

February 2016

Call Sign



From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*If you thought
cyclists were just a
nuisance, prepare
yourself for a shock!*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Let's beat the rickshaws at their own game and pick up work from the theatres. Here is a list of theatres, the shows and their "kicking out" time!

London Theatre Shows

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

Theatre	Show	Sun	Sun	Mon	Tue	Tue	Wed	Wed	Thu	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sat	Notes
Adelphi Theatre	Kinky Boots			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Aldwych	Beautiful			22:00		22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00	22:00	17:00	22:00	
Ambassadors Theatre	Stomp	16:45		21:45					16:45	21:45	21:45	16:45	21:45	
Apollo (Shaftesbury Ave)	Nell Gwyn			22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00	22:00	17:00	22:00	O 12/02/16
Apollo Victoria Theatre	Wicked			22:20		22:20	17:20	22:20		22:20	22:20	17:20	22:20	
Cambridge Theatre	Matilda The Musical	17:40				21:40	17:10	22:10		22:10	22:10	17:10	22:10	
Criterion Theatre	Close to You (Bacharach)	16:00	19:30				16:30	21:00		21:00	21:00	16:30	21:00	
Dominion Theatre	War of the Worlds			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Drury Lane, Theatre Royal	Charlie & the Chocolate Factory			22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00	22:00	17:00	22:00	
Duchess	Play That Goes Wrong	17:05	21:05			21:35		21:35		21:35	21:35	16:35	21:35	
Duke of York's Theatre														
Fortune Theatre	Woman In Black				17:00	22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00	22:00	18:00	22:00	
Garrick	Red Velvet			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gielgud Theatre	Curious Incident/Dog/Night			22:15		22:15		22:15	16:45	22:15	22:15	16:45	22:15	
Harold Pinter	Sunny Afternoon			21:50		21:50	16:50	21:50		21:50	21:50	16:50	21:50	
Her Majesty's Theatre	Phantom Of The Opera			22:00		22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00	22:00	17:00	22:00	
London Palladium														
Lyceum Theatre	Lion King	17:15				22:15	17:15	22:15		22:15	22:15	17:15	22:15	
Lyric Theatre	Thriller Live	18:00	22:00			22:00		22:00		22:00	22:00	18:30	22:30	
New London	War Horse			22:10		21:40		22:10	17:10	22:10	22:10	17:10	22:10	
Noel Coward Theatre	Mrs Henderson Presents			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	O 16/2/16
Novello Theatre	Mamma Mia			22:15		22:15		22:15	17:30	22:15	22:15	17:30	22:15	
Palace Theatre	Harry Potter	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	O 30/7/15
Phoenix Theatre	Bend it like Beckham			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	C 5/3/16
Piccadilly Theatre	Jersey Boys	19:35			17:35	22:05		22:05		22:05	22:05	17:35	22:05	
Playhouse Theatre	End of a Longing			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	O 11/2/16
Prince Edward Theatre	Miss Saigon			22:20		22:20		22:20	17:20	22:20	22:20	17:20	22:20	
Prince Of Wales Theatre	Book Of Mormon			21:50		21:50	16:50	21:50		21:50	21:50	16:50	21:50	
Queen's Theatre	Les Miserables			22:30		22:30	17:30	22:30		22:30	22:30	17:30	22:30	
Savoy Theatre	Guys & Dolls			22:15	17:15	22:15		22:15		22:15	22:15	17:15	22:15	
St Martin's Theatre	Mousetrap			21:45	17:15	21:45		21:45		21:45	21:45	18:15	21:45	
Shaftesbury	Motown the Musical			22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00	22:00	17:00	22:00	O 8/3/16
Theatre Royal Haymarket	Breakfast at Tiffany's			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	O 30/6/16
Trafalgar Studios 1	Homecoming			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	C 13/2/16
Vaudeville	Hand to God			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Victoria Palace Theatre	Billy Elliot - The Musical			22:30		22:30		22:30	17:30	22:30	22:30	17:30	22:30	
Wyndham's Theatre	Hangmen			22:00		22:00	17:00	22:00		22:00	22:00	17:00	22:00	C 5/3/16

Key - ✓ = Show on but unknown finish time.

O=Opens C=Closes

from the editor's desk

Welcome to February – notorious as the most depressing month of the year. That is probably why even in this leap year, there are only 29 days in it! But hey ho, that's where we are so we'll have to put up with it. So on with the show...

Electric taxis

Many years ago I was invited to dinner at the **Dukes Hotel** in St James with then Conservative Minister of Transport for London, **Steve Norris**. The idea was for me to throw any questions I had at him and to publish his replies. But there was one question he couldn't answer on the day because he said he needed to consult with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Whilst that didn't assist any article I was planning to write, I have to admit for that one brief moment I felt quite important!

I had asked that as a result of all London taxis having to be compulsorily redesigned in order to accept wheelchair passengers, then in future they should be free of VAT as they would then be specialised vehicles for the disabled.

As promised, the answer came around a week later, but I don't have to tell you what it was – unless you have ever bought a new cab with no VAT!

I obviously disagreed with the decision, but there wasn't much I could do about it as the trade organisations I spoke to said that my stand was pointless and it would never happen as it was a governmental decision. I still disagree because, like it or not, our trade is tiny and discarding VAT for us would hardly have affected the country's balance of payments.

If we are to assume that a new electric taxi is going to cost £50,000 including VAT, then one without the tax would lower the price to under £42,000 and with the Mayor's subsidy offers, I'm fairly certain that they would fly out to younger drivers. However, it might be rather difficult as things stand.

I always believed that **Steve Norris** would have made an excellent Mayor for the taxi trade (he stood against **Ken** but lost). He knew more about our business than anyone outside the trade I had ever met - including many cab drivers inside it! We would have still had minicabs, but they would all have behaved themselves – or else! He brought in the original *Green Paper* on licensing minicabs, but was never two-faced and always said he would do that. He also said he would protect the taxi trade and I believed him.

We now have a Conservative Mayoral candidate in **Zak Goldsmith** who says that within 2 – 3 years most car owners will have electric vehicles and if elected, as an incentive to purchasing them, any electric car owner would have access to bus lanes. He added that if his forecast was correct, then "...there will be no point having bus lanes because everyone will be driving these things around."

Labour Mayoral candidate, **Sadiq Khan**, responded that millions of Londoners used buses every day and that their journeys should be made easier and not harder.

I voted for **Boris Johnson** 4 years ago. If I knew then how he would set about turning our great capital into a large park for the benefit of cyclists, I'd rather have voted for **Mickey Mouse**! Instead I got both...



How long did TfL take to come up with that!

On February 20th the trade finally heard from **Transport for London** about the *private-hire-but-really-Uber* consultation that we were all asked to fill in. Among the questions originally asked were some such as whether PH apps should be allowed to show vehicles that were "available for hire" either visibly or virtually. Then there was whether they should have to provide booking confirmation to passengers at least five minutes prior to the trip.

All PH companies are supposed to provide a pre-booking service of up to seven days in advance. After all, they are not allowed to ply for hire so it has to be via pre-booking. But **Uber** doesn't allow pre-booked trips and neither does it have an advertised landline – you'd assume a must for minicabs and one that TfL would surely sort out.

Also in the consultation was that drivers should not be allowed to work for more than one operator. We've all seen minicab drivers – mainly those on **Uber** – with *almost* more phones in their car than we have computer screens in the DaC Contact Centre! It is dangerous in a car and we've all seen the accidents that **Uber** are involved in.

There were also some silly ones too, such as that all minicab drivers need to speak English! Ridiculous! After all, if they don't speak English then they can always keep their children off school and use them to translate their satnav into English! Call Sign has already published two examples of that actually happening! (See page 18... Ed)

So from their padded seats counting their six figure salaries, TfL finally let us know their decision and it was so good, that all the trade organisations actually got up and walked out at the launch! TfL are obviously scared of what could happen to them and their huge salaries if they showed the balls needed to tell **Uber** what they can and can't do in London. Then again, three names keep popping up: **Boris Johnson**, **David Cameron** and his friend **Rachel Whetstone**... who happens to be the senior vice-president of **Uber**! Obviously a coincidence...

You can read a more detailed version of the consultation that 16,000 people wasted their time in completing and his view of it from Brian Rice in his Reflections of the Chairman on page 4...

Karhoo

Some months ago, *Call Sign* queried how taxi companies could go onto a taxi/minicab compar-

ison site that **ComCab** had announced it was joining, because we failed to see how our prices could compare to PH. The company concerned is **Karhoo**, a start-up that has already raised \$250 million and which says it plans to raise over \$1 billion in an ambitious attempt to take on **Uber**.

Karhoo was founded by British entrepreneur **Daniel Ishag** who was based in New York originally. It claims to have support from several high-profile partnerships and backers that include former **Sony Music Entertainment** Chairman and Chief Executive, **Nick Gatfield**, who suddenly upped and left the music giant at the end of last year. Perhaps we now know why! There are other high profile names and companies also associated with **Karhoo**.

Going onto their platform would mean being on the same site as ComCab, but it would also mean Addison Lee and others. If that bothers anyone, then they won't want to go within a million miles of it. Others may – and I stress may – feel that they are the lesser evil when it comes to dealing with Uber.

Some might also say that the expression *e-bail* has **Uber** connotations. But that's like a passenger on the **Titanic** refusing to go in a lifeboat because a waiter at breakfast didn't call him sir. Our trade is currently on the **Titanic** and we can use some help. But that doesn't mean we should take anything unless we believe it can help. You tell me.

In the meantime I have asked **Karhoo** to give a synopsis of their app and it is in this issue...

Cyclists and speeding taxis!

This issue of *Call Sign* has what I would consider to be one of the most shocking incidents I can ever remember writing about. It involves a **Dial-a-Cab** driver going through a red light. It wasn't deliberate, but the driver held her hands up when seeing still photos taken from a CCTV film – or at least she assumed that where they had come from!

But she was wrong. She was filmed by what appears to have been a cyclist camera – one of those attached to the crash helmet. The film was then apparently passed over to the police who took stills from it and after seemingly trying to cover up where it originated from, then came out and said they were happy to accept the cyclist's film as evidence against the taxi driver!

We always thought that the CCTV cameras had to be checked and calibrated before being used in evidence. Are we now wrong and that in reality, anyone can film anyone else they claim is breaking the law and that film becomes perfectly ok to use in a court of law?

But that wasn't all. The photos sent to driver, **Debbie Hope (W18)**, showed that the lights weren't working correctly and that from red and amber, where they should have turned green, they in fact went straight back to red! The story is inside this issue...

Reed

I have been amazed at the number of drivers that remembered January as being the month my son **Reed** died. It really is hard to believe that three years have gone since that awful time. My sincere thanks to all the drivers that contacted me at the time. Your sentiments were very much appreciated...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections of the Chairman

TfL proposals for London's Private Hire

On February 20th I received a press release regarding TfL's proposals for the Private Hire industry, the proposals having arisen after a consultation process in which TfL received 16,000 responses. As I began reading the document, it seemed pretty good as there was a formal English requirement for drivers, an investigation regarding the removal of the Congestion Charge exemption, a guaranteed fare estimate for passengers in advance of their journey and to also ensure that passengers can actually speak to someone in the event of a problem with their journey.

The proposal regarding the removal of the exemption for the Congestion Charge is due to there being in excess of 95,000 Private Hire licences issued with 1 in every 10 vehicles entering the Congestion Zone being a PH vehicle - an increase of over fifty per cent in the last two years. The Mayor is now concerned about the congestion they cause and of course how they add to pollution.

Regarding the proposals TfL propose to take forward, thirteen of them are as set out in the public consultation and a further five are amended proposals. Another three proposals will be investigated further before any decision is taken as to whether or not they should be taken forward.

But, and what a huge 'but' it is, there are four proposals TfL will not be taking forward and they just happen to be the most important proposals, certainly so far as I am concerned. That is because they cover the topic of immediate hire. Those four proposals are:

* **Operators** having to provide booking confirmation details to passengers at least five minutes prior to the journey commencing.

* **Having** to offer the ability to pre-book up to seven days in advance.

* **Operators** being prohibited from showing vehicles as available for immediate hire, either visibly (for example by signage on the street) or virtually (for example via an app).

* **Finally**, Private Hire drivers only able to be registered to a single Operator at any one time.

So there you have it; TfL's idea of a consultation is to produce a public consultation document and once you get the results, just choose the ones you fancy and ditch the ones you don't! So what is the point of having a consultation when you've already decided the outcome of the proposals to be forwarded to the Board on March 17th. Once again TfL have let the trade down, I don't know who they are frightened of but it certainly isn't us! Here is a list of the proposals they will be putting forward to the Board on March 17th.

* **Operators** must have the facility to provide a booking confirmation to passengers containing the photo ID and details of the vehicle being used to discharge the booking where passengers are able to receive that information.

* **TfL** will no longer issue licence variations to private hire operator licenses to add a late-night or temporary event operating centre.

* **Operators** will be required to provide specified information to TfL at specified intervals



including details of all drivers and vehicles registered with them.

* **Operators** must record the main destination for each booking before the journey commences.

* **Operators** to retain all records for a period of 12 months.

* **TfL** to control the names under which operators offer private hire services to the public.

* **Private** hire drivers to be required to demonstrate a certain standard of English, with particular emphasis on ability for spoken communication in line with the Home Office requirement for a B1 qualification when applying for citizenship.

* **Individual** licence applicants to provide National Insurance numbers to TfL.

* A driver's private hire vehicle licence to be considered for revocation if their private hire driver's licence is revoked.

* **TfL** will liaise with the Home Office on introducing DBS checks on private hire operator staff that have face to face contact with the public.

* **TfL** to stop accepting payment for licence fees by postal order and cheque.

* **Drivers** to carry or display a copy of insurance details at all times.

* **Introduce** new operator licence fee structure to better reflect operator licensing costs based on operator size. The specific revisions

to the licence fee structure will be consulted on separately.

* **Amendment** of regulations to give TfL the power to control advertising displayed inside, from, or on the outside of a private hire vehicle.

* **Operators** will be required to notify TfL before changing their operating model.

* **Operators** must ensure that customers can speak to a real person in the event of a problem with their journey.

* **Private** hire operators must provide an estimated fare prior to the commencement of the journey.

* **Private** hire drivers will be required to have hire or reward insurance in place at all times while registered to an operator.

Proposals that will be considered further are:

* **Requirements** for security measures for operators who use apps to allocate drivers to a fare to prevent the app being used by a person other than the licensed driver.

* **The** feasibility of introducing a requirement for operators to indemnify their customers against any failing of their driver to provide hire or reward insurance.

* **Hire** or reward insurance protects passengers in licenced taxis and private hire vehicles. It ensures that passengers are able to reclaim loss sustained as a result of an accident while undertaking a journey in a taxi or private hire vehicle. Without this insurance in place, passengers may not be able to reclaim costs or claim compensation following an accident or injury.

All I can add is that TfL had the opportunity to appease the Licensed taxi trade, but they have not taken it; instead, all I can predict is that the coming months will see more confrontation.

Once again, TfL have let us down...

Brian Rice
Chairman
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A Parliamentary reception hosted by **Stratford-on-Avon** MP **Nadhim Zahawi** has highlighted the important role that **Autogas LPG** can play in cleaning up air quality in the UK's towns and cities. The event also delivered a strong rallying call for the Government to introduce a more coherent road fuel strategy that considers all fuels equally and on a level playing field.

To support the event and demonstrate the significant air quality improvements that can be made immediately via LPG, **Autogas Limited** presented its newly converted Euro 6 compliant TX4 LPG taxi on the Parliamentary estate. **Autogas** believes that this readily available technological solution could be a significant answer in helping to improve air quality in London and other polluted cities and towns both now and into the future. It would also, of course, provide extensions to our taxis – currently the TX4, but TX1 and TX2 in the near future.

Speaking at the reception, Mr Zahawi said: *"We have a significant air quality crisis across the UK and with the Government due to respond to the Supreme Court's ruling, I believe this is the moment for LPG."*

Speaking to **Call Sign**, **Autogas LPG Business Development Manager Paul Oxford** said that although not yet available in London, the LPG conversion was ready to go as soon as **LTPH / TfL** gave the thumbs

As a converted TX4 Euro 6 LPG TX4 is presented to Parliament...

PARLIAMENTARY RECEPTION TO PROMOTE LPG



up for it to go ahead. They will shortly be road-testing the converted cab.

The UK currently faces a growing air quality crisis. Since 2010, it has been breaching EU NOx limits and in April 2015, the Supreme

Court ruled that the Government must submit new plans by the end of the year about how the UK can comply with EU requirements.

Greater uptake of LPG, including **Autogas'** new taxi conversion, is just one way which could help the UK meet these targets. **Autogas'** new repowered TX4 black cab running on LPG emits significantly fewer NOx emissions compared with a normal diesel powered version. In addition to reducing emissions, users would also see fuel cost savings of around 20 percent and would be able to refuel from any of the existing 1,400 refuelling stations nationwide that already offer **Autogas LPG**.

To find out more about how **Autogas LPG** can improve air quality in the UK and help users reduce their fuel bills, visit www.autogaslimited.co.uk.

Autogas Limited is a joint venture between Shell and Calor. Established in 2000 with the sole aim of making automotive LPG more readily available to fleet and private motorists, the company now has LPG refuelling installations on more than 215 petrol forecourts throughout the UK.

Sex while driving!!!

Call Sign has published results from some fairly weird surveys over the years, but a recent one from UK independent vehicle supply professionals, **OSV**, has challenged for the number one spot! The OSV national survey questioned 500 respondents throughout the UK and apparently found that UK drivers take part in some strange and rather dangerous activities whilst driving!

For a start, apparently 14 percent of drivers have admitted to "engaging in sexual activities whilst driving a car!" Men were more willing to admit to this indiscretion with some sixty percent of those that made the admission being between the ages of 30 and 59. Ten percent of those owning up were over the age of 60!

However, being engaged in sexual activities was not the most popular activity choice in the survey, having been beaten into second place by 'picking your nose' which came out on top. Over 40 percent of the 500 recipients to the survey admitted picking their nose whilst driving!

Other admissions – none of which could remotely be classified as being safe included checking social media (10%), taking a selfie (4%), driving naked (2%) and eating with utensils (2%).

Co-Founder of OSV Ltd, **Debbie Kirkley** said: "This survey helps lift the lid on what people get up to whilst driving. It is deeply worrying that so many people admit to taking part in these dangerous activities and shows that more needs to be done to help highlight and educate people about the dangers that come with participating in these activities. Engaging in sexual activities should be the last thing that people do whilst behind the wheel..."

She didn't say what the first thing should be. Mind you, we forgot to ask TfL what they thought!



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Well, they ARE hopeless in dry weather... so what could you expect when it's icy!

London Taxidriviers' Fund for Underprivileged Children

CHRISTMAS COLLECTION AT BURLINGTON ARCADE

In December, the committee of the LTFUC were again out in force holding yet another Xmas fund raising event, this time at London's Burlington Arcade.

We would like to extend our grateful thanks to the management and staff at the Burlington Arcade and everyone who made the day possible. Special thanks go to **Doug Cheshire** for joining us with his Vintage taxi, **Clown Jolly Jack** and Andrew with his team from the **City of London Rotary Club** for helping with the collection by coming along dressed as Santa, with his Elves and Snowmen - which provided great fun.

We would also like to thank **Donna Dawson**, the Ranks and Interchange Support Officer for the suspension of cab ranks in Burlington Gardens and **Michael Day** (PC 1630 CW) of the Westminster Police Licensing Team for the Collectors Certificate.

Finally, we'd like to thank the people passing by for their wonderful donations, which included many fellow taxi drivers. The money raised will go towards our forthcoming Christmas party in addition to many more events planned for the children in 2016.



Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

A recent online investigation by taxi driver **Jim Thomas** has broken the unwritten code that many Lycra-clad **Tour de France** wannabees are using in order to speed along Millbank and many other roads - not just for the sake of it, but in competition and regardless of any danger they cause to those crossing the road.

The online code is the word 'Strava' and it's the word that many speed-mad cyclists now search *Google* for and for which they download an app. Jim's search typed in 'Strava segment Millbank' and up popped a map showing a stretch of roadway between Vauxhall and Lambeth Bridges, across the roundabout and as far as Great College Street.

In addition, the site gives names of the fastest cyclists - both male and female - out of a total of 278,240 actual attempts, although many were attempted several times by the same cyclists as they number just (!!!) 34,638! The fastest was measured at 55.3 km per hour, which translates to over 34mph - astonishing when you realise he had to slow down at the roundabout.

Last year, *Call Sign* published the sad case of **Moira Gemmill** who was killed when her bike was in collision with a lorry along **Millbank** whilst on another occasion we reported on a pedestrian being knocked down by a speeding cyclist shooting in and out of the traffic at high speed. We are not claiming that either event was associated with the

If you thought Mr Lycra shooting along Millbank on his bike was just in a hurry?

Wrong! It's the Millbank bike racers club!



Organised bike riders such as the London Prudential Ride are not fast enough for the Strava racers!

Vauxhall cycle super-highway was seeing around 40% of cyclists not using it while Mr Gilligan said it was 5%, clearly has little clue as to what is happening in London.

Strava racers and neither will we ever know, but after hearing about the Strava site, we can never be really certain either way.

What we do know is that **Mayor Boris Johnson's** Cycling Commissioner, **Andrew Gilligan**, who referred to **LBC** political editor **Theo Usherwood** live on air as a liar after he had reported the new

If a taxi driver can discover by simply looking online that 34,638 cyclists are regularly using Millbank as a race track, then why is it we haven't heard a word about it from Messrs Johnson and Gilligan? Because sooner or later, there will be another tragedy along that stretch of road...

*Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online*

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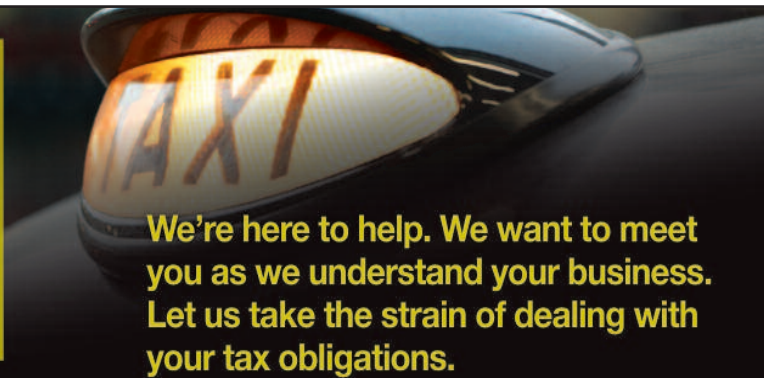
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Stefan now dressed more MMA than for Royalty meetings!

There can be little doubt that the recent ITV programme on Ant and Dec following HRH Prince Charles around for a year will still be spoken of at the end of 2016. It was an astonishing "backstage" look at how the Prince of Wales operates, with the most unlikely of pairings talking to him, showing Anthony McPartlin and Declan Donnelly to be the undoubted masters of their trade.

But there was a fourth person in the two hour programme: Dial-a-Cab driver Stefan Fitt (P88). He was seen stopping to pick up Ant and Dec and although our drivers always try to look good, Stefan pulled up in a shirt, tie and suit! Lucky huh!

Stefan has been with the Society for 15 years and is also a DaC Marshal, but he told *Call Sign* that while he has had many jobs dispatched to him that have been slightly out of the ordinary, this one left them all by the wayside! It had begun some time before when Brian Rice's PA, Jacqui Chart, was contacted by the company behind the programme: **When Ant & Dec Met The Prince: 40 Years of the Prince's Trust.**

The biggest problem was one of security because the driver was going to enter Clarence House in addition to being in close proximity to members of the Royal Family and of course, Ant and Dec! So although London taxi drivers are famous for being the most honest and trustworthy in the world, security nowadays is paramount and Jacqui was asked if DaC could supply someone in advance rather than the duo genuinely hailing someone off the street. As a marshal, Stefan was asked if he would like to do the job and when he agreed, the production co-ordinators swung into action even checking Stefan's passport and taxi licence etc. Once they were happy with him, Stefan was given his instructions

They wanted a taxi with no advertising although allowing the DaC logo. And so the programme opened with Ant and Dec "hailing" Stefan's Vito! But in reality, it was a six hour gig beginning at 11am with Stefan parking in Orange Street WC2 where a crew fitted up his cab with cameras and microphones before setting off and "amazingly" spotting Ant and Dec in the street and eventually taking them to Clarence House.

As a long-time member of the MMA Krav Maga classes run by Ricky Manetta (N16) in

Presenting on TV: Prince Charles, Ant and Dec and of course...

STEFAN – THE WAPPING STRANGLER!!!



Ant and Dec meet Prince Charles at Clarence House

Wapping, he had picked up the nickname of the Wapping Strangler. We were afraid to ask why but assumed that the TV production team's security weren't told that!

"The whole day was just so surreal," Stefan told *Call Sign*. "It was filmed last summer and they actually got into the cab at Leicester Square and we had a drive while they made sure the cameras were working before going to the Royal Park where we drove around to get some footage. Ant and Dec were chatting to me the whole time; they asked about the cab trade and lots of general stuff. The amazing part was that just as they appear on TV, that's exactly how they are in real life. They feed off each other, are very funny and seem genuinely interested in what you tell them. At one point they joked about whether, if the Queen was to move home, she would they call in the removal men! It sounded so funny the way they said it!

"We then drove to Clarence House, where I parked and went in to have lunch with Ant and Dec. The Prince was upstairs being briefed on what was going to happen. No, this most definitely wasn't an everyday trip to work and stopping for a sandwich! HRH's chef did a chicken and a Caesar Salad, followed by fresh fruit with cream and coffee. There was some elderflower wine available but I passed on that. I was told unofficially that they shopped at Waitrose – although I don't think the Prince does it himself!

"After lunch, Ant and Dec interviewed Prince Charles and also Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall who is also Patron of the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children. The idea of the programme was to celebrate an amazing 40 years of The Prince's Trust; but while the interviewing was going on, I was given a tour of Clarence House!"

Stefan and the Prince bypassed each other a few times but didn't meet. Stefan had previously met and spoke to HRH at an LTFUC anniversary party held several years ago at Buckingham Palace.

"On that occasion we spoke about Carp fishing," Stefan told us. "There is a lake at Buck House filled with Carp and that interests me. Fortunately it was one of the Prince's hobbies too!"

Time was moving on and a few hours later Stefan was told that he wouldn't be required any longer as the Prince had put his Range Rover at Ant and Dec's disposal. But he wasn't going to be allowed to forget the day because the following morning his face was plastered all over Facebook – everyone asking if it was really him! Up until then, he had kept it quiet because of signing a waiver to say he wouldn't talk about the experience until after the broadcast.

Stefan is no stranger to live TV and alongside Ricky Manetta has done work around the world for Dana White's UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) as a fight co-ordinator, where he'd walk the fighters down to the Octagon on live television. Guys such as Anderson Silva, Jon Jones, Randy Couture and of course the gorgeous Ronda Rousey, who currently holds the UFC record for the quickest win when defending her UFC World Bantamweight Championship in just 14 seconds! She has now lost that title but moved into movies although rumour has it that she will partner The Rock at the WWE's Wrestlemania 32 in Texas in a tag match against the two owners of the company, Stephanie McMahon and Triple H!

"The WWE is a bit safer than UFC," Stefan told us before leaving to look for his next job. "Where's Jacqui Chart when you need her!!!"

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

Stephen Field (F99) told *Call Sign* that he was just fed up with the way the trade was going and the way we are continually being pushed around. He has been on **Dial-a-Cab** since 2006 and said that the trade in general was in as bad a state as he could ever remember but praised Chairman **Brian Rice** for being the first to recognise the signs and referring to it at an AGM several years ago as a "race to the bottom" - a phrase that many in the trade later picked up on.

Stephen also said that he was irritated that our trade organisations didn't appear to be doing enough to stop the rot. So he wrote to the **European Court of Justice**.

"I am a licensed black cab driver. To get a licence I must first do the **Knowledge of London**. I must then undergo an enhanced **Criminal Records Bureau** check and if that is not enough, a **Medical** too.

I must have public liability insurance so that if I carry your partner / siblings in my taxi, I am fully insured. That insurance costs me £220 per calendar month, so it's not cheap!

Okay that's me, now **Uber**. Those drivers should be forced to have proper insurance. One of their drivers had an accident at Trafalgar Square and then ran away leaving the passenger in the car. There was no insurance, no CRB test and no licence. Rumours claim that British officials have been "bought" as the protection they are giving Uber goes far beyond what you would expect, so passing this email on to British officials would just be a waste of time so far as the trade is concerned. What do I want? **Uber** and any son of Uber to be banned!

If that is not possible, a **European Directive** that all vehicles carrying fare paying passengers have public liability insurance and CRB checks. Or do nothing and be like everyone else..."

Stephen received a reply just a week or so later...

Dear Mr Field,

We would like to draw your attention to the following parliamentary questions raised by Members of the European Parliament. A study to clarify EC law re **Uber**:

In response to the legal actions brought by many Member States, including France, Germany and Spain against **Uber**, the US firm has decided to ask the Commission to rule on the lawfulness of its operations.

The Commission will be required, in particular, to determine whether Uber is a transport undertaking, which it clearly is, given the nature of the service it provides — its online platform is merely a way of dealing with clients' requests. If the European institutions do decide that Uber is a transport undertaking, the US firm will be required to comply with the rules on accreditation and insurance and the drivers will become employees of the firm, with all that that implies as regards labour law.

If they decide otherwise, the Commission could lift the ban on Uber, once again exercising powers which rightfully rest with the Member States. The choice facing the

DaC driver and the European Court of Justice



Stephen Field wrote to the Euro Court

hundreds of taxi drivers protested in Brussels against Uber's business practices. Contrary to what has been asserted, this multinational company does not have its roots in the sharing economy. Uber is taking advantage of this trend to introduce new, fully

flexible forms of employment which make it possible to avoid paying social security contributions.

As I said at Parliament's plenary sitting of 16 September 2015, we cannot tolerate these practices. It is essential to legislate on this matter in order to regulate this type of company and prevent what is a socially damaging business model from spreading.

Ubers business practices: Regulating the 'Uberisation' of our society...

Where does the Commission stand on this matter and will a roadmap be presented in the near future?

Not much in the way of answers, but interesting questions! But for Call Sign readers who would like to watch a transport debate from the Euro Court go to the link below. You will need to have either WMV or MP4 (MPEG-4-Moving Picture Experts Group).

Commissioners is not that of deciding whether or not to support the sharing economy, but of deciding whether or not to safeguard fair competition.

In the Commission's view, is Uber Pop a transport service or a digital service and will the Commission require national courts to acknowledge the lawfulness of the Uber Pop service?

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/eplive/en/committees/video?event=20151221-1500-COMMITTEE-TRAN>

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Last month's Call Sign revealed that a walking charity - Living Streets - had launched a call for the next London Mayor to pedestrianise the 1.2 miles of Oxford Street so that it becomes what they describe as an iconic, safe and enjoyable place to shop.

Sarah Williams, Living Streets' London Campaigns Manager told *Call Sign's* January issue that the situation was about to reach breaking point on Oxford Street. So we asked her two questions, neither of which she could answer satisfactorily. Firstly we asked how disabled people could get to the street if pedestrianised. She said they could get off at one of the 38 side streets!

We followed that up by asking Ms Williams about the main alternatives to Oxford Street ie **Wigmore**, **Cavendish Square** and through to **Goodge Street**. We explained how congested this route already was and that if all buses and taxis were forced to use it, would it not push emissions through the roof? The Campaign Manager responded that they hadn't thought about that yet but wanted to discuss it "...and work with others to ensure that we create the best solution for everyone." She added that the charity didn't have all of the answers but wanted to work with retailers, TfL, engineers and planners on making Oxford Street a place which puts walking first!

Now we hear that Mayor Boris Johnson has clambered on board and announced that pedestrianising Oxford Street is under consideration. He said that officials were drawing up plans to increase safety and improve public access there. Unsurprisingly, Living Streets say that is "great news for Londoners and visitors alike." Neither they nor the Mayor made any mention about whether the disabled were included - the apparent answer being no.

Now Boris is "thinking about" traffic-free Oxford Street!



You don't need to be 'Brain of Britain' to see what causes the Oxford Street congestion!

around Oxford Street.

Living Streets say that London is one of the most polluted cities in Europe and estimates are that over 9,000 people die prematurely from exposure to high levels of Nitrogen Dioxide each year.

There was no mention about the pollution just being moved several hundred metres further north.

Sarah Williams continued: "People want to see change on Oxford Street. It is a very uncomfortable place for pedestrians, leaving them feeling restricted. So it is of little surprise that people say the change they'd most like to see there is less traffic."

Well Ms Williams, we'd like that too and while it's now too late to stop the stupidity of planners who turned it into a single lane each way many years ago, it's not too late to stop every other bus route taking their empty buses along there. But perhaps that is too logical...

Sarah Williams said: "I'm pleased to see that plans are being drawn up to pedestrianise Oxford Street. At the launch of our campaign in December, we recommended pedestrianising part of London's most iconic street so it's great to see this is being considered. We would be happy to advise the Mayor about how to make our national high street fit for walking. Oxford Street is already at breaking point, horrendously overcrowded and with Crossrail due to open in 2018, we're looking at a significantly bigger problem. We must act now to reduce overcrowding, sky high pollution levels and an unsafe environment. We urge officials to think to a positive future, where walking is put first."

Oxford Street is Europe's busiest retail street and it is claimed that every six days a person gets hit by a vehicle along there and one in four of London's collision hotspots are in or

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

TAXI DRIVER OF THE YEAR CHARITY FUND

TDYCF Charity golf day

Dear Friends,

First of all I would like to wish everyone a very happy and safe 2016.

We are holding a charity golf day on 8th June 2016 at Hendon golf club. The cost for the day is £75, which includes 18 holes, a light breakfast in the morning and a meal later on.

If you would like to participate, please contact TDYCF at the address below or email for an entry form. All money raised will be donated to the five trade charities at the annual dinner & dance on 26th November 2016. They are the Albany for Children with Special Needs, LTFUC, Southend Fund for Underprivileged Children, LTBAWD (War Disabled) and East London Cabbies Outing.

I would also like to thank **Crackers Radio** for not only promoting our CD (We'll take you there by The London Cabbies), but for also promoting the licenced cabbies. If you haven't yet heard Crackers Radio, you can tune in and listen on 103.3FM.

Russell Poluck MBE (T55), Hon Chairman
taxidriveroftheyearcharityfund.com

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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

With Tom Quigley (Y33)

Twitter and the moaning cab trade...

I am not on Twitter. I tried it for a while but perhaps the time for registering your thoughts to the actual thought of what I was registering and also the loss of translation in print, just never appealed to me!

There is not a day passing when I don't get a message; did I see this or that on Twitter. I have had local radio shows phoning me up for comments on some Taxi related issue – one that has generally already been commented on Twitter and other social media. The problem I found with all this instant media is that we come across as an occupation that just likes to moan!

Recently the **London Lumiere** displays across London brought out a barrage of abuse about road closures and the lack of



numbers attending. Well, whichever day we work - especially weekends - road closures, however frustrating, are just part and parcel of the job.

But sometimes when we are trying to attract shows and entertainment to London,

whilst they may not always be fully supported by the public, there are still many tourists that like them, helping them to remember their visit and hopefully make them want to come back. They will never understand the traffic problems these events cause, but the fact they return goes a long way in helping our trade.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that our Twitter colleagues have helped bring about a sea change with **Tavistock Square** and the **Loughborough project** (*January Call Sign*).

So Twitter etc can be useful, but moaning doesn't always come across as a positive...

Butter is Dangerous!

The American comedian, **Chris Rock**, once said that no starving child in Africa would have a Lactose problem. Fair comment; I know there are a lot of people with all sorts of allergy problems in regards to what they eat.

When I order a coffee, I ask for it black whilst my wife prefers cold milk in a jug on the side to add to her own taste. I expect that if I want sugar, I will have the option of adding it or not. If I order a steak I'll ask for how I prefer it; I can have my eggs easy over, scrambled or poached - I have the choice. If I order a breakfast, say egg, sausage or bacon and two slices, I understand that is again my choice to select the combination.

But since when has it been the norm that when I order a bacon or sausage sandwich, that I have the butter delivered on the side so that I have to put it on myself! In effect, I am no longer ordering a sandwich, but purely the ingredients! The mechanics of making it will be mine - well not quite true as the sandwich will be presented to me constructed ready to eat (hopefully in a nice way) but of course I will then have to dismantle it.

Unfortunately and unlike Micky Flanagan's wife: "I don't make a nice sandwich – that's why I am ordering it to be made for me."

So now I have to remember to say: "A bacon sandwich... with butter, please!"

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

Pedicab rider jailed

Juris Briedis, a pedicab rider who breached his **Criminal Behaviour Order** (CBO) within three days of it being issued, has been jailed. He was found guilty and sentenced to 24 weeks imprisonment at Westminster Magistrates' Court on 12 January for breaching the CBO which banned him from riding a pedicab in the W1, SW1, W2 and WC2 areas.

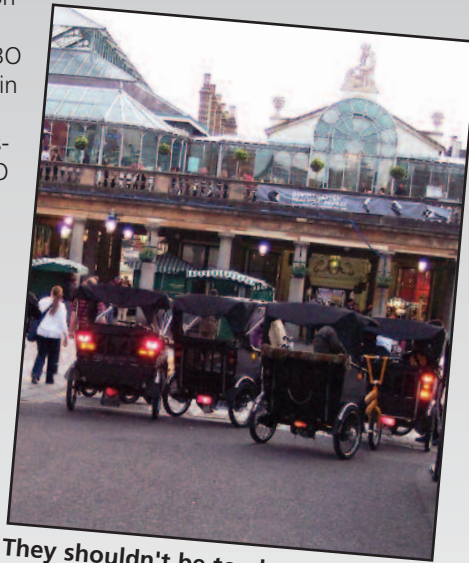
Briedis had been given a conditional discharge for 12 months and a five-year CBO just days earlier at the same court after being found guilty of failing to comply with a Community Protection Notice (CPN), which was issued previously after he continued to use his pedicab in a manner that caused anti-social behaviour.

He appeared in court with four others, who were also subject to a CBO with the same conditions for five years.

Officers from Westminster were on patrol on 10 January and spotted Briedis on a pedicab on Bird Street, which is within the area where he is banned from using a pedicab. He attempted to flee but was caught and arrested. The sentence forms part of ongoing work by the Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street neighbourhood policing teams in partnership with TfL and local businesses to crackdown on the anti-social and criminal behaviour of some pedicab riders in Westminster. They have secured seven Criminal Behaviour Orders in total since October 2015.

In addition, in the past year they have issued over 130 written warnings - which are issued prior to a CPN - and 50 CPNs. These deal with particular ongoing problems or nuisances which negatively affect the community's quality of life by targeting the person responsible. The notice will direct the individual, business or organisation responsible to stop causing the problem and it could also require the person responsible to take reasonable steps to ensure that it does not occur again. To date, 116 riders have been summonsed for parking their pedicabs on the footpath or the road, causing an obstruction.

Over 60 people have been dispersed under section 35 of the anti-social behaviour act for obstruction to the footway or highway.



They shouldn't be too hard to find!

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Editor: Alan Fisher
Address: 39 – 47 East Rd, London N1 6AH
Tel: 0207 251 0581 Fax: 0207 553 7293
Email: callsignmag@aol.com
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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

Tottenham Hale. The station had closed in 1985 - a few years after sporting fans vacated the immediate area and before the regeneration of this part of town.

West Ham Hammers (1929-1972) raced at the famous Custom House venue in Prince Regent Lane

- the final season at this huge stadium saw a Speedway side from Romford race around the famous old track under the name of **West Ham Bombers**. The whole site, including the massive car park, was sold for less than £500,000 - peanuts these days in the Docklands environs.

The Romford Bombers (1967-1971) existed at Brooklands Stadium sharing with **Romford FC** who competed in the Southern League. The Bombers raced around a track with a high perimeter wall so the riders needed plenty of nerve, which was also needed when many of these stars took on the 'wall of death' to supplement their earnings when fairgrounds came into town. Bizarrely, a bridged ramp was erected through the grandstand for the riders to enter the arena, but when the Bombers hit a bad run of form it became known as the Bridge over Troubled Supporters! By the way, Romford FC only narrowly missed out on voting for election to the Football League in 1962, missing out to **Oxford United**, the gamble to splash cash on new stands and floodlighting backfired and sadly Brooklands is now a housing estate with only parts of the original boundary fencing remaining.

Walthamstow Wolves rode in Chingford Road back in 1934; the Stow had only been open for a year - this new Art Deco stadium by architect **William Chandler** will be featured later on in this series.

Dagenham Daggers (1932-1947) operated in Ripple Road briefly before and after WW2.

In North London, the now vanished Haringey Stadium on Green Lanes was home to **Haringey Racers (1929-1954)** and racing in blue and yellow leathers, they were National Champions in 1952. Before WW2 they were the **Haringey Canaries** until 1931 and then the **Haringey Tigers** for a period. Haringey Stadium had a bit of a reputation for crowd disturbances and on one pre-war occasion, 2,000 people demanded their money back when a meeting was abandoned on safety grounds due to an accident - they had a right old tear-up breaking out onto the track, smashing the place up and starting a fire! They became used to starting bonfires here as 8 years later fans ran riot when a second placed dog in a Greyhound meeting was disqualified. Fuelling the fire with bits of hare trap, they proceeded to smash lights, tear down phone wires and

wreck the judge's box and tote office! The official wrecking ball came once the old stadium was sold for redevelopment and the site is now occupied by **Sainsbury's** and **McDonalds** - the only remaining trace of the old Stadium is a very small area of land near the

Sainsbury's car park, once known as the Haringey Stadium Slopes.

Wembley Lions (1929-1971) were always one of London's successful outfits and the red and whites rode at Wembley Stadium (or the Empire Stadium as it was known in its early years). The national stadium hosted the **Speedway World Championships** for many decades and it's hard to imagine that a massive crowd of 78,000 turned out to see the **Dane Ole Olsen** triumph as recently as 1978.

The curiously named **Barnet By-Passers (1929-1936)** initially rode on grass with cinders only added once the grass had worn away, while in west London, **White City Rebels (1929-1978)** rode at the old White City Stadium, which is now covered over by sprawled out buildings from **BBC TV Centre** and despite being crowned British League Champions in 1978, dwindling attendances would force the death knell of another team riding in Red, White and Blue. The Speedway outfit wasn't the only sporting tenants in Wood Lane as we shall discover in a later instalment; the old Stadium - officially opened by **King Edward VI** - was demolished in 1985.

Stamford Bridge Brigands (1928-1932) were initially nicknamed the Pensioners like the resident Football Club, but their existence was very short lived, while **Crystal Palace Glazers (1928-1940)** entertained in the South London Park under the shadow of the great glass structure before it was destroyed by fire.

London's most successful of all time was the most recently departed, **Wimbledon Dons (1928-2005)**. A fascinating statistic from the first post-war League meeting in 1946; it drew a huge 42,000 crowd with an estimated 10,000 locked outside! The Dons attracted world class riders over the years - **Ivan Mauger**, **Barry Briggs** and **Ronnie Moore** had won the world title 12 times between them!

Thus far my first 4 articles have featured 2 different sports which Londoners once enjoyed in their droves, but next month I want to delve into some of the more unlikely and obscure sporting events that took place in your working area - including a venue that is 2,000 years old and which you drive over most days of your working life

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

I enjoyed featuring my old local Speedway team **New Cross Rangers** in the last issue of *Call Sign*, but there were many other local sides dotted around London equally well supported, especially in the post war year period. East London in particular was a hotbed of Speedway action and the sport in Great Britain got underway at a meeting on Sunday 17th February behind the Kings Oak pub in **Loughton**, when 15,000 crammed in to watch a series of races by riders who would go on to form the **High Beech Foresters (1928-1967)**.

Hackney Wick Wolves (1934-1959) got things going at the old Waterden Road Stadium - they were originally **Walthamstow Wolves** before moving to the Wick from the Stow and rode in colours of champagne and claret! The Wolves tragically lost star rider **Dusty Haigh** in 1936 from a broken skull in a crash at the track when leading a race after being struck by another rider's machine.

The newly formed **Hackney Hawks (1963-1983)** continued once the nomadic Wolves returned home riding out to the strains of *The Magnificent Seven* - perhaps even non-Speedway fans will now guess that 7 riders make up a team! **Vic Hawkes** was a popular local hero for the Hawks but was another brave rider tragically killed at a meeting (1979). In fact former rider / promoter **Len Silver** held a Vic Hawkes Memorial Trophy meeting every season after his death. Lennie currently promotes **Rye House Rockets** further up the Lea Valley.

The **Hackney Kestrels (1984-1990)** were a new entity because of a merger after **Crayford Kestrels** were made homeless after landlords sold the stadium for redevelopment. The Red, White and Blues won 26 of their 30 League matches in 1988 and won the National Cup, defeating fellow Londoners **Wimbledon Dons** is that year's Final.

The **London Lions (1996)** operated for just one season at Hackney Wick when promoter **Ivan Henry** moved his **Essex Arena Hammers** to Waterden Road. But along with the Greyhounds, everyone vacated the stadium that would be demolished in the next decade to build the International Media Centre for the 2012 **Olympics Games**.

Clapton Saints (1928-1939) on Lea Bridge Road struggled financially once **Clapton Orient FC** moved onto Brisbane Road and the old 20,000 capacity stadium became derelict and was demolished in the 1970s. It is now an industrial site behind Lea Bridge Network Rail Station and set to re-open in the spring on the line between Stratford and



When *Call Sign* met up with Donald Dacas (P76) recently, he was in a rather sombre mood as he watched his old 'V' reg cab get stripped of its *Dial-a-Cab* equipment at the Roman Way depot.

"Yes, it's a sad day for me," Donald mused, "because after 16 years and more than 400,000 miles together, we finally have to part - me looking for a younger model and this old girl going into a sort of retirement as a general run-around with a new owner, rather than the daily grind of London traffic. Sometimes I think the cab has seen more of me than my wife," Don said with a smile, "and she would probably agree with that!"

Taking a final look at his cab as a licensed vehicle, Donald continued:

"These TX1's are fitted with the Nissan engine and for me that has proven to be totally bullet-proof and never let me down. Components around it, yes perhaps, have caused a few problems. There was the time I was half-way up the M1 on our way to Luton Airport with fare paying passengers and the engine suddenly started jerking and shuddering, before coming to an abrupt stop on the hard shoulder. By chance, a local cab was passing and he stopped as I waved him down and the driver took my people onto the airport to make sure they caught their flight. So from that viewpoint, we didn't let them down. When the AA patrolman arrived, he discovered a rusty fuel cut-off valve under the front of the cab just by the radiator and it was

Another one bites the dust!



Donald says goodbye to his TX1

preventing fuel from reaching the engine. That's why, although we failed to proceed, it was no fault of the engine itself! It was a silly place to put a fuel valve, exposed to all weathers," he suggested as though we were talking about yesterday, "but there you go!

"Also, just a few days ago, I started up easily enough without any hint of trouble, did a few miles and stopped for a short time. The

engine suddenly failed to re-start and that meant a new battery just days before I was due to sell the cab, but I guess that's life!" Don shrugged his shoulders.

"I have a theory that cabs are like human beings, made - or born - at the same time, but fate treats each one individually, some better than others. Some people enjoy a good life, while cabs, produced in a line on a conveyor belt one after the other can also be reliable and rust-free like mine, while others are not quite so lucky." His reply sounded quite philosophical to a reporter that was finding it difficult to believe that we were talking about a metal vehicle! But Donald was serious.

"With these older cabs steadily being retired, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a decent vehicle to go to work in. They are like gold dust as more and more cabs are coming off the road and drivers have to decide whether to rent or buy a new cab, which in these economically difficult times is not that easy. So I consider myself very lucky that I was able to grab a TX4 that has already had quite a bit of work done to it. Personally, I did not want another large mortgage around my neck."

With that, Donald drove away with his personal quiet thoughts about his cab...

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

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

SIMON'S GOLF COURSES

The Berkshires - Blue course

Do you have a milestone birthday coming up? A partner who wants to give you a day's golf that will stay in the memory? Then start dropping hints that you'd love to play **The Berkshires!** The course is near Ascot and certainly isn't cheap... but if they really love you!!!

There are 2 courses here, the Red and the Blue and if you can do it, I suggest playing the Blue in the morning and the Red in the afternoon.

The **Blue** course starts, unusually, with a par 3. The tee box is smack in front of the clubhouse breakfast room and beside the Himalaya style practice putting green. At 210 yards and over a sea of heather, it's an all or nothing shot with run-aways left and right.

Hopefully, this hole won't destroy you as the remainder of the front nine are where you can score with two par 5s and some short par 4s. The final five holes are all par 4s - it's a very tough finish with no let up.

The course itself is very picturesque, as you would expect from a club where both courses rank in the top 50 UK golf guide. Both Red and Blue courses were laid out in 1928 by **Herbert Fowler** - and if that name rings a bell, it's probably because we mentioned him in last month's *Call Sign* as being the architect of the **Walton Heath** course!

Though the Blue is ranked as the lesser of the two courses, many prefer it to the Red. My late father did and who am I to agree with him! Lunch here is jacket and tie. It's a very fine carvery and if you want a personal recommendation, try the rare roast beef and fortify yourself for the Red course! I'll be writing about that course next month...

The photo shows the 210 yards Par 3 first hole on the Blue course.

Happy golfing



Simon Wallis (M11)
Call Sign Online

OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Hello Ladies & Gents,

Now that the Christmas holiday period has passed and we are into a New Year, I'd again like to wish you all a slightly belated happy and healthy 2016 and trust that you've all had time to recharge your batteries. It doesn't need me to remind you of how tough the past two years have been and it will be equally as testing this year. Transport for London have failed to uphold the regulatory measures in London and issued thousands of private hire licenses month on month. Much has already been debated, but in my opinion they have put public safety at risk and cost our trade the opportunity to compete on an equal footing - which is all we have asked for. There has always been a two-tier system between the Licensed Taxis and Private Hire, but since granting Uber a licence some three years ago, there now seems to be a three-tier system with Uber operating outside of the legal structure.

Longer trips

In my address to the membership at last year's AGM, I said we needed to find a workable solution that offered clients - both old and new - the option of using DaC taxis for longer trips at economical prices that were also acceptable to you, the members. We have certainly offered and covered many more airport journeys and trips to and from locations bordering the M25 over the past year, albeit



that we are competing with prices that are ultra-competitive in a highly volatile market.

The fixed prices on these types of trips will not be changed, but all additional waiting time will be calculated in minutes (equivalent to £27 per hour) and added to the fare on completion of the journey.

It is now very difficult to match competitor's pricing, but the system is working. However, *without* your understanding and support - which I believe we now have - it will be not succeed.

On many occasions we are able to agree prices that the client is willing to undertake, but if we price them at full meter fares it is invariably too high and they will use an alternative supplier - this we do not want. Please remember that you are able to reject these trips and you will never be forced to take

them against your will.

The Sales department headed by **Keith Cain** is trying everything in its power to acquire new business as well as looking after our existing account customers. Any reduction in charges, no matter how small that we can offer clients, could help increase usage and may also be the difference between gaining or losing a tender. With this in mind, at the most recent Board Meeting it was decided that where applicable, gratuities will now be capped at a maximum of £5. Our competitors are offering large reductions across the board and in such a cut-throat environment, it is important that we react in the correct way. The change will take place in week commencing 5th March 2016...

Lucas Taxi Meters

It appears that **Lucas meters** are being phased out over the next few months and they will be replaced with **Cygnus meters**. If you haven't already been contacted by the relevant supplier, the changeover will be carried out at the **London Taxi Company** (Brewery Road) or at **Taxi World** (White City and Tottenham). The new meters are Sim enabled and you will be notified by post. Unfortunately, spare parts for Lucas meters are no longer available.

Clearing credit cards

Finally, can I please remind you that if you clear a street generated Credit Card trip that needs to be *swiped* through the terminal, you will see *'Please Debit My Account'* appear on the actual receipt. It is imperative that you request a signature from the customer at all times, otherwise the payment will not be authorised.

Allan Evans

DaC Operations / Compliance Manager

#SAVETAXI NOW BATTLES TFL!

Artemis Mercer, who with other taxi drivers wives started the **#SaveTaxi Facebook** group last year in support of the taxi trade, has launched a drive to raise £600,000 to fund the initial phase of getting a **Judicial Review** against TfL. Artemis has established **Action for Cabbies** as a private company to spearhead the campaign. It will use the platform of **Crowdfunder.co.uk** to help the new group secure the Judicial Review. It bases that on the grounds that TfL was wrong to grant a licence to Uber and its drivers in 2012 as the licensing authority had failed to follow the correct procedures.



Artemis Mercer

"There has always been a two-tier system with private hire vehicles on one side and black cabs on the other," Mrs Mercer, whose husband is a taxi driver, told **Sky News**. "TfL did not follow those regulations in 2012: it went from being a law-enforcer to a law-maker and in doing so it compromised public safety and cost black cabbies the opportunity to compete on a level playing field."

The group will again repeat that Uber drivers use a meter of the kind that should only be available to licensed taxis. Artemis said the Uber app did not implement insurance and public safety standards as rigorously as those imposed on black taxis.

The Crowdfunder campaign will target London's 25,000 licensed taxi drivers to raise the required money, with further finances expected to be required if Action for Cabbies is successful in securing the Judicial Review. It will also be open to others who wish to contribute, although it will be unlike many Crowdfunding efforts in that there is no prospect of a direct return on the funds invested.

Action for Cabbies has warned that unless TfL's decision to grant Uber a licence is revoked, the black taxi industry will be decimated "...and the iconic black taxi rendered extinct."

The first day raised £31,412 of the £600,000 needed. If you can help, go to: <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/Action-for-Cabbies> and click on **Pledge** to support the fund.

High Court rules against LTC taxi shape

High court judge Mr Justice Arnold has ruled that the London taxi is not as unique as many believed and said it was "devoid of inherent distinctive character and merely a variation of the typical shape of a car." He ruled that trade-marks exclusively relating to its shape should be deemed invalid.

The judgment followed a legal row between the London Taxi Company and the Metrocab hybrid-powered taxi developed by Frazer-Nash Research and Ecotive.

Justice Arnold said: "In my view, the design of the black cab would have been perceived by the average consumer of taxis as merely a variation of the typical shape of a taxi."

Call Sign at the LTFUC



Artemis and Linda donate a cheque to the LTFUC

Call Sign has been attending the London Mad Hatters Tea Party at the Great Room for many years, but this year's bash really must have been a night of happy children and carers eating, drinking and dancing. The event (amazingly organised "in-house" by Maureen) was a night where hours just flew by.

The Fund celebrated their 88th year in style as the students showed how singing and dancing. This was followed by a "real life" duo of Elsa and Anna singing a smash, *Frozen*. A Mad Hatters regular came on next and also put in an amazing version of *Viva Las Vegas* that was a hit.

LTFUC Chairman **Sim Yiannikaris** and Secretary **Christabel Flight** were on stage before the entertainment continued with the amazing Spiderman outfits and while taking the mick out of the children.

Act Now, a performing arts program that has inspired over 30+ years featured some excellent singing and dancing. How young some of the children were, because they were so young.



LTFUC Chairman Sim Yiannikaris with the Lady Mayor of Westminster, Christabel Flight

Once again, **Gabriela and Monica** were on stage with the **Girls** and dressed in their skimpiest outfits. They sang the biggest hits in a 20 minute set that suddenly need an excuse to approach the children. Their loyal eyes for *Call Sign's* editor! Their loyal fans were in good luck.

The Mad Hatters characters then came on stage to entertain the kids and get them into the spirit of the party.

Then host, **Dave Davis** - who has been on the scene for many years - introduced comedian / magician **Frank Bruno** who had reached a previous **Britain's Got Talent** final. Just loved him as he wound them up with his ventriloquism.

A young man called **Tom** beautifully performed. He had previously sung on the West End.

Not sure what to say about the next act, but it was an incredible piece of machinery, but it was a bit of a let down. Just back from a tour of Romania and the children and adults amazed as the huge machine worked. Telling jokes!

Certainly as different as it's possible to be, but some gorgeous young lady supporters came on stage around in Cheer Leader formation to entertain the children.

The Crystal Girls also danced with the children. Some of the male carers would have been surprised. **Cab Board Member Mike Son** got in for a bit of fun.

Between the acts, Dave Davis introduced **Frank Bruno** turned up to pose for photos and signed autographs. Former **World Heavyweight** boxing champion **Terry Alderton**, the **Eastenders** taxidermist **Bianca Butcher** (Patsy Palmer) for **Flight**, the **Lady Mayoress of Westminster** **Christabel Flight** to speak to the children in her full regalia.

There were also presentations of cheques. **Karen Hilbrow** of **Support Blackpool** kindly donated by one of our biggest donors. **Ink Recruitment** donated £1,150 towards the fund. They also contributed £3,000 towards the fund. **Linda and Cher** of **#SaveTaxi** donated £1,000 towards the fund.

As usual, all around the Great Room were the Metropolitan Police bikes for kids to ride. The Metropolitan Police Brigade. Face painting and balloons were available. Clown **Jolly Jack** was always around entertaining the children.

The Fund have asked us to thank you for all you have done; but let's not forget the Fund Committee for doing such a brilliant job the whole year round.



Dave Davis introduces Frank Bruno



Weren't you in my Sugar Puffs???

Mad Hatters Party 2016

Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children of the *JW Marriott Grosvenor House* for many years have been close to being the best. With around 700 guests, singing, dancing and watching some brilliant entertainment (including **Levy**, wife of the charity's PR **Raymond**), the five

The afternoon opened with **Amanda's Action Show**. Singing can be done properly by young people. They were singing 'Let a new day dawn, let it glow' from the *Disney* musical as **Elvis Shmelvis** sang some of the King's hits, but that allowed children to go on the stage with him.

Then **Malcolm Shaffron** then made a welcome speech praising **Bournemouth Carnival Band** who dress in their own playing, know how to entertain!

Inspired the talent of young performers over the past years coming from the musical *Annie*. It was amazing to hear they were undoubtedly good enough to grace West End

— better known as **The Cheeky** twins in their red outfits ever - performed their show. Suddenly saw many male carers suddenly on the stage! But, the twins only had a short time to the Fund is amazing. **Ed** came out onto the dance floor to join in.

Ed has been doing the show for many years. He is a ventriloquist **Sam Jones** who performed in the *Talent* semi-final. The children were entertained with magic tricks combined with

Ed sang *Where is Love* – a song that he had performed on stage in a production of *Oliver*. He was the guest – **Titan the Robot!** Not just one that talks and answers back!

In Russia, Titan kept children and carers entertained around the dance floor

Ed's final act was the final act, when the members of **Crystal Palace FC** pranced on stage to entertain everyone.

The children, although we suspect they have been happy to join in, but **Dial-a-Dancer** first!

Ed introduced some celebrities who had come to get autographs. Among them was the **champion Frank Bruno** and a taxi driver who wined and dined on his own reasons!!! **Christabel** kindly gave up her Sunday afternoon for the Fund. **Cathy Beany** and **Black Taxis** passed over a cheque to the supporters, **Peter Stringfellow**; he made up of 5% of recruiting fees. Ed covered the cost of the day. **Artemis**, Ed received a much appreciated £1,500.

Ed were things going on such as the children to sit on, the army and the Fire were also available and of course, Ed were entertaining somewhere.

Ed everyone involved, which we were the committee themselves who do the work around...

Photos Alan Green and Alan Fisher



The Cheeky Girls with a Cheeky Ed!



The first Mike Son photo Call Sign has ever taken where he is seen to be smiling!!!



No, you ask him if his shirt itches!



Elvis entertaining the kids with his version of Viva Las Vegas

John's dual identity taxi!



A Dial-a-Cab driver recently called this magazine to ask about a TX4 number plate she had spotted on one of our taxis that sported the words **Mercedes-Benz, Colindale**. It was unusual, if not unique!

Thoughts raced through her mind as to why an LTC TX4 should bear **Mercedes** details on it. Maybe the owner was supporting both marques as a way of countering the relentless expansion of private hire or perhaps he was confused as to what vehicle he was driving! A multitude of possibilities raced through the driver's mind – although a KGB undercover surveillance vehicle seemed unlikely!

"The answer is that I don't know," **John Connor (S66)** explained to *Call Sign*! "I bought the TX4 from **Jonathan Radcliffe (G09)** back in April 2015 and collected it from the garage that overhauled the cab, **A & S Services** in Hoddesdon. They are LTC authorised agents and the Mercedes details were already on the vehicle when I took it.

"My part of the story is that I bought the cab on the Friday, drove it home on the Saturday morning and on the following Tuesday I was diagnosed with cancer on my tonsils. I went straight into **Colchester Hospital** and haven't actually worked since that day. The medical

team at Colchester Hospital have been absolutely fantastic, just superb. But in the meantime I registered my nephew on *DaC* as a journeyman driver," John said.

Call Sign asked A & S and they did give a logical possibility as to the origin of the strange duel identity number plates. A spokesman confirmed that Jonathan has a "cherished" personal number plate that he wanted to retain on his new cab. So he had to re-register the cab with the DVLA who duly issued a replacement registration and Jonathan would probably have had the new number plates made up somewhere convenient for him.

"There is an MB agent near Paddington – even though they state Colindale - so we'd guess that the number plates were constructed there. But you never know, it *could* be a KGB plot!!!"

A & S Services can be contacted on: 01992 445 733. The KGB is unavailable to callers but say they don't do overhauls!

VACANCY FOR A DAC ARBITRATOR



There is a vacancy for a DaC subscriber to become a Society Arbitrator. Should you wish to put your name forward and you meet the minimum criteria of 5 consecutive years membership, then please apply in writing expressing your interest to be received by me at Dial-a-Cab House no later than first post on Monday 29 February 2016.

Should more than one driver apply, a postal ballot would then be conducted at a later date and the candidate with the highest number of votes would then be duly appointed.

Candidates who apply and who wish to send their CVs for publication in *Call Sign* should send them to the Editor, either by post or email, by the same date ie Monday 29 February 2016 keeping to a maximum of around 200 words and preferably attaching a photo as well. They will then appear in the April issue.

If you have any queries regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Howard Pears
Company Secretary*



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Not content with the Mayor giving them huge amounts of space...

NOW CYCLISTS ACT AS UNPAID SPEED COPS!

Over the years, we at Call Sign have heard many true stories that at the time we found difficult to believe, but the one involving a Dial-a-Cab driver just before Christmas outside the Houses of Parliament has surely moved to the very top of the list! It also brings into play a situation that is not just shocking, but in reality puts our licenses and very livelihoods into the hands of our Mayor's undoubted favourites – his fellow cyclists!

Debbie Hope (W18) had been travelling along St Margaret's Street towards the Parliament Square traffic lights. Soon after – on Christmas Eve in fact - she received a police letter enclosing three stills taken from a video camera appearing to show that Debbie's taxi had been driven through the lights whilst they were red.

"The photos undoubtedly showed my cab going through the lights on red and although I couldn't understand how I missed them, I obviously did and was prepared to hold my hands up," Debbie told *Call Sign*. "The first photo showed me a short distance away from the lights with them showing red and amber, so the next sequence should have been green. But they obviously must have changed straight back to red because the second photo showed the lights as being red again and my cab going through them."

Continuing with her story, Debbie told us: "Receiving that on Christmas Eve was bad enough, but the police then said that on looking at files, I did not have any insurance and that frightened me even more! So far as I knew, I was insured with Quotax and had never had any renewal problems. But the letter now made me wonder if, and for how long, I had been driving while uninsured? It really did frighten me."

Debbie phoned Quotax and they confirmed that she was insured and that any police enquiry must have shown an incorrect registration. But she still faced the possibility of three points for what their own photographic evidence proved was an incorrect light change sequence. So Debbie then phoned the number on the letter and they confirmed that she was indeed being prosecuted for going through a red light. But what they told her next not only amazed her, but should shock every single taxi driver in London.

"I asked if I had been filmed by a yellow camera because I had never noticed one there. When I was told no, I then asked if it was a police hand-held camera and again the answer came back as no. So I asked where the footage had come from and after a few moments of silence, the voice at the other end said it had been taken by a member of the public!

"My husband, Duncan (R52), took a look at the photos and said that in his view they seemed to be still shots from a video that had been taken by a cyclist with a helmet camera who must have been behind Debbie and passed the footage of a taxi going through a red light over to the police!

"I was still reeling from the shock of what I had been told by both the police and then Duncan, but pulled myself together enough to call the police again and explain that the sequence of lights was obviously wrong and although I admitted going through a red light because the photo showed it, surely the incorrect lights sequence was mitigation enough for the matter to be dropped? The voice at the other end said she would look at the footage and call straight back, obviously hearing the concern in my voice. True to her word, she did phone back and confirmed that I had indeed gone through a red light, but went on to add that an incorrect sequence was no defence. She also apologised for the police making a mistake re my insurance, but they were not going to cancel the offence.

"Because I now believed it was probably a cyclist, I asked if that footage was allowed as evidence for something serious enough to carry three points if proved and she said yes! I was truly stunned and several days later when I spotted a policeman in the street, I asked if

he could confirm that cyclists' helmet camera footage was acceptable. He said that he too was amazed and had never heard of it!"

Debbie, who has been with DaC for 15 years, went on to tell this magazine that she now has a camera in her taxi and had contemplated passing over footage of any cyclist that jumped a red light! But she added that with their advantage of not needing registration plates, they all looked the same from behind! And besides, that would probably be a full time job!



Debbie was filmed going through a red light by a cyclist who passed it on to the police...

"I assume that the cyclist who passed the footage of my cab over to the police just didn't like taxi drivers and has probably done it before," said Debbie, "but I doubt that an all-out war between us would do anyone any good. However, I'd like to warn all Dial-a-Cab drivers that with so many cyclists having helmet-cams, this may be just the thin end of the wedge..."

**Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online**

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Call Sign has made several mentions over the past few months regarding comparison site app, Karhoo. The first was when another taxi company announced they were linking up to it. I came out against because I couldn't see how our prices could compete to private hire. However, on the second occasion I wondered whether we could work with it and left it open. So I offered Karhoo the opportunity to show us what was on offer and David Goldring, Karhoo's Head of Supplier Relations (UK), has written this exclusively for Call Sign readers... Ed

What is Karhoo?

Karhoo is a Licensed Taxi and Private Hire comparison app. It works by connecting the dispatch system of existing fleets to let customers choose from nearby available cabs.

It features Black Cabs, minicabs and executive cars from local and regional companies including ComCab in London and a large number of Private Hire companies. The passenger can choose by vehicle type, specific fleet, the closest or cheapest cab; paying the fixed or metered fare quoted through the app (no cash, no meter anxiety). You can also pre-book (multiple) vehicles and journeys through the app.

Other apps cut out the Licensed Taxi and Private Hire companies by directly connecting the customer and driver through their app. Karhoo is the opposite: we don't recruit drivers or run our own fleet of vehicles; we simply put you, the driver, in front of more passengers.

Karhoo has been in development for a year and went live in the App Store and Google Play in January as part of a soft launch in London. Karhoo will also launch in New York and Singapore in 2016.

How can an aggregator change the world?

What we are doing at Karhoo has never been done before. We are putting your vehicle in front of more passengers and giving passengers more choice. We are levelling what has become an uneven playing field. We want users to have a choice and are delighted to have London Black Cabs, which are continually voted the 'best in the

AGM REMINDER

All members should have received the *Notice of Annual General Meeting 2015* advising that the meeting will again be held at The HAC, Armoury House, City Road on Sunday 7th February 2016 at 11am.

There is no election of officers at this year's meeting and any Rule Changes or Propositions would have had to have been received at Dial-a-Cab House on or before 09:00hrs on Friday 27th November 2015 as per the Notice of Annual General Meeting 2015 letter. There were none received by that date.

Please remember that if you do not vote by post then you should attend. If you do not attend or vote by post, you will be liable for a £50 fine.

*Howard Pears
Company Secretary*

WHAT IS KARHOO?



both the supply and demand ends of their business. Disruption wasn't always at the expense of livelihoods. Accommodation site, **Airbnb**, didn't put family-run hotels out of business. Expedia didn't drive airlines to bankruptcy. They saw a way to integrate smart technology to make life better for companies and customers. That is what we are doing.

At Karhoo, we are here to champion the incumbent industry. We don't think algorithms and GPS should replace human beings who have worked hard to get you from A to B. Technology may have tipped the playing field against the fleets and drivers but smart, collaborative technology can level it again. We want to support your business to grow, not watch you suffer.

Passengers win because the app is easy to use, transparent and fair but, most importantly lets them choose a ride that suits their needs. Fleets win because Karhoo easily integrates with existing dispatch systems, is vendor neutral and ultimately will put idle cabs in front of more passengers. It is this approach that is being so well received by regulators around the world who are openly supporting Karhoo, rather than trying to ban it.

Together, we will level the playing field...

**David Goldring,
Head of Supplier Relations (UK)**

world' available on the app. It takes years of hard work to learn the **Knowledge**, earn your badge and all the trust that comes with being a Black Cab Licensed Taxi driver, then seemingly from nowhere a billion-dollar tech start-up based abroad comes and has a huge negative impact on your business almost overnight.

How can you stand a chance against the technological and marketing spending power of these Silicon Valley giants? Existing Black Cab fleets such as **Dial-a-Cab** and **ComCab** are feeling the pain of this technological disruption at

Simon Scott is one of the new generation of taxi drivers whose life is captured as a blog! His story of when he was on the Knowledge is...

A Blogger's Tale

Finally, in the summer of 1988, the day no London Cab Driver would ever forget arrived. Despite my ridiculous nerves, I emerged from that 'cold war' looking PCO building in Penton Street with a very shiny green badge and the number 46587 stamped on it. I went in a Knowledge Boy and emerged as a licensed London taxi driver!



I went to see Michael at the garage with my badge in hand. I walked into the office feeling at least a foot taller than the last time I had been there; he was on the phone and looked at me with absolutely no bodily acknowledgement whatsoever. Eventually, the phone slammed down and he said: "So you want a cab, do you!"

We walked out onto the forecourt and he pointed to some dirty old cabs that were alongside a wall. They all had adverts on and looked very unappealing; he opened the driver's door of the first one and an **A to Z** fell out of the door pocket! It stank of cigarette smoke and I found myself taking a step backwards.

"How much," I asked?

He said it would be £140 - it was only a marginal improvement on my wangle cab. He wandered off as I shut the door and found the oldest one. It turned out to be the cleanest with the fewest battle scars. I went to find him and we walked back to the office where he gave me a card with the date and the registration number on it; next to the date he had written £127.

"Pay me at the end of the week," he said. I watched him go as a train rattled by above the old railway arch.

The first fare...

London cabbies are a superstitious lot and I had been warned time and time again to give away the first fare. In other words, the first fare is free to facilitate a long a prosperous career. But I was far more concerned that I wouldn't know the first destination!

I rattled along the cobblestones towards **Bethnal Green Road**, switched my light on and could almost hear my heart pounding. I neared **Shoreditch High Street** and then I saw them. I felt sick as they spun around and started waving their arms and shrieked out "Taxi!" I think I was actually reciting the **Lord's Prayer** as I pulled in beside the two largish West Indian women who were so obviously excited to see me. I prayed I would know the destination as one of them pressed her face into the nearside window. I waited and watched her lips as she mouthed the words "**Lemon Road**, please."

Sh*! Lemon Road? I repeated the words back to them to make sure I'd heard them properly. But they just said that they wanted Lemon Road. With that, they opened the back door and climbed inside. My mind raced frantically; eventually I had to spin round and ask: "Where is Lemon Road then?"

I breathed out and felt my body suddenly relax when one of them said it was near Aldgate! I asked if they meant Leman Street. "Oh yeah, that's right" came the reply. I pressed the big button on the front of my meter and off we went. They looked like they were going to molest me when I told them that the journey was free, but I managed to escape by turning into Prescott Street and on towards the City...

To be continued...

**Simon Scott (O40)
Call Sign Online**

The annual general meeting of The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled was held on Monday 14th December 2015 at The Royal Hospital Chelsea SW3. Those present included former ODRTS Board and founder member, Harry Joel MBE, Paul Davis, Michael Husk (P41), Graham Pike, Terry Ward (W13), Richard Goodwin, Gary Belsey, Edward Hillery, Dennis James, Derek Leone, Arron Capell, Ian Parsons and former DaC Secretary Trevor Clarke. Guests were Frances Wyhowska and former DaC Board member David Clegg. The meeting opened at 3.15...

Chairman Gary Belsy opened the meeting with a minute silence for those no longer with us. The Chairman's report was handed to committee members. It was read and approved (see below).

Trevor Clarke, the charity's long-time auditor, thanked the Chairman, Treasurer and Committee for the good work that they are doing for the charity. He read the financial report, which was approved. The Chairman and committee then thanked Trevor for his assistance in preparing the accounts.



ODRTS Founder Member, former Board member and LTBAWD president Harry Joel MBE

Elected Officers

President Harry Joel MBE, Chairman Gary Belsy, Secretary Paul Davis, Treasurer Michael Husk, Vice Chairman Ian Parsons, Vice President Dennis James, Vice President and Appeals Richard Goodwin, Vice President Frances Wyhowska, Transport Terry Ward,

The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled

LTBAWD AGM

Assistant Secretary and Press Officer Derek Leone.

Also elected were Gary Hutchinson, Graham Pike, Eddie Hillary, Arron Capell and Dennis Hayes.

The Chairman then invited David Clegg to become a member of the committee and he was pleased to accept the position. In his absence, Gary Mankelow (E67) was voted onto the committee.

The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled AGM closed at 4.00pm...

Derek Leone
LTBAWD Hon Press Officer

LTBAWD Chairman's Report 2015

This year so far has once again been a successful one. This Charity is growing larger, sadly this means more ex-servicemen and women need our services and our support is welcome to them. Since my last report, we've had a Remembrance service at the **Chelsea College of Arts** in November, followed by a Christmas lunch at **Millwall FC** in December.

2015 started with a collector's lunch in the **Union Jack Club**, many other luncheons have followed with the Veterans having a good old singalong! In March we had a function at the **Cheam Sports and Social club**, a good time had by all. Many thanks to Tony and his team.

In May we celebrated **VE Day** and went back to **The Netherlands** for the 70th Anniversary of the end of WW2 and the Liberation. It was a very successful five day trip. June saw us invited to the **Royal Hospital Chelsea**, where we thanked them for their support over many years. That month also saw our annual **Worthing** trip. For the first time in 67 years, we held our event on the pier in the **Pavilion Theatre**, attracting much attention with 100 plus taxis parked on the foreshore with the many Veterans - a great day and a big success once again. A big thank you to **Worthing**

Council and the people of **South Holmwood**, our halfway point of the trip for supplying food and drinks and for their support over the last 67 years! Another event was the **Chalke Valley History Festival**, an excellent weekend.

Then in July, we had the **Johnny Rowlands Golf Day**, a fabulous day with dinner and some great entertainment from **Roger De Courcy** and **Nookie Bear**! Many thanks Johnny!

In August, the Charity with the help of **London Taxi Drivers**, supplied free transport for all VJ Veterans from mainline rail stations to the **VJ Day** event in Central London. Well done to all those who helped get the Veterans to the event and back to the stations afterwards. We also helped supply transport for the **George Cross Island Association** and the **Royal Marines Association** for the **Korean War Memorial**.

The Charity had an invite to **Beating the Retreat** at **Headley Court** where we received a warm welcome from the Commanding Officer and staff. We also received thanks for the support we gave to the servicemen and women there.

This year we have a new web site; it has already been a great success with many hits world-wide and informative information on events and history of the charity.

I would personally like to thank my committee for their hard work over the last year and to the London Taxi drivers who gave up their time and money to help this Charity to become what it is today. The two words - *thank you* - are not enough for these Veterans who gave and maintained our freedom over the years!

A big thank you to our trade organisations, the **British Legion**, **Heroes Return**, **Millwall FC** and many others that have helped this Charity. And lastly, a special thank you to our collectors over this past year for all their hard work. Well done!

Gary Belsy
LTBAWD Hon Chairman

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A major new exhibition presents 1916 & WW1 as seen by Britain, France & Germany

REMEMBERING 1916 – Life on the Western Front

A new exhibition exploring **World War One**, the battles on the **Western Front** and the experiences of people on land, in the air, at sea and at home will open in March 2016. Marking the centenary of WWI and the momentous events of 1916, *Remembering 1916 - Life on the Western Front* presents a collection of 500 original objects, many from private collections and never before displayed in public.

Remembering 1916 - Life on the Western Front will run from 12 March - 31 August 2016 at the Whitgift Exhibition Centre at Whitgift School, Croydon and include stories examining battles of Verdun, Jutland and the Somme and such characters as Lord Kitchener and the Red Baron. It will reveal untold stories and uncelebrated individuals on both the Western and Home fronts.

The exhibition is designed, curated, produced and run by **Whitgift School**. A school production in name, the exhibition is a museum-quality project, presented with exceptionally high production values and open seven days a week to all visitors. Looking at the political and social background to WWI and the events of 1916, it will draw on the voices, recollections, writings and opinions of British, French and German soldiers and their families. It will feature a large array of personal items belonging to soldiers, providing an insight into their day-to-day lives. The exhibition themes and exhibits will reflect the approaches, attitudes and actions of each country.

Among key exhibits will be two very rare original first issues of British trench newspaper, **The Wipers Times**, a German light field wagon, a British Battle of Jutland ensign, a rare German battleship flag, original British, French and German uniforms, kit and equipment, including tank drivers' uniforms, a rare Women's RAF uniform and the original train sign of Verdun station.

Parts from WW1 **Zeppelins** and fabric from the famous red triplane flown by the **Red Baron** together with stories detailing the exploits of the German flying ace, **Manfred von Richthofen**, who was the **Red Baron** - in particular, his fierce dogfight with **Second Lieutenant Lionel Morris**, a former Whitgift pupil. Richthofen shot down Morris' plane, mortally wounding Morris. This was the Red Baron's first official 'kill' of the War. To mark this event, Whitgift has commissioned a painting depicting the height of the battle, by leading aviation painter Alex Hamilton, GAvA. The School has also commissioned a replica silver cup to match those made for the Red Baron after each of his 'kills'. The cup will be engraved with the date of the 'kill' and the name of the aircraft.

A key feature will be the reconstruction of a British trench at dawn, showing soldiers going 'over the top' and a German trench from the Battle of the Somme at night, transporting visitors to a frenzied and terrifying moment for both sides. The Somme saw the first use of tanks in the War and visitors have an opportunity to see tank tracks from the Battle of Flers-Courcellette.

The exhibition will also find its way beneath the main gallery space with a display on tunnelling, illuminating the tactic of going underground to listen to the enemy and lay explosives. It will also explore the political and social background to key events in 1916, using the contemporary voices of soldiers and their families. The four main themes are:

The War on Land remembers two of the key battles on the Western Front. The Battle of Verdun saw the French and German troops pitched against each other in what turned out to be a blood-bath and the longest battle of the War. The Battle of the Somme was arguably the most infamous battle of the War. The Somme offensive was meant to be a breakthrough against the German defences, but poor planning resulted in unprecedented allied losses on the opening day.

The War in the Air charts the rapid development of the Royal Flying Corps and explores the growing importance of aerial warfare, both for reconnaissance and control of the land below to both sides.



The War at Sea looks at the Battle of Jutland, the largest naval battle and only full-scale clash of battleships in the War. It is one of the most controversial battles in history due to the allegation that British Commander, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, missed the opportunity to destroy the German fleet.

The War at Home shows the contrast to the harsh reality of the Western Front. Remembering 1916 will also create a snapshot of what life was like for those on the Home Front in Croydon and the South East, as well as in France and Germany.

From letters to home and sweetheart

tokens, to air raids and the changing role of women, the impact of the action on the Western Front on people's lives is clear to see. Visitors will be able to read original letters and postcards sent between soldiers and their loved ones and view many other personal mementos.

In the final display, visitors will learn more about some of the 251 former Whitgift pupils who sadly lost their lives during the War, with a poppy memorial display paying tribute to each of them.

Visitor Information: 12 March to 31 August 2016 from 10am - 5pm, 7 days a week at the Whitgift Exhibition Centre, Whitgift School, Haling Park, South Croydon CR2 6YT.

Admission: Adults £7; Seniors £5; Children (under 16) £3; Children (under 5) free; Family* £18

*Any family combination of up to 2 adults & accompanying children (5-16 years) up to 5 people.

More information:

www.remembering1916.co.uk or call 020 8688 9222.

There will also be an Edwardian themed café and an exhibition shop.




THE HERTFORDSHIRE
WINTER PRO-AM GOLF TOURNAMENT

Friday 26 February 2016
Friday March 18 2016

09.30 Coffee & bacon roll on arrival***
10.30 Shot gun start***
15.30 Presentation of Professional & Team prizes
£45 per person in a team of 2 amateurs
going out with a golf professional
Maximum full handicap 24 Men, 30 Ladies
Format: Stableford 3/4 handicap. Best two scores count.
Please telephone if you would like an
entry form or any further information.

Call Elaine Cochrane on 01992 466666 Ext. 249.

The Hertfordshire was designed by Jack Nicklaus II. It is a par 70 spread over 6266 yards of beautiful Hertfordshire countryside, making full use of the natural surroundings. The lakes and forests in the area, for example, make for wonderfully challenging natural hazards. With full irrigation cover of tees, fairways and greens, the course is in fantastic condition all year round. Read more about the course at <http://www.thehertfordshiregolf.co.uk/>

It was good to read the comments of the two drivers in this month's *Mailsbot* who gave their opinions regarding fixed prices and how one is in favour while one is not. If a straw poll were to be taken amongst members, I feel those comments would reflect the entire membership. No one wants to work below the meter, but market forces dictate that we should - or at the very least - consider it.

One of the letters (**Geoff Levene W32J**) stated that it was my opinion we must accept fixed prices if we are to survive. I am not advocating this is the only route that we as an organisation must follow; all I am doing is informing members what we are up against when trying to compete against private hire.

The other letter (**Jon Robinson E88**) refers to closing the stable door etc. I'd just like to say that we have been offering fixed rate journeys for some considerable time and not as many may perceive, just started offering them now.

With *Call Sign* being such a widely read publication within the trade and beyond,

DaC Sales Report

With Keith Cain



we have to be mindful not to give our competitors any advantage over what we are doing in Sales. I am fully aware this at

times can be to the detriment of members by not keeping them as up-to-date as I would like and I apologise for that, but the blame totally lies at Alan's door for producing such a good magazine! (*Ed's note: Blimey, talk about getting blamed for everything!*) When our competitors tell us that they eagerly await each month's issue of *Call Sign*, it does make you think twice about what you say!

Make no mistake though, the market place is fierce and in my opinion what has made it even tougher is the pricing structure of **Uber**. Their charging has begun to impact more severely on the whole of the private hire industry and the major car players have had to review their journey costs for fear of losing out to the Uber app. And that, of course, affects us!

Over the past few years I have scrutinised more car vendor journey costs than I would ever wish to mention and was starting to see the gap between private hire and licensed taxis closing, even if it was only marginally. But what I've noticed very recently is that the gap is beginning to widen again and I honestly believe this is down to the competition within the private hire industry itself.

Whether we offer no run-ins, no gratuities and just the meter fare or fixed rate journeys below the metered fare, one thing for sure is that the car company journey costs are cheaper than the meter fare, even when you start with a dead clock.

To give you an example; I recently saw a PH invoice showing journey costs from EC2 to W2 for £17.50, EC2 to W8 for £18.20 and EC2 to W14 for £23.55 - all with no administration charge added. I'll let you work out what the meter fare would be to those destinations. I also had the "privilege" to be informed by an account client of ours that they had been offered a fixed price to go from EC2 to W13 for £38... that by another "black taxi company."

That is what we are up against and it is not going to go away - at least not as long as the playing field remains so uneven. We all know about being regulated to the extent where we have no choice of vehicle or that what we have to charge is no competition against those in a free market. I lay that one firmly at the door of TfL... as I'm sure you all do.

I will always try to get members the best deal I can, but to say it is difficult is an understatement! We have expanded the Sales department and recruited a Senior Sales Executive from outside of the industry, but from an equally tough industry sector. He is currently on his probationary period and as soon as this is completed, we will introduce him to you all.

Keith Cain

DaC Head of Sales

DaC and the world's top 20 taxis

During a few minutes' breather after a very busy pre-seasonal rush to get *Call Sign* out on time, a member of the team began idly browsing the internet while boss **Alan Fisher** left the room to renew acquaintances with the staff canteen's coffee machine.

Suddenly *Google* and a laptop came together to display the **Top 20 Taxis of All Time**.

There on the screen appeared the world famous shape of the **London Taxi Company's** TX series of taxicabs. Nothing surprising in that, you might say, as the instantly recognisable icon of London is often used in a story somewhere.

The original image accompanying the article was shot by a foreign photographer probably visiting London, with the featured cab being a '55 plate **TX2**. But what was nice was that the snapper chose to shoot a **Dial-a-Cab** taxi instead of any one of the many thousands that transport passengers safely around our streets every day of the year.

The pic was taken before our new-style door logos were released and the colours of the old one may have been what attracted the Snapper; but to feature so prominently and the free world-wide publicity such exposure offers, should not be under-estimated!

Among those in the survey were some old London stalwarts such as the **Beardmore, FX3** and **FX4**, while at the opposite end of the scale there was the latest hybrid **Metrocab** taxi currently seen on the streets of London undergoing trials before full production is expected to begin later this year. Alongside the hybrid taxi was the original electric cab - **The Bersey**. It was invented by **Walter Bersey** and worked the London streets in the late 1890s. His fleet of 75 cabs were powered by grid-plate batteries that could only be recharged at Bersey's Lambeth garage, where a hydraulic lifting system allowed for quick battery exchange. The taxi had a range of about 35 miles, which was more than the average horse-powered cab could cover. It had a top speed of 14mph - which some would say it isn't much different today with all the extra traffic! But they never carried the DaC logo!

The survey also featured the usual array of low emission cars such as the **Nissan Leaf** and dare we say, the **Prius**, together with an array of **Mercedes-Benz** saloons so popular across Europe. There were also some local home-grown marques in various countries around the globe converted for what watchers would call 'taxi' use. We have some doubts as to whether those behind the survey know the difference between taxis and private hire, but that doesn't detract from any associated world-wide publicity for the DaC taxi and the instantly recognisable "real" ones!

Also there were the gaudily decorated World War II Jeeps used in the Philippines that have been converted into taxis to carry as many people as possible at the same time by rearranging the seating along the length of either side of the vehicle - although no mention of their emission ratings!



Old logo - but still great world-wide publicity!

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online



What exactly is it that the media can't see or understand about Taxi and Private Hire regulations? We already have sufficient

legislation called the Private Hire Vehicles act 1998. Then Uber comes along and amazingly, even though they don't (can't) conform to the regulations every other PH operator has to abide by, are licensed as an operator???

Uber don't do bookings...

Contra to the *PHV act 1998*, Uber's app allows them to illegally ply for immediate hire. When originally licensed in 2012, they had no proper operating centre and ran their business from a rented desk space in **More London**. They didn't even have a landline to take bookings, contra to regulations laid down regarding applications for operator licences. Even now, over 3 years later, they still don't have a valid landline or take bookings. In fact they have no way to pre-book a job.

The Taxi trade call foul and ask for regulations to be enforced (not new or more regulation, just enforce what we already have) and suddenly it's a breach of Uber's consumer rights! What about the rights of every other taxi driver or minicab operator in the industry?

Would it be a breach of consumer rights to stop Taxi drivers selling cheap cigarettes and cans of beer to passengers or set up an

Thomas the Taxi wonders about Taxi and PH regulations and asks...

WHAT IS IT THE MEDIA DOESN'T UNDERSTAND?

app to supply cheap booze to people outside public houses? After all, it's what the public wants! Perhaps we could perform cheap dentistry without any training? Got a toothache? Call a cab....we can get pliers to do the job cheap!

Legislation is there to protect the public and should always be enforced fully. Letting a company come here, one that pays virtually no tax, treats its workers - who work below the minimum wage and have to be reliant on benefits - like slaves, without a doubt is unfair competition.

So why has this one company, with massive funds available for lobbying support, been allowed to operate outside of the very legislation that every other PH company has to abide by? The Legislation that is put in place to protect the public. Surely this is a breach of all other Taxi and Private Hire operator's consumer rights?

So what is it that the media can't grasp about this?

We are told this is allowed because it's what the public want! But as **LTDA** General Secretary **Steve McNamara** pointed out in an **ITV** interview, a huge proportion of the public want to be able to buy controlled substances that are illegal. But they can't because there is legislation against it, just like the legislation that governs minicabs. Unfortunately, at present and in regards to Uber, the current Private Hire legislation isn't being enforced.

The Taxi trade doesn't want or need less regulation. It's there for a reason! We are proud of the fact that we have all completed the Knowledge of London. Yes, it was hard but it produces quality drivers who are regularly voted not just good or excellent, but the best in the world!

We don't need more legislation in regards to PH, we already have exactly what is needed. Why should one company be given exemption from the regulations or be able to flout the law and operate in any way they see fit?

Has our licensing authority become corrupt?

Or is our licensing authority just too terrified to take on this multi-billion dollar company? After all, when was the last time Tfl's legal team actually had a major victory? Instead of trying to fix the situation by watering down the required standards to enter the Licensed Taxi trade, perhaps interfering politicians should be investigating why our licensing authority (Tfl) are not enforcing the rules and regulations to the same standard as pre-2012. Over to you **Tom Watson**...

All our industry asks for is to have the rules and regulations that we already have in place enforced. What part of this request does the media and interfering politicians not get?

*Jim Thomas
Call Sign Online*

Mick Wheeler

Mick Wheeler has been advertising his mobile air con servicing and repair service in *Call Sign* for several years. As a result, Mick had many **Dial-a-Cab** drivers who knew him as always being very helpful and whose work was always excellent. These drivers became regular customers.



We have now heard that Mick has passed away and his business has ceased. On behalf of Mick's family, his nephew Robert told *Call Sign*:

"It is with great regret that we would like to inform customers, colleagues and friends of the death of Mick Wheeler. Mick was well known in the trade for repairing air conditioning. Unfortunately Mick passed away on November 8th after a very short illness with pancreatic cancer. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

"Mick built up his business over the years and has been working in the London Taxi trade for around twenty years. He was extremely proud of his job and that showed in the quality of his work. Mick will be fondly remembered by all those who knew him."

Taxi insurance for DaC drivers



On behalf of Dial-a-Cab, Hillier Buchan Ltd in Bexley have negotiated exclusive rates for DaC members. We believe our rates are competitive in today's market for experienced licensed Black Cab drivers.

At Hillier Buchan, we understand every driver's circumstances are different; therefore our policies can be tailored for the individual driver. We offer a 5% discount for DaC members, with additional discounts for existing protected Bonus policies.

Hillier Buchan was established in 2002 by David Hillier and myself with in excess of 50 years experience as high level Brokers working in the City of London for major broking houses. We have established a reputation for professionalism and service in our chosen fields.

We have extensive London Market contacts; consequently we are able to offer our clients a quality of security from companies that are all available in the world's pre-eminent insurance market. As a result, our clients achieve quality of security and service upon which we pride ourselves and a competitiveness of premium that our clients find particularly attractive in today's climate.

Our philosophy is to build long-term relationships using balanced service teams providing continuity and expertise. Compare our prices and give us a call. See our ad on page 18 inside this issue of *Call Sign*.

**Phil Buchan, Hillier Buchan
01322 55313**

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

Brethren of the Whip



The Kipper

"As flat as a kipper," usually sums up the period from Christmas to the Chelsea Flower Show in May. Times change however and the Kipper seems to

change with those times. Ten / fifteen years ago, December was non-stop throughout the day and night, now the work seems to die off in the run-up to Christmas, so could it be that The Kipper now begins before the festive period?

And what about the Flower Show? For the past few years, there does not appear to have been any substantial increase in the work after the show. There can be a few good weeks in June, but come July and August, the work completely dies off before picking up again in September for the run-up towards Christmas. Of course, there are some drivers who will argue that we are in a permanent Kipper and no doubt there are others who will claim we have not had a Kipper since the early 1990's.

The Kipper is ephemeral, it moves according to the tastes and wants of the cab travelling public. So what about the Victorian Brethren of the Whip, when was their Kipper?

It comes as no surprise that very few Victorian cabmen kept a daily record of their takings – if they did, very few appear to have survived. We do, however, have the daily rental charged to the men for the hire of a cab and horse. If a cabman was expected to have a good day, then his master would put up his rental accordingly. The masters were quick to increase rentals when they saw fit, but always reticent at dropping it down. When cab rental was low, drivers were not expected to earn much.

For the Victorian cabbie, the best time of the year was 'The Season' – which basically applied from April to mid-August, usually whilst Parliament was in session. When the MPs and Lords were in town, so was society, and when society was in town they used cabs. As late as May 1966, the editor of *The Steering Wheel*, Donna Bewley, commented that *"...the season is upon us...and a taxi-man's life becomes more varied and lucrative."*

In 1858, the Season ended earlier than usual. The summer heat created what became known as *The Great Stink* when the Thames smelt so bad due to the pollution being pumped directly into it, that the House of Commons had to soak their curtains in lime chloride in an attempt to mask the smell!

When cab driver William Ransom appeared at Hammersmith Police Court charged with defaulting on his rental with his master, he blamed "the Season" for being very bad. He had originally been paying 18shillings (90p) a day but as the cab-going public moved away from the city, this was mutually dropped to 10s (50p) a day. Still, Ransom could not pay and owed his master, Mr Gard, a total of £3. For his part, Gard admitted that times were difficult for the drivers with the Season ending abruptly in mid-July, which coincided with The Great Stink. Ransom could not afford to pay his master "another farthing" and in consequence was imprisoned for 21 days.

In their *Street Life in London* (1877) Thomson and Smith write that the daily price of a rental in the dull season was on average 10s to 12s a day, but there were eight price hikes during the year. If a cab was to have a 'wait and return' to the Epsom Derby, the master would want £2 with the driver charging the passenger the accepted rate of 3 guineas (£3 3s). They also stated that the months of September and October were the quietest months of the year.

In 1894, drivers went on strike over the daily rental they had to pay. The matter was finally settled by the Home Secretary, Herbert Asquith, with what became known as the *Asquith Awards*. The masters on one side, with

the union representing the men on the other, agreed to a fixed set of daily rentals throughout the year. From the *Awards* it can be deduced that the quietest period of the year was from around mid-August to mid-October when the men were expected to pay 10s a day. The rental would gradually rise until peaking at 16s a day at the beginning of June, where it would remain for six weeks before dropping down until the third week in August.

So *'the work is as flat as a kipper,'* and *'kippers are all a cabman could afford to eat,'* have both been mooted at one time or another as the derivation of the term, as has *'it comes from the Yiddish word for coppers (pennies) – kaperz,'* which sounds even more feasible.

In one of his many columns under the pen-name of *Jebu*, Simon Hogan recalled how when it was very quiet, many cabmen would supplement their income by sewing the spare buttons for jackets onto pieces of card; when it was busy, they didn't have to.

Last year, in an interview on the Robert Elms Show on BBC London, menswear designer Paul Simon stated the people who did this were paid slave wages and according to the Jewish tailors who employed them, they were called "Kippers."

And that's why it's the Kipper Season...

Sean Farrell (B39)
Call Sign Online

LOSSES!



Call Sign found it sad when hearing that San Francisco's largest cab company, Yellow, was set to file for bankruptcy due in no small part to Uber and Lyft. We know a few drivers working over there.

Then we heard of two other reports concerning serious losses and you would assume that they were all down to Uber. But even they are losing a staggering amount and by the end of the first half of 2015 had lost almost \$1 billion! Those losses were up from \$671.4 million in the previous half year but thanks to their backers, they still had \$4.1 billion in cash and cash equivalents in the bank as of June 2015. However, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau is the latest to

announce a bill will be passed to put a halt to Uber Canada, promising to protect the integrity and commitment of traditional Taxi drivers.

Then we heard about Hailo, which according to the company's auditors, might only have enough cash to operate as a going concern for another three months. That report came with the company's 2014 accounts. Over the course of the year, Hailo's parent company made a loss of £21.8m, with £11.8m of that loss coming from the company's now-discontinued North American business. But Hailo's operations in the UK in addition to Japan, Spain and Singapore still contributed more than £10m of losses over the year. Hailo has now warned that to continue as a going concern, it will require a new round of fundraising within the next three months. With further cost-cutting, it could survive a further 12 months.

Hailo says it is confident it will be able to raise the funds needed and that they expect to receive further funding in the near future. They added that in the unlikely event that further funding cannot be identified, they would take any necessary steps to mitigate the risk of the business running out of cash in the foreseeable future.

Representing Hailo's Auditors, Julian Frost said that they currently do not have any committed funding, nor have they committed to any further cost reductions. These conditions indicate the existence of a material uncertainty that could cast significant doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern.

Mr Frost added that Hailo's directors acknowledged that to continue with the current cost base, the group would require a further injection of funds within the next 3 months - or 12 months if further expenditure reductions are implemented - in order to provide ongoing working and growth capital.

With all three major London radio circuits currently losing money, the reason seems fairly obvious; greed! Companies see others earning money and attempt to jump on a bandwagon that isn't big enough to hold all of them and leaves everyone hanging onto the sides..



Tell me, how is it that Christmas used to be two days and now it's two weeks? Time was when people would work till the 24th, celebrate for two days and be back at their desks on the 27th. Then

they'd work until New Year's Eve, party till God knows when and then stagger back on January 1st.

But gradually, they stopped turning up on New Years' Day, Government bowed to public pressure and declared it a Bank Holiday. The result was that many then took off the days in between.

Ok, fair enough. In fact I've always found those few days to be quite busy. The stations run well with all those people who can't wait to get away from their families and get back to London - and on top of that, there aren't many drivers out there.

But over the past few years, a new situation has arisen. The City seems by and large to pack it in a week BEFORE Christmas. This year it went dead on the 18th December. It may be my birthday but it's hardly a national holiday. That's what I mean about two weeks.

And we all know what happens once January begins. It goes quiet for at least a couple of months before... it goes a little less quiet if we're lucky! So it's the perfect time for a holiday. A bit of winter sun perhaps, somewhere you can go out without a heavy coat and scarf. Somewhere you don't have to worry about ranks stretching up Harewood Avenue, along Harrow Road or Vauxhall Bridge Road.

We like to go to the Canaries. The weather is usually good and it's not too far. So by the time you read this, we'll be soaking up some heat at the Guyarmina Princess Hotel on Tenerife. We've been there for the last few years and judging by the familiar faces I see there, it's popular with plenty of other drivers in the trade. For a few years we went to Los Cristianos and the Oasis Moreque, which is now part of the H10 chain (as per the one in Waterloo Road). There were a couple of memorable incidents at the Oasis. The first morning we went down to the pool and Val, a Yorkshire woman, immediately button-holed us. The first thing she told us was that she was recovering from brain surgery. That should have been a clue and I shouldn't have been surprised at the strange things she said or did. But after a few days, she was making me feel that I was the one who needed the brain surgery. Basically, she was driving me crazy... but how to avoid her?

She regularly stationed herself by the entrance to the pool area, so I devised a cunning plan. We would come out of the front door, go round the block, enter through the back gate and settle quietly onto our

Another true story from Geoff Levene...

LIFE AT CHRISTMAS

sunbeds. Val looked puzzled but never approached us again.

There was an area for entertainment and one evening a band came to play. A large Dutch party staying nearby came in to drink and enjoy the music. Amongst them were three women of a certain age who settled at a table. I'll tell you how fanciable they were - I couldn't decide if they were prison guards or female weight-lifters!

Now, staying on his own at the Hotel was an odd little German guy. During the day he tended to wear cute little denim shorts while in the evening it was a denim shirt and jeans. He looked like a football supporter from the seventies, minus the scarf tied round his wrist. Anyway, we watched him approach the table and ask one of the three ladies to dance. They looked at each other and burst out laughing. Not exactly encouraging for the Teutonic suitor, however one of them put him out of his misery and stood up and they began to jive on a raised area about three steps above ground level. As Herr Double Denim got more excited, his Dutch partner spun him round. And he spun and spun and spun right off the raised area and landed with a sickening thud. The good lady wife gasped in horror but the Dutch women just looked down at him, burst out laughing again and went back to their drinks. He crawled off and that was the last we saw of him!

The Guyarmina Princess is on the Costa Adeje, that's the other end of the strip from Los Cristianos. There isn't anything particularly beautiful about the area, but if you're lying on your back reading, well, you could

be anywhere. As I say, we always have a nice time there, but of course there was the Great Tomato Ketchup incident...

We went down to breakfast one morning and I decided to have the traditional Canarian dish, *Huevos y judegas con tostas* - better known perhaps as eggs and beans on toast! I took a plateful and headed back to our table. The good lady wife grabbed the sauce and we sat down. A forkful of scrambled egg was halfway to my mouth when an angry voice declared: "This is buffet! You no take ketchup to table. You leave for other guests."

I looked up to see the Chinese head chef standing over me. I should mention that I had been a bit disappointed with some of the food so I said to him that I was glad he showed his face and that I wondered what he thought of the evening menus. I complained that some of it wasn't up to standard.

"You no like, you go to different hotel," he yelled at me! Annoyed, I just told him to "clear off" back to the kitchen where he belonged! And dear Call Sign reader, I definitely said 'clear off'!

He stormed off and I went back to my now ketchupless breakfast, while the other guests stared open-mouthed. I complained and a few days later a huge basket of fruit appeared in our room. Trouble was we were going in a few days and the chambermaid got most of it. So the moral is this: Never take ketchup to the table and if you are going to complain, do it early in the holiday...

Geoff Levene (W32)
Call Sign Online

THE LONDON TAXI BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION FOR WAR DISABLED

Lunch at Millwall FC for LTBAWD

In early December, The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled held a luncheon at Millwall Football Club; this was to thank all our sponsors and a particular group of veterans who have, over the year, collected money at various locations for the charity.

Guests began arriving at 11.15am, including Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson and Bob Gamble OBE from The Royal British Legion, with veterans arriving in taxis from London Bridge and Waterloo Stations. A number of drivers refused payment and the Committee cannot thank these drivers enough for their generosity, especially considering the lack of work on the streets.

The Secretary, Mr Paul Davis, welcomed everybody and thanked them for their support over the years. Reverend George Parson then said grace and lunch was served. After lunch we were entertained by St Jude's School Choir who sang Christmas Carols with everybody joining in. It was greatly appreciated and they received a rousing round of applause; it was a really nice start to the Christmas period.

Mr Ted Pieri is a WW2 veteran and at the age of 89 years recently made a parachute jump with the Red Devils Parachute Team! He raised £1700, which he donated to the Charity. This will enable ten veterans to take part in a gliding day in 2016. National President of the Royal British Legion, Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB CVO, presented Ted with a certificate to thank him.

The President, Chairman, Officers and committee thank all the sponsors and drivers who have supported the charity over the year and hope we can count on your continued support for next year.

Derek Leone, LTBAWD Hon Press Officer



Ted Pieri receives his certificate from Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson



Mike Son is a DaC Board Member and also a former Magistrate. Rather than writing about the trade this month, Mike is personalising a driving statistic that ended in the death of a ballet dancer. So often, the tragedy of people like Jonathan Ollivier would just be part of a list of statistics...

On average, 3,000 people are killed or seriously injured each year in drink-drive collisions with almost one in six of all deaths on the road involving drivers who are over the legal alcohol limit.

The penalties for drink-driving related offences in the UK are severe. One of the most important factors determining the severity of sentences magistrates impose for drink-driving offences is based on the level of alcohol in an offender's system at the time of the offence.

Before magistrates decide on the appropriate sentence to impose, they will take into account any relevant previous convictions as well as any aggravating and/or mitigating factors surrounding each individual case. They will also take into account the level of harm that an offender caused or could have caused while committing the offence.

On Sunday, 9 August 2015 Jonathan Ollivier was killed in Clerkenwell, the victim of a collision between his motorcycle and a car at a road junction fairly close to Sadler's Wells Theatre. He was on his way to that theatre to prepare for his role in *The Car Man*, which was about to end a hugely successful four-week summer season.

UK DRINK DRIVING STATISTICS

I believe this is a very convoluted method to determine the penalty. Maybe a simpler way of deterring drink-drive offences should include both a heavy financial penalty - possibly a percentage of income - in addition to a custodial sentence.

So here is my question: When will the UK government bring in a zero alcohol policy for anyone driving any motorised vehicle? Many other countries have strict legislation that says if you drink, you cannot and must not drive.

Below is just one of many tragedies that take place in London - even as this one did, on a quiet Sunday morning...

Jonathan Ollivier was born on 26 April 1977 in Northampton. He died on 9 August 2015 in Clerkenwell at the age of 38. Jonathan was a ballet dancer. He leaves a wife, Desiré Samaai and two young children.

On the day of the accident, the driver of a black Mercedes car was arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving, although at this time there



Jonathan Ollivier: April 1977 - August 2015

is no allegation that the driver of the car was driving while intoxicated.

The reason I write this piece is because I met with one of the principle dancers who performed at Jonathan's memorial event which took place on 18 January at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. To the world, Jonathan Ollivier is just another sad statistic. In reality he was a real person with a real family and a real life.

As you read this, the next time you see statistics of road deaths, perhaps for a brief moment you could think of Jonathan Ollivier as an example of what a list of statistics really means...

**Mike Son
DaC Board Member**

Stargazing!

"I guess it goes with the job," Eugene Fitzsimons (L09) told *Call Sign*, referring to the numerous celebrities he has taken around town in his taxi. "There was Tilda Swinton, the lady who played the *Ice Queen* in the TV series *Chronicles of Narnia*. I stopped for her and her family in Drayton Gardens and took them to the Haymarket Theatre to see a show. I recognised her immediately, but it took me a few minutes to put a name to her face," he admitted.

"On another occasion I stopped in Bryanston Square for someone I recognised instantly. There's no mistaking comedienne and author Dawn French for anyone else is there! We went to Haymarket to collect some dry-cleaning before heading back to Bryanston Square. She is a very funny lady and made me chuckle as we chatted amiably throughout the journey.

"Then there was tough guy actor, James Cockburn," Eugene recalled. "I took him from Harrods to outfitters Huntsman in Savile Row. He explained that he and his wife were travelling to Scotland and she had advised him to get a warm jacket - so that's what we did! As he paid me off, I couldn't help but notice his large, aged hands and fingers. I think I read somewhere that he suffered with arthritis."

James Cockburn died in 2002 and severe arthritis prevented his movie career from progressing during his later years. He made around 70 films including many westerns and the *Our Man Flint* spy series.

Continuing the Eugene Hall Of Fame membership list, we moved on to the amazing Peter Ustinov. "He was an interesting passenger," said Eugene now in a quite matter-of-fact voice! "I collected him and his daughter from the Berkeley Hotel and during the journey he constantly asked me questions about the taxi trade. As I set him down, he asked me to take his daughter onto her home in Barnes. On the way, she sounded almost apologetic that her father had bombarded me with questions, but explained that he was always interested in doing research for parts he might play in a film and so, to him, it was all useful information in possibly bringing reality to a role. I told her I was honoured to be of help and looked forward to the day when I saw him playing the character of a cab driver and I could then boast to my children that I taught him about our trade!" Eugene laughed at the memory before adding that both father and daughter had been such lovely people. Sadly Peter Ustinov died in 2004.

"Do you remember that brilliant TV series *The Good Life*," Eugene asked this *Call Sign* journo. "Well, I took Richard Briers home to Chiswick and asked him what it was like working with his co-star and Dial-a-Cab regular, Felicity Kendall. He said simply that she was a real character and by chance, sometime later I actually picked up the lady herself, taking her from a theatre where she was working to her home in Chelsea - not far from the late David Frost's house. It was a real loss when Richard Briers passed away in 2013.

"I could say something nice about actor Hugh Grant... but I won't! I must have caught him on a bad day as I recall he was going through a tough time with the media around that time. Also many years ago and on a lighter note, there was Jean Boht who played Nellie Boswell in Carla Lane's brilliant TV series *Bread*. She had been shopping in the West End and on the way back to her Barnes home we spoke on a number of different topics. But feeling decidedly naughty as we passed Harrods, I persuaded her to shout out her *Bread* catchphrase of *You Tart* to people walking along the street. Amazingly, she agreed, rolled the cab window down, popped her head out and bellowed it out for the world to hear once again! I saw the look of surprise on the faces of pedestrians as we drove by!" Eugene laughed uproariously as he recalled the 'balls' he must have displayed in daring to ask her!

"A bit of rock 'n roll next when I picked up *The Who's* Roger Daltry from Denmark Street to take him to a regular DaC destination of some years ago, the BBC studios in Maida Vale. He asked me about the London music scene and if I had been to any music venues. He said he visited the 100 Club in Oxford Street, but couldn't really go clubbing because of the attention his appearance brought. But he did say there was an up and coming band I should watch out for called *The Black Eyed Peas* with a new young singer called William Adams who went by the name of Will-I-Am!

With that, Eugene Fitzsimons left the building and left me starstruck!



Eugene the stargazer!

David Hughes (A73) is one of Dial-a-Cab's longest serving drivers and who in 2017 will have been with the Society for forty years. Throughout all those years, he has never been



afraid of getting involved in any politics that affect this trade. This time David wrote to his local MP about Uber business practices and specifically mentioned that Uber does not pay UK taxes, its drivers do not have proper insurance and that it is having a negative impact on the UK taxi industry. His MP has now replied in a private capacity using the HoC library service, but David has given *Call Sign* permission to publish, although we have not mentioned his MP's name...

The answer to David

There are long-standing concerns about the ability of Uber and other multinationals offering digital services – such as *Amazon*, *Facebook* and *Google* – to avoid corporate tax not just in the UK, but in many of the countries they supply services. It has been clear for some time that the international tax system established almost a century ago is under severe pressure from globalisation and technological change. In a paper* on reforming the system published in 2014, HM Treasury looked at the ways in which multinationals had been able to exploit the interaction between national tax systems to avoid tax, including "...using structures or new technologies to minimise the need for a physical presence within a tax jurisdiction, or to deliver certain functions from another geographical location. This enables a business to ensure that the level of its activities does not create a permanent establishment and therefore a taxable presence in a jurisdiction where it is not resident."

**HM Treasury: Tackling aggressive tax planning in the global economy: UK priorities for the G20-OECD project for countering Base Erosion and Profit Shifting, March 2014 (page 5).*

The Treasury paper was the Government's submission to the so-called 'Base Erosion & Profit Shifting' (BEPS) initiative – which is an international effort to tackle this problem. In October 2014, the Chancellor attending a meeting of G20 Finance Ministers to discuss a series of recommendations by the OECD to clampdown on this tax avoidance and as Mr Osborne said, the Government is to "...take new steps to introduce these new international rules into our domestic tax laws." (*HM Treasury press notice, 9 October 2015*). In addition to this, in March last year HMRC announced it was taking forward an initiative to share information with other tax authorities to tackle the particular risks posed by digital multinationals (*HMRC press notice, 25 March 2015*). Further to this, last year the Government announced unilateral action to counter the use of aggressive tax planning with the introduction of a new 'Diverted Profits Tax' (DPT) from

UBER BUSINESS PRACTICES

A DaC driver asks his MP for answers...

April 2015, to ensure multinational companies paid the right amount of UK tax. These initiatives were all listed in a recent PQ on the Government's efforts (*PQ14328, 10 November 2015*). If you need it, there is more detail on the new *Diverted Profits Tax* published by HMRC.

As regards Uber themselves, the company have argued that they are making considerable capital investments, which substantially reduce their taxable profits. For example, see: 'Uber pays £22,000 tax on £866,000 UK profit' from *The Guardian*, 20 October 2015. One further point would be that self-employed individuals who use the Uber app to offer their driving services, will be paying tax on the income they make from their trade.

Insurance

The constituent (David) had a further grievance against Uber, namely that whereas taxi drivers have to take out Hire & Reward insurance, Uber drivers do not. It is the case that Uber drivers do not take out specific carriage insurance (other than Uber's own policy, which covers some of the same ground) but I have found it surprisingly difficult to ascertain whether it is true that taxi drivers have to take out H&R insurance. I have consulted various sources but no answer has been either convincing or unambiguous. Further research is ongoing.

All drivers, regardless of whether they are taxi operators or not, are required, by virtue of section 143 of the *Road Traffic Act 1988*, as amended, to have third party insurance (or security bond equivalent), however, there are no separate insurance provisions for taxis which would disadvantage them as compared to Uber drivers.

Impact on the UK taxi industry

Finally, the constituent states that Uber has "bullied" its way into the UK market "...totally ignoring the rules that currently apply to everybody else; in doing so they've driven down the incomes of tens of thousands of taxi and minicab drivers."

Uber operates in 11 metropolitan areas of the UK, namely Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, London, Manchester, Merseyside, Newcastle, Portsmouth and Sheffield. In all of these areas Uber is licenced as a PHV operator and any driver using the Uber app to operate a PHV service has to be individually licenced as a driver. It is up to individual local licensing authorities to decide whether applicants meet the relevant requirements to be licenced. Licensing requirements are the same for Uber as an operator and drivers who use its app, as they are for any other PHV applicant.

The most recent statistics show that the growth in PHVs and drivers over the past two years has largely been driven by London (which accounts for about 35% of all licenced vehicles). London is clearly where the effects of Uber are being most strongly felt to the point

that Mayor Boris Johnson has called on Transport for London to be given the power to cap PHV numbers.

In a May 2015 article, the *Evening Standard* reported: *Speaking to LBC this morning, Mayor Boris Johnson said: "I'd like to talk about the congestion threat caused by the massive increase in minicabs. Your listeners may be aware of this as you'll have seen it around you. In the last 18 months, they have gone up by 18%. They've leapt from 65,000 minicabs to 76,000 minicabs - and it's growing at the rate of about 1,000 a month. What we're proposing is that you need to have some legislation and I'll be looking to take that forward to restrict the number of minicabs that can come on the streets."*

There are still 25,000 black cabs in the capital, but the decline in new recruits means Uber drivers could soon outnumber the traditional taxi drivers, as has happened in New York. The 15 May 2015 *Evening Standard* wrote: *"Mayor plans to curb number of minicabs in London amid drop in new black taxi recruits."*

However, the Government has not shown much inclination to legislate for this. In a debate on London Black Cabs in September 2015, the Minister, Andrew Jones, said:

"... there is currently no legislation in London, or anywhere else in England and Wales to allow the number of private hire vehicles to be limited. Equally, officials are working closely with TfL on whether legislation needs to change—we need to consider that issue and develop the required evidence. The situation is changing rapidly due to the numbers but as things stand, there is no legislation in place." (*HC Deb 15 September 2015, c239WH*).

The PHV industry beyond Uber and taxis, particularly in London, obviously oppose a new competitor into the market and the question of whether Uber is crowding out traditional services will be a fraught one over the next couple of years. It may indeed be only the first of a new wave of remote operators using app technology. A cap would help to deal with issues of congestion and possible over-supply, but there is no obvious reason as to why Uber would suffer from this more than any other PHV company (other than the sheer volume of drivers it has on the roads) – a cap could not be seen to be directed specifically at a single company, it would apply to all. The traditional argument against caps has always been that the market tackles oversupply – if (usually self-employed) drivers cannot make money by driving, they will cease.

Where individual Uber drivers are seen to be behaving in an illegal, disreputable or otherwise unfavourable manner, both the company itself and the licensing authorities have an interest in ensuring they are disciplined and/or stripped of their licence. If one sees a PHV driver behaving in such a way, one should try to make a note of their badge number and report it to the local licensing authority...

** Since that statement, Andrew Jones has said that Her Majesty's Government have no intention of bringing legislation to cap private hire numbers...*

When *Call Sign* Editor Alan Fisher found a **Blackberry** cell phone on the rear seat of his taxi after dropping a passenger in Dalston, he handed it in to his local Upminster police station as 'property found in a cab' and was duly given a slip of paper to present to the **Lost Property Office** in London. It contained the usual bump that should the item not be claimed within the statutory full three months *after* the property was deposited at a police station, then it would be returned to that person (or an agent) if collected within 14 days.

Time went by and the slip of paper was presented to the Lost Property Office in Baker Street. But try as they might using details gleaned from the original police receipt, the item could not be found at the LPO. The helpful staff explained that vans go around to all the railway, bus and police stations every night collecting property that people have left behind while travelling around London.

All property is put into sealed bags before transit to the LPO and each seal is numbered for security purposes.

In the case of 'property found in a cab', when the driver hands in such property (always assuming you can actually find a police station that is open) he or she should provide where possible, such details of the journey as to allow the rightful owner of that property to legitimately re-claim their property by also providing similar details, always assuming they know where they lost it! Equally, you will be expected to provide personal details such as your name and Badge number etc.

So it is in the best interests of the taxi driver to note that the item being deposited is given an accurate description, any serial numbers are recorded and most importantly, the item(s) being handed in

Missing without trace...



Lost brollys at the LPO

are placed in a sealed bag *in your presence* before leaving the police station. You may also choose to discreetly note the shoulder number of the receiving police officer.

When the bags are unloaded at the LPO, the first thing they do is to record the serial number of each sealed bag even before it is opened and only then note the origin of the bag and its' contents. Only LPO staff are allowed to break the seals on the bags. These 'lost' items are entered onto the computer system with a description and stored in a highly secure location within the LPO with access limited to specially authorised staff only. We got the impression that visit-

ing MI5 at Vauxhall would not be much more difficult because when visiting Baker Street, you have to show your badge to the camera above the shutter door before they even let you into the building, and then security cameras follow your every move.

The LPO take personal detail security very seriously, which is why you are likely to receive a monetary award on a prescribed scale for items that are quite probably full of personal data such as laptops, cell phones, tablets etc rather than the item itself.

If you are unable to visit the LPO in person, ensure you clearly sign the original receipt authorising your nominated agent to claim the artefact on your behalf.

And the fate of Alan Fishers' lost property? In fact, it had been reclaimed from the police station by the passenger just hours after Mr Fisher had deposited it and was not included in the overnight bag collection. Hence, no trace at the LPO.

Alan commented to this reporter: "Whoever collected it from Upminster within such a short period after losing it in Dalston was luckier than me. I had to go to the police station four times before finding it open the following day!

"And how they knew it was in Upminster Police Station classifies as a modern day miracle!"

**Alan Green
Call Sign Online**

Driverless cars closer!

We've heard about **Google** testing driverless cars in the California desert, but now Seoul National University in South Korea is testing a type of "taxi" they claim can pick up and transport passengers without a human driver.

Seo Seung-Woo, director of the Intelligent Vehicle IT Research Centre says the university has been testing the driverless vehicle to transport disabled students around the campus.

The vehicle, called **Snuber**, has been navigating the 444,200 square foot campus for the past six months without any accidents. It works in conjunction with a hailing app created by the university and uses a turret on its roof with a scanner to search off road conditions. However, it is not considered safe enough to drive off-campus and is limited to 18mph.

There are no traffic lights but Snuber has been programmed to search for other challenges such as stop signs and pedestrian crossings. It applies a brake at those and can scan other lanes to detect vehicles travelling from the opposite direction if it needs to overtake. If there is nothing coming, the Snuber moves into the oncoming lane to pass the vehicle.

Meanwhile, South Korea's largest carmaker, Hyundai, said it doesn't expect to roll out fully automated cars until at least 2030.



The Snuber

Why are we not surprised!

We've heard the stories that many **Uber** drivers have such a poor understanding of Basic English that they are taking children out to "work" with them so that

they can translate what the passengers – and equally as important to them – what their satnavs are saying! In truth, that seemed a bit far-fetched, even for a bunch of people who are so bad that they have almost acquired a cult following! See *Editor on page 3...*



But thanks to Dial-a-Cab Account Manager, Jeni Albert, we have this Twitter screenshot showing exactly that – an Uber driver with a child in the front with him doing the translating!

Mailshot

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

I remember...

Dear Al

With regard to your article in the *December Call Sign* about the high price of our fares, I remember the first ride I ever did. It was back in 1962 when the "drop" was 1/9 (9p in today's money) and my customer grumbled about our high fares. So nothing has really changed because whatever the fares are, the customers will always grumble – probably even if the fares were nothing! Unfortunately we will never be able to please everyone. I keep hearing how cheap Uber are but my young cousin took an Uber car from W1 to Elstree, Herts and the fare, would you believe, was £160! He assured me that was the case, so are our fares high? Hmmmm...

Gerald Webber (E11)

Taxi drivers never moan Gerald; we just have strong opinions that happen to always be right ...Ed

Collateral

Dear Alan

Can I ask a question? Are the Board of Management allowed to use collateral from the building to cover any DaC losses accrued during this or any financial year? If I were to make a loss then I could re-mortgage my house to cover losses and it would be used as collateral. Could the BoM do the same with the building?

Stephen Field (F99)

Brian Rice replies: I believe I understand what you are saying Stephen; we would treat the situation slightly differently to what you are suggesting because fortunately for the Society, we do not have any debt to service or indeed any mortgage. I believe what you are asking is that because the Society's office building is accruing value, can that be offset against any losses? Well the simple answer is that we would have to get the building revalued to increase the fixed asset value of the Society and I am told that once this has been done, it is an exercise that is then required by HRMC on an annual basis - an expensive exercise that would only increase our fixed asset value on paper. If our situation were to change in the future, then of course the building would be valued to obtain the 'true' fixed asset value of the Society.

So in a nutshell Stephen, from when I purchased our building for £3.7million, during the intervening years the value has increased to approximately £9million (educated guess) but that increase would only be realised if the building were to be valued and that would then increase the fixed asset value of the

Society on paper, which would obviously be taken into account should there be a sale because the Society would be worth more than what the fixed assets showed in our figures.

So in your hypothetical case, if your house is worth £300k on paper and you lose £100k and you then borrow £100k, your asset value is £200k, because you have taken some of the equity from your property to offset the £100k borrowed. However, since you bought your house, the value had increased to £500k, but you have never had it valued, then your asset value is really £400k. But everything has to be valued to realise the true figure and you would have that done if your circumstances changed or you decided to move properties. I hope I have answered your question to your satisfaction Stephen and not just confused the situation!

I don't want fixed prices!

Hi Al

I write this letter to *Call Sign* in response to **Keith Cain's** reply to my last letter in the January issue about reducing journey costs for this Kipper season and maybe the future. This is not a personal attack on Keith or our BoM, although I assume that Keith's view reflects the BoM's view and policy on fare pricing. Reading Keith's reply, it would appear that he feels we must accept reduced fixed price fares to survive and hope for a change in Taxi trade fortunes! I'm sorry, but we have all been *Ubered* and our trade has changed forever. I believe reduced fixed price trips mean 20% below the expected meter fare, no run-in and no gratuity; does that mean 27% below meter fare once our subs of 7.5% have been deducted (many drivers have complained about these trips)? Yet Keith writes in his reply that a quote for a smaller account has two car companies offering 20% cheaper than us! These account companies will still pay a minimal booking fee, but if it's that minimal why charge it at all? We will never compete on price with minicabs. Fact! So why bother?

I think reduced FP trips – 'skinny' fares for want of a better word - will be detrimental to coverage. I don't think I would want to run from Chelsea to pick up in Putney to take a Skinny fare to the City in the morning rush hour when it's a little busy on the street... would you? So will these corporates all become Uber riders because no one can compete with their prices? Drivers are complaining about fixed price to LHR even at this time of year. There's nothing wrong with cheap fixed price to airports and beyond the M25, but SW postcode to the City? No! Fixed prices at busy traffic times won't be covered - to the detriment of DaC. Many drivers reject W4 to WC1 for £36 in the mornings, so why a booking fee on these trips? Surely we need a larger volume of work and more drivers to make DaC profitable, instead of booking fees on every trip?

How is it that Hailo, Gett and other taxi

app companies apparently continue to grow their business? I'm sure most DaC drivers have been asked by a passenger if they are on Hailo. Many will say no, yet these Hailo customers remain loyal to them even when, so I'm told, Hailo or other app suppliers don't even always supply a taxi! Is this because they are cheaper than a DaC account taxi? Their coverage must be improving all the time as private hire take our work from the streets. Some app taxi suppliers even tried supplying minicabs, yet most of their customers didn't want that. These taxi app companies all have ambitions to increase their corporate share. Many DaC customers tell me they love our taxis and our drivers but still use a car company for airport trips because they are cheaper. These customers are corporate and personal accounts, many complain about having to pay extra to have a taxi at their front door. DaC has many loyal Taxi preferring customers, but I see their loyalty being tested by other taxi suppliers. So why not pre-empt that and try no run-ins and no admin charges for longer journeys before our app rivals tempt our customers away? Coverage won't suffer if the driver gets the metered fare minus 7.5% subs for a longer trip. I believe one of our Mayfair accounts is using Gett for Heathrow and DaC for other trips. If you were going to Heathrow or out of town, would you want to pay £4.20 + waiting time + gratuity + admin and booking fees on top of the meter fare when others don't charge that? What about cash paying DaC riders; they pay a £2 booking fee and our credit card customers an extra 10% for the privilege of riding in a DaC taxi? Do we offer reduced/discounted fares to credit card and cash paying customers? What about Credit Card bookings from October with only 3% handling fees? We might as well start now and try to gain some market share rather than lose any regulars when they see it cheaper elsewhere.

I don't think booking fees and run-ins are sustainable in the long term; I wonder what the BoM's view is on this and if our policy on drivers with rental taxis and/or if we should seek yellow badge drivers in problem coverage areas such as South West London? If we can't be competitive with service and prices within our own trade, how are we going to retain existing customers and attract new customers?

I'd also be interested on the views of Society members? Meanwhile, fingers crossed for a roader...

Jon Robinson (E88)



Mailshot

I want fixed prices!

Hi Alan

In the last issue of *Call Sign*, Keith Cain commented on a letter from Jon Robinson (E88). What he ended up saying was that to get more business we need to offer fixed prices, no gratuities and no run-ins. That's good thinking. The annoying thing is that in the depths of the recession, a succession of drivers (me included) suggested the same thing. And each time a Board Member took his head out of the sand long enough to say that we can't offer lower prices because when things got busier customers would expect the same deal. Well yes, they will. Isn't that what they call market forces?

Now, at long last, it seems the BoM have realised that things must change. But I fear it's too little too late. I just heard a strange noise. It was a bolt sliding into place as a horse thunders away...

Geoff Levene (W32J)

I've been doing this job (editing) for a long time now – but nowhere near as long as I've been driving a cab. So yes, I know exactly what's being said and the two above letters probably cover most views between them. Jon doesn't want fixed prices because those in town trips won't get covered, whereas Geoff does want them and has been saying so for some time. Both have views that make sense to them and to many drivers out there, yet both disagree on how we should go about getting accounts to come back. Jon says that drivers don't want W4 to WC1 for £36 in the mornings. I assume Geoff disagrees if it means the customer uses us.

I haven't worked a day shift for over 20 years, so have no idea as to what the traffic is like and how much the fare would normally go. But if I was within 10 minutes or so of the pick-up and was offered it, I think I'd jump on it even if it wasn't quiet out there. How much would it go if it was the meter with no run-in, no gratuity and no admin charge? Well the customer would save £1.80 on the run-in and assuming they paid a gratuity, another 10% on the total. Would there be a huge difference between the two? Well without knowing what the fare goes on the meter, I can't work it out. But, and it's a big but, customers want fixed prices and probably couldn't give a stuffed hoot as to whether drivers like them or not. I'm old enough to remember when we held the whip hand and clients had no choice other than to pay what we asked. The shoe is now firmly on the other foot and we either give them what they want or they go elsewhere. Liking us is no longer an important factor.

Yet Jon is right when he writes of coverage involving fixed prices. Geoff and many other drivers used to write to *Call Sign* and say that we should try more

fixed prices, yet when I make an occasional trip upstairs to the Contact Centre or even speak to a Board Member, they give me examples of roaders where drivers have accepted a fixed price but then complain that it went much more on the meter. It's all very well looking to offload blame, but if even the drivers can't agree on the best way forward, then how can anyone reach the right decision.

Keith Cain has written about the above two letters inside this issue and other Board members will probably broach the subject in future editions. The problem is that no one can agree with both and I suspect that drivers are split fairly evenly with both too! ...Ed

Uber and insurance...

Hi Alan

It seems there is a big loophole involving Uber drivers – especially considering the way they drive (*January Call Sign – A day in the life of Uber*). That is the apparent cancelling of Hire and Reward insurance back to a normal policy to save money after they have registered with Uber. I wonder how widespread it is and whether LTPH have a way of checking?

On a similar topic, I also read an article by Matthew Norman in *The Independent* where he wrote how wonderfully cheap Uber was and how black cabs were finished etc. So I sent him an email. In it I wrote: *"I think you should move to New York where the Uber cabs are even cheaper than London. But just remember that those guys are struggling on less than the minimum wage - but I expect you shop in Primark and buy your pizzas in Dominos. Rubbish products - just like the garbage you pedal..."*

David Heath (Ex W27)

Hove, East Sussex

I'm afraid I don't have an answer re Hire and Reward insurance, David, and I would think it to be an impossibility to check every single driver. However, if the tout squad set up traps around town just for Uber, I suspect that the word would soon get around. Sadly there isn't a hope in hell of them doing that ...Ed

Where's the answer?

Dear Alan,

At the end of November I sent you a letter which you kindly published in the *January* issue of *Call Sign*. I raised three specific topics; radio signals, plans for Dial-a-Cab and issues relating to a possible merger. There was also a request for information about any practical suggestions from the two most recent Board Members. You said that as we were near an AGM, it would be better if I raised these questions then. This means most members will not be able to find out any of the answers till the March issue of *Call Sign*. I was wondering if any Board Member has had a gentle written or spoken word with you asking for questions to be put on the back burner?

As regards the radio signals and move to

GPS as reported in the last *Call Sign*, when I was at Roman Way today (6 January), I was told that the switchover was not in sight and the fitter had no idea why it was given such prominent publicity so early.

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Dear Laurence, no one has asked me to hold back on anything! They never do because *Call Sign* is uncensored except by me. Brian Rice, as Chairman, sees a copy just before it gets printed and other than possibly spotting a typo, very rarely comments on the actual contents. My problem was that lengthy responses from Joe and Garry would mean putting them in twice – last month and then next month in an AGM report - assuming they are asked. There was nothing sinister about it; I just try to make *Call Sign* as interesting as I can. Depending on the available stories out there it isn't always possible to fill every page with totally fascinating stuff! But putting the same stories in twice within three months would result in drivers asking why! But you will probably be pleased to know that regardless of whether Joe and Garry are asked the question at next month's meeting, they are both scheduled to write columns in the next issue anyway.

As for the GPS, I believe that the fitter is wrong. I've had the latest upgrade which allows me to switch to VAD and which I have done occasionally when showing other drivers how the GPS part works. But several others are actually testing the system with trips, so GPS *will* come fairly soon – albeit with just 100 drivers at a time going over in case of problems.

I personally believe that once up and running it will offer drivers work they might not have got before, because speaking with my driver's hat on, we'll all be in the right zones and probably be offered work in zones that we perhaps would not normally book into out of fear! Time will tell.

Re any merger, it seems unlikely to me because so far as I know (and I haven't signed any confidentiality contracts) RTG have yet to respond to DaC's proposals sent last year. These were in response to theirs, which were apparently unacceptable to us, so there was nothing to report - and unless something is being conducted in true MI5 fashion, then there still isn't. I suppose it's possible that they just aren't telling me in case I tell anyone else...as if! But of course, if I did tell anyone else I would also tell them not to tell anyone but if they did, they should tell them not to tell anyone! But you never know ...Ed



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