

March 2016

# Call Sign



From the home of Dial-a-Cab International

## ***AGM SENSATION!***

***Brian Rice announces DaC House  
value increase of fivefold making each  
driver's share worth around £20,000!***





# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

*This month sees a 'What's On' guide, 100 of them with burst times (where possible). \*\*\* If Arsenal go through to the next round of the FA Cup, the match on 12/3/16 at the Emirates will be cancelled...*

Venue	Date	Event	Venue	Date	Event
ExCel	01/03/2016	Hotelympia (Burst 17:30)	ExCel	16/03/2016	HR Tech World (Burst 16:00)
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	01/03/2016	Higher Education Forum (Burst 18:00)	ExCel	16/03/2016	Wearable Technology (Burst 17:30)
Arsenal	02/03/2016	Arsenal v Swansea (Burst 21:30)	O2 Arena	16/03/2016	Adele
ExCel	02/03/2016	Hotelympia (Burst 17:30)	Olympia Conf. Cntr.	16/03/2016	Boden Sale (Burst 19:00)
Olympia Central	02/03/2016	The National Career (Burst 15:00)	Royal Albert Hall	16/03/2016	Natalie Merchant (starts 19:30)
Olympia Grand	02/03/2016	The PA Show & Confex Burst (17:30)	Olympia Conf. Cntr.	17/03/2016	Boden Sale (Burst 16:00)
Olympia National	02/03/2016	Event Production (Burst 17:30)	ExCel	18/03/2016	Capital Talent (Burst 16:00)
WHU	02/03/2016	v Tottenham (Burst 21:30)	ExCel	18/03/2016	MOVE IT (Burst 18:15)
ExCel	03/03/2016	Hotelympia (Burst 16:30)	O2 Arena	18/03/2016	Adele
O2 Arena	03/03/2016	Rudimental	Olympia Grand	18/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Olympia Central	03/03/2016	Knitting & Stitching (Burst 19:00)	Royal Albert Hall	18/03/2016	Spectacular Schools' (Burst 14:20)
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	03/03/2016	Commissioning (Burst 16:30)	Chelsea	19/03/2016	v WHU (Burst 16:45)
Olympia Grand	03/03/2016	The PA Show Burst (17:30)	ExCel	19/03/2016	Capital Talent (Burst 16:00)
Olympia National	03/03/2016	Event Production (Burst 17:30)	ExCel	19/03/2016	MOVE IT (Burst 18:15)
Olympia Central	04/03/2016	Knitting & Stitching (Burst 17:30)	ExCel	19/03/2016	Abu Dhabi Grand Slam (Burst 21:30)
Olympia Central	04/03/2016	Childcare (Burst 16:00)	O2 Arena	19/03/2016	Adele
Chelsea	05/03/2016	v Stoke (Burst 16:45)	Olympia Grand	19/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
O2 Arena	05/03/2016	X factor tour	Royal Albert Hall	19/03/2016	Classical Spec (starts 15:00 & 19:30)
Olympia Central	05/03/2016	Knitting & Stitching (Burst 17:30)	Tottenham	19/03/2016	v Bournemouth (Burst 16:45)
Tottenham	05/03/2016	v Arsenal (Burst 14:30)	ExCel	20/03/2016	MOVE IT (Burst 17:00)
O2 Arena	06/03/2016	Wet Wet Wet	O2 Arena	20/03/2016	Peter Andre
Olympia Central	06/03/2016	Knitting & Stitching (Burst 17:00)	Olympia Grand	20/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 17:00)
Olympia National	06/03/2016	Bridal Show (Burst 18:00)	Royal Albert Hall	20/03/2016	Classical Spec (starts 15:00 & 19:30)
Olympia National	07/03/2016	Bridal Show (Burst 18:00)	O2 Arena	21/03/2016	Adele
Fulham	08/03/2016	v Burnley (Burst 21:30)	Olympia Grand	21/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Olympia National	08/03/2016	Bridal Show (Burst 15:30)	O2 Arena	22/03/2016	Adele
QPR	08/03/2016	v Derby (Burst 21:30)	Olympia Conf. Cntr.	22/03/2016	Pulse Live (Burst 17:00)
Chelsea	09/03/2016	v Paris SG (Burst 21:30)	Olympia Grand	22/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Olympia Grand	09/03/2016	Retail Business Tech. (Burst 17:00)	O2 Arena	23/03/2016	Mariah Carey
Olympia West	09/03/2016	Retail Design (Burst 17:00)	Olympia Conf. Cntr.	23/03/2016	Pulse Live (Burst 15:00)
Royal Albert Hall	09/03/2016	Indiana Jones (starts 19:00)	Olympia Grand	23/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Olympia Grand	10/03/2016	Retail Business Tech. (Burst 17:00)	Royal Albert Hall	23/03/2016	Hacienda (starts 19:30 sold out)
Olympia West	10/03/2016	Retail Design (Burst 17:00)	O2 Arena	24/03/2016	Ellie Goulding
Royal Albert Hall	10/03/2016	Indiana Jones (starts 19:00)	Olympia Grand	24/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 21:00)
Olympia National	11/03/2016	Franchise Exhibition (Burst 17:00)	Royal Albert Hall	24/03/2016	Bootleg Beatles (start 19:30 sold out)
Royal Albert Hall	11/03/2016	Western Music (starts 19:30)	O2 Arena	25/03/2016	Ellie Goulding
Arsenal ***	12/03/2016	v WBA (Burst 19:15)	Olympia Grand	25/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
ExCel	12/03/2016	Les Mills Live (finish 18:30)	O2 Arena	26/03/2016	a-ha
Fulham	12/03/2016	v Bristol City (Burst 16:45)	Olympia Grand	26/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	12/03/2016	Bass Guitar Show (Burst 18:00)	O2 Arena	27/03/2016	Little Mix
Olympia National	12/03/2016	Franchise Exhibition (Burst 16:00)	Olympia Grand	27/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 17:00)
QPR	12/03/2016	v Brentford (Burst 16:45)	Olympia Grand	28/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Royal Albert Hall	12/03/2016	Indiana Jones (starts 14:30 & 19:00)	WHU	28/03/2016	v WHU All *s Burst (15:45)
WHU	12/03/2016	v Watford (Burst 16:45)	O2 Arena	29/03/2016	Dynamo
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	13/03/2016	Bass Guitar Show (Burst 18:00)	Olympia Grand	29/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
Royal Albert Hall	13/03/2016	Gala (starts 13:45 & 19:45 sold out)	Wembley Stadium	29/03/2016	England v Netherlands (Burst 21:45)
ExCel	15/03/2016	HR Tech World (Burst 17:00)	O2 Arena	30/03/2016	Dynamo
ExCel	15/03/2016	Wearable Technology (Burst 17:30)	Olympia Grand	30/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 18:00)
O2 Arena	15/03/2016	Adele	O2 Arena	31/03/2016	Janet Jackson
			Olympia Grand	31/03/2016	Ideal Home Show (Burst 21:00)

*For a more comprehensive list of 'What's On' for March, go to [www.myfav.co.uk/nnomar16.pdf](http://www.myfav.co.uk/nnomar16.pdf)*



# from the editor's desk

Well, whether you like AGMs or find them deadly dull, no one at this year's meeting could possibly attach the word 'dull' to it! Considering the way things are out on the street, it was carried out in an astonishingly well-behaved manner and believe me, having missed just one AGM since 1974, I've witnessed some that would make the Alamo seem like a game of chess!

The most astonishing part to come out of the meeting was that when you think how bad things are in the trade, you suddenly realise that each Member of **Dial-a-Cab** is actually sitting on an awful lot of money! The word *awful* is important because should the Society's membership decide to cash in, there will be much antagonism from those taxi drivers outside of DaC telling us how awful we are to put money first.

One previous attempt at demutualisation by another radio circuit ended in abject failure for the drivers, when their nest egg turned out to be worth no more than the paper it was written on. We, on the other hand, are lucky that the investment purchased on our behalf by **Brian Rice** just nine years ago that went from being just an office building to become Dial-a-Cab House, has in that short time increased in value by over five times to just under 18 million quid! That means many thousands each, if that's what drivers vote for. But if that is what Members vote for, there will be a tremendous amount of jealousy and name-calling from non-members. The next few months are going to be nothing less than fascinating.

In the meantime, those of you that weren't there and those who just like AGMs can read a very long report on the meeting that took me around three days to put together! As it says at the beginning of the article, it is as close as I can get but it would have been an impossibility to do a word-for-word report. So if reading long reports on meetings is the type of thing you enjoy, have fun reading it and think of my typing finger that ended up feeling numb!

## Sheer madness!

Mayor **Boris Johnson** faced a storm of protest from drivers of all types of four-wheel vehicles after revealing plans to shut an eastbound lane of the A40 Westway to allow the building of another cycle superhighway. This on a road that is usually solid anyway during busy periods and just heavy during quieter times, but is a scheme that the Mayor's cycling commissioner **Andrew Gilligan** – a cyclist like his boss – described as a perfect solution! Mr Gilligan's idea of a perfect solution will result in making the road unusable!

**The loony duo are also planning to shut the Outer Circle in Regents Park except for a few hours each day in order to facilitate a superhighway linking Swiss Cottage to the West End. That one would also see traffic restrictions on Avenue Road.**

Messrs Johnson and Gilligan are acting as though they own London and surely that is wrong. Of course, if they are actually found to be mad, then they would escape the prison sentence they both deserve to be sent to along with their Tfl compatriots, because what they are doing is literally murdering London.

The man aiming to succeed his fellow Conservative Mayor in May, **Zac Goldsmith**, says he *might* consider dismantling these ridiculous cycle superhighway lanes that even many cyclists



don't like if it turns out that they delay emergency vehicles. Personally, I don't know whether to laugh or cry that we have politicians prepared to spend multi-millions on bike lanes that are and will continue to cause absolute chaos while others say they *may* dismantle them. It's enough to make you just give up...

## Taxis and Private Hire: When will Tfl learn the difference???

Drivers have been saying it for years to such a degree that defending our licensing authority, Tfl and its head honcho, London Mayor **Boris Johnson**, has now reached a stage where their incompetence makes that almost impossible. Yep, I know this column has already had a pop at his Mayorship this month, but when you sit and read some of the stuff Tfl – every cock-up matters – get up to, then it is so hard not to.

For years we've heard examples of Tfl spokespersons talking about private hire as though there was no difference between them and licensed taxis. Now they have put that incompetence into print in an important document.

**Tfl's Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Conditions (Responsibilities of the licensee)** has a section on changing the VRM or Vehicle Registration Mark. We can understand the *Evening Standard* getting it wrong – deliberately or otherwise – but Tfl? Bearing in mind that the Tfl paper is aimed at minicabs, surely someone at Tfl sitting in Blackfriars with their six figure salaries could actually proof the papers that they put out with so much regularity first, before then allowing the world to see them.

Under the heading of 'Change of VRM' and giving the phone numbers that private hire drivers must contact, it goes on to not only tell them that they must bring with them the declaration on the reverse of the existing TAXI licence but also the amended **TAXIMETER INSTALLATION** certificate to show the new number! What do you mean that PH can't have meters? This is Tfl, headed by a blond bomber who has destroyed London's traffic flow with roadworks, brought the capital to a standstill by cutting the road widths in half while at the same time adjusting the traffic lights system so that you now wait much longer and when you finally do actually start moving, have to drive along in a low gear because the speed limits are so low.

Yet he thinks he has saved London and pretends to want to help by talking of a cap on private hire numbers when it is his department that brought the regulations in to start with. Now

when he perhaps can see the error of his ways, his pal in **Downing Street** together with his pals, Messrs **Hilton** and **Whetstone**, won't allow it because it would damage Uber, of which, naturally, **Rachel Whetstone** is a prime player.

Sadly after all these years, **Boris** probably knows far more about vintage wines than he will ever know about taxis. Roll on May! The only shame is that Sir **Boris** of England can just leave rather than get the boot! Not in a million years would I ever have expected myself to say out loud that even with the numerous problems we had with **Ken Livingstone**, he was still by far a better Mayor than **Boris** could ever be!

## And Tfl's good bits!

I have to be fair and there are a few nice bits about Tfl that I must write of, because they are true. I've had several occasions of late to phone Tfl because of delays in my licence and I have to say that those I have spoken to on the other end of the phone – with just one exception mainly because I couldn't understand what he was talking about – not only appeared quickly after the usual push button process that big companies now all put you through, but were all extremely helpful and seemed to have much in the way of commonsense that those in positions currently there, sadly lack.

The thought even occurred to me that perhaps one of these kind souls would be better employed in a higher position than those above them who struggle to make any sense of the decisions they come up with!

## Demo

There is a report in this issue on the taxi demonstration that was held on 10th February along **Whitehall**. I lost count at how many I have attended, going right back to the **LTDA** organised one where we took over the **County Hall** car park by getting there at 6.30 am, before all the councillors did, causing them to hunt around Westminster for a parking space. It was brilliant because we hit them personally.

This latest one was also excellent because the turnout was huge with an estimated one-third of all licensed taxis being there! Others still chose to go to work and in my view they should feel ashamed at allowing others to lose money while they coined it thanks to the obvious lack of cabs on the street. As **Terry Buffin** (£16) said at the recent AGM, those not wanting to be at Whitehall could have quite easily either stayed at home or taken a lunch break during the time the demo was on. Not everyone agrees with demonstrations – I'm not always sure they do a lot of good – but to just go to work when others are fighting for you, really is wrong.

Has the demo done any good? Well time will tell because it probably won't be the only one this trade has, but it will never beat the **County Hall** demo because the councillors were mortified at their parking spaces being taken and were ready to discuss anything rather than it happening again!

Also read the speech from Mayoral candidate **George Galloway** at the demo. A real scary shocker...

## Last word

My sincere thanks to all those that came up to me at the AGM to say they enjoy the mag. It still means a lot to me and again, I thank you all...

**Alan Fisher**  
callsignmag@aol.com

# Reflections of the Chairman

## AGM

It was an eventful AGM, which certainly went very well especially considering the situation the London Taxi trade currently finds itself in. What was particularly interesting was that for the first time in many years I am faced with writing to the whole **Dial-a-Cab** Membership in the near future regarding three issues that Members present at the AGM wanted further information – and possibly even a vote – on, or at least *some* of the proposals at a later date.

So my intention will be to write to all DaC Members explaining the three issues within the same correspondence, however, one of the issues is delaying me at the moment and until that situation is resolved, it will slightly delay the situation and you will understand why a little later in this report.

I informed those Members present at the meeting that I had received an offer for your business – initially the offer seemed reasonable from a company within the taxi trade, a company that I believed would be acceptable to Members.

Consequently, we decided to have your building valued in an attempt to see if the offer we received for the Society was acceptable. There is a clause in the 'Heads of Agreement' that says both parties must agree on a valuation for the Society within thirty days of Dial-a-Cab getting a valuation for your building, so at the time of writing that is the issue that's holding up the process.

Personally, I believe the price will be too high for the third party as the valuation we received for the building was £17.9million. When you consider you paid £3.7m when we bought the building back in May 2007, I think you will agree that we have done rather well. However, we have to realise that the building is only worth that figure if someone is prepared to pay that amount.

That leads me to the three issues I mentioned earlier. The majority of Members present, when they realised the potential value of their property, wanted me to write to all Members to ask them if they would like their property to be sold, with any proceeds distributed to Members. But of course, in order to do that we would first have to demutualise the Society. So please bear in mind that any correspondence will only be in an attempt to gauge the feelings of Members, to see if they want to take it to the next stage by having a vote or making a rule change, depending on the topic.

I have been saying for many years that the BoM is too large, that we do not need five elected members, a Chairman plus a Finance Manager, making a seven man Board, because what that produces is discontentment from some on the Board that are not required on a day-to-day basis.

I always felt that it would be inappropriate for the BoM to put this rule change forward, as some would accuse the Board of forming a *clique* in an attempt to deny other Members



being elected to that Board.

However, this time it is different as the majority of the Members present felt that it *was* appropriate and wanted to give the whole Membership an opportunity to vote on the issue. What I will probably do is to ask Members initially if they wish to reduce the size of the BoM with a simple *Yes* or *No* and if *Yes*, would they prefer to elect a Chairman plus two BMs or a Chairman plus three BMs.

Finally, an issue was raised with which I have some sympathy. As many of you know, it is now becoming increasingly difficult to purchase a second hand taxi, due to the fifteen year rule and I know some of our Members are in a situation where they do not wish to buy a new taxi because they simply can't afford it, or they don't consider it a viable proposition due to the number of years they have left in the trade.

The second hand market is almost non-existent, so the Member whose taxi has reached fifteen years does not have much alternative other than to rent a vehicle. That then begs the question as to whether if a Member has been a shareholder for ten years or more and has to relinquish

ownership of a taxi for whatever reason and then rents another taxi with the Dial-a-Cab equipment in it, can he/she remain a Member and Shareholder in Dial-a-Cab?

As I stated earlier, I will initially be writing to you all and you can state by return if you wish to take any or all of the issues forward. If you do, then we will have a postal vote and if the vote is to change a rule, then seventy five per cent of the votes returned will be needed in order for that rule to be changed.

It could be that if the majority of Members wished a new rule regarding the retaining of membership after ten years' service to be inserted into the rule book, then that could be done with a postal vote as it would obviously affect some Members immediately.

Regarding the change in the size of the Board, if most Members were in favour, that could be held over till the next AGM, which is an electable one and the proposed new rule voted on then. A new rule does not become a rule until it is registered so the BoM could be elected and after registered, the Board Member's with the least votes would stand down until the new required number is achieved.

At the moment, the above is hypothetical and no doubt events will become a lot clearer in the future so none of the above, or how we go about the issues, are cast in stone. After all, if you decide to demutualise, then the changing of our rules will become obsolete so before you bombard *Call Sign* or me with questions, please wait just a little longer to see how the issues develop.

I have merely attempted to relay to all Members what they might expect in the future and also to let the Members who were at the AGM know their requests will be acted upon...

**Brian Rice**  
Chairman  
Dial-a-Cab

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

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

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

## #SAVETAXI NOW BATTLES TFL!

### And they need your help NOW!



**Artemis Mercer and Action for Cabbies need your help. If you haven't yet donated, don't wait till it's too late...**

standards as rigorously as those imposed on black taxis.

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

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

The first day raised £31,412 of the £600,000 needed, with the latest total reaching around £200,000. But there are only a few weeks left and if you can help, go to:

<http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/Action-for-Cabbies> and click on Pledge to support the fund.

*Your livelihoods may depend on it...*

Book Review

Book Review

Book Review

Book Review

Book Review

# LONDON TAXIS IN CAMERA

## A taxi history in pictures

**Bill Munro** is quite probably the taxi trade's most prolific writer with every book published by him always worth reading; so the second and enlarged edition of **London Taxis in Camera** (Earlwood Press, £21.99) is one book that I just had to look at.

With so many problems besetting this business, it's important we know where we came from as well as where we want to go to and this book shows that quite beautifully – after all, who knew there were quite that many taxis to fill 160 pages with photos! Many of them are in colour and have never been seen in print before – in addition to histories of the cabs and even some of the early garages!

The book begins with a time "before" taxis where it explains the difference between **Hansom Cabs** and taxis, why having no meter made a difference and what happened when they were introduced.

The first definitive part of our history that Bill writes of is the **Edwardian** period, the introduction of the **London Cab Co** of Brixton and its 500 **Renault** taxis. That in itself was somewhat prophetic as around sixty years later, **Michael Gotla** introduced the vehicle that became known as the minicab – **Welbeck Motors Renault Dauphines**. And as you would expect in such a comprehensive look at the trade, there is an informative piece on **Welbeck**.

But it's in the chapter on the 1930s and WW2 that familiar names to current – albeit older – drivers start to creep in with taxis such as the **Beardmore** and **Austin Low Loader**. There are photos of taxis both in service as cabs and also as fire engines during the war and as it does throughout the book, full explanations of who, what and why are alongside.

It is in the Post-war section of **London Taxis in Camera** that I found my favourite photo in the book. Yes, it's in black and white and quality-wise isn't the best because there was obviously a bit of the old London smog around, but I found a fascination in seeing a rank of **Nuffield Oxford** taxis filling up the whole of Westminster Bridge on 20 November 1947 waiting for passengers at the wedding of the then **Princess Elizabeth** and **Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark**; of course later to become **Queen Elizabeth** and **The Duke of Edinburgh**!

Then there was the story of the 1954 **Monte Carlo Rally** and how the **BBC's** only sports show of the time

**Sportview** covered the event with **Peter Dimmock** and an **FX3** apparently pulling up in a **Glasgow** street to pick up someone

in a bowler hat who "asks" to be taken to **Monte Carlo**! Hardly earth shattering but an interesting piece of history that most wouldn't know about in addition to the historical facts that abound throughout the book.

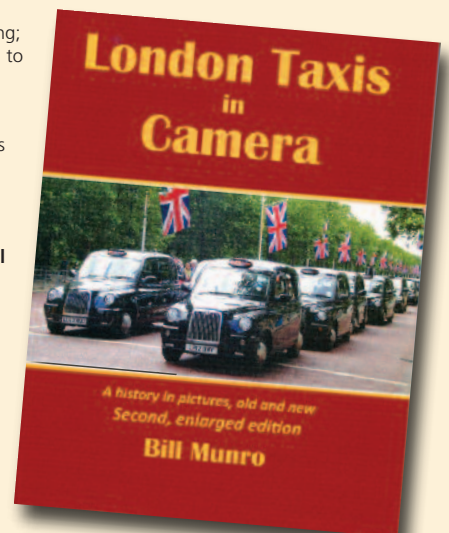
Moving along to the twentieth century, that section begins with a photo of a demo that I'd forgotten all about, even though after reading it I remembered being there in my **FX4**! We were demonstrating against the then Labour government who had failed to compensate the trade for the raging inflation that was going on. Happy memories? Probably not, but it nonetheless made fascinating reading.

Also in that section, the beginning of wheelchair access and how the United Nations became involved plus the advent of the **Metrocab** and **Asquith** in addition to the various **LTI** progressions. Then there is the part that many still curse – the advent of all-over livery advertising. Also included is a piece on our "little green huts" and of course the latest taxis including the **TX4**, the **Vito** and many other strange looking variations – who remembers the **Lucas** electric taxi – before ending with a history of the **PCO**, something many detested, but would love to see back now after watching **TfL** in action!

I have many taxi books in my library, beginning with a first edition of **Anthony Armstrong's** 1930 book, **TAXI** that told of the daily grind of London taxi drivers between the two World Wars. Then there are most of the books by **Bill Munro** and the late **Phil Warren** in addition to many attempts from other authors to portray parts of our business. But I have to say that **London Taxis in Camera** is by far the best one of them all!

Unlike some of the taxi books I've seen where the photos and text look as though they were just copied with a cheap copier and stuck into a book format, the photos here are excellent with clear and precise explanations as to what's happening. It caters for both those who just like the historical aspect as against those who are more mechanically minded and like to know how things work! I come in the first group and have to say that it was so informative that I will soon be reading it again!

**London Taxis in Camera** (Earlwood Press, £21.99) is available on Amazon and various different outlets. Earlwood are doing a postal service where you can order the book online and get it for £19 including postage, or £22 including postage for anywhere outside the UK for the benefit of **Call Sign's** 8000+ internet readers. USA readers can find it in bookstores and various outlets...



*Alan Fisher, Call Sign Online*

# Jery's World



Not bad! We've been here 3 hours and earned an extra fifteen million quid! We've had worse days!!!



Disclosure &  
Barring Service

If you find updating the DBS every time your  
licence expires a hassle, now there is a...



Disclosure &  
Barring Service

## DBS UPDATE SERVICE

**T**hink back to when your three-yearly taxi drivers licence expired and the hassle you got trying to update your DBS certificate (formerly known as the CRB check).

**Call Sign** has received numerous complaints from Dial-a-Cab drivers over how long it is taking to get a completed DBS check.

First there's the online performance, followed by a visit to the Post Office with not one or two ID documents, but three! According to **LTPH**, it is the DBS that holds up the renewing of the licence; so if you didn't have that, not only could it save a lot of hassle but also a lot of time... and if you could also save money? Well now you can do all that!

**The Disclosure & Barring Service have an update service that means once you have received your DBS certificate and decided to subscribe to the update service, then you need never apply for a new one. LTPH – or any employer – will just need the membership number and can check that there have been no changes to your original DBS without any delays.**

There is a fee of £13 annually to subscribe to the update service when you apply for your DBS certificate. That compares favourably to a three-yearly fee of £56.85 but means that you will no longer be required to apply for a new DBS certificate or have the frustrating wait associated with it. So what do you have to do? Well it has to be done within 19 days of your next renewal. Once you have completed the DBS form and have your application form reference number, just log onto the DBS website and join. You will need a credit/debit card. If you prefer to just go through the performance every three years, then that option will still be there...

**Go to the DBS website at <https://www.gov.uk/db-update-service> for more details...**

**Dennis Latchett**  
Call Sign Online



**L**ondon Mayoral candidate, **George Galloway**, has said several times that should he be elected as Mayor then he would attempt to kick **Uber** out of London. As his son-in-law is on the Knowledge and as he has also expressed his admiration for London taxi drivers, that may not be surprising. But what was something of a shock was listening to an off-the-cuff speech he made to some cab drivers and representatives of the press at the February 10th **Whitehall** demo, standing just yards away from **Downing Street**. His words were captured on film by **Dial-a-Cab** driver **John Davis** (V41).

Mr Galloway said:

"I've always spoken directly to cabbies – 7 years on **TalkSport** – and in the great struggle that you have now had to undergo at the hands of **Uber** and the corrupt relationship with the Government behind me. When I saw **George Osborne** sitting free and *gratis* in the stand at the **Superbowl** last weekend, all was clear – if it hadn't been clear before.

I'm saying now, in the presence of microphones and cameras, that money is changing hands now or in the future between **Uber** and their owners and the people making the political decisions that relate to the taxi industry.

There is no other explanation possible for a relentless war that has been unleashed against skilled workers, small businessmen and women with high levels of skills, who pay taxes as law abiding citizens, who have to prove that they are law

## GEORGE GALLOWAY SENSATION!

He claims money will or has changed hands between **Uber** and the decision makers!



George Galloway at the demo shocks with corruption comments!

abiding citizens in the beginning and throughout their lives as cab drivers.

There is no other explanation for the unleashing of an unregulated, deregulated, deskilled, unskilled workforce deployed against the cab trade. There is no other explanation for the bonfire of standards and regulations and laws that you have been forced to face.

My son-in-law goes around London all day and every day on a moped, building up his skills just as every one of you has done; he did so in the hope of a dignified, skilled trade to keep him and my grandchildren for the rest of his working life and it's plain that it is being destroyed by these hucksters behind me who have told us – or at least told **Boris Johnson**: Leave **Uber** alone!!!

And my goodness, that is an instruction he has certainly observed! He hasn't laid a finger on **Uber**."

Judging by the cheers from drivers at his words, the majority seemed to agree with him...

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**Bob Francis (Y98) has been on Dial-a-Cab 11 years and a taxi driver substantially longer. He recently asked himself a question he hadn't thought of before. The TfL consultation on Private Hire suggested a possibility of making PHVs pay the congestion charge and to also compulsorily carry or display a copy of their insurance details at all times...**

"So I thought **Call Sign** readers might find this interesting," Bob told us. "A number of years ago I wrote a letter to **Mayor Boris Johnson** headed *How not to pay the Congestion Charge by registering as a Private Hire Vehicle*. The answer I got back (admittedly not from Boris himself) was a load of gobbledegook, basically saying that **TfL** had checks in place to stop that from happening.

"Well, on a recent weekend I saw a 15 registration plate **Aston Martin Vantage** (priced from £87,500 to £149,000) with Private Hire roundels on it. At that moment I thought: Stuff the taxi, I want to know what minicab firm he works for because I can do that!

"Of course I didn't, but when I came back from dreaming, I did some checking on what PHVs could and couldn't do while getting licensed and this is what I found in the **Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Inspection Manual V6** (01/10/2014).

*PHV insurance complies with 7 (2) (b) of the Private Hire Vehicles Act 1998 (London) 7 (2) (b): That there is in force in relation to the use of the vehicle a policy of insurance or such security as complies with the requirements of Part VI of the Road Traffic Act 1988; and (c) that any further requirements that may be prescribed are met.*

The Road Traffic Act 1988 section V1 covers third party liabilities and you can find that at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/52/contents>.

"To save **Call Sign** readers checking out all the above, what it appears to mean is that the only requirement I needed had I been a PH driver was **Third Party** insurance to register a vehicle for Private Hire use. Naturally I didn't believe that and so I telephoned the TfL booking line and asked what insurance I needed for PHV licencing. The answer – and I quote – was quite astonishing:

**"Any insurance will do for inspection. It's up to you to sort out Hire & Reward afterwards!"**

I think that quote is worth repeating because it comes from our licensing authority, the organisation placed on this Earth to make sure that passengers are safe! They said:

**"Any insurance will do for inspection. It's up to you to sort out Hire & Reward afterwards!"**

"So there you have it, you can currently register your car to get out of paying the congestion charge – albeit you do need two MoTs. But what's far more worrying is that TfL actually licence vehicles for the public to

# TfL and insuring PH vehicles



**Bob Francis was shocked by what TfL told him about PH insurance**

travel in yet *do not* check that they have the necessary correct insurance in place!

Naturally, London Licenced Taxis can only be plated if they have Hire & Reward in place at the time of the inspection...!"

**Call Sign** then spoke to Mike Galvin, former MD of ComCab but who for many years has been with Addison Lee, currently as Head of Regulatory Affairs at the PH Company. We asked him about the many PHVs that apparently go to be licensed but are allowed to use just third party insurance with TfL's blessing. We asked if Addison Lee use Hire & Reward. He told us:

"In short yes, all our vehicles are insured all the time. We provide the insurance centrally (it's our own company) and although drivers

can choose to get their own insurance, it must obviously meet our requirements. Almost all of our drivers choose ours as it is very competitive.

"We regard the current situation with TfL as appalling in relation to PH insurance. We have been told openly at TfL meetings that with 17,000 – or whatever the number is that **Uber** operate – that it is no surprise that a few will have no insurance!

"I said this to TfL officers directly: I never thought the day would dawn when Hire & Reward insurance was an optional extra in the PH industry. This goes against primary legislation and is not, in my view, for TfL to decide. We are champions of operator insurance, ie operators do as we do and that is to ensure that every single PH driver has Hire & Reward insurance. Nothing less is good enough."

**TfL's Board will be discussing the consultation proposals on March 17 and they include both the insurance question as well as whether PHV should pay the congestion charge. However, if they insist on PHVs only needing third party insurance to get a licence, then it would seem to confirm the view that many in the trade already have – both taxis and the respectable side of private hire – that TfL are just not fit for purpose.**

Bob Francis came back with the last word: "I still feel very strongly that vehicles should have H&R insurance in place at time of inspection. Even so, the fact we are actually talking about it and that it actually needed a consultation to decide the answer, shows that TfL don't actually think things through. The acronym, KISS ((Keep It Simple, Stupid) is a phrase TfL would do well to grasp..."

In two weeks' time, we will know the answer...

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Do you ever find other cab drivers to be embarrassing? Sometimes it might just be a joke. You'll be stuck in traffic with a job in the back; a mate pulls up alongside, his window rolls down and

he yells out: "Are you still having those fits?" You and the passenger have a good, if uncomfortable, laugh.

But sometimes things make you feel really uncomfortable... like the two drivers who were standing on the pavement by the only two cabs on the **Acacia Road** rank when up walks a job. Both drivers get in their cabs with neither thinking it might be a good idea to open the door for the passenger. It's only a little thing, but people do appreciate it.

**Have you noticed when a passenger comes out in the early hours, they close the front door as carefully as they can and tip-toe down the front path before whispering their destination? It makes you feel that you shouldn't actually start up the engine but push the cab away instead!**

I suppose we've all had to call the AA in the early morning at some time or other. When those guys are working, they clunk and clank with their tools without any thought for those asleep in their beds. And why shouldn't they? It's their job and after all, it's not easy to change a tyre quietly!

But it was while doing a two cab job the other day that I wanted the earth to open up! The other driver was a bit 'mutton' – well more than a bit, with the result that he was shouting at the top of his voice. At six-thirty in the morning, it was still dark for Heaven's sake! What could one say?

It was at a similar time on a beautiful still summer's morning that I was picking up in Hampstead. The customer had specified the driver not to ring the bell or phone, obviously not wanting to wake up anybody. After a few minutes, the front door opened and he approached the cab. My finger hovered over POB. This was the old terminal and sometimes odd things happened when you used its functions. For instance, if you were on the Sloane Square rank and did a 'Queue Position' the automatic doors at old Royal Court Hotel on the other side of the square would open! If you did it often enough, the staff would come out scratching their heads as they tried to work out what the problem was.

But back to Hampstead on that lovely quiet morning; the man got in – the same man who didn't want to wake up his family or the neighbours... and then I pressed POB. But there was a sports car parked in front and my POB caused the alarm to let out the most ear splitting screaming that I'd ever heard. Babies started crying, dogs began barking and curtains twitched! He asked what happened and I just said that perhaps a cat had set the alarm off – even though I knew exactly what had really set it off. But at least we didn't ring or call!

One thing that is highly embarrassing is

*Another true story from Geoff Levene...*

## Wasn't that embarrassing!

when you hit another cab. One lunchtime I decided to park on the rank in **Carey Street** while I picked up a sandwich in **Chancery Lane**. There was one cab right at the front and another at the back. So I parked behind the front cab. There seemed to be a gap behind me and that was when I discovered that it was a four cab rank, albeit a bit of a squeeze. I got my grub and was halfway through my crayfish and rocket sandwich when a cab pulled up alongside and asked if I could move forward a bit so he could get in. This was going to be interesting. Then he started. Backwards and forwards and.....bump! I glanced in my mirror for a wave of apology, but nothing. Backwards and forwards and....bump. But again zilch! Then a third time... nada. This time I got out just as he squeezed in. He got out of his cab carrying a sheaf of papers. There was no damage but a 'sorry' would have been nice.

"Are you going to be long," I asked? "About twenty minutes," he replied nonchalantly. "If you need to go you can bump me. I hit you five times." And I had only counted three!

But I must confess to a bit of 'previous'. In

my early days of cabbing, I was going down **Green Street** in Mayfair when a large truck came towards me. I pulled over and touched – and I do mean touched – the bumper of a parked cab. Out came the driver – an old boy. The first thing I noticed was that the top button of his trousers was undone. He bent down to examine the non-existent damage and told me to be more careful. I was full of contrition. Just imagine the scene; he was leaning back against my double-parked cab, which was making a narrow road even narrower. At that moment, a Bentley came down the road at speed. I don't know whether the wing mirror touched his trousers or it was the draught that the car caused, but suddenly all the buttons of his old-fashioned flies popped open and his 'kecks' fell down revealing a pair of long johns. He looked up to the heavens and wailed: "They're pulling my trousers down!"

I couldn't do anything but drive away. Embarrassing or what...?

**Geoff Levene (W32)**  
**Call Sign Online**

## Stone Setting for Ray Sorene



The stone setting for the late Ray Sorene (A53) will be held at the Western Cemetery, Bulls Cross Ride, Cheshunt EN7 5HT on Sunday March 13th at 14.00.

Ray joined what was then ODRTS in 1969 just as Jack Taylor was handing over the ODRTS Chairmanship to Jack Russell. When he left Dial-a-Cab because his cab had reached its 15 year limit in 2014, he had become the second-longest serving driver behind Alan Lewis (A44).

On a personal note, there were a number of occasions when with very little notice, Ray would act as a Call Sign photographer if Alan Green (E52) was suddenly called away.

Above all that, Ray Sorene was also such a lovely man.

**Alan Fisher**



# CALL SIGN AT THE DEMO

**A**n estimated one third of London's licensed taxi fleet all assembled in Whitehall on February 10 to demonstrate against several things. If you asked five drivers, you would have got five different reasons why they were there, but the important part was that all the trade organisations supported the demo and if nothing else, that would have put the wind up Her Majesty's Government. Until recently, we had all assumed that TfL were to blame for our ills but recent events have confirmed that they are just the whipping boys – albeit well paid ones – of David Cameron and George Osborne.

According to **Len Martin**, UCG Chairman: "The choice is simple, if London wants its highly regulated, safe and on demand gold standard taxis, there needs to be a clear understanding that we aren't supported by the taxpayer or charities. Government must not allow private hire operators to ignore the legislation. The taxi trade cannot survive with unfair competition."

**Mick Bailey**, the RMT Chairman added: "Plying for hire is the thing that's got to be dealt with. We've got to get it in the House of Commons and we've got to prevent this government from dismantling the Licensed Taxi Trade in London."

DaC Chairman **Brian Rice** said: *I have never been militant and always looked on myself as someone who prefers to talk, but I have my doubts that anyone in the Government cares enough about our trade to lower themselves by talking to us. Certainly TfL are no better. That's why I supported this demo.*

Uber's **Jo Bertram** picked demo day to offer black cabs free commission on fares for a year, but **Call Sign** could find no one that was tempted.

Unfortunately, something of a damper was put onto the day when news filtered through that the **LTDA's** High Court challenge, which asked a judge to declare that the construction of the segregated cycling route from the Tower to Westbourne Grove without planning permission was illegal, had failed. LTDA QC **Mark Lowe** said the association had consistently opposed the cycle superhighway on behalf of its members but that the project had gone ahead without planning permission or an environmental impact assessment as required by the EU EIA directive. TfL described the superhighway as "works of improvement" not requiring permission or an EIA.

Some even suggested that the timing was deliberately set for the day of the demo. As if...!

**Alan Fisher**  
Call Sign Online



Lou Loizou (T58)  
still smiling  
after 2 hours!



At least  
8000  
taxis  
were  
there

**John Davis**  
(V41)  
polished  
his cab  
specially in  
case the  
PM came  
out!



DaC's little  
drummer boy,  
**Marc Turner**  
(R97) telling  
the world  
we're there!





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# ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2015 AGM

**Sunday 7 February 2016 saw the 2015 Dial-a-Cab AGM held again at the HAC Barracks on City Road. What follows are not the official minutes, but an unofficial record of the meeting as captured by Call Sign Editor Alan Fisher. It is not a full record and neither should it be taken as including every word said or indeed the exact wording spoken. Some paragraph grammar has been sacrificed in order to make the report as compact as possible. Approximate attendance was 96, not including the BoM...**

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

## 2014 Minutes

*Minutes of the 2014 meeting were passed. There were no matters arising...*

## Annual Report including the Chairman's Report on the Financial Statement

*Brian Rice gave a lengthy synopsis of the report. You can read that on page 18 of this issue...*

## Questions on the Financial Report



First up was **Jimmy Edwards (E76)**. He asked **Brian Rice** if we had a game plan, pointing out that TfL staff were on six figure salaries and that the only people that weren't earning were the drivers.

Brian agreed and said that going forward was going to be difficult if TfL refused to help the trade. The Chairman confirmed that at least we had an asset behind us (Dial-a-Cab House) and that we could carry on. But as for a game plan, he said that had to be an amalgamation with one or the other or even an outright sale. But then again, would you buy a company that was losing money? If two circuits were to amalgamate and operate from a single premises with economies to scale and cutting down that company's overheads, then he said that really was the only way to proceed.

Jimmy came back and said that some of the younger drivers with mortgages and cabs to pay for could "go to the wall" this year. He suggested we stripped the company down and formed our own app. He agreed with Brian's old *Call Sign* articles about run-ins and gratuities etc and that you should never cut wages, but added that we were "knackered" and going nowhere. He wondered if we would even be here in 18 months' time.

Brian said that while we would never return to the halcyon days of 2006, there was no question that we would still be here. He reminded Jimmy of his last sentence of a 2007 Chairman's report in *Call Sign* where he said: "This is as good as it gets!" He said he could see the writing on the wall. Not that long afterwards, the country went into recession and after coming out of it, 2012 saw **Uber** licensed and we started all over again. He said that all customers really wanted was "cheap" and that Board Members would confirm that when you go to visit customers, they bang you over the head with Uber comparisons. Jim confirmed his view that the Society should rebrand itself as an app and put much of the blame to the trade's current position down to the 2012 London Olympics. Brian reiterated the points he made in his Financial Report earlier that an app isn't a guarantee of success because otherwise why would **Cab:app** try to raise £500,000? He also said that last year **Hailo** spent £3 for every £1 they earned. They have huge amounts of money behind them yet they lost £22million. He said that whatever we did, we just don't have those resources and cannot compete with that. Brian also said that perhaps an amalgamation of all three radio circuits might be another way forward. Jim wasn't happy about joining with **ComCab** and complained about the terrible service they give to passengers using **Taxicard**. He said we had given that an excellent service for many years but **ComCab** give most of the work away to minicabs, with some people having to wait for in excess of two hours. Brian didn't disagree but said that sometimes you had to bite the bullet for the greater good. As Jimmy stepped down, Brian mysteriously added that we could actually have a plan...



**Kevin O'Connor (T75)** was next up and started by saying that he agreed with Brian's views on **TfL**. He then spoke about **ComCab** and about the way they take accounts and whether we had tendered for **Freshfields**. Brian explained how CC had taken **Freshfields** and that it was nothing to do with any tenders because they hadn't sent any out. It was purely to do with who knew who and a former member of **Radio Taxis** staff who was the Account Manager for **Freshfields**. He moved to **ComCab** and took the account with him,

something, the Chairman added, that does happen in business!

Kevin then spoke about **ComCab** and **JPM**. He said that our rolling rank had worked really well but that CC just give a passenger name and some passengers were now waiting in excess of 15 minutes. His question to Brian was whether we were in touch with **JPM**. Brian explained that the account was now operated from New York and while he constantly emailed them, they rarely responded. He added that **Keith Cain** also emails them but with little response. Brian said that he'd keep trying because DaC gave **JPM** an excellent service for many years and should know that we are ready whenever they wanted to return.

Kevin then asked about the loss of **JPM** and the **Citigroup** so close together and whether we offered no run-ins etc. Brian repeated the set of circumstances that ended with us losing **JPM**, confirming that we offered no run-ins etc to Citi and yet still couldn't compete with the prices offered by **Brunel** cars.

Kevin ended by asking if the BoM could set an example by cutting back and Brian explained why Board costs had increased slightly. Among the reasons was **Joe Brazil** coming in to learn the ropes and DaC building a new website and its associated costs. Brian also told the drivers present that **Mike Son** came in just one day a week while **Garry White** only came in for Board meetings. Kevin asked why Garry didn't have a job and Brian said that getting on the BoM was no guarantee that they would get a job and that in reality there just weren't enough jobs to go round. The Chairman said to Kevin that if he felt that strongly then he should propose a rule change cutting the number of BMs and then they would all get a job.



Next up was **Patsy McCarthy (C01)** who said there was no way we could compete with Uber and said that we had a major asset that we should sell and split the proceeds of between DaC shareholders while it was worth a lot. He said that he joined **ODRTS** 48 years ago when we were based in **Ableck Street** off **Pentonville Road** and suggested that we knock Dial-a-Cab House down and build a block of flats or an hotel! Although we'd need to use the services of a company that knew what to do, we would still make a fortune with apartments in the area going for £1million each! The Chairman asked Patsy to take a guess at the valuation of DaC House, bearing in mind that Brian on behalf of the Society had bought it for £3.7million back in July 2007? Patsy said around £9million, but Brian then shocked everyone by saying that he had just had the building valued following an organisation (unnamed, but neither of the other two radio circuits) showing an interest



## All you need to know about the 2015 AGM (continued from page 12)

in buying the business. It came back with a valuation of £17.9million if it could go up to ten floors and substantially more if it went higher as next door was already doing. An audible gasp was heard from *the floor* as the Chairman continued saying that however bad things were, they had put an extra £14 – 15million assets onto the Society giving us a total asset value of around £25million! He spelled out alternatives that would give us and reiterated that he completely understood the building didn't put work into the back of our cabs, but that it wasn't all doom and gloom as some made out. He compared it to another radio circuit that had to sell their asset in order to pay their growing debt and now with no assets, had to pay £300,000 a year in rent. Patsy thanked Brian and said that in that case we should do something with the building that could earn the drivers money, rather than keep struggling to pay bills and end up leaving with our £50 share. Brian estimated that if we got the full market value, each member could be on close to £20,000! Patsy ended by praising the Chairman but saying that the time had come to cash in our assets or invest it by building an hotel or apartment block. Brian said that if we were to go down that road, we would probably be better off selling the building to a developer as our knowledge of building apartment blocks probably wasn't that good! He added that since the valuation, the interested company had pulled out as they couldn't raise that much capital but if that was the route members wanted, then we would have to demutualise and rent smaller premises elsewhere, adding that there was no longer a need for that much space. Even the Control Centre was taking just 47% of trips via the phone with the other 53% coming via online or DaC's app. Harking back to last year and the problems we had with Cab:app when they were threatening legal action and sending solicitors letters because they wanted to buy DaC yet were showing very little in the way of funds, now they were trying to raise half a million, which Brian said proved he had been right to refuse to discuss it with them. As for Radio Taxis, he hadn't discounted them, but we were the ones with the money and yet they wanted to come in and take control! It wasn't going to happen that way, the Chairman repeated. He apologised in that although things were going on, it wasn't always possible to put it all into *Call Sign* due to *Non-Disclosure Agreements*.



**Paul Willett (V12)** was next and wondered if we could develop another way forward in case selling didn't happen and Brian said he would write to members asking whether they would be interested in selling the building and sharing the dividends. Paul said he assumed it wouldn't be in Board Members interest to demutualise and compared it to turkeys voting for Christmas.

**Terry Buffin (S16)** is in his twenty seventh year with DaC, still looks as he did 27 years ago and obviously loves speaking at AGMs as

he seems to appear on every *Call Sign* report on the meeting! This year he spoke on credit cards and the Mayor's decision to make credit/debit card acceptance compulsory in all taxis. He queried how DaC would cope losing all the 10% charges, as this had now become our largest earner. Brian said that all the credit card machine suppliers would make a rental charge with drivers paying the 3% in return for the meter starting at £2.60 instead of the current £2.40. All the companies – including DaC – had argued against that but as usual TfL took no notice. He thought it would add up to more refusals but if it went ahead as seems likely, DaC would have to increase subscriptions, but added the BoM had plans on the subject that they didn't want to reveal yet.

Brian also told the drivers present about being approached by a company connected with rebuilding of next door and how they wanted to build a mezzanine floor above our car park for a period of three years. We would keep our car park but they would build portacabins on the mezzanine floor. They offered £45,000 for the three years, which DaC turned down. Then someone else contacted us and following negotiations, raised the three year total from 45k to £510,000 into the DaC coffers. The Chairman went on to explain why that deal would not affect any sale.



Next to the lectern was **John Rubini (F55)** who spoke of the possibility of reducing the Board to fewer than its current number. He said this was just an observation but asked if it was such a good idea to reduce Board numbers, why the BoM didn't just bring it in as it needed 25 members to put it forward otherwise. Brian said that he felt it could make it seem that they were protecting their own positions if they brought it in, but added that if members approached them about the rule change then they would support it. John spoke of the savings we could make and again asked what the Board were waiting for? Brian said that he didn't want anyone to think the BoM were trying to make themselves into a closed shop. John disagreed and said they accepted there was a need to save money and the BoM should put it forward. Brian said fewer BMs would mean less chance of drivers getting on.

**Tony Sam-Yorke (W95)** was next and spoke on finance. He began by referring to DaC as an exceptional circuit and said most of the drivers in the hall had been there throughout the good times as well as bad. He continued by saying that we had missed the app revolution and that people were hailing cabs differently now because they wanted a cab to come to their front door. He said the Board were paid to get us work but that as years went by, there had been a slow decline that left drivers suffering. He asked why **Keith Cain** hadn't got us work even though that was what he was paid to do. He quoted a *Call Sign* article written by Keith that said if anyone knew of possible accounts that might be interested in DaC, then they should let him know. But, Tony said, that's what we paid the

Board for. He then repeated that we should have had an app and that it was now too late.

Brian came back to Tony and said that we'd had an app for years and that we do a substantial amount of our bookings via our app and that current account and credit card customers could use it at any time, but that when drivers accepted the trip they wouldn't know whether it was via an app, phone call or online booking. It was just an account ride to drivers. Tony felt that all our work should come via an app and that it would mean direct contact between drivers and customers, making contact easier and cutting out problems involving incorrect pick-ups etc. Brian came back and said that they try to push every customer to book via our app, but that not all account customers wanted an app and many preferred the way they currently ordered cabs. He agreed with Tony that we were seeing more and more people using apps even though there were lots of empty taxis available. He read an email which he felt would explain why that might be. It referred to **Addison Lee** and a pricing ad that went to their customers: W1 to Heathrow £39, W1 to the City £16 and Clapham to Islington £20. That's why they many look at their phones – it was often down to price. Tony came straight back and asked what was the purpose of a Board if we couldn't compete? **Patsy McCarthy** interrupted and said we couldn't compete against those prices. With that, Tony stepped aside, looking rather disconsolate.



It was then the turn of **Shawinder Singh (H66)**. He thought we took our eyes off the ball when talks of a merger first appeared and that because drivers smelled money, we stopped looking at our real problems. He said he felt we could become leaders once again and that he would vote against any merger anyway. He added that £10k, £15k or even £20,000 wouldn't change anyone's life and he would rather the Society remained intact. With technology always moving forward, DaC as a circuit could continue giving us work as a whole rather than a one-off payment. He said if we discarded our platform and eventually the Society itself, we would be worse off. He felt we should get the BoM to offer cheap fares with no run-ins etc and that we would eventually reclaim our place as number one. Shawinder made the point that he would rather work for less individual fares if it meant that we got more work and that his hourly rate actually went up.



Following Shawinder was **James Powell (G23)** who said that non-radio drivers were also not making any money, that our chances of recovering were less than very slim and that the best and only real option was for us to sell the building and we could then take our money and go our own way. He said he had been on other circuits besides DaC and that AGMs were always the same – how much we spent

## All you need to know about the 2015 AGM (continued from page 13)

on stamps etc. But he felt the trade as a whole had been going downhill for the past 8 years. Jim was also uncomplimentary about drivers that worked at Heathrow describing them as dirty and rude. He asked why anyone would want to use them when they could get a Mercedes limo for less with a smartly dressed driver. He felt we'd been screwed into the ground with no way back. After Jim's depressing picture, Brian joked that we were only on the first floor, so jumping out would be of no use!



Next up was **Jon Robinson (E88)**. He said he had just one question, which knowing Jon meant a long time at the lectern! His one question was how long we could carry on as we

were. The Chairman replied that we currently had around £5million in the bank and working out the loss figures after depreciation, said that would last around five or six years. Jon came back (with question two) and asked if that meant that drivers wanting their money had to wait up to six years? Brian said that was only if nothing happened in the intervening period but that if it didn't, then yes, it could be five years. For question three, Jon suggested that we would then need to diversify? Brian replied that if we sold the building and divvied up the money, drivers could still go to work but that DaC would be different to what it is now. Jon came back with question four and asked whether selling the building would accelerate our demise? Brian said that if we sold now and added our cash to it, drivers could get maybe £19,000 or so but if they wanted DaC to continue then they would have to leave some of that in the pot in order to operate the business... but drivers would still get a substantial amount each. The business left would be exactly that – a business and no longer a mutual trading society. Jon then said we were at the crossroads and either worked cheaply with no run-ins, gratuities or waiting time etc or got out of the market place. Brian said he tended to agree with the last speaker that he was reluctant to see our wares go at a ridiculously cheap price. People wanted a top-class service but didn't want to pay for it. The DaC Chairman then spoke about the cost of a new cab and wondered how much an electric one might cost and aligned that to ultra-cheap fares, suggesting the two were incompatible. He felt that TfL should help reduce our overheads while increasing those of the minicab fraternity. He said that even if we had no run-ins, no gratuities, no waiting time costs and then slashed admin charges and even the actual fare, we would still be unable to compete on price! He compared the meter rate of £3.89 per mile on tariff three with Uber's £1.25 per mile and said it was difficult! He also spoke about Addison Lee who for years had been buying up the competition. In the end there would be them and Uber. The corporates would choose AL while the public will stay with Uber... unless we got some help. Jon repeated his first question: How long could we carry

on? Brian couldn't give a definitive answer but said that some were in a worse position than us. He cited ComCab who had shut down their offices in Edinburgh as well as Liverpool and Birmingham because they were losing so much money. That was with no run-ins etc and in many cases actually only charging just 80 percent of the fare. Whilst Brian added that cut price was the only way to go, their sway wasn't the best way to go. Jon left the lectern with a sad look, but hopefully his sense of humour still intact!



**Javid Raja (N72)** then spoke about how we could defeat Uber and said that would be through the **European Commissioner for Competition**. Javid explained his reasoning. He said that the Commissioner had been on **Radio 4** and when asked why she hadn't done anything about **Uber** or **Google's** "cosy tax deal given by the Conservatives," she said no one had complained to her! Javid said that the Shadow Chancellor, **John McDonnell**, had since complained to her. To calls from the *floor* of agreement, Javid said that what Uber were getting from the Government was tantamount to state aid and then called for the DaC Chairman to take the lead on behalf of the trade in defeating the menace we faced. He had some rather disparaging words for leaders of other trade organisations. He criticised some of the trade speakers representing us on television and said that on behalf of the whole trade he wanted **Brian Rice** to represent us with the European Commissioner. Brian said that he had never been a quitter and would always stand up for the trade whenever possible, but thought that Uber was a 'done deal' and spoke of the "friends" of Prime Minister, **David Cameron**, who were also God-parents to son **Ivan**, who sadly died some years ago. One of those "friends" was formerly a big cheese at **Google** and was now the same position at Uber. It was the PM who helped Uber get where it was. Brian also shockingly added that TfL meetings with the trade also had a member of HMG present to make sure TfL didn't step out of line! He said that throughout the years, any group of working class workers seen to be earning a good living were beaten down. It was, he said, sad but true whilst also explaining that many Uber drivers were subsidising their ultra-cheap fares with tax credits paid for by people like us. He got around to answering Javid's request by saying that it should be a taxi trade organisation and not the Chairman of a mutual trading organisation.



Last on financial questions was **Adam Harrison (A19)**. He spoke about the attempt to collect money via a **Crowdfunding** scheme in an attempt to get a **Judicial Review**. He said his wife was with **#SaveTaxi** and the group had established **Action for Cabbies** as a private company to spearhead the campaign. It based the possibility on the grounds that TfL

was wrong to grant a licence to Uber and its drivers in 2012 as the licensing authority had failed to follow the correct procedures. Adam said only 2000 out of 25,000 drivers had contributed and asked if DaC would consider making a donation. Brian said that he felt it would be wrong for the Society to donate but that as an individual he had made a donation. He agreed that drivers should donate and had met one of the ladies behind it – **Artemis Mercer** – recently. He told her we were a mutual trading organisation and couldn't make donations of that kind but showed Artemis a copy of **Call Sign** where we publicised the collection and are doing so again this issue. Brian reiterated that drivers should donate on their own behalves but explained that the money would not automatically get a Judicial Review. It would then be up to a Judge who would say yes or no. If he said no, then that was it! But if it went forward, it would then be a case of whether the procedure was carried out correctly and not if it was right or wrong! A Judicial Review is not automatic just because you have the money. But Brian wished them luck. Adam said they had collected £100,000 out of the £600,000 needed and was really there to inform those that didn't know about it.

### Auditor's Report



Representing DaC Accountants, **Moore Stephens, Mike Tovey** gave a brief report adding that the Chairman had covered most of it already. But he said the Society was at a turning point where it could make decisions that would influence the future, but it would be awful if we ended up in a situation where the future was in someone else's hands because we ran out of resources. He said that although we have a nice amount behind us, it wouldn't last forever.



**Tony Sam-Yorke (W95)** asked Mike whether he felt that DaC should sell the building, take our money and run. Mike said we had to decide whether the business could be competitive but added that it was showing signs that it can't. If we sold the building today, it would put a lot of money into the bank but wouldn't affect the underlying performance of the business – in fact it could make it worse as you would still have to find the rent from somewhere and if that came to £300,000 per year then it would exacerbate the performance and make it even worse that it was. He said in his view we couldn't afford to sit on an asset such as the one we had just to save DaC having to pay the rent. The area around **Shoreditch** is currently white hot, but we don't know what it would be like in two years. The bubble could burst and we could now be in a position where the timing was as good as it got. But even selling wouldn't improve the business. The only way that could be achieved would be to consolidate it with other busi-



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nesses in the same trade and even that might not fix the problem. He said that making the business bigger while reducing overheads could be the only way to go back to profit and added that all three London circuits together as one could be profitable. **Tony** came back and said that after listening to Mike and the meeting, he thought we should sell.

After saying that he didn't disagree with **Tony**, **Brian Rice** then explained some figures in more detail saying we had dropped £620,000 income in administration charges from customers, but also dropped £446,000 in subscriptions. We had no alternative in order to maintain coverage and members to lower the subs, which we did to £10 a week. The two figures combined came to £1,046,000 but had we been even where we were at this stage last year with the same amount of admin and subs, we would have shown a profit this year. It really is a finely balanced situation. He went on to talk about the benefits of consolidating two into one and the fact that you'd only need one set of Board members, one call centre and one building etc and that once the initial costings were taken out of the way, he estimated roughly that in around two years you could be looking at around £2million in profit. Mike came back and said that would still depend on how things were out there and nothing could be guaranteed, while **Tony** ended by saying that he felt we should sell while we could and suggested a vote.



**Laurence Kelvin (W88)** was next and said that if **Brian's** suggestion regarding VAT being dropped on cabs was taken up, would that not mean that all taxi values would drop by 20 percent?

**Brian's** answer was yes, but that all new taxis would be 20 percent cheaper and that would come to much more than the money dropped on second hand cabs. Laurence then asked what type of responsibility "companies" had towards their shareholders. Mike said that it was really a legal point rather than an accounting one but in his view any BoM would have a responsibility to do what they could to reasonably and diligently protect their shareholders. However, the Board of a Mutual such as DaC are more like custodians than risk-taking entrepreneurs, existing in a mutual way but in a business sense. That does mean that a mutual could never be as fleet-footed as a commercial interest. Laurence then asked if Mike had seen a business in deep decline come out of it and become profitable again. Mike said he had seen examples of businesses in decline recognising the symptoms, acting on them and recovering. But it couldn't be left too late otherwise it becomes too late and exponential. Laurence came back and said he had been on DaC for over 40 years and felt that it could be time to admit defeat and that while we have substantial equity, we should sell up and share it out.

**Brian** responded and said that he had been on DaC even longer than Laurence and that he would be really sad to see it go. He said he

could understand the views being expressed but felt that there were alternatives to at least look at. Many drivers, he said, were keen to get some money out of the Society by selling the building, but by doing that it didn't mean that the business would have to close. You could have your money and DaC could then still carry on. There was no reason why there couldn't be a much smaller fleet providing a service to those that wanted a proper service. That's why people stay at the **Savoy** and eat at **Le Gavroche**, he said. The Chairman reiterated his view that drivers could still take the money but that he would hate to see DaC close. The applause from drivers seemed to indicate that they agreed with him.



**Pat Keefe (G01)** spoke next and asked **Brian** if he wanted to be remembered as the Chairman who saw us go skint or the Chairman who saw his drivers leave with a golden handshake of £20,000 each – one possible figure mentioned earlier in the meeting. **Brian** replied that he wanted to be remembered as the Chairman that left DaC with £5million in cash, who bought our building for £3.7million that is now worth £18.9million and the Chairman who walked out leaving £20million of assets.



**Colin Jenkins (Y22)** said that he would be very sad to see DaC go but that it was inevitable. He felt it wouldn't be necessary to change a mutual status in order to share any money, comparing the situation to that of several years ago and the Christmas bonuses we gave out. He suggested selling up, sharing the money after buying a smaller building but not demutualising and instead have a type of incentive scheme in order to facilitate the share-out. To laughs, **Brian** said that if he did that, would **Colin** visit him in **Wormwood Scrubs** because it was illegal as HMRC wouldn't like a £25million share-out without getting a piece of the action!

**Next came voting to accept the Auditor's Report, approve the Annual Report and to reappoint Moore Stephens as auditors...**

### Any Other Business



First under AOB was **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)**. He pointed out that most of the members present were in their later years and that in his view, younger members couldn't care less about the business. He thought the postal ballot rule should be looked at so once again it became compulsory to attend AGMs. He called it disgraceful that so few members could be bothered to give up one day a year to attend and to help run their own business. **Brian** replied that the only ones that would vote to keep it would be those that turned up anyway and that it would be a wasted vote.

**Laurence Kelvin (W88)** returned to the lectern and asked DaC's two newest Board



Members what they had done. **Joe Brazil** replied first saying that so far he had been involved in updating the complaints meeting procedure and a rationalisation analysis programme for

looking at excessive run-ins. There was the interview he was involved in with **Brian** for a new Sales executive, he'd also been involved in the new website with a design for the encompass launch, photography for the website, the software testing and the recce involved before all that, a collation of fixed fares for use on Tenders, he was part of the logo design team and looking at the staffing levels throughout the company and where savings could be made. He ended by saying that there had been substantially more but "that should keep Laurence going!"



Laurence then asked the same question to **Garry White** and it became apparent that **Garry** was quite upset. He started by saying that **Joe** had been involved in much more than him so

obviously had done more. He said he originally suggested someone going into Sales but that **Brian** had said no because the CV had contained a typo and we did nothing after that. He said that we now had one but it would have been better three years ago. He said he once suggested that we should be leading the app market and gone in when **Hailo** entered the minicab market and that would have helped subsidise our accounts. But he said the Chairman told him it would involve a rule change and that it wasn't feasible. Then he was put on Compliance but after the last AGM he was taken off when **Brian** said he received complaints about his compliance and that he wasn't good enough. He then said if we were doing so well on Compliance now, how come we had some 500 drivers on **Gett**. He said he now just attended Board meetings and listened more than talked so that he could hear what had happened during the previous month. He said he probably sounded a bit bitter but hadn't put his name forward just to attend Board meetings. **Garry** sounded upset as he inferred that the Chairman had "a Board in his image and that they were ageing guys who weren't looking to take the Society forward." He said he felt the Society did have a future in the cab trade, albeit a slightly different one. He spoke of a plan to make DaC the leaders in accepting credit cards involving the whole trade and that we could become credit card takers. We could then use the money we made out of that to promote the cab trade, ie what taxi drivers did – and that was picking people up.

As he finished, **Brian** said that **Garry** sounded bitter but went on to explain that he'd had complaints about the way **Garry** was dealing with the complaints procedures and that he wasn't carrying them out correctly. He went on to say that he was in a difficult position because had he removed **Garry** from compliance before last year's AGM, some would have

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said he had done it because of Garry's intention of standing against Brian for the position of Chairman. Once the election was over, there was a Board meeting where the Board as a whole – not him – decided that Garry wasn't up to doing that job. Brian added that the job was now taken up by **Allan Evans** who did it in addition to his own job of Operations and Control Centre Manager, adding that it wasn't a particularly huge task. He went on to say that he was surprised to hear Garry talk as he did because as of late, he thought his attitude had changed. Garry disputed that, but before it went any further, Laurence came back with another question regarding DaC having a smaller Board. He called for a show of hands and most went up in support of the idea. Laurence said he felt it could go ahead without waiting for another AGM and a rule change. Brian said he would look at writing to the members regarding a possible postal ballot and Laurence agreed that the new BoM could consist of a Chairman and two BMs. Brian said that some would think he was starting a *clique* but that if members were in favour then he would put the postal ballot into operation. He reminded Laurence that a PB would require a 75% majority. He added that once the rule – if passed – was registered then if three BMs did not voluntarily stand down, there would have to be an election via a postal ballot or even an EGM – but that judging by the AGM attendance, most members would vote by post anyway. Brian also dropped a hint that he might not stand again as Chairman.



**Martyn Madden (Y97)** spoke next. The 30+ year veteran at DaC asked that bearing in mind the current situation and also the price of new taxis and with electric ones being on the way, was it necessary for Dial-a-Cab to remain as an owner drivers' organisation? He said he'd read pieces from drivers in *Call Sign* regarding the difficulties in buying a second hand taxi with so many being close to the 15 year rule, that allowing current drivers to remain on the circuit but with a rented cab could be an answer to a big problem. Brian replied that he agreed with Martyn and that there were good drivers out there who could be forced to leave because of the Mayor's rules and that would be a shame. He said if the owner agreed to become a bond holder, to allow his cab to sport the DaC logos and not have a livery, then DaC would allow the driver to remain on the circuit with a rented taxi. Martyn asked whether it would need a rule change. The Chairman said that this was something that had happened in our past and under a form of grandfather rights it could easily be reinstated. A rule change, he said, would only be needed if the bond holder element was to be done away with.

Martyn then asked whether such a driver could retain his share together with his vote and any share of profits made should DaC ever sell the building. Brian said he had sympathy with Martyn's point but that drivers should take into account the fact that if that

were to happen and the cab owner at a later date rented the cab out to another driver, that person would then be entitled to anything a shareholder got. But he also added that Martyn or anyone else *could* put in a rule change that stated any member forced to sell his taxi and who had been on DaC for more than a certain number of years and had to rent a cab, would remain a member and be entitled to anything an owner-member was. A brief discussion with Martyn followed about how that could be achieved and a show of hands was called just to get a snapshot driver's view. That put the figure of how long a driver would have to have been on DaC in order to rent while continuing to retain membership at 20 years.

Martyn then moved onto the proposed **GPS** system and asked Brian if what he had read in *Call Sign* that it was ready to go and that 100 drivers at a time would be going over to it was true. When the Chairman confirmed it, to laughs **Y97** asked if just for once we could start from **Zulu** and work backwards as he was fed up with **Apple** cabs going first on everything and Yankees always having to wait until almost the end! The Chairman asked **Shelagh Adkins**, who is overseeing the bookings for the new system's fitting, to put Martyn at the head of the queue while jokingly asking Martyn if he had ever heard of the maxim... never volunteer!

Next were raffle results organised by **Russell Poluck MBE (T55)** on behalf of the **TDoy** committee.

**Javid Raja (N72)** then addressed the drivers and asked Brian whether DaC was going to make a contribution to the *SaveTaxi Crowdfunder* appeal towards the cost of trying to get a Judicial Review. Brian said we wouldn't and explained the reasons saying that the Society would like to, but felt that it wasn't our place to do so and instead it was up to every driver to support it individually. Brian didn't disagree with Javid saying that TfL were our biggest threat and that this could be our only chance to defeat them and said that he had already personally contributed, but reiterated that drivers should do so individually. Brian pointed out that info about the now-named **Action for Cabbies** had gone into *Call Sign* and Javid then asked the Editor if he could put it onto the front cover for the next issue. Alan said it would go in but putting just text onto the front cover wasn't practical in a glossy mag but that he would make sure it was prominently shown.

Javid then went on to ask Brian if DaC House could have some charging points for electric cabs. Brian said that it wouldn't be feasible as they couldn't have many because there just wasn't enough room and currently there was no way of knowing what type of charger would be needed as the cabs weren't yet built. Javid then asked **Joe Brazil** about something he had mentioned to him in a private capacity regarding a company that were looking for a taxi supplier, but where no one had yet gone in (*Call Sign* isn't mentioning the name for obvious reasons – our 10,000 online readers in addition to our competitors who read it from cover to cover)! However, as

that had been just a few days earlier Joe hadn't had time to bring it up but would do so at the next Board meeting to DaC's Sales team and the new Sales executive.



**Terry Buffin (S16)** asked whether Brian and the Board should think about the possibility of selling the building and asked for a show of hands as to how many were interested. Quite a large number of hands shot up. He said that waiting for another AGM would mean another year going by and that we could end up losing money if property prices suddenly fell. Brian answered by saying that perhaps the best way forward would be to let the valuers know we would look at any potential offers and see where that gets us. If there was an offer that looked interesting Brian, as Chairman, would write to subscribers to tell them the situation and see whether they wanted to take it further. But then if other offers came in, it could keep going there and back and end up taking till the next AGM anyway! He said that if most were thinking of selling, then he would go to the valuers and see what the best firm offer was and just put that one forward to the members to vote on. However, if we said yes, then we would have to demutualise the Society first.

Terry continued by talking about fixed price trips below the meter but on which the driver then had to pay 7.5 percent + VAT. He asked whether it was fair to charge that 9 percent after the driver was already losing out on the meter anyway. Brian understood but came back by saying the Society had to earn money from somewhere and reiterated how much we had dropped in subscriptions. He spoke of the fact that DaC were only charging £10 per week which covered the mapping, satnav and credit card PED, but that if we still charged the original £30 a week then there would be money to play with and Terry's suggestion might have been looked at. He added that in most fixed price trip jobs, destination and price was shown and in most occasions the drivers take them. He admitted the few complaints came from those who worked very late and compared the f/p to the final meter reading on Rate 3. He added that DaC had to earn some money and that if they didn't subtract the 7.5 percent then they would have to increase the £10 per week subscriptions. Terry ended by saying that he would be going on the Whitehall drive-in the following Wednesday and gave a heartfelt plea for those drivers that had no intention of going, to at least not go out to work until it had ended or to perhaps have a long lunch.



**Jason Hunter (A90)** referred back to **Martyn Madden's** query about drivers renting cabs and continuing as members. He pointed out a resolution passed at an AGM that said drivers had to be on DaC for two years before being able to vote etc and asked what the difference was between someone that had been on DaC for 3 or 4 years and someone who



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had been here 20 years? Brian said that he didn't disagree with Jason but that the 20 year suggestion had come from the *floor* and that drivers would have to decide what the final figure to be voted on should be. He added that the rule Jason was talking about was different to the one Martyn had proposed and it'd have to be a new rule regarding renting. He did say that the time period could be any figure drivers wanted, but it had to be just one figure. He called for a show of hands whether drivers present wanted 20 years or 2 years and 20 won.



**Mike McGlynn (F60)** was the driver that had originally proposed the rule Jason was talking about. He said it applied to drivers that had joined before May 2004 and that after two years you had surely proved that you wanted to be a driver on the circuit and that the circuit by then would know what you were like. He originally thought – this at a time when an offer had been made for the Society – that those on 30 years' service would get more than those with 2 years should there be money coming. But he was told that you were either a subscriber or you weren't and that any dividend would have to be shared equally between Members.

Mike also spoke of a time several years ago when he earned £1500 prior to Christmas when the Society paid £5 per job over a certain number in order to assist coverage. He said we didn't have to demutualise then, so why was that different to sharing funds if we sold the building? Brian said that when they gave away a total of £521,000 as an incentive it was vastly different to dividing up £20million + for selling the building!

Accountant Mike Tovey came in and said there was a tax question attached to the subject. He said if the Society were to distribute £15 or £20million to drivers then **HMRC** would go after individual drivers for **income tax**. If you demutualise and had shares in the company and then sold, you would pay **capital gains tax** which would be 18% for some and 28% for others and a lot lower in addition to you being allowed £11,000 as a capital gain every year, so there was a significant advantage in doing things that way. Brian came back adding to what Mike had said re the £11,000 in that with member's agreement, the dividend could be paid beyond the first 12 months with a big saving on tax. He added if you wanted the whole amount up front then you would have to be prepared to pay a large amount in tax. Brian explained the procedure that would have to be put into place for demutualisation to occur.



**Robert Lyle (W39)** was introduced as someone who gave the wrong call sign last year but who this year gave his correct one. But to try and confuse *Call Sign*, this year he introduced himself as **Jeremy Ford** in an apparent ruse to get some of his own carrot cake back! *Charles* then said some of the fixed prices weren't very

good and spoke of one in particular that he said was really bad. Control Centre Manager,



**Allan Evans**, told *Jack* that trip was no longer on a fixed price. *Sam* then went on to say that drivers needed a loving arm around their shoulders and that he had phoned Allan several days earlier and that it still hadn't been done. Allan told *Rupert* that it definitely had been done and *Pete* thanked him and said he hadn't noticed. Allan said that many long trips now had fixed prices but shorter ones with f/p's were put into the system several years ago and were just updated when fares went up. But the one that *Tom* had mentioned no longer had the price that *Malcolm* had spoken of. *Bert* then asked whether we still had any input into **Euston Station** following a shout from



there last year. **Brian Rice** said no, explained who was now doing it and said that one driver who took a trip to **Gatwick** on that occasion had gone via the Westway and M25, even though it was around 5 in the morning and going through town was a doddle. As a result, it added about £80 to the expected fare and the account rarely returned after seeing that. Brian said we even offered £2.80 a mile, but they hardly ever come back. Allan Evans said they even offered to go down to £2.50 a mile for some trips, lower than they had ever gone, but the trips went to **Addison Lee** who offered £2 a mile! Brian said that we had taken a job to **Wales** the previous week at £3 a mile and the driver got back from the 200+ miles round trip in around 4 hours! *Lance* then asked whether we could subsidise some trips via the £5million we had in the bank. Brian said that it wouldn't be practical and that as drivers were given the pick-up, destination and the price, they had the choice of whether they wanted it or not.

*Joe* also asked whether DaC had taken on someone to do marketing as they had previously said and the answer was yes. She was currently in our employ and had worked on our new website in addition to being very good on tenders. With that, *Bob* continued his search for a piece of his carrot cake!



**Marc Turner (R97)** was next. He spoke of trade orgs fighting back and mentioned the **Mayfair Mob** and **UCG** as being heavily involved in the battle. He was critical that all some could think about was selling the building and getting money. He called it disgraceful and said if drivers were dying, would all they thought about be how much money they could get. He said drivers sounded too defeatist.

**Adam Harrison (A19)** was next onto the lectern. He asked if we had ever considered using mobile phones for receiving trips like the apps did. Brian said we already had an app in the cab and that it was called a terminal!

Adam said that if we had our phones used it would save money by getting rid of the fitting bay. Brian said he believed drivers like the functionality of the terminal in addition to its large lettering. He also said that looking at a phone could constitute a danger. Adam then asked about having an iPad. Brian replied that drivers would leave them in the cab and constantly be broken into. He added that we also needed a sim, which in the terminal's case was a data one. Otherwise some would try to rip the terminal out.



**Joe Connor (N64)** said that re the years' drivers had been on DaC before being eligible for retaining membership, all the drivers that had stayed since 2008 when things started to get bad were the true members and they should be eligible for renting without losing membership. There was applause and Brian said it was a fair point and asked drivers if their previous 20 years vote should be reduced to 10 years? Drivers seemed to agree.



**Rob Roney (C14)** was last and started by saying that he thought many wouldn't like what he was going to say – **Robert Lyle** immediately showed concern about his carrot cake! Rob said he thought reducing the Board at the moment wasn't the right thing to do and suggested that if other companies saw us reduce the size, they could assume we were in trouble and offer much less that the building was really worth. He also spoke about the previous year when he only just managed to find a second hand cab and might have been in a position where after 30 years, he could have lost his membership and everything associated with it. Rob went on to say that he had a lot of respect for **Mike Tovey** and considered that he always gave us the truth. He wasn't too keen on some of the current BoM and also some past members, whereas others he thought had done a good job. But fortunately for *Call Sign* he didn't name anyone! Nevertheless, his point was that you needed a full BoM rather than a small few. He then spoke of the time it takes to get planning permission and of how developers of the building next door had overpaid because they had the time to sit on it for however long it took. He thought we had a good chance of earning a really good deal on the building because of the fact that it had planning permission to go up 10 floors and possibly even more, was in the City, **Crossrail** would be coming soon and we are close to the tube, but that we needed to be seen as being strong whereas the trade at present was very weak. He thought it might be the right time to sell up lock, stock and barrel. Brian said anything they did was down to the drivers.

All the votes were carried and the meeting ended at 3.10pm.

**Alan Fisher**  
**Call Sign Online**

*At the recent AGM, Brian Rice gave a lengthy report that we have taken out of the actual AGM report for space reasons and placed within its own page. He did not use any notes, but neither should it be taken as being word for word...*

# The DaC AGM Financial Report



I don't think you need me to tell you what has happened to our trade. It seems that everyone has taken us on at every opportunity. I saw the figures last week and there were just over 97,000 minicab licences out there with

TfL licensing new ones at a rate of over 600 each week.

There seems to be no curtailing **Uber** and unfortunately it has left our trade in dire straits – that's not just **Dial-a-Cab**, but the whole industry. As you probably know, one of our competitors had a large debt and they had to sell their premises in order to service the debt with the bank, so they have no assets left. I would be the first to admit that our figures are not very good, but at least we do have a little bit in reserve as well as a substantial asset. When you lose money as we did this year – that's £970,000 – it's not all cash; that would be around £300,000 or £350,000 with depreciation. But we are still burning cash at half a million pounds a year so things can't continue as they are. I'd like to sit here and tell you that things are going to be fantastic, but I can't. The only way I can see it getting better is if TfL or the Government intervenes and does something to protect our trade. They keep telling us that we are the *Gold Standard* but then do nothing to look after us and I have learned over the years that you can't negotiate with TfL – they just dictate and tell you what the score is.

We had a meeting with them at **Palestra** recently. All those that supply credit card chip and pin machines were there... **Cab:app**, **CabVision**, **Verifone**, the radio circuits etc and every one of us to a man asked them not to impose the charge on the driver but to impose it on the customer. So what did they do? They imposed it on the driver!

So as far as I am concerned – and I have always considered myself to be moderate – I feel that everything coming out from TfL such as consultations etc, well they have made their minds up even before the consultation comes out and they just want to be seen as paying lip service and tell everyone that they *did* consult with the licensed taxi trade. It's a problem and I really can't see things getting better until we are relieved of TfL, because it is they that are the problem. They are reducing our street work; if you come out at around 10.30pm then you are surrounded by what looks like a million yellow lights with passengers standing on corners looking at their phones and waiting for their cars.

The problem is that they all want something cheap and unfortunately with the overheads the trade and drivers have, you just can't work or even afford to work cheap. I feel that what they need to do is to somehow reduce your overheads

– for instance I believe you should be zero rated for VAT because the cab has to have a wheelchair access and as for those vehicles carrying medical equipment, that should be enough. I believe that our only way forward is to reduce overheads while placing more on the heads of private hire. But there has to be an appetite to do that and I'm not convinced that all the new candidates standing for Mayor are going to do it. I remember Boris Johnson when he first came to us in 2008 promising us the world. He even got the LCDC on his side and we were giving out receipts proclaiming 'Vote for Boris'. But of course, they get in and then the attitude changes.

What exacerbates the situation even more – and you know about this far more than I do – is the traffic congestion in London. They are digging up half of London to put in cycle superhighways, leaving traffic in an absolutely abominable state. It is making taxi fares hugely expensive, journeys are taking a long time and causing us to lose customers because of it. Those passengers are now going for an alternative where they get a fixed price from A to B and they know what that price will be regardless of whether it takes 15 minutes or an hour! But we can't work on that basis, it is unfair; we don't expect you to do fixed prices that involve you getting stuck in horrendous traffic conditions. It just isn't fair.

So, I'd like to sit here and tell you that things will get rosier in the future, but I believe that we have a problem on our hands. I don't want to be a doom and gloom merchant or one of the 'old boys' who go around telling everyone that the game is finished because I don't think it is. But we definitely need some help from the powers-that-be. I have never been one for demos and things like that because I think it just antagonises the public. But I'm not so sure now. We need people to wake up; we've got the last throw of

the dice to do something to protect our trade. But as I said earlier, fortunately **Dial-a-Cab** at least is in a good financial position.

I feel very strongly about what I've said and feel very sorry for the younger members of the trade that have large commitments and they must feel they are in a very frightening position. It reminds me of the time back in the 1990s when we had a similar downturn – although probably not as bad as this. But there were financial reasons for that and of course the Iraq war was going on. But what we have here is unfair competition and to an extent that makes it too difficult to compete against and things are not getting better. We are again running with a deficit, just as we did last year, and that can't carry on forever.

**But I think things will change and they will change in the next year because London cannot sustain three radio circuits and all the apps.**

We have held talks with **Radio Taxis** but they cancelled the last two meetings. They had previously put some propositions to us that were totally unacceptable, wanting an amalgamation on their terms. But of course, they've got nothing to put in, so nothing came to fruition.

As you are probably aware, **Cab:app** are appealing to raise £500,000 and looking to sell 7.5% equity in the company. They wouldn't want to do that if they were doing well. **Hailo** said they had enough cash to continue for three months unless they could raise some more venture capitalist money, which they probably will do. **Radio Taxis** had to sell their building to pay off their debts while **ComCab** had to shut down their offices in **Edinburgh**, **Liverpool** and **Birmingham**. If it was just us doing badly while everyone else was doing fantastically well, then we would have a big problem, but it's not. It's everyone across the trade that is struggling.

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*Simon Scott is one of the new generation of taxi drivers whose life is captured as a blog! His story of his early days as a taxi driver is captured here as...*

# A Blogger's Tale

## 1988

The first few days and weeks behind the wheel went by quickly – in a whirl of diesel fumes, waving hands and my desire to make my cab payments on time. I felt at home behind that grubby plastic steering wheel with my right elbow nonchalantly poking out of the window and I felt like I fitted nicely into a small inner London *clique* as I guided that battered old girl around the streets of the City. My only concern was that my right arm had a better sun tan than the rest of me!

It was a very hot summer and although air conditioning had been invented, no one in the cab trade had heard of it let alone thought about fitting it to black cab. Needless to say my cab boiled over numerous times; this got very boring as it took time to cool it down and get going again, I would quietly curse Michael. I had however discovered a little trick to prolong the time between boil-overs, I would turn the heating up full blast in the back and open both the windows, this kept the engine slightly cooler.

Sorted, or so I thought. There was of course the little matter of passenger comfort and the fact that they tended to notice the ferocious heat as soon as they got in the back. A pattern began to emerge, passenger hails my cab, I pull over and we discuss the destination, I set the meter, mirror signal and manoeuvre... and then passenger begins to

mumble about it being hot in the back! I pretend not to hear in the hope I can get somewhere near their destination before they bail out. This rarely worked and I usually ended up blaming the previous passenger for fiddling around with the buttons. The heating would go off and the cab would boil over again. I knew I had to go back to the garage to complain of course, but I put it off time and time again due to my interest in self-preservation.

One morning I was sitting in the **Strand** happily watching the general public wandering around and willing one of them to step too close to my web, when I was rudely interrupted by a sharp tap on the window. A very official looking man was fixing me with his nasty, weasly looking eyes and was holding up a card that, as I peered closer, read **Public Carriage Officer**. I froze! The taxi police! I had heard about these people and although the cab wasn't mine, I knew this meant trouble. I decided to face him head on, got out and walked around to join him on the pavement. He called me Sir – a bad start... and I felt one nil down already.

"Where is the fire extinguisher," he asked?

"I don't have one," I mumbled. This was going badly. He looked me straight in the eye as he said:

"Take this excuse for a taxi back to Michael and tell him to fit a suitable fire



extinguisher and if I see you again without one, I'll give you a stop note."

I didn't yet know what a stop note was, but I didn't like the sound of it at all. Mr PCO hadn't finished: "And you can take that unauthorised transistor radio off the vent hook."

I didn't bother trying to argue; he gave me a little note to give Michael and off he went. I stood there watching him and the cabs quickly pulling away from the rank as he made his way towards them! It looked like a black **Mexican Wave** as they all pulled off in a cloud of diesel fumes and roaring engines. I had no choice; I did a U turn and headed off towards **Bethnal Green**...

*To be continued...*

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

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

## SIMON'S GOLF COURSES

### The Berkshires – Red Course

Last month's **Call Sign** article dealt with **The Berkshires Blue course**, so this month sees us look at **The Red course** at the same golf club.

This one is unusual in that it's made up of six of each – that's six par threes, six par fours and six par fives! At over 6000 yards, the best way of scoring well is on the par fives, which are shortish by today's standards, because most of the par threes are a real challenge.

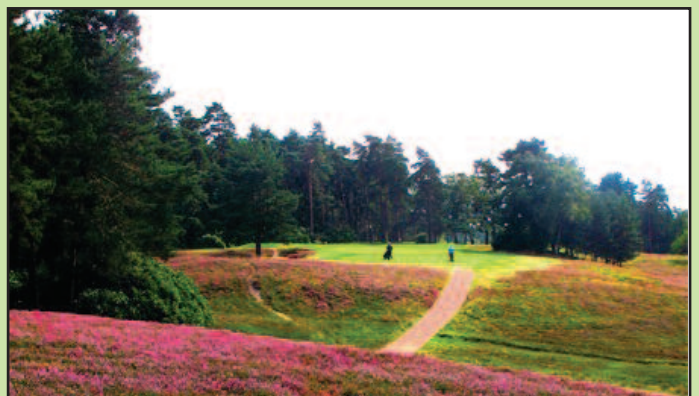
**The easiest par 3 is the second hole; I only mention that hole as it's where I scored my sole hole in one; it was with a 7 iron, shooting into a stiff breeze at 140 yards and actually hitting it well for once!**

In my opinion, a par 4 doesn't have to be of ridiculous length and one of the best holes here is the short 360 yards par 4 sixth. Precision from the tee to the corner of the dog-leg right or big hitters can risk taking on the trees, leaves a well-struck short iron to a rising green guarded by bunkers.

Heather, birch, sandy soil and fast greens all make for a great day's golf. I recommend it highly – albeit not cheap, even if it's just the once!

Top tip: Go in mid-May when the rhododendrons are in bloom. Just magnificent...!

*Happy golfing...*



**The Red course 7th hole 180 yard par 3**

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

Last month's *Call Sign* ran an article that we thought sounded shocking, when **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Debbie Hope (W18)** received a **Metropolitan Police** letter enclosing three stills taken from a video camera appearing to show Debbie's taxi had been driven through lights whilst they were on red.

Debbie held her hands up, although she couldn't remember the incident. However the stills showed the lights had gone from red to amber and then straight back to red! Even so, Debbie admitted that it was her cab and the incorrect light change must have temporarily confused her.

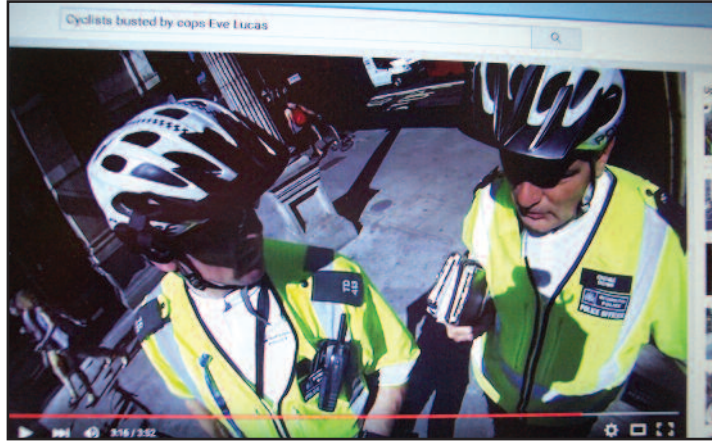
Later, her husband **Duncan (R52)**, while checking the stills, said they looked like they had come from a cyclist's helmet cam because there is no official camera in place at **Margaret Street / Parliament Square**, where the offence took place. When Debbie phoned the Met, they eventually confirmed Duncan's theory and said that the offence was still not going to be dropped.

The article went round the internet like crazy, with *Call Sign* receiving driver's views

*If you thought last month's Call Sign article on DaC driver Debbie Hope (W18) being nicked for going through a red light courtesy of a cyclist's helmet cam wasn't true, be prepared for a shock...*

## CAUGHT ON FILM!

### POLICE TELL CYCLIST TO SEND FOOTAGE TO THE MET!



Officers tell a cyclist to post footage to the Met

The two policemen between them then tell the cyclist how to upload the footage onto their website and explain that the instructions are clear and "tell you where to go." They then tell the cyclist of one person

caught cutting up a cyclist at the Oval thanks to uploaded footage. It went to court and the driver – described as a cab but not specified as to which variety – was fined £800. The footage ends with the police having a friendly chat with the cyclist about the possibilities.

Unfortunately, *Call Sign* sees nothing "friendly" in this incident and would recommend any driver caught by footage of this nature to contact their trade organisation because this isn't just unfair, it is an absolute disgrace! Unfortunately Debbie doesn't belong to one, so we await to see whether the police take it further..

## Obituary: Bob Coy



I regret to inform the society of the death of Bob Coy (ex-D77) who passed away on Monday 1st February 2016. He was a circuit member for 40 years, also serving as a Board member for part of that time, as well as being a Society Arbitrator.

Bob was a big man; he liked a good laugh, a good pint and a good game of golf. Two of these he excelled at – sorry about the golf, Bob! He was great company, a true friend and possessed the best London Knowledge of anybody I ever knew!

He will be sadly missed by all of his family and friends including many on Dial-a-Cab. But he will not be forgotten. RIP...

David Hughes (A73)

*DaC was represented at the funeral on February 12th by Brian Rice, Allan Evans and Joe Brazil...*

by the score ranging from name calling of the Met, to calls of it being illegal as all cameras operated by the force "have to be regularly calibrated" – something we at this mag also believed. Some even thought it was a scam pretending to come from the Met!

However, following publication, we were sent a disturbing YouTube clip showing a Met officer actually telling a cyclist that they would be happy to accept helmet cam footage!

The footage opens with a cyclist turning left from **Southampton Row** into the **Vernon Place / Bloomsbury Way** bus lane and being pulled over by waiting police for being in a bus lane that doesn't allow cyclists in it. The officer politely castigates the cyclist, explains about the 'no cyclist' signs and then tells him that he will be given a smaller fixed penalty notice (£15) than it could have been because it incorporates an online **10 minute learning package**. The officer says he would go on the cyclist's integrity and trust him to do the course, even though he had absolutely no ID on him! Officer **TD 431** then charged him.

Then the shocking part! The officer, along with **TD 413**, informs the cyclist that they are not at the bus lane every day "by the way" and the cyclist replies in a joking voice that it will be ok to do it then! But the joking stops there so far as *Call Sign* is concerned. The police know they are being filmed and ask the cyclist what he does with his film clips and smile when he says they go out on **YouTube**.

**TD413** then says to the cyclist that if he gets any examples of bad driving, he should send it to the Met Police to deal with! The policeman adds that they first send out a letter (as Debbie Hope got) and then investigate it (as when Debbie phoned the Met and they told her they had no intention of dropping it, regardless of the film originating from an unofficial and uncollaborated source and regardless of it then showing an incorrect traffic lights sequence).

## HOME PC REPAIR

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# BRAZIL CALLING

## The thoughts of Joe Brazil

### Remaining idle is not an option

Well there you are, it's 3am, it's cold, it's a Tuesday and it hasn't been a good one!

You've been on EC5 for longer than you wanted or expected and getting close to the point of **McLiver** – for what that's worth – when out comes what you hope will be a rescue job on the terminal.

The screen, after its initial burst of urgency, informs you that you are to pick up at Travers Smith in Smithfield. Now as everyone knows, when you pick up at that account there are many instructions and restrictions guiding you to the conclusion that you are probably not really wanted in the area at all, but an account client needs you!

Engine starts, lights on and off you trot – dodging meat lorries and fork lift trucks as you go. £3 something on the meter, this could go either way you think and as you get around there, observing the “do not pick up or drop off in a loading bay, must park on a yellow line to avoid a ticket” instructions, there's a gap on the left, that'll do. So you decide to reverse into **Hosier Lane** and send a message informing the client and advise arrival. So far, so good – I haven't incurred a penalty, I've been observant of all rules and regulations and I just sit and wait.

This now is the perfect time to reach for the name board and make sure the heater is on in the back; after all it's the middle of the winter and all you can see out the windscreen are market porters loading meat and three brass monkeys looking for something.

Then a bit like a **Derek and Clive** skit I seem to remember, (one for the kids there!), you get a tap tap tap on the window. You think blimey he's out quick, before you then notice a rather cold looking chap with a lanyard around his neck poking an ID with a **City of London** decal in your direction.

“Hello, how can I help you,” I ask – it costs nothing to be polite, I thought.

“Could you switch off your engine,” comes the reply.

I, being slightly bewildered at this request, ask who he is.

“Emissions,” he states without any hint of a smile.

Doesn't really answer the question, but I comply anyway:

“What's the regulation you're enforcing,” I ask? “Is it a bye law?”

This left him looking like a fox in the headlights.

“Err, excuse me a second,” he says, as he walks around the back of the vehicle and reaches for his mobile. I hadn't come across enforcement officers requesting this before. Notices have appeared in the City asking you to turn your engine off after 60 seconds, but I hadn't actually been approached regarding any enforcement. But before he returned to the vehicle, the passenger had arrived, jumped in and I had no further conversation with Mr Emissions. I did wonder if this left me in the position where I had to push the cab to **Bethnal Green** or chance starting it. Well, okay, I didn't, but it was the question I wanted to ask him. Of course, being polite, off I drove and no more words were exchanged.

So what are they enforcing and what are the regulations? A quick look on the *interweb* found this:

### Idling vehicle engines

*Why are idling vehicle engines a problem in the City? Leaving an engine running causes unnecessary air pollution. The whole of the City is an Air Quality Management Area as air quality objectives for Nitrogen Dioxide and fine particles (PM10) are not being met.*

*Any driver of a motor vehicle who unnecessarily keeps their engine running while the vehicle is parked on a road, can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. When an officer discovers a vehicle with its engine running, the driver will be advised that it is an offence to leave an engine running in a stationary vehicle and that such an offence carries a Fixed Penalty of £20. The officer will then ask the driver to turn the engine off. A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued if the driver refuses to turn off the engine. The fine must be paid within 28 days, after which it increases to £40.*

So there it is; I have no problem with the regulations, clean air is a benefit to all of us... a cold cab not so much! The meat lorries with their engines running are probably the real reason for enforcement officers to be deployed in the area, but of course cabs are a much easier target. I wonder how many £20 fines have been collected from Dutch and Irish lorries loading in the area, the former no doubt would have a language barrier making conversation difficult and, I think the second would also have a language problem, but maybe for different reasons. For us, it's always worth avoiding a fine.

As the great **Brendan Behan** once said: “I have a total irreverence for anything connected with society except that which makes the roads safer, beer stronger, food cheaper and the old men and old women warmer in the winter and happier in the summer.”

I couldn't have put it better myself! Now handbrake off and heave...maybe next time.

**Joe Brazil, DaC Board Member**



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## MAM Auto Electricians on the move

One of the London taxi trade's longest standing and favourite electricians, Michael, at MAM Auto Electricians has moved from Blundell Street, Kings Cross to a new and brighter property that is accessed directly from Scrubs Lane W10. MAM is a family run business that has been sorting out London taxis electrical problems for over thirty years.

MAM's new address is:

**Unit 9, Mitre Bridge Industrial Park  
Mitre Way, London W10 6AU**

The phone number is the still the same:  
**020 7607 3915 or 07831 222046**

You can go to Michael for any taxi electrical work on  
Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm  
He is also open on Saturday between 8.30am till 1pm...



I have been waiting for 11 years to write this article! When I first became a licensed taxi driver in 1975, I was just 24 years old. Later that year, I got married and one year after that I applied for and got a mortgage. Within another

12 months I purchased £4,400's worth of new cab (RUV 324R). So what with the mortgage and loan repayments for the cab and although I knew I could afford the repayments while working, I wondered how I would cope if I became sick or had a bad accident...

My answer was to join a sickness / income replacement scheme in around 1978 and duly pay the monthly instalments. I changed insurers in the early 1990s because the original company wanted more money for less cover. So I continued paying the monthly instalments to the new insurance company.

Then in January 2002 and at a time when I was now over 50, the policy allegedly needed renewing. I had never had to renew it prior to becoming 50 and had to make a declaration that I was fit and well, something I then did every subsequent January.

However, in October 2004 I went into hospital with Atrial Fibrillation. I had a resting pulse of 162 despite training 3 days a week and never having smoked. So I was then off work and had to claim on my sickness policy. There was a 7 day excess and was supposed to cover me up to two years

**Brian Marcantonio (R73) is a DaC driver and former Taxi Driver of the Year winner**

## The do's and do nots of a taxi driver's health insurance

or to my 65th birthday, whichever was sooner.

I claimed in mid-October, received some money in early December with a larger cheque on Christmas Eve. By the time that cheque had cleared, it was the New Year.

I went to see the consultant early in January 2005 and told him that this time off work was breaking me (luckily my wife was working). He said I was OK to return to work; I explained what I did for a living and it being a somewhat stressful job, but he said it was OK providing I kept taking the medication I had been prescribed. I also confirmed with the consultant – who had around 12 letters after his name – that the drugs prescribed would not impair my driving. He said they would not.

So I put my cab into overhaul and notified the insurance company that I was returning to work on 10th January 2005. A letter quickly arrived from the insurance company with a cheque for the outstanding amount, together with a letter telling me they were no longer prepared to insure me – or in other words that I should go forth and multiply because we don't want you!

Charming, I thought! I had been paying £40 a month for all that time and it was only when I had to claim that they suddenly no longer wanted to know! So I continued to

put away the £40 a month until now (I am 65 in March). Ten years and two months makes £4880 extra I now have instead of giving it to an insurance company salesman. So I would like to thank Emrose (Insurance Brokers) Ltd and the caring, sharing Cabsurance Direct for telling me to s\*d off in 2005!

What I'm saying is if you put the premiums for this type of insurance away, after a couple of years you can insure yourself and if you are fortunate enough not to be ill or have an accident, you will then have a nice lump of money like I have.

Of course, it is wise to take out Permanent Health Insurance; this covers you if you have been off for two years and pays you up to OAP age whatever that's going to be for you, because if you have been off for two years, then the chances are that you won't be returning to work.

But just make sure anyway that the wording of the policy states that "returning to work" means also in your original occupation ie as a licensed taxi driver.

**Brian Marcantonio  
Call Sign Online**

*Brian's article is a personal point of view and does not necessarily represent the view of Call Sign...*

**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**



London's sporting heritage does of course, go back to time immemorial, but I wonder how many readers are aware of an ancient sports stadium underneath your working area in the City's square mile? If you have ever seen the film *Gladiator* then you might have some idea where this is leading.

London's Roman Amphitheatre, where vast crowds would have witnessed gladiatorial combats as well as blood sports and even public executions, had been lost for nearly 2,000 years until archaeologists discovered the ruins of the original circular walls after searching for 100 years.

The Museum of London's archaeology team had been given the chance to inspect the site before work was due to start on the new **Guildhall Art Gallery** building back in 1988. What perhaps was surprising was that this stadium was found to have been built within the old Roman Wall – because most amphitheatres in other cities of the **Roman Empire** were located on the outside.

It was initially built as a wooden structure in **AD70**, just a few short years after invasion and conquest. But those skilful Roman architects gave it a substantial makeover nearly 50 years later, while at the same time increasing its capacity to over 6,000 – all, of course, baying for blood!

The Romans abandoned Britain in the 4th century and over time the Amphitheatre was left to decay and even periodically dismantled and recycled for building materials until it began to get covered over by other settlements. But in the 11th century, the first ever (timber) Guildhall was built, which became the

very centre of London's administration – the core structure you see today was the work of master mason **John Croxton** between **1411 and 1429**.

So it appeared that the old Roman Amphitheatre was to be lost forever, until that archaeological discovery almost 30 years ago – and if you stand today in **Guildhall Yard**, a quick glance down at the paving stones reveals an 80cm wide curved of dark stone, which marks the edge of the sporting arena. But even better than that, this hidden gem is actually available for all to visit and view for free by entering the **Guildhall Art Gallery** – where its actual remains are located some 8 meters below the surface, buried between centuries of old rubble and rubbish.

Once inside, you will be up close and personal with the remains of the original walls of the stadium, its drainage system and even the sand that was once laid down to soak up blood from the wounded *Gladiators* – yep, it wasn't much fun winning the silver medal in those days!

There is also an impressive digital projection that fills in those gaps within the ruins to fire your imagination and well worth you taking time out to visit the next time you stop for a cuppa at the **Piccolo** or even to show off to punters if you can squeeze on the two cab rank in **Aldermanbury**.

Ok, so it's not the massive **Coliseum** as in Rome, but it's ours and should be celebrated... and it should be visited! **Russell Crowe**, eat your heart out!

Next month we're off to the horse races in London! You didn't have to go as far as **Kempton Park** or **Sandown Park** to enjoy the sport of kings!



**Part of the Roman amphitheatre at Guildhall**

**Bob Woodford  
Call Sign Online**



## Hola to my friends at Dial-a-Cab...

It's been a while since I have written to *Call Sign*. I am still here in Spain living in my hacienda and growing old disgracefully. So you may wonder what inspired me to put pen to paper (or should that be keyboard to screen) after such a long absence?

Recently I have been faced with the dilemma of whether or not to renew my taxicab driving licence. Despite it being 45 years since acquiring the licence, I can still remember how difficult it was to achieve. There are not many cabbies who voluntarily give up their licence, unless of course bad health prevails. I am grateful to say that at time of writing I am in good health but still cannot see the practicality or financial advantage of keeping my licence any more.

I have not worked for several years and cannot see myself working in the foreseeable future. What I have always seen as an assurance measure, I now see as an unnecessary expense.

Since retiring, I have tried to keep my fin-

Steve Shaller has driven on DaC for many years as well as writing for *Call Sign* both with a motoring column and a general gossip one! He moved from Gants Hill to Spain many years ago to become a long distance commuter and part-time taxi driver, but now...

## Steve says adios to taxis!



ger on the pulse of the taxi trade. I read various cab journals as well as *Call Sign* magazine. I speak to taxi drivers and what I read and what I hear is not the positive feedback that I would wish to receive.

I read Alan's *January Call Sign Online* and in that issue saw a letter from my old Finsbury Square comrade Bernie Silver (G08) who, like myself, is having second thoughts about renewing his Bill. For basically the same reasons as Bernie, I too feel that I would be unable to endure the ridiculous traffic conditions, speed limits, camera cash cows and cycle lanes.

I therefore will not be renewing my licence in May and if you, Bernie, intend to follow suite, I can assure you that there is life after cabbage. There is no longer room in our trade for part-timers and we oldies since the new 15 year age limit on licensing taxis was introduced. I now consider it a job with very little return for the amount of hours put in, coupled with the stress and expense of keeping a very expensive vehicle on the road.

*Still proud to have been one of the best in the world...*

**Steve Shaller (ex F34J)  
España**

**Gary Cox thinks back to a chance meeting with Amy Winehouse and her legacy...**

## REMEMBERING AMY...

**A**my Winehouse first came to Joe public's attention via the great educator **Robert Elms** on **Radio London 94.5**. Everyone thinks they know her and some would say, her sad pathetic story as well. But in the cab trade she's just known as one of ours. The type of girl you could imagine working in her dad's east end garage and who even as a kid with that cheeky smile would give as good as she got.

I met her just once and very briefly. It was on a cold bright lunchtime; I was getting out of my cab in **Broadwick Street** and there was waif thin Amy and dad **Mitch** strolling straight down the middle of the cobbled **Soho** street.

As she walked towards me, I called out: "Amy, you're looking good kid!" As the old cockney saying goes... out of the mouths of babes, her reply will always stay with me; albeit just a simple "...thanks, I'm feeling really good!" Then she and Mitch passed me, both with smiles on their faces.

**Sadly, in what seemed just a relatively short time later came her tragic death on 23rd July 2011 due to alcohol poisoning.**

So Amy, if you're sitting upstairs feeling bored, being a cab driver's daughter you'll look down and flick through *Call Sign* so I'd just like you to read the following words kid. Along with the rest of the world, I know your 2006 album **Back to Black** gave you five **Grammy** awards and that over the course of time you got to work with the master himself, **Tony Bennett**. But I just wish I could walk into a taxi garage and see you there today. Unless the wind blows fair in my direction, I will probably never meet Mitch again because with production of director **Asif Kapadia's** film called **Amy** now released on DVD, I'd like to shake Mitch's hand for his horse trading to get a percentage of the profits from the film for the **Amy Winehouse Foundation Resilience Programme** – the ground breaking drug and alcohol awareness programme. If you've got a teenager in your world, consider buying that special person a copy – bear in mind that it's a 15 classification with references to drugs and swearing. You could say it's a mirror image of the worst excesses of the world that we taxi drivers mop up on a Saturday night.

I can't recommend this DVD highly enough – maybe because under the stewardship of the Winehouse family, something good did come out of this mess in the end – as well as some wonderful music.

And Back to Black? Perhaps Amy was even singing about us...!

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



**Amy and Mitch walking through Soho**

**London Taxidivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children**

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*The Hon President, Hon Chairman and Committee look forward to seeing you*

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

# Brethren of the Whip



## The Eatwell Dynasty

*Dial-a-Cab driver Steve Thomas (N10) has been doing his family tree and it was whilst researching his wife*

*Maria's ancestors, that he found her family had once been quite prominent in the cab trade of Victorian London. Via the editor, Steve asked me if I had any information in my files regarding the Eatwell family. I knew the name well. What follows is a combination of Steve's genealogical work and my files from that period...*

Maria's great-great-great-great-grandfather, **Uriah Eatwell** (born 1797), moved to London from his native Gloucestershire. When he was 27, he married **Sarah Oldham** at St Pancras [old] Church in 1824. This was before births deaths and marriages were registered so there is no record of his occupation and it is only with the census of 1841, when he is living in **Roberts Mews** off **Hampstead Road** that we get official confirmation that he is a (licensed) cabman.

Uriah and Sarah had at least five children, four boys and a girl. The youngest child, **Charles** was charged with manslaughter after running over a pedestrian with his **Hansom cab** in November 1855. Several witnesses expressed their belief that Charles could have pulled up in time as he shouted the warning "Hoy!" Charles was found guilty at the **Old Bailey** and sentenced to one month.

Uriah's only daughter was **Mary**. She became a cook at **Chiswick** where in the space of ten years she had saved "about £50." In 1886 at the age of 44, she married a "foreman at the docks" and her husband appears just as thrifty as her, for he had somehow managed to save £200. They purchased several properties between them, but apparently lost money by them and were forced to sell.

After her husband's death in 1884, **Mary's** health and mental state seemed to deteriorate and within two years she was applying to the **Poor Law Union** for relief. In 1889 her landlady reported to the relief office that **Mary** was in a bad state. *"She thought her out of her mind; she was covered with vermin and her room was beastly dirty."* It was clear that **Mary** was suffering from an undiagnosed form of dementia. She was too ill to be moved to the **Poor Law infirmary**,

died the next day and was buried by the **Poor Law Union** in a pauper's grave. Her only known relatives were two brothers; **William**, a decorator in **Battersea** and **John**, a cabman of **Lambeth**.

John was the oldest child of **Uriah** and **Sarah**. In 1853 he had been summoned to court for driving too slow. No details were given by the report other than the plate number of the cab (1281). Cabmen at the time could be hired by time or distance. If hired by time, they did not have to travel faster than 4 mph, if by distance the maximum was six miles an hour, though of course this was often exceeded. This had been a short journey, so perhaps John may have resented being taken off a stand after doing a long time waiting – a common enough occurrence. All that is known is that he lost the case.



Steve Thomas asked Sean for help in tracing his wife's cab driving ancestry

In 1876 John was in trouble again, this time for refusing to give a ticket – a kind of receipt that allowed for the driver to be traced. They were supposed to be given at the commencement of every fare, but were seldom asked for and rarely given. The passenger had tendered 1s 6d for the journey which he believed to be under two miles, but John demanded 2s. Throughout the nineteenth century cabmen were notorious for adding on an extra 6d. Most people paid it to save them the tirade of abuse that would follow payment of *the legal amount*. John's passenger was of stronger stuff and demanded a ticket. In court, the passenger told the magistrate that he thought at one time the cabman was about to strike him with his whip. John was fined 20s (£1) which he paid straight away.

But it is John's younger brother, **Martin**, who was probably the most successful cabman of the **Eatwell** dynasty and who expanded into a cab and omnibus proprietor. In 1875 Martin

was fortunate not to be jailed after sending out a horse in a cab that was unfit to work. He was fined £5 and the driver 5s for "torturing a horse by allowing it to be worked." He died in 1885 and his widow, **Mary Ann** (whose sister was married to **John Eatwell**), took over the business. It was managed by two of her sons. The widow's right to take over the proprietor's licence dated back to 1654 with **The Fellowship of Hackney Carriage Drivers**. Even if a widow remarried, proprietorship would not become her husband's – as all her other property would – without her consent.

Following an appearance at the **Old Bailey** in 1888 where the compensation they paid following an accident caused by one of their drivers was fraudulently stolen, there does not appear to be any more information on the **Eatwells**. By the turn of the twentieth century, **Eatwell's Yard** was on the corner of **South Island Place** and **Hackford Street**, between the **Brixton** and **Clapham Roads**.

In the 1911 census, **Charles Eatwell** (56 and son of **John**) is a cab proprietor in **South Island Place** and his cab driver nephew **Martin** (37) appear to be the only remaining family members connected with the trade. Both are single and the **Eatwell** dynasty could have ended there... except that **Steve** has found that there was a cab proprietor living in **South Island Place** in 1919 by the name **Edward Eatwell**. Which begs the question: Are there any **Eatwells** driving a cab today?

**Sean Farrell**  
Call Sign Online

*If there are any other drivers who would like Sean to try and trace the cab driving side of their family, then please email [callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com) and we'll put you in touch with Sean..*

## Call Sign March 2016

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# Welcome to Dial-a-Cab!

Everyone after Founder-Chairman Bonnie Martyn in 1953 has been a new recruit to *Dial-a-Cab* at some or other time and of late there have been quite a number of new drivers joining up. *Call Sign* was recently on hand to watch several new subscribers, together with a few returning old hands, signing up and undergoing training to join the Society. We asked a few of them to give their reasons for joining the circuit...



**Jaye Studman (D35)** was eager to join *DaC*. He told *Call Sign*:

"My wife's uncle and my next door neighbour are both on *Dial-a-Cab* so I feel particularly at home here. An added advantage for me is the credit card facility built into the data terminal, because the ability to accept credit cards is a 'must' nowadays in order to offer a better service to the travelling public and to bring the cab trade into the 21st century. We need to make sure we keep up with the opposition."



**Ronnie Blagrove (K88)** is another new face to us – although with a well-known call sign, it being the one that the now-retired **Sid Nathan** had. Having spent several years with another radio taxi company and with what Ronnie described as a "radio focussed brain," he is effectively an 'old hand' at radio work.

"But I just didn't like that circuit's working practices and finally got so fed up that I left. I have spoken to several *Dial-a-Cab* drivers who are happy here and from what I understand, I think I will prefer the *DaC* class of work. I come in from the SW and am aware there are a number of credit trips in the SW area, so I look forward to covering the work..."



**Wayne Trevett (B61)** also has had previous radio taxi experience.

"I have several friends who are already on *DaC* and so I have an insight into the ethos of this Society, which I like. For me, it will be a fresh start and I can relax a little instead of running around like a headless chicken because *Dial-a-Cab* gives me another string, an alternative of work options. Also, the mapping and navigation systems are a massive draw and the ability to accept credit cards is a huge bonus because in most countries in the world, acceptance of credit cards in taxis is mandatory and we as a trade must move forward."



Returning to the fold after a 2 year break is **John Murphy (C11)**.

"I had 16 years here before I took a 'break' and have now decided to return to cabbing full-time and so it was natural for me to come back to *Dial-a-Cab*. I believe that the credit card facility is a very necessary tool in our armoury as it's at least once a day when someone proffers a card, and it is embarrassing to

have to decline the job on the basis of not being able to process the plastic. As a service industry, we need to be able to offer a full and professional service to our public. And I've got my original callsign back, how about that!"

*Call Sign Magazine MMXV1*



**Keith Reading**  
Professional Toastmaster  
Master of Ceremonies

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The number of people who don't know what taxi apps are available...

# Steve's not 'appy!



Steve Burton

"It's quite surprising to me that the general public do not seem to know about the numerous taxi apps available, not least of all our very own *Dial-a-Cab* app, because so many passengers tell me they cannot get a taxi to pick them up from their place of work or other venue," **Steve Burton (N90)** told *Call Sign*, his tone of voice displaying a feeling of exasperation.

"The trade needs to reach a wider audience via better publicity in order to inform the public that we really can offer a 'door to door' service around the clock and that with our safety record and fabled Knowledge of London, we can and do supply an unbeatable service. I have a friend who works in the City and even he does not know about the 'A to Z' service we can provide; how ridiculous is that!"

"It seems to me that the industry has changed considerably and that we as a trade need to make ourselves more attractive in order to compete and win back confidence and loyalty of the travelling public. Perhaps when credit card acceptance in taxis becomes compulsory, any new way of charging will make the trips look more attractive in comparison with certain other PH companies."

**Alan Green (E52)**  
Call Sign Online



## THE HERTFORDSHIRE WINTER PRO-AM GOLF TOURNAMENT

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## Hello Ladies & Gents

### Dial-a-Cab and you...

The Society is at a crossroads in my opinion; at this year's AGM, we had members wanting to build flats on the current DaC house site, other members wanting to shut up shop and divide any monies left, with the majority wanting to know the next plan.

So what's next? We have a regulatory body in TfL imposing compulsory credit cards

# From Garry White

acceptance upon us – something which I welcome by the way because the travelling public need to know they can pay with credit and debit cards.

In January 2018, all new taxis presented for passing will have to be zero emissions capable; however at the moment I don't believe there is a zero emissions taxi in production! And when it is, at what cost is the vehicle going to be and will this lead to a short fall of available taxis to buy and rent?

Yet all the time, TfL are licensing 500+ private hire drivers each week, thus ensuring Uber have a constant supply of drivers, so that they can adopt the model, stack them high and sell the service cheap!

So how do we compete with this as a Society that was started over 60 years ago to get work and support its members? There will always be a certain level of corporate work for taxis, however, in my opinion not enough for the present four companies that

are after this market ie DaC, RTG, ComCab and now Gett.

Where we have an advantage over the others is that we don't have to pay shareholders. However, in my opinion we do need to diversify into the app market and provide credit card facilities for the trade to supplement the cost of running your Society.

## Volante Automated Dispatch (VAD)

With the new GPS dispatch system – which I and nine other drivers have tested in the City zones – almost ready to roll out to the fleet, it gives us something to look forward to.

DaC's IT department have done a great job with this project, now we need some new accounts to come on board to kick start 2016...

*Be lucky*

**Garry White**  
DaC Board Member

# Hypocrisy and TfL

Ever since the licensed London taxi service left the PCO and moved to TfL's big umbrella, things have gone steadily downhill. *Call Sign* doesn't need to tell you about **Uber** or why PH numbers aren't capped. By now we all know why – and it isn't because they love us!

The TfL press office has sent out information about how well buses are doing in terms of safety and how over the last three months of 2015, **only 1,488 passengers were injured, down 3 from 1,491 in the same period last year.** Great news, lets tell the public!

But what about **Private Hire**? Are there no statistics from the press office about *that* industry that we keep hearing nasty stories about? Well there are actually, but TfL don't want them published as they could apparently alarm the public! So it must be better to leave prospective passengers in the dark and face a possible attack rather than alarm them!

*Call Sign* has almost 8,000 online readers in addition to the DaC drivers who get the magazine posted and we feel they should know what they are getting into when they hire a minicab.

So let's put our cards on the table. I expect that very few, if any, of the figures below that TfL didn't want you to see come from reputable PH companies such as **Addison Lee** or **Brunel**. So who could they be? **U** tell us!

*These are the figures they don't want you to see...*

**2015 PH sexual offences: Total number of allegations 180, total number of arrests 112.**

**Of those, 68 were licensed private hire drivers and 44 were unlicensed minicab drivers.**

**And taxis? Well we've heard of none in regard to physical attacks, let alone sexual ones.**

Keep them secret to avoid alarming the public? Whoever at TfL made the decision for the taxi press not to publish, should be sacked immediately...

*Alan Fisher, Call Sign Online*

# Uber and "Friends...!"

With many in the taxi trade – and indeed in the respectable sections of private hire – suspecting that the Mayor can do nothing without Messrs Cameron and Osbourne giving the ok and with that duo firmly in Uber's corner, we were sent the following piece by a DaC driver. It comes from *The Idler*. You can read more about that at <http://idler.co.uk/>

"The British news has been full this week of stories which prove just how far up the fundament of Silicon Valley the Tories have placed their tongues. **Google** has done a special tax deal with **George Osbourne**. No such special deals come to the small business. If we at *The Idler* are a few seconds late with our VAT return, then enormous penalties are imposed by the unforgiving Miss Jean Brodies who work for **HMRC** in **Cumbernauld**.

Well, the cosy relationship enjoyed by the Tories and the libertarian geeks of **Menlo Park** will come as no surprise to fans of documentary-maker **Adam Curtis**, who wrote a fascinating blog on the subject on the BBC's website.

Curtis points to the intriguing and brilliant figure of **Rachel Whetstone**, former head of Comms for **Google** in Europe and who is now playing the same role for **Uber**. It is **Rachel** who makes sure that **Uber** gets good press and an easy ride from government – and according to some reports she is paid a million quid a year to do so. Notice how anti-Uber stories have been on the decline lately? That's probably **Rachel's** work. She is well-connected; **Rachel's** husband is Tory advisor **Steve Hilton**, and **Rachel** used to work as a spin doctor for the Tory party when **Michael Howard** was leader. Her mother was a Tory Party member and fiercely anti-state while her grandfather was **Antony Fisher**, an ultra right-wing libertarian. He brought chicken factory farming to the UK and helped set up **Radio Caroline**, the radio station which paid no royalties to artists. He also created the first think tanks, which were essentially PR machines for Tory ideas, with bland names which imply a dispassionate stance, like **The Institute of Economic Affairs**.

By the way, I blame **Rachel** for coming up with the phrase "hard-working families." She uses it on a clip from a TV doc made about **Michel Howard** and the young **Cameron** and **Osborne**, show on Curtis's blog.

So **Rachel's** impeccable libertarian pedigree and top connections – she was godmother to **David Cameron's** first child, **Ivan** – have made her the beneficiary of gigantic salaries from tech giants who want to appear to be nice in the papers. This is how things work."

*Ed's note: Incidentally, according to the Mayor, he has never met anyone from Uber. The Idler could also have mentioned that Rachel was caught having an alleged affair with Sam Cam's stepfather Lord Astor just before the 2005 election!*



**Boris** says he has never met anyone from **Uber**, whose Head of Communications is **Rachel Whetstone**...



# ROMAN WAY TO THE RESCUE!

**Every driver has to go to Dial-a-Cab's fitting bay sometimes! Whether it's for a new terminal, a repair or to strip out and refit into a new cab, Roman Way is the place that does the business. Recently one of Call Sign's hacks was making a pit-stop at Roman Way and took a look at what happens when drivers go there...**



Make sure the three plugs are pushed right in

First in was **James Heather (L18)**. He, good humouredly but with a little frustration, told a technician that his terminal was playing up and giving scrambled messages and psychedelic patterns across the viewing screen!

"The map has gone hay-wire too" James said, "and the terminal itself takes some time to warm up!"

The techies did all the usual checks to ensure a steady power supply to the MDT, carefully inspecting the battery connections and cables for security before finally diagnosing a fault within the MDT unit. Inside of fifteen minutes, James was back on the road having had the data unit replaced. He told this mag that he was delighted to be back at work much quicker than he thought he would be.

"These units are generally very robust," **Dana Thananjeyan**, Roman Way's depot manager told us.

"Bearing in mind that they are used constantly for hours at a time, together with often poor road surfaces that give them a pounding, they stand up well. But problems can often arise from electrical deficiencies or lack of maintenance," he suggested.

**Paul Ranson (L90)** came in not long after James pulled out. He had a different problem; his terminal was running intermittently and the map had completely disappeared!

He also added that he was unable to process a credit card trip or even clear an account journey, only being able to do so with the assistance of a helpful contact centre supervisor.

"I've had some grief," Paul announced dryly albeit with a smile.

The technicians got to work checking the battery connections, fuse holder and all associated wiring right up to the MDT itself.

"Ah ha!" A shriek of obvious success from deep black below the data black box came from the DaC techie.

"Gotcha you little...!" The voice fortunately tailed off before the sentence was finished!

The source of all Paul's grief was the USB connection to the MDT, which had become slightly loose during the course of time and service. One firm push of the blue cable back into the MDT, the map was reset, final checks on the PED to ensure credit cards could be processed with ease and Paul too was on his way back to work.

***It was at this point that Call Sign decided to pick the brains of the guys who deal with these queries all day long, and this is their timely advice.***

Power supply/loss problems are frequently the basis of MDT's not functioning properly so there are some very basic checks you can carry out yourself before attending Roman Way. It could be a loose or dirty battery cable, corroded fuse or plastic fuse holder – usually sited near to the battery. Or it might be something as simple as a loose connection to the MDT itself by way of any of those three connections underneath the MDT.

The technicians also advised that the battery be dated by scratching it carefully with a screwdriver when replaced to avoid



Paul Ranson

confusion over warranty periods because batteries don't last forever. You should always try to keep battery terminals clean and corrosion free.

Also, check those aforementioned three cables underneath the MDT for good contact by gently giving them a little push upwards into the MDT itself. Finally, if the MDT does take a little time to start up, run the engine for a few minutes before you switch on the MDT so that the cab heater generates some warmth inside the driving compartment to ease boot-up times.

*It was emphasised that no further 'D.I.Y.' effort should be attempted if the problem is not resolved, but to attend Roman Way without delay.*

**Jamie Corum**  
**Call Sign Online**

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

## DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month's Flashback goes back 15 years to June 2001 and involves a group of DaC drivers who were taking TV companies – and the City – by storm...!

### DAC'S MONEY MEN ON TV AGAIN!

Regular readers will have read about the group of twenty taxi drivers – six of whom are on *Dial-a-Cab* – who together have formed the **Fiscal Shares Club**. The idea of the club is that the members each invest an amount of money into a joint pot, which is then re-invested into the stocks and shares that members feel can earn them a profit in either the long or short term.

Having already appeared on Carlton, BBC2 and US money channel, Bloomberg, the latter invited them back again to put their portfolio before the eagle eyes of Share Magazine's money expert, Nicole Swift. *Call Sign* was at Finsbury Square on May 10th 2001 to see Bloomberg presenter Sara Lean film the intro to the programme, which went out one day later to Europe and the USA.

It took eight 'takes' of the usual cabby TV "coincidence" of the interviewer talking to the camera about the subject, turning around, shouting out *Taxi* and then amazingly the exact person they were hoping to interview drives up to accept the hiring! Sara climbed into the cab of **John Dixon (B67)**. More astonishingly was fellow club member **Mark Rayner (V57)** already sitting in the back!

John – resplendent in his DaC polo shirt together with Mark answered all Sara's questions on camera. The questions were based on the Club's judgement and how successful their hunches had been. Off camera, the Club's PR man, **Martin Hizer (M47)**, was standing outside hoping that Sara would invite him to squeeze into the cab, but sadly no invite came!

Sara asked Mark about their biggest disaster: "Easy" said Mark, "that has to be **Arena Leisure**." Back in the Bloomberg studio, **Nicole Swift** disagreed. It may not have been the greatest buy for what they were looking for, she said, but in the long term it could build nicely. She added that Arena Leisure had made a 27 percent return over the previous 12 months and that certainly looked good on paper.

Then she looked at three of their intended buys; Oystertec, Bett Brothers and Henry Boots. All of them, she explained, had strong possibilities and the Club could do well with them.

When Sara Lean asked John Dixon whether the club based its buying on passenger's hints and information, he said they used their noses as they drove along to see what was succeeding by drawing in the punters, and what wasn't. Nicole agreed that was a good strategy and would get them further than chancing their luck on passenger tips. All in all, it was a Bloomberg thumbs-up for the Fiscal Shares Club, which showed London Taxi drivers in an excellent light.

The six DaC drivers in the Fiscal Club besides Martin, Mark and John are **Alan Hall (B48)**, **Andy Morrison (B78)** and **Mickey Brennan (Y67)**. We gave club PR man Martin the last word and he told *Call Sign* that the club usually traded monthly so that they would have some money to play with.

"We'd look silly going to trade by asking for £5 worth of shares, please...!"

He added that it took three to four years to learn the Knowledge, but only took the club six months to learn how the stock market worked! So driving a cab had to be more difficult!



Bloomberg's crew get ready while John Dixon waits...

## LOOKING AT (TAXI) LIFE

With Tom Quigley (Y33)

### National Wealth Service

When you reach a certain age, you seem to spend more time taking and fetching older relatives to and from hospital, and the fact that taxis are the ideal vehicle for this journey gives the mistaken impression that we can work when we want, meaning that we never lose any money or time doing it.

Of course, after spending hours in waiting rooms, wards and clinics, the journey to and from those, plus the natural anxiety and stress of looking after the relatives takes its toll so much so that by the time you do get home, the thought of getting into the taxi and going to work has been totally drained from you.

Just recently, Wendy and I had been taking three close relatives on such trips, each of these have their own lives on their own and all have a different living accommodation.

As we all know, every visit requires the same questions over and over again – their own status and our relationship to them, as by and large it will be Wendy or I named as the first form of contact to be established before any form of medical help is administered for any long term strategy or solution.

The same questions always come up: "Do they live on their own?" To all three it's a yes. Then the key question: "Do they own the property they are living in?"

Once it's established that none of them do, the whole emphasis of what sort of treatment and care is replaced, so much so that in one case the notes taken down by one particular hospital were completely wrong and the hospital changed treatment and strategy mid-way through, as they had



been under the impression that this relative owned their own property.

One day it was set up for a bit of convalescing in a short term ward with the review of a stay in a longer, more suitable home. Literally, the next day all these thoughts had gone out of the window to be replaced by telling us they were looking to discharge the relative, even though it was obvious to all that they were a long way from being ready.

It's not the people we deal with at ward level, but the money men and women in the background. I wonder how many working class people who bought their council houses to build a bright new future for their families and to leave something to their next of kin, now have to use that property to fund their health care.

Also, the cynic in me saw the headlines in the papers on Monday 15th February 2016 – that the government are going to plough more money

into Mental Health care on the same day that the BBC launched a two week special on the lack of care offered to Mental Care patients...

### Carrier Bags: It didn't take long...

I recently wrote in *Call Sign* about the carrier bag scam of us all being charged 5p to save the planet while using fewer bags with the profits going to charities. Have you noticed that charity shops are now becoming the worst offenders in this scam, as they don't do the 5p bags but only their own branded bags... at 10p!

As we are too snobbish to go to jumble sales? We go to boot sales and table top sales or we do our bit by donating our goods to charity shops. Whilst in there, we may pick up a bargain or two ourselves.

So imagine my face after taking some stuff in carrier bags and bin bags to a leading charity shop. At the same time, while there, I went to purchase a bargain or two and was standing there without a bag but looking at the pile of bags I had just brought in. Behind the counter was the assistant who was serving me and he told me without the faintest hint of a smile that the only bags they did were the 10p logoed ones.

So I naturally enquired about what happens to all the bags that I and many others bring in? Still with a serious look he told me: "Oh, we throw those away!!!"

Tom Quigley  
Call Sign Online



**"I recently renewed my Bill where the letter from TfL stated I should return the completed medical form within 28 days," Bill Cobb (K76) informed Call Sign.**

"However, I was due to have my eyes tested by way of my regular optometrist check-up in a few weeks, which would have meant I'd be late returning the completed medical form that includes the eye test as part of the medical examination. So I called TfL to explain the situation and they agreed to my delay, noting the reason on my file," Bill confided.

"If, like me, you are over 60 years old, you can get a *free* eye test that in these economically challenging times is a big bonus. So it makes sense to get the eyes sorted before you go for the medical. The inclusion of an eye test is a requirement of your driving licence being granted, so it is logical to arrange that first off. It also keeps the doctor happy, because it's one less item to be checked and you can provide proof you've been done by including a copy of the eye test prescription with the doctor's medical report.

# The Eyes Have It



**Bill Cobb**

"Anyway," said Bill in passing, "you need to be able to see potential passengers. That is a

big advantage in this job!"

The TfL documentation that comes with the medical form advises drivers to keep a copy of the form before returning it to TfL. Bill makes his own copy of the form and eye test prescription for his records, but also requests a 'proof of posting' at the Post Office.

"I was also surprised how doctor's fees for carrying out the medical can vary depending on individual medical practitioners. As an example, my current GP was a lot cheaper than my previous one – although I suppose that could have been because I provided my own eye test. Nonetheless, as a certain supermarket chain says... every little helps," said Bill with an impish smile. "I suppose you could also say that the eyes have it!"

**Alan Green (E52)**  
**Call Sign Online**

## Taxi insurance for DaC drivers



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

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

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

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

Our philosophy is to build long-term relationships using balanced service teams providing continuity and expertise. Compare our prices and give us a call. See our ad on page 21 of **Call Sign**.

**Phil Buchan**  
**Hillier Buchan**  
**01322 553313**

## Knowledge Boy arrested at trade demo



One of many **Knowledge of London** students demonstrating along with over 8000 taxi drivers at the recent **Whitehall** demo, **Patric McGuinness**, was arrested with another Knowledge student for obstruction. He sustained bruising to his wrist and was released the same day. He was told that the charge would probably be dropped, but later told that may not be the case.

However, Patric's main concern is that whatever happens, the incident could go on file and impede his progress on the KoL. Witnesses were queuing up to testify on his behalf and we've been told that the **LTDA** have offered to defend him.

**Call Sign** was there on the day and can honestly say that we have never seen such a well behaved demo and one where the demonstrators and police got on so well considering how important the reason for the demo was. We trust that LTPH/TfL will agree...

## Mailshot

Either write to Call Sign at Dial-a-Cab House or email us at [callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com)

### How to build a cycle superhighway...

*Hi Alan*

I am currently away in Melbourne, Australia, but thought you'd be interested in knowing that the local council here have put in a fully segregated cycle lane measuring 3/4 of a mile. But unlike ours, they did it in just a single weekend, only working at night *and* it included moving all the car parking with a protection island over the full length of it. Perhaps Mayor Boris should ask the Mayor over here how it's done, because he obviously doesn't know...

**Bernie Silver (F13J)**

**Bernie, if you're trying to cheer me up, you have failed miserably! ...Ed**

### Electric cars and bus lanes

*Hi Al*

Am I the only one who listened to the **Nick Ferrari** programme on LBC when he interviewed **Zac Goldsmith** because no one is screaming in our trade? He made a major statement against our trade which will destroy us saying that if he becomes Mayor, then as an incentive for people to buy electric cars, he will allow them to use bus lanes. Why bus lanes? Why not a reduction on VAT or anything else? This is a scam to get Uber into bus lanes; there are around fifty thousand electric **Prius** cars that will go straight into the bus lanes. **Addison Lee** lost their case to access bus lanes and they don't like it, so now they are trying to do it via the back door with a bit of help from **Zac Goldsmith**.

Cameron, Johnson, Osborne and Goldsmith all know a lady who just happens to work for Uber! What chance do we have when George Osborne tells Boris Johnson to lay off Uber? Turkeys voting for Christmas again... I don't think so!

**Jim Smith (D09)**

**Jim**, you sent your email before reading last month's editorial otherwise you'd have seen my comments. Other than that, the reason no one has shouted is because he hasn't yet been elected! Many voters say they have learned a lesson thanks to the current incumbent as Mayor and will cast their vote elsewhere. **Zacharias Goldsmith** has been called the wealthiest MP in Parliament and was said to have been left a \$1.2bn bequest by his father, **Sir James Goldsmith**. Although **Zac** doesn't talk about it, many claim that his income from the trust alone comes to around \$5m per month! Even **Real Madrid's Ronaldo** probably sends him begging letters! He says that if elected he *might* look at cycle superhighways and decide if we should keep them. The real question is whether someone so rich can understand what working people have to put up with.

The LibDem's **Caroline Pidgeon** is popular with taxi drivers thanks to her support for our trade via the London

Assembly but has said she wants to pedestrianise Oxford Street. **George Galloway** gained votes when he said his son is on the KoL and how much he supports taxi drivers, but he also supports the PHV union. **Sadiq Khan** has come out against **Goldsmith's** bus lane scenario and is said to be the favourite. The Green Party is represented by Highgate councillor **Sian Berry**, while Culture spokesman **Peter Whittle** is the UKIP candidate and **Sophie Walker** is from the Women's Equality Party. You pays your money, Jim ... Ed

### Credit card machines

*Alan*

Is there any way DaC can use the new Credit Card regulations to our benefit and fit them into cabs not on DaC but needing the new equipment? Or perhaps put these drivers onto our app and give them membership where they pay a bond for the CC machine but can't do account work unless they pay for a full fit out as and when needed by DaC. Run-ins would need to go though in order to compete with other apps. The trade needs a driver-owned circuit now more than ever, otherwise if DaC goes we could be paying 20% + on account and app jobs in a few years' time with profits leaving the trade.

We could have an advert on our cabs – perhaps the rear doors – and reduce our CC merchant fees or signal fees? DaC in partnership with whomever? Also we are not turning enough of the CC customers we pick up on the street into long term customers. If we offered them an incentive eg 10% off for their first 3 journeys if they joined the app in the cab, they might download our app there and then and use us more often. But the run-in would have to go to compete.

**John Thomas (Y58)**

**Brian Rice** replies: That's interesting **John**, what you've asked has prompted many questions in just a few lines. Initially, our 'Chip and Pin' machines are not stand alone units, they operate via your terminal, so if as you suggest we were in a position to issue the whole trade with Chip and Pin then the cost would be huge as the machines are quite expensive to purchase. At the time of writing, I believe under the new regulations the maximum figure that can be charged to the driver for processing the cards will be 3%, when you consider that Amex charge 2.85% to the supplier of the equipment, then you will see there is not a lot of profit in the transaction. My guess is that in the future if the proposed regulations remain the same, then the supplier of the equipment will charge a rental to the driver.

Incidentally, at the moment our driver App is your terminal; if we were to have an App as you suggest for drivers that are not Members of Dial-a-Cab without run-ins and gratuities, then we would just be competing against ourselves, which would I believe lead to the whole circuit operating without run-ins and gratuities. Can

what you are suggesting be achieved? Yes it can, but would it be beneficial to the Society when you consider that one of the taxi Apps spends £3 of Venture Capital money for every £1 it earns?

Regarding your final suggestion of having a 10% discount off their first three journeys, I assume Dial-a-Cab will bear the cost of the discount, because under the new regulations we cannot charge a fee to the customer, so we will never be able to recoup that initial outlay...

### Novikov

*Hello Alan*

I'm always dropping Russians off at **Novikov, Berkeley Street**. Food critic **Jay Rayner** said it was packed but with the worst food and at £150 for two people, then they must have money to burn! It's funny how our Government say they are cracking down on tax cheats yet welcome all the foreign ones! Fortunately, they seem to like the black cab!

**David Heath (Ex-W27)**

**Portslade, East Sussex**

**Novikov** is one of Russia's favourite upmarket restaurants, so it isn't surprising to see it doing so well over here. What is even better is the group of taxi drivers known as the **Mayfair Mob** who have secured ranks such as **Novikov** for the licensed taxi industry ...Ed

### Choice!!!

*Hi Al*

There was a 65 plate taxi alongside me in the Strand with a **Radio Taxis** logo on the door as well as the inside. However, the front windscreen and partition had **Hailo** and **Gett** stickers on, with also another **Gett** sticker offering £10 off new customer's first ride. There was also a **Hailo** sticker advertising credit card payments!

But the **Radio Taxis** credit card machine on the back partition had a bag over it claiming that it was out of order! A bit confusing for punters! I think I'll cancel my application for **Mountview**, I guess there's not much work there!

**Jon Robinson (E88)**

Sorry **Jon**, but I decided not to publish this letter as it was too controversial; as a result I arranged to have it put into your copy only! ...Ed

### Family history!

*Hi Alan*

I'm after a little help if possible. I've recently been researching my wife **Mia's** family tree and have discovered that her Great, Great, Great, Great Grandfather and various other ancestors were cab proprietors/cabmen, predominantly in the 19th Century. They lived in and around **Boar's Head Yard** (now **Great George Street**) and ran various businesses from **South Island Place**, **Stockwell**.





# Mailshot

Having read Sean Farrell's *Brethren of the Whip* article in January's *Call Sign*, it prompted me to write and ask if you could pass on this email to Sean and any other cab trade historians you may know, or let me have any contacts you may have in order to find out a little more about this branch of my wife's family. I've posted the link to a couple of court cases this branch of the family were involved in and whilst interesting for Mia and her family to read, may not be of much interest to anyone else, but if you feel as though they'd be useful for *Call Sign*, feel free to use them and the above information. Maybe someone reading them could help with my research.

Steve Thomas (N10)

No sooner said than done! See Sean Farrell's *Brethren of the Whip* inside this issue. If any DaC drivers have a cab driving family that go back many years and would like some information on their history, Sean may be able to help. Email *Call Sign* and we'll put you in touch with Sean. He can't promise anything but he'll have a go! ...Ed

## Holding the ace card and still losing!

Dear Alan

I have written before regarding our fares and suggesting we look to undertake the longer ones on a more competitive basis (I think this has to some extent come to fruition). The problem with this strategy as I see it is that this approach is somewhat messy from a marketing perspective. From speaking to some of my passengers, I get the impression that they are drawn to using what is now (as I see it) our main competitor namely Uber, based on price. They, in some cases, have been at pains to point out that it's not just the fact that there is a price difference, but that the difference is just too wide. Many have indicated that all else being equal (and this point is important) a modest premium would be acceptable and indeed paid to use *us* rather than *them*. So the questions that need answering as I see it, is what should that discount be and how should this be marketed / promoted to have the desired effect?

Regarding the first question, I noted that on a recent Sunday afternoon a fixed price job was dispatched and covered without prompting by dispatch for NW8 to Heathrow for £51. Given that this would be on Rate 2, I would imagine the meter price to have been at least £65; therefore this was done either at – or very near – a 30% discount to that clock. So, albeit only one in this particular example, it does prove that some drivers are prepared to work well under the clock. Regarding the marketing, I would imagine that as an industry the licensed trade would get a lot of support if it offered a simple app-based facility that was promoted as a licensed taxi at a 30% discount to the metered fare. As my title suggests, we hold the ace card in that when it's busy on the street, we can just do that work on the clock. We have (subject to some small fluctu-

ations) a fixed number of licensed taxis, so an increase in work from any angle will automatically make all drivers busier irrespective of what circuit or what app they're on or not.

I do feel at times that some drivers believe they are an island and are not affected by what others are doing, which seems to be misguided say the least. So what we are looking for is an app-based dispatching system that can be promoted as a simple 'no ifs no buts' 30% discount to the metered fare that all drivers can join. Of course this is already out there, it just needs someone to do it properly.

Coverage is a dead issue as I see it, the fact that *SURGE* pricing exists and is accepted is tolerated proves that point. To be clear, none of us want or would choose to work below the clock but we have to be pragmatic; this is where the market is at. Satnav has commoditised our business but a lot of people would still rather use us at the same price or indeed a small premium to the competition via an app, so the answer is obvious... do an hour reading your book at Kings Cross or take a £20 fare for £14 and then when the rank is running fast, turn the app off.

Hoping that TfL are going to somehow put obstacles in the way of the competition is futile, and as for *Crowdfunding* to make legal challenges, we may as well just take the money up Chancery Lane and give it straight to the lawyers and tell them to have a good time with it!

David Fletcher (O15)

Hi David, thanks for a really interesting letter; it will be equally interesting to hear what drivers think ...Ed

## AGM

Hi Alan

I attended the AGM on Sunday and the thing that struck me most was Mike Tovey saying that things could not go on as they were and that we were approaching a crossroads. This contrasted with his upbeat assessments in previous years. There did not seem to be a clear cut strategy coming from the Board as to how we go on from here. There was plenty of blaming eg it was TfL's fault with their crazy traffic schemes and their light touch approach to Uber, or it's the meter and the expensive vehicle we drive that means we can't compete on price.

There was vague talk of an amalgamation between the three major circuits, but meanwhile the Society is losing money and things cannot just drift. It was not until the members spoke and pushed for the sale of the building that some sort of concrete proposal emerged. But what did not emerge was a clear timescale so could Brian please tell us when he believes he has a definite proposal to put to the membership. I have always been a supporter of Brian and have confidence in his ability to get the best deal for the members if we choose to demutualise.

One of the members said that attending the AGM was like being in the movie *Groundhog Day*. I hope that things move on this year and that we don't wake up on the morning of the next AGM to the sound of *Sonny and Cher's* I got you babe! Mick Kennedy (M30)



See Brian Rice's Chairman's Report on page 4 ...Ed

## AGM 2

Dear Alan,

The AGM will certainly be covered by you in a responsible objective manner elsewhere in *Call Sign*, but may I make a few personal observations. Given the financial report, there was clearly an underlying feeling of dejection in the room. There were the usual complaints about the competition and failure to enforce regulations. Also road works and cycle lanes were held responsible for our woes. This reminded me of drivers complaining many years ago about closure of the north side of Leicester Square to traffic that would "make it impossible for us to earn a living." We have to accept that taxis are only a small part of the picture as seen by the authorities and the public; endless complaints about each change does nothing to endear us to the wider community.

About the only practical suggestion to help our organisation was for a merger with another one or even two circuits so that expenses could be shared and efficiency improved through economies of scale. But given that we own our offices, sharing with anyone else would not make much difference to our overheads, especially as we have already reduced staff costs as much as possible. Only the creation of many new substantial accounts could help our position, and that is not on the horizon. So as far as I can see, the idea that a merger would improve the basics is no more than wishful thinking. Sharing accounts and sharing drivers will hardly boost the income of any individual driver.

Most people I spoke to accepted, reluctantly, that the time has come to admit that radio circuits have done well in their day but have now been overtaken by events, newer technology, arrival of outside companies with massive financial and political backing, and poor response from TfL. Rather than continuing to prop up a failing loss-making organisation, the interests of members would best be served by selling our building and distributing the total residual assets. The longer we wait to do this the more money will vanish from our reserves each week. None of this should be seen as a personal criticism of the chairman or any of the Board members who have worked very hard for many years and guided us through several years of great success.

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

There is a six page report on the AGM inside this issue + the Chairman's view on the financial report at the meeting, in addition to his report on page 4 where he reflects on the meeting...

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