

April 2017

Call Sign



The largest online readership of any Taxi magazine

DaC Ltd shareholders' meeting decides to de-merge the business into two and put the building onto the market

Special Souvenir Issue



NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

I choose the events when the finish, burst or sold-out information can be obtained. I urge you to check out the on-line version that has 3 times the number of events, making an essential download for DaC drivers...

What's On: April 2017

Venue	Event	Date
Chelsea	v Crystal Palace (burst 16:45)	01/04/2017
Royal Albert Hall	The Who (Sold Out)	01/04/2017
O2 Arena	Olly Murs	01/04/2017
Sadlers Wells	English National Ballet (Burst 21:45)	01/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 18:00)	01/04/2017
ExCel East	Inner Engineering (finish 19:30)	01/04/2017
Brentford	v Bristol City (bursts 16:45)	01/04/2017
Leyton O.	v Wycombe (burst 16:45)	01/04/2017
Millwall	v Scunthorpe (burst 16:45)	01/04/2017
Arsenal	v Man. City (burst 17:45)	02/04/2017
Royal Albert Hall	Pet Shop Boys (Sold Out)	02/04/2017
Wembley Stadium	Checkatrade Trophy (burst 16:15)	02/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 17:00)	02/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 18:00)	03/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Sold Out Burst 22:20)	04/04/2017
Brentford	v Leeds (burst 21:30)	04/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 18:00)	04/04/2017
ExCel East	in-cosmetics (finish 18:00)	04/04/2017
Arsenal	v WHU (burst 21:30)	05/04/2017
Chelsea	v Man. City (burst 21:45)	05/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	VM and Display (finish 18:00)	05/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 18:00)	05/04/2017
ExCel East	in-cosmetics (finish 18:00)	05/04/2017
ExCel East	Sage Summit (finish 18:30)	05/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	VM and Display (finish 17:00)	06/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 18:00)	06/04/2017
ExCel East	in-cosmetics (finish 17:00)	06/04/2017
ExCel East	Sage Summit (finish 18:30)	06/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Burst 22:20)	07/04/2017
QPR	v Brighton (burst 21:30)	07/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 18:00)	07/04/2017
ExCel East	Vape Jam (finish 19:00)	07/04/2017
ExCel East	Golf Show (finish 18:00)	07/04/2017
Charlton	v Southend Utd (burst 16:45)	08/04/2017
Fulham	v Ipswich (burst 16:45)	08/04/2017
Tottenham	v Watford (burst 14:15)	08/04/2017
WHU	v Swansea (burst 16:45)	08/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (finish 17:00)	09/04/2017
ExCel East	Vape Jam (finish 18:00)	09/04/2017
ExCel East	Golf Show (finish 17:00)	09/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Burst 22:20)	10/04/2017
Crystal Palace	v Arsenal (burst 21:45)	10/04/2017
ExCel East	Enactus (finish 19:00)	10/04/2017
ExCel East	Enactus (finish 18:00)	11/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Burst 22:20)	13/04/2017
Brentford	v Derby (burst 16:45)	14/04/2017
Millwall	v Northampton (burst 16:45)	14/04/2017
Crystal Palace	v Leicester (burst 16:45)	15/04/2017
Tottenham	v Bournemouth (burst 14:15)	15/04/2017
Olympia Central	Muslim Lifestyle (finish 18:00)	15/04/2017
Olympia Central	Muslim Lifestyle (finish 17:00)	16/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Burst 22:20)	17/04/2017
Charlton	v Gillingham (burst 16:45)	17/04/2017
Fulham	v Aston V. (burst 16:30)	17/04/2017
Leyton O.	v Hartlepool (burst 16:45)	17/04/2017
QPR	v Sheffield W. (burst 16:45)	17/04/2017

Venue	Event	Date
O2 Arena	Bruno Mars	18/04/2017
ExCel East	Marathon Exhibition (finish 20:00)	19/04/2017
O2 Arena	Bruno Mars	19/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	Virtual Reality (finish 19:00)	20/04/2017
Olympia Central	Procurex (finish 16:00)	20/04/2017
ExCel East	Marathon Exhibition (finish 20:00)	20/04/2017
ExCel East	Stitching, Sewing (finish 16:30)	20/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Burst 15:20)	20/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	Virtual Reality (finish 18:00)	21/04/2017
Olympia National	Fitcon (finish 17:00)	21/04/2017
ExCel East	Marathon Exhibition (finish 20:00)	21/04/2017
ExCel East	Stitching, Sewing (finish 16:30)	21/04/2017
O2 Arena	Bruno Mars	21/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Burst 22:20)	22/04/2017
Arsenal	v Sunderland (burst 16:45)	22/04/2017
O2 Arena	Bruno Mars	22/04/2017
Sadlers Wells	BBC Young Dancer (burst 22:00)	22/04/2017
Brentford	v QPR (burst 16:45)	22/04/2017
Millwall	v Oxford Utd (burst 16:45)	22/04/2017
WHU	v Everton (burst 16:45)	22/04/2017
Alexandra Palace	Cake International (finish 17:00)	22/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	Virtual Reality (finish 17:30)	22/04/2017
Olympia National	Fitcon (finish 17:00)	22/04/2017
ExCel East	Marathon Exhibition (finish 17:00)	22/04/2017
ExCel East	Stitching, Sewing (finish 17:00)	22/04/2017
Chelsea	v Soton (burst 16:00)	23/04/2017
Alexandra Palace	Cake International (finish 17:00)	23/04/2017
Olympia National	Fitcon (finish 16:00)	23/04/2017
Royal Opera House	Madama Butterfly (Sold Out Burst 22:20)	25/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	Stationery Show (finish 17:00)	25/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Charing X Symposium (finish 18:00)	25/04/2017
ExCel East	Natural Stone (finish 17:00)	25/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	Stationery Show (finish 16:00)	26/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Charing X Symposium (finish 18:00)	26/04/2017
ExCel East	Natural Stone (finish 17:00)	26/04/2017
ExCel East	Academies (finishes 18:30)	26/04/2017
ExCel East	Quality and Safety in Healthcare (finish 17:00)	26/04/2017
Alexandra Palace	Country Living Fair (finish 18:00)	27/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Charing X Symposium (finish 18:00)	27/04/2017
ExCel East	Natural Stone (finish 17:00)	27/04/2017
ExCel East	Quality and Safety in Healthcare (finish 17:30)	27/04/2017
ExCel East	Unleash The Power (finish 12:00)	27/04/2017
Alexandra Palace	Country Living Fair (finish 18:00)	28/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	BeFit (finish 17:00)	28/04/2017
Olympia Grand	Charing X Symposium (finish 13:00)	28/04/2017
Olympia National	Mind Body Spirit (finish 20:00)	28/04/2017
ExCel East	Quality and Safety in Healthcare (finish 17:30)	28/04/2017
ExCel East	Unleash The Power (finish 22:30)	28/04/2017
Fulham	v Brentford (burst 16:45)	29/04/2017
Leyton O.	v Colchester (burst 16:45)	29/04/2017
QPR	v Notts. F. (burst 16:45)	29/04/2017
Tottenham	v Arsenal (burst 18:15)	30/04/2017
Charlton	v Swindon (burst 13:45)	30/04/2017
Alexandra Palace	Country Living Fair (finish 16:00)	30/04/2017
Business Des. Cntr.	BeFit (finish 16:00)	30/04/2017
Olympia National	Mind Body Spirit (finish 20:00)	30/04/2017

You can download the on-line version in larger print with the date and day of the week...

Go to: www.myfav.co.uk/woapr17.pdf

from the editor's desk

A taxing question

An interesting piece of info hit my desk recently from what I believe to be a very reliable source. It involves TfL, HMRC and London's private hire drivers.

If you remember, last month's Call Sign gave an up-to-date TfL figure for the number of licensed London minicab drivers – an horrendous 117,588 compared to licensed taxi drivers of 24,617.

The question now is whether the PH numbers will go down once this news gets out because a usually reliable informant has revealed that HMRC are comparing their list of TfL private hire drivers licensed to work in London compared to the list of private hire drivers who have minicab driving declared with HMRC as their chief source of income. Within a few months, I expect that 117,588 to drop substantially as word gets around that in order to work as a minicab driver in this country, you have to at least be registered with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and pay tax...

Mobile phones

You all know the mobile phone regulations that came in on 1 March. You now put your licence at risk if you use your mobile phone while driving, at traffic lights or even just sitting in the cab at the side of the road with the engine running. If you are using satnav on your phone, then you need to set it up in advance as you must not touch the phone once driving or sitting in the cab with the engine running.

Thinking of playing music via your phone? If you haven't pre-set it, then you can't whilst on the move or as above.

You may also have heard of the licensed taxi driver on the Kings Cross rank who was nicked for using his phone because although not moving, his engine was running. The fact that he was surrounded by minicabs using their phones to accept job offers and then setting SatNav coordinates was obviously irrelevant! Whatever TfL and the Met say, we are – and always have been – an easy nick for them. While PHVs must not accept trips via their mobile whilst moving, I assume that would also apply to Hailo and Gett drivers. Either way it's a massive 6 point penalty in addition to a £200 fine. Is it worth it?

Vito parts

Several Vito drivers have asked Call Sign to ask Penso if they can supply Vito suppliers and repairers, S&B, with parts and then charge them when actually used by S&B, thereby giving their staff a chance when dealing with drivers! Penso manufactures parts for Mercedes-Benz and others in addition to providing consultancy services. So there we are... no sooner said than done!

Box watch

Perhaps my mind has been elsewhere, but I thought I'd mention this anyway. On 12th February, I stopped at the dreaded yellow box junction at Harwood Road in Fulham with my front wheels just in the box. Seven days later, I was forced to stop in the yellow box between Shepherds Bush Green and the Holland Park roundabout where buses exit from Westfield Shopping Centre. These are the first two box junction PCNs I've received for many years, so I'm not really moaning too much even though they have cost me £65 each; but a few points are worth mentioning.



The obvious one is not to get caught in a box junction, especially where it comes under Fulham and Hammersmith Council as they have a renovated flyover to pay for! Secondly, both were at night so the cameras obviously work just as well in the dark! Finally, so far as the Westfield camera is concerned, there must be a good chance that they will also spot any cabs leaving Westfield via the bus terminal, which as we all know is prohibited even though using the correct way literally adds several pounds onto passenger's fares and in all probability, makes many use cars at our expense.

And, as this is my last Call Sign editorial, I suppose I can safely say this... I bet the camera operators are really ugly!!!

PH and wheelchair accessibility

Call Sign recently received a stack of phone calls, text messages and emails asking us if we had heard Transport Minister Andrew Jones say that from April, Private Hire (and Taxis) would be fined £1000 if they did not have wheelchair accessibility. Even the usually reliable Taxi and Private Hire Monthly reported on the Minister's dictate. So we contacted Andrew Jones and asked him. We said:

"Quite rightly, taxi drivers refusing wheelchair passengers will be fined £1000. But reports of law changes announced on February 7th that are to take place from April 6th seem to infer that private hire vehicles also have to be able to take those in wheelchairs without the need for the passenger to leave the chair. Could you please let me know if this applies to all PH vehicles as reports I have seen do not make this element clear."

The Minister replied: *"We want to build a country that works for everyone and part of that is ensuring disabled people have the same access to services and opportunities as anyone else – including when it comes to travel. Disabled people are often heavily reliant on taxis and private hire vehicles and this change to the law will mean fair and equal treatment for all."*

What that cop-out means is that on 7th February, the Minister signed a Commencement Order to bring sections 165 and 167 of the Equality Act 2010 into force in April 2017. This change provides local authorities with the powers to make lists of wheelchair accessible vehicles, with the drivers of those vehicles then required to provide passengers in wheelchairs with appropriate assistance and refrain from charging extra. It means that drivers of taxis or PHVs that appear on

the local authority's list of wheelchair accessible vehicles will be subject to new requirements and from April, drivers of Taxis and PHVs designated by the local licensing authority as being wheelchair accessible must comply with the requirements of Section 165 of the Equality Act 2010, **unless they have been issued with an exemption certificate.**

What that means is that to be placed on a licensing authority's list, a vehicle must be capable of carrying some – but not necessarily all – types of occupied wheelchairs. Or they can decide not to carry any at all!

In other words, companies such as Uber can pick 100 or so vehicles that take wheelchairs and advertise themselves as being able to carry wheelchairs. As a result, they have now won the NHS transport account that ComCab used to have. See 'shame of the NHS' inside this issue...

It's goodbye from him...

Tying in with the goodbye from Call Sign is another goodbye to both the taxi trade and the mag itself; our photographer and general sidekick for the dayshift, Alan Green (E52), is also calling it a day and riding off into the sunset with his Dial-a-Cab Ltd share safely tucked under his arm!

For the 20 years of my reign at the mag, Alan has interviewed and photographed numerous drivers and captured their stories. He even had a few years with my predecessor, Jerry Craig. So my sincere thanks to Alan; have a great retirement...

And it's a goodbye from him...!

Well, this is it. Contrary to at least one driver, no... I haven't been sacked! But after 42 years involvement with the magazines of this Society – the last 20 of them as Editor – it's time for me to say goodbye. So I hope you don't mind me hijacking a few of this issue's pages for my own selfish reasons!

I thanked all my current and past contributors in the March Call Sign; but there are some others that I'm not so much sure about thanking – more just to explain who they are... or were.

People such as Ron Yarborough, Dennis Latchett, Baghwat Singh, Jamie Corum, Michael Toomey, Ricky Peters, J.P. Duval, Mr X and Lana Sherif. For those that didn't know... yes, they were all me! Both Big Al and Senior Al came with their photos so there was never any query, but I always believed that articles should have a signature to give anyone complaining the opportunity to either criticise – or even occasionally offer praise. But to put my name after everything would have tended to make me look rather big-headed – and I hope I have never been that. So I came up with the above names! Hopefully no one out there thinks badly of me for doing it and judging by the number of drivers who say they enjoy the mag, that seems doubtful. Those driver's comments were always so very much appreciated. But if you did feel offended, then please accept my apology.

That's it! Thanks to all of you that read the magazine each month and I hope to see many of you out on the road for some time to come. So it's goodbye from me and it's goodbye from him (and one her)! Keep well... and of course, be lucky...

Alan Fisher
Former Editor of Call Sign Magazine
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Reflections of the Chairman

New phone penalties and DaC terminals

As many of you are probably aware, new penalties have been introduced regarding legislation and the use of mobile phones. I have been reading articles concerning the new penalties and have had several drivers asking me whether it will affect us regarding the use of our terminals; the short answer is that I don't believe it will.

Our MDT is on a private Access Point Name (APN) and therefore does not have access to the internet or indeed a public telephone network. However, all Private Hire drivers out there - including Uber - are just using their normal phones. That also includes Hailo, Gett and all the others. Consequently, they have access to the Internet or Public Telephone Network or both. This legislation regarding the new penalties came out on 1st March and at first glance I can't see how they will get round it... but of course they will!

The new legislation doesn't just apply to mobile phones, but also to "any internet device." I believe that in the legislation they refer to Social Media and of course to access that you need a connection to put you online, which is basically any phone, tablet, computer or other device which is able to access the internet.

Police have reported an increasing number of drivers (I'm not referring to Taxi drivers) caught texting, using apps such as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram and even live-streaming while behind the wheel of a car!

I have also been informed that some London Taxi drivers have received comments from the police regarding their mobile phones, although I am not aware that any have been prosecuted. The penalties for such an offence are the same as those for anyone caught using their phone while driving; that means an instant six penalty points on your licence and a £200 fine.

It's important to remember that this also counts when the driver is sitting stationary on the road, for example while stopped at a junction or at traffic lights. It's only legal to use your phone or device when you're safely parked off the road and with your engine switched off.

So in a nutshell, you must not use a hand-held phone whilst your vehicle is in motion or indeed if you are stationary at traffic lights etc. You may only use the hand held device if it is safely stowed in a bracket at all times, so anyone that receives a telephone call or a trip via an App, if they can't read the phone whilst it is stowed in the bracket and they pick up the phone to read it, they could then face six points on their licence and a £200 fine.

However, with your MDT it is a fixture in the vehicle that is not connected to a Public Telephone Network or the Internet, because as I explained earlier, it is connected to an APN so the above does not apply. However, the legislation does mention the programming of SatNavs whilst the vehicle is in motion, so you should still be vigilant. Hopefully the above may come in handy should some 'know all' pass a remark about your MDT.



De-Merger Meeting

We had the De-Merger meeting on the evening of 27th February and as I explained in my letter to you regarding the meeting, it could prove to be a formality as most Shareholders would probably use their Proxy vote in favour of the De-Merger, and that indeed was what happened.

The overwhelming majority of Shareholders gave their vote to me with the instruction to vote 'For' the two resolutions; consequently, they both went through by picking up almost every vote.

The next hour or so was spent with our solicitor David Wilkinson and me answering Shareholders questions. That went extremely well and hopefully we addressed any concerns that Shareholders may have had.

So what was the purpose of the meeting and vote and what will happen both now and in the future? Well, your organisation has now been split in two - the Radio Circuit and the Property. They are both divorced from each other and without any financial crossover; you, the Shareholders, hold shares in both companies.

Both Companies were registered on 28th February and the day following the meeting

your building went onto the market (1st March). The reason I could get the building onto the market so quickly was because all the preparation had been achieved whilst we were waiting for clearance from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) regarding your tax situation. We will now have to wait and see what the reaction is from the market place.

I will now digress just a little. I was talking to one of our Shareholders recently and a friend of his is in the Property Market. The friend informed him that in a new complex close to the new American Embassy in Nine Elms, thirty one apartments have been purchased by a Chinese lady and fifteen by an Arab gentleman from Qatar. They obviously must have large families!

So it seems the Property market is still buoyant, although it does appear that much of it is coming from foreign money and with the pound devalued against some foreign currencies, perhaps property in London is still seen as a good investment.

Farewell

As I wrote last month, this will be the final issue for now of *Call Sign* as our Editor, Alan Fisher, seeks retirement from editing. I gave him all the plaudits and praise last month, so it just remains for me to wish him well for an excellent job completed over the last 20 years.

At the moment, we have no plans to replace Alan as the future will probably hold a myriad of scenarios and as people say when they don't wish to make a decision, let's just keep our options open! And of course you know where we are should you wish to ask any questions. We will, of course, keep you up to date should anything concerning the building occur...

Brian Rice
Chairman
Dial-a-Cab Ltd

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Monday 27 February saw the final meeting in a process of several - beginning with the Society's demutualisation - which saw a huge majority of its shareholders give Dial-a-Cab Ltd Chairman Brian Rice the go-ahead to de-merge the organisation into two separate entities - the radio circuit and the property - with neither depending on the other.

The meeting was held in the lecture theatre of the Central Foundation Boy's School in Cowper Street EC2 and at the very beginning the Chairman admitted to the 65 shareholders present that regardless of what happened on the night, so many driver/shareholders had already responded by post or allocated their 'yes' vote to him that the vote had already been carried. As a result, shareholders now each hold 50 £1 shares in **Dial-a-Cab Holdings** (which holds all the shares in the taxi side of the business) and 17,400 £1 shares in **Dial-a-Cab House Holdings**, which roughly translated means the building itself. Both companies are separate units.

Acting for the Society, solicitor

DaC De-Merger Meeting Gives Go-ahead!



David Wilkinson explains the de-merger situation to drivers



David Wilkinson assisted by Joanna Keating, explained the situation to those present. Brian Rice then spent an hour taking questions from drivers.

The decision was registered the next day at Companies House and Dial-a-Cab House itself was put onto the market at a price of just under £20million. More details in Chairman's report on page 4...

TX5s TESTED IN ARCTIC CIRCLE!

The next generation of taxi - the range-extended electric **TX5** - has been undergoing the most rigorous testing regime of any cab ever built by **The London Taxi Company**. It may be built at **Ansty Park, Coventry**, but it needed extreme winter conditions so as to focus on ensuring the highest levels of quality, reliability and usability for its demanding taxi usage. So the final TX5 prototypes were taken to one of the world's harshest environments, the **Arctic Circle** in **Northern Norway**.

Tests were carried out in conditions below -15 degrees, giving an opportunity to monitor battery performance and electric range in challenging conditions, where on-board systems are used to keep the battery at the optimum operating temperature. Winter testing allowed them to measure traction and grip on slippery surfaces and to calibrate safety systems such as anti-lock braking and electronic stability control. There was also fine tuning for calibration of the heating and ventilation systems to ensure they perform effectively, so no matter how bitter the temperature outside, it should quickly reach and maintain a comfortable cabin temperature for the driver and passengers. Ensuring glass is de-frosted and de-misted rapidly also means drivers have the best possible view of the road - regardless of outside conditions.

This regime of extreme testing is set to become even more stringent when the vehicle is chilled to -40 degrees in an environmental test chamber; effectively a huge drive-in freezer - a guarantee that the vehicle will perform on demand, even after the coldest winter nights.

The vehicle is set to go on sale in the final quarter of 2017, with this new electric taxi being the most comprehensively tested and developed product in LTC history. With promised financial assistance from the Mayor, the price is expected to be similar to the current model...

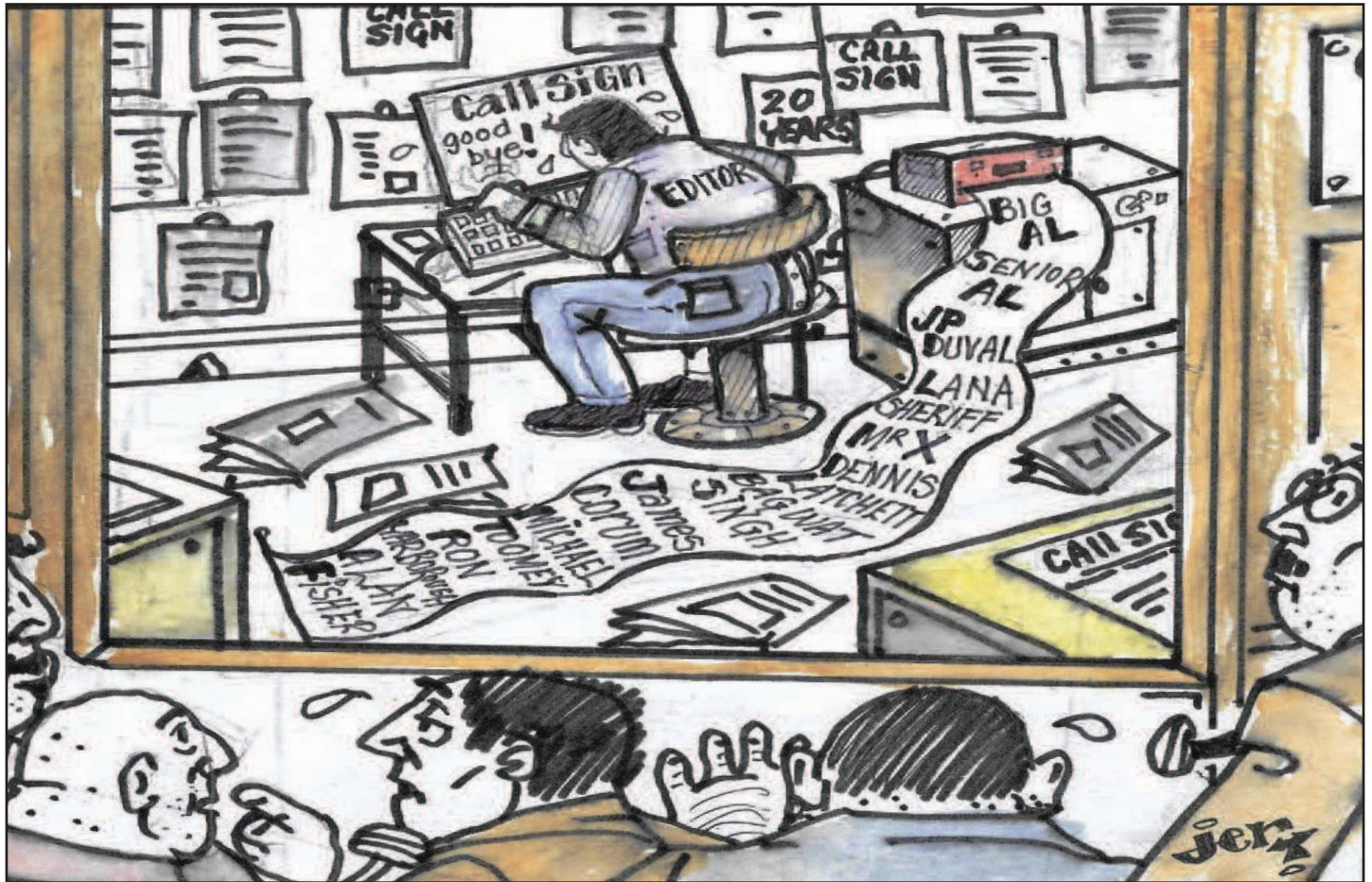


The Arctic Circle looks colder than Coventry!

Jery's



World



"No wonder he's hittin' it on the 'ead; he's been doin' Call Sign for so long that he has to go away to try and remember who he is!!!"

History of the Taxi Trade

With *Call Sign* bowing-out at least for now – we thought we'd publish the official history of the London taxi trade as given to us by the PCO in 2000 together with our own ending...

- 1588:** The first recorded use of **hackney coaches** carrying fare paying passengers.
- 1694:** An *Act of Parliament* set up the first system for regulating and licensing hackney coaches.
- 1834:** The **Hansom cab** was first introduced in London.
- 1850:** The **Public Carriage Office** opened.
- 1897:** The first electric motor cab, the **Bersey "Humming Bird"** was licensed on 5 November.
- 1903:** The first petrol driven motor cab, a **Prunel**, was licensed on 11 December.
- 1946:** The last **horse cab** was licensed on 2 September; the licence was surrendered on 3 April 1947.
- 1966:** The Public Carriage Office moved from **109 Lambeth Road** to **Penton Street** on 3 October.
- 2000:** The PCO transferred from the **Metropolitan Police Service** to **Transport for London**, part of the new **Greater London Authority**, on 3 July.
- 2000 – 2016:** **Transport for London** begin a campaign to equalise the London taxi trade with that of the licensed private hire side, the result being the gradual demise of what was long acknowledged as the finest licensed taxi service the world has ever known.
- 2017:** TfL lose court case so that Uber do not have to always display adequate insurance nor have to have a 24x7 call centre as everyone else does. They count as a victory that PH need an adequate grasp of English. *Lessons learned? We need the PCO back!!!*



Wonder who owned this badge and who had number 1!

Mr Ormes Parrot

Modern Times *Streetwise* was a television documentary first shown on BBC in 1996. The programme opened its doors to the workings of the Knowledge of London as administered back then by the PCO and is remembered for the trials and tribulations of Jim Nolan's 10 year Knowledge stretch. Jim finally made it and serves the public to this day.

It also featured legendary examiner Mr Ormes (who is also out there nowadays pushing his droshky), ably assisted by his Parrot. The bird faced either in or out the window, depending on its keeper's mood! The parrot was recently unearthed in the premises of Stable Taxis.

This trade artefact had been presented and inscribed to Ronnie Mitchell, Stable's founder (now in his late 80s) by John Ormes himself – although on seeing the parrot again after all these years, it may give many of us from that era the shudders, especially Jim Nolan who must have seen Mr Ormes' parrot more than most!

The documentary – still available on the BBC's iPlayer – did prove what we've missed for years: The tight ship the old PCO once ran! If you want to see it, go to:

www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b007796l/modern-times-streetwise

Marc Turner (R97)
Call Sign Online

Ronnie Mitchell of Stable Taxis now has the parrot. This photo, taken with Call Sign's Marc Turner, shows Ronnie on his 86th birthday



Mr Ormes parrot sits by his office window at the old PCO



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DaC's Lee Pearce has played in goal for league and non-league football teams as well as writing for Call Sign about the problems of goalkeeping at that level. But...

Sutton United's amazing FA Cup run came to an end at the hands (and feet) of Arsenal, but all the after-match publicity fell on the non-league team's substitute goalkeeper, Wayne Shaw.

The 20 stone reserve goalkeeper - known by Sutton fans as the '*roly-poly goalie*' for obvious reasons spent much of his working life at Sutton doing everything from painting and decorating, to giving goalkeeper training to new recruits. The team's fans used to smile at Wayne when he took a mid-match snack that usually consisted of a pie or pasty. Sadly, Wayne had to leave after the Arsenal defeat when a TV camera showed him eating a pasty after a few small bets had been taken on him doing exactly that, something that was against Football Association and Gambling Commission rules.

Lee Pearce (J71) has been on Dial-a-Cab for 12 years as well as playing for many football teams, both league and non-league. So Call Sign asked him if he had ever been tempted to partake of some refreshment during a match???

"Well I can sympathise with Wayne so far as weight problems are concerned," Lee told *Call Sign*. "It doesn't matter how much I train, weight loss seems almost impossible and I've carried that problem with me for many of the years I have played in goal. Like Wayne, I also train the young goalkeepers. But eating a pie? You'd expect me to say no... but I came very close on one occasion!"

Lee gave us his story. It began when he was at League Two team Barnet and was sent out on loan to non-league Hitchin Town.

"I wasn't thrilled at having to leave a league team to go to a non-league outfit, but I wasn't given much choice. At Barnet, I did what I always do and gave 100 percent. Unfortunately it was at a period that all goalkeepers go through when nothing sticks to your gloves and soon after arriving at Hitchin, they dropped me and I became resigned to being on the substitute's bench. It really is on very rare occasions only that a substitute goalie is needed once a game has started.

"I was on the bench for a midweek game. It was winter and the subs bench was bitterly cold. Not far from me I could just see the snack wagon, so I quickly made my way there and waited a few minutes while they

WOULD LEE EAT A PIE DURING A MATCH!!!



Lee Pearce in taxi mode!



Wayne Shaw in pie-eating mode!

made me a burger and a cup of tea. As I held the tea between my hands, I could feel my blood coming out of its deep freeze mode! I looked at the burger and prepared myself to rejoin the human race as it began the short journey from my hand to my mouth.

"Just inches away from heaven and I heard screaming noises calling my name - and not in a particularly nice way. It sounded like 'where the effing hell is that bloody goalkeeper!'

"The Hitchin goalie had gone down at the centre forward's feet to try and retrieve the ball and stop him scoring. Unfortunately he took a kick, had to go off and suddenly they were looking for me - who was standing at the pie stall holding a burger in one hand and a cuppa in the other!

"I quickly - albeit reluctantly bearing in mind the chill wind - gave both hot items away and ran to the goal. Those that saw where I'd been gave out with a few sarcastic comments and bearing in mind the poor form I'd had before leaving Barnet, I had my fingers crossed - at least as far as my goalkeeping gloves would allow! But I needn't have worried. I played a blinder and had my best game for ages!

"So that was the time I *almost* had a burger mid-match! Sadly Wayne went one step beyond that..."

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

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After many years at Coventry's Holyhead Road – an address *Call Sign* readers know well through the many guided tours we organised there - as of March the most famous taxi manufacturing company in the world moved a few miles down the road to their new home at Ansty Park and the place where the TX5 electric cab will originate from.

The Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, led by its Chairman Li Shufu, saved the former LTI from going under in 2007 and there is no doubt that had Mr Li not stepped in, there would be no London Taxi Company now.

Several years later, he admitted that so far as profits were concerned, making the London taxi would not be that high up the list, but Mr Li went on to add that although LTC profits were a drop in the bucket for a company that already owned Volvo, what he valued most was the special status the company enjoyed in the UK, its additional service concept and brand effect.

When *Call Sign* interviewed him in 2013, it soon became very clear that Li Shufu wasn't just building a taxi; he loved the idea of the vehicle and what it stood for.

Moving to the present and LTC's move to Ansty Park; in January the company ran an in-house competition for employees to name the road that LTC would have as its address. The Council had already said that it had to end with the words *End* or *Close*. The winning employee that got his or her proposed name chosen would receive £300 to go to their chosen charity.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the name of Li Close was chosen as part of the address. But the reason isn't quite as straightforward as you would think though. Chairman Li Shufu's name seems obvious as he was the person that saved the London Taxi Company and turned it into a profitable business with exports going around the world. The council were happy to accept the road being named Li Close and also invested in the new facility.

However, it was the employee who actually suggested the road name that also pointed out that the TX5 electric vehicles would be powered by Lithium Batteries and that the chemical symbol for Lithium is Li...!!!

We prefer the former story and hope that is the case as in our view Li Shufu deserves an honour for saving the company. Either way, for those that need to know, the new address is:

**The London Taxi Company,
Li Close, Ansty Business Park,
Coventry,
CV7 9RF**

LTC MOVE HOME

And provide a mystery over the name!



Is LTC's new address named after the man that saved the company... or a battery!!!



SIMON'S GOLF COURSES

West Middlesex Golf Club

As this will be my final review, I hope you will allow me to indulge myself and say a few words on a club and course that has been - and still is - a large part of my golfing career and also my tutorage on the way golf should be played.

I joined West Middlesex Golf Club in around 1973/4 as a junior; if I'm honest, it wasn't a game I particularly enjoyed but my father had been a member there since the mid-to-late 1960s and he was keen that I should also play.

My father taught me many things about golf; always obey the rules, praise an opponent or fellow player on a good golf shot as that good shot hasn't happened overnight. But above all, he taught me that no matter what your level is, you can compete in a fair and friendly manner against anyone, no matter of your ability - or indeed theirs.

Founded in 1891, this hidden gem is one of the oldest clubs within the M25 still playing on its original course. Originally designed by Willie Park Junior and then redesigned by the prolific James Braid, this is a course with an absolute abundance of character.

Three par 5s, nine par 4s and six par 3s make up the 18 holes; there are many blind shots there but if you've played for long enough and you trust your swing, is there anything better than selecting the correct club with the belief that it will be the right swing to achieve the result desired!

There are several notable holes - the par 4 9th, a blind tee shot into a gully that turns into a dog-leg left, leaving a short to mid-iron to a two tier green; or the 13th stroke index 1 hole with its chance for big hitters to clear the out-of-bounds powerhouse on the corner of a dog-leg right. In my younger days that was possible, nowadays and at a slightly more mature age, I try and fade the ball round the corner to leave a long iron or wood to reach the green.

WMGC has 2 public days (Monday and Wednesday) where the green fee is reduced and represents exceptional value. And it's only 20 minutes from the Hammersmith flyover!

Lastly, my thanks go to Alan for allowing me to review the courses in *Call Sign* over these past two and half years and of course, thank you to Dial-a-Cab's golf lovers for hopefully reading and enjoying them.

As always, happy golfing...

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



A par 3 at West Middlesex Golf Club

It was back in 2004 when **Dial-a-Cab** and **ComCab** finally realised that fighting each other for the then **TaxiCard** account was pointless and that sharing it not only provided a better service for those using it, but that it made it far more difficult for any private hire company to compete.

DaC had first become involved with the original account when it was set up by the old GLC administration under **Ken Livingstone**; it began life on a test basis around the **Camberwell** and **Peckham** areas with passengers being able to travel a substantial distance for just £1. It later grew to become the largest taxi account in Europe, funded primarily by 32 London boroughs with supporting funds from **Transport for London**.

Many years later, **ComCab** decided that they wanted the whole account, offered a ridiculously low fare and got it. Coverage became difficult because for many trips it just wasn't worth the drivers running. Gradually, some of the boroughs – led initially by **Barnet** – starting using cars and the account began getting smaller. **Dial-a-Cab** still operated the **Westminster** section, but that was also eventually hijacked by **ComCab** with ultra-low rates and no minimums – accompanied again by a reduced coverage.

As the account got smaller, it moved further outwards for the taxi sections, Yellow badge drivers became more involved and it became a major part of their income. But **ComCab's** price-cutting was now rebounding on them and eventually large usage areas such as **Redbridge** started using taxis AND cars... until now when several **Redbridge** users told **Call Sign** that unless they specifically ask for a taxi, then they will get a car even though taxis may be on near-by ranks waiting for trips. Taxi takings have continued to decline.

Now a press release involving our NHS could actually put them out of business altogether.

In 2008, **Call Sign** revealed that **Glasgow Taxis**, a Scottish radio circuit similar in size and operation to DaC, had lost their **NHS Scotland** account to a car company, even though the police had claimed the private

National Health Service prefers Uber to Licensed taxis...

SHAME OF THE NHS



The new company has "hundreds" of wheelchair accessible vehicles - we have 25,000!

Hire company that had won the account was led by what they described as a gangster and they asked for the company to have its licence taken away. But they kept it and the NHS stayed with them. We wondered then what was more important to the NHS – funds or passenger safety? The NHS obviously decided that the dosh came out as number one on that list! Eventually the "gangster" left, but they had the account anyway!

Now the NHS in the south has added a company as a partner that is the opposite of the Scottish company in that it is 100% legitimate and doing good work in its care for the elderly. There can be no doubt that **Cera** is not only reputable, but a very valued organisation. But that doesn't mean that everyone **Cera** aligns itself with is as reputable as **Cera** itself.

Cera's website says: Cera takes pride in thoroughly supporting our stakeholders. We strive to integrate best-in-class products and services into our client's homes to support them as well as possible, while empowering our carers with pioneering technology.

Sounds good, so how do they transport their elderly patients because according to the NHS, they do not use Uber? Well we were somewhat surprised to hear a recent news report on LBC claiming that Uber had won the NHS transport account using what they called **UberAssist** and **UberWav** and that they would now be adding the NHS service to their portfolio.

They can't both be right... either Uber have won the account or they haven't? So which organisation is correct? Well the NHS is only dealing with **Cera**, but that organisation says on its website:

Uber is a smartphone app that connects users with licensed drivers at the push of a button and is active in more than 20 towns and cities across the UK. Cera and Uber have partnered exclusively to integrate care and transportation services.

It goes onto add: *The partnership enables London based carers to use Uber to get to the people they are caring for as quickly and seamlessly as possible. It also gives those who need care the freedom to book cars so they can get out and about when they would otherwise have been housebound, or had to rely on someone else. Disabled clients, or those who need a little extra help, can book UberASSIST – or a fully wheelchair accessible vehicle through UberWAV – driven by one of Uber's hundreds of fully licensed and top rated partner drivers who have been through a specially designed disability equality training course for this programme.*

Anyone with the slightest understanding of business would be able to see that Uber now have the NHS account, not in their name directly perhaps, but using that of a well-respected organisation. A service aimed at the old and disabled will now be provided by an organisation that has a record of more attacks on passengers by its drivers in a single year than licensed taxi drivers have had in the past ten and probably more years.

Cera say they use only the top 5% of carers and we're sure that is true, but if they have Uber as a partner, then the 5% obviously doesn't apply to the transportation aspect of their business. Their transportation company has "hundreds" of wheelchair accessible cars – ours has 25,000!

Money or safety; which is more important to OUR NHS? Of course, if Uber's TfL licensing application fails then the account would have to be forfeited; anyone like to bet on that result!!! Don't bother answering because we all know the answer.

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

Call Sign April 2017

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Email: callsignmag@aol.com

Website: www.22-callsign.co.uk

Printers: Premier Print Group

E6 6 LP

Design: Aldan Publications

Tel: 07958 300 428

Email: debbiefresco@googlemail.com

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Hi Ladies & Gents

As a former Board member of **Dial-a-Cab** who was honoured to represent you, the drivers, I was delighted when Alan got in touch

Returning for one final time in Call Sign...

From Garry White...

asking if I would like to make a contribution to his last **Call Sign** magazine.

The trade has moved at a fast pace over the last 6 years with disruptive technology in the Private Hire industry and app providers within our own licensed trade changing the way people hail taxis. It's certainly not easy to predict the future of our plight while **London Taxis Private Hire/TfL** oversees both trades.

However, I do hope we are not priced out of the cab trade by having to buy hybrid or full electric / battery powered taxis to comply with low emissions.

And finally...

I wish **Brian** and the Board all the best in

steering the business under the structure we now operate in. It is in all our interests as shareholders that they get this right and that the staff work tirelessly keeping a 24/7 business going.

For my last word, I'll say that **Alan Fisher** has done a tremendous job keeping **Call Sign** informative and current in this modern age of fast moving news. I hope he enjoys his new found free time.

Thanks for all the great magazines over the past 20 years. Well done Alan...

PS I'm upset I never made the front cover... lol!

Garry White (L65)
Former DaC Board Member



Goodbye Alan

On hearing news that **Alan Fisher** was stepping down as Editor of **Call Sign**, I felt compelled to mention that having enjoyed reading it every month for the past 35 years, and especially the past twenty years under your extraordinary editorship, I'm sure I and many

others are going to join you in what will surely be considerable sadness in the knowledge that **Call Sign** after 60 odd years will very probably no longer exist.

Fortunately you still drive a cab to occupy your time, so you won't be suffering from any sudden retirement syndrome, but nonetheless I will be surprised if you don't experience an enormous void in your life, especially the natural part of your character that involved the continuous sniffing like a newshound for the snippets that kept **Call Sign** both an interesting read and at the forefront of all the other taxi trade papers and periodicals! You should be proud of that terrific achievement.

For most of my 30 years as a Board member of **Dial-a-Cab**, it was **Call Sign** that was responsible for the love-hate persona I portrayed amongst the membership, probably due at times to my lengthy contentious articles; articles that no matter how controversial they were, you never once withheld them going to print, probably knowing that it would keep the **Mailshot** letters section - often four or five pages long - as the first pages the members read!

We hear of writers' block and there were times when I used to spend a whole weekend looking at a blank screen on my PC at home, praying for inspiration knowing that when I arrived at my office on the Monday, there would be the dreaded demand from you for my article before deadline time. And it pleases me to say that I never once let you down and that included me always producing a full page.

It was instances like the above that in a perverse way added to the difficulty of my adjusting to retirement, just as it will, I'm sure, affect you the same way when you finally give up your badge. But in time you will adjust and be left with many terrific memories of your time as Editor of **Call Sign**.

So I would like to say thank you Alan for contributing to my happy memories and especially a big thank you for the professional manner in which you - and I might add Linda - edited and produced **Call Sign**...

Allen Togwell
Former DaC Board member

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Then...

Seven of us sat in the tiny, smoke filled room at **15 Penton Street**. Just like the other six, my chest was bursting with pride; I had just passed my **London Taxi Knowledge** examination. As those other six drivers stood there inhaling the nicotine laden air while waiting for the green and brass coloured badge to be pressed into their sweating hands, they finally allowed their faces to break into a beaming smile on acceptance. Then **Mr Miller** arrived at the seventh and last recipient and I realised that his hands were now empty.

"I'm very sorry **Mr Whitbread**, there seems to be a problem; could you return in an hour and we'll sort it out!"

This was the outset to my taxi career and for the next forty-odd years, this would be the way it would continue.

I started the **Knowledge of London** whilst crewing a **London Accident Ambulance**. During that time, I got married to the night casualty sister at the **Whittington Hospital** in **Highgate**. When you added together both our wages, it was very hard to live in London as anyone working within the **NHS** and **London County Council** was invariably very lowly paid. So, I was always looking for another job; then one appeared in the **Evening News** with adverts for a uniformed job working out of the **Metropolitan Police Traffic Division Garage** in **Bow**.

It was after I started working at Bow Garage that I became aware I had to gain authorisation from the Police Commissioner to continue doing the Knowledge, as he had overall charge of the PCO. This was at the beginning of the 1970s when the PCO was very strict and run mainly by former police officers.

To get permission was harder than I expected. The process took me almost two years, but I did it and passed... except that now I didn't have that coveted green badge like the first six had. I finally got it 2 hours later and was able to hire a taxi from **Levy's** at **York Way**. My time with them was fairly short-lived as I didn't like giving up such a large percentage of the meter fare to the company.

Next up was to purchase a taxi from **Mann & Overton** and then apply to join the **Owner Drivers Radio Taxi Service**. I joined in March 1976 and stayed with the Society until retiring with failing health, in addition to being voted off the Board of Management in 2014. When I left, I was the longest serving Board Member, having served under six different Chairmen and three different **Call Sign** editors - the current Editor being the longest serving and the one I enjoyed working with the most. He has extracted many articles and other pieces of interest for drivers and staff and I am hoping that with his persuasion, if I have enough time and interest, to write a book about my life and many jobs, which long-time readers will know include being a driver for **HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother**.

Tom Whitbread has been very ill but on hearing of Alan Fisher's imminent retirement from Call Sign, he wanted to write just one more article to ask...

WAS IT WORTH IT??



And now...

Many was the time that **Alan Fisher** asked at the last moment for an article to help fill the magazine. I never minded as I found that he has a very inquisitive brain... or I suppose it could be that he is just nosey! Back in 1997, we undoubtedly made the correct choice of a new Editor, with Alan always finding something interesting to fill the magazine with while keeping readers interested.

He and his wife **Linda** have become good friends of mine and he is one of the few that still keeps in touch to see how I am. There are some that I worked with for many years in various office buildings that I haven't spoken to since I left the **HAC Barracks** back in February 2014 following the election.

I spent almost forty years helping to build up the company so that all the new faces I see in **Call Sign** can reap the profits when the building is sold. I, like many of the older drivers who have had to leave **ODRTS** over the past few years, will receive nothing and often wonder if, after the building is sold and the money is shared out, how many drivers will just hand in their equipment and run to the hills.

Hopefully there will be a company willing to take a chance on buying **DaC** as a going concern, because it most certainly could be. But you look at the Mayor's decision to let anyone who thinks they can drive have a **PH** licence and flood London with more cowboys... because licensed or otherwise, these drivers are still cowboys with no idea as to what they are doing!

That leaves us with a question: How do you know when the Mayor of London is lying? Answer: His mouth is open! He goes on television and radio stating he wants air pollution cut to zero, yet grants up to 600 private hire licences a week so that they can flood the capital as they fumble their way around pumping more and more

fumes into the air. London did have a Licenced taxi service that was looked up to by the rest of the world, but thanks to **Sadiq Khan** we are being reduced to a traffic mess not unlike **Jakarta** in **Indonesia**.

Dial-a-Dream

May I also take this opportunity to not just thank **Alan Fisher** for being the best Editor that I have worked under - and I have penned many articles for other magazines - but he has also supported many charities whether they be with articles or money, as both **Bob Heath** and myself can verify. He has supported our **Dial-a-Dream** charity, which makes terminally ill children's dreams a reality, for many years and I know that his own situation with his son **Reed** gave him a soft spot for these children.

So I would like to say on behalf of the children and many **ODRTS** drivers both past and present, a big 'thank you' to Alan for a job that he has done so well for 20 years. Have a good rest from the keyboard - although I'm sure that you will be popping up somewhere...

Tom Whitbread
Former DaC Board Member

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Jim Thomas is this trade's most respected blogger as Editor of Taxi Leaks. He is currently taking a short break from blogging, but not before penning this piece first. Jim adapted it from a poem by German Pastor, Martin Niemoller, who wrote it to point out the danger of cowardice by German intellectuals following the rise to power of the Nazi Party and after they went on to purge various groups they perceived as being dangerous to their desire of domination. The poem deals with themes of persecution, guilt and responsibility. The most famous version of Niemoller's poem goes:

First they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist,

Then they came for Trade Unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a Trade Unionist,

Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew,

Then they came for me...and there was no one left to speak for me.

“ You get nothing in this life given to you on a plate. That's why you did the Knowledge. You had to work and fight for that badge. Now most drivers just sit back and do nothing but complain that no one is fighting for them. It's no good blaming the orgs because when they've called mass demos, they've been lucky to see 20 percent of drivers turn up.

When Action4Cabbies asked for £20 donations, only 4,000 out of 22,000 pledged money. Drivers complain about the LTDA and yet when asked to go to a branch meeting and vote new life into the org, only 50 drivers out of 10,000 showed up.

Every night I see drivers sitting behind

AND THEN THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT!



touts on our ranks, young fit drivers who do and say nothing. You have allowed small groups of individuals to take full advantage of your apathy; credit card companies and an App company have stuck their greedy fingers into your money bags and are helping themselves to part of your earnings... and you say nothing.

Drivers that have never complained face-to-face with their org reps now think it's a great time to join in with the enemy union, chaired by a man who rides round reporting Taxis for over-ranking and who wanted to drive an AddVan through London advertising the

exploits of John Worboys.

And now it's nearly all over, they say “stop with the gloom and doom” while sleep walking into a one tier system that is most certainly coming. I predicted years ago that when the end battle came, all our leaders would have left the battlefield. I was wrong - it's the army that are deserting!

Well good night from me and God bless... it's all yours.

First they licensed Uber and I did not speak out because I was working.

Then the Trade Unionists and Taxi orgs called a mass demo and I did not go because it was busy and I had to work.

Then, after realising our largest org was doing nothing, two drivers stood up shouting and rebellious but they were expelled and I did and said nothing, just carried on working.

Then they asked for members to go to a branch meeting to vote against Judas and his WAGs but I didn't go as I was working.

When they finally took my Badge and Bill and handed it to an Uber driver... there was no one left to fight for me. ”

Jim Thomas
Taxi Leaks

And even Mike Tovey says goodbye to Alan!

Hello Alan

As you know, I am a regular reader of your organ and was compelled to drop you a line after seeing the March edition.

For me, the Owner-Divers Radio Taxi Service Limited (I thought I'd use the old handle one last time) has always been more than a client. For years, I have enjoyed reading about the goings-on at Dial-a-Cab in the pages of Call Sign magazine and, on more than one occasion, my attention to the letters page has been rewarded by knowing when to duck at the AGM!

Alan, my compliments on a job well done, and over 20 years...

All of which reminds me that my first encounter with Dial-a-Cab was back in the 1970s when I was a junior on the audit and spent weeks in the garret at Shirland Road, endlessly ticking drivers' ledger cards, longing for lunchtime and a couple of pints down the road at the big pub on the roundabout.

As I grew in experience and waistline, I would attend the Board meeting, approving the accounts and be treated to lunch; salt beef sandwiches, potato latkes and new greens!

The hospitality budget in those days wasn't exactly huge, but I remember it more clearly than any number of 'corporate' lunches! I once turned the tables on the Board and took them for pie and mash in Broadway Market. Happy days!

Enough nostalgia, got to get off to lunch at Le Gavroche...

Mike Tovey
Partner, Moore Stephens



Mike at the 1999 AGM

LPG Engine Replacement

Last month's Call Sign gave an update on the LPG engine replacement that would give cabs an extra 5 years beyond the 15. We have now heard from Autogas in association with Shell and Calor to say the test vehicle had a successful outcome to its emission testing at MIRA, which was witnessed by TFL. The vehicle has now started a 10,000 mile road test on a double shift basis which will hopefully be completed by mid / end May. After that it goes back to MIRA for final emission testing and hopefully a sign-off from TFL by the end of May. Autogas should be able to start taking after that!

Minicab drivers "taking collective action against Uber?"

The association of **United Private Hire Drivers** has suggested to members of the PH organisation that they should consider joining a campaign to take collective legal action against **Uber**.

Founders of the UPHD, **James Farrar** and **Yaseen Aslam**, have been backed by lawyers from the **GMB** union – the same ones that defeated Uber at an employment tribunal court several months back - and the association is now inviting driver members to sign up with **Manchester** law firm **MWG Solicitors** to fight for worker employment status and associated benefits such as the national minimum wage and holiday pay.

At a meeting in East London, Mr Farrar told members that Uber was not obeying employment law and that had they been in any other business, under the conditions they operate under as private hire drivers, then the operators would be heavily fined by the national minimum wage people.

"But this is not just about getting money out of Uber," he said, "even though you will. It is also about protecting your rights as a worker. We are not asking for anything more than we are worth and the more members we can get to sign up, the more of a difference we can make. We are now getting to a critical mass and this whole campaign is becoming an unstoppable force. A sign to Uber, the legal community and the politicians that we cannot be ignored anymore."

Mr Farrar also said that the UPHD was making headway in persuading politicians to improve the pay and working conditions of licensed private hire drivers. He brought up last years' report by Labour MP **Frank Field** (**Sweated Labour – Uber and the Gig Economy**) and said that licensing authorities and the Government would have to take note of its recommendations.

Mr Field is recommending that licensing authorities such as **TfL** should make workers' rights a condition of being granted a private hire operator's licence. If a company cannot respect workers' rights, then it cannot have a licence.

Mr Farrar added that support had also come from **The Green Party** who asked them to draft a resolution calling for PHV drivers to be paid properly for their labour.

Added together, it will pose even more problems for Uber than they even faced at the November Employment Tribunal...

JOHN CLOUGH

John Clough (W80) joined Dial-a-Cab in March 1982 when the Society was still based at Shirland Road. Judging by the number of drivers asking why they hadn't seen him for some time, he was obviously a very popular member of the circuit.

The first time *Call Sign* met John was in 2000, when his callsign was pulled out of the hat as that month's winner of the monthly logo draw and he was presented with a cheque for £300. He made us smile with his refusal to have a photo taken as he said he didn't want to frighten anyone!



But John always had a smile on his face, right up until August 2015 when he appeared to stop driving the cab. Sometime before that, unbeknown to us and many outside of DaC's Driver Services, John had been diagnosed with bowel cancer.

The first we heard was when John's daughter Katy wrote to *Call Sign* to tell us that her dad had died after losing his battle with cancer in October 2016.

John passed away leaving his wife Carole, three children in Angela, Katy and Steven and his four grandchildren Lauren, Jessica, Brandon and Libby. RIP John. We'll miss the smile...!



James Farrar and Yaseen Aslam

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Goodbye Al!

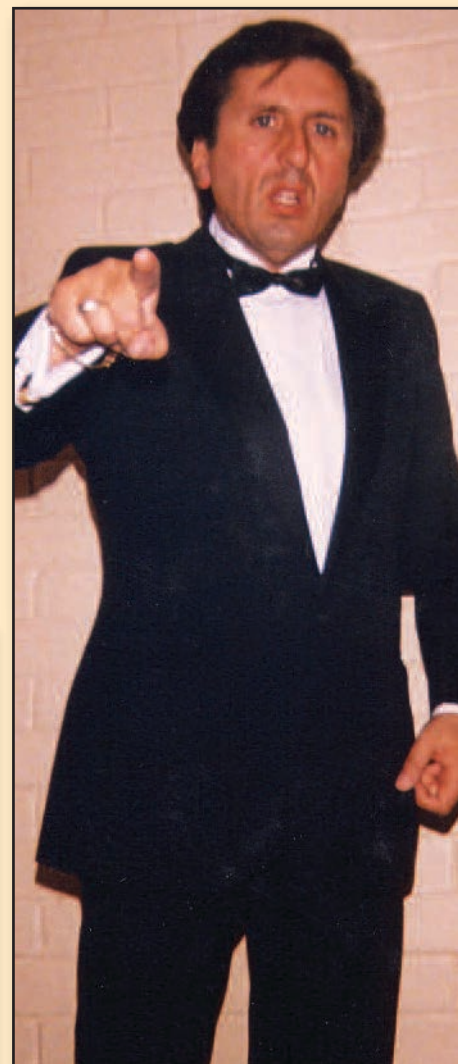
With this issue being the last one for Editor Alan Fisher, the Call Sign staff had a hunt round his picture files and put together a history of Alan's 42 year involvement in the DaC and ODRTS in-house magazines since 1975.



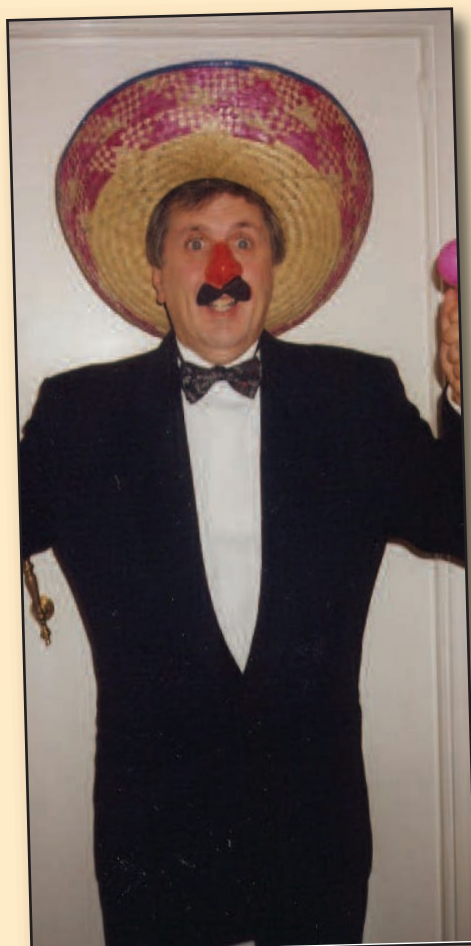
1975 and part of Poet's Corner in Phil Emden's ODRTS News 'n Views



1983 and Big Al makes his first appearance in Jerry Craig's first Call Sign issue



1990 and Big Al grows up



1995 and Big Al became Senor Al



1997 and his first issue as Editor



2011 and still Editor



2017 and his last issue as Editor

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

Brethren of the Whip



Fishermen

By way of a tribute to our departing Editor, I offer an *bomage* in the form of a look-back at previous namesakes of the Fisher clan...

Of the 85 people named **Fisher** in my files, the earliest entry is **Richard Fisher** who was fined 20 shillings in **January 1816** for abusing a gentleman who had only paid him the legal fare.

In **1841**, **John Fisher** accused his passenger of attempting to bilk him. The passenger, a bricklayer

employed on the railways denied the accusation, but in his denial, the three sovereigns (£1 coins but much bigger than the modern equivalent) that he held in his mouth "for greater security" fell to the floor. The bricklayer picked up two of the coins, but Fisher was seen to pick up the third. He was arrested and taken to a police station where he was searched without the coin being found. It was only when the policeman grabbed hold of Fisher by the throat, that the cabman spat out the coin and it fell to the floor. Fisher was remanded but his subsequent fate is not known.

A **Mrs Eliza Fisher** found herself before a magistrate in **January 1843**. She had caught her husband in bed with another woman after having gained entry to the other woman's bedroom in the middle of the afternoon. She attacked her husband, a cab proprietor, and smashed several windows at the woman's house. The magistrate warned her that she should have applied herself more to her husband, rather than the windows. To much laughter in the court, the magistrate dismissed the charge and informed Fisher that he should settle with his girlfriend in paying for the new windows.

James Fisher had a particularly troublesome fare in **September 1843**. He picked a gentleman up in **Broad Street, Bloomsbury (High Holborn/Shafesbury Avenue)** and took him to the nearby **Evan's Hotel in Covent Garden**. Fisher waited until half-three in the morning before his passenger emerged from the hotel and denied having engaged him in the first place. The passenger was arrested and taken to **Bow Street** police station.

After giving his name and address - both false - the passenger was allowed to go but then engaged Fisher to take him to the **Adelphi**. For some reason, Fisher agreed, but when he was bilked for a second time, Fisher drove back to **Bow Street**. The passenger was charged again and released after he had provided his details.

As he left **Bow Street**, Fisher followed him into **Southampton Street** and as he watched the bilker walk down **Maiden Lane**, he drove his cab into the **Strand** - where the bilker promptly hailed him! The bilker asked to be taken to **Charles Street** although which one is not stated and there were hundreds at the time. For the third time, Fisher was bilked and this time gave a policeman a different name and address. In court the bilker was rather aggrieved that a cabman had the audacity to drag a gentleman into court. The magistrate ordered that he should pay Fisher 6s 8d for the three fares and waiting time. The gentleman replied that he came to court unprepared for such a decision and had no money on him. He was locked up whilst the money was sent for, by which time the magistrate increased the fine to 13s 2d (66p) to compensate Fisher for his loss of earnings for that day. (*Ed's note: Not much has changed there then!*)

Mr W.A. Fisher, badge 4233, was charged with stealing a half-crown from his passenger, a solicitor's clerk. A policeman testified that Fisher was sober but the passenger was drunk and that he, the policeman, was accused of stealing the money as well. The magistrate dismissed the charge against Fisher - who still had not been paid the fare at the centre of the dispute.

Augustus William Fisher was a cabman who was also a pugilist under the *nom de guerre* of 'Long' Fisher. When he wasn't cabbage or boxing, 'Long' Fisher also dabbled in burglary! In **1850**, a policeman heard cries of "murder" and "police" emanating from a house in **Buross Street, Whitechapel**. On gaining entry to the house, the policeman was approached by Fisher, who maintained he was a lodger in the house and

assisted the policeman in looking for the "burglars." The charade lasted a good while until, with the arrival of several other policeman, Fisher was identified and arrested. Having already served a prison sentence of six months for a previous felony - and being allowed to keep his badge - Fisher was sentenced to three months with hard labour.

In **1866**, **Charles Fisher**, badge 8124, knocked over and killed a man in **Tottenham Court Road**. Witnesses stated that Fisher was only driving at about 5MPH and that the deceased appeared to be drunk. Fisher was greatly upset, stating that "he would rather have lost his cab and two horses than such a thing should have occurred." He was released on bail and not thought to be at fault.

James Fisher, badge 9987, demanded, without menace, 5s 8d as the fare from **Holloway Road** to **London Bridge**. His passenger regularly only paid 3s 6d and refused to pay the extra 2s 2d asked for by Fisher. The cabman summoned the passenger for the remainder of the fare and stated that as the journey originated beyond the 4-mile radius, he was allowed to charge extra. So much is true, but the dispute was whether the journey began beyond the radius. The case was then adjourned and an investigation launched. It appeared that **Scotland Yard** had moved the rank across the road, thus placing it outside the radius. The magistrate agreed that the passenger had been duped by **Scotland Yard** but saw no reason for the cabman to lose out, after all, he had done nothing wrong.

The passenger magnanimously agreed and paid Fisher all his costs plus the disputed fare, saying he would demand the money in turn from the Commissioner of Police.

Bye for now, thanks for reading Brethren of the Whip since March 2014 and good luck Alan...

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

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Goodbye Al – My favourite photos!

With this being my last issue of Call Sign, I hope you will forgive me using the magazine to re-publish some of my favourite photos, in addition to some that just mean a lot to me from the 12,000+ I have on file and the thousands I also have on photo paper. Twenty from thousands was a hopeless task, but hey, where can you go to if you want to complain! So in no particular order...

Then **Transport Minister for London, Steve Norris**, shows *Call Sign* a copy of his **Green Paper** that was to see the licensing of private hire. At the time, the taxi trade had been crying for minicabs to be licensed, but after what became the **Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998**, they gained the respectability that we had always claimed they never had. Steve still reads the magazine, so can I just say to him: "Steve, I still look younger than you!!!"



It was at DaC's amazing 50th anniversary ball held at **Vinopolis** in June 2003 and Alan seems to be wondering just what the meaning of life is, while Nuala just smiles. She obviously knows! The celebration had been organised by **Brian Rice's PA Jacqui Chart** and virtually everyone connected to the trade was there on that never to be forgotten night...



DaC's longest serving driver, **Alan Lewis (A44)**, has been with the Society since August 1962 when he joined at **Pentonville Road** under the Chairmanship of **Trixie Solomons**. Even at the age of 82 Alan still hits the streets – albeit not quite as often as he used to! The photo shows Alan with his FX3 in 1960..



One that means a lot to me. **Ian Cameron** as **R12** was *Call Sign's* Consumer reporter. Ian, with his red hair, went round testing cab drivers eateries and coffee haunts. More importantly, Ian was one of four DaC drivers along with **Tony Jack**, **Ken Freeborn** and myself, who for six years between 1977 and 1983 covered the transport needs of **St Joseph's Hospice** in **Mare Street**. Along with the amazing nurses working under **Dr Richard Lamerton** and the foresight of an amazing lady by the name of **Cicely Saunders**, the service that allowed those with terminal cancer to die in their own homes rather than a hospital went on to become the world-famous **Macmillan Service**. Sadly, Ian died of a heart attack in 2006, but his memory and legacy are remembered again here...



Brian Rice had not long become Chairman and his son **Billy** was working in the call centre. No one can remember why, but Billy had obviously been a naughty boy while working and dad looks suitable unimpressed. Fortunately Billy had another ear!



Historical photo of **Florrie Culverwell** taken in 1959 as it's one of only two photos featuring the inside of our first premises at **172 Pentonville Road** (corner of **Affleck Street**) that still survive - and both feature Florrie! She was a one-woman army there, doing everything from answering phones to clearing up afterwards. Florrie also moved to **Shirland Road** when the Society moved on in March 1965. Her son **Michael (G82)** is still a **DaC** shareholder having been here since 1985...



Nor sure what it is about this 1904 photo that I love but I do! Perhaps it's that although **Hansoms** went many years ago, the **Royal Albert Hall**



from the front view still looks the same then as it does now and there is something comforting about that...

Goodbye Al – My favourite photos!

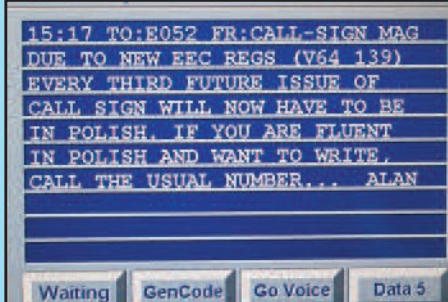
One of the most famous photos in any taxi collection. Former ODRTS and LTFUC Chairman, **Jack Taylor**, greets **Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II** together with a young **Prince Andrew** at the **Odeon cinema Leicester Square** in 1971 where the LTFUC had been granted a **Royal World Premier**. The movie – **Light at the Edge of the World** - starred **Kirk Douglas, Yul Brynner** and **Samantha Eggar**. At the time, it was the biggest fund raiser for the LTFUC that the charity had ever been awarded, but almost as importantly, it raised the profile of this amazing taxi charity.



Harry Joel (Ex-B81) was not just a Board member at ODRTS in the 1960s, but was also involved with the **London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled**, which recently changed its name to **The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans**. Besides spending many years leading the charity as Chairman, in 1967 Harry was hailed as a hero when he rushed into a Belgium hotel in **Blankenberge** before the firemen had arrived and put out flames from two mattresses that had been spotted smouldering earlier, but which had suddenly burst into flames. He helped holidaymakers, who had been overcome by smoke, out of the building. His action was praised by the manager of the **Hotel Marie Jose** who said that but for Harry's action, lives would have been lost. Harry, now 92, is the charity's Life President...



This was the **April Fools** gag that caused us the most trouble. **Call Sign** doesn't usually run April Fools gags, but in 2007 we thought we'd have a go! Because 1 April fell on a Sunday that year, we couldn't use the magazine so the next best thing was to put out a terminal message. And that's what we did! At 10am and again one hour later, a message went out on data terminals claiming that new EEC regulations meant that every third issue of **Call Sign** would have to be written in **Polish**! Amazingly we received 14 calls from drivers who claimed they knew someone that could write in Polish for us! However, over 50 concerned drivers called DaC. Soon after, **Call Sign's** access to putting messages out somehow failed. It never came back. Dunno why!



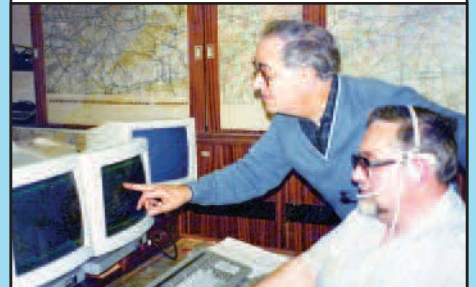
We first wrote of **Tony Arnold (J01)** back in 2002 when he was paid by a Chinese TV company to fly a **TXII** to **Beijing in China** and then drive it all the way back to **London** with two young Chinese passengers who had won the trip in a competition! The trip was to help publicise the **Beijing Olympics** – which were then still 6 years away. The 3-month TXII trip took him through **China, Outer Mongolia and Russia** – where at the border crossing of **Manzhouli** a local restaurant offered to catch a dog and cook it for him and his co-driver! Tony declined and stuck to something resembling a pizza! They drove back via the **Arctic Circle, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Holland and France** until Tony and the TXII arrived safely back in **London** after a trouble free trip! **Call Sign** sponsored all his phone calls and in return followed his progress each month...



Everyone knows 4-time **Olympic** Gold medallist **Laura Trott**, but back in 2015 the lovely Ms Trott was taking part in **The Prudential's RideLondon**. But one **Dial-a-Cab** driver probably remembers it more for picking up Laura and her bike! It was, so **Call Sign** was told, a very warm day and Laura was feeling the heat. So the best thing was to go home in a taxi... and that's what she did! But naturally, we're always pleased to help our Olympic heroes...



Those who are used to working on Saturdays - and have for many years - will always associate that day with the duo of **Lou Gitlin** and **Ivor Belkin (C97)**. Lou's death in 2010 put an end to the trades' longest running radio taxi partnership. It began in **September 1961** and went right up until 2006 when Lou had to undergo a double cataract operation and on his return to the dispatcher's box at **Brunswick House**, found the VDU glare to be too much to take. He told **Call Sign** at the time that he hoped he could return when his eyes improved, but sadly his general health also began to deteriorate and that opportunity never came about. Ivor still dispatches, although ill-health has stopped that of late.



Driving a cab has been my occupation since 1971 so remembering how I got the licence is something I need to do. However, this photo taken in 1937 shows not only how difficult the Knowledge was back then, but how popular the idea of becoming a taxi driver was. Yet it took a fraction of the time to pass out. Today, the **KoL** is said to take up to four years AND many Knowledge boys (and girls) use sat-nav devices on their bikes. The result? Almost six times as many minicab drivers as there are taxi drivers!



Goodbye Al – My favourite photos!

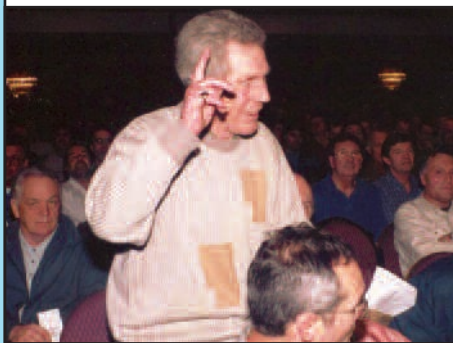
It was **Christmas 1979** and the four **Dial-a-Cab** drivers running **St Joseph's Hospice** transportation department for Thursdays – **Ian Cameron, Tony Jack** and **Ken Freeborn** and the silly-looking person in the dinner suit (ok, that was me!) were putting on their Xmas show. It was based on the then-well-known **Radio Luxembourg** programme, **The Ovaltinies**. Other than medical staff, the audience consisted of patients who were unlikely to see another Christmas; but to hear them cheering these four drivers up on the stage who were prepared to make fools of themselves in public just to make a few dying people laugh, was something I will never forget. The photo was taken by **Dr Richard Lamerton** and not only did he put it up in his office, but wrote about it in his first book (published in 1986) called **East End Doc**



Some might say I am taking advantage of the position of Editor – and they would be right! But my wonderful son **Reed** worked for **Dial-a-Cab** in the call centre as a dispatcher for 25 years, no mean feat when you consider it was always his second job! His main job was as a systems analyst with the **Ford Motor Company**. This photo was taken in July 1998 at a staff awayday and like many others on the “bonding” trip, Reed was presented with a prize by **Brian Rice**, who was then into his second year as Chairman. When Reed died in **January 2013** after battling a brain tumour for over 3 years, DaC almost came to a standstill with so many drivers and staff at the funeral. That meant such a lot to us...



Mickey Daley was someone who rarely failed to make me smile. The only place I knew I would definitely see Mickey was at the DaC AGMs, mainly in the old days when there was no postal balloting and 1000+ people turned up at various London halls to discuss matters of concern to the Society. Back then there would always be at least 10 people queuing up to address the meeting and as soon as the number one speaker left, someone else would join at the back! Mickey addressed every AGM... but rarely left his seat because no matter how far back he was seated, he had the ability to make himself heard and invariably raised a laugh from the hall! He had views on everything – especially if it was connected to EC5! Mickey died in 2007 and is still much missed...



How could I possibly leave out my two year tenure at **Taxi Globe** as the nasty **Mr X**. It was the early 1990s and then-Editor **Rodney Lewis** was looking to replace the adorable chatterbox otherwise known as **Lana Sherif**. Lana had to stand aside when too many people realised that Lana Sherif was an anagram of **Alan Fisher**! So she had to go, only to be replaced by a mysterious male wearing an eye mask... and yes, that was also me! Mr X had a history with the American version of **professional wrestling**, having previously worked for American movie mogul **Ted Turner** and his then-wife **Jane Fonda** at CNN. Ted was the paymaster for US wrestling organisation **WCW (World Championship Wrestling)** which was later bought up by the **WWE**. Every issue saw Mr X with another superstar from **Hulk Hogan** to **Mr Perfect** to **Sting** (see pic). As a bonus, I could be as nasty as I wanted and that was something that taxi mags had never had before. And it was great fun...!



There have been a number of taxi drivers throughout the years that became well known for... well, for being cab drivers who could talk. Few of them could be classified as entrepreneurs, but there has been at least one licensed taxi driver who throughout the years has helped to bring this trade as up to date as much as feasibly possible. That man was **George Vyse** – seen on his 77th birthday in the photo with **Call Sign's Marc Turner (R97)**. Over the years, George with his distinctive **H1 PCO** number plate made trips to the old **PCO** and later to **TfL** to ask for various improvements that he had either developed himself or seen elsewhere. It is highly probable that without George we would still have just Medium wave radios! George even gave **Call Sign** a satnav to test out years before most drivers had even heard of them! Of course it worked and when I went to return it after writing a review, George sad that because it was now second hand, that I should keep it!



Last, but certainly not least re photos, is the woman behind the throne – my wife and chief **Call Sign** proofer, **Linda**. Getting a magazine out that was both interesting and entertaining is one thing, but making it read sensibly with as few typos as possible is something else. Thanks to Linda, they were very few and far between because any mistakes are very quickly pounced upon!



Goodbye Al – My favourite photos!



I just had to put in the last-ever **Kupkake's Korner**; it was published in the **May 2014** issue, four weeks after David died. He specifically asked us not to publish it until he had passed away.

It was the end of an era and in a totally different way, so is this...

GONE... BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Now Kupkake's gone,
Never again will there be the like,
Definitely a unique one,
Behind wheel and mic.

A sense of fun,
Seen through bifocals,
A fast retort,
And fluid vocals!

An honest man,
Not known to flinch,
Swift to help,
And assist.

So long Kupkake,
You've left a space,
Wherever you may be,
And in whatever place...

*Remember me for what I am
Never think I didn't give a damn...*

David Kupler
Always Kupkake...

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

**Flashback
1955**

This month's Flashback – being the last one – goes back to March 1955 and the official opening of ODRTS – the organisation that would later become Dial-a-Cab...

From ODRTS Newssheet number 1, April 1955, Editor Bernie Lyons...

Gentlemen,

We have come a long way since 29th January 1953 when both Mr Bonnie Martyn and Mr Albert Hall left RODA and just three months later met in Mr Martyn's cab parked on the Grosvenor Gardens rank along with Mr Cutmore, Mr Duncan, Mr Naismith, Mr Stoffel, Mr Cobden and Mr Fiertag.

We also had a magnificent collection of over £200 by those present at the Albany Tavern on 7 June and we thank the publican for the use of his premises at such a reasonable rate of £2.19.6d.

Then on Thursday 1st October we had Mr Duncan agreeing our phone lines with Dial House in Shaftesbury Avenue for 172 Pentonville Road. Within 6 weeks of that, we had the first Committee meeting at our Chairman's house. We would like to thank Mr Martyn for the refreshments he made available and for which he paid for out of his own pocket.

Although the first jobs that we dispatched in December had very poor signals, on 26 January 1954 the ODRTS equipment had been improved to such an extent that we managed to successfully dispatch our first job, going from Pentonville Road to Gamage's.

That takes us to our official launch, which took place a substantial time after we had begun working our normal schedule because we wanted Sir Ian Fraser MP to perform the ODRTS official launch ceremony and he was not available until Tuesday 8th March 1955. We decided to wait for him even though it meant performing the ceremony almost 15 months after the first job. However, it does tie in with our first ever account, which has been opened by the British Broadcasting Corporation. I have asked driver Sam Harris to write of the day.

"It was a memorable day. Even the weather was pleasant for March. We were all invited to 172 Pentonville Road to watch Sir Ian Fraser, MP for Morecambe and the only blind member of the House of Commons dispatch the official first job. Sir Ian was selected because he was the Vice President of the London taxi drivers' branch of the British Legion. I believe Bonnie Martyn was the Chairman of the branch at the time and that is where I first met him when I joined in 1949 like many drivers before and since. Incidentally, Bonnie was also the Chairman of the Underprivileged

Children's Fund, which was then known as the Norwood Fund.

Sir Ian sat next to our regular dispatcher, pushed a button to call the trip going from Chancery Lane to Seething Lane and then congratulated ODRTS on its success. It was a wonderful day."

Bernie Lyons
ODRTS Newssheet



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Mr Martyn
(centre)
with Sir
Ian Fraser
to his
immediate
right**

Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund

GOLFERS: DO YOU WANT TO WIN A CAR!!!



A hole in one could win you a £10,000 car!

Well now is your chance! Sponsored by Plan Insurance, you can win a car up to the value of £10,000 in the next Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund annual golf day on 8 June 2017.

The cost for the day is £70; that includes 18 holes of golf, a light breakfast at 10am and a meal later on. Tee off time will be at 11am.

The TDY committee have also announced that the first person to get a hole in one will win a brand new £10,000 car! The competition takes place at the Hendon Golf Club, Ashley Walk, Devonshire Road, Mill Hill, London NW7 1DG.

You can enter as an individual or make up a team of four with friends. If you, your family or friends would like to participate, please contact the TDYCF – details are below.

As usual, all money raised will be donated to the five taxi charities supported by the Fund. They are the Albany Taxi Charity Fund for Children with Special Needs, LTFUC, Southend Fund for Underprivileged Children, London Benevolent Association for War Disabled and East London Cabbies Outing. The presentations will be made at the annual dinner dance of the TDoy on 25 November 2017.

All cheques made payable to T.D.Y.C.F. Please complete and return forms to: 5 St Brides Avenue Edgware Middlesex HA8 6BT. A £10 deposit will be required with completed forms and full payment to be received by no later than 18 May 2017...

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Phone/ Fax: 020 8952 1357
Mobile: 07850 056 765
Email: brussella@talk21.com**

London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children

DRIVERS WANTED FOR LTFUC SOUTHEND TRIP

Drivers, come and have a fun-packed day by the sea...

Drivers, we need your help to give 300 'special needs' and underprivileged children a brilliant and memorable day out at Southend-on-Sea on Wednesday 12th July 2017.

In case you have any doubts, we welcome all drivers regardless of what colour cab you have, whether you have radio circuit logos or advertising. This applies to all our outings. As well as giving a great deal of pleasure to so many children, we promise you will have a brilliant and fun-packed day out yourself.

Without you there are no outings. So please contact our driver liaison Steve Bell on 07811 508772 or enter your details on the Volunteer Page of our website.

Just go to www.ltfuc.org.uk

The Hon President, Hon Chairman and Committee would be very grateful if you could join us and we look forward to seeing you on the day...

"None walks so tall as he who stoops to help a child"

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

Can you afford *not* to get a copy!!!



Produced by Dial-a-Cabs PCN expert, John Vigus, this book is all you need to know about moving traffic and parking regulations in one easy to read guide!

The Motorists Guide to Moving Traffic And Parking Regulations

Hard copies £8. Electronic versions to Dial-a-Cab drivers are £5 per copy. Orders via Driver Services with payment deducted from your DaC account.

Can you really afford *not* to get a copy!!!

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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.

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Or as we call it... The downfall of Uber!

As this terrific trade magazine bows out and many in our industry experience a 'crisis of faith', yours truly will now address some of the issues, albeit sadly for the last time in *Call Sign*.

Despite the doom and gloom naysayers, I'm seeing reasons to be optimistic. Granted it's never going to be how it was, but even then we had pessimists abounding and predicting the trade's imminent demise. These days, most are blaming our current woes on Uber and for a while they *were* our main threat. Reassuringly, their *blitzkrieg* is currently being halted in its tracks. And of course we now have the Daily Mail investigation into Uber, David Cameron, George Osborne and Rachel Whetstone!

In fact, I'd say Uber were on the verge of becoming a busted flush since HMG, TfL and the media woke up to what we've been telling them for the last three years... *not all that glitters is gold!*

Uber have been under the microscope of late, resulting in much adverse publicity. But other reasons for the slow-down in business (especially at weekends) are there before our very eyes; the world is changing. A cultural come societal revolution of sorts is underway. For instance, people do not need to venture out as often as they once did. They don't drink as much and they cycle more. Notice all the pubs closing and gyms opening, while top food can now be delivered to their homes, saving time and money. I always theorised that the night time (weekend) economy was mainly fuelled by sex! But possibly the biggest detraction of modern times was Home Entertainment. It encompasses interactive games, box sets and Netflix etc. No wonder the public aren't going out.

People went out hoping to meet new friends, lovers and potential partners – but not anymore! With the advent of dating apps, **Tinder** and **Grinder** etc, that appetite has been fully quenched without the need for a ride in a Black cab. Not forgetting **Brexit** jitters and the threat of terrorism. Also, how many jobs have been lost to the night tube! No wonder it's quiet out there! Yet the supposed availability and cheapness of Uber has in no way enticed the masses out.

As I see it, two events of last October were game changers. In no particular order, there was the Uber drivers' employment rights tribunal victory over their own company and Taxis mandatory acceptance of Credit Cards, something that has done us no end of good.

Youngsters who had deserted us are now *Back to Black*. They had always told me that Uber served their convenience needs better than us... but not anymore! Uber have recently announced that their **UberTaxi** platform is to be disbanded; **UberPool** sunk without trace and their drivers and staff are rising up against their bosses.

They invaded us for the 'Jewel in the Crown' and failed - even with facilitation of government, TfL and the media - because they didn't understand the existential nature of our being; how we are part of the

Call Sign's Marc Turner (R97) is also known as Drumslayer. This month he writes on... well er, EVERYTHING!

DRUMSLAYER'S THEORY OF EVERYTHING!



fabric and culture of London. Uber's management believed we would give up our freedom and join them because that's how it had worked in America. They didn't consider that the proud 363 year old London Taxi wouldn't just roll over. Yes, they hurt us... but they couldn't knock us down!

And the Editor...

I'd like now to share a story regarding *Call Sign's* esteemed editor Alan Fisher. Couple

of years' back I stumbled on a Taxi garage proprietor who had gone over to the dark side. He was an Uber franchisee. On visiting his premises and confronting him with my evidence and then being given sharp shrift, I contacted Alan.

Because of the possibility of legal repercussions, I wasn't sure Alan would be up for exposing the miscreant. Resolute, Alan didn't have to think about it or consult anybody. After I explained the situation, he just said: "You write it, I'll publish it." So I did. The *exposé* saw the garage owner with around 600 cabs try to disperse his fleet around town. Eventually he sold out to a respectable garage after which I'm led to believe he left the trade altogether.

So thank you Alan Fisher for displaying, steadfastness, integrity, courage, all the attributes of a great editor. **Dial-a-Cab** has been blessed to have you charting *Call Signs'* course for the past 20 years.

Enjoy your retirement...

Marc Turner (R97)
Call Sign Online

Flying cabs by 2025???

First there were minicabs, then it was Uber, followed by self-drive cabs. Can there be anything else to follow that (always assuming they can get the S-D vehicles to stop at red lights)! Well how about flying cabs? Traffic? What's that!

Well, according to **The Hoversurf Project**, by 2025 they will have introduced a series of flying cabs!

Hoversurf is a **Russian** startup that claims they will be making the wishes of **Star Wars** - and indeed **Star Trek** - fans come true following its announcement that they have produced a flying motorcycle just like the Speeder bikes from the Star Wars movies.

Called **Scorpion 3**, the prototype reaches around 35 miles per hour and currently reaches a height of 30 feet. A series of prototype bikes is expected by the end of this year and Hoversurf say their plans are to turn their flying motorcycle into a flying taxi or cargo-drone, which would be ready in the next few years.

Does that mean we will get in first and that there will be a new company, LFTC - The London Flying Taxi Company!



We've all had moments in this game that we'll never forget. Three airports in one day (yes, it used to happen), or that long wait and return!

It reminds me of the girl who became ill at the office, so they sent her home to the country with a colleague. You dropped her off and after making sure she was ok, it was back to the office with her colleague. Then there's the time when your **Dial-a-Cab** terminal suddenly bleeps as you started work or when you were somewhere out in the wilds!

My own special moment came at nine-thirty on a Saturday morning around sixteen years ago. I had accepted a job in **Hampstead** going to **Paddington**. I glanced at the details as you do: Booked time... OK. Address... yes. Passenger... and that's when my heart started to beat a little faster. Who was it that began giving me palpitations? It was **Mr. D.H.M. Cornwell**.

I can just hear *Call Sign* readers calling out in unison: "So what?" Well, I knew the real name of my favourite author - someone I had always hoped to meet. That was David Cornwell and I was pretty sure he lived in Hampstead. In fact I was passing some of the spots where his book action took place. Could it be him?

I was soon approaching the pick-up and a man was standing at the front door with his back to me. Then he turned, gave me a cheery wave and yes, I was right... it was **John Le Carre**! I leapt out of the cab - I think it had just about stopped - and ran round to open the door.

Another true story from Geoff Levene...

That Almost Perfect Day...



"This is such a thrill," I said, "I've read just about everything you've ever written."

With a smile, he asked: "Have you got my latest book?"

I said that I hadn't yet, but it was on my list to get that week. He went back into the house and came out with a hard-back copy of *'The Constant Gardener'* in which he had written a lovely dedication.

I've picked him up several times since then and whilst I know he probably doesn't remember that first time, he is always such a charming man with that rare quality - the ability to listen. That, undoubtedly, is why he is such a master of dialogue. The papers always refer to him as a 'spy writer' but he's much more than that. He is a real man of letters...

Who else has there been lately? My regular customer is the former golfer and now film producer, **Drewster 'Droozy' Goldberg**. He called me up and I was surprised to learn he was involved in that recent **Liam Neeson** film. You know the one; it's where **Hollywood** finally started to address men's health issues. Neeson plays a man who has problems with his waterworks that then affects his sleep. It's called *Run all Night*.

That firebrand left-wing MP, **Manny Festo**, was in my cab recently. As usual, he was banging on about workers' rights etc.

"Do you want to have your differentials eroded," he asked me?

"No, I do not," I replied, "I still haven't got over having my assets frozen!"

I also got an ear bashing from the editor of *Caravanning Weekly*, **Ms. Winnie Baygo**! She was extolling the virtues of chemical toilets, the M25, French seamen's strikes and Operation Stack.

"So what are the disadvantages," I enquired!

Back in **Wardour Street** just the other day, a hand shot out and I couldn't believe it. It was only my hero from the Sixties - **Spiro 'Spiderman' McGee**. When I first saw him live at the **Whisky a Gogo**, he was a callow youth fronting the iconic band **Original Hairy Messengers**, but he later became notorious for his hell-raising lifestyle. It was Spiro who spent that weekend at the **Hotel Splendide** while appearing at the **Bridlington Roxy**. He was rumoured to have downed 38 pints of Guinness, 3 bottles of vodka and 2 bottles of Palwins Number 9. All he ate was a salt beef sandwich, a latke and a new green cucumber!

What amazed the hospital's A&E department was where he found salt beef, latkes and a new green in **Bridlington**. But he's changed nowadays - no more pony-tail... well no hair at all actually and he sat there reading a seed catalogue. And where was the ever present hamburger? Remember, this was the man who named his kids **Wendy, Byron and Mac...**

And finally...

The other morning, a couple with overnight bags stopped me in **St John Street**. They looked like they were going to the **Eurostar** terminal at **St Pancras** but surprised me by asking for **Heathrow**. They were taking their national Airline back to **Helsinki**, so I suppose you could say it was a job that came out of 'finn air'...

Goodbye *Call Sign*, nice knowing you...

Geoff Levene (W32)
Call Sign Online

DIESEL COSTS SINCE 1996



Because of its closure, *Call Sign* looks back through its files at the cost of diesel since 1996 slightly earlier than usual...

1st June 1996	– 51.9p per litre	– £2.36 per gallon
1st June 1997	– 54.9p per litre	– £2.50 per gallon
1st June 1998	– 65.9p per litre	– £3.00 per gallon
1st June 1999	– 72.9p per litre	– £3.72 per gallon
1st June 2001	– 77.9p per litre	– £3.54 per gallon
1st June 2002	– 75.9p per litre	– £3.45 per gallon
1st June 2003	– 77.5 p per litre	– £3.52 per gallon
1st June 2004	– 89.0 p per litre	– £4.05 per gallon
1st June 2005	– 89.7 p per litre	– £4.08 per gallon
1st June 2006	– 96.9 p per litre	– £4.41 per gallon
1st June 2007	– 97.9 p per litre	– £4.45 per gallon
1st June 2008	– 128.9 p per litre	– £5.86 per gallon
1st June 2009	– 101.9 p per litre	– £4.61 per gallon
1st June 2010	– 121.9 p per litre	– £5.51 per gallon
1st June 2011	– 140.9 p per litre	– £6.37 per gallon
1st June 2012	– 143.9 p per litre	– £6.87 per gallon
1st June 2013	– 138.9 p per litre	– £6.27 per gallon
1st June 2014	– 135.9 p per litre	– £6.14 per gallon
1st June 2015	– 120.9 p per litre	– £5.46 per gallon
1st June 2016	– 111.8 p per litre	– £5.05 per gallon
1st Mar 2017	– 121.9 p per litre	– £5.51 per gallon

With prices varying from garage to garage, these prices can only be averages...

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Brazil Calling

You wait 120 years for one... and two come along together!

The first horseless carriage taxi was introduced by the **London Electric Cab Company** in 1897; it now looks like its successors, which to be fair have taken a while to arrive, are now close to the marketplace. The original cabs had a top speed of 12mph and batteries which had to be charged every 30 miles. These cabs, nicknamed **Hummingbirds** because they were smooth and quiet, were unreliable and expensive to maintain according to a **Mr Clarkson Senior** in an early revue.

Well maybe not, but we all recognise the sentiment. There isn't much to go on at the moment in regard to finding out what the latest offering from LTC will be; the best guess is that a Vauxhall Ampera engine will be the power plant of the TX5. This unit of multiple electric motors (two) and a four cylinder petrol combustion engine used as a generator will keep the vehicle running when the batteries are exhausted. This would give the model a maximum range of 300 miles, one unlikely to be attained in real world conditions with a cab body added, also when contending with an estimated 198kg of batteries.

The **Metrocab**, built by **Frazer-Nash Research Ltd** is a little more forthcoming with details. Theirs is powered by two 50Kw electric motors producing 1032lb/ft of torque and a one litre, three cylinder petrol engine driving the generator, in short, lower expected kerb weight in the Metrocab, similar power trains and slightly larger petrol engine in the LTC TX5 EV.

Mr Khan, our third glorious leader, has deemed it necessary to introduce a new 'T charge' zone. TfL's website still shows this now out-dated information: From **September 2020**, all cars will need to meet exhaust emission standards (ULEZ standards) or pay a daily charge when travelling in central London. It will operate 24 hours a day, every day of the year, including weekends /public holidays.

This has now been surpassed by: From **23 October 2017**, cars, vans, minibuses, buses, coaches and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in central London will need to meet minimum exhaust emission standards or pay a daily £10 Emissions Surcharge (also known as the **Toxicity Charge** or T-Charge). It is in addition to the Congestion Charge. Operation hours are Monday - Friday 07:00 - 18:00.

As you can see, there is no mention of us in this short missal; I have no doubt TfL will treat us with the level of courtesy they usually afford us! So, in some cases you will find that even though you have bought a taxi in good faith and been promised a 15 year lifespan, the last five years of your new taxis' working life will end up costing you in excess of £17,000 pounds for the average driver.

I could understand if the technology was already in place regarding charging points and other necessary amenities, but even they have shamefully been reduced in number. TfL tell us they are working with suppliers to deliver 150 rapid charge points by 2018 and 300 by 2020 to support the electrification of taxis, PHVs and

other commercial fleets. But recent figures show that could be reduced to 75. But even at the higher figure, let's do the maths.

What can we expect? 120,000 PHVs, 18,000 taxis, 300 charging points... not enough! That would mean it could be 115 days between charges on the street. When you do dig deeper into the data regarding vehicle charging in London, there is a potential 1406 charging points, that's almost 100 vehicles per charging point and it doesn't include private vehicles; I can't imagine they'll be too happy not being able to charge their vehicle because Taxis and PHVs are monopolising every charging station.

How long to fully recharge a battery? Six hours at 10amps average, maybe four hours on rapid, and don't expect every charger you find to have the same output either. Also bear in mind that not all connectors are available to all vehicles at every charge station.

I don't doubt that some of those vehicles could be charged at home, but by the time you install a 3 phase supply, fork out a further £300 for a charging cable, that's another £2000 up the Suwannee. It seems to me that the only possible working model will be range extended vehicles, the reason London isn't filled with electric vehicles is the obvious range anxiety that these models suffer from; 300 charging points is obviously woefully inadequate in the same way that the existing 1406 available to the public is also.

Whilst these new vehicles from LTC and Metrocab will most likely have lower running costs, they will not necessarily be cost free; new battery packs could cost £5000 or upwards to replace, expect the rear suspension to fail considerably quicker than normal and brakes to be replaced on a much more regular interval. Whilst these Hummingbirds may have torque figures that will leave conventional vehicles flagging, don't imagine that you will end up with sports car performance either, although I'm willing to wager they will be considerably quicker than existing models.

I personally like the thought of a quiet clean electric vehicle, but if the opening selling cost exceeds £50,000 I don't imagine there will be much of a queue for them unless TfL raises its game and instead of spending £900 million on cycle routes, they decide to give the 18,000 cabs on the road a well needed subsidy; now let's see...

18,000 Taxi's x
£50,000 = £900
million! Same as
the cycle super
highway!

*What do you say
TfL...? We'll go
50/50???*

English test court ruling

The English test court ruling that took place in early February closes what in all practical terms was an unfair omission in TfL's



original *Conditions of Fitness* to be a driver in London. **Sam Dumitriu**, head of projects at the **Adam Smith Institute**, a conservative think-tank, criticised the ruling.

I'm guessing that when Sam was studying in **Manchester** for his philosophy degree, he never had much of problem explaining to a driver how to get back to his digs in **Mossdale** whilst wearing a traffic cone on his head, as he was too busy worrying that "...the unexamined life is not worth living."

Well Sam, from your elevated position in your "think tank," think about this: Power is no blessing in itself, except when it is used to protect the innocent (Jonathan Swift) and a little less about your utilitarian recreation of serfdom.

Loaves Labours Lost

Alan Fisher hanging up his quill is a sad loss for not only **Dial-a-Cab Ltd**, but the cab trade in general. He, believe it or not, has always been as nice and as decent a man as ever to have come through the doors at DaC. He has always been the cheerleader for the good and willing to criticise all that he thought was unjust or unfair and believe me, he rarely got it wrong!

Alan's decision to retire this post, one that he has so wonderfully crafted over twenty years, makes us all a little poorer. I have always enjoyed his many sobriquets; **Big Al** and **Lana Sherif** stand out.

I wish him the very best for the future and to borrow from loaves labours lost; "I suffer for the truth." Not enough sometimes, maybe too much at others. Enjoy your literary retirement, Al...

Joe Brazil
DaC Ltd Director
Head of Driver Operations



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

IT IS NOW!

Bob Woodford looks at London's long lost sporting venues

When Editor Alan Fisher emailed me a month ago to tell me this April issue of *Call Sign* was going to be the last, my initial thought was that this was some absurd April Fool's joke – and for all I know it may well be! (*Sorry Bob... it ain't... Ed*)!!!

My second thought was Yippee, as it meant that for my current series - the origins of London's Football Clubs - I don't have to write about West Ham United or Crystal Palace after all!

Perhaps Alan will correct me, but I believe my musings here first started about 17 years ago – which is frightening! I've had some success along the way as well, as by advertising my wares I have sold copious cases of organic French wine from the Corbierres to Dial-a-Cab folk over the years and perhaps the case of red I sold the Chairman was the reason he started losing his hair! That was good stuff!



Bob with the late Paul Bishop taken in 1997

I have also persuaded some of you to become **London Taxi Tour Guides** and consequently great ambassadors to London and the trade.

Talking of France, perhaps my most amusing Alan Fisher story was when I

found a little house for him and Linda to stay in for a short break, but his presence in the village caused uproar with one little old lady deciding it would be

a great idea to attack him every morning by beating him with her baguette! Alan was the victim of mistaken identity, as the lady in black thought he was the owner of the house and was upset with the satellite dish she didn't like the look of and wanted removed!

I can honestly say that I have thoroughly enjoyed making my monthly contributions, not least because Alan is such a great bloke and also a cab trade stalwart. But above all, I shall also be forever grateful for Alan's help in raising awareness for my fund raising appeals over the years, perhaps most poignantly the appeal for **Motor Neurone Disease**, which was launched having lost my dear friend and DaC driver **Paul Bishop** who left us at a far too young an age.

Some things are more important than anything, thanks for everything Alan.

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

MyTaxi takes over Hailo

In the September *Call Sign*, we told readers that **Hailo** had agreed to a "merger" with the **Mercedes Benz Daimler** ride-sharing app, **MyTaxi**, which has been part of **Daimler Mobility Services** since 2014 when MBD were said to have paid around £100million! The deal was said to be cashless and saw Daimler take a 60% stake in Hailo and controlling seats on its Board.

We heard that the Hailo name would vanish within 12 months and be re-branded as MyTaxi. That has now come about. Hailo had suffered with financial problems since being forced to pull out of **North America** in 2014 following a price war and battle for market share. They also never really recovered after applying for a PH license but keeping it secret from its subscribers. It was later discovered by **Grant Davis** at the **LCDC** and within hours, news spread via social networks leading to a mass departure from Hailo by its drivers, together with many of them putting signs in their wind-screens expressing their displeasure at the new license – but not always in a very polite way!

We also spoke to an experienced competitor of MyTaxi in Germany, but agreed not to publish any names. He told us back in September:

"MyTaxi was originally a startup, claiming a niche - one of the first to do so in the German taxi sector. Its founder and former CEO, **Niclaus Mewes**, grew up in a family dealing with a special kind of fleet management – shipping! But the new company grew quite fast, relying on taxis only with **Deutsche Telekom** and **Car2Go** being some of the first investors. The MyTaxi setup is actually pretty much the same as you'll find with **Hailo**, **Gett** and others. They bypass traditional taxi dispatchers and build a direct contact between the drivers and customer.

"MyTaxi has tried its best in many European cities such as **Paris** and **Switzerland**, but has yet to make a success in most of them. The only strong market besides **Germany** is in **Spain**. So coupling with Hailo makes some sense there.

"They've had some problems in Germany where they went around aggressively "buying" customers at half fare. You should prepare yourselves for that in London as well, since a 50 percent price tag on all trips is still active in Spain and Poland etc. Yes, they do claim to only work with licensed taxis, but since they have a huge marketing budget, they often try to "bend" the law - although they can't anymore in Germany.

"Incidentally, MyTaxi and Hailo are claiming they will now have the largest taxi app network in Europe, but I believe that to be incorrect since the **Berlin** and **Vienna** based taxi network, **taxi.eu**, is already active in 13 countries with well over 170.000 drivers throughout Europe."

Now 7 months after *Call Sign* revealed there was to be a takeover, MyTaxi has arrived and is going around trying to capture drivers at main-line taxi stations. It also put an expensive double-paged ad in the **Evening Standard**, which probably confirms our report on their having a huge marketing budget, not surprising when you consider the organisation behind it. It has also referred to itself as an alternative to **Uber**.

Will it replace Uber? Just as importantly, will that be achieved by doing as they did in Germany and charging 50 percent of the meter? Will it actually just become a minicab using black cabs? Has the trade just received its last rites or is MyTaxi its saviour? Time will tell...



Michael McHale (F26) looked at Call Sign's not-so-young reporter and said it, obviously meaning every word: "I always knew we really were the Gentleman's (and Ladies') circuit, now the kindness and camaraderie shown to me by a fellow Dial-a-Cab driver has proved it again."

He was referring to Patrick Walsh (V17), who came to Michael's aid when his taxi broke down while travelling along Bayswater Road when, without any warning, the cab suddenly came to a grinding halt. Using all his experience, Michael managed to coast it into the kerbside so as not to affect the traffic flow too much. The engine was running, but the unhealthy noise from the wheels suggested that this taxi was not going to get much further!

"Clearly I was not going to make it to my service agent, Mr Diesel in south London under my own steam, so I called the AA for a low-loader to transport the taxi there. They said they were busy but would get a rescue truck to me as quickly as possible after I explained about the heavy traffic and my immobile cab stuck at the roadside. All the time traffic was getting slower as it weaved its way round me and my motionless taxi.

"I continued to call the AA back at regular intervals to see how far up the list I was getting and they in turn, kept fobbing me off with all sorts of excuses. Meanwhile, the time was passing for me to get to south London before Mr Diesel closed for the night.

"Suddenly, another Dial-a-Cab driver pulled up behind me and said he'd seen me sitting at the roadside for several hours and asked if he could do anything to help. Knowing that the breakdown was a major job and no driver would be able to help in that, all I could think of to say was that a hot coffee would be nice because I couldn't leave the cab unattended. He smiled and then drove off.

"I wasn't expecting him back; after all, work is hardly easy to come by at the

Roadside Hero!



Mike McHale: We're still the gentleman's circuit...

moment. But sure enough, several minutes later my roadside hero duly returned and presented me with a huge cup of piping hot coffee (ok, minus sugar!!!) and a cheese sandwich. But it wasn't just that, because it was so nice that someone took the trouble to have a chat – you feel really lonely in a situation like that with people staring at you as they slowly wind past.

"So after a four-and-a-half hour wait for the recovery vehicle to arrive, I finally got to Mr Diesel late in the afternoon. But because I had phoned to say I was on the way, those great guys - Danny, Gary and Earl - kept their doors open for me until we got there. They quickly diagnosed the nearside front wheel bearing had been damaged due to a loose screw and I got my cab back the following day with the repair duly completed! I've been going to them for many years" Michael continued, "and that is just one more reason why!"

"But I am also very grateful to Patrick Walsh for his support in my time of need, and for his generosity because he would not accept any payment for the food he kindly brought to me. He restores my faith in the brother and sisterhood that is Dial-a-Cab and after 25 years on the circuit, I feel well placed to know!"

So Call Sign's elderly reporter, on the verge of his retirement yet still eager to impress the Editor and needing another 100 words (!!!), duly called Patrick Walsh for his side of the story.

"Michael's cab had been stuck there for ages. I recalled seeing it parked at the kerbside for several hours as I motored up and down the Bayswater Road at various times of the day. So as soon as I was empty, I stopped to see if I could help, not knowing if the driver simply needed tools to repair something or assistance to get moving again. But as he couldn't leave his cab even to get some sustenance, I decided I would at least do that. I'm sure it was nothing more than any another Dial-a-Cab driver would do for me..."

Alan Green (E52)
Call Sign Online



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NEW YORK ADVERTISES ELECTRIC TX5

In a brilliant piece of publicity, The London Taxi Company/Geely advertised its new all-electric range extended TX5 in newspapers and motoring magazines around the globe by showing it being tested in the Arctic Circle. Call Sign also has a story on the test elsewhere inside this issue.

What we hadn't seen anywhere outside of America was this New York ad that was illuminated in Times Square, right in front of all the Yellow taxi drivers in their "taxi of tomorrow" which does look rather like the "taxi of yesterday" compared to the TX5. Either way, the publicity coup was brilliant!



In last months' magazine, you will have read that *Call Sign* Editor, Alan Fisher, has decided to hang up his keyboard and mouse after twenty years in the hot seat and another twenty as a contributor under both Gerald Craig and Phil Emden.

When I began writing for *Call Sign* exactly 28 years ago under my previous boss, Gerry 'Jery' Craig, it was a huge Remington mechanical typewriter, itself described as a desk top model, but which actually sat on our kitchen table, that was the order of the day together with white A4 paper and a sheet of blue carbon paper sandwiched between a second sheet of white paper that left a faint copy of my work as I hit the typewriter keys!

It was Gerry who gave me my first break into journalism by inviting me to contribute a regular monthly column on photographic topics, both advisory and subjective, for the benefit of families going on holiday or perhaps capturing that special moment in their life. Film was the medium used back then and a trip to the chemist or photo lab for processing was invariably heralded by an anxious wait until the prints came back and you could savour that 'magic moment' for evermore, possibly dis-

AND IT'S GOODBYE FROM ME

(With apologies to the Two Ronnie's)



played in an album.

Gerry was my mentor in many ways and we worked closely together on numerous projects, either for the magazine itself, or ODRTS

as Dial-a-Cab was known back then.

When Alan Fisher took over the *Call Sign* helm, he invited me to undertake stories as well as purely photographic assignments and that's when you, the drivers and your families entered my life! Under his editorship, I have enjoyed free reign to generate my own projects and was allowed to get on with the job as I thought fit. Uncensored plus!

Digitalisation, both in computing and cameras, has made immense strides forward and now I can be on assignment somewhere for the mag, shoot the images, maybe write up the story and send it all down the line to Alan in seconds, but that didn't necessarily stop 'The Boss' texting to ask where it was, as he had "already been waiting for several minutes!" I think it was just to keep me on my toes!

Seriously though, they have both been wonderful to work with, taught me a lot, gave me opportunities I would never have otherwise had or even dreamt of and I have cherished every moment.

Along the way, numerous service agents have readily shared their wealth of knowledge with me when I have sought advice over a drivers' cab, or allowed me to crawl over a taxi undergoing servicing for 'that' photo which illustrated an elusive part, be it of an engine component or whatever.

Particular thanks are due to the technical staff at our Roman Way depot that have over the years put up with me getting under their feet on an almost daily basis in the relentless quest for stories or driver surveys. My thanks also extend to DaC's management team for their faith in me to fulfil tasks that allowed me to represent DaC. You know who you are.

Last but by no means least, special thanks go to the guys and girls who have given me their time and stories, both happy or not so happy, who patiently and graciously withstood my nagging of 'turn this way, look up, look down' as I strove to take a photo.

And so as I say goodbye to *Call Sign*, I thank you all very much... simple as that.

Alan Green (E52)
Call Sign Online

Tom Quigley (Y33) says...

THE GAME IS NEVER DEAD!

When Alan informed us of his retirement as Editor in the March *Call Sign*, my first reaction was to thank him for the opportunity of being allowed a regular slot in the magazine between September 2010 and May 2016 with *Looking at Taxi Life*, together with the added adage of him never once interfering or censoring any article; basically, he gave me the freedom to write about anything and those of you that read those articles would know that I did just that! And I thank you for reading them...



As some of you may be aware, I run my own Knowledge School in Chingford E4 KOL. This has given me an opportunity to once again to get involved in Adult Education; I had previously taught City and Guilds Brickwork at Waltham Forest College. But despite the doom and gloom amongst some within this trade, I have got to meet and assist students on the way to a new career as taxi drivers - something that is very rewarding.

I have witnessed a massive change from those I did the knowledge with 20 years ago. Firstly, there are a larger number of women - I won't say that there is a larger ethnic minority doing the KOL as the taxi trade has always reflected the working class of its time, be it the Jewish immigrants of the WW2 aftermath, the Irish as reflected by myself, the West Indians from the 50s and 60s right up to the present day where my school has Turkish, Asian and Eastern European students. The whole trade has a multi-ethnic support service industry from the call centres on radio circuits to the garages and even TfL itself. Whilst not always being in the front line, each and every person and job helps to reflect and promote the industry.

But the biggest change, and one that gives me more hope for the future, is that the new crop are hungrier - virtually none of them are supported by a large redundancy payment from a nationalised industry that poured loads of part time workers into licensed Taxis.

We are now getting a larger majority of workers who are sick and tired of zero hour contracts and minimum wages; younger students who are looking to put in the hours in order to get a mortgage and the older students, who unfortunately may have been through a divorce or separation, all see this job as a sea change to earn money and are prepared to put the hours in to achieve their goal. Some of the young mums that have passed out from my school are working evenings, whilst their partners take their turn to look after the children.

The trade is now seeing drivers that are more techno savvy with apps and credit cards; they use social media to source work, to inform and support those who are working and also to chastise (though sometimes too far) those who are letting the trade down by brooming etc.

Whilst we knew our immediate COPS and very little else except maybe a point collector (as I once was) they are a Facebook / Instagram community, supporting each other; our own school has different WhatsApp groups for those studying or that passed out and are working. They support the green huts by eating there. They have joined trade organisations in bigger numbers than I previously knew, they are not apathetic.

This Game has been injured - yes, sometimes even self-inflicted. Earnings have been hit; but I'm confident that those who are joining are the saviours and it's nowhere near dead...

Tom Quigley (Y33)
Call Sign Online



Alan says goodbye to Nash's Numbers

I did something really silly back in 1997. Being a *Butter Boy* and having only gained my prized possessions of a Badge and Bill in late 1996, I had no idea how much fares would be to various locations when passengers asked the question: "How much to *****!" So I wrote a simple program in DOS, the computer operating system invented by Bill Gates in the 1970s. I entered the yardage and cost per unit and hey presto, a list of how much 1 mile to 350 miles appeared - and that 20 year old program still works today!

So what was it that I'd done that was so silly? Well I contacted Alan Fisher and asked if he wanted to put my list into *Call Sign*, of which he had just become the new editor. Well he not only said yes, but muttered: "Can you do something like this every month?" And I agreed! I thought of calling it *Helpful Corner*, but Alan renamed it *Nash's Numbers*. Well 220 issues later, I will be following in Alan's footsteps and this month's *Nash's Numbers* will be my last. Over the last 20 years, I've come to dread the 14th of every month, which is my cut off date for when the following months' copy has to be submitted - and boy does he pester! He is even pestering me for this article!

In the early days it was quite easy to think up new subjects to publish, with some of the subjects I covered being hotel chains, restaurants, clubs, pubs and bars, street numbering, airport departure terminals, Eurostar arrival time tables, City Airport arrival time tables, theatre burst times, Heathrow hotels, postcodes, police station opening times, ranks at Westfield E20, car pound addresses, Euro currency, the Complaints procedure, cash machine locations, distance chart to towns, parking hot spots, 'reclaim tout' hot spots, Black cab fuel card locations, Addison Lee v Taxi prices, TaxiCard codes and my most recent mainstay: What's On.

One month I even showed how to do a *Sudoku* puzzle - I obviously couldn't think of anything useful that month! In the *September 1997 Call Sign*, by popular request I listed ATMs; I had found some software that listed

Alan Nash has had a 'Nash's Numbers in every issue of Call Sign over the past 20 years. He now tells how he did it...

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME

"HELPFUL" CORNER							
How often have you been asked, "Hello cabbie how much to Welling", a wild guess, expert knowledge because you've been there before, but if you haven't then you need to take three things into consideration, time, distance and how much does it cost for that distance. As a first in a series of articles aimed at being <i>helpful</i> , below is a table of charges for distances up to 350 miles, for that "how much to Newcastle" job. With the latest increase in April, charges are now much easier to calculate in your head than last year as all mileage over £9 on the meter is almost exactly £2 per mile. Waiting time is at the rate of £13.40 / hour up to £9.00 on the meter and £20.00 thereafter.							
Miles	Fare	Miles	Fare	Miles	Fare	Miles	Fare
1	£ 2.40	16	£ 29.00	31	£ 59.00	46	£ 89.00
2	£ 3.80	17	£ 31.00	32	£ 61.00	47	£ 91.00
3	£ 5.00	18	£ 33.00	33	£ 63.00	48	£ 93.00
4	£ 6.40	19	£ 35.00	34	£ 65.00	49	£ 95.00
5	£ 7.80	20	£ 37.00	35	£ 67.00	50	£ 97.00
6	£ 9.00	21	£ 39.00	36	£ 69.00	60	£ 117.00
7	£ 11.00	22	£ 41.00	37	£ 71.00	70	£ 137.00
8	£ 13.00	23	£ 43.00	38	£ 73.00	80	£ 157.00
9	£ 15.00	24	£ 45.00	39	£ 75.00	90	£ 177.00
10	£ 17.00	25	£ 47.00	40	£ 77.00	100	£ 197.00
11	£ 19.00	26	£ 49.00	41	£ 79.00	150	£ 297.00
12	£ 21.00	27	£ 51.00	42	£ 81.00	200	£ 396.80
13	£ 23.00	28	£ 53.00	43	£ 83.00	250	£ 496.80
14	£ 25.00	29	£ 55.00	44	£ 85.00	300	£ 596.80
15	£ 27.00	30	£ 57.00	45	£ 87.00	350	£ 696.80

Alan's first Call Sign article in 1997

www.nasbsnumbers.co.uk in 2003, where the main purpose was to obtain relevant material via back issues. However, it took a lot of my time to keep this going as well as writing articles and sadly it has not been updated since July 2015.

I registered www.myfav.co.uk in 2007 as a better platform to be useful and hold back issues, but it was the storage place for the multi-page document (UID) which not only held all the information from my monthly articles, but to which I added a lot of additional information. But the workload of

keeping this updated was horrendous and it hasn't been updated since 2014, although an awful lot of the information is still valid today.

The reason for the - of late - regular 'What's On' is that nearly all of us have Smart mobile phones, and it has become so easy to obtain info on when the next Eurostar is due in and not just from a timetable.

I started with a mileage chart and every April that has been updated, except for the past two years as the change has been so minimal. And as this is the April issue, I wanted to finish as I'd started, but sadly I have not had a reply from TfL - well we don't expect anything else from TfL nowadays except for them to make our lives harder and certainly less profitable.

So it's goodbye from me and thanks for reading Nash's Numbers over the last 20 years...

Alan Nash (A95)
Call Sign Online

Wednesday 22 March 2017

On Wednesday 22 March 2017, a coward in a car wreaked havoc on Westminster Bridge and killed three people before then killing a policeman who London's taxi drivers have probably passed on numerous occasions. He was just doing his job inside the House of Commons.

The coward even attacked school children as well as tourists and Londoners going about their daily business. It was indeed a dark day, yet London responded in the way it does best. Medical staff from St Thomas's Hospital rushed out to help the many injured. Uninjured members of the public and those that had been close by, didn't run away but stayed and helped those that hadn't been so lucky.

Taxi drivers leaving Waterloo and seeing the appalling scene taking place in front of them turned their meters off and ferried people to places of safety away from the carnage and as you would expect, made no charge. Uber surged to three times the fare.

It was a day that showed how a terrible situation failed miserably to bring London to its knees. Only one group charged for their time and we won't waste any more breath on them...



For one final time, Mike Son gets his typing finger out and writes...

GOODBYE CALL SIGN

Dear fellow Shareholders

I must say that since leaving the Board of Management, I didn't think I would be writing any new articles for *Call Sign*. However, now being aware that Alan Fisher has decided to put away his quill and retire from the position as Editor of *Call Sign*, I feel I must say that this is a loss to both to *Dial-a-Cab* and the taxi trade.

Alan's contribution has been tremendous - both as a talented, prolific writer as well as an honest one... albeit sometimes controversial! Over the past 20 years, Alan has created a well-respected and influential publication with

both the hard copy and online versions being read worldwide, the result being that *Dial-a-Cab* as a company is known around the world as a respected taxi company.

If I also remember correctly, many years ago *Call Sign* was even quoted in one of the highest echelons of the BBC - no less than in *Have I got News for you* in the *Missing Words* round; high praise indeed!

Always being aware that *Call Sign* was not just read by DaC members and staff, but customers too, nonetheless Alan still allowed drivers and Board Members the opportunity to air their views on many aspects of DaC and other subjects both within the taxi industry and outside of it. If criticism was offered, it was usually without being too rude or disrespectful, but it was always published. Alan certainly knew how to keep his letters pages filled with far more comments than the rest of the trade press together!

I am also aware the various charities in the taxi industry that were extremely grateful for the publicity given to further their aims and worthy causes they support, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank Alan for his commitment in creating one of the taxi trades' best publications, along with his photographers and contributors during these many years.

Although *Call Sign* will be sorely missed, I am sure Alan Fisher will continue to write in other publications.

Thanks again Alan...

Michael B. Son BEM (V52)

The Silent Killer

Don't ignore it...



"I was aware of the recent media coverage regarding a prostate cancer awareness campaign and decided that, although I did not feel unwell, I might just as well get it checked out as a matter of precaution," Ray Whitehead (Y72) told *Call Sign*. "I just had an inkling that it might be

a sensible thing to do and thankfully my GP agreed."

"A simple blood test will usually reveal if you have a high PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) blood count that could indicate further investigation is needed. My PSA blood count went from 6 up to 7 over the course of about 2 months and my doctor suggested a biopsy to establish a cause. This is not a pleasant procedure, but very necessary," Ray admitted.

"PSA is a protein produced exclusively by prostate cells and the simple blood test may help to detect early prostate cancer. Raised levels may suggest you have a problem with your prostate gland, although it may not necessarily be cancer," Ray continued. "It's called the 'silent killer' for good reason because you do not feel any pain or discomfort nor any symptoms that would indicate a problem. However, it's best to get checked regularly."

Ray went on to tell the magazine that the results of his biopsy revealed a problem was indeed present and he underwent surgery in December 2015, being unable to return to work on medical advice until the end of January 2016 - some 7 weeks later.

"At this point," Ray continued, I must thank all the medical professionals for their care and concern for my welfare, they did a great job on me! I'm nearly 60 now, our daughter is planning to get married next year and so my wife and I have everything to live for. My brother is also undergoing tests as it appears he too has a problem and it was suggested that the risk can be up to 30 percent higher in families with an hereditary history of the problem. Although my brother does not drive a cab, it would appear cab driving does not help, sat in a relatively cramped position all day. What really amazed me as to how common the problem is was when I mentioned it to my golfing pals, they then too got themselves checked out and now three out of the four have also been diagnosed with a problem, so it's not exactly an exclusive club to cab drivers.

"Since I had the surgery, I feel great and now that it's behind me I'm getting on with life. I'm a very positive thinking person, but it is also very important to have a supportive, understanding family around you. In that respect, I count myself very lucky and if you are fortunate enough to have that kind of support, so much the better.

"But the really important message I'd like to get across is to initiate regular blood test check-ups to ensure you stay on top, to catch potential problems early and before these things develop."

More info at: supportercare@prostatecancer.org or phone 0800 082 1616

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I certainly never asked for – and definitely didn't expect – so many drivers, staff and non-Dial-a-Cab people to write in after I announced my retirement as Editor. I appreciate every single comment and will certainly keep this issue of **Call Sign** as a lovely memento of my time with the magazine.

I thanked a lot of people last month but saved one for this month – my layout man, **Danny Fresco**.

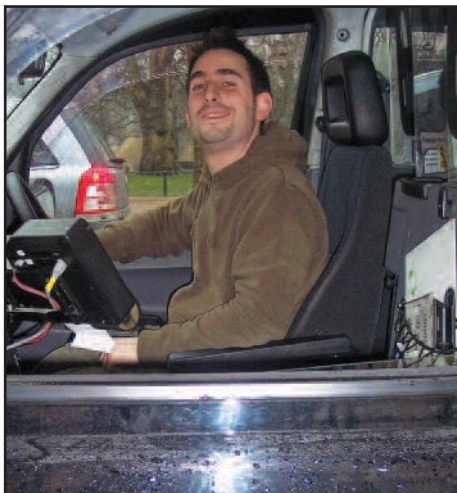
Like several others connected with my time as Editor, Danny too has been with me since my first issue in 1997 – and back then he wasn't even a driver but had just left college where he got a degree in exactly what he does so well for **Call Sign**!

Someone with **Al Fresco** as his dad had no choice but to go onto the **Knowledge** and at around that time, that's what he did until finally getting his **Badge and Bill** in June 2000. Unsurprisingly, when he married his gorgeous wife **Debbie**, he then adopted a father-in-law who was also a taxi driver, **Dial-a-Cab's Gerry Tobin (L32)**.

Danny and Debbie have two lovely children in **Harrison** and **Ruby** and I thank all the family for putting up with my moaning about wanting everything a

Thank you Danny

And not forgetting Sally and Alan..



Danny Fresco has been with **Call Sign** since before he was a cabby

day before I gave it to Danny!

I must also thank **Sally Costello** at **Premier Printing** who is the person I work with each month in making sure that the magazine you get posted to you not only looks as good as it can, but also gets to you at the allotted time of the first of each month. Like Danny, Sally has proved to be invaluable.

Amazingly, in my 20 years in the hot seat, I have only ever worked with two type setters. Sally's

predecessor was **Alan Tarant** at **John Brown Printing**. He taught me a tremendous amount and just like Sally, he had an amazing eye for any typo that **Linda** and I may have missed. He might never even read this, but I still wanted to say thanks to him.

To Danny, Sally and Alan, my humble thanks. I couldn't have done 20 years without all your help...

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

To Alan... My sincere thanks for the past 20 years. It's been a pleasure and much fun putting up with your endless demands! It's hard to believe it's coming to an end. **Call Sign** has seen me through the **Knowledge**, my marriage to **Deb**, our honeymoon and the birth of our two beautiful children. So I will always be grateful to both you and **Call Sign**. Layout man **Danny Fresco**

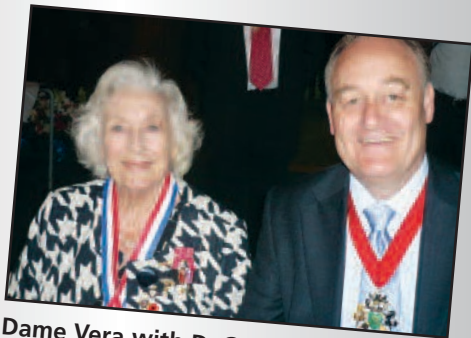
Alan, I shall miss working with you on **Call Sign** – it's never really felt like work as I would enjoy reading whilst working through it. Good luck in your retirement. Go to nice places. Sally.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DAME VERA!

On 20 March, **Dame Vera Lynn** celebrated her 100th birthday. She has been associated with the taxi trade for many years and actually became Patron of the **War Disabled** charity (now known as **The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans**) in 1973

as well as also being associated with the **Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers**.

Dame Vera was born in **East Ham** in 1917 and began singing at the age of seven. She made her first radio broadcast with the **Joe Loss Orchestra** in 1935 and began her own radio series in 1940 where she performed songs requested for the troops stationed abroad. It was at that time that she was dubbed **The Forces Sweetheart**, a name she kept right up until her last personal appearance in 1995 at **Trafalgar Square** to celebrate the 60th anniversary of **VE Day** when she joined in a chorus of **We'll Meet Again!**



Dame Vera with DaC's Jim Rainbird on her 90th birthday. She is now 100...

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Hello Ladies & Gents

Gratuity upgrade

By the time you read this article, we should already have started upgrading both the MDT terminals and the PEDs that will now enable your passengers to add a gratuity to hail and ride fares. The amount of tip will increase in five percent increments and they will also be able to add an actual amount should they wish to do so.

The new terminal upgrade (*Version 12*) has a number of enhancements to the system and various bug fixes to make your life a little easier. Our IT department made the necessary changes very quickly, but to gain the accreditation and pass the tests at **Barclaycard** seemed to be a never-ending process that included several visits to their HQ in **Northampton**. Unlike the upgrade before **Christmas**, this is not a do or die situation, so the degree of urgency is far less than it was last **October**, but it is in your own interest not to leave getting your terminal upgraded for too long.

Heathrow fixed prices

I mentioned a while back that whilst we're offering fixed price trips to Heathrow, it makes sense to offer the return trip to clients at the same rate in an effort to generate additional work. I understand that some of you already in the Airport taxi park who may have waited for a lengthy period, may not wish to be offered these fixed price trips, so they will be dispatched to a virtual rank, LHFP (London Heathrow Fixed Prices). These particular trips will not auto-

matically go to taxis in the feeder park, but the fixed rate trip will appear in the *Bids* immediately after working its way through all cabs booked into the LHFP rank - if in fact there are any. But you must be able to reach the airport terminals within fifteen minutes before booking-in to LHFP.

All other non-fixed price account work will be dispatched to the feeder park (LHR) in the normal manner and again you must be within the qualifying zones inside the **Perimeter Road** or you will be unable to book into LHR. Like the old system, you cannot *soon to clear* when

you're on the way to Heathrow and it's important to remember you can only book into one of these ranks at any one time.

Call Sign

It seems strange that after twenty years, which pretty much coincides with my time on the Board, that this will be not only my last article, but also the final edition of *Call Sign*. The magazine was unrivalled in the trade; it was totally uncensored, it was truly the best and will be missed by all of us. I can understand why **Alan Fisher** has decided to spend more time leading a normal life, one which will allow him holidays outside of May and more importantly to concentrate on the normal stuff that he mentioned in his last editorial.

I will also miss him nagging me each month for my article and waiting in anticipation for him to pick up on any typos that may have appeared (hopefully there weren't too many).

Alan, enjoy your time with Linda and the family in your retirement from the magazine and be very lucky. It's been a pleasure doing business with you!

Allan Evans
Operations/Compliance
Director

New Charles Dickens Exhibition

The tireless work of Charles Dickens as a campaigner and investigative journalist will be given overdue recognition when a new exhibition opens at his 48 Doughty Street London home museum from 9 May until 29 October.

Restless Shadow will follow the footsteps of Dickens as he pounds London's streets, determined to make himself aware of the terrible conditions, injustices and hardships faced by the poorest and least powerful people in society. Doughty Street is the townhouse where Dickens completed *The Pickwick Papers*, wrote *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* and began *Barnaby Rudge*.

Drawing on the Museum's vast and unrivalled Dickens collections, *Restless Shadow* will present a powerful collection of evidence of Dickens's writing, public speaking and campaigning, including little-known and rarely-seen articles, speeches and letters. It will show that the social ills and struggling working class of London were not confined to his novels, but also given life and a spotlight in speeches and weekly magazines that reached an audience of millions.

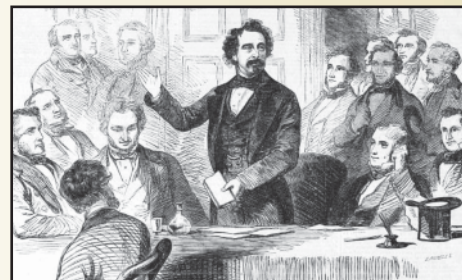
A powerful symbol of Dickens's activism and desire to poke into all corners of society is also one of the star exhibits - Dickens's wooden walking stick from the 1860s, the last decade of his life. As both a fashion accessory and walking aid, the stick was a significant item for Dickens; he covered almost inconceivable distances every day and some nights - at speed - in an attempt to bring himself face-to-face with people suffering on the streets in all parts of the city and beyond.

For a man with both an international audience of millions and the ear of the wealthiest and most powerful in society, his walks were vital journeys, which brought hidden hardships out into the open and helped Dickens promote practical solutions to the problems of the downtrodden. The journeys helped him to pioneer investigative journalism, a type of writing he saw as a kind of shadow. In a letter to **John Forster** in 1849, Dickens referred to this type of journalism as one "...which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight and be in all homes and all nooks and corners, and be supposed to be cognisant of everything, and go everywhere, without the least difficulty. It may be in the Theatre, the Palace, the House of Commons, the Prisons, the Unions, the Churches, on the Railroad, on the Sea, abroad and at home: a kind of semi-omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature..."

Journalism ran through Dickens's entire career, from his early days as a parliamentary correspondent (1831-34) to his years as editor of weekly magazines *Household Words* (1850-59) and *All the Year Round* (1859-1870). Each magazine allowed Dickens to entertain but also to speak out on issues and causes that troubled him and his contemporaries. The chair used by Dickens in the editorial office of *All the Year Round* at **26 Wellington Street, Strand** is another highlight of the exhibition.

When Charles Dickens moved into 48 Doughty Street, he was a little-known writer still using his pen-name, **Boz**. By the time he left, he was an international superstar, having written *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* as well as being a prolific cab user! The rooms are still filled with the furniture he bought. Most of the fireplaces, doors, locks, window shutters and fittings are still in place as they were when the family resided there.

Restless Shadow is on from 9 May - 29 October. Opening hours Tuesday to Sunday, 10am-5pm. Adults £9; concessions £7; children (6-16) £4; under 6 free. More info: www.dickensmuseum.com or events@dickensmuseum.com or 020 7405 2127.



Dickens: 19th century superstar!!!

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

A Blogger's Tale



The moment is finally here, the last *Call Sign* magazine is in front of you, filling your senses with its last unique *Call Sign* experience.

My first column in 2015 was an obituary for a good friend; he died in 2001 when the trade was very different to the way it is now and I've spent the past month wondering what he would make of it now. Personally, I don't think the job has changed at all; we take people from one point to another in the straightest possible route while sitting alone in the front watching the world and all its madness go on around us. I heard it called 'the theatre of madness' this week and I couldn't have put it better if I tried.

I can't even begin to estimate how many books I've read behind the wheel, sitting in traffic, waiting on ranks and waiting for the Dial-a-Cab terminal to light up. It's a lonely job, of that there is no doubt and my early days were spent with a little portable radio that I had to hide when I ranked up for fear the PCO would spot it and tell me to put it in the boot.

That voice on the radio was my companion and as cabs caught up with modern technology, we had radios that were built into the dash with twin speakers and we could actually see the dial without pulling a neck muscle.

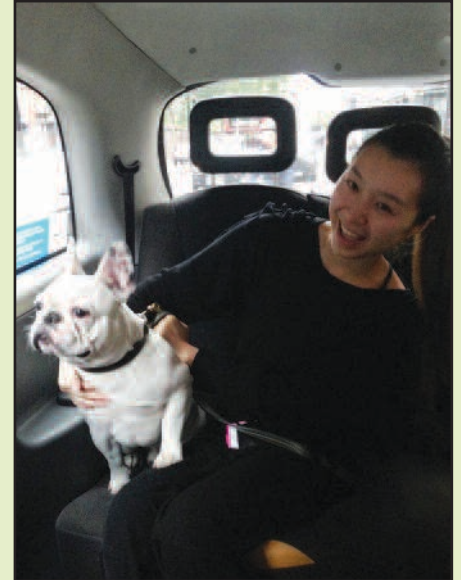
The same can be said about electric windows; in the winter when you really couldn't work with the nearside window open, you would have to lean across and pull down the window every time you stopped for a punter. Now that may sound insignificant, but when you've done that all day and every day for years, it can be a bit tiring! I remember just beckoning punters to climb in the back as I've never refused a job anyway, so it made no difference to me.

I hope the magazine that lands with a thud on your doormat, sending the dog into a tailspin, returns one day. I love the smell of it and the anticipation I feel as I turn the pristine pages and immerse myself into someone else's world for a short time. My children all read from tablets or phones or laptops now so that you can't see what they're reading or watching. They listen to their music through headphones that excludes the outside world and if you watch people like I do, you'll notice that society is becoming more insular. I imagine many people don't even go out anymore, happy to lead an online life tucked away indoors staring at a screen. But I feel there is a glimmer of hope that the whole thing will go full cycle. After all, vinyl record sales are up, as are sales of turntables; while the second hand book business is what keeps charity shops going.

I've spent some time thinking about the people I've met over the years; to me the famous ones aren't the ones that stick out, it's the ordinary working folk who I enjoy the most and I've had the full spectrum of punters over the years. The nasty ones, like the one who got out and told me he wasn't going to pay me only to realise he'd left his phone on the back seat - luckily I realised a fraction earlier and locked the doors. "No problem," I said, "I'll keep the phone instead!"

Then there are the completely mad ones who burst into tears or who can't stop bouncing around like **Tigger**. The drunk ones that fall into the cab backwards, forcing me to get out and fold their legs into the back before slamming the door shut and driving as though I had stolen it to reach the destination quicker!

The best ones are the really nice ones and luckily I took a photo of one of the best punters I've had. They all climbed in and wanted the animal hospital in Clerkenwell Road; on the way they needed a cash point, which gave me an opportunity to take a quick photo of the French Bulldog that was so well-behaved, that he was allowed on the back seat! I wish I could have taken him home with me... pity the same can't be



Simon's favourite passengers!

said of many of the others...

You can follow more cab blogs at:
undercovercabby1.wordpress.com

**Be lucky... Simon Scott (O40)
Call Sign Online**

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Part 1: By now, everyone connected to the trade knows that **Uber** lost one third of their court case following a legal challenge when they claimed that the **English Language Requirement**, which meant that you couldn't get a licence if you couldn't communicate in English at what was called an appropriate level, was not needed and thrown out by the judge. So Uber lost, will appeal the decision and few would bet against them getting a reversal.

1 – 0 to TfL

Part 2: This refers to the eminently sensible requirement that PHVs should be **insured for hire or reward** at all times and not just while working. Yet TfL lost that one, even though they later made the brave statement that private hire vehicles "must still be covered by hire or reward insurance at the point of licensing and when in use as a private hire vehicle." But what they really mean is that the requirement to always have the correct insurance no longer applies. What type of insurance company provides a policy like that? A lot of passengers are going to be in for a shock if involved in one of the many accidents that

IT'S ALL CHANGE FROM TFL

Well, it is Uber!!!

happen on a daily basis in Uber cars.

1 - 1 and it's going to penalties, but TfL have a strong third point and will surely win...

Part 3: Yes, this will be a cakewalk because all private hire vehicle operators have to make someone available in a **call centre for passengers** to speak to during operating hours in case of any complaints about the vehicle, the booking or the driver. After all, we have published the number of PH attacks on passengers several times. Yet somehow TfL managed to lose this one as well.

It's a shame that the UK is leaving the EU because after managing to do the impossible and lose the two most important parts of the case, that would have been their best chance of getting into Europe!

TfL say they are reviewing the position. Perhaps more to the point, someone should review TfL because their total mismanagement is destroying everything about this trade that took over 350 years to build...



With TfL in charge, could we end up with this???

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

The Call Sign Internet Library



Since 1998, Vince Chin has been Mr Call Sign Online...

Many drivers have been asking what is happening to the **Call Sign** Internet website after **Call Sign** closes. Well although there will be no updates added, the website will still continue as a reference facility with its library going back to 1967. **Call Sign's** online department, headed by **Vince Chin**, has been going since 1998 – by far the longest of any taxi trade

magazine including the one that is apparently read by more drivers than any other! Even though the last time we looked, CS had almost 10,000 online readers, never mind hard copy readers!

If you want to look up an old issue of **Call Sign**:

Log on to www.dac-callsign.co.uk or www.dac-call-sign.com

Then either browse through every issue of *Call Sign* since 1998 by using the *Search Call Sign* facility at the top right of the page, type a clue and let our search engine do the rest. Or go straight to the issue you want by clicking on *Archive* or *Call Sign* at the top. They are both similar except that the *Archive* facility uses covers whereas the *Call Sign* button uses dates. Issues of *News & Views* and *ODRTS Monthly* from the 1960s can be clicked on.

Since the May 2006 issue, you just need to click on the **PDF** logo under the issue you want to see a large text version. Prior to that date, you can read 20 page issues.

If you've never been on it, take a look... but beware, just like looking at old photos, you could easily become hooked!

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New account

My last few reports have been, to say the least, very downbeat, but I have saved the good news till last and I'm very pleased to report that we have been successful in obtaining a very large account based in the City.

The whole team here at DaC House have played a very important part in obtaining the account. From Chairman Brian to the Sales team, our Trainer, the IT team, account managers and even staff in the call centre, they have all contributed to gaining this account. The process started nearly two years ago when we first participated in a tender to supply both cars and taxis using the **Encompass Booking Tool**. We were asked to run the car side first and participate in a selection process for the taxi work at a later date. Encompass had to prove itself - which it did - and at the end of last summer we went live.

The taxi contract was up for renewal in April and we were asked to make a proposal, which I am very happy to report was accepted. The account is based in Broadgate with the pick-up being at the rear of the building in Appold Street at the junction with Sun Street.

If you haven't guessed the name of the account, it is **UBS**. The account will hopefully generate some 2000 trips per month and will be dispatched to the EC11 rank during the day and EC5 after 21:00 hours. We have secured a £3.80 run-in that in today's climate is a good deal. There will not be any gratuity and there are a small number of fixed price trips. Waiting time on fixed price journeys will be 45p per minute after 10 minutes charged from minute one.

Like with all major corporates, there are strict Service Level Agreements (SLA) and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in place, with fines being implemented if the service we provide falls short. That is where you the driver need to be aware of your responsibilities.

Drivers, I'm sure I don't have to remind you that you should be courteous and polite at all times, follow the instructions provided by the passenger carefully and if no instructions are forthcoming, then use a route that provides the most efficient combination of speed and distance to ensure the passenger arrives in the shortest time possible. If you are carrying out a fixed price trip, you can choose a route deemed preferable to you. Any request by the passenger to make a deviation from the chosen one to their selected route may result in the fixed price being taken out and the cost of the journey may then be more expensive. This must be commu-

DaC Sales Report

With Keith Cain



will result in losing the account. Our Contact Centre staff will also be working under strict SLA's and KPI's. They too must be courteous and helpful to callers. They will be monitored as to the amount of time it takes to answer the telephone and much more.

This is a very large and prestigious account and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who played their part here at **Dial-a-Cab** in securing the account.

Goodbye to the Editor

With this being the very last edition of *Call Sign*, I wanted to write something complimentary about our editor **Alan Fisher** or whatever pseudonym he is using at the time! But I have to say that the reputation Alan has built for himself in producing the best magazine in the trade is totally down to him. Having had the freedom of the content has most likely contributed to that, but the interviews Alan had with senior people in the trade always made good reading. None more so than the recent correspondence he had with reference to Credit Card readers being placed in the back of the taxi and his interview with **LTPH** General Manager **Helen Chapman**.

When Alan comes into your office, you hide anything confidential because he is the only person I know that can read documents upside down equally as quick as if they were the correct way up! He was also an expert at sleight of hand; he'd enter the office holding his Dictaphone close to his chest and then start talking about nothing really before then slipping in a controversial question! He would then wait for a reaction and before you had even finished a sentence, he'd press the record button! As technology progressed, he would be found using his mobile phone more and taking lots of pictures.

Alan, you were a cunning old fox but your actions made good reading for DaC members and I would like to thank you for always finding a photo of me that took at least ten years off my age! I wish you well for the future Alan and I thank you for doing a sterling job...

Keith Cain

DaC Director & Head of Sales

nicated to the passenger before deviating.

The passenger may request the journey to be carried out in silence and you must respect that request, turn off radios etc and decline conversation during the journey.

Once you have accepted the booking, you must carry out the journey even if the destination is changed on route or additional stopping points have been requested. It is important that drivers communicate changes to the original trip information with the controller.

Vehicles are to be clean and tidy before the commencement of a journey with drivers being of smart appearance at all times, driving in a manner that is safe and professional. Please do not use unnecessary speed and abide by the laws regarding the use of mobile phones whilst driving. These must not be used by drivers while the passenger is on board, unless in an emergency.

To ensure the safety of passengers, drivers must ensure that passengers are safe at their destinations by driving as close to the designated drop-off point as possible. Drivers must wait for their passenger to enter the relevant building before moving off.

All these stipulations should come as no surprise as this is the standard service we provide for all of our customers. It is very important that no driver is ever reported for not following those procedures. Small fines are attributed to each failing and too many

Where did it all go wrong???



Did anyone else notice the opening scenes of the **Real Marigold Hotel** where at the **Heathrow** departure point the contestants were taken to departure in minicabs? That's in **London**, one of the greatest cities in the world with the best Taxi service and the **BBC** being one the most respected media organisations with its claimed a high moral standing making programs about the exploited and GIG economy; to my eyes it makes them look very two-faced and exploiting this perverse system for themselves. Surely one or two London taxis in the scene would have shown they were a caring and sharing organisation? That would be spreading licence fee monies around more fairly. I could ask the BBC for a **Freedom of Information** request about the matter, but I am not sure if it would be of any use with too many trade organisations working against each other to act on it.

In a more personal vein, I am very sorry to hear **Alan Fisher** is packing his bags and going to take it easier with a well-deserved rest. It's been a pleasure to know him and read his Gold Top trade mag. Any successor will have a hard job to follow; but no doubt when they call, Alan will put down his Chardonnay and crisps and help them out to keep up the high standard!

I will be leaving the trade in a few months; when I joined it was a great job just so long as you watched your Ps & Qs and stayed out of trouble. It has certainly changed! But the question is: Where did it all go wrong?

Gordon Bennett (Y91)

Mailshot

Electric taxis and charging...

Hi Alan

Yesterday I received a call from the **London Taxi Company** asking if I was interested in a new taxi. I said no thank you, but did however say to the nice salesperson that I would like to know more about the new electric cab. He informed me that it wasn't going to be for sale until the end of the year, but I still asked if he knew how much it would cost to 'rapid charge' it on the street or a rank. He said he had no idea! I don't know of any electric charging points for London taxis, do you? Looking on *Google* for the on-street price of charging electric cars up, it costs around £7.20 for 30 minutes. I wonder if this includes a cost for parking!

Did you see the recent issue of the **LTD's TAXI** where two of their columnists complained about unattended cabs parked on ranks? I fear this problem has been caused by years of heavy PCN enforcement together with a complete lack of taxi rest ranks.

So back to original query of charging points; we are going to need a huge increase in the number of rest/charging ranks for electric cabs across London to keep an electric fleet of taxis moving. Who is going to provide the road space for these ranks - TfL or local authorities? I doubt if either will want to find space for us. So who is going to pay for those ranks? No doubt our friends at TfL will subcontract the installation and day-to-day running of these charging points to a private company, who will in return want to turn a profit at our expense.

So I plug in my cab and accept the £7 that will be debited from my bank account when I get a walk-up that wants a taxi? Naaah! I think I'll be keeping my old oil burner a bit longer than TfL and the Green Party would like!

Jon Robinson (E88)

Moaning till the end Jon! I am hoping that not only will the Mayor subsidise taxi charging points, but will also increase the subsidy for us to buy the new TX5. After all, even if EVERY driver bought an electric cab, TfL could afford it very easily ...Ed

Exploitation of migrant workers

Hi Alan

Would **Jeremy Corbyn** bring in legislation to stop the exploitation of migrant workers and the undercutting of locals wages by multinationals that seem to be running the country in tandem with the Tory government? That exploitation currently taking place is particularly rife in the online gig economy sweeping the country, with the likes of Uber - now not only backed up by the **Goldman Sachs** management wealth

fund but also the **Saudi** sovereign wealth fund! Yes, ironically from a country that bans women from driving and is now using them as an investment product! Callous beyond belief...

David Heath (Ex-W27)

Brighton and Gloucester

A spokesperson in Labour party Deputy Leader Tom Watson's office said in a rather pointless response saying nothing: "Labour's policy on migrant exploitation is clear, we will act to prevent the undercutting of wages and to ensure fair pay for all. Migrant labour is often exploited and used to undercut local or industry-agreed rates of pay. It is unscrupulous employers that drive down wages, not migrants. Labour would ban employment agencies from only advertising UK jobs abroad and make it illegal for agency workers to undercut permanent workers. Of course, migrants contribute to our society and to our economy - helping to fill skills gaps and boost economic growth. Labour will campaign against any dog whistle politics."

Last issue quiz!

Dear Alan

With your wealth of experience, wisdom, charm and knowledge, perhaps you would be good enough to answer the following questions in the last edition of the magazine that you will edit.

1. If I am driving down Piccadilly, Kings Road, or Kensington High Street and see 15 empty taxis coming towards me, then look in my mirror and see 10 empty taxis following me, what should I do?
2. In the days of the Public Carriage Office, taxis had to be kept in a very good condition at all times. Since TfL does not seem to be bothered any more, should we continue to take as much care of our cabs?
3. After waiting for 35 minutes on the rank at Paddington and a passenger asks for Inverness Terrace, what is the best way to express my gratitude that I have at last found some work?

May I wish you lots of luck in whatever you do next and enjoy the extra spare time you find for yourself. You have done a great job in producing a quality magazine that is informative, provocative at times, reliable, an enjoyable read and independent. Many thanks for all the work you have put in.

Laurence Kelvin (W88)

Answers: 1. Go home... 2. Yes, because we are still the best... 3. Ask them if they knew an unexploded bomb had been discovered there and all residents have been advised that TfL are putting them all up overnight at their place in Blackfriars. They shouldn't have any problem getting in as it appears to be just taxi drivers that can't. Don't take them via Piccadilly though as there are 25 empty cabs that might get upset at you having a job!!! ...Ed



On street inspections

I had an on-street inspection recently. A female CO says Badge and Bill! I gave her both copies of my Bill and she says in surprise: "You have two? I might have to keep one!" So I explained what's what and then showed her my badge, which I wear tied to my belt around my waist. I know... but after a cyclist tried to pull me out of the cab by pulling my badge years ago, I now keep it on the belt. It's never been a problem before. She says it should be on my chest, asked for it and began fondling it. I actually wondered if she was going to bite it to see if it was real brass! She checked my insurance and finally decreed that it was my cab! Almost finished, she then checked the badge identifiers before finally asking me to sign her palm pilot, apparently to say that she had stopped me to check my badge and Bill. I ask what I was signing for as I didn't think I was buying life insurance!

I have now received a warning for not wearing my badge and telling me how lucky I am not to get a £200 fine!

Jon Robinson (E88)

Hmmm! Two letters Jon! There was some interesting advice online recently from someone I have much respect for after his battle of years gone by against minicab touts. That advice from Tony Casey was to never show your badge/Bill to any compliance officer who says he is from Transport for London but shows you just their deputy badge. Look-a-likes are apparently available on eBay for less than a fiver - including the leather wallet. Every compliance officer has a warrant card, the same as carried by all policemen.

Tony said you should then ask to see it clearly and use your phone (make sure your engine is switched off) to take a clear photo of it with the full name of the TfL staff member. You can even film the whole compliance check so long as you are parked with the engine off. If you are happy that they are genuine, then comply with their request but don't sign anything. They might ask you to sign a blank screen on their PDA just as Jon was. Don't do it as it is for their performance figures and nothing to do with you. According to Tony, these officers have been ordered to turn a blind eye to PH touting and concentrate on harassing Licensed Taxi drivers. When you look around, that makes a lot of sense. You only have to sit on the Kings Cross rank and look to see what is happening. And TfL wonder why we have become so militant! ...Ed

Mailshot

Goodbye Alan

Hi Alan

This is the 'Mercenary' father **Joe Connor** (*Call Sign* December 2014). Just like to thank you for producing a great mag for the last twenty years. As for Ross, my son, he is on his second book, a prequel to *Mercenary* (*Top Hat Books*) called *Heretic*. It will be our pleasure to send you a copy down the line when it is finished. Thanks again Alan and best wishes...

Joe Connor (N64)

Hi Alan

Just read the first few pages of the March *Call Sign*, what a surprise and shock to hear you are retiring as The Editor of our in-house mag after twenty years of being in the hot seat. I'm sure many would like to thank you for the fantastic job you've done producing an enjoyable, factual and independent reading for us the membership. We both joined DaC over forty odd years ago and have met at every AGM since! I have also sent in quite a few articles for *Call Sign* over the years and I must say you have never refused or edited any of them, even if they were critical of our Society, the BOM or the trade in general.

Alan, enjoy your time off with Linda and your family, you've earned it. Whoever takes over, the best of luck to them; they have a hard act to follow.

Pat Keefe (G01)

Hi Alan

I can't blame you for wanting to hang up your boots but it will be a shame for what I consider to be the best trade magazine – for which you deserve all the credit – to come to an end. When I read my first copy of *Call Sign*, I was struck by the fact that you published criticism and complaints, something no other trade mag seemed willing to do. It was this that made the magazine stand out in my eyes and one that I felt proud to be able to contribute to. You are ending your editorial career at a pinnacle and there's no better time to bow out than when you are at the top.

Sean Farrell (B39)

Dear Alan,

20 years! It seems more like 20 months that you started making *Call Sign* into a best-in-category house magazine. Congratulations on doing a superb job and lasting for all that time in such a difficult job. Have you thought of now becoming a Premier League football club manager, as you must have such survival and learning skills!

Rodney Lewis

Former Editor Taxi Globe

Dear Alan

Hearing that your Editorship at *Call Sign* is to cease was a sad day. I'm not grovelling, but whilst you were the editor, it was the best read in the cab trade. Good luck for the future...

Brian Marcantonio (Ex-R73)

Alan

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very happy retirement as Editor of *Call Sign* magazine following the April issue. You must surely hold the record for being the longest serving editor of any taxi trade publication. For the past twenty years you have produced an excellent publication, which has always been a firm favourite. *Call Sign* has been informative and enlightening, especially regarding TfL.

Happy Holidays from now!

Dave Cohen (E94)

Hello Alan

Just read about your retirement in *Call Sign* and on behalf of the London 'Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children I'd like to thank you so much for all the help and sponsorship you have given to the charity over your 20 years. You will be missed...

Alan Cohen MBE, LTFUC

Hello Alan

Good luck in all you do, it has been an incredible honour to write for the magazine and especially for you. Thank you for the opportunity; I only had one 'O' level and that was in Spanish around ten years ago, so to actually be able to tell people that I wrote regular articles in a magazine is a very proud thing for me. Then there was the fact that you allowed me to write whatever I liked without prejudice or censorship! That is such an endorsement of your belief as an Editor and a person. I miss the writing, but I'm sure you will feel even worse and your poor family will probably have to endure the DTs from it!

Tom Quigley (Y33)

Hi Alan,

Congratulations on reaching 20 years and your retirement from *Call Sign*. You are leaving a magazine that is in excellent shape. Hope your successor understands the "if it ain't broke..." rule and appreciates the hard work you have put in, thereby making it an easier job than it could have been for him to walk into.

Wish you and Linda well...

Nigel Walters

Export Logistics Manager

The London Taxi Company

Ansty Park, Coventry

Hi Al

I can't believe it's 20 years, mate. There were your reports and sponsorship of our *marathons* around the world along with **John Dixon**, **Phil Stern** and the much-missed **Paul Bishop** in aid of the baby life support charity BLISS. Then came *Call Sign en la belle France* and *it is now*. Where has it all gone! So the question has to be: What does an editor hang up - his pen or typing finger?

There's a tinge of sadness here mate...

Bob Woodford (Ex-P49)

Dear Alan

On behalf of everyone at the Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund, we would like to

thank you for all the write ups and photos you have printed in *Call Sign* magazine. We hope you enjoy good health and lots of happiness in your retirement with Linda and your family.

Thank you once again...

Russell (T55) and Barbara Poluck and all at the TDYCF

Hi Alan

Sorry to hear you are leaving *Call Sign*, although I understand why. You can be proud of how you've edited the magazine over the past 20 years - a job well done! I've always thought *Call Sign* to be a very well balanced read... although on the plus side, I was running out of prestige golf courses that I've played on!

Simon Wallis (M11)

Hi Alan

It is so sad to hear you are leaving *Call Sign*. I always look forward to reading the magazine each month and you will be missed; having said that I hope you enjoy the spare time you will now have. Like you, I also hope to start taking things a bit easier and take some more time off, so perhaps it's a blessing in disguise. Give me a toot if you see me out and about!

My thanks for your support in giving me advertising space in each issue...

Debbie Hope (W18)

Dear Alan

I've just received the latest *Call Sign* and read of your upcoming retirement as Editor. This is a fabulous magazine produced to such a high quality in both content and presentation thanks to your commitment and dedication.

My warm regards and hope you enjoy this year's holiday free of deadlines!

Barrie Segal

AppealNow.Com

London SW1

Hi Alan

I think I speak for everyone when I say your *Call Sign* Editorials will be sadly missed each month. Thank you also for the support in promoting my boxing gym sessions...

Gary Bedford (T39)

Hi Alan

A colleague at Claridges passed me his copy of your penultimate *Call Sign* before retirement. I just wanted to congratulate you for managing to "wing it" for 20 years! Enjoy your retirement and keep well

Howard Taylor (Ex-D19)



Mailshot

Continued from page 37

Hi Alan

Congratulations on 20 years of great editing and thank you for your support with my advert as a toastmaster. Over the years I have had a number of jobs that came as a direct result of the ad and those were always the fun jobs because they were usually linked to fellow cabbies and their families. I will be sad to see *Call Sign* disappear, but as you pointed out there is so much competition online together with what must be large running costs, so I suppose it may have just run its course. Many of us who are more 'mature' of age, whilst being ok with the hand held devices, still like to hold onto something more substantial without having to go through an endless menu of options to get to where you want to go! But it is still so sad all the same. Thank you again for your support...

Keith Reading (W76)

Hi Alan,

Sorry to hear that you are giving up the editorship; you have done a really professional great job over the years and will be sorely missed, of that I have no doubt. I can fully understand why you need to move on and concentrate on earning a living in the cab, especially with the way things are at the moment. I sincerely hope that *Call Sign* continues in some way, shape or form as it is very much appreciated and valued by the majority that read it.

Lastly a big thank you for including my adverts, it has been greatly appreciated...

Graham Waite (B35)

Hello Alan

Sorry to hear that you are retiring as *Call Sign* editor. It is such a well-produced magazine and you did a really great job. As a by-product, you also helped me to achieve my lifetime ambition - to see my name in print...

Geoff Levene (W32)

Hi Alan,

Another sad day looming for the cab trade! I can at least say that the memories I have from 1977 till today regarding cabbings have been some of the best. I would like to thank you personally for the assistance and support that you as editor of *Call Sign* have afforded *Dial-a-Dream* over the past 25 years - yes it's been that long! The involvement or intermingling of *Dial-a-Cab* and *Dial-a-Dream* has been symbiotic.

I wish you and yours a very happy and long life and of course... Be lucky mate!

Bob "the dog" Heath (Ex-F44)

Hi Alan

I am truly upset that April will be your last issue of *Call Sign*. Like you we have seen many changes over the years, some good and some bad, but one event in particular really sticks with me and that was our trip

to the G7 radio circuit in Paris that you sent us on; I often have a giggle thinking about it! I also love the fact that *Call Sign* gave a voice to many that would possibly not have taken the time to share their views. It really does seem like the end of an era. I will certainly miss *Call Sign* and your fantastic sense of humour.

I wish you and all your family good health and happiness for the future.

Caroline McGowan

DaC Customer Service Manager

Alan

I've read the news in the March *Call Sign* that you are retiring as the magazine's Editor. Can I thank you for the last 20 years. Good health and good luck to you and Linda and your family...

David Marks (R22)

Dear Alan

I hope I haven't left it too late for my thanks to be published in *Call Sign*, if I have then that will not stop me thanking you privately for publishing my many articles and letters that you have accepted suitable for publishing over the years. I sometimes requested that if you found the content of my letters or articles unsuitable for publishing that I would rather you didn't publish them if requiring editing. Other than possibly improving on my grammar, you never did omit any of my scribbles. I thank you for that and now that you are stepping down as the editor of *Call Sign*, I hope to see more postings from you on Facebook.

Best wishes for the future...

Steve Shaller (Ex F34J)

Spain

Dear Alan

Call Sign just won't be the same without you. I really hope that it continues because having a cab trade magazine sitting somewhere near you is part of the life of a cabby. Personally I avoid reading online if I can help it, preferring to hold a magazine or newspaper if I can. That probably reflects my age and attitude generally! Anyway, you sound like you've earned the break and I wish you well...

Simon Scott (O40)

Dear Alan,

I have read your Editorial with a tear in my eye. Who's going to have a pop at me and the French now! Huh, huh! I can see a big queue forming on the horizon... (I have the same wry sense of humour as you ah ah)! Honestly, I'm sorry to hear that April will be your last issue as Editor in chief but I understand your reasons.

Kind regards

Denise Zemma

DaC Account Manager



Dear Sir

I would like to express my sadness at the demise of our in-house magazine *Call Sign*. Over the last 20 years under Mr Fisher's Editorship, it has been very professional and entertaining. I wish every success to Mr Fisher and his family for the future. But there will now be a vacuum existing for the Shareholders. Would it not be possible to have a Newsheet sent out to keep us informed, after all we now have no voice at all in regard to our Company's progress at this most important time.

Once again, we have not received any information with regard to our accounts, which should have arrived to the Shareholders in January in preparation for our now redundant AGM in February. Have we reached the three year deadline given by our accountants in regard to our ability to stay financially viable? Another area of concern is what will happen to our Rollerbond? Are we guaranteed protection or should we cease with this system. These are very strange and worrying times for all concerned and I hope that the Board of Directors can address these and other concerns for the Shareholders.

Once again my good wishes to the Editor for his future plans.

Paul Hammett (V42)

Alan

Congratulations on your retirement, Alan. Speaking from experience, this phase of one's life on this good earth is wonderful. Thanks for your consideration in forwarding a PDF of *Call Sign* so faithfully and for the nice little "featurette" in the March issue.

John Freeston

Vice Chairman, London Vintage Taxi Association (US section)

Windham, New Hampshire, USA

Dear Alan

Although I live in **The Netherlands**, I have been reading *Call Sign Online* for many years and was so sorry to hear that April will be the last time I shall see it. I read taxi and private hire magazines from around the world and yours is one of the two best ones alongside online magazine **Wim Faber's Taxi Intelligence** which like *Call Sign* does not fill itself up with press releases. I and my small band of drivers have an online facility in our waiting room while their vehicles are being repaired and will miss you and the sense of fun you bring to cab driving stories.

Kan uw Spurs winnen!

Willem Schouten

Rotterdam, Holland

Mailshot

Continued from page 38

Hi Alan

Congratulations on your upcoming retirement from *Call Sign Online*, it won't be the same without you. I assume that you have something else in the works to absorb all that free time and refocus your journalistic skills. Anyway, at least I still have one more issue to look forward to!

Norman Beattie
Manitoba, Canada

Hi Alan

I was shocked to hear that you are leaving the magazine that you have turned into the best taxi mag in the country. Thanks also for the articles involving me, especially those where I was doing something for charity. Even my wife reads *Call Sign*! Good luck for the future...

John Davis (V41)

Hi Alan

Just read that you are calling it a day at *Call Sign*. I now know what it's like having to plan your life around deadlines and dates. After a few weeks of being free you will wonder why you ever did it. Having the time to do what you want, when you want to, is priceless.

Bob Fisher
Former Editor Taxicab News

Dear Alan (or should I say editor of the finest licensed cab trade magazine of all)

Although not an actual driver for the past 12 years – I was previously **B13** and founded the **Metrocab Club** because of need. I have read *Call Sign* a great deal and always found the articles and content to be first class and very interesting, as well as always telling the truth. Then to read of the departure of you as Editor is in my humble opinion a great loss for the industry, one which needs the support of each and every one in view of the chaotic state of **TfL** and the years and years of poor decisions and non-actions they have taken. I am solely speaking about the fine and honest journalistic approaches that you have brought to the notice of all that read this fine magazine and I know there will be many who will be upset about you no longer participating in its editorship.

Throughout the past 20 years you have written about the good, the bad and the lovely; those lovely 'lost ones' that many of us can recall who will never be forgotten and who contributed to the growth of **Dial-a-Cab** and truly brought the name *The Gentleman's Circuit* to one and all and which makes us all so proud! Sure, there were the few who totally disregarded the word 'respect' but they were soon weeded out and whilst it is well possible that a few may still be in existence, in the main they hardly exist.

Call Sign, supported by its numerous contributors over the years with its editorship strictly controlled by you, has unquestionably been the one instrument that has reported

on and exposed many important issues, which over the years have needed to be exposed. Because of so-called progress, its need is even greater today and just maybe, maybe, like as has happened in the House of Commons and various other important places on several occasions, you may decide for say for a limited period, that there will be a slight stay of execution because the Editorship and Alan Fisher are one - and the two go hand in hand (*sorry, but no chance! ...Ed*).

Anyway, Alan, I wish you and your family well for the future and maybe, just maybe, you might change your mind. God Bless and good luck...

Ronald S Colman (Ex-B13)
Westcliff on Sea

Hi Alan

I was sorry to learn that you are retiring from publishing *Call Sign* and that the April edition will be your last. I am, therefore, writing on behalf of the Hon President, Hon Chairman and Committee of the **London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged Children** to thank you most sincerely for all the help and support you have given to our charity over very many years. As Press Officer of the charity, I really appreciate all the excellent coverage you have always given us and will miss your great and wonderful input.

Maureen and I would like to wish you good health and a very happy and relaxing retirement.

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

Hi Alan

I'm sorry to hear you are going to put *Call Sign* to bed after the April issue; was it my fault for all these years of nagging? I don't see any adverts to replace you or is it the end of *Call Sign* and **Dial-a-Cab**? Who will I be able to nag in the future? Did you know that with predictive text on the *iPhone*, *nagging* gets you *marriage* in the options box? I recently sent a letter to the **LTD's TAXI** newspaper care of their Editor, but he didn't even reply! It's not as though they publish loads at the best of times. Never like that with *Call Sign*. Moan or otherwise, it goes in!

It really is a shame you're going, but we need clear information on whether DaC House is ever sold.

Jon Robinson (E88)

Many thanks to you and **Dial-a-Cab** for sharing news and views from the taxi capital of the world. Every issue of *Call Sign* promotes and celebrates professionalism in our trade. That professionalism is the strongest bulwark against the onslaught of amateurs and pirates that Uber and the others have unleashed across the world.

Best wishes to you Alan and thank you for the finest taxi publication anywhere!

Charles Rathbone
San Francisco, California



Hello me

So this is it eh? A sad day indeed, no more chasing around day after day after day trying to get answers to driver's questions; no more typing with one finger of each hand into the wee small hours to make sure that a last minute article gets into the mag; no more losing time driving my cab because the mag is one page short, nothing is happening but I still need to fill it! But yes, amazingly I will miss it! Just as I'll miss drivers asking me questions that I will now no longer have the answers to – but many of them have now become friends.

I'll miss the staff at DaC House that I have got to know so well, many of them having been with the former Society almost as long as I have. I'll miss having access to Board members – albeit Directors nowadays – and to parts of this trade that few visit, such as the charities. Most hear of them when they put out a press release or those that volunteer on outings, but they work so hard at times outside of the above two. I'll certainly miss my access to the Chairman. Even though we sometimes disagree, we too have become friends.

As a final sign-off and to answer a few questions; yes, there will be accounts available soon and they will be available to any shareholder that applies to Howard Pears for a copy. At the time of writing, they have yet to be signed off but they will be fairly soon. However, there really is no point in preparing a smart brochure with the figures in because it ends up costing £thousands and they will probably be available as a paper document. The roller bond will be continuing and is guaranteed by the fact that DaC Ltd still has several £million stashed away! However, shareholders will always be informed of important information by post, with not-so-important stuff put out over drivers' terminals. However, as only a former Editor... what do I know!!!

Seriously, my sincere thanks to everyone who over the years has complimented *Call Sign*, but even more importantly, has helped to fill it by writing letters or articles. It always was your magazine, not mine, and I thank each and every one of you that has allowed me these past twenty years as its guardian...

Alan Fisher

Former Editor of *Call Sign*

Thank you Alan, but would you please move out of the way. You're yesterday's news and you are blacking my entrance... Lana Sherif (Temporary Editor until tomorrow)!



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