred taxis going round and round **Whitehall**, bringing the immediate area to a standstill. The reason for the demo was one **Call Sign** has great sympathy with – **TfL's** poor management in regard to congestion and the danger to health that causes.

Call Sign is also having problems with TfL; we have said that if they really insist on credit card PEDs being placed in the passenger compartment, then they should be on cables as our current ones are so that in the case of any problem, they can then be passed through to the driver rather than he/she having to enter the passenger compartment. But they don't yet seem to understand that either.

But back to the UCG demo; it was well organised, held in a friendly atmosphere and gave their General Secretary, **Len Martin**, the opportunity to hand-deliver a letter to Prime Minister **Theresa May**, a letter we have published inside this issue. It was well written and covers all relevant topics. But my question is this; I have been on many demos over the years - I couldn't guess at how many - but I can only ever remember one that caused enough of a rumpus to get something done. It was many years ago and an **LTDA** idea that caused every newspaper to put the story on as a headline.

We all awoke early, hovered on the south side of Westminster Bridge and as soon as the London County Council's offices at County Hall opened, taxis piled in and filled the car park. When LCC members arrived and couldn't park their cars, there was absolute uproar! They weren't used to walking!

I'm telling the story not because the UCG demo wasn't any good, it was. It's just that I believe that **TfL**, alongside the Government are happy to put up with a few hours inconvenience and then put it away until the next time. We really need another way of putting our point across forcibly because I don't think demos work any longer. I admit that isn't going to be easy but it has to be done somehow.

So called "flash" demos that are organised online do have an immediate effect, but again very soon become tomorrow's chip paper because they are ignored by everyone within hours of the demo. We need a few clever people to get together and dream up a way that will catch the attention of the *Mayor* - one where he will *have* to listen. And yes, we do have some very clever people in this trade.

Complaining about complaints!

I recently needed to phone **LTPH** at the number given with their **Palestra** address on **TfL** stationery. Of the four options given, none applied to me so I pressed number one for Taxi and PH licensing and then just hung on... and on and on while a voice kept repeating that I was in a queue and because there was a "high demand," I might have to wait.

Suddenly a voice came on the other end that sounded different. I was about to talk when the voice just spoke over me saying that I would be answered within ten minutes! I just hung up in frustration and called back several hours later with exactly the same result! So I



decided to push a different option – this was option two, which was to complain about taxi or private hire drivers! Yes, dear **Call Sign** reader, you're ahead of me now, aren't you!

There was the usual message about calls being recorded and then literally within ten seconds someone picked the phone up! So now we know why we have to wait so long - **TfL** obviously expect to get complaints about us and are putting all their call takers on that line. Taxi drivers can wait!

The Screaming Donalds???

Going back to the early 1960s, I met **David Sutch** several times – albeit quite briefly - at the youth club I attended. Knowing that he was coming, I'd rather nerdishly wait by the door and offer to help carry his coffin (!!!) into the hall where we had our Sunday dances! He was a really friendly guy who appeared at our "socials" every few months and who would always sell the place out.

Then at 7.30, the lights would go out, his coffin would illuminate at the front of the hall just by the stage, booming music that your mother wouldn't like came out of the two speakers - and the coffin lid would suddenly open! Then out would come the man we'd all gone to watch and hear. **David Sutch** went into the coffin, but it was **Screaming Lord Sutch** that came out!

As the years went by, **Screaming Lord Sutch** left the world of singing and in 1964 started his own pirate radio station with **Radio Sutch** and broadcasted from an old fort at **Shivering Sands** on the Thames Estuary using car batteries to try to get a signal. Within months, he sold it on for £5000 and it became **Radio City**, whose office in **Clifford Street, Mayfair** went on to open an account with **ODRTS**. Unfortunately, the partnership that started providing taxis in December 1966 lasted only until 8th February 1967 when a court found **Dorothy Calvert** – whose husband **Reg** had been shot and killed on the station just 10 months earlier - guilty of broadcasting without a licence. That night at midnight, **Radio City** closed down and by the time the **ODRTS** admin department asked for their money at the end of the month, the company had already moved on and became our first real debtor!

But I'm getting waylaid! **Screaming Lord Sutch** later decided to move into the world of politics and having previously stood at the by-election to replace disgraced MP **John Profumo** under the banner of the **National Teenage Party**, **Sutch** soon decided to form his own political party – so in 1983 was born the **Monster Raving Loony** party! When **David Sutch** died in June 1999, the **BBC** described him as Britain's longest serving party leader!

So going back to the beginning of this piece, it seems that following the recent US elections, had **Screaming Lord Sutch** been born in the USA, he would probably have ended up as President rather than the *Monty Pythonesque* way his party is looked on as. After all, **The Donald** did it...

Job distribution

At a recent meeting with Chairman **Brian Rice**, he told me of a letter someone had written to him that mentioned me. It wasn't one of the more flattering letters I had ever heard about myself – but let's face it, not everyone in the world loves little old me. How can that be, you ask...yes, it's a puzzle, but each to their own!

The driver's inference – I wasn't told his name - was the old chestnut that I would say black was white with green spots if that's what the Board said. I don't intend trying to convince him otherwise, because I still have to write an Editorial and he can either believe it or not. Apparently he still reads it otherwise he wouldn't know what it actually said!

His beef was in regard to last month's Editorial where I spoke of the new **VAD** system of job distribution and said I liked it. The driver – for some reason I'm assuming was male – claimed that he didn't, neither did anyone else other than me and I only did because I was scared to say otherwise! Well I'm not and I do like it, I like the fact that I get trip offers where I don't expect them because under the **V6** system, like many others I would probably have been booked into a nearby zone where I thought there might be a better chance of a trip. But what I didn't do - and it sounds as though this unidentified driver did - was to do what I was actually joking about in last month's piece. I wrote:

"I know that a small number aren't happy with **VAD** because it doesn't allow them to book into **EC5** from **Woodford**... but hey, nothing is perfect!"

VAD is ultra-smart. Try booking into one of the sub-ranks when you're not in it. The system will send you a polite message telling you that you aren't there and cannot book in! So yes, some drivers who used to chance their arm to a much greater degree than just booking in one or two zones from their actual position may be well down in trip numbers. The problem was that drivers who were actually in town working often lost out to those who might have just been starting and already booked into their favourite zone from way out.

Look, we've all at some time or other booked in earlier than we should have because whilst in reality it's true that drivers could legally just wait in a zone, the chances are that most were on their way to the zone from elsewhere.

If you did that regularly, then you will now be down in trip numbers. You could be down even if you used to work 100% straight down the middle. But looking at things logically, someone must be doing the work because driver numbers on **DaC**, whilst increasing of late, haven't gone through the roof and the job numbers are fairly stable. So the question has to be just who is doing the work? Well, what is undoubtedly happening is that the system has become ultra-fair and trips are being spread around and whilst still true that the longer you have been in a zone the better the chance of a trip offer, that no longer includes just being booked in – but actually being there and not having just left home!

For the record, the unidentified driver had apparently rejected almost one third of trips offered and I'm a big boy and can answer for myself had he written to me direct...

Reflections of the Chairman

Progress

No doubt you are all wondering how the situation regarding the building is progressing, especially as I wrote in the last issue of *Call Sign* that you would be receiving more correspondence from me, but as yet you have not received it. There are not any problems, but unfortunately we cannot move faster than the organisations with whom we're dealing with will allow - namely **Companies House** and **HMRC**. However, it *will* all be resolved in the near future.

In the meantime, I've been pressing on with the sale of **Dial-a-Cab House** as hopefully, when your business has been de-merged, the issue regarding the building will be ready to go. I have already instructed an Agent, but unfortunately there is more to it than just that. You also need an **Architects Feasibility Study**, a website has to be produced together with a glossy brochure; then of course there is the **Rights of Light Survey** and an **Energy Performance Certificate**.

Last and by no means least, there's the **Measurement Survey** and undoubtedly there'll be something I have forgotten to mention. So as you can see, there is plenty to do whilst we're waiting to de-merge the company; but when we do, everything else will be in place.

Karhoo

It was recently announced that another App has gone out of business, leaving substantial debts behind. It was basically a price comparison site that was started by a man with the rather unfortunate name of **Daniel Ishag**. I'll just refer to him as Daniel! Anyway, he went about raising Venture Capitalists money and getting numerous minicab and taxi companies to subscribe to his site.

The customer would enter their destination into the App and the software would come back with the price the cheapest companies would charge for them to get to their destination. My guess is that most of the time, the customer would choose the cheapest option and I really couldn't see that being a licensed London taxi. From the customers' point of view, they had to lodge their credit card with **Karhoo** and any ride they took would be debited to their credit card. At the end of the month, **Karhoo** would deduct 10 percent from the fare and pass the remainder to the minicab or taxi company.

They came to see me on three occasions in an attempt to get **Dial-a-Cab** to sign up to their App. I refused on each occasion as I couldn't understand why on a price comparison site, the public would not choose the cheapest option because if they did not want the cheapest price, they would probably be using another App. I also couldn't understand how if any trips went to licensed taxis, how the taxi company could pay the driver the metered fare and then **Karhoo** retain 10% of that fare before paying the remainder to the taxi company! As you might expect, they told me how silly I was as **RTG** were on there, along with **ComCab** and **Addison Lee** and they had also signed up **City Fleet** in Singapore.



Anyway, the rest is history as they are now out of business; however, as they only paid the minicab and taxi companies on a monthly basis, I just hope they did not owe the taxi companies any money for the month prior to them going out of business. I have spoken to both **Addison Lee** and **ComCab** and they both told me that **Karhoo** went bankrupt without owing them any money. Hmmm, that was fortunate, wasn't it...

PEDs

You will read elsewhere in this issue about the enormous problems we've encountered with **Ingenico** and **Barclaycard** regarding our PEDs. There isn't any doubt that there has been one tremendous blunder (not really the word I was looking for!!) by either **Barclaycard** or **Ingenico** - with both parties blaming the other.

Our IT department found out purely by chance that a software upgrade was due and we had not been informed. I made calls to other PED suppliers and their acquirers had informed them in September that this **Algorithm** upgrade was imminent. Consequently, it's been all hands to the pump in an attempt to rectify the situation before all our PEDs 'died'. As you can imagine, this put a tremendous strain on our IT department and **Roman Way** and caused inconvenience to you, our Shareholders. I can only commiserate with all three groups and just hope we have rectified the situation by the time you read this piece.

What with the de-merger and a host of other situations, we really didn't need this last episode regarding the PED software.

Regarding PEDs, I admit reluctantly surrendering to Tfl and it is not an episode I will ever forget. They have completely neglected the security of taxi drivers.

I visited a workshop with templates **Roman Way** had made, in an attempt to have brackets made for the PEDs; the brackets will be attached to the grab handles on the back seat so will not necessitate any drilling of the vehicle. The brackets have been passed by Tfl. I have been arguing with them since March of this year regarding the siting of the PEDs, especially as I had written permission from Tfl dating back to March 2011 giving me permission to install our PEDs in the front of the taxi.

However, there came a time when I had no option but to capitulate and order brackets, otherwise there would have come a point when Tfl put 'stops' on drivers cabs. They knew it and that they had me over a barrel. If it was just me that was going to be affected, I would have carried on because they have got this wrong and drivers *will* be put at risk. I even enquired about a **Judicial Review** and was told it could cost up to £120,000! So it was probably easier and cheaper to surrender.

However, I now view Tfl in a different light and they should remember that every dog has its day...

Season Greetings

It seems that regardless of your religion, this time of year will be a celebration of some kind. So either way, I send you all the season's greetings. If you don't follow any religion then I hope you just have an enjoyable and financially rewarding December...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab Ltd

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KARHOO GOES UNDER...

In February, *Call Sign* wrote about a new Taxi/PH comparison site that had contacted us for our view on an app they were putting out which they claimed would compete with **Uber**; our first question to them was whether they really expected taxis to be happy to share a platform with minicabs? The answer surprised us when they said that both **Dial-a-Cab** and **ComCab** had signed up alongside **Addison Lee**. It turned out that they were wrong about DaC, but that ComCab had indeed signed to go onto **Karhoo**, as had Addy Lee and other minicab companies.

I also asked how they could expect black cabs to compete on a price comparison site with minicabs and as an example asked how many passengers would select a taxi from **Cabot Square** to **Heathrow** when minicab prices began at around £36.

My problem was a feeling of concern that after constantly seeing black cab fares as always showing up more expensive, many of our prospective customers might have stopped comparing and just gone straight to minicabs. Either way, we'd have lost.

Were we against Karhoo? Not really... but that was probably more to do with us being worn down after years of fighting against minicabs. Even **Mountview/Gett** – they of the “we only work with black cabs” – went on it.

But although we wished Karhoo luck, we really couldn't see how it could work and that was proved right on 8 November when Karhoo announced that they had failed to secure the backing they required to keep going and had to shut up shop.

Their announcement said that it was with regret that they had to close its service. They continued:

“The Karhoo staff around the world in London, New York, Singapore and Tel Aviv has over the past 18-months worked tirelessly to make Karhoo a success. Unfortunately, it became clear two weeks ago that the financial situation was getting dire, with Karhoo in urgent need of funding. Discussion with a potential new backer ended last night, forcing the company to stop trading. We would like to thank our staff, partners, fleets around the world that shared our vision and the hundreds of thousands of people who down-

loaded the app and supported what we were trying to do.”

Call Sign's question is why, when they say that hundreds of thousands of people downloaded the Karhoo app, did they find themselves in a position where they had to cease trading? They recently sent out a press release claiming London was a huge success with fleets reporting revenue increases of up to 30 percent. They said they had significant funding, a scalable model and a UK network of more than 90,000 cabs. Either they lied or something serious went wrong???



Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

GMB: PH language tests are ridiculous

Speaking of what he referred to as “ridiculous language tests that forces London private hire drivers to fork out at least £180 to prove they speak English,” **GMB Professional Drivers' Secretary Steve Garelick** said that it could see a private education firm (Trinity College London) pocket £20million.

The GMB claim that the new rule has caused outrage among PH drivers, especially those that were born and raised in the UK. TfL have mandated that unless the drivers can prove they have an English GCSE, then they must undergo a language at a cost of around £180.

Mr Garelick added that in his view the tests were not only unnecessary and demeaning, but would “shovel huge sums of money into Trinity College's coffers, thanks to a virtual monopoly.”

What Mr Garelick needs to understand is that there are a great many PH drivers whose command of the English language is little above nil and that there has to be a way of separating those that can from those that can't – and a GCSE seems to make sense as that divider.



Steve Garelick

As the House of Lords talk about driverless technology for London

SINGAPORE DRIVERLESS CAR HITS LORRY!

A self-driving car that was described as a taxi and being trialled in **Singapore** by **US** based start-up software developers for self-driving cars, **nuTonomy**, has had its first accident.

A spokesperson said the driverless vehicle (which actually had two engineers on board) had hit a small lorry while driving at about four miles per hour. It described the incident as a “small prang” and said that there had been just minor damage and that neither of the two engineers was hurt.

According to the **BBC**, the Singapore scheme was the first around the world to trial driverless taxis, however, the nuTonomy spokesperson added that small accidents were not unexpected during the trial period and that the idea of the testing was to learn what went wrong.

The project uses six **Renault** and **Mitsubishi** electric vehicles, equipped with nuTonomy software and cameras. Each car uses a system of lasers that work in a similar way to radar and monitors the vehicle's surroundings. The on-board drivers monitor the performance and are there as a backup in case something goes wrong – as in hitting a lorry! Although described as taxis, needless to say they do not pick up passengers!

Most major car companies including **BMW**, **Ford**, **Volvo** and several Chinese car makers in addition to **Google** are currently testing out driverless technology. One spokesperson claimed that by 2020 the technology would be good enough to put a driverless car onto the road.



nuTonomy staff before the crash

Jery's World



“Sorry Santa, but using a taxi instead of a sleigh still won’t make you a Dial-a-Cab shareholder!”

TAXIS AT THE PALACE

In late October, British classic vehicles with a combined valuation of over £19million lined up on the forecourt of **Buckingham Palace** to help commemorate the 90th birthday of **Her Majesty The Queen**. They were inspected on her behalf by **HRH Prince Michael of Kent**.

Each of the ninety vehicles was manufactured in a specific year of the Queen's life and represented that year. The line-up included three London Taxis, those belonging to **Brian West**, **Doug Cheshire** and **Jimmy Waters**, who were all representing the **London Vintage Taxi Association**.

There were four sports-racing cars, three police cars, as well as various models of **Aston Martin**, **Austin Healey**, **Bentley**, **BSA**, **Caterham**, **Cooper**, **Daimler**, **DeLorean**, **Ford**, **Jaguar**, **Jensen**, **Lea-Francis**, **Lotus**, **McLaren**, **MG**, **Morgan**, **Morris**, **Noble**, **Riley**, **Rolls Royce**, **Rover**, **Triumph**, **TVR**, **Vauxhall**, **Windsor** and **Wolseley** in the line-up.

In the photo, HRH Prince Michael of Kent is inspecting the taxi of LVTA Chairman Doug Cheshire as he toured the line-up of vehicles in the forecourt of Buckingham Palace.

The line-up was made possible by the goodwill and enthusiasm of owners who travelled from all over the UK - as well as three from Europe - to be present at the Palace, as well as the support of both **Stewart Miller** and **Peter James Insurance**, the UK's leading specialist classic vehicle insurance broker and **H&H Classics**, Auctioneers for the Classic Collector.



*Sandie Goodwin
Call Sign Online*



In May 2016, Dial-a-Cab Members voted overwhelmingly in a survey organised by the Board, to say that they wanted to demutualise ODRTS, realise the value in its assets and distribute that value to its Members.

On Sunday 18 September at the HAC Barracks in City Road, Members of the Society attended the first of the two meetings needed for demutualisation to be activated. At that first meeting, more than 75% of those voting (including proxy votes) had to have

ODRTS is dead: Long live Dial-a-Cab Ltd!



been in favour, with at least 50% voting. A 'yes' vote of 95.9 percent was returned. The result meant a second meeting became necessary and that was held three weeks later on Sunday 9 October. After Electoral Reform Society representatives had completed the

final count, it was announced that the vote had been carried with 97.2 percent voting in favour, meaning the Society would now head towards becoming a Company incorporated under the Companies Act 2006.

Then on Tuesday 1st November, ODRTS / Dial-a-Cab solicitors, Fieldfisher, announced that following Member's two meetings, stage 1 of the process to convert ODRTS to a limited company had been effected and registered. That meant the entity that was formerly the Society, was now a company under the name Dial-a-Cab Limited.

So ODRTS is dead...

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UBER AND THE TAXI TRADE

October's **Employment Tribunal** ruled that **Uber** drivers were not self-employed - as Uber often claimed - but are employed, entitled to holiday and sick pay and the national minimum wage. Even though the decision applied to just two drivers, Employment Tribunal decisions apply to ALL UK tribunals and as such seen as precedents. Uber are appealing the decision...

Following the Tribunal result, The LTDA issued a statement to its members via the Association's General Secretary, Steve McNamara. He said:

"Whilst this decision has been appealed by Uber and is likely to change, our lawyers have reviewed the transcripts of the hearing and consider that some aspects of the evidence are relevant to Uber's continued ability to be licensed in London; especially when viewed in conjunction with evidence previously provided at the recent court hearings in **Toronto**. Our first opportunity to mount a legal challenge against Uber's continued licensing will be when they apply to TfL to be re-licensed early next year.

The LTDA will be setting out a fully detailed and researched case as to why Uber should not be re-licensed, using the same expert legal licensing team that we have engaged and who are currently assisting with our 'Plying for Hire' prosecutions.

The primary focus of our political campaign is now on securing a requirement for Private Hire Operators to be made responsible for insuring all the cars on their platform (Operator Insurance) and to tackle pollution



Steve McNamara and the LTDA will be attempting to block Uber re-licensing next year

and congestion by getting the exemption to the congestion charge removed from Private Hire Vehicles. Our All Party Parliamentary Group will be meeting shortly to formulate a strategy and I will be making these the lead items on my upcoming meeting with Government Transport advisors.

At Mayoral and TfL level, our primary focus is on highlighting and changing the disparity between the proposals for Taxis and those for PHVs in the **Ultra-Low Emission Zone** which starts in January 2018. How can it be acceptable to allow 100,000+ PHVs to continue to run polluting diesel vehicles whilst insisting the taxi trade is compelled to buy new Zero Emission Capable cabs?

Undoubtedly our campaign is beginning to change how politicians view Uber; initially almost every politician I met made a comment about competition or new technology; but now there is universal agreement about the damage being done and the problems being caused by the Uber set up. The recent report by the right wing Policy Exchange which highlighted Uber's tax avoidance is shortly to be followed by another report, again expected to criticise Uber, from the left wing Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). Evidence of the success of our involvement with these reports with the media and politically is that Uber is now becoming viewed as a 'toxic' brand and not the friendly tech company that it was originally perceived as and wants to be again.

Uber are fully aware of what is happening and are concerned enough to be attempting to obtain details of the LTDA's meetings with the Mayor, senior City Hall figures, politicians, Government Ministers and advisors through a succession of *Freedom of Information Requests*. I see this as further evidence that our strategy is the correct one!"

Mr McNamara added that although the LTDA has been asked to support a variety of militant actions and while they supported the sentiment behind all of them, their political advisors had said that supporting them would be counter-productive to the Association's "detailed and extensive Political Campaigns." The General Secretary added that it was "...better to be inside the offices of Government talking to the decision makers, rather than blocking the roads outside."

Motorway speeding tickets up 50,000!

And that's just between 2010 and 2015!

New research taken between 2010 and 2015 has revealed that fixed penalties issued on smart sections of motorways have gone up from 2,000 to 52,000. The data was taken from 12 police forces across the UK that monitor major stretches of smart motorway (**M1, M25, M4, M42 and M6**) and revealed that 52,516 tickets had been issued in 2014-15 compared to just 2,023 in 2010-11. There are more than 236 miles of smart motorways in England, which use the hard shoulder and variable speed limits to control traffic flow.

Drivers are being caught out by changing speed limits which have been introduced at traffic black spots to control congestion. The fixed penalties mean that revenue on each of the years increased to over £1.1million compared to £150,600 just over five years ago.

Further research by Confused.com

into attitudes around speeding cameras reveals that over a quarter (28%) of motorists believe that cameras are just a way for the police to make money.

Amanda Stretton, former racing driver and motoring editor at Confused.com said:

"With speeding tickets on smart motorways rising sharply, our research shows that drivers are highly cynical over the increase of speeding fines. However, exceeding the speed limit is dangerous and the law should be enforced. Speed cameras have been put in place to prevent accidents and slow down drivers. If motorists are caught speeding, they can face fines of up to £2,500 depending on the particular speeding conviction, as well as a strong chance that their car insurance premium will rise as a result. While motorists might see speed cameras as annoying, they help to keep speeds down and the roads safe for motorists and pedestrians alike."



Thanks to all staff and drivers who supported the annual Macmillan 'World's Biggest Coffee Morning' held at Dial-a-Cab House back in September.

We have just received a certificate of thanks from Macmillan - which can be viewed on the Dial-a-Cab Facebook page - in recognition of the impressive £300 raised on the day.

Many thanks again for your support...

Brian Rice

Brazil Calling

Special General Meeting

The first thing that must be mentioned in this article is of course the events of the 18th September 2016. Whilst as Board Members we have been writing *Call Sign* articles on alternate months, therefore I have not yet had the chance to thank subscribers for their faith in returning me to the Board – albeit as a Director. It has, in my mind, always been a great privilege to represent you and it remains to be, so thank you for your votes and as I've said before, I'll do everything in my power to improve the value the Society has to each of you. My commiserations go to **Michael Son BEM** and **Garry White**, both good men with the cab trade coursing through their veins. Both of them will be missed, but I'm sure, as all of you know, both will be out there fighting your corner just as they always have.

So what changes?

Well, as the structure of the company at this time is now that of a Limited Company, it means terms like 'Board members' have been surpassed by the term 'Director'; in the final meetings, we should see the division of **Dial-a-Cab**, if ratified, become two separate companies under the umbrella of a Dial-a-Cab Limited Company.

This of course gives DaC the flexibility to allow for the sale of the building as an asset and allow for the distribution of monies to you, the shareholder, in the not too distant future. For many drivers this can't come soon enough, but great care must be taken at this stage to ensure the best outcome for you, the shareholder, and with the right professional advice being in place and a motivated Chairman and Directors, we will do everything in our power to ensure a positive outcome for all of you.

The first Directors meeting allowed for a few changes within the internal structure. I will now be at the office two days a week, Tuesday and Wednesday. The duties that have now come under my remit are that of **Driver Operations**, which will include an overseeing brief at **Roman Way**, driver recruitment and marshalling activities. This of course will not be exclusive, and as I'm sure **Allan Evans** will be mentioning at some point, it also allows for inclusion in the project to move the PEDS, from the front compartment to the rear of the taxi. We have already had a visit from **TfL** and agreement for a non-invasive fitting that will reduce, if not remove, the need to drill holes in the centre partition has been given a tentative nod. Hopefully we will have found out if approval has been granted by the time you read this, good news for drivers leasing vehicles, as £700 to replace a partition has been suggested by some suppliers.

The Baker Street irregulars...eliminating the impossible!

News has reached us that **Karhoo**, the **Baker Street** vendor of other companies' vehicles, has had to close its service. This App - or digital disrupter as most of us see it - has fallen after just 18 months trading. Within a market saturated with empty promises and false dawns, this worldwide App or 'website' as it saw itself, trading in **New York**, **Singapore**, **Tel Aviv** and of course **London** closed with job losses of around 100 people in London alone. It was reported that UK staff were told that their employers were unable to make the payroll. Karhoo apparently raised a huge £202 million investment round last October from **Nick Gatfield**, the former CEO of **Music Entertainment** and **David Kowitz**, the co-founder of hedge fund **Indus Capital Partners**. However, that number has been called into question by multiple sources who claim the company only received between \$10 million and \$20 million according to the 'business insider'.

The article continued: "Since launching, the company has been burning through cash at a phenomenal rate in a bid to grow its user base, with several customers claiming they received multiple free

rides from Karhoo."

This may seem a far off land to some, but **Addison Lee** and **ComCab** may be caught in the cross hairs of this debacle and possibly left holding the baby when it comes to paying drivers. Karhoo founder, **Daniel Ishag**, the son of a banker and CEO of Karhoo, incidentally stepped down a few days before. A member of staff at Karhoo stated that they had ended up having to deal with a lot of fraud prevention in their app. So much for the free ride policy; who knew that would fail?

In August, **The Financial Times** reported on its disappointing app store reviews that Daniel Ishag said were down to "not using the promo codes properly" and that issues got resolved after they had spoken with customers. The fact is that free rides don't buy loyalty.

The Karhoo statement ended: "The world needs Karhoo." Well it would seem that *that* is no longer the case and the bottom line of our competitors may prove that they didn't need it in the first place.

And finally...

Thanks for sticking through the article; here comes the information bit. I've had a few credit card trips requesting chargebacks from our drivers; these can sometimes be for considerable sums. Please, *please* keep your credit card receipts for six months after you have issued them. If a query is raised, without the receipt it becomes very hard to argue on your behalf for payment.

I hope you all have a happy, peaceful Christmas and a good financial one if you intend working...

**Joe Brazil, Director
Head of Driver Operations**



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Watch out in the City



Several drivers have contacted *Call Sign* over the past few weeks to tell us they have been "nicked" for exceeding the City of London 20mph speed limit. One also added that he was told he would be reported for not wearing his badge.

So beware; you may consider 20mph as being a ridiculous speed limit at night, but it's the law!

On 8 November, a taxi demonstration along Whitehall protested against TfL's failure to deal with traffic congestion and the resulting air pollution caused by their policies. At the same time, UCG General Secretary Len Martin delivered a letter to PM Theresa May. This was the letter...



UCG Letter to Theresa May

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you as the General Secretary of the United Cabbies Group (UCG), a trade body that represents the interests of the Hackney Carriage drivers in London and other UK cities.

1. Our members have called upon us to arrange a formal protest today as they now have no confidence in TfL and its management team; today, we the Licensed Taxi Trade, bring our discontent with TfL to Whitehall to raise awareness of serious threats to London. We do not call these protests without giving serious consideration to the effects they have on the general public and we apologise for any inconvenience our protest may cause; however, we feel we are left with no other option as we have exhausted every possible avenue in our attempts to get Transport for London to address our concerns.

2. Whilst we have a number of unresolved issues with the day to day administration at TfL, our main focus is on health, safety and the economy. A number of recent reports on the worrying decline in London's air quality, coupled with excessive journey times, have resulted in an unsustainable increase in traffic congestion; this manifests itself in pollution taking London well above safe limits. Approximately 9,500 people are dying prematurely every year, twice as many as previously thought. London has breached EU safety limits on NO2 for five consecutive years (*source King's College London*).

Oxford Street has the worst NO2 levels in the world. As working Taxi Drivers, we are exposed to this toxic pollution more than any other road user; it is often suggested that the Taxis we drive disproportionately contribute to these levels. Whilst this is true, it is not of the driver's choosing. We have a very limited choice over the model of Taxi and design criteria of the vehicles we drive.

Transport for London have failed to provide the Taxi trade with an affordable choice of vehicle that is more environmentally friendly and thereby allowing us to compete in an increasingly competitive market.

Buses (subsidised by TfL) are the highest polluters of all vehicles on London's roads, followed by private motor cars (because of the number of them on the roads at any time). Taxis are in third place (*source King's College London*).

3. Another consequence is that of massive real losses to London's economy. We have used official figures to calculate the loss of productivity to London every year. The figures are simply staggering and costly; anybody who needs to travel for business, logistics or the emergency services can attest to this. Transport for London has implemented road traffic management policies that have caused serious damage to London's health and wealth.

When Leon Daniels took on the role of Surface Transport director at TfL, road speeds in London averaged 8.98mph. This is now below 7mph.

Sustrans reported in 2014 that 9.6 million trips as car driver/passenger were taken every day (this figure is rising). Based on official figures, London is losing 1.4 billion hours every year stuck in traffic jams, creating congestion, pollution and costing UK businesses £millions of lost income.

There are a number of other worrying issues regarding TfL and their fitness to run London's transportation system. One of the most concerning issues is the continual rise in rape and sexual assault figures pertaining to Private Hire drivers in London; TfL have failed in their duty to protect the public and their licensing practices must be investigated. The last published figures showed 111 sexual assaults committed by Private Hire drivers; the latest figures that were due to be released in September 2016, are still unavailable and despite FOI requests remain so. Leaked information suggests this has risen to 263 for the six months to September.

4. There have been several allegations of corruption at TfL, ranging from contracts awarded for underground 3G infrastructure to tendering for bus contracts. There is an individual who has claimed he was directly told that unless he submits a payment, his solution to a pollution problem will not be accepted (I have this person's details and he has repeated this accusation to me).

There are also some very dubious and questionable relationships between senior TfL staff and minicab company Uber that have been uncovered in leaked emails, amounting to "Coaching" answers to difficult questions that would expose illegal behaviour. We believe this was done with the sole purpose of misleading the public and the Greater London Assembly (GLA).

There is also the security risk from lack of enforcement on counter terrorism. A while ago, there was the potential for two very serious incidents. A Private Hire Vehicle (aka minicab) was left unattended outside a London nightclub whilst filled with gas cylinders; the vehicle was towed away (oblivious to the danger) and upon unloading at the car pound, a bomb was discovered - fortunately it failed to detonate. A second vehicle, disguised as a minicab, was identified nearby by police - that also failed to detonate. With so many PH vehicles parked outside venues and TfL's total lack of effective enforcement, this could happen again but next time with unimaginable dire consequences.

5. TfL is an organisation with a budget of £10.4bn in 2016/7 but is not accountable to anyone. Even the Mayor seems to have no power to deal with this behemoth of an organisation that is now very apparently out of control. There is something very seriously wrong at TfL, but this is not just our view. A recent GLA future proof report described TfL as woefully inadequate; we believe this warrants an inquiry.

We therefore formally request that you grant a Statutory Public Inquiry for the sake of London's, health, safety and wealth.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your representatives in order to discuss our concerns in further detail.

Yours faithfully

Len Martin
General Secretary
United Cabbies Group



In this series so far, we've looked back in time at some London football clubs' previous grounds that have in the main either become victims of the wrecking ball or covered over. But I've also taken a look back at their origins, the unique heritage that each of these famous old institutions hold dear.

We discovered that Millwall was started up in 1855 when a group of Scottish labourers in a tinned food factory on the Isle of Dogs began kicking a football around during their tea break; Queens Park Rangers were formed by members of a youth club who were ex-pupils of Droop Street School in 1882, and Arsenal was begun by munitions workers down at Woolwich in 1886.

This month I want to feature some south-west London stalwarts who used jumpers for goal posts under the sails of a windmill – these were ex-pupils of Old Central School at Camp Road SW19 in the autumn of 1889, who looked down at the already established Wimbledon Association FC at the bottom of the hill near Parkside.

Football in London was all the rage by the 1880s, even in leafy Wimbledon, where the Old Central School was once proud to have had William Wilberforce among its first trustees.

I've read many London sports historians appreciation on how the beautiful game exploded in the late 19th century, usually put down to how successful the predominantly Midland-based Football League was developing; it was the oldest such competition in world football – but let's not forget the annual FA Cup Final had been up and running since 1872 in London!

The fact that between 1872 and 1886 the Cup Final was held continuously in the capital MUST have inspired our local football clubs – The Oval in Kennington was used 16 times during that period with one Final held at the Lillie Bridge Ground (now covered over by a car park in Seagrave Road). The game of football had come a long way in nearly 20 years and the new Association rules dictated that 'throttling an opponent could no longer be fair practice'. Forget bruised shins, biting was a more common injury!

The Old Central held practice close to the Windmill until they managed to arrange their first friendly, which took place on the common close to Robin Hood Road – the other side of the London Scottish Golf Club which had been around since the 1860s. History was made when a 1-0 victory over Westminster FC got the ball rolling (no pun intended) and further fixtures and wins over traveling opposition ensued. There was a happy bunch of founding fathers that would gather up for regular meetings at the Coffee Tavern on Ridgeway. However, just as Wimbledon Old Centrals were gaining increasing numbers of spectators and just like our other London sides at the time, they had to seek an alternative suitable home ground.

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Some people are on the pitch, they think it's all over!

IT IS NOW!

Bob Woodford looks at London's long lost sporting venues



This was left after Wimbledon moved to Milton Keynes!

The Wimbledon Common Conservators felt the last straw had arrived when the football hit a passing Hackney Carriage knocking off the top hat of a seated passenger!

New accommodation was sought and found behind The Swan Pub on the Ridgeway, but there is no point looking for that old pitch now; it is covered up jointly by the Ridgeway Riding Stables and late-Victorian housing on Thornton Road.

The new century was a time of change and the club moved to a brand new ground at what was then called Worple Road West (now named just Worple Road) at the junction of Pepys Road and Cottenham Park School was used to house the changing rooms.

It was in 1905 that 'Old Centrals' was dropped from the club's name and the boys from the Common end of town would be known simply as Wimbledon FC. But ground drainage issues in Worple Road caused the club to experiment using other grounds for home matches – playing fields at Grand Drive near Raynes Park Station, at The Chase in Merton Hall Road, at Burlington Road in New Malden and at Malden Sports Ground near New Malden Station.

Perhaps the idea of a 'Crazy Gang' mentality came in 1908 when a report from the Boxing Day match said there had been 'sickening scenes' after a humbling defeat to Kingston FC and Dons star player Dave Walker was brutally assaulted as he made his way off the pitch – so much for Christmas cheer!

Seeking a new permanent ground, the Club looked to the local authority for help, but not for the first time the forerunners of the London Borough of Merton were not forthcoming – football activities were actually suspended for a whole season.

In 1910 the Dons joined forces with some council workers who had a pitch at Coppermill Lane to the east of the River Wandle (off Plough Lane), which may have

been a tad marshy, although 18 years later this difficult plot would not deter South London Greyhound Racecourses Ltd building a huge new London Stadium.

Merging with local borough workers meant a new Wimbledon Borough FC was born and in 1912 they took a leap of faith and purchased some swampy land, which had become a refuse dump on the opposite side of the river on the corner of Plough Lane and Haydon's Road. Immediate improvements were made, the ground was fenced in, dressing rooms built and a stand to seat 500 fans erected; welcome to the new home of Wimbledon Football Club in Plough Lane until 1991.

Call Sign readers will know that the old Plough Lane football ground has now been swallowed up by private housing and not the originally intended Safeway supermarket chain – Reynolds Gate Estate (named after former 1960s prolific goal scorer Eddie Reynolds) has six individual blocks named after other star players.

How coincidental that when AFC Wimbledon was re-founded (after their previous owners upped sticks and disgracefully moved to Milton Keynes) the players had no choice but to train just yards away where it all started over 100 years earlier under the sails of that Windmill – using jumpers for goalposts!

From 2018, the Dons will be back in Plough Lane – Greyhound Racing Association recently sold their Stadium so that the club can turn it into a football stadium. Come on you Dons!

Wishing Call Sign readers a great Christmas. I shall be back in the New Year with the story of London's oldest Professional Football Club.

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online



Call Sign's Marc Turner (R97) is also known as Drumslayer. This month he is writing about problems between taxi drivers and the people that use us – our customers...

KEEPING THE CUSTOMER SATISFIED

However, we still have much support from Joe Public, despite a few of us (perhaps unwittingly) sometimes falling below the standards our patrons pay for and rightly deserve.

People often tell me that they want to put their hard-earned money into taxi drivers pockets, yet suffer disappointment when those drivers lack manners, good grace and customer service.

One fellow told me how he often hails cabs where the drivers are on their mobiles and who don't even make eye contact with him, just beckoning him brusquely into the cab. Then apart from ascertaining the destination they just continue with their call, not even interrupting it for payment, just offering a curt nod as a thank you.

He went on to tell me that this lack of

respect, which borders on arrogance, makes him feel undervalued and unsurprisingly added that this rudeness does our trade no favours at all!

Many cabmen obviously do not enjoy the job and feel that chatting to mates helps the time go quicker. But just imagine entering a shop where the salesperson ignored you, distracted by a conversation on their mobile phone. Would we accept that? I doubt it! Yet we expect our punters to do so with grace.

As the old adage goes: "He who pays the piper, calls the tune." What better song is there than "Keep the customer satisfied!"

I wish you all the seasons greetings...

Marc Turner
Call Sign Online

Whilst out working and as we head towards another Christmas, I'm often chatting to passengers and doing (unofficial) market research. Of course, these days Londoners are so spoilt for transportation choice and I'm bowled over when a hand goes up because someone has chosen me!

The public in general are well informed regarding the current precarious situation our trade – often due to no fault of its own - finds itself in. We, especially day men, still have the lions' share of the work despite it feeling otherwise. Night men on the other hand are feeling the shift in public taste big time! Recent weekends resemble a basket case.



Simon Scott is one of the new generation of taxi drivers whose life is captured as a blog. The continuing story of his time as a butterboy is...

A Blogger's Tale

This morning whilst thundering down the A1 towards London, I listened to an interview on the radio given by a young man whose career I have followed closely. He was talking about his new novel and I couldn't help but admire his eloquent and confident performance in front of the microphone. I cast my mind back a number

of years to a job that at the time seemed a little, but not overly disturbing...

I was driving along Newgate Street approaching the Old Bailey on my left, when across the road one of the two men standing near the Viaduct Tavern put their hand up to hail me. As I slowed and started to manoeuvre a turn, another cab travelling in the opposite direction stopped for them. The elder of the two leant forward and said something to the driver and with a shrug of his shoulders he drove off. I pulled over and my punter leant into the nearside window and said 'the cheeky so-and-so tried to steal your job'. I mumbled something about bad manners but thanked him and they climbed inside.

"Do you want to go to Essex, the passenger said. Well of course I did, but I maintained a poker face and just asked which part. He said Chigwell and off we went. Now I try not to listen to conversations in the back, preferring to listen to the radio and concentrate on not killing anyone along the way; I think it began to rain and that slowed us down a bit. My mind began to wander and I glanced at them a few times in the mirror, they seemed to be related - probably father and son I thought with the elder of the two in his thirties and the younger in his teens. There was a strange atmosphere in the back that I couldn't quite put my finger on. The younger man didn't say much at all, most of the talking was coming from his father and at one point he made a phone call; I overheard him trying to reassure someone by telling them 'it'll be alright, don't worry'.

As we neared Chigwell, the older man asked me to wait whilst he went to buy fish and chips, he insisted that I have some as well and he was very persuasive. I waited for his return reading my newspaper, but with the sense of unease that I had picked up from my two passengers. He returned and we went on our way, they got out in front of one of the big houses that always make me envious and he turned to pay me. I remember him telling me that it was a nice journey and to take care, he gave me a big tip - £10 over the meter - and we went our separate ways.

Some weeks or even months later, I opened a copy of the Evening Standard and read the news that Ronnie O'Sullivan had been given a life sentence for a murder that took place in Soho. I looked at the accompanying photo and instantly recognised him as my Chigwell bound passenger and the young man with him was his son, who would become the famous snooker player of the same name. I had thought many times about how having his father imprisoned at such a young age would have affected him and of

course he has had a few well documented problems.

However, he is a very gifted man who it seems has come out the other end of that experience very well balanced and philosophical. I'm looking forward to reading his novel...

To be continued...

Simon Scott (O40)
Call Sign Online

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There's an old saying that has been used by cab drivers throughout the years – trust your first instinct! Of course, that instinct could be wrong and someone you suspect of being up to no good could well be fine and someone you wouldn't consider capable of any wrongdoing could actually try and take you to the cleaners. And, of course, when it's a bit quiet out there, you might be tempted to disregard that initial instinct.

That's exactly what happened to **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Mike Appleby** (L73). Although Mike has been on DaC for over 14 years, he has been driving a taxi for twice that time and when three prospective passengers tried to get into his locked cab, Mike had a bad feeling but disregarded it. Mike told *Call Sign* his story...

"I always keep my doors locked and when someone hails me, in 99.9 percent of times I release the lock. It matters not where they are going so long as they look like genuine cab punters. But I broke that rule when three young guys with hoods up tried to get in at the **Welbeck Street** lights where it meets **Wigmore Street**. They were rattling the handles in an attempt to open the locked doors and my instinct said not to let them in. But it was quiet and I thought that perhaps it was me prejudging them, so I unlocked the back and they climbed in.

"They said they wanted **Knightsbridge** near **Harrods** with a stop on the way at a **McDonalds**. So I politely explained that there was a McDonalds just past Knightsbridge, so there was no need to stop on the way. That's when I got the first hint of an attitude problem and knew straight away that my initial instinct had been right and there was no way that they intended paying – or they could possibly even have something worse on their mind. But I'd come across people like these before and wasn't overly concerned so long as my doors remained locked.

"One of the three started calling me 'bro' and asking me to be fair! So I repeated that McDonalds was just past Harrods and their destination was just by there. But I had already picked up the signs that made me certain that they were going to make a bolt for it once I let them out. Then they suddenly decided they had to stop at a shop along the route, but I said no. They said they really needed to stop there so I told them the facts of life – which were that as soon as I let them out they would make a bolt for it!

"Eventually we pulled up in Knightsbridge. My foot remained firmly on the footbrake so that they couldn't get out and told them that for the whole journey I had been filming them. I then turned the camera round and put the lights on so they *knew* they were being filmed. I told them they couldn't get out until they first paid the £14 on the meter.

TfL: "No problems with card readers safety. If something happens then we'll look again..."

MIKE AND THE BILKERS!



Mike tells his passengers that they won't get out until they pay



The three "gentlemen!"

I also kept inching forward to put more pressure on them. I then phoned the police and made sure the three of them heard. By then, the meter had gone up to almost £18 but this was all about the principle of them not getting away with attempting to bilk a taxi driver so I was happy with the £14.

"The police said they were on the way and remained on the line while the three passengers were mumbling. One even started looking in his inside pocket in a threatening way and I think – very briefly – I spotted a miniature laser beam pen in his hands. Whether he was waiting to aim it at me I don't know, but the middle one suddenly bent over as if to clear a gap for him to aim through. I was looking straight ahead and reiterated that the police would be there in minutes and if they wanted to get out, all they had to do was pay me the £14. I wasn't worried about the rest, it was just a matter of principle.

"I offered them a credit card facility but they declined. I was talking to them and the police at the same time when suddenly a £20 note came through the partition gap. I took it and gave them a £5 note and didn't bother waiting to see if they would tell me to keep the £1.00!

"Then they got out but left the door open. Perhaps they thought I would get out to close it but I carefully drove off with it open until I could see them walking in the other direction. Then I stopped and closed it. I also cancelled the police.

"It was only later when I thought about my offer to let them pay by credit card; what would have happened had they realised we all took credit cards? I read a recent piece in *Call Sign* and it suddenly hit me that they could have just said the CC reader wasn't working in order to try and get me into the back. Would they have then actually attacked me? After all, they obviously had no intention of paying; yet according to the article TfL say they've had no incidents of it happening! Never mind my three bilkers, more pertinent is whether TfL even care about us?"

Call Sign Says:

According to TfL there have been no reported incidents of passengers deliberately luring drivers into the rear of the cab under the pretence of the credit card reader not working. So we ask whether that just may be because very few cabs had the PED in the back and whether once it becomes common knowledge to people such as the three "gentlemen" in the above report, such incidents will increase. If so, they will surely be the fault of TfL who are taking absolutely no notice of our plea and who apparently care very little for our safety. More and more people in this trade are now beginning to take notice of something we have been saying for months...

Michael Toomey
Call Sign Online

Micky Marshall was on Dial-a-Cab for many years before moving to ComCab, but for the sake of this article Micky is like all of us - a London taxi driver. At a time when TfL apparently care nothing about our safety by refusing to allow a cable to be attached to rear-mounted credit card readers so that passengers with card problems can pass the reader through to the driver rather than force the driver to leave his cab and enter the rear compartment, *Call Sign* will be publishing any article that involves passengers being problematic as regards our safety.

According to our licensing authority, we do not have such problems with passengers and have no reason to fear entering the passenger compartment. Micky told *Call Sign*:

"Someone hailed me in Commercial Street and asked if I could take their friend to Harrow Road. She was quite drunk but where work hasn't been that good, I agreed to take her. Throughout the journey, she, like most drunks, spoke absolute rubbish but was still quite pleasant, although with 33 years under my belt that somehow made me feel rather uncomfortable.

At the other end, there was £23.60 on the meter. She gave me a fiver and thanked me before adding that she had no more money. So I asked her for a credit card and told her to put it into the passenger compartment credit card terminal and to just follow the instructions.

"It ain't working," she called out. I tell her it is but she is insistent and says that I will have to get in the back to show her how. I replied that the only way I was getting in the back of the cab with her was if a police officer

TfL: "No problems with card readers safety. If something happens then we'll look again..."

THE DRUNK AND THE CREDIT CARD MACHINE...



Micky Marshall: Drunk female wanted him to go into the back to look at the credit card reader

was present. She then called me a wa**er a no good sh*t cu*t.

Just as I was about to call the police, the concierge at her swanky flats came out and apologised while asking much she owed me. I told him and he gave me the dough. He said

it happened a lot and that he would get it back off her the following day.

That was it for me, light out and home! I was very thankful for his help but we as cab drivers should not be put in such an awkward position. What if I had got in the back???

Go into a petrol station at night and the attendant is locked in the safety of his cabin, a bit like the front drivers compartment in a cab. Should you wish to pay by credit card, he pushes the terminal through to you using a sliding draw and thus ensuring his safety. In my opinion TfL should have made CCTV monitors in a cab more compulsory than credit cards.

I was one of the pioneers in accepting credit cards over 25 years ago, but my opinion is still the same as it was then - it is surely illegal to force either a company or sole trader to take credit cards, even though I personally think all cabs should accept them - but by choice.

I also noted Call Sign's interview with Helen Chapman; please pass on my regards and tell her if she ever wants to come out in my cab for a few hours to show her what it's really like out there, it would be my pleasure and of course... no charge!



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There were two reports recently from one of London's most respected taxi garages of drivers being lured into the cab's rear compartment after passengers claimed the credit card readers were either not working or that the passenger "didn't know how to use it."

Both reports came from the **Long Lane Cab Garage** while owner **Tony Forsythe** was away on holiday. **Karen** in the garage's office explained to **Call Sign** that two of their customers – one a female – had gone to the rear compartment after being told that their passengers were having trouble with the PED. Both were then attacked.

Unfortunately there are no further details, but if the two drivers concerned would like to contact **Call Sign** (callsign-mag@aol.com), we would like to hear their stories. We will respect their privacy should they wish to remain unidentified.

We are very concerned that this could be just the tip of the iceberg and that once those "passengers" – whose only aim in life seems to be to do as little work as possible by robbing and stealing from taxi drivers – realise that all they have to do is say the PED isn't working and drivers will have to get out, then the above scenario will become regular events. In addition, attempted bilks such as the one involving **Mike Appleby** (L73) (see page 13) will turn into incidents of luring drivers into the back and attacking them.

A spokesperson at the Mayor's office told **Call Sign**: "Under no circumstances would we expect a driver to leave their cab should a problem with the payment machine arise. First of all, the driver should ask the passenger to try again. If the fault persists, they should contact the payment device supplier for sup-

TfL: "No problems with card readers safety. If something happens then we'll look again..."

Drivers attacked because card reader "wasn't working???"



Two Long Lane customers allegedly attacked because the card reader "wasn't working!"

port and see whether they can fix the fault or take an over-the-phone transaction. Once a fault has been acknowledged, the vehicle should be taken out of service until it's fixed. If the card is declined or faulty then a commonsense approach should be taken and an alternative means of payment agreed upon. If a passenger refuses to pay and an amicable agreement cannot be found, this should be treated like any other instance whereby a passenger refuses to pay a fare."

We can assume from that the Mayor does

not have the remotest idea as to how taxis operate because we'd love to see him sit in the driver's seat with the above passengers had they requested a south London back street council estate at two in the morning.

We can no longer rely on Transport for London, which has demonstrated that so far as they are concerned, the only duty of care they have is to their own positions.

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

CREDIT CARD STICKERS

And the ones that don't fit!



Many drivers with TX cabs where there are headrests stuck onto the central partition, have told **Call Sign** that the credit card stickers sent to them by **TfL/LTPH** do not fit. We told the licensing authority and they sent us a photo of an approved place where the notice, in the case of those where the headrests stop it going on the glass, can have them stuck. This is in addition to the long, thin signs that fit on the top of the windows inside of the passenger doors.

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I'd like to tell *Call Sign* readers a true story that happened to me while doing a hospital account job on behalf of Dial-a-Cab. It was getting close to the holiday season and I was on my way home feeling quite happy at the approach of another Christmas. Suddenly my terminal beeped and a trip came up, albeit a short one with a fairly low fixed price, but it was going in my direction and I accepted it.

When I arrived at the hospital, I saw a nurse and gave her the name of the three passengers I was to pick up. She directed me to a small reception area while telling me that one of my passengers was blind. As I got closer, I started to sense a rather strong, musty smell. I entered the reception and there, standing right in the middle, was my blind passenger. He was holding a white stick in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other. He also seemed to have half the contents of his last month's dinners on his teshirt and joggers!

The two other passengers, an elderly lady and a not-so-elderly Jamaican gentleman, were sitting nearby. I say sitting, but they had more than probably collapsed from the pong because as I got nearer to the blind gentleman, I realised that this dreadful smell was coming from him and the people sitting down were probably trying to get as far away from him as possible! So when I informed them that we were all going home together, that was the first they realised that this very smelly and dirty person was going to share their taxi. I asked the blind passenger for his first name and I'll change it to Bert for the sake of the story - just in case!

I took the bull by the horns - or in this case by the hand! He also asked me to hold his loaf of bread, which of course I did. Bert then raised one hand up into the air level with his shoulder and pointed out to the front. So I took it and waited for my flock to follow. I felt a bit like a Messiah about to lead my people to the Promised Land!

I started walking out of the ward, slightly in front of Bert while holding his hand so that the smell was behind me. Once we got some distance away from the other two passengers, they very slowly rose from their chairs and with an incredibly reluctant look on their faces, began to follow. The lady didn't seem too keen on keeping up at all and wasn't so much walking as sort of shuffling around five feet behind us. A further five feet back was the Jamaican gentleman, who was looking in

every conceivable direction possible - except the way he was walking! No doubt he was trying to avoid direct nasal contact with Bert!



As we walked towards my taxi, I imagined a path of fainted people lying on the ground as we passed! I was still leading Bert to the cab, with the occasional peep behind to make sure my flock were still there. I went down a ramp and crossed a courtyard towards the cab. As we got there, I turned around to check the flock again. I could see the Jamaican passenger, who by now was about 20 feet behind us, but no sight of the lady. I thought she had done a runner or a shuffle, when suddenly I spotted her lying on the floor.

I quickly threw the loaf of bread into the luggage compartment and told Bert to wait there. I ran to the lady and realised that a waiting ambulance had left its wheelchair ramp down and she'd walked straight into it. I helped her up off the floor and for the first time asked myself why I hadn't just gone home! The un-Christmaslike words *stupid*, *greedy* and *git* worked their way into my thoughts too!

Anyway, thankfully the lady was fine and I eventually succeeded in getting them - and the loaf of bread - into the taxi. They all lived within a mile of the hospital and off we went. First drop was Bert - there is a God I said to myself! I got him to his address, a very dodgy looking block of flats, in double quick time and helped him from the taxi. With each movement of his body, there seemed to be a different, far worse smell emanating! I took him by the hand in our now tried-out formula and we slowly made our way to his flat, pass-

ing a selection of people who seemed to have found their evening's entertainment by watching us. We were almost at his front door when he shouted that he had left his bread in the taxi!

So we made our way back to the cab to get the bread, passing the same people who seemed to be enjoying the entertainment! Then it was back to the flat again, passing those same people yet again and who had by now replaced their smiles with looks of puzzlement. I was now holding one hand while he had his loaf in the other. We turned round the first bend into the corridor of his flats. I was still holding his hand, but as I looked back at Bert I couldn't believe what I was seeing - his joggers were down to his knees and he was exposing his meat and two veg! What our "viewers" must have thought was unimaginable! I shouted to him that his trousers had fallen down!

He just said: "I know, I've lost 2 stone recently and that's why I asked you to hold the bread, so I could hold my joggers up with my free hand!"

I took his bread again while he pulled his trousers up and we took the final steps into his flat. I opened his door, guided him inside while holding my breath all the time! As I said goodbye, I really hoped that I never had to pick him up, or smell him ever again! But I wished him a Merry Christmas and he smiled back, thanking both me and Dial-a-Cab for being so wonderful to people with disabilities. What a lovely man I thought as I walked back to the cab passing the same people who were now telling me how wonderful taxi drivers were!

As I arrived back at the taxi, I heard the end of a conversation between the remaining two passengers. The Jamaican was saying that being blind shouldn't stop him taking a bath! I said nothing. Within five minutes I had dropped both the other two passengers off without any further problems and headed off back up the M11 towards home. Even with the windows open and the cold Xmas-time air blowing all around me, the cab still stunk! Yet I was smiling and almost giggling to myself at the sight of Bert in that corridor with his joggers round his ankles whilst holding his precious loaf of bread! It also occurred to me that I should have a bath as soon as I got home, not to mention get the cab fumigated - and never to be greedy ever again...!

A happy Christmas to all...

Peter Moll (K35)

Call Sign

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"By all accounts, **Derric Sampson** is a model driver. He has done 7,400 trips on Uber in 18 months and riders rate him 4.85 out of 5, above average. The only issue: He's served time in prison. My friends are often taken aback when I tell them about Sampson. But people are released from prison because the state accepts they have repaid their debt to society and deserve a second chance. And if prisoners can't find gainful employment, they're much more likely to commit another crime, putting them back in prison.

However, it's amazingly hard to find work if you are one of the 70 million-plus Americans with a criminal record because many companies ask about your history up front. And if you tick 'yes,' the application process ends before the interview has even started. That is why Uber supports "Ban the Box" and has removed this step from our hiring process.

But that's just one of the many barriers people face when looking for work. Some 30 percent of jobs in the United States now require a license - from being a tour guide or real estate agent to hair braiding. And many of these licenses include some kind of criminal background check.

It's easy to understand why we've gotten here. Certain offenders, especially those convicted of violent and sexual crimes should be prevented from doing some jobs. But these types of rules have been extended to cover too many non-violent crimes, excluding people

Travis Kalanick is CEO and co-founder of Uber. Although he once referred to taxi drivers as assholes, we forgave him because we know how kind and thoughtful he really is with an inbuilt desire to give even criminals a second chance in driving his passengers around. Of course it's nothing to do with his desire to get hold of cheap labour; he is obviously just a lovely person!

The following article comes from the San Francisco Chronicle...

Travis Kalanick: "Let convicted prisoners drive Uber cars!"



Archie signed up with Uber after receiving support from A New Way of Life, an organisation that helps women coming out of prison. But without lawmakers and corporations showing greater collective courage, her other work choices are almost non-existent.

Crime is wrong. But once a person has served their time, we need to give them a second chance. Consigning millions of Americans to a life of unemployment, with all the costs that entails, may be the easier option. It's certainly not the best one for our country."

Travis Kalanick
CEO and co-founder of Uber

Three weeks after Travis Kalanick wrote the above article for the San Francisco Chronicle, the GMB union won their case against Uber in London when the London Employment Tribunal determined that they had acted unlawfully by not providing drivers with basic workers' rights.

The GMB had brought two test cases on 20 July 2016 and the Tribunal decided on 28 October that Uber drivers are entitled to receive holiday pay, a guaranteed minimum wage and an entitlement to breaks. The Union had heard that at least one GMB member, who worked exclusively for Uber, had received just £5.03 per hour in August after costs and fees were taken into account - substantially below the national hourly minimum wage of £7.20.

Lawyers for the drivers claimed that Uber acts unlawfully by frequently deducting sums from drivers' pay, often without informing the drivers in advance, including when customers make complaints. And Mr Kalanick, these drivers weren't criminals - they were just treated as though they were...by you! So unsurprisingly, the man who cares so much for criminals has appealed the decision. He probably thinks that £5.03 per hour is too much and that someone being released from prison would snap that up! And it may have been just two drivers, but we should also point out that decisions made by employment tribunals are binding across the whole of England and Wales.

Let's hope that our trade organisations take a leaf out of the GMB's book and show some steel against TfL's ludicrous decision not to allow PEDs placed in the passenger compartment to at least be on cables, so drivers would not have to leave the front in the case of a malfunction - real or otherwise...

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

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from low-skilled work for offenses such as the possession of marijuana. It's about fear not fact.

Earlier this year, Uber aligned its requirements with Proposition 47, which reclassified certain non-violent crimes as misdemeanours. As a result, 3,300 people have signed up to drive with Uber to earn a living and stand on their own two feet in one state alone. Imagine how many more life-changing opportunities we could create if other states followed suit. And the most interesting part: Prop 47 drivers have the same average rating as their Californian counterparts (4.82 in August). They also appear to live in areas where work opportunities are harder to find.

I'd never really thought deeply about criminal justice reform before starting Uber. Now I realise reform is desperately needed. For example, the FBI records many companies used to do background checks but don't include up-to-date data on whether an arrest resulted in a charge or conviction. So if someone is arrested and subsequently acquitted, their "record" may not show that they're innocent. This is a terrible injustice because a large number of arrests don't end in a conviction. What's more, people of colour bear the brunt of this inequity as they are more likely to be arrested than whites. Flaws in these government databases are one of the reasons Uber screens drivers - and we do rigorous background checks - using county court records.

Reforms like Prop 47 could have an outsized impact on the life of someone like **Ingrid Archi**, who was convicted of drug possession in her 20s. She was laid off when the company she had worked for three years changed its policies to exclude anyone with a criminal record. Out of work, Ingrid stole clothes for her baby. She was arrested for petty theft and having violated her probation, was sentenced to prison. Under Prop 47, her offense was reduced and she is out of prison and wants work.

No one carries on forever, but when **Bernie Silver** (F13J and until recently G08) phoned to tell us that he had *almost* retired, we queried what that actually meant! After all, he had been with ODRTS / Dial-a-Cab since 1975 and although 41 years is a long time, he never really sounded as though he was even thinking of calling it a day.

"I'm just fed up with this job," a sullen Bernie told *Call Sign*, "you put your heart and soul into giving a service to the public while at the same time earning a living, but when it comes down to it we have people in this trade who couldn't care less about us. There's TfL at the top of the pile who seem to do everything they can to damage our pockets by licensing an infinite number of minicabs, while blaming the government for not putting down legislation. But why didn't they ask HMG to put the block on when minicab numbers reached 50,000 rather than waiting till they reached 115,000 and even then still do nothing other than continually laying the blame elsewhere.

"Then there's **Uber** being allowed to ply for hire via the back route and an app; and whose fault is that? Again it's TfL who have given a new meaning to the word infertility. They produce absolutely nothing of any use to the licensed taxi trade and people such as me, who have given a lifetime to the trade, are just left in limbo.

"As a result, this job has become worthless. We sit on ranks and watch cars picking up the passengers who used to use us, driven by people working for £5 an hour! That's what TfL have done to our trade and I can no longer stand it. So I am going to retire at the end of November.

Can you almost be pregnant? Can you almost read a book? Can you almost pass the Kol?

CAN BERNIE SILVER ALMOST RETIRE???



So fed up is Bernie that he is almost retiring!

"BUT...!"

Hang on Bernie! How can there be a 'but' when your intention is to retire?

"But," said Bernie somewhat quietly, "if after three months I find myself struggling too much, then I might come back! So you could say that I am *almost* retiring!"

So all *Call Sign* can do is to *almost* wish

Bernie the best of luck in case he goes beyond an *almost* retirement! But please, we don't want any Dial-a-Cab drivers writing to the magazine saying that their other half is *almost* preggers!!!

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online

WINTER WONDERLAND



With Winter Wonderland returning for its tenth year on Saturday 19 November and continuing until Monday 2 January 2017, there will again be a marshalled rank placed as last year by the first two coach bays at the Brook Gate exit to Hyde Park on Park Lane. The following three coach bays are for coaches, so please do not over-rank.

The rank will be sponsored by PWR Events – the people behind Winter Wonderland and it will be their marshals, along with some from the LTDA, making sure the rank runs well.

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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

Flashback
1998

This month's Flashback looks at a piece of history from the May 1998 issue of Call Sign – whether there should be a Mayoral election for London and what they would do if there was one...

London's Future – Your Choice

Londoners will be voting on new type of authority for the City on Thursday 7th May 1998 - whether to elect a Mayor and Assembly for London.

"Our plans for London are radical and innovative and will restore the civic leadership and strategic direction which London urgently needs. It will give Londoners a new style of local democracy with a strong Mayor, an effective Assembly and new powers to deliver on transport, jobs and crime," says **John Prescott**, Deputy Prime Minister.

The Mayor would be responsible for taxis and most main roads, whilst controlling the underground and London buses through the new **Transport for London** body (TfL), bringing an integrated approach to travel in the capital.

The Mayor would also be responsible for regulating taxis and approving taxi fares, a role currently performed by the Secretary of State for Transport. TfL would handle licensing and everyday licensing work, presently delegated to the Metropolitan Police and the Public Carriage Office.

But if proposals to regulate London minicabs ever come to fruition, responsibility for their licensing would rest with the Mayor.

The Mayor would also implement London-wide strategies in many other areas such as economic development, the environment, health, sport, tourism and culture; oversee a new Fire Authority and organise action on other issues – perhaps even an Olympic bid for example - with the Assembly agreeing or suggesting changes to proposals.

If London votes 'Yes' in the referendum on the 7th May, the Government would introduce legislation quickly, although the first elections for Mayor and Assembly would not take place before Autumn '99.



John Prescott says a London Mayor will deliver on transport, jobs and crime

CARVING THEIR NAMES WITH PRIDE

In 1907, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry was formed. During World War One, it became involved by driving ambulances and assisting in field hospitals under dangerous conditions. At the end of the war, the women of the Nursing Yeomanry had received one *Legion d'Honor*, 27 *Croix de Guerre* and 17 *Military Medals*.

When WW2 began, they were to become the motor driving companies that formed part of the **ATS**, many of them going onto top secret work in coding and supplying administration and support at the special training schools. They also joined the **Special Operations** executive where they served in different parts of the world. A large number were sent into occupied France and were captured, many of them dying in concentration camps.

Three of them, **Noor Inayat Khan**, **Violette Szabo** and **Odette Hallowes** all received the **George Cross** - the first two posthumously. A film was later made about Violette Szabo - Carve her name with pride – where she was played by Virginia McKenna. On the wall of St Pauls Church in Knightsbridge is a memorial listing the



names of 54 of these brave women and on 29th October 2016, members of the Yeomanry, which is now known as the

Princess Royals Volunteers Corps, attended their annual **Remembrance Service** at the church.

The **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled** was asked to supply transport for some of the veterans to convey them to a lunch at the **Victory Services Club** afterwards.

Thanks to all the drivers who assisted by taking these brave ladies to their lunch...

Derek Leone
LTBAWD Hon PRO

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MY ESCAPE – THE FACTS!



A statement from the Editor:

When the taxi trade complains about Uber, we tend to say that if you pay peanuts then you get monkeys. In the August Call Sign, we published a response from Bonzo the Gorilla who lives at London Zoo and who asked us why that would be such a bad thing? He demanded an apology for our remarks and a promise from us not to repeat them. We were unable to give that assurance but agreed to give Bonzo a platform to express his views and also explain about his recent escape...

Dear Mr Fisher

I just thought I'd bring you up to speed on what I've been doing lately because there has been much talk in the press about me escaping from the zoo. I'd like to state categorically that I had no intention of escaping. Let me explain...

I'd had a hard day. Got woken early by some animal screaming blue murder - and there would have been a murder had I found out who it was! No consideration at all. Anyway, at 6am it's breakfast time. Yes, bananas and leaves again! Can you imagine how many thousands of bananas I've had! Whatever I had yesterday, it'll be the same today and they're full of sugar, you know. Oh well, I thought, I'll just have to soldier on as usual.

I had four hours until the public were due. I wandered round the enclosure, ate a few more leaves - I think I'm an addict. They do say that if you eat too many carrots then you turn orange, so what happens if you spend years and years eating leaves? I'll tell you... wind, terrible wind!

Anyway, I climbed a tree, found a rope and swung back to a platform. As **Cilla Black** famously sang: "I think I'm going outta my head," although as any nerd will tell you, it was originally recorded by **Little Anthony and the Imperials**.

But I digress and thought you might like to know something about my occasional partner, **Bonzella**. You could say we met on a blind date - although it wasn't as romantic as that! I was sitting around one afternoon when the door was flung open and she walked in, although to be honest it was more like they shoved her in! I don't know who was more shocked - me or her. Well, she looked at me and I could see that the way she looked was way beyond compare. Someone should put music to that...

But back to Bonzella; we were supposed to get to know each other. And we did - in about 35 seconds. And that was it. We had a few dates and I suppose I quite fancied her, but intellectually it was a struggle. I'd ask her what she thought about **Brexit** and all I'd get was a grunt. Or I'd ask what she thought of apples instead of bananas. Another grunt! So, I have to admit that I've gone off her. Yes, we get it together now and then but I don't think it's going to last - well not for more than 35 seconds!

Then, just before the gates were open to allow the public to come in, my phone rang.

"Bonzo speaking."

"Hi Bonzo, it's Phil."

"Who?"

"Phil.....Phil Collins."

"Sorry....I'm not sure who you are."

"You know," said Phil, "Su, Su, Suddio". Another day for you and me in Paradise. And I can hear it coming in the air at night, oh Lord (copyright Cadburys chocolate - the ad, not the Lord!)"

"Of course," I replied, "you saw me playing in the advert. Oh yeah, I know you."

So Phil Collins told me he was going on tour but had done his back in, was unable to play the drums and having seen the ad featuring my drumming skills, said that he needed me. Sadly I told him that I couldn't do it explaining how the Zoo made a big fuss when I did the advert. But I offered to call **Mick Fleetwood** for him; he declined my offer and hung up. Not much gratitude there! I hope his walking stick breaks.

Nevertheless, that was my chance for fame and fortune and I was stuck in this dump. So I walked up to the window of the enclosure and hit it in frustration. Some visitors screamed so I kicked the door at the back... and it opened! That wasn't right. I was in a little storeroom. There was a fridge containing guess what - you got it in one...bananas and leaves!

There was another door so I tried that. It wasn't locked. Someone had messed up. But now I was in the open. I pushed a turnstile and I was out on the road! This was all wrong. I tried to go back through the turnstile but it only went one way. People were rushing about screaming and yelling. I don't know why, I couldn't see anything unusual out there. But I was now outside so I thought I'd have a quick look round. There was a taxi rank across the road. The first driver looked at me, went rather pale and said: "Sorry mate, I've just got a **Dial-a-Cab** job," and drove off! No wonder you're losing business. There was another Dial-a-Cab driver behind him and he opened the door for me. I jumped in and asked for **Hampstead Heath**. It seemed like the right sort of place because if nothing else, there were bound to be a few leaves lying round. But I'd hardly sat down when he started his monologue.

"**Uber** are in trouble. Seems their drivers ain't self-employed after all. They've got to pay holiday and sick pay. And what about National Insurance and Pensions. It's gonna cost 'em millions. But they'll probably win the appeal and then it's back to square one... blah, blah, blah... Trying to drive down the Embankment? Forget it. And there's no cyclists even using it... blah, blah, blah... Just sitting there in a cloud of pollution... blah, blah, blah... Two days guv, two days and it offered me just one job and that was on my way home. Life's a complete disaster... blah, blah, blah. Sell the building and share out the money. And then what?"

Escape? To that? Screaming people, pollution, moaning cab drivers? There was only one thing left to say: "Driver, take me back to the Zoo!!!"

Bonzo (typed by Geoff Levene)

Call Sign Online

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Poppycabs



Well done to all those Dial-a-Cab taxi drivers who joined many other cabbies on Sunday 13 November to help transport veterans from mainline stations to the Cenotaph in Whitehall to commemorate Armistice Day.

The closest Sunday to 11 November each year marks the armistice signed at Compiègne in France between the WW1 Allies and Germany in 1918 for the cessation of hostilities on the Western Front and signifying the German defeat. That took place at 11am and is remembered as the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. We now refer to it as **Remembrance Sunday**.

The transportation of vets to Whitehall is brilliantly organised each year by Mike Hughes and is known nowadays as Poppycabs. In addition to driving the vets, many other drivers helped as marshals along the way and the trade thanks them all for caring...



*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

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

Liphook Golf Club

Down on the border of Hampshire and West Sussex, there lies a gem of golfing turf. **Liphook Golf Club** is a near neighbour of the previously reviewed **Hindhead**. Whilst not as visually stunning as Hindhead, it can arguably be said that Liphook is fractionally better as a golf course - even though there is very little in it.

In 1922, Arthur Croome designed his one and only course. A schoolteacher by profession, he had very little funds at his disposal facilitating the use of the nature of the land, but nevertheless this is an extraordinary piece of golfing heaven.

Not long, perhaps, by today's standards - 6200 yards and with a par 70 - it demands you play good golf. Indeed, for you Zen golfers reading this, it's a course that gently whispers in your ear: "I want you to play well and think about every shot you make!" It's very hard to pick individual holes, as the course itself has a wonderful flow with a well-thought out classic design. I'll use the 18th as I took an accompanying photo. This is a great final hole, a par 5 at just over 500 yards. The longer hitters may be able clear the plateau ridge and get a kindly run down the hill to leave a 200 yard plus shot to the green.

But beware that for the last 80 yards there are bunkers guarding the right, no room on the left and out of bounds yards of the back. To add to that, the green runs back to front and is treacherously fast - the ultimate risk and reward finish!

As you can tell, I have huge fondness for Liphook...

A happy golfing Christmas...



The 18th at Liphook

Simon Wallis, Call Sign Online

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"Probably everyone else has noticed too," **Danny Lewis (D17)** commented, "but the traffic volume has worsened to the nth degree lately, which not only affects our arrival times for picking up account clients, but is also having a serious effect on actual journey times in getting people to where they want to go.

"Last week I picked up an elderly couple from **Kings Cross** going to the **Chelsea Bridge Hotel**. The lady was in a wheelchair, while the gentleman was reasonably mobile and alert. No sooner had we got ten minutes into the journey when the lady asked - with a sense of urgency - if we were nearly there yet? I replied that the traffic was bad and that I would do the best I could, which kept her quiet for just a few minutes before she repeated the same question again! I decided to bite my tongue and concentrate on driving smoothly, all the while breaking my head as to how I could avoid the worst of the traffic," **Danny** said, sounding as though he were doing the journey again!

"At that moment and much to my relief, the

Are we nearly there yet?"



husband interjected by telling his wife that there wasn't long to go and that at least kept her happy for another ten minutes, after which time the same question returned and

required yet another calming message from her husband..."

Continuing his story, **Danny** said that he decided to use **Judd Street**, **Great Russell Street**, down through **Covent Garden** and into **Cranbourne Street** rather than **Gower Street**, its various road works and usual traffic hold ups.

"During the course of that 30-minute journey, the lady must have commented at least four times and as we approached **Chelsea Bridge**, she sighed that they "really" must be there soon... and of course, at last we were! As they left the cab, a sense of peace and quietness fell over me!"

But the **DaC** driver hadn't quite finished with **Call Sign**, telling us about another horrendous trip from **Kings Cross**.

"I took a gentleman from the station to the **Goring Hotel**; the traffic was even worse than my **Chelsea Bridge** trip and it took the best part of an hour to complete it! Yet when I apologised, explaining that every way we could go was the same on that particular day, the passenger was as good as gold and said it wasn't my fault. It makes your life so much easier...!"

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

LI SHUFU: BREXIT WON'T AFFECT CHINA AND THE UK

The **August** issue of **Call Sign** ran an interview with **London Taxi Company** Chairman, **Carl-Peter Forster**, who said the **TX4** owners – **Geely Holding Group** - aimed to produce 10,000 taxis and light commercial vehicles a year by 2020, up from under 1,200 in 2015. He also added that Britain's decision to leave the **European Union** would not affect the company's current investment plans.

With their new factory at **Ansty Park** near **Coventry** completed and with £300 million of **Geely's** money invested in the new site, Mr **Forster** said that although future investments could depend on the new relationship Britain forges with the EU, he said that any decisions would not need to be made until at least 2018, by which time they would know exactly what the regulatory framework was, together with customs and duties framework etc. They could, if necessary, then make a decision.

But last month, **Geely** Chairman **Li Shufu** gave his view on **Brexit** and said that he didn't think it would have any negative impact on the relationship between China and the UK. He added that he believed the two countries could continue their relationship well into the future.

Geely Holding Group is China's largest privately owned car-maker and it has helped Mr **Li** become a billionaire. But his wealth has been spread to the Midlands factory where the taxi makers are said to be taking on 1,000 new workers – among them being highly skilled engineers, managers and advanced manufacturing technicians, who will all be involved in the production of the green zero-emissions capable **TX5**, which is due to be launched by the end of 2017.

This **TX5**, with its new light-weight aluminium body structure and composite panelling, was designed in Barcelona by British designers **David Ancona** and **Peter Horbury**. It will be battery-powered but can switch over to petrol should the battery get low.

The new taxi will seat six people, give more leg-room for drivers and incorporate a panoramic glass roof. It will also have in-cab WiFi as well as charging points for passengers wanting to recharge batteries on their phones or lap-tops.

Li Shufu is 53 and was the man that took **Manganese Bronze** out of administration in 2012 at a reported cost of £11.4million, so guaranteeing the continuation of what many recognised as the London taxi icon. In an exclusive **Call Sign** interview in our October 2013 issue, Mr **Li** told us that **Geely** were in it for the long-term and would be building **LTC** into a global business. He added that he had a strong belief in its future and had agreed the right business plan for its future.



Li Shufu at the Chinese National People's Congress in Beijing

WHIPLASH CONSULTATION TO CUT INSURANCE COSTS



The Ministry of Justice has launched a consultation on proposals that could reduce the high number of whiplash claims and reduce premiums. Whiplash claims have risen by 50% over the past ten years and cost insurance companies an estimated £1bn a year.

The consultation gives details of plans to scrap the right to compensation or put a cap of £425 on the amount people can claim for minor whiplash injuries – and then only after giving proof via a medical report. The average whiplash payout is around £1,850.

That's not strictly true, of course, **Transport for London** would never say bog off; they just don't reply! But to us, that is the same. **Call Sign** has been battling for many months in an attempt to make our licensing authority understand that forcing drivers to place credit card readers in the passenger compartment could put our lives at risk.

The latest letter we sent went to **Alex Moffat** of their policy department and the man who checked **Dial-a-Cab's** new bracket that will be fitted in the rear compartment should TfL not back down.

Many of our readers will undoubtedly be getting bored by **Call Sign** constantly going on about the danger TfL could be putting us in, but if you have read this issue right through you will have seen the number of bilks/attacks we have found in just one month. No doubt we could have found many more had we advertised, but we now know that TfL don't really care and in this case, we didn't even get the courtesy of a reply – which to us is the same as receiving a response telling us to bog off!

The latest letter is printed below. **Call Sign** has also spoken to the two largest selling newspapers in the UK – **The Sun** and **Daily Mirror** – and explained the situation. Whilst they have not published the stories, should any driver be injured due to this stupid mandate, then they will undoubtedly go to town on TfL. We have also spoken to a legal company but the cost to us is just too ridiculous to even think about. But again, should something happen, then they will know the situation and how often TfL were told what will happen to a driver eventually.

IN FACT THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW THE TYPE OF PEOPLE WE ARE VAINLY TRYING TO TALK TO...

This was the letter we sent to Mr Moffat...

Hi Alex

I don't think we have ever met but **Brian Rice** has spoken of you being a nice guy. So I really have to write this to you directly, although I know **Steve McNamara** forwarded on my previous email to you.

As the editor of **Call Sign**, I am getting inundated by drivers who say that TfL don't care about drivers' safety and that the only thing that is important to the licensing authority is uniformity.

In my next issue (1st November) I have several drivers writing articles and letters regarding TfL changing their mind after passing the **Dial-a-Cab** PED equipment 5 years ago and it being fine to use then in the driver's compartment, because being removable from its cradle and attached to a cable it could very easily be passed through to the passenger. Should there have been a problem with the PED or the passenger was just unable to understand how to use it, the driver could rectify the problem without the need of getting out of the cab.

I have read on several occasions the official TfL response that if a passenger says the machine doesn't work etc, then we shouldn't leave the safety of the cab but either look for a cash machine (even though that could add pounds onto any fare and cause even more of a problem) or phone the suppliers (at 2am

Once again Call Sign writes to TfL about credit card readers; once again they say...

BOG OFF! WE'RE NOT TALKING!



that really would be pointless).

But Alex, the above isn't the real problem because genuine passengers will somehow work out a way of payment. It is the few whose only aim is to rob the driver - and please don't kid yourself that they aren't out there.

As I said earlier, I have several more drivers in November writing of their problems regarding credit card payments. One driver was invited into the rear by a drunk lady passenger who said the machine wasn't working, while another even sent a photo of the three young men who were at the very least looking to get out without paying but who, had they known that taxis accept credit cards and the machine was in the back, would undoubtedly have tried to attack the driver after getting him to leave the front of the cab. You obviously know that if a driver has to leave the front to go into the back, then he/she would not be able to lock his/her door.

I have letters from drivers who have written to their MPs and one who has **Andrew Dismore** promising to bring up the subject at the December **Mayor's Question Time**. As I write this, **Caroline Pidgeon** is expected to ask **Sadiq Khan** at the November MQT to look again at the situation and the danger it presents to taxi drivers.

Yet TfL in their wisdom keep pumping out the same misinformation claiming that we shouldn't leave the safety of our cab. But will TfL pay us to let these people off the fare because the advice to pay by cash is ridiculous if they say they haven't any and even more pointless is to phone a CC company at 2 in the morning. What should a genuine passenger do? Wait until the following morning?

The answer, Alex, is to put a proper sign in the passenger compartment that passengers can't miss, saying the taxi driver accepts credit cards – because TfL couldn't even do that correctly. Apparently they didn't realise that some

TX4s had tip-up seat headrests on the partition and consequently the signs they sent just didn't fit. That said it all to me. There may well be some nice people at TfL but the impression is that although they are our licensing authority, they are run by machine and there is no room for any movement. TfL says so, therefore it is!

If DaC's PED was passed by TfL 5 years ago at a cost to DaC of £500,000, why is it no good now? And why is it that not one member of TfL has answered me as to why, if the PED must go in the back because TfL say so, why it cannot be on an unbreakable cable as it currently is on DaC PEDs in the front. Then passengers with problems could pass it through to the driver if they claim there is a problem. It could possibly be more prone to damage, but better to a machine than to us!

The Call Sign letters and articles re TfL's total intransigence etc are all laid out for the December issue. How nice it would be to say in the following issue that TfL have looked at the subject of driver safety and will allow PEDs to go in the rear or the front provided it is accessible to passengers without the driver needing to touch the card (as DaC's is otherwise it would not have been passed) and the correct signage is attached.

Sadly, the belief that most drivers have of TfL – ie they could not care less about our safety – will be confirmed when you either send me the identical letter I have had from many at TfL and the GLA that we shouldn't leave the cab, look for a cash machine or phone the CC company. Or you might not even reply because the days when TfL replied to editors has long gone.

Alex, if I sound rude towards you, that isn't intentional. It is borne out of the sheer frustration of banging my head against a wall. After all, I assume the decision to place all PEDs in the rear was taken at a meeting with the trade (my belief is that **Steve McNamara** and **Grant Davis** were there – and even the founder of **CabApp**, an app that seems to have failed yet obviously is more important than DaC so far as TfL are concerned). Yet **Brian Rice**, the first Chairman of a radio circuit to mandate credit card usage for all his drivers, wasn't invited and didn't even know it had taken place until being told your decision had been taken. Why? Well, would TfL want someone there with a different point of view? Of course not! Hence the bruising on my head thanks to TfL.

My sincere apologies if I have let out my frustration out at you Alex. It really isn't personal, but hopefully you can see my problem. As a driver as well as an editor, I know the situation drivers are in. TfL obviously don't... and therein lays my frustration and head banging requirement.

*Kind regards
Alan Fisher*

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

Brethren of the Whip



Waiting Time

We've all had the passenger at one time or another who asked you to wait whilst they tended to their business and were then surprised on their return to find that you had not stopped the clock! It's really nothing new...

On the last Sunday of 1833, **William Carrington** was sitting atop of his Hackney coach on the stand in **Knightsbridge**. It was a bitterly cold morning and two gentlemen approached him saying he could have a fare when the **Exeter** coach arrived. No doubt Carrington was readily available to do any fare and once he had earned enough, he would be putting the horses away and placing himself in front of a nice warm fire. The two gentlemen were also cold and asked if they could sit inside the coach whilst they awaited the arrival of their friend from Exeter. They climbed in and waited... and waited! After two and a half hours they surmised the coach was unavoidably delayed and thanked Carrington for the use of his coach and began to walk away.

Carrington, it can be assumed, was none too happy about this; the two gentlemen had been protected from the elements whilst he sat in the biting wind for over two hours and without a penny to show for it. After a lot of argument, he managed to obtain the address of one of the gentlemen and a summons was issued.

In court, **William Blacklock** tried to argue that due to an irregularity, the summons was invalid. **Magistrate Burrell** told him that as he was in court at the moment, the summons must have done its job. Blacklock then argued that the Hackney coachman was told he was only going to have a fare after the Exeter coach arrived, which he had readily agreed to. The magistrate replied that the hiring commenced as soon as they climbed into the coach. Carrington was entitled to his fare - 5s for the waiting time plus a further 8s 6d expenses.

In 1855, **Samuel Joseph** agreed to take a fare from **Whitechapel** to **Ilford** and return for 7s 6d (38p). He was kept waiting over three hours at Ilford and demanded to be paid for his waiting time, which his German publican passenger refused to pay. The publican had agreed that though a price was agreed for the journey, there was no mention of waiting time.

"On your reasoning," ventured **Yardley**, the magistrate, "if the cab was detained at Ilford for a week, he was not to be paid for it." A witness stated that the coachman was told he shouldn't be kept waiting at Ilford for "a great while."

"What is your notion of a great while," queried the Magistrate, "a week or a month?"

"Oh no, sir," said the witness, "that's a long while!"

"Then what is your notion of a little while; a day, or a day and a night," queried **Yardley**.

To much laughter from those present in the court, **Magistrate Yardley** was told that "...a day is a little while!"

The German publican called more witnesses, none of whom were fluid English speakers but who were supposed to have understood the contract between the driver and his passenger. The publican then informed the court that "...the cabman was eating bread and cheese and drinking beer in an alehouse in Ilford at my expense and I was obliged to wait for him whilst he finished his meal!"

Yardley was incredulous, "What! Do you mean to say he was stuffing himself with bread and cheese and beer for three hours and a half," to which the German replied in the positive.

Another witness told the court that **Joseph** would be detained just for a very little while. Once again **Yardley** asked a witness to define "a

very little while." This was easy for the foreigner: "A little while," he said, "is a very little while!"

Samuel Joseph was paid his 6s 6d waiting time plus 5s expenses.

Then spare a thought for **William Tapping**. Shortly after midnight in late **November 1861**, he set down a fare in **Brompton** and watched as the two gentlemen entered a house. At 2am he saw the last lights of the house extinguished as all inside prepared for bed.

At 5am, after sitting on the seat of his **Hansom** in the cold and drenching rain, he knocked on the door and asked how much longer he was to wait. The master of the house was awoken and confronted by a thoroughly wet and bedraggled cabman in front of him. As far as the passenger was concerned, he had placed the shilling fare on the roof of the hansom through the communicating trap door, which was right in front of the driver.

The passenger clearly thought the cabman was trying to pull a fast one. He knew the fare had been terminated but was trying his luck. **Magistrate Paynter** felt that the passenger should have at least informed the driver that the fare was ended, instead of putting a coin through the trap, a coin that could easily roll off the roof unseen by the driver. Though he himself was not totally unconvinced the driver was not pulling a fast one. **Tapping** only received half of the 11s he was trying to claim and was not allowed any costs. Both cabman and passenger were unhappy with the magistrate's decision.

A very merry Christmas to all...

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

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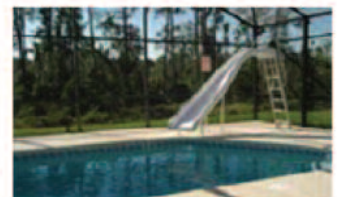
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London City Airport has been named the best airport of its kind in the world, picking up the Regional Airport of the Year award at the CAPA World Aviation Summit in Amsterdam on 27 October.

Organisers said the award was given to the regional airport that has been the biggest standout strategically, has established itself as a leader and done the most to advance the progress of the aviation industry. The category covered airports catering for up to 10 million passengers per year.

Peter Harbison, CAPA Executive Chairman said: "London City has overcome intensifying competition in the London area, as well as political obstacles. Despite these barriers it was one of the fastest growing UK airports in 2015 with a passenger growth rate three times the national average."

Accepting the award, Declan Collier, CEO, London City Airport said: "This award is the icing on the cake of what has been a momentous year for London City Airport. In July, the Government granted planning permission

London City: Best regional airport in the world!



for an expansion programme that will transform the airport, creating additional capacity for the London airspace system, welcoming a new generation of aircraft that will open up new destinations and accommodate 6.5mil-

LCA will be providing more work in the coming year

lion passengers per year by 2025, up from 4.5m today.

"While waiting for planning permission, we have experienced sustained record growth and managed this with very constrained infrastructure. Crucially, we have done so without compromising customer experience and continued to deliver our passenger proposition of 20 minute check-in (door to gate) and 15 minute arrival (plane to train). I thank CAPA for its recognition and look forward to building on the success of 2016 in the years to come."

London City Airport currently has ten airlines flying out of it, serving more than 40 mainly European destinations. The City Airport Development Programme, given the go ahead by Government in July 2016, will see the construction of a parallel taxiway to increase runway capacity, seven new aircraft stands and a world-class terminal extension. The plans will see LCY welcoming 6.5m passengers per year by 2025.

Sayings of 2016!

Or there's one born every minute!!!

As we approach 2017, we wanted to present two phrases from 2016 that emanated from different departments of Transport for London and which allow you, our **Call Sign** readers, to decide on as to how applicable they were to real life!

1. From TfL adverts both on television and posters:

"Every journey matters. Safety is our priority."

Call Sign: Does that include taxi drivers who, if forced to enter the passenger compartment following a complaint that the credit card reader doesn't work, could well be leaving themselves open to an attack or robbery as they would also have to leave the driver's door unlocked...?

2. Boris Johnson, as Mayor, after being asked about the appalling eastbound traffic along Lower and Upper Thames Streets from morning till late at night:

"Wait until the roadworks at Tower Hill are finished and then you'll see the difference..."

Call Sign: We're still waiting Mr Ex-Mayor – probably in the never-ending hold-ups along that stretch of road. At least making you Foreign Secretary means you are out of the country more than in it! Pity you can't take your bike lanes with you when you go...



Call Sign's famous pic of the Lower Thames St bike lane featuring a bike and a jogger – plus traffic chaos alongside it

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SEASONS' GREETINGS



It's a bit silly, we know, but since December 1997 this magazine has celebrated Christmas / Eid / Chanukah / Zarathosht Diso / Rohatsu in the 1 December issue! We just have this silly feeling that 1 January might be a bit late and in any case we missed

Diwali altogether. So here we are and regardless of which religion you follow, we hope your God provides you with a good December...

Alan Fisher, Call Sign Online

Upgrades

Ladies & Gents

You will probably know by the time you read this article, that we have been extremely busy throughout November dealing with an urgent upgrade on the Ingenico PEDs.

The **Dial-a-Cab** IT department found a problem almost by chance and immediately contacted **Barclaycard** and **Ingenico** who were passing the buck and blaming each other! It transpired that we had just over two weeks to upgrade the units or they would all have literally died overnight.

For the upgrade to work successfully, the MDT units also needed updated software, so you can imagine our IT Director, **John Bankes** and his team together with all the guys at **Roman Way** were under severe pressure to make the necessary changes in such a short time and without the prior notice that other providers were given some two months before. Not an ideal situation and definitely not one of our making.

We utilised both **Roman Way** and **DaC House** to carry out firstly, the reprogramming of the PEDs and secondly, asking you the Shareholders to come to either location - day or night - to have both the MDT and an updated PED fitted in your taxis.

At first the changes that Barclaycard made to reactivate *all* PEDs did not completely solve the problem, which meant some units were still unworkable and more time had to be wasted on a project already short of time. Through no fault of DaC, we had to hold off with even more calls and apologies from Barclaycard until they finally rectified the problem. Fitting the fleet in such a short period was a major task and your full assistance has meant that we are

OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE REPORT



currently on target to succeed.

The software update should and would have included a gratuity box and pre-authorisations, but due to the gaping hole in communication from Barclaycard, rectifying the current problem was high priority and those two updates will be coming in the next release.

PEDs in the passenger compartment

The brackets were approved by TfL very recently and are currently in production. I am expecting delivery very soon in readiness for the commencement of the fitting pro-

gramme. We are using the yellow grab handles as the main securing point, which alleviates any additional drilling or fixing holes that I know many of you with lease deals were concerned about in case of possible damage it could have caused to the taxi – but no need to worry!

You will be contacted and given a date and time slot at Roman Way and I'd appreciate it if you could try to keep to the time, as again we are under a strict time frame of 1st January 2017 to complete the project. We've already fitted a number of you with the wiring prior to the fitting of the bracket, which will reduce the fitting time substantially; unfortunately, with the above mentioned PED upgrade rearing its ugly head as the immediate priority, we could not fit as many as we originally aimed for.

And finally...

Can I wish all of you and your families a very happy and busy festive period. This is also the time of year where we can all take time to reflect and think of the loved ones that we have lost..

Allan Evans
DaC Operations
Compliance Manager

Alex: Give pedestrians the roadway!

"I've been on **Dial-a-Cab** for 15 years now, which means I've been reading about driver's moans in **Call Sign** for 15 years too! And you know what...pretty much all of the moans are deserved!"

We wiped the sweat beads from our fevered brow as **Alex Constantinou (N05)** told this magazine about the things that irritated him, saving his worst one till the end.

"The cost of a new cab is always up there being moaned about, just as is TfL placing PED's in the back of the cab and putting our safety at risk. Then there are the number of licensed private hire cars – which must be close to 120,000 by now - but way out in front has to be the state of the traffic! It doesn't matter where you go in the daytime, because you will be just minutes away from yet another holdup. Every taxi driver knows about the ludicrous cycle lanes and how they are destroying London, but my problem is pedestrian crossings.

"Traffic lights crossings that stay red forever to give pedestrians time enough to have lunch and make a phone call while strolling across are bad enough, but old fashioned pedestrian crossings where people don't wait until it's safe but walk straight out without even looking, pointing to the zebra stripes on the ground after you've had to slam your brakes on, are just the worst!"

Alex had been in **Ladbroke Grove** in yet another hold-up when he saw a bus that had gone into a wall on the wrong side of the road. Just then a passenger jumped in and asked for **Notting Hill**. He told Alex that someone just walked out onto the crossing and the bus had to swerve to avoid them. Alex didn't know the facts to issue blame, so we cannot do so in this case either, but it fitted

in with Alex's moan and he ended by reverting to his list of moans again:

"I do sometimes wonder whether it would just be better to give pedestrians the roadway too because they think they own it anyway. Then the rest of us will all have to go by bike because there won't be room for anything else!"

After a quick moan about the weather, Alex left **Call Sign's** reporter and drove off in a puff of smoke!



The bus swerved and hit a wall



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Brian Rice throws charge of nepotism at the IEA after its ludicrous suggestion to...

LET MINICABS PLY FOR HIRE AND USE BUS LANES!

The Institute of Economic Affairs, an organisation famed for doing very little other than being a thinktank for Mrs Thatcher when she was Prime Minister, has come back into the world with something they believe will get them publicity – coming up with a plan that would allow minicab drivers to be able to become black cab drivers, but without having to go through the Knowledge!

They are proposing that regulations and restrictions in the taxi market get torn up so that the number of cabs able to ply for hire, use taxi ranks and fly along bus lanes would increase from its current 25,000 licensed taxi drivers up to around the IEA's figure of 170,000 private hire vehicles out of a total of 242,000 – no, we don't know where they get their figures from either! They also propose that fares be slashed.



Brian Rice accuses the IEA of nepotism

Under the thinktank plans, it would no longer be a requirement for new drivers to spend between two and four years learning London and the distinction between private hire vehicles and taxis would be scrapped, allowing minicabs to roam the streets and pick up street hails. If it's quiet out – and are there that many passengers around to satisfy 242,000 cabs searching for a hand going up – then minicabs could also use our ranks. If they are lucky enough to trap a job then they would – according to the IEA – also be able to use bus lanes. The organisation considers that the main requirement for driving a taxi would be a clean criminal record and correct car insurance so that passengers were covered.

According to the IEA, the distinction between private hire vehicles and taxis had been blurred thanks to minicabs being booked from street corners.

Mark Littlewood is the IEA's director general. He also believes the rich pay too much tax. He said: "Current regulation of the taxi market is archaic and needs urgent reform. Much of the new regulatory measures taken have been obvious attempts to obstruct growth within these companies. The market must be liberated from overzealous government regulation to allow com-

panies to regulate themselves according to market preferences and to level the playing field for both taxis and private hire vehicles in a way which encourages competition and growth and to improve service for consumers."

He added that in the view of the thinktank, PHV markets were open and competitive while taxi markets were still heavily protected with the number of licences capped and that minicab growth should not be held in. He said that taxi restrictions should be lifted and a level playing field adopted.

Dial-a-Cab Chairman, Brian Rice, told *Call Sign*: "This is an absolutely preposterous suggestion and reeks of Nepotism. The IEA was founded in 1955 by the late Sir Anthony Fisher; a current Member of the Board and Chairman of Network for a Free Society is the daughter of Sir Anthony - her name is Linda Whetstone. Her daughter and granddaughter of Sir Anthony is Rachel Whetstone, who is the Senior Vice President of Communications and Public Policy at none other than Uber! That connection in itself should confine their findings to the rubbish bin, as it reeks of nepotism and vested interest. They are supposed to be a thinktank; perhaps they should get the fundamentals correct before passing an opinion."

Transport select committee member, Karl McCartney, said that IEA needed to ensure there was a sustainable future for London's iconic black cabs by helping to bring the trade into the 21st century and creating a playing field that recognised its "unique and traditional role."

A Department for Transport spokesperson said that while they recognised new technology such as the Uber booking app as being a game changer and that no one wanted to do anything that stamped out innovation and creativity, "...there were no plans to change the rules so that taxis and private hire were subject to the same regulations."

Vito 2017?



Digi sign on the rear of the new Vito?

Details of the new Mercedes Benz Vito are shrouded in secrecy, but a Dial-a-Cab driver who was at their premises for a totally different reason, got a brief look at an uncovered top rear end of what was said to be the 2017 electric version of the taxi.

The driver, who wanted to remain anonymous for obvious reasons, told us: "I asked someone why the cab was covered up and he said it was still secret, so I assumed it was the electric version. I had a phone in my hand but didn't think that *Call Sign* would be interested in a photo of an old tarpaulin cover – even with a Vito underneath it!

But suddenly one of the mechanics called out to another and although I couldn't hear what was said, I could see he was going to look at something underneath. I really couldn't see much, but enough to see that the vehicle had what looked like a digital sign-writer at the back that would inform vehicles behind that the doors were opening and took a quick pic! It certainly made me wonder what other technology was about to be sprung on us!"

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Hi Alan

Is it just me or have LTPH/TfL totally lost it! When you renew your licence you get a choice of filling the application in manually or doing it online and as I do not have a computer, I still do it the old fashioned way. Yet when I did that, LTPH/TfL told me that they couldn't renew it unless I gave them an email address. So I told them I didn't have one, but that didn't satisfy our licensing authority and they said I would have to use someone else's! I did do that but it got me wondering about data protection regulations and the aspect of allowing someone else to receive details about my licence – a regulation LTPH/TfL are apparently encouraging me to break?

Gerry Tobin (I32)

It sounds a bit weird Gerry, even for TfL! Are you sure you didn't tick an incorrect box? It reminds me of a time back in 1988 when I first went on email with Compuserve. I only knew two others who were on email (it was still called electronic mail back then). There was former Board Member Steve Sanders and the Editor of Las Vegas taxi magazine, Trip Sheet, Dick Kawadler. When there was nothing to say to either, I would have to email myself just to check it was working. Now 28 years on, TfL apparently say you have to have an email address whether you have a computer or not? Are we heading towards the day when we all have electronic chips surgically implanted to save us bothering to even talk? Then TfL can just zap us and we'd automatically be relicensed!!!! ...Ed

Sex attack statistics

Hi Alan

You may be interested in a letter I wrote to my MP, James Cleverly, last month regarding TfL's failure to keep their word on sex attack statistics...

Graham Waite (B35)

Graham's letter to James Cleverly, MP for Braintree, is below. The figures have been promised for several months but at the moment have still not been released. The longer they take to appear, the more many will assume that they are so bad that the Mayor does not want them revealed prior to the Christmas rush ... Ed

Dear Mr Cleverly,

I am a licensed London Taxi Driver living in Braintree. In March of this year and in response to a Freedom Of Information request, Transport for London agreed to publish Taxi / Private

Hire sexual assault statistics (using the Public Interest Exemption) "in the coming weeks." But they never did. In response to another FOI request (August 2nd 2016), TfL said they anticipated publication on September 20th 2016 – they still have not done so, despite several assurances that they were imminent. During the interim period, women have been sexually assaulted; having had no warning from TfL of the possible dangers associated with using Private Hire vehicles. Having used Section 22 of the FOI Act to justify their response, I believe TfL will shortly be in breach of FOI regulations as the use of Section 22 is conditional upon the 'existence of intent to publish' BEFORE the FOI request is made.

I would like you, as my MP, to demand the immediate publication of a complete and comprehensive statistical report of the sexual assault data.

*I appreciate your assistance,
Graham Waite*

A clean Christmas...

Hi Alan

Betty is like that special aunt, the one that if your mum dies you've pencilled in to go to live with at the age of seven, knowing that she can fix your bike and understand the long words in your homework. So let's hope that if/when we have to move offices, we can hold on to the very best domestic in the world. So on behalf of my wife and myself, happy Christmas to a lovely lady.

Gary Cox (046) and his domestic, Ally Cox

You have a way with words, Gary, whilst Ally must have an amazing amount of patience! But yes, Betty is exceptional. My only concern is how you know Betty! Happy Christmas anyway! ...Ed

Uber, the Telegraph and Brighton...

Hello Alan

In the Daily Telegraph, Richard Holt said London's black cabs should be consigned to history and that Uber was the way forward. There are, however, a number of issues Uber drivers have with their own bosses, culminating in the recent High Court case regarding driver employment status. Yes, their fares are as cheap as chips for the time being, but for how long? Perhaps only as long as it takes to decimate the opposition before a radical hike in fares benefitting the puppeteers... sorry, driverteers! But take a look inside the company; see how they operate and how they treat their drivers who are constantly protesting

about their dwindling pay deals, which affect passenger transport and their food delivery service, Uber Eats. Uber have been shown to possess an unbridled disregard for the financial rights of individuals, backed up by a team of highly skilled persuasive lawyers who know what buttons to press and when to press them!

Uber are a soul devouring juggernaut that sucks people in and spews them out. When you work for Uber, you sell your soul hook line and sinker. Yes, they help you obtain a car etc at extortionate rates. They tie you into their contract and you are then an Uber prisoner. They own you and sin-bin you if you don't follow their rules and regulations. If that's being a self-employed free agent, then my name's Donald Trump!

I also know that although Uber are desperate to start here in Brighton with lots of fares waiting, they just can't get the drivers because the regulations and enforcements on Private Hire and Hackney all have to abide by the blue book of regulations... and it's a long list with an even playing field for all! If only TfL had adopted Brighton's strategy instead of letting them come on stream so easily!

Dave Heath (Ex-W27)

Brighton, East Sussex

Come on David, admit it; you're not really Uber's number one fan! ...Ed

Rear mounted PEDs

1

Hi Alan

There has been a problem with rear mounted PEDs, which TfL should be made aware of. Passengers, usually the ones in a big hurry, are removing their Credit Cards prior to the transaction being authorised. I have spoken to a few drivers who have had to ask their passenger to reinsert their Cards to restart the transaction, causing delays to them and the following traffic. I personally experienced this problem today when I passed the DaC PED to my Chinese passenger, who obviously couldn't understand the process. The trip was from Pall Mall to Little Venice on Oct 30th and is recorded on my log.

Dave Cohen (E94)

Dave, there is absolutely nothing that I haven't told TfL either personally or via a third party about what can and probably will happen by moving our PEDs to the passenger compartment. They range from the one we all know about (possible attacks by passengers deliberately claiming the PED isn't working) to blocking our vision of nearside cyclists to possibly, in the event of a sudden stop and the passenger not belting up,



Mailshot

of banging their head onto the rear-mounted unit. However, I have all but given up on TfL actually seeing any sense because our safety is obviously not as important to them as the uniformity of every taxi having the PED in the same place.

I have since then asked Steve McNamara, LTDA General Secretary, to ask TfL why, if they insist on PEDS being there, then why can't they be on cables as they currently are in our cabs. Then passengers could pass them through to us. I did actually ask Helen Chapman last month following our meeting, but received no reply so I'm hoping that someone at TfL will answer Steve. For the life of me, I can't think of a solitary reason as to why they would say no; after all, it would deal with our main problem – that of safety. I also gave details to *The Sun*, who several months ago published an article on the 32 alleged Uber rapes in their cars, but obviously it would suit the paper far more if a black cab driver was severely beaten up first. Their "ad" for stories mentions celebrity or scandal, so I guess a story about our safety isn't really up their street and explains why I don't usually read that paper. And no, I haven't given up nagging TfL but as they care about our safety little more than *The Sun*, it really is difficult ...Ed

Rear mounted PEDs

2

Dear Alan

Thought you should know that I asked Andrew Dismore, Labour London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden to speak to TfL on our behalf. I don't suppose it will make much difference but there is always hope. He said he would bring it up at the December Mayor's Question Time. I wrote:

"Dear Mr Dismore, I was wondering whether you would be prepared to ask TfL not to insist that credit card readers be situated in the passenger compartment of taxis. I work as a taxi driver in London and drive for Dial-a-Cab, who have had card readers with TfL permission in the driver compartment since 2011 with no problems at all. It seems to me that making us move the readers could endanger drivers if they have to leave the safety of the front to help a passenger in the back, who may be deliberately misusing the reader just to get a driver out of the front so they can rob him or her. I think TfL are just making themselves look ridiculous over this issue; it seems they made a mistake but haven't the courage to admit it. Any help you can give us in this matter would be very much appreciated, if you need further information please contact Dial-a-Cab."

You never know, Alan. Maybe...

Alf Cook (A62)

Well done Alf; if you read this issue and

the problems drivers have, you will know my view. But you are also right that TfL won't admit that they have cocked up. Then again they must be used to it...!

Congratulations... and sadness!

Hi Alan,

Re the November issue of *Call Sign*, many congratulations to Al Fresco on his 50 years as a Green Badge driver. I note that you have been driving for 46 years; I got my badge in December 1955, so between us we've seen many changes in the cab trade over all those years. But never in my worst times did I ever think the London taxi business would be so badly treated by its licensing authority as TfL does to it.

I also read with sadness and dismay in *Call Sign* that my old paper, *Taxi Globe*, like many other taxi trade publications before it, has ceased production. Sad days indeed, but I wish all at The Gentleman's Circuit, ie ODRTS, Lords and now Dial-a-Cab, all the very best and of course, be lucky!

Rodney Lewis (Ex-D77)

Thanks Rodney; 61 years is some time to be connected with this trade – albeit as a driver and trade newspaper editor. So yes, who would have thought that this trade would have jumped through hoops to get back the old PCO as against the licensing authority we currently have. But all is not totally bad, at least those at TfL in charge of us are not starving and off our backs, are earning far more than we could dream of! ...Ed

Formerly a diamond!

Hi Alan

I recently dropped off Bob Diamond, the man who got a £32million bonus from Barclays. I told him I remembered driving him around when he worked at Morgan Stanley in the late 80s. Yes, he said, they were happy days. And he gave me a 40p tip! A true gent lol...!

Jon Robinson (E88)

Shows how little you know, Jon! By the time he paid tax on it, he'd be lucky to go home with £20million. And that's why you only got 40p!!!

Wrong hat!

Dear Alan

Regarding the letter from Dave Cohen (E94) in last month's *Mailshot*, Jack the Hat McVitie was stabbed to death in a flat in Evering Road by Reggie Kray, whereas Bill the Hat was the unfortunate taxi driver to have been shot and killed in Baker Street. If memory serves me correct, his killer got more time for the burglary he had just committed in

Bayswater than for Bill Harris's murder.

Sean Farrell (B39)

Thanks for clearing it up, Sean; I was about to make a joke about hats, but then I remembered hearing about the murder and there was nothing remotely funny about it ...Ed

Credit card charges

Hi Alan

I was very disappointed with Dial-a-Cab for adding on a further charge of 1.5% + VAT on street credit card rides. I was under the impression that the £7 increase earlier this year was supposed to have given us surcharge-free transactions. I think we must have the most expensive PED on the market at the moment.

Perhaps it might be a bit fairer to the drivers if Dial-a-Cab could offer us a service to match the cost, ie payments twice a week instead of having to wait almost 2 weeks for some credit card payments to reach our bank accounts.

Peter Moll (K35)

Allan Evans replies: Hi Peter, the additional amount is actually 1.5% + vat which equates to 1.8% on Credit Card (Hail and Ride) Trips. As one member of the new Board of Directors, I still feel it is more than fair compared to other providers. The additional amount is merely to offset the rapid increase in merchant fees that DaC pays on all transactions and as I have already mentioned, this fee is steadily rising.

Moving forward, we have already discussed at length the payment schedule for Hail and Ride trips and it is currently under consideration...

VAD

I concur with the Editor's comments in the November *Call Sign* re the new VAD system being a much better system than V6 and that the amount of Credit Card work has shot up enormously (although tips are almost no existent). But I would like to make a plea for the next VAD update. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE make signing on and clearing a job to default to Available...

Alan Nash (A95)

Why would you want that, Mr Numbers? You may sign on but be on your way somewhere and not want to be offered a trip; while the same may apply if you clear a trip and decide to look for somewhere you can stop for a bite to eat – or in your case to search for the 'kicking out' times of that month's events! You would then be writing to me to ask that the following update did not automatically make you available! ...Ed





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