

January 2016



Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*A walking charity
wants to pedestrianise
Oxford St. Call Sign
asks its Campaign
Manager two
pertinent questions...*



*DaC's IT
Director tells
Call Sign:
GPS dispatch is
ready to go!*



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

Happy New year to all drivers and staff, let's hope this year is more prosperous. To help get those continental passengers as fares, here is the new Eurostar Timetable.

Eurostar timetable: Valid until 28th May 2016

From	Arrival	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Train #	Notes
Brussels	7:59	✓							9109	
Paris	8:02	✓							9005	
Paris	8:32	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9007	
Brussels	8:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9113	
Paris	9:00	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9009	
Paris	9:30						✓	✓	9011	
Brussels	9:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9117	
Paris	10:09	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9013	
Paris	10:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9015	
Paris	11:30		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9019	
Paris	11:30	✓							9019	1
Paris	11:30							✓	9019	5
Brussels	11:57					✓			9125	
Brussels	11:57	✓	✓	✓	✓				9125	6
Brussels	11:57						✓		9125	7
Paris	12:00					✓			9021	4
Paris	12:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9023	
Brussels	12:57							✓	9129	
Paris	13:30	✓				✓		✓	9027	
Paris	13:30				✓				9027	1
Paris	13:30		✓	✓					9027	3
Paris	14:00					✓			9029	2
Paris	14:00	✓			✓				9029	4
Brussels	14:05	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9133	
Paris	14:09							✓	9029	
Paris	14:30							✓	9031	2
Paris	14:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9031	
Paris	15:30						✓	✓	9035	
Paris	16:02					✓			9037	
Paris	16:02	✓			✓			✓	9037	4
Brussels	16:05							✓	9141	
Brussels	16:05	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9141	
Paris	16:30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9039	
Brussels	16:57							✓	9145	
Brussels	16:57					✓			9145	6
Brussels	16:57	✓	✓	✓	✓				9145	7
Paris	17:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9043	
Brussels	18:03							✓	9149	
Brussels	18:06	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		9149	
Paris	18:12							✓	9045	
Paris	18:32	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9047	
Brussels	19:03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9153	
Brussels	19:10							✓	9153	
Paris	19:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9051	
Brussels	19:57							✓	9157	
Brussels	19:57	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			9157	6
Paris	20:02					✓		✓	9053	
Paris	20:02		✓	✓	✓				9053	1
Paris	20:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9055	
Brussels	21:03	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9161	
Paris	21:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9059	
Paris	22:00							✓	9061	
Paris	22:39	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9063	

- Note 1 Runs until 3/1/16 & from 7/2/16
 Note 2 Runs from 7/2/16
 Note 3 Runs until 3/1/16 & from 27/3/16
 Note 4 Runs from 27/3/16
 Note 5 Runs until 3/1/16, from 13 to 21/2/16 & from 19/3/16
 Note 6 Runs until 31/12/15 & from 8/2/16
 Note 7 Runs from 29/3/16

from the editor's desk

Transport for London

I have a problem with TfL because I really want to like them; contrary to some opinions I hear regularly, there are some very nice, helpful people there. The problem is that like those opinions I mentioned, added to some horrendous stories passed over to me, I am starting to dislike our licensing authority as a whole with something of a vengeance.

Last month's **Chairman's Report** where **Brian Rice** went into print to voice his frustration at the lack of security drivers had by being told they had to renew their licences via credit cards and that cheques "could hold up the issuing of a new licence," it caused my phone to go into meltdown for almost a week with not just **Dial-a-Cab** drivers calling, but non-radio too! I should have given them the Chairman's number, but hey, I'm not totally stupid – albeit occasionally a bit silly!

So to save anyone else calling, yes, they will accept cheques made out to London Taxis Private Hire. Brian also mentioned, my medical form that went adrift somewhere in Sheffield, well that has finally turned up around one month after I was told it hadn't arrived and that I could lose my licence if I didn't send it!

Then there was the driver I wrote of a few issues back who was arrested by gun-toting cops at **Canary Wharf** for not having a licence, even though he showed them the receipt he had from the **Post Office** via their *Check and Send* service. He still hasn't received his new licence, has been told that he cannot drive a cab until he gets it, has now been off work since July and is living on his savings – those savings that he had intended keeping until his retirement! We hear of temporary licences – but not for him! To me this sounds like a 'punishment' for his admitted stupidity in not following up the non-receipt of his licence. Just having paid for it was obviously not enough for TfL.

So what is it now? Well a press release has announced a congestion crackdown by TfL. Ok, so most of the traffic congestion has actually been caused by TfL anyway, but it's never too late to make amends! So what is this crackdown?

Well they are introducing a new team of **Road and Transport Enforcement Officers** to watch key traffic routes across town to help crack down on *"illegal or inconsiderate behaviour and other problems that cause congestion."* What? Yep, they have 40 officers, which apparently will be increased to 80 by the spring.

Sounds ok, until you hear that these officers will *"...help deal with problems such as illegal stopping or unloading of deliveries, which can cause delays to drivers and bus passengers."* Don't know about you, but to me that sounds like another name for traffic wardens and more money for TfL coffers!

The team will apparently *"help to move unlawfully stopped vehicles, issue PCN's to illegally parked vehicles and clear unnecessary or poorly set-up roadworks!"* Yep, definitely traffic wardens!

What London needs is simple; traffic lights that give traffic the chance to move before turning red again, time for pedestrians only when they push a button requesting it and to get rid of those bike lanes that apparently even cyclists don't want.



As I said at the beginning, I want to like TfL but that seems to be almost impossible, at least until they get someone there who shows even a minimal amount of commonsense...

Understanding the public

I get a lot of tweets passed over to me and quite honestly, while I can see the possibilities for *Twitter* – especially when it comes to the night-time **Mayfair Mob** whose main priorities are to reclaim our ranks and work from the touts – there is no way while still in my editing job that I could ever go onto that service. Every now and then, an interesting one seems to crop up, but most are either silly, make you smile or contain a traffic report. But all take time to read.

Anyway, this isn't an anti-Twitter piece but just about one Tweet that seemed to be spot-on.

It may be that I don't have all the information on **UberPool** and how they got it past TfL. However, while I'm not exactly sure why **Maaxi Taxi** never got off the ground, I do know that they had a lot of hassle from TfL. In the end, the taxi sharing app seems to have got fed up and left the arena. Then along comes **UberPool** and marches into that same arena, announces that it has set up a ride sharing scheme and apparently *that* one is ok with TfL. Of course it could be that we're all wrong, but we appear to be not important enough for TfL to explain anything they do.

So to the Tweet I spoke of earlier. In 45 years of being a licensed Taxi driver (before I became a black cab driver!) I can only ever remember hearing of one female passenger saying that she didn't want her taxi driver to know where she lived. She later made a complaint to this circuit because of sexist comments the driver had made on the way home. The complaint was upheld and the driver expelled. I think we can safely say that whether they use us or not, women trust taxi drivers to get them home safely, even though that involves knowing where they live.

So to the Tweet! It came from Sharon Grant who tweeted: #UberPool – an easy way for weirdos to find out where you live. No thanks.

I don't know who Sharon Grant is, but I thank her – not for supporting London Taxis, but for bringing commonsense into our arena and for showing TfL what the genie that have let out of the bottle is thought of.

This may well be 'bash TfL' month but in my view their actions make them deserved of every word...

A question...

Inside this issue is a **Ron Yarborough** article about **Lambeth Council** cancelling the **Loughborough Junction** traffic experiment after it became obvious that traffic congestion caused by the scheme was bringing the area to a complete standstill, never mind what it was doing to the atmosphere in the form of added emissions.

Also in this issue are some letters sent to **Call Sign's Mailshot** regarding the **Camden Council** one-way traffic scheme at **Tavistock Place** that regularly chokes up the **Russell Square** area. So we have a question to ask our readers.

But before the question; Camden aren't stopping at **Tavistock Place** because they also intend banning all traffic except buses (and bikes naturally) from **Tottenham Court Road** between the hours of 7am and 8pm, while at the same time making **Gower Street** two-way. Of course, the **Gower Street** scheme will make little difference as the traffic hardly moves anyway!

Camden is then also looking at making **Camden High Street** just one single lane northbound. At the same time as all those crazy schemes, **Transport for London** are issuing around 2500 private hire licences to drivers who haven't a clue where they are going unless their satnavs work. And that is *every* single month! Whatever road space left is virtually unusable.

So to the question aimed specifically at both TfL and Camden: Is it true what they say and that there are more out than in??? To our readers: Yes, we know that you know, but do you know if they know that you know. I don't know! What I do know is that both TfL and Camden should feel ashamed at the way they are destroying a once great city. But do they even know???

Wrong!

Last month's **Call Sign** contained an article claiming that the former parcel service, **CityLink** that announced it had gone bust on Xmas Eve 2014 was behind a new coach service from **St Pancras** to **Stansted**. This **CityLink** is actually owned by **ComfortDelgro** who also own **ComCab**. It has nothing to do with the parcel business that went bust. Sorry for misleading anyone, but they *were* still touting for business...

Happy New Year

It probably isn't December 31st yet, but can I still wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year.

2015 was a rather strange year because at one point it really looked as though things were picking up – then Paris happened and you could see a sudden quietness descend over London.

In Paris, despite the rhetoric about standing up to terrorism, unsurprisingly there was still an 80% reduction in theatre bookings and I suspect that whilst not as much, London has also seen a reduction with many patrons not being prepared to sit in an enclosed space.

There is little doubt that the world has changed and I'm not sure that it will ever return to a period of peace. But hey ho, we're British and we carry on regardless! So yes, let's hope for that Happy New Year that we are always going on about...

Alan Fisher
callsignmag@aol.com

Reflections of the Chairman

When the Editor asked me for a Chairman's Report, I assumed his memory was slipping even further than usual as I confidently told him that he'd already had my piece for December. But no! He was already touting for a January issue that he claimed had to be done early due to printer's early closing for the holiday period and that as no trade papers came out during the time between Christmas and the New Year, drivers would appreciate something to read – especially those of you who are, or have been, working during the holiday period. So I now have to give you some news, when in reality there is very little because I've only just finished December! But here goes anyway, because you wouldn't like Mr Fisher when he gets upset!

Cycle Superhighways and traffic

Despite warnings from all corners, **Mayor Johnson** has pushed ahead with his cycling superhighways regardless of any consequences, and there have been huge numbers of complaints involving the taxi business and motorists in general, most of which have traffic hold-ups at their base.

I don't need anyone to tell me what the numerous roadworks have done, because complaints from passengers have added to our members concerns. Journeys from the City to the West End and back are taking up to double the usual times and along with that comes the increase in the meter fare.

We can't expect our members to work for nothing, but that doesn't pacify passengers who ask why the fare is so much higher than usual.

But if we thought that was bad, we also had a week of the **Victoria Embankment** closing from 8pm each evening so that work on the superhighway lanes could continue without disturbance from the "nuisance" that is ordinary cars and taxis!

Reports flooded into the **Dial-a-Cab** Contact Centre asking dispatchers to inform members that with the main Embankment thoroughfare shut, that they should also avoid Fleet Street on the north side of the river, along with Stamford Street, Southwark Street and The Cut on the south side. Holborn Viaduct? Don't bother because that was also solid both ways. Ok then, how about heading even further south to the Elephant & Castle? You are surely jesting!



Assuming you could even find your way through the traffic on that latest Tfl mess, you would have a job just working out where you actually were!

One member told us of picking up a cash trip from the **Chelsea and Westminster Hospital** in **Fulham Road** at 9pm going to **Waterloo** and then on to **Hooper Street** by **Leman Street**. Unsurprisingly, his passenger was rather shocked at the £54 cost – as indeed was the member who had quoted around £30! Fortunately his passenger didn't blame him but had a quick curse at Boris!

The Mayor's compulsion with his cycling superhighways is killing London and even when the roadworks are gone, the road widths will still have been hugely reduced and one day, if London isn't to die as one of the biggest financial capitals of the world, someone will have to pull them down and throw the receipts into the rubbish bin because there isn't room for both.

If we are to become another **Amsterdam**, then we'll have to just extend the **Thames** and put in lots of flowers, because there will be very few financial institutions left. And whose fault will that be? Well it won't be yours or mine or that of many more members

of the public and the press and even cyclists themselves. It will be the fault of just two people – **Mayor Boris Johnson** and his **Cycling Commissioner Andrew Gilligan**; the man who told *Call Sign* in the April 2015 issue that regardless of how much cost and effort was to go into them, cyclists would not have to even use them if they didn't want to!

You sometimes have to pinch yourself to make sure you are awake and not having a really stupid dream!

Licence saga!

If you remember, I explained last month how I was endeavouring to renew my 'Bill' which expires on 19th February 2016 and how I refused to insert my debit card details as I did not consider it safe to include them on the application form.

I was eventually reluctantly informed that I could make a cheque payable to **London Taxi and Private Hire** but it would mean the processing of my application would be delayed. After my visit to the Post Office where I produced my passport, driving licence and a utility bill and my subsequent conversation regarding the cheque, I received my new 'Bill' exactly two weeks to the day after my initial visit to the Post Office! Not too bad I thought, especially as they had tried to frighten me at Sheffield by saying that my Bill would be delayed by not inserting my debit/credit card details. It just goes to show!

Happy New Year

I'd like to wish everyone associated with Dial-a-Cab a very Happy New Year. Hopefully business will pick up with all the effort your Sales team are putting in, but just as importantly, I wish you all a very healthy New Year as well...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab

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A charity for everyday walking - Living Streets - has 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 - especially at Christmas.

Sarah Williams, Living Streets' London Campaigns Manager told *Call Sign*: "The situation is about to reach breaking point on Oxford Street. As it is, it's horrendously overcrowded but 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. For many, the experience of crowds and crowds of people on Oxford Street puts them off going altogether, especially at Christmas. Oxford Street is a very uncomfortable place for pedestrians, leaving them feeling restricted and people say the change they'd most like to see there is less traffic. Those who do take a trip along it end up feeling flustered, frustrated and fed up. What is this going to mean for future Christmas shopping on Oxford Street if nothing changes?"

Living Streets have sent out a fact sheet that says Oxford Street is at the heart of London and should be an iconic place for tourists and residents to enjoy, but claim that current TfL projections are that without a radically different approach to our transport system, there will be increases in congestion of 60% in Central London and 25% in Inner London by 2031.

So will London be a mega city choked by traffic, with polluted, hazardous town centres and streets?

Living Streets say that it could become a world-leading city with the freedom to walk, breathe fresh air and experience our iconic

Hands up if you thought things couldn't get any worse!

CALL FOR OXFORD STREET TO BE PEDESTRIANISED!



Traffic free, but where will it all go to?

streets, public spaces, and fantastic, thriving town centres.

They add that walking offers a simple solution for the future and that by rethinking our attitude towards transport and prioritising and investing in walking, London can be a world-class city to live, visit and do business in.

Call Sign had two questions to ask Sarah Williams.

1. How will disabled people get to Oxford Street if the only access is by walking? Not all the stores have side street entrances. Or what if they just want to see the Christmas lights but can't walk and rely on buses or taxis?

Sarah Williams replied: "Right now, Oxford Street is dangerous and polluted and a risky place for people walking along it. There are 38 side streets where people would be able to access taxis if no vehicles were to be allowed

along Oxford Street itself. These are not spread far apart. Most importantly, as London grows and changes we need to look for creative and innovative solutions to the issues of safety, overcrowding and pollution along Oxford Street."

2. The main alternatives to Oxford Street are Wigmore Street, Cavendish Square and through to Goodge Street. This route is often very congested, so where will the traffic that is banned from Oxford Street go without pushing emissions through the roof and causing shop owners along that stretch of road to suffer because no one will be able to stop along there.

Sarah Williams replied: "We want to discuss this and work with others to ensure that we create the best solution for everyone - while putting people and walking first. What we need are creative and innovative solutions to the ever increasing issues on Oxford Street. We don't have all of the answers but want to work with retailers, TfL, engineers and planners on making Oxford Street a place which puts walking first."

It's seems fairly safe to say that Ms Williams, on behalf of Living Streets, didn't have the answers to our questions. It's probably just as safe to say that the organisation has come up with an idea, but given very little thought to its effect on London's traffic or the disabled...

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

Uber: "Fixed fares unfair!"

Competition watchdog, the **Competition and Markets Authority**, have taken the side of **Uber** in claiming that nine of the 25 proposals put forward by TfL to regulate the private hire trade would be bad for passengers, while not serving the public interest.

The Transport for London consultation, which closed on 23 December, put forward a number of requirements for London PH vehicles - among them being suggestions such as operators needing to provide a booking confirmation to passengers at least five minutes before the journey commences, to offer a 7-day pre-booking facility, for TfL to no longer issue licenses for temporary events, that operators must have a fixed landline that is always available to the public and for operators to give a fare before the booking is accepted. There were also requirements for drivers to have a minimum English speaking ability, that they could drive for just one operator at a time and should undergo a topographical test.

The response to the consultation from the CMA - which in theory carries no more or less weight than any other one - took issue with nine of the 25 proposals claiming that they would "impose regulations that excessively and unnecessarily weakens competition, to the overall detriment of users of taxi and private hire services in London."

In a dig at the licensed taxi trade, CMA Chief Exec of the CMA, **Alex Chisholm**, wrote in the FT that he was concerned proposals such as fixing fares in advance and a five-minute wait for a minicab would artificially restrict competition and curb developments that would otherwise benefit passengers. He wrote: "Defenders of the *status quo* can often be more vocal and organised than the advocates of change who could struggle to make their voices heard."

Money-rich Uber has had around 200,000 people signing a petition calling on TfL to drop the proposals, with Uber's UK General Manager, **Jo Bartram**, rather unsurprisingly claiming that many of the proposals would take away consumer choice and be bad for competition.

TfL say that the consultation is just floating ideas and that there are no definitive plans as of yet, but many outside of the licensing authority are concerned at the number of PH vehicles there are in London, with the number rising by up to 2500 each month! Most of them with Uber with TfL saying they are unable to do anything about that.

With current Uber valuations giving the company a worth of anything up to \$50billion, the CMA intervention is unlikely to be only one we see between now and any final decision.

The CMA works to promote competition for the benefit of consumers, both within and outside the UK. They say their aim is to make markets work well for consumers, businesses and the economy...

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

VACANCY FOR AN ARBITRATOR

There is a vacancy for one DaC subscriber to become an Arbitrator. Should you wish to put your name forward and you meet the minimum criteria of five consecutive year's 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 26 January 2016.

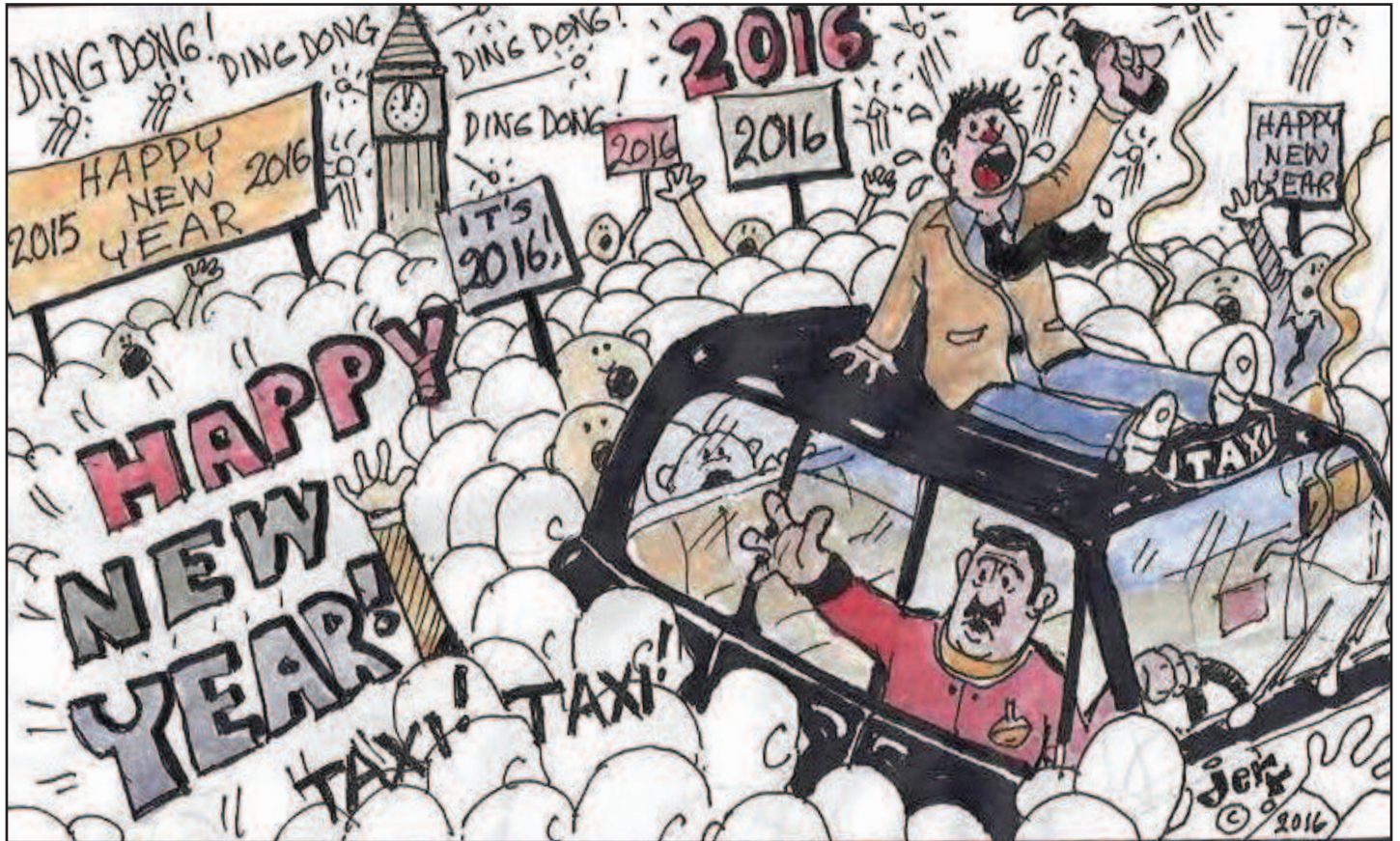
Should more than one person apply, a postal ballot would then be conducted at a later date and the candidate with the highest number of votes will then be duly appointed.

Candidates wishing to send their CV for publication in the 1 February issue of *Call Sign* should send it to the Editor, either by post or email, by Friday 15 January 2016 keeping to a maximum of around 200 words and preferably attaching a photo as well.

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

Howard Pears
Company Secretary

Jery's World



"Can you (hic) please put the (hic) heating on driver, your taxi is really (hic) cold!"

Minicab app guilty of no PH licence

Splyt Technologies fined and ordered to pay costs



TfL has taken enforcement activity against an app-based minicab company that was operating illegally without a private hire licence. In its role as a responsible regulator of the capital's taxi and private hire trades, TfL has successfully prosecuted **Splyt Technologies Ltd** for breaching the requirement for a London private hire operator's licence. Splyt, which offered private hire journeys through an app, launched their service in April this year without an operator's licence. TfL believed this to be in breach of legislation and Splyt ceased their operation following correspondence. At **Westminster Magistrates Court**, Splyt pleaded guilty to the charge, were fined £1,750 and ordered to pay TfL's costs of over £5000 in full.

The District Judge remarked that it had been a complex case and that there had been extensive correspondence between TfL and Splyt to try to resolve the matter.

Garrett Emmerson, TfL's Chief Operating Officer for Surface Transport, said: "This is a very positive result and one that shows our commitment to tackling illegality in the private hire trade in order to protect the rights of the legitimate private hire and taxi trades in London. We will continue to bear down on illegal activity of this kind and as this result shows, we will take action through the courts if necessary."

Another aspect of the work being undertaken with private hire is the current consultation into the regulations governing the trade. The wide-ranging proposals seek to bring up-to-date the regulations governing London's private hire sector to ensure they take into account recent developments in technology and are fit for the future.

TfL wants to hear the views of passengers, members of both trades and all other interested parties on the proposals, so that the regulations can be shaped in a way that benefits both drivers and passengers.

The number of private hire drivers in the capital has risen rapidly in recent years – there are now 92,049* licenced private hire drivers, up from 76,249 in March 2015.

This rapid growth has given rise to a number of wider issues, including rising traffic congestion, illegal parking and impacts on air quality. This is why the Mayor is calling for the Government to bring forward primary legislation to give TfL the power to cap minicab numbers.

*Transport for London
Press Dept*

**That figure was correct at the time of the press release. It is now around 94,000 ...Ed*

Saturday 21st November was an unusually quite night for the time of the year, no doubt due to the grotesque events of the previous weekend in **Paris**. Ten days earlier, I had replied to an advert in **TAXI** newspaper; the **LTDA** were looking for members to 'Join the Fight' by marshalling on their behalf. I was recruited and briefed on my marshalling debut by no less than **Bob Oddy** himself.

As instructed, I turned up at Winter Wonderland's newly appointed taxi rank on Park Lane (opposite Brook Gate) 15 minutes early, met fellow marshal and LTDA Advan day driver, Mark Curry. We'd never met before, but over the next four hours, we bonded nicely. I'd already decided that although we were at Wonderland, so far as Uber picking up, it might as well have been named Neverland!

From the moment our shift started at 7pm, there was a constant demand for London's finest. In fact, quite early on I needed to 'tweet' for reinforcements and the cavalry duly arrived. I was heartened by the success of our mission, because it also proved that the assertion of **Mayfair Mob** founder, **Mick Smith**, was correct in that if cabs show a presence, the public would do the rest (*Ed's note: See November Call Sign, page 17*), that I whipped out a pair of sticks and indulged in some impromptu drumming on a pal's cab - much to the disdain of both driver and senior marshal! **Mark Curry**, with 20 marshalling years behind him, reckoned we'd loaded close to 300 cabs in just over three hours!

In all that time, just three young PH-loving, stereotypical couples enquired where they met their **Uber** car? My response should have

MARC IN WONDERLAND!



Marc and Mark marshalling at Winter Wonderland

cannot tell a lie - the Editor told me to say that! In fact, had I been a few years younger, I might've run a lap of honour around **Hyde Park**!

To all the 'doomers and gloomers' out there, marshalling enlightened me to the fact that despite rumours of our imminent demise, Joe Public still appreciates and desires our services in preference to any inferior imitations. There may presently be

a lull in the game, but it's far from dead.

In conclusion, my thanks to Mark Curry for showing me the ropes and to all those drivers that supplied the rank, not forgetting the LTDA for the opportunity.

Winter Wonderland is open until Sunday 3rd January. Times are 10am to 10pm. The 7 cab rank operates from 10:30am and is situated opposite Brook Gate in Park Lane.

Wishing all drivers and their families in our great trade, a happy and healthy New Year...

**Marc Turner
Call Sign Online**

been "in hell," but as a polite driver who has been taught manners from being on **Dial-a-Cab**, I replied sensibly: "Anywhere but here, this is a designated World Heritage Uber-free site!" You won't believe this, but they didn't laugh! Only one Uber driver had the temerity to hang it up by the point of our Taxi kingdom. He was shown no leniency by Mark and ushered away - minus his victims!

It was the coldest night of the year by far, yet by the shift's end we marshals were glowing as not one single minicab pick-up had occurred on our watch! I felt the elation of a goalkeeper who'd kept a clean sheet, especially if he played for QPR (sorry **Mr Rice**! I

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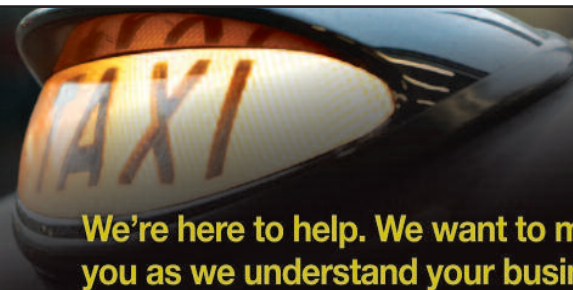
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"I've been driving a taxi for over fifteen years now, nine of which have been on **Dial-a-Cab**," **Roger Leithboro (K22)** told *Call Sign* "and it's funny how even over a lengthy period of time, certain trips stay in your memory..." As the words left his mouth, a smile spread across his face.

"I had only had my Green Badge a week or so and remember well a hiring by three American travellers who stopped me in **Oxford Street** and directed me to **Notting Hill Gate**, where they would drop one passenger off and then go on to what sounded like **Wheatbridge** in **Buckinghamshire**.

I searched my mind for the final destination as I hadn't come across it in the *Suburbs* section of my *Knowledge* runs; so I questioned where the place was and they said it was close to **Marlow** and by the river. They said that if I could get them there, they'd be able to direct me as they had been there before – albeit some years earlier. So off we went in pursuit of our destination, with me still breaking my head wondering exactly where this place could be."

Roger told us that when they finally reached Marlow, his passengers had lost their previous navigational confidence and were now not so sure!

"So I stopped to ask a pedestrian if he knew Wheatbridge, but all I got was a blank look that I interpreted as a no! Further down the road I got off the cab to ask at the counter of a fish and chip shop, but they were not

Lost in Translation!



Looking for Wheatbridge!

much help either. So we drove to the river in search of the venue and suddenly there were

yelps of joy from the back of the taxi as the passengers recognised it. With excited vocal directions and lots of arm waving, we slowly approached **The Fisheries Hotel** via a small suspension bridge spanning the river.

It was there that I noticed a large sign advising that it was a weak bridge!

Fifteen years on and recounting the tale still brought a chuckle to Roger's voice as well as to *Call Sign's* reporter, who also saw the funny side!

"I learned a lot from that trip," Roger said, "mainly not to go rushing off into the countryside without being certain as to where you'll end up, but such is the luck and enthusiasm of a 'Butter Boy!'"

Then off he went looking for anyone who wanted to go to Wheatbridge. Roger knew where it was...!

Alan Green
Call Sign Online



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

moped to mop up a few points in Bethnal Green. It was a lovely sunny day as I weaved along the backstreets without a care in the world; I think I was whistling a song as I rounded a bend near **Barnet Grove**.

It was then that our eyes met... the biggest Rottweiler I had ever seen had just noticed me, it must have been eight stone and looked affronted that I had dared to try to approach it on my moped.

Although my lips were in whistle mode, the tune had dried up and I let out an expletive beginning with S. The dog that had been sitting on a doorstep lifted its head and fixed me with his gaze. I slowed down and tried to act cool just as it stood up and gave me that 'I'm going to eat you alive' look!

I tried a smooth 'U turn' but the front wheel wobbled, I tried to correct it and just about stayed up. I looked over my shoulder as the dog began trotting towards me, I accelerated and gave the little moped full throttle, but nothing happened; it just chugged along at about walking pace. He was gaining on me. I didn't feel ready to die in a Bethnal Green back street; I hadn't even finished the Knowledge yet! The bike was in third gear and I had a dilemma, should I take time to change gear or should I hope the bike suddenly takes off?

I could almost smell it's nasty, slobbery, dog food breath as it closed the gap, my mind raced. I thought about calling for help, but this was Bethnal Green in the eighties, a crowd would have gathered and they would have placed bets on how quickly the hulking brute could devour me!

Just as I gave up all hope and was about to scream, my little moped leapt into life and took off. I was so relieved I could have hugged a cyclist, I looked back and tried to give the dog a little grin, but my lips were too dry to move them. I had been seen off by a dog...

To be continued...

Simon Scott (O40)
Call Sign Online

After I had reached the **21 days** stage, I decided to take a 'wangle' cab from a local garage in **Bethnal Green**. I popped in to see the owner and even though he put his arm over my shoulder and told me he would "look after me," I suspected he was picking my pocket with the other hand!

My initial thoughts proved to be correct; he was no benevolent uncle! My new wangle cab was ancient, I'm sure it only missed out on the Dalek-like roof indicators by a couple of weeks. The doors didn't shut properly and one morning the nearside door opened as I made my way up **Queensbridge Road**! I only realised because the temperature suddenly dropped. I also had to keep looking over my shoulder because the nearside mirror kept spinning around. I got out and grumpily slammed it shut so hard that it refused to open again!

I decided to park the cab up and use the



From Garry White

Terminal upgrade

On the week beginning 14 December, I began testing the latest software available for the Dial-a-Cab terminal from our IT department, which, all being well, will be rolled out to the fleet in the New Year.

Gett

I've noticed over the past few months that Gett have started branding themselves on taxis and are operating more like a radio circuit, albeit via an app. I know in the New Year it always starts off quiet, but please don't be tempted to join/work with Gett as it is against Society rules to work with another taxi supplier and I'm sure that Allan Evans will be checking...

Transport for London

Where do I start! Well, TfL have certainly decided that the night time economy isn't a

priority by the way they have bottled up London with the **Victoria Embankment** closures over the festive period, the ongoing changes in **Aldgate** and the road works at **Old Street!** Need I go on!

The Mayor seems not to care as he looks at pastures new, setting his sights on Dave's job and is positioning himself to fight it out with **Mr Osborne** and **Mrs May** in 4 years' time. That leaves TfL to do whatever they like!

Has anybody heard **Mr Brown**, the new head at TfL, speak about how congestion is killing the capital, how Uber are allowed to operate unchallenged and now want to introduce UberPool; as I've said before, **Totally failing London** is a slogan that really fits...

Sales

With Uber looking to add another nail in our coffin by introducing **Uber for Business** and with Gett trying to operate as a fourth radio circuit, we really need to up our game, fight with lower starting costs to win new business and help retain what we have, so a good Sales team has never been more important in fighting for our share in the corporate market.

Credit Cards

As many of you will be aware, from next October all taxis in London will have to accept credit card payments. We still wait to see the *Conditions of Fitness* to know how this is going to affect us; I for one welcomed this news.

The reason I feel that way is because I believe a big part of the rise in the private hire trade via apps are card payments. Young people, businessmen and women like card payments as the cashless society is only going to increase and we need to join the 21st century. **Cash Only** signs in taxis really doesn't add to that image.

MPs

On a more positive note, myself and a fellow non-DaC taxi driver, **Andrew Hampshire**, recently visited our MP (**Jackie Doyle-Price**) at **Portcullis House**, Westminster. We had an interesting meeting where we put forward points about how we feel the government and various ministers are not putting us - as small businessmen and women who all pay tax in the UK - into the equation when backing disruptive technology in London.

After 90 minutes of speaking with her, she firmly believes the problems are all at the door of Boris and Transport for London.

Festive period

I do hope you all enjoyed the small Christmas break and those that worked got lucky. I wish you all a Happy New Year for 2016.

Garry White
DaC Board Member

Give the cab a slap!

When **Mike Kennedy (M30)** couldn't re-start his cab after stopping for a short while to run an errand for his wife (yes, he's well trained), he was rather perplexed as it had started without hesitation earlier in the day, the engine was still warm and he'd only been away from the cab for a few minutes.

"My TX4 was completely dead," Mike told *Call Sign*, "so I had no choice but to summon the AA breakdown service and thankfully the patrolman arrived fairly promptly.

"He tested the battery and found that to be in good condition and fully charged, so he scratched his head a little before reaching into his van for an electronic diagnostic gizmo thing and plugged it into the cab via a scart socket under the steering column. There was a selection of car makes and models to choose from and under **LTI Taxi** we saw **Hints & Tips for Starting** displayed on the LCD screen. I peered over his shoulder in a rather inquisitive manner and read everything I could and to my utter amazement, it read; Slap the steering column! He did it, turned the key again and amazingly as he did so, my cab sprang into life!"

Mike's astonishment was still obvious as he recalled the incident.

"Who would have thought there would be such an item listed in the AA patrolman's box of tricks," he said smiling, "but I'd never have known if I hadn't looked over his shoulder and I'll bet it's pretty confidential info too!"

Call us cynical, but as delighted as we were that Mike got his cab going, we found it hard to believe that a non-starting cab could be cured by slapping the steering wheel! So to try and find the reason why the AA have this advice - one that seems to work - on their diagnostic gizmo, *Call Sign* spoke to **Michael** at **M.A.M Auto Electricians** close by our own **Roman Way** depot for the answer.

"Ah yes," he told us, "a very familiar and common occurrence on TX's due to the transponder on the steering column failing to communicate electronically with the chip in the ignition key. That's the little oblong plastic insert in the top of the key; it 'talks' to the transponder and sometimes there is a lack of communication between the two that causes the non-start. Call it 'lost in translation,'" Michael explained.

"Slapping the steering shroud or shaking the steering wheel usually activates the starting process, but if it happens frequently then the only solution is to replace the transponder and re-programme the system to ensure secure communication with the ignition key, and that requires special software from



Mike Kennedy: AA patrolman restarted his cab by slapping the steering wheel!

an LTC Dealership," Michael advised. "Otherwise you will end up with a very sore hand and perhaps even be nicked for cruelty to a taxi!"

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Alan Green
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CAUGHT ON CAMERA

"It was quite late at night, probably around 11pm," **Karen Menpes (E01)** explained to **Call Sign**. "My passenger directed me into one of the many narrow streets in Fulham with cars parked on both sides of the road. As I came to a stop, I noticed a car come whizzing around the corner from the opposite direction so that it was facing me before coming to an abrupt stop at the corner of the junction further up the road. I could vaguely make out two occupants in the vehicle and assumed, innocently that the car had stopped to let me pass once I had set my passenger down."

But they weren't quite that innocent because as soon as Karen had been paid off and the passenger walked away from her cab, meaning there were no witnesses, the opposing car came briskly down the road and stopped just inches from the front of the **Dial-a-Cab** driver's taxi.

Karen continued her story. "It was as if they were confronting me over who had the right of way and I got the impression that they were telling me to back away as this was their space, but it would have been dangerous for me to have done so because of the lack of room to manoeuvre and I wasn't about to reverse along the lengthy stretch of road from where I had just come."

Karen's thought process then wondered if perhaps the car contained a private hire driver trying to be awkward, or even a less than savoury person with other intentions bearing in mind that the taxi contained a lone female, late at night with cash and other personal effects about her person.

Karen wasn't about to take any chances and immediately phoned the police before deciding that she would get off the cab to remonstrate with the driver as to what he thought he was doing.

"I decided that I would confront the driver as politely as I could as to what he was doing. Before I actually got out, I checked that my '**Novus**' **CabCam** was functioning and the audio facility was active, so that everything we did and said would be caught on camera, just in case the other driver decided to put in a complaint against me. Stranger things have happened to cab drivers and you have to be so careful nowadays.

"As I approached the car, I noticed that the passenger was in fact another female and when I quietly expressed my concerns, as well as informing the male driver that I had already called the police, together with the fact that all was being seen and recorded by my taxi

CabCam, the driver, with more than a little persuasion from his passenger, reluctantly reversed back up the road and I slowly and graciously pulled away contentedly, smiling proudly towards my little electronic friend that had recorded the entire scenario and almost certainly defused the possibility of an otherwise nasty situation!"

"Call Sign Magazine MMXVI"



Karen recorded the whole incident

Thanks... but no thanks, Boris!

We're not sure where this picture originated, but it was taken on the first day of a cycle superhighway – apparently Vauxhall – and is said to show **Mayor Boris Johnson** just what a fellow cyclist thinks of his superhighway. Apparently the cyclist's views are also shared by many other two-wheelers. We're saying nothing!



This cyclist must be telling the Mayor that he is number one!

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The Chairman's Report from Brian Rice in the December issue of Call Sign seemed to have set a number of alarm bells ringing for Dial-a-Cab drivers who then called this magazine, worried about their licence renewal after not hearing from TfL.

Firstly Brian had written that TfL were unhappy with his decision that he wanted to pay by cheque rather than a credit or debit card. Brian wrote that in both instances TfL required you to submit your details in a written format, including the card's sixteen digit number, the three security verification numbers from the back as well as the "to and from" dates. Brian added that you were then expected to send it all by post to Sheffield together with your name, address and date of birth, not to mention a scanned copy of your DVLA licence! The Chairman said that the process went against the **Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard** advice. After what Brian referred to as a "frightener" – ie TfL said that sending a cheque could cause a delay - they finally agreed.

Unsurprisingly with so many drivers being concerned at delays to their licence and the Chairman also revealing that Editor Alan Fisher's completed medical form – also sent to Sheffield – had been lost somewhere in the TfL system and at the time of writing still had not been found, drivers were becoming increasingly concerned.

In the *April 2015* issue of *Call Sign*, reporter Ron Yarborough discovered that in 2011 TfL had lost a batch of driver's CRB disclosures and that around four years later, it happened again when TfL admitted that a batch of **Criminal Record Bureau** forms sent from **Palestra House** in Blackfriars to the CRB HQ in Liverpool had been lost.

In 2011 it was DaC driver **Marc Turner (R97)** who alerted *Call Sign* after TfL had admitted to him that his application for a new Bill had been lost. *Call Sign* then discovered that it wasn't just Marc's CRB, but a whole batch that had gone missing. Marc told us at the time that the CRB check contained personal information that you wouldn't want to get out. TfL blamed the postal service.

In the 2015 loss, three DaC drivers all told us the same story - TfL had contacted them to say that a batch of completed medical forms had gone missing and they were asked to send a photocopy.

One **Dial-a-Cab** driver told us: *"Fortunately I kept a copy, but I was very concerned that they could lose such an important document. After all, on the first page it actually says that the information included in the form may be passed to law enforcement agencies if criminal activity is suspected or where they are otherwise required to do so by law! You don't need to be brain of Britain to realise that is an important document. Besides anything else, call me old fashioned but I don't want strangers knowing my health details including my name, where I live and my GP's address. That information could feasibly be used against me - not to mention fraudulently.*

TfL, lost licences and a survey!



Palestra: Why is so much being lost?

I was also extremely upset to be asked via a TfL phone call to send them a photocopy. Surely informing me that they had lost such an important document and requesting a photocopy should have come in a recorded letter?"

All three drivers eventually received letters confirming that their licence renewals had gone through.

Forward to December 2015 and we were contacted by the distressed wife of a DaC driver who'd had problems regarding his medical form, which then seemed to go missing altogether and which at the time of writing still hadn't turned up. But the driver's wife – however much annoyed she was at that – was even more upset at receiving a phone call said to have come from TfL although it was probably an agency on the licensing authorities behalf, asking if they would do a survey; wanting to know how many hours the husband did etc. They also said that if the survey was completed, they would be "rewarded" with a £50 voucher!

"What a waste of time," the DaC driver told us, "they should take £50 off the cost of the licence instead of making phone calls asking for all this personal information

when they have been shown to have such lax security. They should pull their fingers out and sort out taxi drivers' licence renewal and medicals instead of them having to wait months for it."

Michael Toomey
Call Sign Online

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Gary and "the finger!"



I'm surprised that we are still waiting for the first cab driver to sue TfL for getting cancer due to passive smoking, since for many years all the cab trade were allowed to do was to have a 'thank you for not smoking' sign on the taxi partition and if passengers wanted to smoke, then we couldn't stop them. So I think that it's only a matter of time that

someone is going to sue due to the fact that a relative died in the back of an ambulance after being stuck in a single line of traffic along **Victoria Embankment**. Spin a coin, passive smoking or 999.

So as we wait for that, let's contemplate any Christmas gifts you may have got. Top of any list must be the latest present for men. I can almost see the ad now: "Girls and boys, give your man the finger for Christmas!"

But stop! Let me explain myself before you get carried away in shock and horror and complain to *Call Sign*. It's time to think positive. Come on lad, man up, it's not going to hurt. It all starts with being given a bottle at the docs and if need be, a finger up the Khyber Pass - or in medical terms, the rear passage, my dear.

The reason for my being an expert on the aforementioned subject is that after more trips to the docs with a waterworks infection than I care to remember, and every conversation going from whether I had been near any strange women, followed on one occasion by whether I was gay and would I like to talk about it? Finally, letter in hand it was up to North Middlesex Hospital with the resulting confirmation - I've got a big one! Yep, perhaps I should explain it more clearly. My prostate is enlarged.

Nobody seems to know why men of a certain age find that it starts to grow, but just between you and me, the doc prescribed something called **Finasteride**, which is a female hormone. Until the end of November, I didn't know whether it worked or not, but I have a feeling in my water that things are now looking good!

One of the upsides for me followed a visit to the disabled loo at M&S. On leaving after a satisfactory splash, an elderly gentleman shouted at me in disgust that it was a disabled toilet! In my very best **Marilyn Monroe** voice, I whispered into his ear: "You see young man, I am on a female hormone and not sure which one to go in, ladies or gents!" He suggested that I ought to get out more!

So don't be careless and I have two tips for the New Year; one is to go and see the latest Bond film if you haven't already and second, if your man is over forty, give him the finger for the New Year!

I dedicate this to all the team who have put their finger on the problem. If you have enjoyed this experience and on reading it would like to make a donation to my New Year fund because I have had the finger already, send a donation to **Prostate Cancer UK**...

**Gary Cox (O46)
Call Sign Online**

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Dial-a-Cab drivers coming in or going home on the A13 know how appalling the traffic can be between Rainham and Canning Town, with traffic jams often taking up entire lengths between the two points; eastbound in the evening and westbound in the morning peak hours.

But recent months have seen an escalation in the number of serious crashes, at least two of which *Call Sign* has heard where the eastbound stretch was closed at Rainham, leaving EB traffic not moving for over an hour with the hold-ups going back to Tower Bridge and Lower Thames Street.

One smash saw a lorry driver escape serious injury by actually diving out of his cab onto the A13 carriageway just before an HGV filled with scrap metal ploughed into and crushed his vehicle. It was around 9am and he had been laying out cones. The HGV driver "escaped" with three broken ribs and facial injuries. Another was at the Movers Lane flyover, Barking, when again two lorries collided and the A13 was once again shut with the hold-ups almost as bad as the previous accident.

A third smash saw a tractor driver killed at the Pitsea flyover, while an overturned van caused havoc on both sides of the carriageway close to the M25 junction when rubberneckers slowed to see what was happening. The result was one crash after another around the roadworks that were already there. A number of accidents continued for around 20 minutes of mayhem. Many call the A13 the worst main road in England, with blame attributed to speedsters, speed limits too slow and lorries!

DaC driver Alex Constantinou (N05) had taken a job from Canary Wharf to Dagenham. He told *Call Sign*: "We were on the A13 and I knew there had been a serious eastbound accident because drivers going westbound were sending in reports. Our problem was that we weren't already on the road and because we weren't moving, we couldn't pull off. We sat stationary for over an hour and then when traffic began moving slowly, it took another 30 minutes to creep to the exit. But the roads all around were totally stuffed as well and in the end my passenger got out and began walking. At least that meant I could eventually turn round and creep back towards town!"

MP for Rainham, Jon Cruddas has called for action to make the A13 safe and said he would take up the matter with the relevant council departments.

Many believe that it isn't so much the speeding as the speed camera placings that make drivers suddenly brake. With average speeds coming in, that should help but what it will never stop is the young speedster with a car far too powerful for him.

In 2012, Dial-a-Cab driver John Ward (R88) gave *Call Sign* first-hand experience of what can happen on a day that he described as one of the worst of his life...

At Snaresbrook Crown Court, Judge

A13: Worst Main Road in England?



One of the accidents that shut the A13

Inset: DaC's John Ward got an award for saving lives



Patricia Lees said that John's actions "almost certainly saved lives." He had been on the A13 going home at around 01.15 and was in the middle lane. Suddenly a BMW 640 coupe with personalised registration number of P1MP R 'undertook' John on the inside lane at a very high speed before pulling into a BP garage. John took little notice and continued his homeward journey. As he approached Rainham Marshes, the BMW came out of nowhere – again very fast – and disappeared out of John's sight within seconds. In court, the BMW's speed was estimated at 155mph!

As John approached the M25 junction, he saw the same BMW badly damaged, obviously having been in collision with something. It had come to rest between the slow and middle lanes of the carriageway, the whole road was strewn with debris and a strong smell of petrol hung in the air. John pulled his cab across the two lanes at ninety degrees to the hard shoulder, put his hazard lights on and dialled 999. The BMW driver was at the passenger door helping the young girl passenger out. John looked around in the dark and spotted another car tipped over at a 45 degree angle to the road and facing up the banking and saw a man slumped in the drivers' seat.

With fuel spilling out everywhere, John tried to force the car door open to get the driver out. But the door had been crushed into the bodywork and would not give way. John wasn't to know, but the driver was probably already dead.

John ran back to the traffic – still fast moving although thinning out due to the hour – and waved down another cab and asked the driver

if he would park his taxi next to John's so that between them they could try to completely block off the two nearside lanes. Traffic was still speeding past in the fast lane at 70 mph. A truck then stopped and John asked the driver to park sideways across the entire three lanes to block the road completely and help prevent further accidents or loss of life. The emergency services arrived and the BMW driver eventually ended up in court.

John told *Call Sign* at the time how amazed he had been at the lack of any apparent care the BMW driver, 25-year old Shehzad Munir and his girlfriend showed as the other car driver, Sukhpreet Singh Chimber - a 30-year old father of three young children whose wife was expecting their fourth child - lay immobile in the wreckage. Munir was found guilty by jury of dangerous driving and jailed for seven years. He was also banned from driving for eight years.

John was later presented with a certificate of bravery from the High Sheriff of London at the United Kingdom Supreme Court in Parliament Square as well as the Hitch Award by the WCHCD.

To most drivers, an accident is an inconvenience on our way home or coming into town, but each one involves real people and real lives. The question is how to make the A13 safer. Is it to cut the speed down to something ridiculously low or to set a faster limit than the 40 / 50mph that is currently in force for stretches of the three lane highway? Or is there a better way? You tell us because we can't go on as it is...

Baghwat Singh
Call Sign Online

DAC on GPS: It's ready to go!



The replacement for our legacy V6 dispatch system is now functionally complete and is being rolled out across the DaC

fleet. Call Sign asked IT Director John Bankes to bring us up to date with the rollout and to describe how the new system will work...

"The new GPS dispatch system for Dial-a-Cab has been assigned the name **Volante Automated Dispatch**, or VAD for short. Volante is a name we use for our internally developed systems and we already have **Volante Mobile**, **Volante Web**, **Volante MDT** and now **Volante Dispatch**. We added the word 'Automated' because we didn't think that the acronym for Volante Dispatch would work very well!

As you all no doubt know by now, VAD is a system that is based upon the GPS position of a given cab. That means that the driver will no longer be required to 'Book In' to a zone. Trips will be distributed to drivers based on the actual position of the cab.

How will it be different to operate?

From a driver's standpoint, the operation of VAD is simpler than the current system. You will no longer have to book into a zone; your MDT will do that for you automatically. Your MDT will transmit its current GPS position data to the host every 30 seconds and a driver need only press the 'Available' button to tell the host that they are available to be offered a trip (provided that driver is not currently **In-Transit** or **In-Service**). The host will offer a driver a trip based on the proximity to the pickup point and the length of time a driver has been available. The concept of manually booking into a zone has gone.

You will be pleased to know that the **zone query** will remain and that it will once again refresh itself automatically. You will therefore be able to look at where the work is and how many other drivers are in that zone before driving to the area.

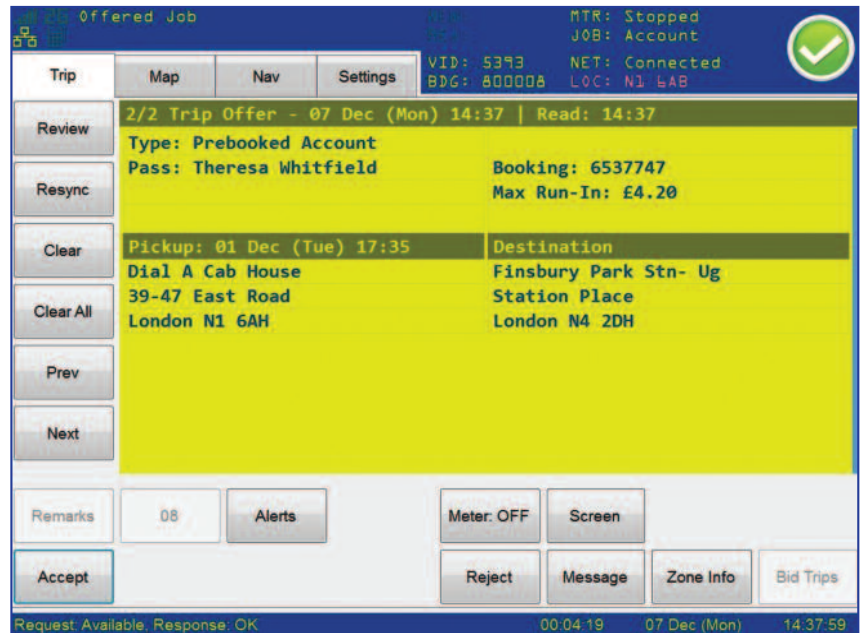
Will I need to be retrained?

Most drivers will not need retraining. We have written the system so that it looks and behaves very much like the one you already have. Since there is now less work for the driver to do, you should find it easier to use. We will also issue a 'Quick Start' guide to the new software to help in the transition. If, however, any driver feels that they require further training on the system, they can request that help from our Training Manager.

When will we start using the VAD system?

Maintaining a continuity of service to our drivers is our highest priority. For this reason we have taken a safe approach to the rollout by building the system in such a way that both the old and new systems will be available at the same time. When you receive your new software, which will be **VolanteMDT version 10**, you will note that there are two sign in buttons, one for V6 and one for VAD. This means that if we do encounter teething trouble with the new system, you will always be able to sign in to the old system and carry on working.

Drivers will continue to use the V6 system until enough cabs have been fitted to make the VAD system viable. Once we reach that threshold, we will assign a percentage of ALL work to the VAD system. That percentage will be adjusted weekly and will reflect the percentage of drivers able to work on VAD. This method has been approved by the



One of the new GPS screens

Board and ensures that the transition from old to new is not only safe, but also fair.

Over the next few months, you will be contacted by Drivers Services to arrange for your fitting, which should take less than 30 minutes."

John Bankes
DaC IT Director



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Another true story from Geoff Levene...

THE FUNNY PUBLIC!



I'm sure it's happened to you. It's happened to me many times and it goes something like this...

I take a job to say, **Greenford**. On the way back to the A40, a man stops me, gets in, closes the door, sits down and says **Tavistock Terrace**. That's all; no clues whatsoever. But being a licensed taxi driver I know exactly where it is.

So off I go. **Western Avenue, Westway, Marylebone Road, Gloucester Place, Prince Albert Road, (the passenger just looks out of the window) Parkway, Camden Road, Parkhurst Road, Nags Head and left into Holloway Road. Now we pass Tufnell Park Road and Mercers Road and then at last he speaks – and of course you know what he says...**

"It's the next on the left!"

That's right; after about 12 miles and within 25 yards of the destination, he decides to offer a bit of help! "Lucky I came this way," says I, but the irony is lost on him. But that's what makes this job such fun. The public are so funny although they often don't even realise it.

Are you familiar with the octogenarian and steadily more demented MP **Sir Gerald Kaufman**. Some years ago when cigarettes were still legal in cabs, he got into mine, screamed that someone had been smoking in the cab and slid down all the windows. Fair enough, but what made it funny was the fact that in the 1960s, Prime Minister **Harold Wilson** was a pipe smoker in public but a cigar chomper in private. He was said to be considering legislation to stop people smoking, but was dissuaded by a young adviser who reckoned that the working classes needed their cigarettes. That young person was, of course, our friend Sir Gerald. Mind you, is that funny... or just plain cynical?

How many of us can honestly say we've never said or done anything that hasn't caused someone to wonder if the guy was for real. Before I started the **Knowledge**, I noticed a fellow down my road had got his badge. Accompanied by his girlfriend, he proudly showed it off to the neighbours. I didn't really know him, but strangely enough on my first day in this game I found myself next to him in **Baker Street**. His name was **Eddie**. A year or so later, a girl handed me a delivery in **Hanover Square**. I recognised her and asked if she was Eddie's girlfriend? Her face darkened.

"I was," she said sharply, "but he married someone else yesterday!" Oh God! Yesterday! What an idiot! "Sorry," I mumbled before getting

out of there as fast as I could! What must she have thought...

Sometimes we see ourselves as others see us. Some years ago, the good lady wife and I spent a Bank Holiday weekend in **Edinburgh**. At that time you could park over the weekend in side streets around **Haverstock Hill**, so we left the car in **Eton Road** and stood in the main road waiting for a taxi. Soon one appeared. He didn't have his light on but I waved and he clocked the suitcase and stopped.

"Kings Cross, please," I said.

A cloud crossed his eyes as he hesitatingly replied ok. As we approached **Prince Of Wales Road**, the driver suddenly asked if we needed to turn left there.

I said yes as I looked for a licence plate. At that moment, an elbow hit me in the ribs and the wife hissed as to whether the driver knew where he was going? But then we got the life story.

"You see, I've had a licence for years but worked in **New Covent Garden** for a long time. I can find my way to anywhere from **Waterloo!**"

That was comforting. At the corner of **St Pancras Way** and **Agar Grove**, he suggested turning left. I assured him going straight on would be best, so we made it to the Cross and I bunged him. Then off he went, presumably to **Waterloo**. I was puzzled; what would a tourist have thought? I've no answer.

But there are other questions to which there are no answers. Firstly, what was **Captain Hook's** name before the accident? Secondly, who put the ram in the rama lama ding dong and third, when **Meatloaf** sings: "I would do anything for love but I won't do that," what on earth is he referring to?

Incidentally, I think **Darryl Hall** and **John Oates** have been seeing the same girl as **Meatloaf**. The reason I say that is because those two sing: "I would do 'most anything, but I won't go for that - no can do."

God knows what she was into...

Geoff Levene (W32)

Call Sign Online



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FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN**

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"None walks so Tall as he who Stoops to help a Child"

www.ltfuc.org.uk

Appeal following Kingston rape

Detectives investigating the rape of a woman in Kingston are trying to trace two taxi drivers who may have information that could assist them. The victim, a 19-year-old woman, reported being raped in Kingston University accommodation in the early hours of Thursday 12 November. Beforehand, she was believed to have been travelling with a male passenger in a white coloured taxi from Pryzm nightclub, Clarence Street, to Portland Road, Kingston at just after 02:30 hrs.

The victim is described as white with ginger hair and was wearing a black dress. The man with her at the time is described as a middle-eastern man aged in his 20s with short black hair. He was wearing a black jumper.

Officers would also like to locate a second taxi driver who drove a silver coloured taxi and picked up the victim and two other women (one of whom was white and the other Asian) outside the **Metro Bank** in **Eden Street, Kingston** earlier on Wednesday 11 November at about 23:45hrs. They were driven to Pryzm nightclub after making a slight detour to one of their homes to fetch ID. Police are keen to identify both the taxi drivers. Detectives from the Sexual Offences Exploitation and Child Abuse Command are investigating.

The drivers, or anyone with any information that could assist the investigation, is asked to contact Detective Constable Rob Way who is leading the investigation on 020 8721 4106.

A 21-year-old man from Kingston has been arrested in connection with the investigation. He has been bailed to return on a date in February pending further enquiries.



Wrong way down Great Windmill St

A day in the life of Uber

With Uber constantly grabbing the headlines and people you'd assume would know better, saying how wonderful Uber is without a thought for the poor drivers who work for well below the minimum wage, we thought we'd grab a few piccies from the internet. They were not from the same day, but did come from the same week!

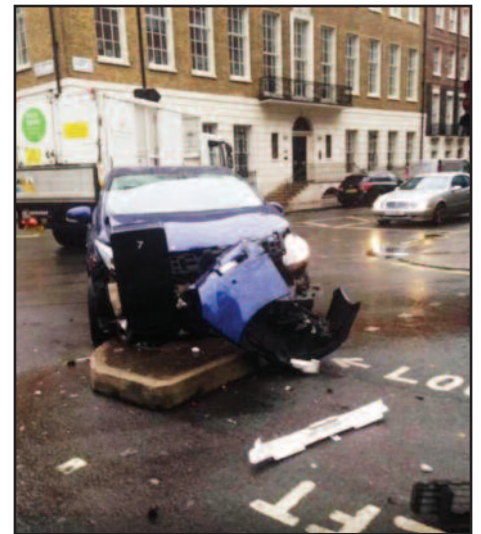
Why does it not astonish us that people you assumed had some semblance of brain power should be happy to use a service that is cheap, while apparently not guaranteed to get you to your destination in one piece! We could probably ask the Mayor, but we'll keep our waffles for the breakfast table!



Wrong way down Tottenham Court Rd



Wrong way down Camden High St



"My satnav said turn left... so I did!"

The Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

A HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH DACCU!



Hello one and all,

We at the DaC Credit Union would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year with the hope that you had a great Christmas and a deserved break from all the traffic, drunks and miserable punters that we have to suffer day in and day out! So if you're like me, to help make things seem nicer, I go shopping and bash the old credit cards!

If you are in that position but don't want to keep paying interest upon interest, come on down to the Credit Union offices in downtown **Hackney Road** and we'll do our best to alleviate your financial problems; some of the drivers or members that phone in tell us that because of their circumstances, they feel a bit embarrassed about coming in. Well there really is no need for that as we all are or have at some stage, been in the same position!

We're all cab drivers here; some of us are retired but we still have a licence and know what's happening out there, so don't be shy - come in and see us and if you want a private meeting, we have a spare office on a one-to-one basis. I hope this article will help you make up your minds to come in...

We don't just do loans, you can save with us and we only ask for £20 a week and these savings could provide you with money to buy, for example, tyres from **Hackney Road Taxi Tyres**, which is downstairs. So a quick share withdrawal from the Credit Union upstairs and that's it job done - and you keep your float.

Well that's about it from me for now; I do hope to see old and new faces alike this year. Don't forget that this is *your* Credit Union, so please use it.

That just leaves me to wish you all a Happy New year and be lucky... but be very careful out there.

John Riley
DACCU President

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

Brethren of the Whip



The Beginnings of the Knowledge?

With the recent closure of Knowledge Point School in Caledonian Road, I take a quick look at the history of the topographical examinations and dedicate the same to Malcom and Pat Linskey and their staff - past and present - and for introducing me to my wife at Dame Alice Owen back in 1986... but that's another story!

There is a popular misconception that The Knowledge came out of complaints arising from the influx of visitors to the Great Exhibition of 1851. There were indeed a large number of complaints that year, but the vast majority were either against cabmen for overcharging - or trying to - or for the abuse they gave when unsuccessful in obtaining more than the legal fare!

For the cab driver and trade, the main consequence of the Great Exhibition was the implementation of the Fares Book issued by Scotland Yard in 1853. Distances were measured by the shortest route between two points and this distance dictated how much the fare was to be. If a cabman went by a longer route, the passenger would only have to look at the Fares Book - either their own or the one all cabmen were now obliged by law to carry and which stated the fare for the minimum distance. So it was in the driver's interest to go the shortest route - possibly the genesis for the Knowledge.

In his *History of The London Cab Trade*, Phil Warren believed an early form of Knowledge was "implemented in 1851 by Sir Richard Mayne," (Commissioner of Police, although Phil was quoting a secondary source from several years later). He also quoted from a well-known London cabman of the time, John Cockram, who in 1869 thought the examination "was hard enough already."

When Phil came to write his *History of The London Taxi Knowledge*, he found the beginnings had proved to be "very elusive" but definitive accounts begun in 1884 when 1214 candidates passed and 717 failed. So just how 'knowledgeable' were cab drivers of the 19th century?

In 1823 the un-named driver of hackney coach 620 dropped his fare off in Moor Street instead of Little St Andrews Street (now Monmouth Street), telling his passenger that he did not know where Moor Street was and that he "was not expected to know every street in London." For his insolence, the coachman was fined 20s (£1) and locked up until he could raise the money.

In 1838, Daniel Whittle Harvey was first the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Public Carriage Office; when he licensed and badged

drivers for the first time he had all applicants declare they were "well acquainted with the streets in and about London." What this entailed was never explained!

In 1845, a 16 year old *butterboy* of two weeks did not know how to get to Manchester Street from Paddington, whilst in 1853 an owner driver, "only recently in the business," had to be directed from Bond Street to Hanover Square. In 1853 *The Standard* was calling for cabmen to "have experience" of the city in which they work - the trade was on strike at the time so perhaps the papers was calling for a clean sweep with a new broom.

In 1867, William Charley MP published his book on *The Law of London Cabs and Omnibuses* in which he stated that "Lieutenant Colonel Paschal, on whom the duty of examining candidates devolves, subjects them to a searching examination in the topography of London, selecting various points of taking up and setting down." This is an 'appearance' in all but name; how searching the examination was and how many "appearances" were made by a candidate is not recorded, but it does go to show that The Knowledge was up and running by 1867. However, what excuse a cabman going north over Waterloo Bridge in 1881 had when he asked a pedestrian: "Am I OK for the Strand?" is anybody's guess!

When Herbert Hodge applied for a cabman's licence in 1928, he had to declare all his previous convictions to a Carriage Officer before he would be allowed on The Knowledge (he actually calls it such in his 1939 book, *Cab Sir?*). Hodge was warned that any undeclared infringement of the law would result in his being refused a cab licence. Fortunately for Hodge, the only conviction he ever had was for defective lights on a cycle and after feeling like a "human post office directory" he completed The Knowledge in six months.

If there had been discrepancies with his character, then Hodge would have received a letter from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police stating that he did not meet the 'fit and proper' requirements and as such his application would be refused.

One person who did receive such a letter was Alfred Bowes, who felt his life had been ruined by the epistle from Scotland Yard, and in his anger he awaited outside the Commissioner's Campden Hill Road home to confront him about it!

The Commissioner was Sir Edward Henry, who whilst serving in India had first recognised that fingerprints were unique to the individual; but now as he climbed out of his chauffeur driven car on the night of November 27th 1912, Alfred Bowes lay in wait and he was armed with a gun. He approached Sir Henry and pleaded his case, but the Commissioner was dismissive and told him to contact the office. With that, Bowes pulled out his gun and began shooting.

After firing three shots, two of which missed their target, Bowes was overpowered by the chauffeur and a passing decorator. Sir Henry

was not seriously injured but suffered from stress due to the shooting. Any effects it had on his wife and children who witnessed the shooting were not recorded.

Bowes was the only son of a widowed mother and it had been his aim to become a cab driver in order to look after her and after looking into his affairs Sir Edward took some pity on his would-be assassin.

At his trial at the Old Bailey, Bowes was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 15 years. Sir Edward tried to have the sentence reduced, but to no avail. It is at this point that the story took another unexpected turn.

Bowes's mother had been forced to return to work now that her only child was imprisoned, but according to newsreader, actor, writer and Dial-a-Cab client, the late Gordon Honeycombe, every now and then whilst her son was in jail Sir Edward would get his chauffeur to drive him to Mrs Bowes home in Acton; he would then dismiss his driver and walk the remaining distance where "he gave her enough money to satisfy her needs and keep herself comfortable and warm."

Sir Edward's wife had no knowledge of his affair and it is not known if it continued after Alfred was released from prison in 1922, but the ever generous Sir Edward paid for Bowes's passage to Canada so he could start a new life...

"The Knowledge of London serves no useful purpose and should be abolished."

Department of Transport 1970

"The Knowledge is the corner-stone of the taxi trade in London. It underpins everything we do."

Malcolm Linskey 1990

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

A computer glitch that removed all question marks in last month's issue causing an ultra-basty re-proof, then changed the street names in Sean's article! It should have read "The Haymarket (now Cumberland Market)" [as is in NW1] and our rush proof changed it to "Cumberland Market (now Haymarket)" [as in SW1]. Apologies to Sean...

Call Sign January 2016

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BRAZIL CALLING

The thoughts of Joe Brazil...

Old Street and redevelopment...

When **Islington Council** first muted changes at **Old Street** roundabout back in April 2006, I'm sure all taxi drivers - like myself - let out a groan of disbelief. Let's face it, the last time they redeveloped it from a crossroads, back in the 60's, they hardly created a monument that would ever trouble the pages of *English Heritage*, although I'm sure **Grand Designs** presenter **Kevin McCloud** turning up and expounding the beauties of brutalist concrete structures, would do it the world of good!

It remains not much more than a creation of form and function, unadmired and slowly being dissolved into the ground with little hope of any real money or design genius ever troubling its façade. So the time is nigh for a new frock and bit of a spruce up...well, a £25million pound facelift anyway.

As you can imagine, this will involve considerable upheaval; TfL in its *Citizen Space* document tells us that "journey times through the junction for motorists and bus, coach and taxi passengers are likely to change slightly."

Never has the term *slightly* been more misused, although it is interesting that we are the only ones with passengers; I presume buses will be empty and no-one will be inconvenienced, although that may just be me being pedantic!

Well, I thought, I wonder why so many £millions are being spent? There must be car-

nage at this junction. Yes, one death is too many as all right minded people would agree; injuries are not to be wished on anyone but a cycle traffic light properly observed would be of considerable effect, or just directing cycles through the heavily armoured side streets would alleviate dangers. But then again, TfL do not have control over the side streets, so even though these streets are virtually empty, local councils seem to be only too happy to watch all means of transport being shoved off their patch of side streets and onto main routes instead of standing up to their responsibility to protect the travelling public.

It can be hard to find information regarding accidents, not always, but sometimes. They are shrouded in misinformation. I remember **Jeremy Clarkson** pulling up previous Minister of State for Transport, **Stephen Ladyman**, for counting a suicide from a bridge as being a motorway death and so allowing speed cameras to be installed on the basis of hitting some terrible target to achieve financial gain. The truth of the matter (that has been disclosed) is that between February 2010 and January 2013 there were 44 "collisions" in the "vicinity." Vague enough for you? How big is the vicinity? Define collision? Collisions between whom?

Well, what I can tell you is that 80 per cent involved a pedestrian or cyclist... that's err...35.2 I think, over almost 3 years! How many involved vehicles and cyclists? Vehicles and pedestrians? Cycles and pedestrians? Hardly carnage, but then again one is too many. Deaths? Not mentioned, but let's hope not.

So how is this to be addressed? Old Street

roundabout will close the northwest arm of the newly formed junction and become a peninsula. You will be forced anticlockwise around the junction from the west with no right turn into City Road southbound, just in case you are foolhardy enough to try to escape from the inevitable traffic hold-up that strings back for Old Street east of the roundabout... err sorry, I meant junction.

Job done then; traffic halted, no accidents, your journey time is "changed slightly!" Top job, you say. Without doubt, data of collisions between pedestrians or cyclists will be much harder to find then. So let's face it, we must all stand up for the forgotten 35.2 who err....may have suffered, although we can't be sure as we can't find the data!

This will allow gentrification of the junction, a new peninsula, coffee shops, new public spaces, new retail units, temporary food stalls. Pound to a penny cyclists will hurtle through unimpinged by law enforcement or road regulations. Try finding data then... no chance!

This gentrification does have an upside though, Old Street will become a slightly more pleasant place for the pedestrian and tube traveller; **Dial-a-Cab House** - being in the vicinity - will become a nicer place to work. Our new neighbours at the **Atlas Building** with their 350 bicycle spaces that **Boris Johnson** described as being within the area he is going *full speed ahead* to change is achieved.

The Atlas with its 302 apartments, ranging from studios to three bedroom apartments starting at £580,000; if only we had a stake in this improvement, if only we were in this ever-changing tech valley vicinity, if only, if only, oh we have! Well you can't stop progress, can you; every cloud etc... You know the rest.

Let's hope there is a benefit, after all I do like a new peninsula every now and then, who in their right mind wouldn't...

Joe Brazil

DaC Board Member

Susan gets the KoL at 60!

Dial-a-Cab driver **Brian Marcantonio (R73)** recently told *Call Sign* about the wife of a friend of his. Brian has known fellow taxi driver **Frank Harrington** for many years, but the story is about Frank's wife, **Susan Harrington**, who at the young age of 60 was about to get her Green badge after passing the **Knowledge of London**.

Brian told us: "Susan had got her Rec but failed her first drive on the Highway Code! She worked really hard at the Knowledge, which is really quite amazing when you consider that she will be 61 in March! She finally got her green badge on 9th December, so I wonder if she is she the oldest woman to ever pass the KoL."

Call Sign isn't too sure about who the oldest person was, but in this month's 'Brethren of the Whip' on page 18, **Sean Farrell (B39)** writes about how the Knowledge of London probably came into existence.



Susan and Brian celebrate on a night out

TAXI AIR CONDITIONING

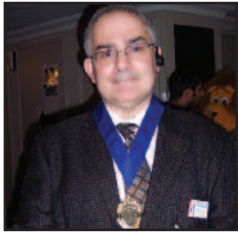
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London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children

LTFUC HON CHAIR'S REPORT



Welcome to the **87th LTFUC Chairman's Report**; yes 87 glorious years of serving 'special needs' children! The children are from all walks of life within the

L o n d o n

Metropolitan area and have physical and social-impaired needs. I started my second year as Chairman at London's **Burlington Arcade** in December, where we were fundraising as well as promoting the charity. Our London taxi dressed up as a reindeer was a great attraction with many photo opportunities to be had. In addition to the trustees that were there, we were also pleased to be joined by London's **Pearly King & Queens** and the **Fulham & Hammersmith Choral Society**.

January commenced with our now famous **Mad Hatter's Tea Party** in the *Great Room* of the **JW Marriott Grosvenor House Hotel**, where we entertained over 600 deserving children from many London boroughs. On arrival, the children were greeted by characters such as the Honey Monster, the Furry Tail Folk, Star Wars characters and many others. The venue is festooned with balloons, decorations and tables full of food; afterwards the children are entertained by a variety of acts and shows culminating in a huge disco. To top it all, on departure the children go through a toy grotto where they leave laden with various toys and goodies, plus some fruit for the journey home.

The event literally involves a whole army of volunteers who give up their time to make this such a wonderful day and we are so grateful to them all, including the hotel staff, management, celebrities, entertainers, face painters, balloonists, the Household Cavalry, Police, British army, sponsors and many others. The list is endless. I am also pleased to say that **Sainsbury's (Low Hall) Chingford** are supporting our charity in a very big way and as well as raising funds for us all year round, they were involved at the tea party in so many ways, supplying and making hundreds of sandwiches for the guests and entertainers and allowed us to fund raise at their store over Easter and Christmas.

Our next outing took place in **June**; that was our legendary fabulous annual trip to the seaside! For almost 80 of our 87 years the charity has been taking children to **Southend-on-Sea**. In its modern format, this involves over 120 vehicles in convoy including over 100 balloon decorated taxis, with support from St John's and Red Cross Ambulances, Green Flag recovery and the Essex and Met Police. Previous meeting points have always been Beaumont Square and Victoria Park in the East End, but in 2015 we started the outing from the Sainsbury's (Low Hall) car park in Chingford. This proved to be more convenient than Victoria Park and meant the journey was quicker by 30 minutes, so the children had even more time to enjoy themselves! The outing was once again a wonderful event enjoyed by both the children and the drivers, even though it *was* on the hottest day for nine years!

In September, we had the pleasure of being invited to the traditional annual London Pearly Kings & Queens Costermongers Harvest Festival Parade at the Guildhall and we thank all the wonderful Pearlys for their continued support of our charity.

As well as outings and the functions we arrange, we're also very pleased to help very needy and worthwhile causes. The charity receives on average 100 appeals a year and the committee investigates each claim on its merits and we help as many of those appeals that we can. Some of our donations include hospital equipment such as baby incubators, sensory rooms for children, speciality equipment for children recovering from cancer, sailing boats specifically built for physically impaired children and even specially adapted wheelchairs for individual children.

The charity is very proud to say that under 2% of the money raised goes towards administrative expenses. The voluntary committee on the Fund are 14 working taxi drivers and with the help and assistance from our wives and partners, we continue to do this work because we love trying to bring something special into the children's lives.

The committee would like to thank **Larry Abrahams**, who has now retired from the fund and wish him good luck for the future. Along with his lovely wife **Sue**, they have both contributed many years of hard work and dedication helping to brighten up the lives of many deserving children. Thank you both very much. I would also like to thank the trustees and their partners for all their hard work throughout the year and send best wishes to our Hon. Life President, **Bill Tyzack BEM** and his wife **Grace** for a speedy recovery and continuing good health.

Sim Yiannikaris

LTFUC Honorary Chairman

London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children

LTFUC HON TREASURER'S REPORT



It is my privilege to present the Treasurer's Report for the LTFUC year ending 31st October, 2015.

I am very grateful to the Fund's Trustees for taking time to provide me with their ongoing support in respect of my role as Hon Treasurer. Last year's Treasurer's Report mentioned two new members to the fund, who have since stepped into their roles with relentless dedication alongside all the other trustees, continuing to make their respective contributions to the charity.

With the help of many donations, sponsors old and new and public generosity, the fund has maintained reserves to enable continued support for many disadvantaged children of Greater London. General administration expenses have been kept down again to less than 2p in the pound, allowing nearly every penny of income to be spent on improving the quality of life for those in need. During the past year, the charity has spent £1,200 by supplying specialised equipment for a desperately needed mobility wheelchair and a large donation to the **Haven House Children's Hospice**, plus other donations large and small to many different organisations. The cost of the annual **Grosvenor House** children's Christmas party at £6,883 against the previous year figure of £11,227, shows a saving, this being due to the previous two year's hire charges for the *Great Room*. The annual outing to Southend-on-Sea cost £16,038.77, which showed a saving of £1,081.11 against the previous year's figures.

In such challenging times, the fund has been successful with street collections at events such as the **Burlington Arcade**, **Sainsbury's (Low Hall) Chingford** and **Victoria Station**. Having collecting boxes placed around town has helped to raise money to meet an ever increasing demand for our help.

Because of the tremendous generosity of people's donations and sponsoring, the fund has been able to recover all of our outlays and more, giving hundreds of disadvantaged children many great memories to cherish.

Thank you to everyone that has supported the London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children and we look forward to helping many more disadvantaged children in the forthcoming year.

Lilian Julier

LTFUC Honorary Treasurer

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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

Last month in my look at London's lost sporting heritage, I featured those long lost Greyhound Stadiums, but over the next couple of articles in the series, I would like to mention some 'teams' from a different sporting background that would have entertained thousands of Londoners, but these were not football teams...

Speedway provided a perfect partner for Greyhound Racing with many Stadiums holding both sports on separate evenings – often to packed houses, especially in the immediate post-war period.

If you want some idea of the enthusiasm for this once popular form of entertainment, you would only need to watch the 1948 British classic film *Once a Jolly Swagman* – which starred Dirk Bogarde, Bill 'Compo' Owen, Thora Hurd and Sid James. It is now available on DVD.

New Cross Stadium, which was in Hornshay Street just off Ilderton Road, was the film set for all the action, a gem that captures genuine speedway history and highlights the popularity of the sport at the time. Bogarde plays an up and coming young speedway star and the movie charts his meteoric rise to the top and all of the troubles as well as the inevitable romance it brings. Maybe it was a predictable plot – but the sight and sound of those old bikes (pre-silencers) makes this a great listen, as well as a watch. It is well acted and the action scenes from the New Cross Stadium are legendary!

The venue, which became nicknamed the The Frying Pan because of its steep sides and the New Cross Rangers (1937 - 1963) thrilled racing fans here, with former World Champion, New Zealand superstar Barry Briggs a former rider.

The New Cross team were originally the New Cross Lambs (1934 - 1935) before taking the name of the New Cross Tamers (in 1936) – before the heyday of the New Cross Rangers when the Orange and Black leathers would be crowned National League Champions twice in 1938 and 1948.

The stadium had been around in the early 1900's and was originally used as an athletics track, and then by Millwall Football Club as a training ground (who had to move their training to Deptford Park once the stadium closed).

Tragedy struck in 1935 when local star, Tommy Farndon, was involved in a fatal crash when colliding with a team mate during a meeting.

The 'Frying Pan' was also the birthplace of oval track Stock Car Racing and the first ever Formula One Stock Car meeting took place on Good Friday 1954.

When this 26,000 capacity stadium closed for good in 1969, it was left derelict for many years, before being demolished to create a local park (Bridge House Meadows). The bowl of the stadium is still visible and lumps of concrete in the undergrowth are fragments from the



Another full house at New Cross Rangers and (inset) a 1949 New Cross programme

old stands.

Speedway down the Old Kent Road had originally come about when South London Promoter Fred Mockford relocated his Crystal Palace Glaziers back in 1934 – and next month I will give you the heads-up on all of the other London sides, their exotic nicknames and track venues.

It was nice to read in last month's Mailshot where Bernie Silver (F13J) reminisced about the taxi rank at Clapton Pond where punters shared the fare when heading to the old Clapton Greyhound Stadium – it's not a straightforward journey these days, with the barrier halfway down Millfields Road, but I would have imagined that by putting five punters in (we don't talk about 4 seaters here!) for half a crown, it would have been like 'whacky races' speeding back for the next fare!

Happy New Year to ALL!

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online



THE HERTFORDSHIRE WINTER PRO-AM GOLF TOURNAMENT

Friday 29 January 2016

Friday 26 February 2016

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LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

With Tom Quigley (Y33)

CV or first impression...

When I grew up, if someone had asked me who or what is a *Curriculum Vitae* my reply would probably have been the name of a Roman soldier in Ben Hur!

I never knew - and even today I'm not exactly sure - what a *Portfolio* is should I ever be asked to submit one. It would be so mendacious or similar to a **Frankie Howard** sketch, that it just would not be taken seriously. And that is my point...

On the long running TV show **The Apprentice**, the candidates would all have a CV and a Portfolio, plus of course a Business Plan! I'm an ardent fan of the show, it fact I have to admit watching it and reading **Sir Alan Sugar's** autobiography; it has taught me much about business opportunities and strategies as well as helping the **Knowledge of London** students at my KoL school to search out possible points.

However, what are CVs actually worth, plus how do the different organisations use them for their own means or objectives?



The name on the application could easily be used for and against the employee, depending on the strategy of the employer.

The presentation and facts on the CV are probably not worth the paper they are written on. Maybe for some jobs, a CV is a necessity but there are many other jobs at the lowest and highest paid end where a CV is not

required, otherwise why would someone get in your cab and claim to be a Head-hunter if the best CVs go to the best CV-er! (*Man, that's heavy!...Ed*)

Sam Stoller's smoked salmon...

I was with a niece who was looking for a Saturday job in our local High Street; a leading baker's shop had an advert for a Saturday person (of course, we can't say Saturday girl) although unless my eyes have deceived me, I've never noticed a Saturday boy serving in a bakers! She enquired about the job and was told to submit a CV. My niece happens to have 8 O Levels plus 18 months as a junior Police cadet. She never got a reply, obviously not the skills required at a local High Street baker! The job had probably gone to an employee's relative already; I have no problem with nepotism, just don't waste people's time!

In past times, if the job was advertised you were generally given a chance - not always a fair one, but a chance nonetheless. But my own mum must have broken all records of what a CV was worth...

When we were very young, the story was, as told by mum but with quite possibly a touch of Irish *Romancing the Tale*. It went like this; as we walked home one day many years back with a pram full of shopping and more than enough children carrying bags, mum saw a lady struggling with bags loaded up with various stuff. My mother offered her the chance to put the bags onto the pram to help the lady on her way. Thankful for the assistance and despite different backgrounds, there was - and still is - a certain amount of trust. That was despite my mum's strong Northern Irish accent and the lady, who happened to be Jewish, at a time when there were strong anti-Semitic feelings following the six day war together with an anti-Irish stance due to IRA bombings. The lady put her bags on the pram and off they went probably not even listening to each other, but both talking non-stop! This encounter led to a great source of income for my mum, to us as a family and to a great friendship for all of us.

Due to the first impression and equal respect for each other, my mum became the cleaner, driver, childminder and many other occupations to the family. The lady was **Tilly Stoller**, wife of **Sam Stoller** and if you have ever eaten smoked salmon on **Ridley Road**, you'll have made an indirect contact with Sam!

My mum's meeting with Tilly also led to employment for my late sister **Mary** in the **Egg Stores of Stamford Hill**, with me turning the gas on and off in most of the houses in **Clapton** for a shilling a time! My sisters still look after the grandchildren of the families!

A small snapshot of East End history showing that sometimes first impressions are better than CVs! Can I wish everyone out there a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2016...

Tom Quigley
Call Sign Online

Step by Step...

"I've had this **MB Vito** taxi for about a year now," **Daniel Heaven (O01)** told **Call Sign**, "and in all that time I've never needed to use the steps on the side of the cab that allow easier access for those less mobile. It's not that I'm picky, that's just the way it's been!

"Anyway, when I did finally need the step facility recently, I just couldn't operate it and it took some effort to load my passenger. I'm pretty sure I was not shown or told the procedure to activate the steps when I bought the cab. Advice like looking in the owner's manual doesn't really wash when you've got a passenger waiting at the kerbside," he chortled.

"I now know it is necessary to put the gearbox into the *Park* position and apply the handbrake firmly before the steps will slide out and function as intended. I've also done some research that suggests the step mechanisms should be serviced every six months due to their being exposed to the elements and I was quoted a cost of £120 + VAT! I now frequently spray mine myself with WD40, carefully following the line of the runners to lubricate the operating mechanisms. I'm also very careful not to get the solution onto the steps themselves, as I expect this would cause a slipping hazard, which is exactly what you do not want!

"I have been told that there is a *YouTube* instructional video showing how it's done, and I've also heard of the steps being removed completely to allow the mechanisms to be jet-washed. I believe the steps are held into place with just three bolts, one either side and one at the back; that's all that holds them into place, so I have to wonder if that should best be left to the dealerships to do because if it all goes pear-shaped through a DIY mess-up, it could be a lot more grief than drivers bargain for!"

Daniel's advice about urging caution at such an undertaking sounds sensible to us...



How do you release the Vito taxi step?

Ask any regular user of London's road network what they think and a large majority will say that long-term roadworks have turned our capital into a third world city. A huge part of those roadworks are due to **Transport for London's** plans to turn it into a cycling haven.

Last June in a speech in east London, **Mayor Boris Johnson's** Cycling Commissioner, **Andrew Gilligan**, praised campaigners for winning the PR battle against the 'old men in limos' – a quote he took from Olympic cyclist **Chris Boardman** – but said that London was only in the "foothills of becoming a great cycling city" and that pressure needed to be sustained ahead of the 2016 mayoral election (due this May) "to ensure that the work continues." That sounds like an early election push for him to keep his job!

However, Mr Gilligan – a respected writer who now seems to prefer bringing London to a standstill – has now brought the word "lie" into the public domain, when live on LBC radio he accused one of their reporters of telling porkies. Political Editor, **Theo Usherwood** had been assigned to watch the opening of the Vauxhall cycle superhighway and told **Nick Ferrari** that 40% of cyclists weren't using it and riding on the road instead. Several **Dial-a-Cab** drivers phoned and emailed **Call Sign** to give us similar results. Nick Ferrari then put Usherwood's figures to Andrew Gilligan.

The Commissioner's response was: "That report I've just heard is a complete lie. I think he is quite clearly lying."

In response, Theo Usherwood insisted that his numbers had just been a conservative estimate and that he believed that in fact they were probably higher. He also returned Gilligan's 'lie' taunt when claiming online that the Commissioner had said the Cycling

THE FACE OF A MAN WITH NO SHAME...



Superhighway that links **The Oval** to **Pimlico** cost £5million when in reality it cost double that amount.

In the April 2015 **Call Sign**, we questioned Andrew Gilligan on his plans, which at that time hadn't really started to cause the huge amount of congestion that they have now and we asked him the question that everyone knows the answer to now, but caused shock waves back then.

Call Sign: It appears the plan is for the cycle lanes to be protected from the rest of the road and traffic using it, by pavements. So my question is

whether cyclists will have the choice of not using the superhighway lanes and instead use the main section of the road reserved for cars, taxis and buses etc if they feel the cycle lane isn't moving fast enough?

Andrew Gilligan: We're not going to ban cyclists from using the road, but our experience on the existing segregated track we've installed (on Stratford High Street) is that the vast majority (97%+) use the track. The tracks we're installing will be 4m wide (mostly) – enough for fast cyclists to pass and overtake slower ones within the track itself.

Call Sign: I can't really understand why, if the lanes are that wide, that 3 percent of cyclists need to leave them (other than for an emergency). Surely that detracts from the whole purpose – which is to keep them safe. Why cannot it be made compulsory for cyclists to stay within the lane? That would also pacify those against the lanes due to the extra time some journeys will now take.

Andrew Gilligan: I don't think 3 percent makes much difference either way, to be honest. We're talking maybe 15 cyclists an hour, tops.

Call Sign: I still fail to understand why any cyclist that has a lane specially designated for their use should use a section of the road designated for motorists etc. Neither do I believe for a single second that just 15 cyclists an hour will use the main section of road, especially during busy periods. But accepting that they can do so if they wish, can motorists then drive in the cycle lanes?

Andrew Gilligan: Taxis have their own special lanes, and a lot more of them than cyclists! Are you saying that should mean taxis shouldn't be allowed to use the rest of the road?

The interview faded at that point with Mr Gilligan and myself obviously miles apart in our thinking. But even then, the Commissioner was sticking to his view that only a tiny minority of cyclists would leave the lanes to use the main section of road.

However, unlike Mr Gilligan's shameful treatment of Theo Usherwood, we do not call him a liar because we think that what he told **Call Sign** nine months ago, he probably believed at the time. Needless to say however, I didn't believe for a single moment that unless it was made illegal for cyclists to use the main road when a CSH was available, that huge numbers of them wouldn't leave them to join the motor vehicle section.

Had Mr Gilligan accepted the LBC reporter's figures and said they would do something about it, then we would have to accept that; but by calling Theo Usherwood a liar when anyone with a pair of eyes could see that his report was true and regardless of whether it was more or less than 40%, it certainly was far, far more than Gilligan's 5% (and the ridiculous 3% given to **Call Sign**). His statement to Nick Ferrari makes Andrew Gilligan a man with no shame and if he had even an ounce of any, he would tender his resignation.

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

GRIND AND SQUEAK!



"I heard this terrible grinding noise as I drove along in my TX1 and was convinced it came from the rear axle," **Michael Gurry (N38)** told **Call Sign** recently, adding rather philosophically that his cab had covered over 300,000 miles so he was expecting the worst!

"I booked the cab in to the **Diff Doctor** in **Lammas Road, Leyton** and they said they would investigate and do only what was necessary with a view to keeping costs to a minimum, which sounded very fair to me," Michael added.

"When I got my cab back, I had a very pleasant and welcome surprise because it hadn't been the rear axle grinding away as I thought, it turned out to be a front wheel bearing that was causing all the grinding and squeaking sounds that had been echoing through the cab and doing my head in, not to mention the embarrassment regarding passengers. It's much quieter now!"

Mike's obvious relief showed in his smile and the happy tone of his voice! When **Call Sign** spoke to **Jagger** at **Diff Doctor**, he recalled Michael's problems, suggesting that it was usually a little difficult to self-diagnose motion related noises as it requires the cab to be moving for accurate analysis – and listening while driving is not easy.

"With worn or pitted wheel / axle bearings, the noise tends to vibrate throughout the cab when it is on the move and this can be very confusing to pinpoint to the untrained ear. Obviously, when the cab is stationary, there is no noise," he said with a laugh!

"As the wheel rotates when the cab is moving, uneven road surfaces tend to amplify the noise of the worn bearing, which then transmits through the cab suspension, the steering system, through the body panels and can echo throughout the cab in some examples of extreme wear. However, drivers should never ignore rumbling or groaning noises because it could lead to failure of that component and leave drivers stranded and immobile, with possibly additional expense to replace parts that may have been damaged as a 'knock-on' effect.

"Additionally, in extreme cases a bearing/s could seize up completely, with possibly catastrophic effects if you're moving at speed," Jagger warned.

The photo shows a taxi wheel bearing assembly which allows the wheels to rotate smoothly and minimises friction of the moving parts.

Diff Doctor can be contacted on: 0208 556 3134

Alan Green, Call Sign Online

TfL in London or TLC in New York...

THE DIFFERENCE IS THE SAME!

Mike Higgins drives a cab in New York, runs a radio phone-in for cab drivers and edits New York City's Taxinews. Somehow he also finds time to pen the occasional piece for Call Sign! So try changing TLC for TfL and see if you can spot any difference as regards Uber...

"Hey you London guys at Dial-a-Cab; I know about your Uber problems with Transport for London, but believe it or not, our Taxi & Limousine Commission aren't that different! So if you don't mind and knowing how big *Call Sign's* online readership is, I'd like to address our TLC through you, in addition to our own NYC Taxinews...

So hey TLC! Please do *not* lower the NYC Yellow cab driver licensing standards. Raise the standards for the other TLC regulated segments to meet OUR standards!

Passengers are finally going back to Yellow cabs because they actually think we are better now. Do not listen to the idiots who constantly



whine that "...we need moh DROYvahhs!"

We already have 53,000 licensed Yellow cab drivers for only 14,000 Yellow cabs! WTF! Incentivise them to come back! Get them back... first!

Raise the taxi fare or a decent group-ride plan...maybe even put in two-way radio dispatch - and real taxi Apps - into the Yellow cabs. Why are we the only taxi service in the world without two-way radio dispatch? Otherwise you'll be turning the Yellow cabs into a freggin sh*t show. Is that what you want?

Or is that really what 'Uber' wants????!! Maybe the Yellow cab service has gotten too good and

lowering licensing standards could be another trap orchestrated by Uber?

Please, don't frack-up this business by diluting the existing pool of great Yellow cab drivers with a dangerous flood of rookies and rejected Uber drivers!"

Happy holidays to all at DaC. You can catch up on New York taxi news at www.nyctaxinews.com.

Michael Higgins
Call Sign Online

Loughborough Junction experiment fails!



Traffic ignores the signs!

Hot on the heels of complaints by Dial-a-Cab drivers about the Tavistock Place one-way scheme came those moaning about closures in Brixton involving Loughborough, Barrington and Lilford Roads, together with Gordon Grove. The scheme was supposed to make the area a nicer place to live, as well as helping cyclists to stay safe, but the result - which had been obvious to most even when being proposed - was increased traffic everywhere else and that meant increased emissions.

Worsening traffic conditions added up to 40 minutes to journeys and meant that many motorists were disregarding the closures and driving through anyway. The council threatened to put barriers across the roads and then said they were contemplating narrowing the streets and putting flower beds in! Emergency services were naturally unhappy about that.

Even the locals, who claimed they were never consulted about it, were against the scheme and the council has finally abandoned it - albeit with two streets (Calais Street and Padfield Road) staying shut as yet another Lambeth experimental scheme opens. Some years back, Lambeth's council earned the prefix of "loony." Perhaps they were trying to regain the title?

Ron Yarborough
Call Sign Online



Traffic took up to 40 minutes longer to complete their journeys!



Keith Reading
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10% discount for DaC drivers and staff

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Professional Toastmasters

Guess who I picked up in my taxi!

It was just another night at the Arsenal – lots of Dial-a-Cab drivers there to watch the game, knowing that there was a good chance of getting a nice job after the final whistle blew. But one driver picked up someone he never really expected to. The shy driver told us:

“There were two of them and I thought I recognised one of them but couldn’t think where from. Then I heard one say to the other that these were better than his own cabs and suddenly I realised who it was – the



former Chairman of Addison Lee, John Griffin!

“I asked him if he was John Griffin and

Former Addison Lee Chairman, John Griffin, gets out of a DaC taxi!

when he confirmed it, I asked why he hadn’t phoned for one of his own cars, even though I knew that he was no longer really involved with the company other than in name. He surprised me – albeit very pleasantly – when he said that he always used ‘black cabs’

because they were so much better!

“And contrary to reports I’ve seen over the years, he was a real gentleman!”

TfL launch congestion crackdown!

A new team of Road and Transport Enforcement Officers is being deployed to key traffic routes across London to crack down on illegal or inconsiderate behaviour and other problems that cause congestion.

The new 40-strong **Transport for London** (TfL) team - rising to 80 by Spring - will help deal with problems such as illegal stopping or unloading of deliveries, which can cause delays to drivers and bus passengers. It will work closely with the TfL-funded **Metropolitan Police Roads** and **Transport Policing Command**, which was launched by the Mayor in January and with 2,300 officers, is the largest policing command anywhere in the country. The team will help to move unlawfully stopped vehicles, issue PCN’s to illegally parked vehicles and clear unnecessary or poorly set-up roadworks.

It is the first time that TfL will have its own officers who will have the power to direct traffic around congestion on London’s roads. This includes issues such as breakdowns and collisions. They will also access real time information and data and send intelligence back from the street to TfL’s control room. Mayor of London, **Boris Johnson MP**, said:

“This is one of a number of targeted actions we’re taking to tackle congestion and reduce delays on the roads. In January we launched the Met’s Roads and Transport Policing Command and this new team will work closely with them to help keep London moving. They will play a key role in tackling problems that lead to tailbacks and take a zero-tolerance approach towards inconsiderate or illegal behaviour that can cause unnecessary gridlock.”

The ten key locations the team will be deployed are on roads that between them carry 110 different bus routes and are used by half a million bus passengers, in addition to 300,000 car and taxi passenger journeys every day.

They are Gracechurch Street to Bank, Eastcheap to Leadenhall Street, Kensington High Street to Notting Hill Gate, Gosport Street to Hoe Street (Walthamstow), Hackney Road to Balls Pond Road, Ladywell to Loampit Vale, Highshore Road to Heaton Road (Peckham), Manor Park Road / Craven Park to Manor Park Road / High Street (Harlesden), Columbia Avenue to Balmoral Road (Worcester Park) and Gatton Road to Trevelyn Road (Tooting).

The team will be alerted to congestion build ups both through TfL’s network of traffic cameras and through utilising the ‘eyes and ears’ of the almost 25,000 bus drivers, who are calling in any issues to the TfL control room so that they can be reacted to swiftly and intelligence can be analysed to prevent problems from recurring.

In addition, they will work with businesses along the routes to help improve the way they receive and manage deliveries, giving advice on re-timing or consolidation to reduce the impact of deliveries during peak times.

The new team is complemented by up-to-the-minute real-time journey information that TfL provides to advise road users of congestion and to suggest alternative routes. The **@TfLTrafficNews** Twitter feed, which in November gained its 500,000th follower, is an immediate source of information on traffic conditions across London. The TfL website continues to be updated regularly with month-by-month breakdowns of the build programmes for all TfL schemes, showing the locations of different phases of the builds and the areas where traffic may be affected.

TfL is already taking a similar zero tolerance approach to issues that cause congestion at **Blackwall Tunnel**. In 2010, alongside the **Metropolitan Police** and **Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency** (DVSA), a dedicated enforcement presence was established as well as additional over-height vehicle detection equipment and penalties for drivers running out of fuel and causing unnecessary delays. Since starting the initiative, there has been a 32% reduction in collisions, incidents and events causing congestion at Blackwall Tunnel.

TfL open data policy also enables app developers to access real time data feeds on current disruptions and planned works, as well as traffic cameras across the road network, to produce travel information apps to help road users be able to plan their journeys and avoid disruption.

See Editor’s comment (page three)...

**Transport for London
Press Dept**



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Information sought under the guise of the **Freedom of Information Act** can be very interesting. After all, **Uber** is a problem that links us all – **Licensed Taxis** and the majority of **Private Hire** companies. In all fairness, you have to allow the organisation you are requesting the info from a reasonable amount of time to respond, but the answer received from the **Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)** following a request about crime reports in respect of Uber cabs takes some beating. The request didn't come from *Call Sign*, but unsurprisingly the organisation that did put it in doesn't want to be linked with it and perhaps didn't want to irritate the MPS! I don't blame them but thank them for allowing us to use it. Any bold print is ours. We have also had to edit out some of the response or it would have taken up half of the issue! It also shows how little we are valued...

The FOIA requested info on how many crime reports were made to the Met over the past 12 months in respect of Uber, including reported incidents such as assaults and thefts etc, in addition to reported incidents such as driving without insurance and failure to stop at the scene of a collision etc. It asked how many had resulted in arrests, charges and convictions or in penalties being issued. It also asked for dates and locations for each incident...

The reply

"This email is to inform you that unfortunately it will not be possible to respond to your request within the cost threshold.

We estimate that the cost of complying with this request would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for agencies outside central Government; **this is set at £450 and represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours (at a rate of £25 per hour)** in determining whether the MPS holds the information and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this email therefore acts as a **Refusal Notice**.

Upon allocation of your request to me, enquiries were made with the Performance and Assurance Unit (PAU), who are responsible for corporate data collation and a colleague with access to the Met Integrated Information Platform (IIP), which enables different search methods to be applied to various Met IT systems. In addition, I made contact with the Met Prosecutions Unit for data on the second half of your request about incidents concerning failure to stop and driving without insurance involving Uber. Unfortunately, all of these units and colleagues have confirmed that they would be **unable to extrapolate the data that you have requested from our systems within the 18 hour threshold**.

In relation to the first half of your request about crime reports relating to offences occurring in Uber cabs, I can provide the following explanation that was provided by the PAU. **Uber is a licensed Cab Operator whose licence is issued by TfL**. Although any crimes committed by cab drivers would be recorded on the Crime Reporting Information system

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Police Service to an FOIA request, this is...

THE MOST RIDICULOUS RESPONSE EVER!

(CRIS), the MPS are not required to record the operator that the cab driver works for, only the occupation. This detail might be included in the free text fields, but extracting reports relating specifically to Uber by searching for the company name is therefore far more difficult. Furthermore, as the MPS does not hold a comprehensive list of named drivers and the companies that they work for, we also cannot search by named individuals. Even if this was possible, searches would no doubt be further complicated by the fact that drivers can work for more than one company. **In addition, victims are not obliged to provide their occupation and so would not be required to inform us if they worked for Uber, for example. Therefore, data cannot be extracted on this point.**

Given the complexities within your request and all of the different variations on why Uber may be mentioned, it is therefore very difficult to explain how such data could be extracted using our traditional searching methods. It must be remembered that our CRIS system is a live crime management system, as opposed to a statistical reporting tool and there are often limitations on how we are able to run reports to extract certain data. Therefore, the only way in which the MPS may be able to extract any relevant data from the CRIS system, where Uber had been used by either the victim or perpetrator of a crime in any capacity during the time period specified, would be to conduct a key word search for the exact term on the IIP, which is the only way in which such speculative searches can be conducted. This way the MPS would essentially be searching the free text that is recorded on the 'details' pages of each CRIS report that has been created during this period. Searching this way would result in a number of 'hits' where the word Uber featured somewhere on a CRIS report. This number would reflect the number of CRIS records which mentioned the word Uber.

I can confirm that our search of IIP has revealed that in the time period you specified the word Uber featured in excess of 600 CRIS reports. Again, I must stress that this does not mean that Uber was used in the way in which you have requested information about in over 600 cases. For example, it could be an individual's surname was Uber (*Eds note: Really?*) or that they lived on a street which featured the word Uber (*Eds note: Really?*) or that a victim simply stated that earlier in their evening they had used Uber to book a cab - not that any offence has occurred in relation to that company itself. Therefore, without opening each one of these 'hits' and reading the associated report, the MPS is unable to definitively answer your question.

It is estimated that a trained analyst can read 10 records an hour. If this was the case, to read through all of the reports associated with the hits and extract any of the additional information that you required, if the reports were even relevant, would take in excess of 60 hours. Even if we were to say that was a high estimate and estimated that it would take only half that time to read the report that the hit was associated with (which is extremely unlikely given that CRIS reports can range from 1 to in excess of 10 pages depending on the

complexity of the investigation), this would still take in excess of 30 hours.

Your request is further complicated by the fact that some of the information that you are requesting, such as Uber cars found to be driving without insurance etc, may also be recorded on different MPS systems, which would further extend the time that it would take to carry out the searches and comply with your request. I have been informed that to get this type of information an individual would be required to manually search of all the process books / summonses and collision accident books that were filled in by officers during the year in question in order to establish the information that you have requested. This is because Uber, if mentioned at all, would be included within these paper forms as part of the details of the incident. There would be no way in ascertaining which ones might be relevant without reading them all.

As the majority of the information that you have requested would be held on CRIS, it is this system which I have based my cost estimate on. Please note that the Information Commissioner's guidance states that 'Section 12 makes it clear that a public authority does not have to make a precise calculation of the costs of complying with a request. Only an estimate is required ... what amounts to a reasonable estimate can only be considered on a case by case basis.' Although it is hard to arrive at a precise calculation, especially in relation to the second half of your request, I do hope the above explanation has highlighted the extensive work which would be required to extract any pertinent information that is held by the MPS.

(Eds note: Well it does show how highly our trade is valued – obviously not very much).

Therefore I am content that it would far exceed the cost threshold to locate, retrieve and extract any relevant information that the MPS might hold that is pertinent to your specific request."

So the MPS would have agreed to spend £450 but not an extra £300 taking the total up to £750. Three years ago, The Daily Mail published a list of MPS spending over a 10 year period. It included £1billion on a 'core' IT contract with Capgemini plus £millions on software and upgrades. £10.9million on animals including £7million to keep dangerous seized dogs in kennels and £500,000 a year to clear horse manure from stables. Then there was £21million on weapons and armour, including £50,000 on several of the world's first throwable robots that can reconnoitre hostile environments, even in darkness.

How about £9.4million on food and drink for canteens including almost £3million on sandwiches and milk or £4.6million on market research to find out what the public thought about their services! As a reminder, we were talking about an extra 300 quid!

We could ask how many hours were spent writing the above response, because it was around twice as long as the parts we have published but we were afraid it could send our readers to sleep!

It ends by suggesting that a FOIA request be sent to TfL at Windsor House! TfL would love that!!!

There's heather and there's **Walton Heath** heather! I've been lucky enough to have played the Old Course at Walton Heath a few times via a good friend with serious connections. That might be because he always beats me, though it's a price well worth paying!

There are two courses at Walton Heath - the Old and the New course. I have never played the New course, although they do intertwine with each other and it looks just as magnificent as the Old one.

The club was open for play in 1904 and amazingly, **James Braid** was the resident professional from then until 1950! **Herbert Fowler** was the course architect and it is golf on a grand scale.

Many may find it quite stark as there aren't a multitude of trees; but there is heather and the heather here is a bit like 'barbed wire'; go in it and it's at the least one dropped shot - always assuming you can find the ball again!

If you bring your 'A game' then you can score fairly well, but over-confidence here is a cruel mistress... it will bite back!

Two par 5s on the back nine are reachable

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



in two, I've done it on more than one occasion. But you have to be brave on the 16th to take on the cunning fairway bunker on your drive and then the cavernous green side bunker on your second (I've three-putted twice after hitting that green in two, easily

done on WH greens).

Lastly and to show how highly it is rated, Walton Heath hosted the 1981 **Ryder Cup** and is used as a European qualifying venue for the **US Open**.

It's a course that is well worth playing. Now that I think about it, I've not heard from my pal for a while - I'll have to give him a call!

Happy golfing and a Happy New Year...

The photo shows the Par3 17th at the Walton Heath old course...

**Simon Wallis (M11)
Call Sign Online**

Handel & Hendrix in London

Handel & Hendrix in London celebrates the London lives and musical legacies of two of the most important figures in musical history, who lived, wrote and played in neighbouring buildings - but 240 years apart!

The top floor Mayfair flat that **Jimi Hendrix** called home during a pivotal period of his life will open permanently to the public on **10 February 2016**. Following a £2.4million, 2-year period of restoration, building and development, the upper floor rooms of **23 Brook Street** will open as part of a genuinely unique new heritage site, celebrating the lives of two great musical figures.

Handel House at 25 Brook Street is the elegant Georgian townhouse where **George Frideric Handel** lived and worked for 36 years. He wrote many of his greatest works there - including *Messiah* - held rehearsals and first performances of his music and died there in his second-floor bedroom in 1759.

Handel & Hendrix in London, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and other generous donors, will present the London homes of these two remarkable men revered for their musical talent, but separated by 240 years. Tickets for the Hendrix Flat are on sale at www.handelhendrix.org.

At the heart of the Hendrix Flat will be the main living room, painstakingly restored to how it would have been when Hendrix was in residence and giving an insight into the domestic life of an American superstar musician at the height of his creative powers. When Jimi Hendrix moved in on **4 July 1968**, he was entering a period of his life when the musical foundations that had led him to public acclaim were no longer stable; he was considering the next phase of his career with the release of his LP *Electric Ladyland* due later that summer.

His musical life thrived inside the flat; it was the scene of many hours of writing, visits from fellow musicians, hours of playing records at high volume, countless jam sessions and the place he returned to after his sensational February 1969 **Albert Hall** concerts.

Handel & Hendrix in London will include a new permanent exhibition tracing Hendrix's life in London in 1968 and 1969. It will feature original exhibits, including the **Epiphone FT79** acoustic guitar that he bought in New York at the end of his first US tour with the **Experience** and brought back to London. His girlfriend, **Kathy Etchingham**, recalled that Jimi had used it for everything he composed in this country, while Brook Street visitors remembered that the guitar was always within arm's reach, usually beside the bed and invariably played at raucous parties!

The exhibition will add new colour and detail to this time in Jimi Hendrix's life, drawing on new interviews with some of the many visitors to the flat, as well as people who lived and worked in the boutiques and offices in the immediate area around 23 Brook Street. Exhibits include previously unseen or rarely-seen images of Hendrix taken at the flat and in the local area.

Visitors will enter via Brook Street, before making their way to the third floor flat and the new set of permanent exhibition spaces. The main room of the flat, the scene of almost everything that happened there, has been designed to give the impression that Jimi and Kathy had just stepped out. The result of examination of surviving stills and film of the room, along with Kathy's recollections and as many visitors to the flat that it had been possible to find, the room will give a palpable sense of the everyday life of a great musical figure.

The Studio, a new, 40-seat, state-of-the-art space with climate control, interactive screen and special acoustic detail, will be a place for teaching by day and a light and luxurious concert venue by night. Both baroque and contemporary concerts will be held there and it will include a Bruce Kennedy harpsichord made in 1998 to match an instrument that Handel owned. Full details of the learning programme will be confirmed soon, but there will be elements of musical time travel between the work of Handel and Hendrix, as well as a series of oral history projects.

Among the most played records in Hendrix's collection was a copy of **Handel's Messiah** performed by the **English Chamber Orchestra**. Hendrix's interest in Handel clearly went well beyond the curiosity of living in the next door flat! In a gig at the **Winterland Ballroom, San Francisco** in October 1968, he can be heard playing a loose version of the **Hallelujah Chorus**, evidence of the hours he spent listening to *Messiah* in the building where it was composed.

Jimi and Kathy's days didn't start until the afternoon and the curtains stayed closed most of the time, earning Jimi the nickname **The Bat!** The ground floor of 23 Brook Street was taken up by **Mr Love**, a restaurant where Jimi and Kathy would often start the evening before heading off to the **Speakeasy Club** - which older **Dial-a-Cab** drivers may remember was at **48 Margaret Street** - for a jam session.

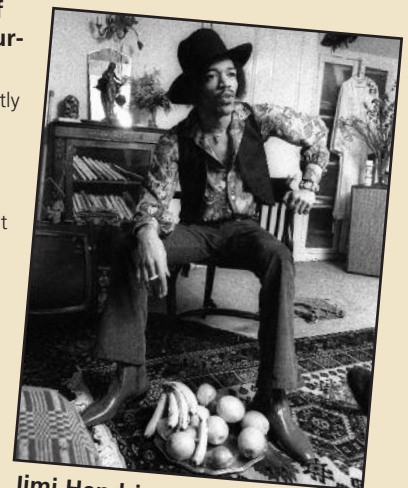
Visitor Information

Handel & Hendrix in London is at 25 Brook Street W1. Opening hours from 10 February are Mon-Sat 11am-6pm; Sunday 12noon-6pm; Last admission at 5pm.

Admission: Handel House; Adult £7.50; Child £3. Hendrix Flat: Adult £7.50; Child £3 OR Handel & Hendrix; Adult £10; Child £5.

Tickets on sale at See Tickets: www.seetickets.com.

More info: www.handelhendrix.org 020 7495 1685 mail@handelhendrix.org



Jimi Hendrix at 23 Brook St in 1969 (pic courtesy Barrie Wentzell)

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

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK



This month's Flashback is from the December 1998 Call Sign...

Driver, please hurry up - my waters have just broken!

Be honest. Haven't you always had a secret fear that whenever a heavily pregnant woman gets into the cab, she will suddenly go into labour? **Frank Danna (F75)** had no such fears - but perhaps he should have!

Frank had picked up an account ride from J O Hambro in Park Place, St James to St Thomas' Hospital SE1. His two female passengers said nothing specific other than they would like to get there as soon as possible.

So off went Frank into **Piccadilly** where the traffic was at an absolute standstill. Suddenly came the words that you just don't want to hear in heavy traffic: "Driver, please hurry up! My waters have just broken!"

It was 11th November - Armistice Day - and traffic everywhere was crawling along at a snail's pace. Frank tried to chop and change and eventually found himself in Pall Mall - where things looked even worse! But the Cavalry weren't too far away. There, just a matter of meters away, was a policeman on his motorbike.

Both Frank and his non-pregnant passenger shouted out in unison that there was a lady in the taxi whose water had broken and that they were desperate to get to the hospital quickly - she to have her baby and Frank to avoid too much mess!!!

The policeman picked up the situation immediately and told Frank to put his headlights on and to follow him. With his helmet tightened and siren blaring, the policeman led Frank and co on a high speed, non-stop trip via Buckingham Palace and Vauxhall Bridge.

Frank told **Call Sign** afterwards that he had never driven so fast through London during daylight hours and for the first time as a taxi driver, he actually had to put his seat-belt on! Needless to say, they arrived in record time.

The next morning, Frank was told that his passenger had given birth to a seven week premature, but otherwise healthy 5lb baby boy named **Max**!

Frank's only comment afterwards? "I will never again say I'm feeling bored whilst working... boring is good!!!"

Everyone at **Dial-a-Cab** sends their best wishes to mum and baby - and well done Frank...



Frank Danna - The flying 'Fox' cab

LTFUC and the Duchess!

Becoming a Christmas tradition, the **London Taxidriers Fund for Underprivileged Children** committee, together with a group of special needs children, were all invited to **Clarence House** to help **Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall** decorate the Christmas tree of the royal residence. This was the fourth such visit for the LTFUC and as always, they arrived in a fleet of taxis!

Although **Prince Charles** was busy and unable to attend, Camilla made the children feel very welcome and as one Committee member told **Call Sign**, that is how Camilla always is and that the children all take to her very quickly.

Also there again were children from **Helen & Douglas House**, which was at one time the world's first children's hospice. It now takes in young adults aged 16 to 35.



GLA TORY GROUP: "SCRAP KNOWLEDGE!"

A report from deputy leader of the Tory group in the GLA, **Richard Tracey**, has described the Knowledge of London as "archaic" and suggested that it was a "major barrier" to recruiting more taxi drivers! The report, **Saving an Icon**, also suggested that we needed to make fundamental changes in order to keep up with app-based private hire companies in an expanding city. He said that the KoL was outdated in a world of GPS navigation, that it was too expensive to achieve and could take people an average of three years to complete.

He added: "The examinations imposed are overly comprehensive in a time of GPS navigation and the cost of purchasing the designated Hackney Carriage is a barrier to entry in an industry which is also rapidly ageing."

Other suggestions were that there should be a review of the industry's competition and that drivers should be helped financially to purchase taxis.

Mr Tracey is stepping down from the London Assembly in May.

Charles Walker OBE is the constituent MP for *Call Sign's* Gary Cox (O46). He has been MP for Broxbourne since 2005 and was the stepson of the former Tory MP and leader of the then *Inner London Education Authority*, the late **Chris Chataway** who who was possibly best remembered for his athletics exploits, which involved running at the 1952 and 1956 **Olympic Games**, 1954 **European Championships** and probably most famously for his involvement in **Roger Bannister** being the first athlete to ever run a mile in under four minutes in that magical day at **Oxford University's Iffley Road track** on 6 May 1954.

In **July 2015** in the **House of Commons**, Mr Walker said that London had to choose between the "chaotic" **Uber** or "heavily-regulated but safe black cabs" because the two could not operate side by side. He added that while taxi drivers had to pass the **Knowledge**, as well as undergoing background and financial checks, technology start-up company **Uber** was "brazenly ignoring rules and flooding the capital with minicab drivers."

He warned that **TfL** officials at **City Hall** was having to deal with as many as 1,200 new minicab registrations each month, while **Uber** straightforwardly ignored most of the regulations. Mr Walker said that if **Uber** was pre-

CHARLES WALKER MP, GARY COX AND TAXIS



ferred by any individual company. He added that the qualities of the taxi and PH sectors and what they had delivered over many years for London - in the case of **Taxis**, over centuries - should be remembered. He said both were strong, important players and needed a protected future.

In **October 2015**, Mr Walker spoke following the **High Court** ruling that **Uber** drivers' smart phones were not taxi meters and which, in reality, made their London operations legal. The MP said that **Uber** was trying to drive black-cab drivers out of London and asked a pertinent question: "The bigger issue is if you want a licensed black-cab trade in London?"

Call Sign writer, Gary Cox (O46 recently wrote to his Broxbourne MP..

Dear Mr Walker,

I am a constituent of yours. Labour leader **Jeremy Corbyn** has asked his fellow political travellers in life to inform him of what questions they would like him to ask the Prime Minister at the despatch box, so I was hoping you would be so kind as to ask the PM a question on my behalf.

The question is: Should companies like **Uber** start paying taxes to help defend our country against the ongoing terrorist threat, while at the same time allow the taxi trade to start making some money so that it can keep donating to the worthy causes that they have been doing for many years. I await your reply with a great deal of interest.

Yours, G J Cox

Charles Walker quickly replied to Gary:

Dear Mr Cox,

I think it must be clear to you that I have done more to support **Black Cab** drivers than any other MP in the **House of Commons**, perhaps with the exception of **Zac Goldsmith**.

Of course I want **Uber** and its drivers to pay tax and I make this clear to anyone who is willing to listen to me, including the Prime Minister...

Charles Walker OBE MP

Gary told *Call Sign* afterwards: "I thanked Mr Walker for his swift reply and told him that if his thoughts were as powerful as his words, then I welcomed his sentiments and standing on the matter."

Call Sign has asked Zac Goldsmith to explain his LBC comments regarding his closing bus lanes within three years because of the new electric cars. He has yet to respond...

Michael Toomey
Call Sign Online



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

ferred, then there should be a genuine free for all, releasing taxi drivers from their current regulations regarding the vehicles they drive and allow them to put "...any old piece of rubbish" onto the road!

He was speaking in a late-night Commons adjournment debate and said that for 400 years, London had recognised the need to have a properly-regulated and licensed taxi service.

"I suggest," he said, "that our illustrious predecessors were not fools in this matter. London cannot have it both ways; it can try, but it will end in tears."

He ended by saying that without enforcement of the regulations, fares would rocket, cars would be unsafe, disability access would be hit and people would be less safe.

Two months later, in **September 2015**, Mr Walker was again speaking in favour of London's taxi service by claiming that there was something slightly sinister about **Uber's** business practices and pointed out to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, **Andrew Jones**, that in the USA, **Uber's** board had met to discuss how to discredit and destroy the career of an IT journalist concerned about **Uber's** business practices. The Broxbourne MP said he hoped Mr Jones was aware of such conduct by **Uber** and would take it into consideration when developing his thoughts on them.

Andrew Jones replied that he had "...absolutely no sympathy for any company that behaves in such a way as to discredit others. Other colleagues in the House have highlighted poor practice, such as on taxes. I have no sympathy for any company that dodges its responsibilities, including on taxes."

Mr Walker responded that **Uber** bullies local authorities and national Governments and said that it should not be allowed to bully the UK Government. **Andrew Jones** agreed and concurred that **HMG** would not be bul-

Mailshot

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

'Cheque' this out...

Alan

I noted **Brian Rice's** comments in the December *Call Sign* regarding the danger of sending credit card details to TfL when renewing licences and it also occurred to me how irresponsible the instruction was. So I wrote to **Helen Chapman** at TfL. This is what I wrote...

Philip Benjamin (K20)

Dear Ms Chapman,

Having just received my Licence renewal pack, I note you wish me to send by post a copy of my driving licence, counterpart licence and account details. For obvious security reasons, that would be totally irresponsible and puts me in a vulnerable position.

I have no intention of paying a fee to the post office for what is a simple procedure. Please advise of an alternative method of payment which is totally secure.

Philip Benjamin

At publication time, Philip told *Call Sign* that he was yet to receive a reply ...Ed

Special offers for taxi trips...

Hi Alan

It's currently very difficult to make a living out there and I dread the kipper this year. So I think **Dial-a-Cab** should have a '**kipper special**': Accounts with no run-ins or booking fees, just a dead clock for all trips to and from central London to outer postcodes and all airports. It could be based on TfL '**Fare Zones**' and perhaps go on for 3 months. I for one would be happy doing that kind of work. Trips like **Croydon** can go £50 so it's far better than sitting around doing nothing. The only coverage problem would probably be **Canary Wharf** to **London City Airport**.

I'm currently sitting on the **Waldorf rank**, fingers crossed for a flyer. It's no different than sitting on **Lincolns Inn Fields rank** (WC3) except that it moves quicker! So would I do an account trip at **Lincolns Inn** to **LCA** for a dead clock? Of course I would. Once drivers adjust to working this way, we could maybe slowly shrink the zone. I would prefer this to fixed price work. These cut price trips may help because it's better than doing nothing for the full price! Some may say we can't afford to do it. I say, can we afford not to.

Moving on, can I also comment on TfL themselves and their new policy to compel every taxi driver to accept cards. Why couldn't they just give every cab driver a hand held card reader? Now it will be more expense and holes all over for non-radio taxis and yet another tatty TfL sticker!

Uber and other minicabs aren't the danger to our trade, it's TfL and local councils like Camden. We need to fight for open access to London's roads, not get shoved around the block in a slow moving traffic queue while the bus goes straight through. **Euston Road** outside **UCL Hospital** is a prime example. Ever since we lost our case to **Islington Council** with the bus lane at **Angel**, we have been pushed aside and lumped into the same group with all the cowboys. We need to stand up and demand access to all bus gates and lanes. There won't be any point in hiring a taxicab soon because the journey times are too long. TfL is an unelected body that answers to no one other than the mayor, who is lied to and told untruths. Anyone who complains is brushed aside.

Re lost and delayed paperwork such as licences and medical reports (*December Call Sign*), the trade needs to sue for loss of income for drivers that can't work due to incompetence...

Jon Robinson (E88)

Keith Cain, DaC's Sales Manager replies: You're right Jon; the next few months are going to be a **Kipper Season** for sure. That was a phrase that up until a few years ago was rarely used to describe the quieter months, but I fear it will be the talking point amongst many. Within Sales we are often dealing with enquiries from clients who were once described as the 'bread and butter' work of our business. Their usage was not huge, but they paid standard charges. These types of customers are now talking about comparing administration charges and journey costs. In order to try and win their business, we have reduced administration charges to a minimum and now offer fixed rates for journeys that are not necessarily longer trips. These customers rarely have long trips, but trips for example from the south west areas to the west end or city are very common. The argument put to us is that the journey cost in a 'black cab' even if the meter starts when the passenger enters the taxi, is still more than prices offered by PH companies. There are some customers who have backed this up by showing us invoices with the car firm's name deleted, no administration, but showing the journey costs. It is obvious that the driver is not receiving the amount charged and with all the expense of operating the vehicle etc, their earnings – that's the money they take home – is small for the total number of hours they work. But it is the journey costs clients look at and look at us to match. I was recently asked to price a small account having been given three months' worth of journeys. I was told that my pricing structure was 10% more expensive than they were currently paying. I offered no run-ins and no gratuity and asked to review the journey costs, but was informed that it would be a waste of time because they now had quotes from two car companies of 20% less than they were already paying!



The only way to stay in the game is to offer regular journeys at fixed rates that will be below the meter, together with extremely low administration charges. As much as it pains all of us to do that, it is the only thing we can do to stay in the race with the hope that things will change for the better. But we also need your help in covering all account trips...

Signals, mergers and new BMs...

Dear Alan

It is now, as I write this, 10 months since the last AGM. One of the main issues of concern was the poor radio signals. Do you know what steps have been taken to improve the situation and what enhancements should we notice?

In the *October* issue of *Call Sign*, you published a letter from me suggesting that negotiations with the **Radio Taxis Group** may be stalling because they could be in talks with other parties, or they could discover legal or financial reasons not to proceed and we should have a **Plan B** ready. I realise that negotiations cannot take place in the public arena, but there has been a silence for so long, I sometimes wonder if we have a **Plan A**?

Most of the Board have been in place for many years, but **Garry White** and **Joe Brazil** are relative new comers. Each arrived with enthusiasm and many promises, but now I wonder what they have brought to the table (excuse the cliché). Can you please inform us of any practical suggestions that these board members have proposed.

Wishing you and all **Dial-a-Cab** members a prosperous new year and thanks to all staff who are keeping the office running efficiently. **Laurence Kelvin (W88)**

Laurence, Call Sign is usually happy to ask driver questions to **Board Members** and publish the responses, but all your questions will involve fairly lengthy answers and as we are almost at the AGM, it surely makes more sense to ask them there because the answers will then go into the following issue's AGM report anyway. As for signals, there is an article by DaC's IT Director, **John Bankes**, in this issue regarding our soon-to-be move to a **GPS dispatch system** ...Ed

Tavistock Place and the disability laws

Hello Alan

"They get into this trap in Tavistock Place, but they could not possibly get out

Mailshot

west, north or south, and that was where they experienced difficulty."

That wasn't somebody musing on the effects of yet another cycle lane, but a retired newsagent in 1890. The obstruction at that time were the frequent bars and chains put across roads – particularly at night – and it took an Act of Parliament to have these hindrances removed. It's only the cyclists who do not consider these lanes to be an obstruction.

I see that the cab rank outside the Tavistock Hotel has not been changed. Cabs have to face west in a street where traffic must be travelling east. The fact that the cycle lane actually goes round the rank must indicate that Camden Council have no provision for removing it, which does make me wonder. And I see from the *December Call Sign* that anybody in a wheelchair has to be set down in Bedford Way. So now Camden Council has exemption from the disability laws. It is illegal to treat disabled people any different from able bodied people. If abled bodied people can be set down at the front entrance, then, by law, so should disabled people. And finally, I watched an ambulance take nearly ten minutes to get from Kings Cross to the British Library, if someone dies because the emergency services cannot get their quickly, will the idiots who dreamt up this scheme be charged with corporate manslaughter?

Sean Farrell (B39)

Makes me wonder whether we are telling the wrong people and perhaps a word in the ear of an anti-disability group could have more influence than a bunch of cab drivers who just moan to each other? ...Ed

Tavistock Place: The answer?

Hi Alan

There is a very simple solution to Bloomsbury – Torrington Place – Tavistock Place traffic problem. Well half of it! Reopen Montague Place behind the British Museum to westbound traffic – either one way or two way...

Eddie Lambert (V37)

Of course Camden could just admit they were wrong and that the huge tailbacks and increased emissions that council has caused by the stupidity of a one-way system that doesn't work make them to revert to the status quo. Or they could follow your suggestion and at the same time also reopen Thornhaugh Street at the northwest corner of Russell Square – one that I bet most drivers don't even remember ever being open.

Read Joe Brazil's article on cyclists in this issue, because it shows the stupidity of the current situation where everything is aimed at the two-wheeled variety of transport ...Ed

TfL and Lower Thames Street...

Hi Alan

Interestingly in the *December Call Sign*, you wrote about delays to emergency services caused by construction of Bojo's cycling superhighways. To add fuel to the fire, I have heard from a reliable source, a fireman, that **Upper / Lower Thames Street** is a major problem to **London Fire Brigade** emergency vehicles departing **Dowgate** fire station. Makes you wonder that the clowns at **TfL** couldn't foresee a problem with response times increasing by over 50% for some *shouts*. The recent fire station closures have made matters worse...

David Cohen (E94)

It always sounds as though we have a pop at TfL because we have nothing better to do. If only that were true because their decisions leave most sensible people scratching their heads and wandering if what they are actually seeing is real! ...Ed

Traffic and emergency vehicles

Hi Alan

I never thought that TfL policies would actually cause me to retire, but I'm not sure I can stand the horrendous traffic conditions caused by TfL any more. I have just had three consecutive jobs where the passengers have exited the cab before getting to their destination because the traffic has been so awful; so I agree with your Editorial (*December Call Sign*) where you write that the emergency services are complaining about the traffic conditions caused by the Mayor's Cycling Superhighways. I am now contemplating early retirement in July purely because of the traffic. Yes, TfL may say that the roadworks could be finished by then, but they will be replaced by the lanes that cyclists don't even have to use, so the traffic will be the same. Do I sound totally fed up? That's because I am...

Bernie Silver (F13J – formerly G08)

I think most drivers will sympathise with your view Bernie. There are two reasons why the traffic is so appalling; as you point out, the cycling superhighways are certainly one, but the other is also thanks to the Mayor and his TfL – that is the number of PH vehicles they have licensed. So for all those who keep asking me for figures, the current number of licensed PH drivers is around the 92,000 mark with around 25,300 licensed taxi drivers. In 2005, there were 24,700 licensed taxi drivers and 19,000 licensed PH drivers. So in just over 10 years, the number of licensed minicabs has shot up in 'real' numbers by an astronomical 73,000! In case anyone thinks that is a typo, let me write it again. In just over 10 years, TfL have licensed an additional 73,000 minicab drivers. Does that tell you anything about TfL? Well they certainly think they are good, whereas we consider them to be abject failures??? ...Ed



I wonder...

Dear Al

I wonder who it was that waved Uber through on the nod? I wonder how Boris got one & half billion plus to put in bike lanes when George is screwing everybody else? I wonder if sleeping in your car overnight is legal? I wonder how long it takes an Uber driver (who lives in Holland) to get home after a day's work? I wonder what happened to Mr Johnson's Euro emission targets after issuing over 100,000 Uber licences? I wonder who owns the roads, as I always thought they were public highways and not just bike lanes?

The only thing that I do not wonder about is that the bike lanes will eventually be dug up!

Happy new year to all...

David Hughes (A73)

Hi David, I'm just wondering why you wonder so much, cos we all know the answers! ...Ed

Air pollution

Yes, Alan you were right (*December Editorial, Call Sign*). London's air quality pollution level of **nitrogen dioxide** has remained pretty static in recent years, despite greener engines, congestion zones and cycle hire. More diesel engines has given rise to fine particle pollutant pm25 – but when you look at the bigger picture, then London has not done too badly. The **World Health Organisation** has a list of pm2.5 levels – the worst being **Delhi** with a concentration level of 153, next comes **Beijing** with 56, **Los Angeles** is at 20, **Paris** is on 17 with **London** on 16. **Melbourne** has an ultra-low 5 – they tried super cycle highways 'down under' but dug them up after a few years because they just were not used enough!

Like you, I just can't see the Lycra brigade being relegated to a cycle lane stuck behind some knob on a Boris bike admiring Big Ben!

Dave Heath (Ex W27)

Brighton, East Sussex

The way the traffic is in London, you have to wonder whether we have all been living under the fairy tree, because suddenly, when we've all started to accept that emission levels were getting worse thanks to more and more cars, we're told that things aren't really that bad anymore – yet London is at a standstill. Has someone been telling pokies just to get bikes in and cars out??? Stay in Brighton David, you wouldn't like it here ...Ed

TX4 Euro 6

OUR NEW CAB IS BLACK AND GREEN.



New TX4 Euro 6 from just £159 per week*

The new Euro 6 TX4 is black and green! Its 2.8 litre diesel VM engine has been designed to be cleaner, greener while delivering improved power output without impact on fuel economy.

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*Terms and conditions apply. Business users only. Finance offer available on Personal Contract Purchase, figures based on TX4 Elegance (automatic transmission) at £42,795 OTR with a customer deposit of £3,295 followed by 48 monthly payments of £688.21 (equivalent weekly payments of £158.81) plus an optional final payment of £16,830 based upon an annual contracted mileage of 30,000 (120,000 over term) and an Option To Purchase Fee of £10 on the last payment. Deposits can be made from £0 and paid on collection; the above is an example deposit based on the finance illustration. Three year plans are also available. Excess mileage charge of 6.0 pence (+VAT) per mile applies. If the vehicle is in good condition and has not exceeded the allowed mileage you will have nothing to pay. Finance is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. Finance is provided by Black Horse Taxi Finance a trading style of Black Horse Ltd, St William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. Other models are available.

Fuel economy information: TX4 (Euro 6) in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.7 (11.0), Extra Urban 41.5 (6.8), Combined 33.2 (8.5), CO2 emissions: 222g/km.

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