

March 2017

Call Sign



The largest online readership of any Taxi magazine



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be transacted until the 10th instant.

WILLIAM J. HENSE
Deputy Registrar



From this... to this!
Marc Turner looks at what we've
now got... see The death of deference



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 and which makes an essential download for DaC drivers...

What's On: March 2017

Venue	Event	Date
Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold Out Burst 22:15)	01/03/2017
O2 Arena	Kaiser Chiefs	01/03/2017
Olympia Central	Career Guidance (Finish 16:00)	01/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Confex (Finish 17:30)	01/03/2017
Olympia National	Event Production (Finish 17:30)	01/03/2017
Olympia West	office (Finish 17:30)	01/03/2017
Royal Opera House	Adriana Lecouvreur (Burst 22:25)	02/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Confex (Finish 17:30)	02/03/2017
Olympia National	Event Production (Finish 17:30)	02/03/2017
Olympia West	office (Finish 17:30)	02/03/2017
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	Commissioning (Finish 15:40)	02/03/2017
Olympia Central	Knitting & Stitching (Finish 19:00)	02/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Winter's Tale (Burst 21:35)	03/03/2017
Olympia Central	Knitting & Stitching (Finish 17:30)	03/03/2017
Olympia Central	Childcare (Finish 16:00)	03/03/2017
Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold Out Burst 22:00)	04/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 21:45)	04/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 17:15)	04/03/2017
Fulham	v Preston (Burst 16:45)	04/03/2017
Millwall	v Milton Keynes (Burst 16:45)	04/03/2017
QPR	v Cardiff (Burst 16:45)	04/03/2017
O2 Arena	David Haye vs Tony Bellew	04/03/2017
Olympia Central	Knitting & Stitching (Finish 17:30)	04/03/2017
Olympia Central	Childcare (Finish 16:00)	04/03/2017
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	Bass Guitar Show (Finish 18:00)	04/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Walker Stalker (Finish 19:00)	04/03/2017
Tottenham	v Everton (Burst 15:15)	05/03/2017
Olympia Central	Knitting & Stitching (Finish 17:00)	05/03/2017
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	Bass Guitar Show (Finish 17:00)	05/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Walker Stalker (Finish 17:00)	05/03/2017
Olympia National	Bridal Show (Finish 18:00)	05/03/2017
West Ham Utd	v Chelsea (Burst 21:45)	06/03/2017
Olympia National	Bridal Show (Finish 18:00)	06/03/2017
Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold Out Burst 22:15)	07/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Winter's Tale (Burst 21:35)	07/03/2017
Arsenal	v Bayern Munich (Burst 21:30)	07/03/2017
Charlton	v Scunthorpe (Burst 21:30)	07/03/2017
Fulham	v Leeds (Burst 21:30)	07/03/2017
QPR	v Barnsley (Burst 21:30)	07/03/2017
O2 Arena	The Weeknd	07/03/2017
Olympia National	Bridal Show (Finish 15:30)	07/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Winter's Tale (Burst 21:35)	08/03/2017
O2 Arena	The Weeknd	08/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 21:45)	09/03/2017
Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold Out Burst 22:15)	10/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Winter's Tale (Burst 21:35)	10/03/2017
O2 Arena	C2C Festival	10/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 21:45)	11/03/2017
Royal Albert Hall	TITANIC LIVE (Sold Out starts 14:30)	11/03/2017
Royal Albert Hall	TITANIC LIVE (Sold Out starts 19:35)	11/03/2017
Arsenal	v Leicester City (Burst 19:15)	11/03/2017
Brentford	v Huddersfield (Burst 16:45)	11/03/2017
Charlton	v Walsall (Burst 16:45)	11/03/2017

Venue	Event	Date
O2 Arena	C2C Festival	11/03/2017
O2 Arena	C2C Festival	12/03/2017
Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold Out Burst 22:15)	13/03/2017
Chelsea	v Watford (Burst 21:45)	13/03/2017
Royal Opera House	Sleeping Beauty (Sold Out Burst 22:15)	14/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Winter's Tale (Burst 21:35)	14/03/2017
Sadlers Wells	Sergei Polunin (Sold Out Burst 21:30)	14/03/2017
Brentford	v Wolves (Burst 21:30)	14/03/2017
Charlton	v Bradford (Burst 21:30)	14/03/2017
Fulham	v Blackburn (Burst 21:30)	14/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Book Fair (Finish 18:30)	14/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Partenope (Burst 22:25)	15/03/2017
Sadlers Wells	Sergei Polunin (Sold Out Burst 21:30)	15/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Book Fair (Finish 18:30)	15/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 21:45)	16/03/2017
Sadlers Wells	Sergei Polunin (Sold Out Burst 21:30)	16/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Book Fair (Finish 17:00)	16/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Partenope (Burst 22:25)	17/03/2017
Sadlers Wells	Sergei Polunin (Sold Out Burst 21:30)	17/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 17:15)	18/03/2017
Sadlers Wells	Sergei Polunin (Sold Out Burst 16:30)	18/03/2017
Sadlers Wells	Sergei Polunin (Sold Out Burst 21:30)	18/03/2017
Fulham	v Wolves (Burst 16:45)	18/03/2017
Millwall	v Bury (Burst 16:45)	18/03/2017
QPR	v Rotherham (Burst 16:45)	18/03/2017
West Ham Utd	v Leicester (Burst 16:45)	18/03/2017
Tottenham	v Southampton (Burst 16:00)	19/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Partenope (Burst 22:25)	20/03/2017
O2 Arena	Drake	20/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 21:45)	21/03/2017
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	Pulse Live (Finish 16:45)	21/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Partenope (Burst 22:25)	22/03/2017
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	Pulse Live (Finish 15:15)	22/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 21:45)	23/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Partenope (Burst 22:25)	24/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 18:00)	24/03/2017
ENO (Colisium)	Pirates of Penzance (Burst 17:15)	25/03/2017
Charlton	v Milton Keynes (Burst 16:45)	25/03/2017
O2 Arena	Craig David	25/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 17:00)	25/03/2017
Wembley Stadium	England v Lithuania (Burst 18:45)	26/03/2017
O2 Arena	Craig David	26/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 18:00)	26/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 18:00)	27/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 18:00)	28/03/2017
Olympia Conf. Cntr.	Lone Worker Safety (Finish 16:30)	28/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 18:00)	29/03/2017
Royal Albert Hall	THE WHO (Sold Out)	30/03/2017
O2 Arena	Olly Murs	30/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 21:00)	30/03/2017
Royal Albert Hall	PAUL WELLER (Sold Out)	31/03/2017
O2 Arena	Olly Murs	31/03/2017
Olympia Grand	Ideal Home Show (Finish 18:00)	31/03/2017

Download the on-line version in larger print with day of the week shown in addition to the date – Go to:
www.myfav.co.uk/womar17.pdf

Reflections of the Chairman

End of an Era

If you have not read the page 4 Editorial yet and perhaps wondered why I have suddenly been promoted to page 3, you might be surprised to learn that our Editor, **Alan Fisher**, is going to retire from publishing *Call Sign* magazine after the April edition; so this is the penultimate issue.

I initially gave Alan the job way back in 1997, some twenty years ago and what a good choice I made! In my opinion it is - and always has been - the best publication within our trade; not does it only go to our Shareholders but it is also reproduced on-line where it has some ten thousand regular readers, which I think you will agree is quite an achievement.

I have always given the Editor a free hand in running the magazine and we are both equally proud of the fact that it is - and again always has been - the only uncensored publication within our industry.

Some years ago I was approached by the **LTDA** for permission for them to speak to Alan regarding him taking over the editorship of **Taxi Newspaper** (bit like a football club). I had no hesitation in agreeing to their request because as I told them at the time, I knew he would not accept their offer no matter what they offered him because I was certain that they would not - and indeed could not - offer Alan the most important aspect of the job to him - that was to have no interference from Management together with a totally uncensored publication.

Needless to say Alan never took up their offer and he remained firmly with the magazine, which gave him the added pleasure of nagging me every month for a contribution to *Call Sign* - something I believe he really enjoyed!

Whilst on the topic of contributing to the magazine, I am equally proud of the fact (assuming I contribute next month) that an article has appeared from me every single month for the last twenty years. He even badgered me for an article back in 1998 when I was unwell in hospital; I duly - albeit reluctantly - complied with the request, but got my own back by not sending it to him, but making him come and collect it in person!

There isn't any doubt that Alan has done a really first rate job over the last twenty years and I don't believe anyone could have surpassed what Alan has achieved with the magazine. I know the term is used quite frequently, but the **Dial-a-Cab** magazine really was/is Alan's baby and there is not any doubt in my mind that after a short period of time, he will really miss editing *Call Sign*; it has been a way of life for him and also a hobby of which I know he is justly proud.

I know he will drive Linda absolutely nuts because he won't be at home editing the magazine, he will just be getting on her nerves! She will probably be glad when he does eventually go out to work, although I don't really have any reservations because I know Linda can handle Alan - no problem!



Finally, I would like to say a massive thank you to Alan from everyone at Dial-a-Cab for the fantastic job he has done over the last twenty years, I never knew Alan before he started editing the magazine. I have lost an Editor, but gained a friend...!

Saturation Point...

I have just seen the latest figures released by TfL regarding Taxis and Private Hire and let us all hope the minicab industry has reached saturation point. Up to the week ending 12 February 2017 there were 117,834 Private Hire Licenses in circulation, although 141 licenses were issued that week the total number of licenses in circulation actually fell by 29. I can actually remember when TfL were issuing in excess of 600 licenses a week to minicab drivers.

There was also a decrease in the number of Operators down to 2,448, a decrease of 15 on the previous week. However, I remember when there were 3,662 Operators licensed by TfL with only 65,656 drivers and that was back in 2013/14. So a year after Uber came into existence, there were 1,214 more Operators but with 52,178 fewer drivers; there must be an explanation for the

decrease in Operators and the massive increase in drivers and I'm sure we can work out why that is!

There is one piece in the figures I do find a bit puzzling and that is regarding their vehicles, the figure dropped to 86,676 - a decrease of 14 on the previous week. Yet TfL are saying that 523 cars were licensed that week, so that means 539 came off the road, seems quite a lot to licence and lose in one week? So TfL passed an extra 539 vehicles in addition to their regular workload?

We now get onto we licensed taxi drivers. During the same period there was an overall decrease of 19 on the previous week, including the 28 new licenses that were issued. There are now 21,330 Green badges and 3,267 Yellow badges, making a total of 24,597 licensed taxi drivers against 117,834 minicab drivers.

TfL have produced figures for the last seven years and the current figure of 24,597 is the lowest number of licensed taxi drivers during that period and of course the figure doesn't include those drivers that may have sought other employment without actually returning their licence to TfL.

Moving on to taxis; there was an overall decrease in the number of vehicles, down by 39 although 18 new vehicles were licensed. Again during that same seven year period, we currently have the lowest number of licensed taxis - 21,200 against 86,676 minicabs!

Surely there must be at least one person at TfL that can interpret these figures and endeavor to explain to the Managers responsible that there is a big problem within our industry that needs to be addressed.

Or could it be that there isn't a soul at TfL that actually cares???

**Brian Rice
Chairman
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from the editor's desk

Where has it gone?

In April 1997 I was one of three candidates applying for the vacant editorship of *Call Sign*. I was amazed to get the job and I am even more astonished that twenty years on, I'm still here! Where have those twenty years gone! But at least I guess I must have passed my six month trial!

But it occurred to me recently when Linda and I were thinking about a holiday, that for those twenty years we had only ever gone away in May because I had the June issue off! Putting it all together, I came to the conclusion that twenty years was enough and that it was time to step down – and that is what I intend doing.

So ladies and gents, next month's April issue – which completes that twenty year point – will be my last one... and no, it isn't part of an elaborate April Fools' hoax!

Leaving *Call Sign* will be a huge wrench; but there have been months when it has literally taken over my life with normal stuff having had to go onto the back burner. But I always felt it was important to have continuity so that drivers knew that usually – barring it falling on a Sunday – that on or very close to the first of the month, a copy of *Call Sign* would come through their letterbox. Those that didn't want to read it for whatever reason could just throw it away, but the incredible number of letters I often received and the drivers that told me how much they enjoyed seeing it each month suggested that the large majority did read it and that always made the hard work worthwhile.

Sometimes I look back in astonishment at how the mag always came out each month; there was my son Reed's death in January 2013 and for the following 12 months – and more – drivers seeing me around would commiserate, something I very much appreciated.

Then there was Linda's quadruple by-pass around 6 years ago. I can't even remember putting the following issue out, but somehow it appeared! For so much of that, I have to thank Linda for encouraging me and being a constant support to me over those 20 years.

I know I have picked up a name among current and past Board Members for constantly nagging them to put out articles, but I can't remember a single time when they didn't accede to the request – albeit occasionally with just minutes to spare! The best example of my nastiness must surely have come in 1998 after Chairman Brian Rice had a major heart attack! I did give him a day or two but then nagged him so much that he finally wrote a Chairman's report from his hospital bed! Mind you, he made me go to the hospital in Tooting to collect it in person as a form of revenge – even though I found him sitting on the ward balcony sunbathing and by the time I reached home some two hours later, he had emailed it anyway!

But of course *Call Sign* is – and always has been – a magazine for the drivers and large parts of it are written by those drivers. In addition to Mailshot, there is Alan Nash with his *Nash's Numbers* that has been in the mag for the whole of my 20 years. How much knowledge is there in the world to help drivers in their daily work? However much there is, Alan Nash has published it at least once!

Going online

There was Vince Chin and his *Computer Chinchat*, where from 1997 he wrote about how computers would one day be in practically everyone's home and how in the future we'd all be using electronic mail – well before



it was abbreviated to email. It was Vince who organised *Call Sign* going online in early 1998 within months of me taking over and at a time when most people hadn't even heard of the Internet – and that includes the rest of the trade press. We were first with the runner-up coming some 10 years later!

Astonishingly for the time, on Wednesday 12th November 1997 Vince created the UK's first taxicab discussion forum/list on the Internet. It was a first for any taxi trade in Europe; adverts went out in each issue of *Call Sign* to try and get drivers to go on email so that they could join "the list."

Numbers gradually crept up and after opening officially a few months later, the first subject to appear on Taxicab.co.uk was the possibility of a Dial-a-Cab floatation!

Nowadays there are lots of chat sites...but there could only ever be one that was first! Thanks to Vince, *Call Sign* now has more regular online readers than any other taxi magazine in the UK.

We've had numerous drivers over the years writing columns on a range of topics, as well as those who just wrote depending on what was happening around them. And it wasn't just men. There was young Zara Gee with her *Teen World* column; "older" ladies were entertained by our *Back Seat Driver* Poppy, the partner of a Dial-a-Cab driver, with her views on life, love and the laundry basket!

Lee Pearce (J71) kept us updated for several years with his goalkeeping progress on the non-league football scene. We sponsored some of his goalkeeping outfit and in return, appeared on the BBC's *Match of the Day* when Lee's team tasted some success in early rounds of the FA Cup.

Hope Liebersohn was on the Law Society Personal Injuries Panel and offered advice to any readers that may have needed it in *Call Sign Legal Matters*. Stephen Berndes (R14) wrote his taxi related chat in 'It's a Cabby's Life' while Steve Shaller (ex-R75) has had lots of stuff in the mag over the years ranging from taxi mechanics to taxi gossip, to life in both sunny Spain and on the Finz!

Of course there is Jerry Craig, the mag's former editor as well as a cartoonist extraordinary. Jerry has been with me for all of my 20 years, just as I had been with him as Big Al for his 14 year stint from 1983 and his predecessor, Phil Emden, from 1975 as the first reserve poet alongside Dave Kupler.

John Edwardes (ex-H02) was 81 when he had to retire through health problems and spent the next year writing in *Call Sign* about his fascinating life as a taxi driver. But the one person I can never forget is David 'Kupkake' Kupler who sent me poems about the taxi trade every single month of my 20 years. They were pertinent and often poignant. David could be very deep but

when you knew him, you also discovered how sincere he was. That came across so well just before his sad death from lung cancer in April 2014 when he asked me to visit him in hospital and dictated two poems to be published after his death – in addition to dictating his own obituary. That, after announcing that he was donating his body to medical science! How else could new doctors learn if they didn't have real people to look at rather than dummies, he asked me? A truly brave man.

Love on the Internet

Coming more up-to-date, there was Tom Quigley (Y33) who up until a few months ago gave his views on what the world was like as against how it should be in his *Looking at Taxi Life*. But one of the most controversial series probably in any taxi mag appeared between 2007 and 2008. It featured the true love story of a Dial-a-Cab driver and a Californian beauty that met and fell in love on the internet in 1998. Sam lived in London and drove for Dial-a-Cab, while Jenny lived on the USA west coast. With their permission – although with changed names – *Call Sign* published their amazing love story. Love on the Internet was so popular that numerous driver's partners and wives wrote to ask for more – even Chairman's wife, Brenda Rice, wrote in to say how upset she was when the story ended after a year! "Jenny" is now a regular online reader, but the romance ended many years ago.

As *Call Sign's* internet site grew in popularity, we had drivers from around the world queuing up to write for us and another American writer was Wendell White, who not only drove a taxi in Denver, Colorado, but was also voted 2008 TPLA International Taxi Driver of the Year! His 'Out and about in Denver' appeared for around a year and led to many international taxi organisations enquiring about going onto our mailing list, which nowadays consists of PDF versions emailed out.

For several years, former DaC driver Mickey Lappin was on the lookout for anyone connected to DaC who was also involved in music and Mickey's *Music* became hugely successful, giving publicity to up and coming musicians. We also had former fireman and taxi driver Richard Potter giving his views on the cab trade in 'Potter's Wheel'.

I must also mention Ray Sorene, who died in March 2015. He joined the Society when the Chairman was Eli "Trixie" Solomons (1959 – 1962). Ray wrote for the magazine occasionally, but more importantly for me, if at any time my regular photographer Alan Green (E52) was unavailable, I only had to phone Ray and he'd be there with his camera as a stand-in.

As for Alan Green himself, he too has been with me for all my 20 years in the *Call Sign* hot seat and been my right-hand man for much of that time. Alan often did day-time interviews while I concentrated on the evenings and night-time. I only had to phone Alan to ask him to chase up something and 99 times out of 100 the answer would be "yes boss, on my way!"

A sad loss was that of Bernie Pressman, who died in 2002. Bernie did many pieces for *Call Sign* – usually of an historical nature. His most popular ones were those detailing London's blue plaques, long before Google became the fountain of all knowledge!

Another thank-you has to go to former driver and ex-DaC driver Sam Harris for many articles over the years detailing his exploits as

from the editor's desk

continued...

an evacuee during the war, his time commanding HMS Vengeance on its Pacific duties whilst he was in the Navy and his early experiences at the formative ODRTS in Pentonville Road under the Chairmanship of Bonnie Martyn.

Speaking of our founder-Chairman, I consider one of my most happy memories so far as *Call Sign* is concerned, to be after I tracked him down and reintroduced him to Dial-a-Cab. The look on his face as he was shown around the Society he founded in 1953 was just one of sheer amazement and from that day, he became a regular visitor and Brian Rice made him the guest of honour at the amazing dinner & ball organised by Brian's PA Jacqui Chart in 2003 to celebrate DaC's fiftieth anniversary.

And then there's now, with subscribers such as Simon Wallis (M11) who visits the best golf clubs for DaC drivers to play at; Simon Scott (O40) who is a trade 'blogger' and transferred much of his taxi talk to *Call Sign* in the form of enjoyable stories. Or taxi historian Sean Farrell (B39) whose knowledge of this trades' history is second to none - even though its success brought out a copy-cat column in another trade magazine! If you want to know how anything in this trade started... just ask Sean! There is also the magazine's resident story teller, Geoff Levene (W32) with his numerous tales detailing what could happen to you as a cab driver and also Marc Turner (R97) who keeps readers updated with the more serious stories that affect us via his alter ego as the Drumslayer!

Former DaC driver Bob Woodford has probably reinvented himself more times than any other driver I know! He first started writing after run-

ning several marathons for charity and followed that with a charity killer run across the Sahara Desert! He has done London tours for us, written stories about his wine growing experiences when he moved to France and currently writes football stories with *It Is Now!*

Uncensored

I've thanked Board Members - and that includes those from past years too - for responding to my "hints" that their articles are overdue, but I have to give a special mention to Chairman Brian Rice who throughout my 20 years has given me the freedom to publish whatever I liked, never telling me I couldn't publish something. Even now after 20 years, some still believe the magazine is censored! Well it isn't and never has been. Indeed, that was the reason that I turned down the Editorship of TAXI Newspaper when it was offered to me because however much of an honour it was to be approached by them, I knew I could never get the type of editorial freedom that I have with *Call Sign*.

I must also thank the many advertisers I've dealt with over the years and hope that the many DaC drivers I helped out with freebies have found them to be useful. When I took the mag over in 1997, I phoned Jamie - now Lord - Borwick, then the Chairman of LTI parent company Manganese Bronze Holdings to ask if LTI would be interested in advertising their taxis in *Call Sign*. He said he'd never heard of us, but if I sent him a few copies over the following months then he'd think about it. He obviously liked it because not only did Mann & Overton contact me, but so did Sir Geoffrey Robert James Borwick - who

took me out for lunch at the Garrick Club! He was - and still is - a real gentlemen and his wife Victoria, the MP for Kensington and Chelsea, is still a licensed taxi lover!

The Ascott Cab Co and accountants Martin Cordell & Co have both been with the mag for much of my time and I thank them both most sincerely. But I have dealt with so many people over the past twenty years that I must have left out many others; to those I apologise but thank them anonymously!

Just one more... I must thank the several thousand people that have written into the Mailshot pages over those twenty years. I hope those of you that required an answer got one that satisfied you. If not, then sorry but I hopefully did my best!

I'll be back next month for my last issue as Editor and *Call Sign* contributor, going back to 1975 when I wrote for then-Editor Phil Emden's Poet's Corner in his News and Views magazine. My first "masterpiece" came after someone had thrown up in my cab. It was called Sick and began thus:

Has anyone ever been sick in your cab, has it ever happened to you? It's always diced carrots and tomatoes, as if all they ate was stew!

It got worse but we'll leave that there! I then became Big Al, Lana Sherif, Mr X, J.P. Duval and many others - some would say I was searching for an identity! But at the end, there was just one signature. It went like this...

Alan Fisher
Editor

Call Sign Magazine
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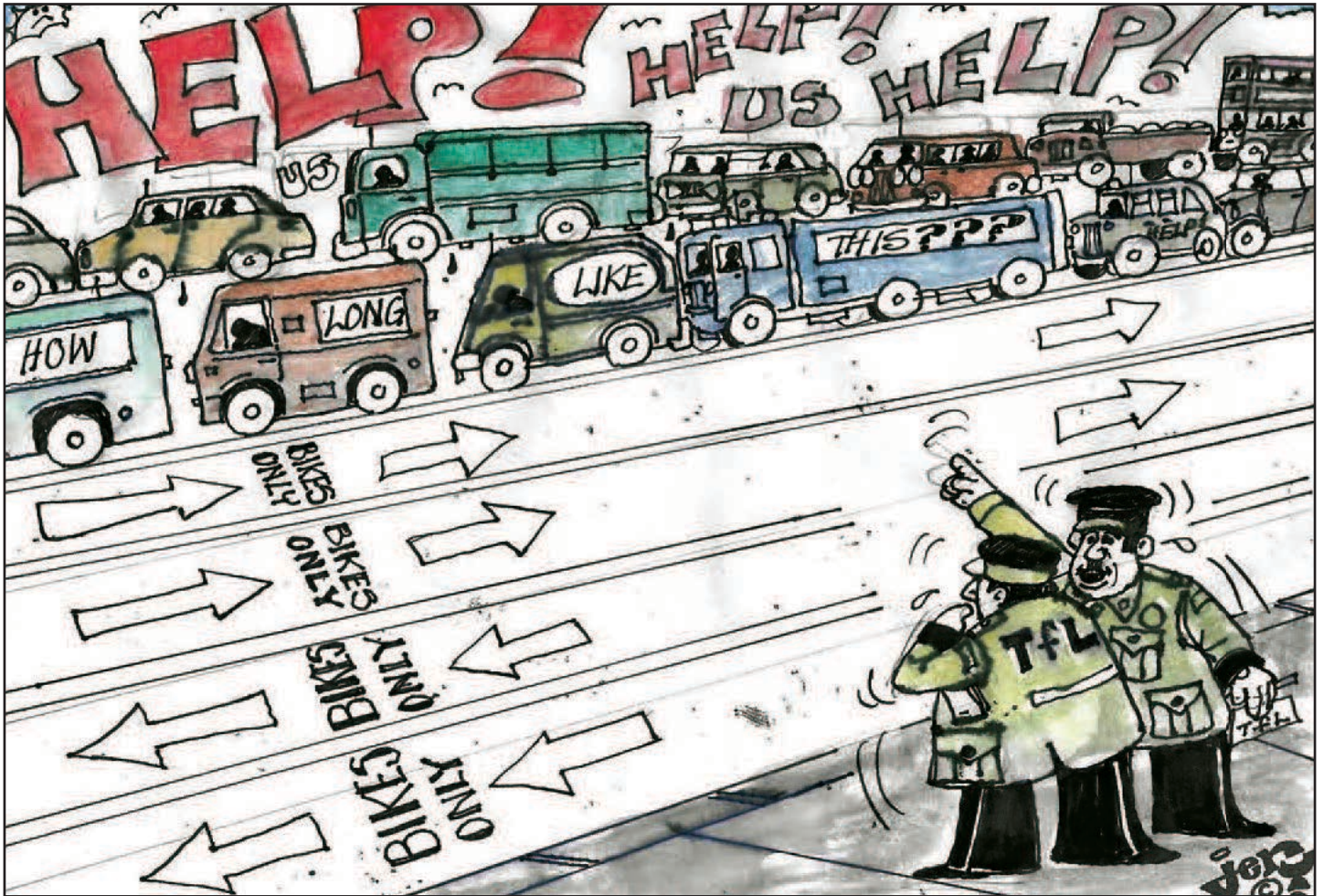
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Jery's World



Wow Bill! What a brilliant way TfL have come up wiv for getting more bike lanes... no one moves anyway, so putting vehicles on top of each other makes sense dunnit? But those taxi blokes will probably moan about it... they moan about everyfing!!

Elephant & Castle Review

At a meeting of Borough, Bankside and Walworth Community Council, it was revealed there was to be a post-implementation review re works completed in 2016 to the Elephant and Castle traffic system that many drivers still find complicated. Residents of Harper Road had already complained that motorists were using the road in order to avoid the Elephant junction. Other side streets in the area have also complained about much more traffic since the system changed.

Southwark Council admitted receiving a large number of complaints from residents regarding the change in traffic patterns over the past 12 months and said that TfL would be undertaking a 12 month post-implementation review of the Elephant scheme. It will take place next month (April). The response added that their officers would need to analyse data against prior traffic counts and consider what options might be available in order to address any issues.

The new layout was introduced by TfL in a £25 million scheme designed to cut accidents by a third on what was described as Britain's most dangerous roundabout, but was criticised soon after implementation when two cyclist deaths occurred. There have also been a number of accidents involving buses. The result is expected in mid-May...



How it was "sold" to the public

Steve the Taxi driving hero!

Call Sign usually sticks to promoting Dial-a-Cab drivers, but in the case of Steve Teague we feel that an exception should be made. Details came in an Evening Standard article when it told how Steve had saved the life of a young lady who was apparently attempting suicide by jumping off Lambeth Bridge.

Steve had been driving home over Lambeth Bridge towards the Bromley area when another vehicle pulled up sharply in front of him, someone got out and ran over to the side of the bridge where a young lady was balancing on a ledge. The man was holding her back and begging not to jump.

Steve jumped straight out of his cab, bolted across the road and grabbed hold of the distressed woman's arm. A third person joined the two men; this one also holding Steve by his trouser belt as there was a real danger that the taxi driver could have been pulled over and into the Thames below.

The three men successfully stopped the young lady's apparent attempted suicide and then waited with her, holding her back, until police arrived and took her to safety.

Steve told the Standard: *"I jumped over the top of the bridge so I was off my feet. There was a guy behind me who was hanging onto the back of my trousers to stop me going over. I was hanging over the top of the bridge reaching over to the*



girl and managed to get hold of her wrist while she was trying to fight off the other guy. I was telling her to stand up but she was really struggling. She was adamant she was going to throw herself off, but I told her there was no way that I was going to let her go."

Steve added that what he called a "real hero" then turned up, a man in a business suit and tie who climbed over the bridge rails to get a better grip of the woman while trying to calm her down. All those involved were holding onto each other because as Steve said; if one went over then in all probability, they would all go over!

The police arrived after around five minutes alongside the RNLI and fire brigade. The

Steve helped save a lady's life

lady was rescued and taken to a place of safety, while a shaking Steve Teague drove home, describing his feelings as being "a bit emotional."

Lambeth Borough Commander, Richard Wood, said later: "I'd like to thank everyone that assisted in the rescue of a distressed young woman from Lambeth Bridge. Several members of the public showed remarkable courage, risking their

own safety to save her as she came perilously close to falling. The London Fire Brigade and my own officers also did an exceptional job in difficult circumstances."

According to Steve, he only did what any licensed taxi driver in that position would have done. Either way, the trade is proud of him and we are happy to write about it in Dial-a-Cab's in-house magazine...

Anyone who feels they need support because of the way they feel can call the Samaritans on 116123, email them on jo@samaritans.org or visit a local Samaritans branch.

Go to www.samaritans.org for details.

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London's congestion charge - initially one of the most successful IT-based public policy initiatives for a generation - has now been beaten by a rising tide of delivery vans and private hire cars, according to a report by the London Assembly Transport Committee.

It has proposed that the charge should be replaced by a road pricing system, charging by distance travelled and time of day. This is one of a package of measures in the report, **London Stalling**, published by the committee in the run-up to a new transport strategy for the capital.

Any move towards sophisticated road pricing would be controversial. Plans for a national scheme were ditched by the last Labour government eight years ago in the face of fierce opposition from the motoring and civil liberties lobbies.

Excess wait time

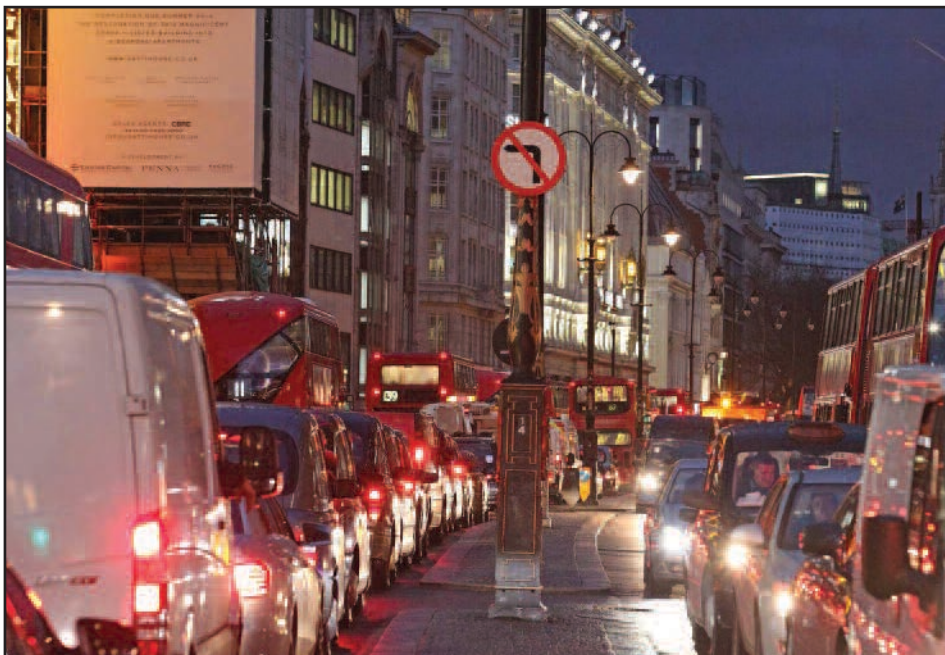
By contrast, central London's fixed charge, currently £11.50 a day supported by automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology, has been seen as a success since its introduction in 2003. The number of cars entering central London fell by 39% between 2002 and 2014. Meanwhile the scheme's operator, Transport for London, raised £168 million from the charge in 2015-16, representing 5% of its income.

However, after a decade of success, congestion seems to be rising again. A standard measure of congestion, average vehicle speed on major roads, fell 11% from 2012 to 2015. Another, "Excess wait time for buses" has risen 20% since 2012-13.

The report says the increase is not caused by use of private cars, which has been falling for at least 10 years. On the other hand, the number of light delivery vans and private hire vehicles is increasing: the number of licensed vehicles by 70% in less than four years.

Delivery vans pay the congestion charge, whereas private hire vehicles,

London Assembly: Change in road pricing?



when licensed with London Taxi and Private Hire, do not. The committee recommends that this exemption be removed. It also calls for reform to the charging model, suggesting a driver who has paid for the day may have an incentive to drive more in order to get their money's worth.

Stockholm model

"The recent increase in congestion should lead to a reassessment of whether the policy is achieving key objectives, and how it may be modified or replaced," the committee says. In the short term, the system should be replaced by one that charges vehicles more for entering the zone at peak times and for spending longer in the zone. Stockholm already has such a charging model.

In the longer term, the charge should be integrated with others that drivers pay. The committee proposes that this should include vehicle excise duty (road tax) - which it wants devolved to Transport for London "so it can be replaced with a system fairer to motorists."

The committee does not explain how such a tax regime would work for vehicles registered in London but used outside the capital.

Real time displays

However, other solutions proposed by the committee appear more realistic. Among some of its recommendations are those to consider expanding the use of displays on the outside of buses to show real time information about congestion. Buses on two routes already have such electronic boards, supplied by Equitech IT Solutions, which give accurate and up-to-date traffic information taken from the TfL Variable Message Sign network.

It also recommends trying to reduce the number of delivery vans by reviving the idea of

'click and collect' depots at Underground and rail stations. Pilot schemes involving Tesco and Sainsbury's were abandoned in 2015 because of a lack of interest from customers. The committee has asked TfL to pilot a scheme in which multiple retailers and/or freight operators can deliver packages to a station for collection.

In the foreword to 65 page London Stalling report, **Caroline Pidgeon**, chair of the London Assembly's transport committee, said:

"We recommend in this report that the Mayor should make plans now to introduce road pricing in London. This idea has long been discussed, but until now the political will to make it happen has been lacking. Delaying further is not an option."

Call Sign Says:

As an assist to the London Assembly, we have looked at our files and present the following numbers collected over a ten year period in order to help them discover just who is causing the traffic problem:

Year	Lic PH drivers	Lic Taxi drivers
2007	38,000	24,600
2008	48,300	24,700
2009	58,904	24,837
2017	117,588	24,617

So, in 10 years, the number of licensed taxi drivers in London has risen by 17 while the number of private hire drivers has risen by 79,588.

Therefore, Call Sign asks the London Assembly whether the above figures present enough evidence as to which of TfL's two sections - ie public and private hire - gives the largest cause towards the appalling road traffic conditions we have to endure on a daily basis..

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Taxi Driver of the Year Charity Fund

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

Well now is your chance! 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

LPG ENGINE REPLACEMENT UPDATE

Call Sign gets constant calls from drivers with older cabs – and indeed some with newer models – but all enquiring as to whether there is any news on the promised LPG conversion engine that will replace current diesel engines with a brand new Opal petrol engine conversion.

The conversion will give drivers an extra five years of service on top of the 15 allowed years for their cabs. It will also dramatically help to reduce air pollution while making substantial savings on fuel costs of around 20 percent.

Over a five hour period at Dial-a-Cab House on July 20th at an open day held jointly by Call Sign and the engine converters Autogas in association with Shell and Calor, an estimated 120 drivers turned up to test drive and find out exactly what LPG converted taxis meant. There were three LPG test drive cabs and four experts on site. A large majority of the drivers loved the performance of the converted cabs.

But TfL's wheels turn very slowly and as we hadn't heard any news for several months, we contacted Autogas for an update. The vehicle had its Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) inspection on 9th January and two weeks later had the TfL pre-road test inspection carried out.

The converted vehicle will go to Motor Industry Research Association (MIRA) centre for emission testing at around the time you read this issue of Call Sign and if successful it can then begin the 10,000 mile road test.

Once completed, the vehicle will then return to MIRA for final emission testing and then hopefully get a final sign-off from TfL with Autogas then looking toward the beginning of May for that. Soon after that, they should be able to begin taking some orders at long last!

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online



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It used to be something from spy stories; but nobody in the real world had any need for one. If you had money in a Building Society, you had a little book in which all your transactions were noted. If you wanted to know your current value, then a clerk would do a quick calculation. It's different now because the fear of computer hackers means everything is shrouded in secrecy.

Suppose you open a *Five Year Fixed Rate Account*; you pay in once, there are no withdrawals and they tell you each year how much interest it has earned. That's it, nothing else to do. But then perhaps after four years there's something you want to check. You click on, put in the account number and the dreaded password, but you're then told the password has been blocked and you have to submit a new one! But you can't do that as you can't access the website - you no longer have a valid password! When you finally get to speak to someone, they tell you the password was blocked because you didn't use it! Telling them that you had no need to has no effect.

I've got a piece of paper full of websites and passwords, but I'm always amazed when they work. Despite all the warnings, I tend to use the same password for different sites, so when I really can't find a password I just try my regular one and hey presto - it often does the trick!

But really the whole thing is crazy. At the end of the month the Prime Minister makes a phone call to Brussels. A recorded message comes on the line...

"Thank you for calling the European Commission. We are currently experiencing a high volume of calls and all our operators are busy helping other Europeans. Stay on the line and we will deal with your call as soon as possible. Your call is very important to us."

So she waits. Then another message: "Do you know that most queries can be dealt with by contacting www.gravitytrain.co.org."

Suddenly: "Thank you for calling the European Commission. Mahindra speaking, how may I help you?"

The PM clears her throat: "I am the Prime Minister of the UK and I should like to trigger Article 50 of the Charter

Another true story from Geoff Levene...

Passwords



in order to do the Brexit thing because Brexit means Brexit, you know. What does Brexit mean?"

"Er... Brexit?"

"Yes, that's spot on."

"Okaaaay," says Mahindra, "I'll need to ask you a few questions. Firstly, your full name."

"Theresa Mary May."

"Is that May as in the month?"

"That's right. What's the weather like over there," asks Theresa, trying to get friendly with the European official.

"Quite hot and sticky today."

"Really? In Brussels and in March???"

"I'm not in Brussels, I'm in a call centre in Calcutta. First line of your address please?"

"10 Downing Street. Do you work full time?"

"Yes, but tomorrow I'm on national rail enquiries and Thursday it's the Beth Din helpline. First and third number of your security code please."

"Eh? I don't think I've got one."

"Yes you have, we sent it in 2003 to someone called A.R.P.Blair. Does he still work there?"

"No he doesn't. So what happens now?"

"I'll send you a temporary password so you can set a new security code. You should get it within five working days. Now is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Obviously not..."

"Thank you for calling the European Commission and have a lovely day."

And so the future of this country hangs on old security codes and the vagaries of the Post Office. I suppose the thing that most of us have to remember on a daily basis is the humble PIN. Four numbers that control our lives and once again, if you don't use it you lose it, just like my friend Mike...

Dealing in cash as he does, he never had the need to use an ATM. But there came the day when it was necessary to

find one and do the business. And of course no money was forthcoming. But as he stood there wondering what to do, his phone rang. It was the Bank's head office wanting him to confirm that he had just tried to withdraw cash. As it was such a rare thing, it was classed as an 'unusual transaction' and they blocked it.

The security was certainly impressive and at least he remembered the number... which is more than you can say about the young chap I picked up in **Portland Place** at around 7.30 one morning. He wanted to go to **Bushey**. Nice ride, although I should mention he was rather drunk and very tired, obviously having been partying all night. The first thing he did was get some money from an ATM. I could see he was going to be out of it soon, so I got his address first. Sure enough he fell asleep and off we went. Forty minutes later we arrived with £60 on the meter. Then the fun started.

"Wakey, wakey," I hollered. But nothing. I opened the back door. "We're here." One eye opened and then closed again. "Come on, mate, pay up and you can go to bed."

"Owmuchzzit?" he slurred. I told him and he gave me the ATM money he had been clutching. It was two twenties. I said I needed another twenty. The former partygoer had gone back to slumbering.

"Take the card," he mumbled and I shoved it in the machine.

"Pin number?" I asked? I might as well have asked him to recite *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*. He had completely forgotten the PIN since earlier and was asleep again. I shook him and he began to come back into the real world.

"OK," he said, "I'll direct you. Take the next left."

We arrived at a beautiful house. He told me to go in with him and wait while he looked for some cash.

"This is nice," I said glancing around.

"Wanna buy it," he asked sounding quite serious!

There were photos of him with his pretty bride, but the house was empty. Maybe that's why he was out all night. He crashed about upstairs. I heard the sound of drawers and cupboards opening and closing. Finally he came down and asked how much more I needed?

"Well it was twenty, but it's probably around thirty now."

"Here's fifty," he said, "sorry to mess you around."

"No problem," replied this Dial-a-Cab driver. "Now you go to bed..."

Geoff Levene
Call Sign Online

Call Sign March 2017

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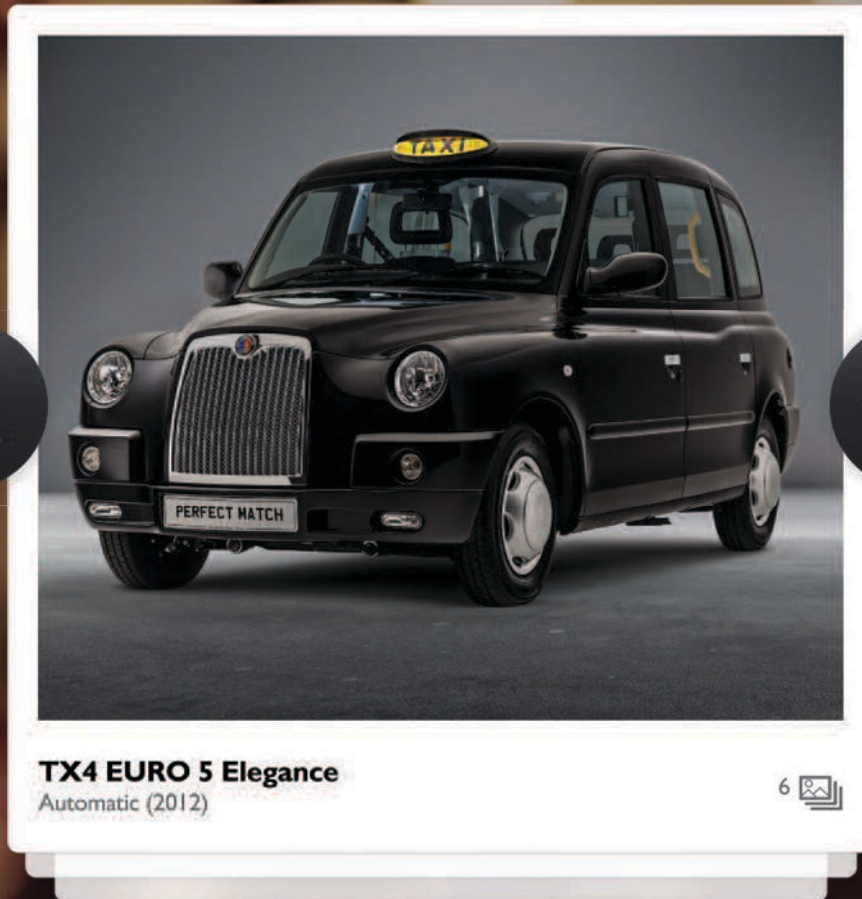
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Embarking on the Knowledge of London over thirty years ago, like all newcomers I was more than happy to do the time, when required to sport a suit, do the occasional jump through a hoop and perhaps bow and scrape with a "Yes sir, No sir, three bags full sir!" We knew that at the end of it all was the exclusive prize on offer... the right to ply for hire.

That was an age when deference in our trade was still alive and kicking. The Examiners were ex-police and the Knowledge process, with its expectations, were those of fable and legend.

Once you'd achieved your goal, a presumed job for life beckoned. The **Public Carriage Office** – known to all as simply the **PCO** and administered by the **Metropolitan Police** – was the ogre we avoided at all costs. Unfortunately, more often than not, they found us! Their Carriage Officers would appear as by magic at ranks eager to inspect cabs, issue stop notes and generally ruin our day if all was not satisfactory. They even did early morning visits to our homes – often ringing your doorbell at around 7 in the morning! You were a night man? Well tough!

To give an example of how strict – even absurdly so – they were, my mechanically sound droshky was once given a 'stop' for 'excessive ornithological droppings!' That reason was actually written on the stop note! Yet there was always polite interaction. They obviously had the public's best interests at heart. In retrospect they were firm but fair. I remember going on demos back in the day, but never against the PCO.

Three decades on and our trade is

Call Sign's Marc Turner (R97) is also known as Drumslayer. This month he writes on how things have changed in the taxi business since TfL took over from the PCO...

The death of deference!



now under the auspices of Transport for London. Never in our history have we been so put upon, with demos against TfL being commonplace. The old PCO at least understood the Taxi trade and had its best interests' at heart, although most of us probably never appreciated that at the time.

From day one, Transport for London never pretended to give a damn about any aspect of our service, one that happens to be a feather in the cap of our great city and envy of the rest of the World. When **Boris Johnson** advertised the **2012 London Olympics**, which mode of transport took centre stage during those same Games? Yet which mode

of transport was then virtually told to go and multiply as it was banned from the **Olympic Route Network**, which killed London stone-dead for a month!

As TfL managed the **London Streets Traffic Control Centre (LSTCC)**, telling us it was nothing to do with them was pointless, as it was *they* issuing the non-compliant tickets to taxi drivers!

We now have social media where frustrated, disconsolate drivers and their families air their views and opinions forthrightly. Most posts are definitely not deferential in the least; they are straight-talking and hard hitting. In fact TfL have retaliated by warning that in future licenses could be revoked or suspended if offence is taken! Democracy and free speech seem to have been thrown out of the window by our governing body.

So it appears we're all fit and proper persons of good character... until we disagree with TfL! It's another nail in the coffin of deference!!!!

Marc Turner (R97)
Call Sign Online

Editor Al and his new great-niece

Call Sign Editor Alan Fisher and his wife Linda already have four grandchildren, ranging from 11-year old Imogen up to 21 year old Taylor. But they were still excited to welcome their first great-niece, Sofia, into the fold.

Born with an amazing amount of thick black hair, Sofia is a first child to Nicole and Stelios and first grandchild to Alan's brother and sister-in-law, Derek and Anne.



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"I'm really rather disappointed," **Paul Campbell (W68)** told *Call Sign* as he rolled his two day old **Vito taxi** into our **Roman Way depot** sporting a very disgruntled look on his face.

"I'm having real trouble with the **Dial-a-Cab** terminal playing up and displaying 'error' messages," he sighed.

Even though it was late on a Friday night and they were busy attending other cabs, a techie checked out Pauls' MDT, diagnosed a power problem to the terminal and swiftly replaced the errant unit. To everybody's dismay, the second monitor gave similar 'error' message as did a third terminal that was fitted on the assumption that the previous two units were faulty and had somehow slipped through the 'returns' net with others awaiting repair.

But when the third MDT gave the same problem, Depot Manager **Dana Thananjeyan** ordered a forensic powerline check, which showed the brand new cab's battery was holding just 9 volts, even with the engine running, instead of the usual 13.5 volt output!

"I'm very grateful to the Depot staff for their efforts to get things sorted so that I could work over the weekend," Paul said, "but once the problem was pinpointed as the cab battery being at fault and not the **Dial-a-**

Vito Power Problems?



New Cab - but with a problem!

Cab system, there was nothing more Roman Way could do. However, they pulled out all the stops trying to rectify the mysterious problem and I'm grateful for that.

"I called **Mercedes** on the Saturday morning and they offered me a booking first thing the following Monday morning. When I got

there, all the necessary paperwork was ready and waiting and the cab was taken into the workshop without further ado. I was shown every hospitality while the work was being carried out... with regular apologies coming along the way! It transpired that an electronic component had failed, which meant the battery was not achieving full output and seriously affecting the performance of delicate electronics, including the **Dial-a-Cab** MDT!

"But while the MB dealership was very apologetic and did all they could to get me back on the road with the minimum of delay, I'm not too impressed that a vehicle costing over £47,000 should be screwed up by a small component wreaking such havoc!

"Perhaps my experience was a 'one-off' as the **Vito Euro 6** taxi is a new model on the production line, so I mention this episode as a warning to other MB Vito owners and potential buyers if they have similar symptoms," Paul emphasised.

But *Call Sign* checked with our Roman Way technicians who confirmed that a few Vito Euro6 cabs had indeed been subject to similar MDT symptoms.

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

Funny thing this internet



John Freeston with Sir Leslie!

Call Sign has been online since around 1998 and our readership since then has run into many thousands of taxi-connected people around the world.

Last month we featured the CEO/President of San Diego company, **RadioMobile**. **Jim Moore** supplied and maintained part of our infrastructure as well as

he told us he enjoys reading each issue of **Dial-a-Cab's** in-house magazine! As befits his position, John has sent a photo of himself standing next to his vintage Austin FX3 taxi – **Sir Leslie** – which John tells us is currently enjoying "its winter nap!"

Sir Leslie??? "Yes, indeed," John told us. "It's named after my ancestor, **Sir Leslie Brian Freeston KCMG**."

The **LVTA** was unsurprisingly founded in the UK, but nowadays has members around the world. Most members own and restore historic London taxis, although some belong purely because they enjoy the vehicles and its history. The oldest taxis date from the Edwardian period, but most originate from the 1930s and go through to the 1980s. The **LVTA** takes part in various classic vehicle shows throughout the year where they exhibit their pride and joy.

*If you are interested in joining the **LVTA**, details of what they do can be found at lvta.co.uk.*



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our modems when we operated on a private network. Back then, Jim's American accent could often be heard around the **Dial-a-Cab** IT department.

Jim is also the grandfather to the three beautiful and wonderfully talented girls of **Southern Halo**, one of America's hottest country groups. Nowadays Jim settles for just reading about DaC in *Call Sign*.

This month we have a taxi as our guest... well, what else would you expect from the Vice Chairman of the American section of the **London Vintage Taxi Association**! **John Freeston** hails from **Windham** in **New Hampshire** and

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

Brethren of the Whip



NO ENTRY: But only to taxis!

With the Corporation of London trying to ban us from using Bank Junction, and Camden doing the same with Tottenham Court Road, the 2017 trade is facing a crisis that will see many of our customers resort to other forms of transport just in order to get from A to B – something we have been specialising in for over 400 years.

Cabs and taxis have at one time or another been banned from entering whole swathes of central London in a bid to ease traffic congestion. Problems with cruising cabs slowing up traffic was often a frequent complaint in the letters column of *The Times*. Cabs at one point could only enter the central zone where all the work was, if they already had a passenger on board. Those who were empty and looking for work suffered a double whammy in not being allowed to go where the work was.

Any cabman accused of driving slowly – how slow was slow was always a moot point – could lead to the driver being charged with loitering. When the Marlborough Street Magistrate Knox noted that there were 200 cabmen before him in one week and all charged with loitering, he asked the police to come up with a different system as an expected 10,000 cabmen charged with loitering a year would be unfair to the trade – and increase his own workload disproportionately!

The answer was the Metropolitan Street Act of 1867 which gave the Home Secretary the power to ban empty cabs from entering central London. Why was it that only cabs were prohibited? *The Cab Menace* was a frequent headline in the letters column of the newspapers. *The Crawling Cab* was deemed to be the biggest 'evil' with many calling it the evil that London faced. In truth, licensed taxis were the only vehicles the Commissioner of Police had control over.

One of the first streets to be so designated was Drury Lane. Burton Newbold did not take kindly to being told by a policeman that he was not allowed to drive up Drury Lane whilst empty. So angry was Newbold, that he struck the officer on the side of his head with the butt end of his whip, knocking him to the ground. Newbold then drove off at an estimated speed of 15mph though the crowded street. He struck a

four-wheeler cab causing £5 of damage and then hit a 19th century private four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage known as a **Brougham**, before soon after coming to a complete stop.

When a policeman arrived on the scene, he told Newbold to get down; but the cabman couldn't – he was so drunk he had tied himself into his seat, so tight in fact that the rope had to be cut to release him! He was later sentenced to one month imprisonment and his licence was revoked.

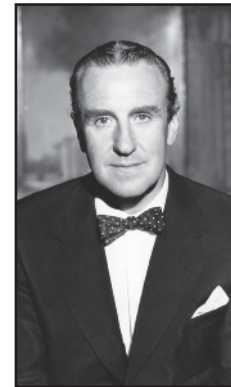
The cab trade threatened to strike over the banning order. The Commissioner of Police stated that any empty cab travelling at a fast trot would not be stopped; but the drivers refuted this, stating that every empty cab was stopped, regardless of speed.

The Commissioner of Police Order did not prevent **Joseph Keen** from being arrested for causing an obstruction. Far from looking for work, Keen was actually on his way home and as he was driving along the **Strand**, a policeman directed him up **Bedford Street**. As this was not in the direction of his home, he refused and was charged with obstruction.

Keen was fined 15 shillings plus costs, but as he was a member of the Cabdrivers Union, an appeal was launched. Despite two Appeal Court judges thinking a miscarriage of justice had taken place, the conviction was allowed to stand, which in effect gave legal force to the prohibition of cabs from central London.

Scheduled Streets, as the prohibitions were later called, were by no means limited to the horse drawn days of the **Hansom cab**. In 1926, no taxicab could ply for hire unless on a rank within the **Magic Circle**, an area which extended three miles from **Charing Cross**. It enclosed

an area where over 90% of the work was to be found. It was hard to enforce, but in 1928 two drivers were each fined 5shillings for reversing their cabs in **Wigmore Street**, "which was within three miles of **Charing Cross**."



In 1959, Transport Secretary **Ernest Marples** (left) introduced the **Pink Zone** in order to avoid congestion before the **Christmas** rush. Empty cabs were once more banned from using certain streets and were also prohibited from performing **U-turns**, as were all other vehicles.

A cabman once described loitering as "...what the police call obstruction and what we call looking for work." *The Abstract of Laws* I was given when I received my badge in 1987 stated that I may not "loiter" in the following streets; **New Bond**, **Old Bond**, **Oxford**, **Regent**, **Wigmore** and **Coventry Streets**, as well as **Strand**, **Piccadilly**, **Shaftesbury Avenue**, **Charing Cross Road** and **Tottenham Court Road**. The restrictions were in place from 8am every day, some until 7pm with others continuing until midnight.

Attempts by the authorities to ban us from the **Bank** and **Tottenham Court Road** are not new – but they have to be fought with as much vigour as the trade can muster.

Sean Farrell
Call Sign Online

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Peter v The Montcalm!

We all know the Montcalm Hotel group in London; there's The Brewery, two at Marble Arch, one in City Road that they refer to as Tech City and which is situated right behind Dial-a-Cab; now there is one at the home of DaC's EC5 rank... Finsbury Square!

Other than The Brewery, they all have a rank for taxis outside and they now want a two cab rank for their new hotel at the former **Royal London House** – the problem is that it's pretty much where **Peter's coffee stall** has stood for the past 26 years.

If you work from late afternoon onwards and right through the early hours, you will probably have at least seen his stall and very likely had a tea and sandwich there while having a chat with other like-minded taxi drivers. But if the Montcalm get their way, Peter will be banished - along with his business.

Peter has been sent diagrams of the proposed rank and it goes exactly where his pitch is. Of course, if you look at the Montcalm website, it doesn't take you long to see that these are all either 5 star hotels or as close as you can get to that status; just as if you look up the new Finsbury Square hotel and a photo of the lovely building, one thing you definitely won't see is any sign of a coffee stall.

When Call Sign spoke to Peter, he told us that if the Council cannot allocate him a new spot, then they will revoke his licence.

"I don't want to stop a rank being put anywhere, after all, most of my customers are taxi drivers and I want them to have as many facilities that help their business as possible. We know how tough things are at the moment and I would be happy to move my pitch to almost any part of Finsbury Square. I suggested the blocked-off part of **Christopher Street** but the council said no as the motorcycle parking places currently next to my stall are going to be moved there and the old parking bays will be replaced by double yellow lines."

Whether it's the hotel that didn't want parked bikes as well as a coffee stall outside the new hotel or just the council is unknown, but the suggestion was made for Peter to possibly move to the south side of the Square - where traffic comes in from **Sun Street**.

"That is by far the busiest part of the Square and I had to refuse," Peter continued. "It would surely have put my customers in danger from passing traffic. But there must be many other parts of the Square that a small stall could be placed. Besides serving refreshments to London's night workers, it has also been my business since 1991 and to just get rid of me is surely wrong? I suppose they could put the rank on the other side of the hotel rather than on my one, but they don't seem keen on that suggestion either!"

It does appear that the only reason Peter and the motorcycle bays are



The new Montcalm at Finsbury Square – no sign of a tea stall!

being moved is because a 5 star hotel doesn't want them outside. You would have thought that the bike bays would have been much easier to move with Christopher Street being perfect for Peter. But no, too many pedal cyclists use that route according to the council.

Let's hope it is sorted out soon as taxi drivers do build up a thirst quickly!

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Wednesday 22nd March 2017 Organisers Invitation Golf Day

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Address:

Tel. No

Society Name:

TEAM

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Player 3: Handicap: e-mail:

Player 4: Handicap: e-mail:

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Email: hertfordshire-golfdays@crown-golf.co.uk
or call Elaine Cochrane at 01992 466666 ext 249

JOHN TOWNLEY

"John Townley was an ex-subscriber and long-time journeyman from DaC's **Shirland Road** days. He has sadly died after a long illness.

John was an old fashioned night-man who would always help out others in trouble. He was also very well known in many of our cab shelters and I hope that any Dial-a-Cab driver reading this that uses a cab shelter on a regular basis, will pass the sad news along so that those who remember John but wondered why they haven't seen him for some time, will at least now know.

John's passing is truly sad loss. Rest in peace mate..."

Ray Buckland (P66)



Dial-a-Cab driver **Tony Dee (E97)** was sitting quietly – and patiently – on the **Hammersmith Broadway** rank when a gentleman with a strong Dutch accent approached him and asked in perfectly fluent English for what Tony was convinced was **Notting Hill**.

“So off we went towards W11, Tony told **Call Sign** recently. “He had a great deal of baggage with him, suitcases, brief case, laptop case and assorted bags that looked like gifts for his family. He settled back into the cab, carefully arranging the freight so that it didn’t move around on the cab floor. As we got nearer to Notting Hill itself, he suddenly enquired: ‘So **Nottingham** is alright with you driver? Have you been there before?’

“I took a deep breath, **NottingHAM** I repeated, as I realised my initial mistake, to which the passenger casually confirmed our ultimate destination as though he did it frequently. Naturally I explained that it was a long way from London and would be very expensive. The passenger again confirmed it was indeed Nottingham that we were going to, saying simply that he’d had a very bad day and just wanted to get home!

“So I headed up towards the **M1**, which, because of the traffic took some considerable time. As I weaved along roads taking me up toward **Staples Corner** for the motorway, we

Notting Hill to Notting... Ham!



Well anyone can make a mistake!!!

chatted amiably and he explained that his wife was supposed to meet him in London but their car had broken down near their home. Because of all his luggage, a taxi was the most practical way to travel, assuring me I would be paid when we got to his house. Clearly he was a businessman *and* a gentleman so I had no qualms about payment,

although I had already determined I would help him unload at his destination, right outside his house, of course!

“He went on to explain that he had travelled from afar and was tired, so would like to sleep and asked if I could wake him up near Nottingham when he would direct me to his house. So I plodded on up the the motorway, waking him up as we peeled off the M1 and sure enough he directed me to his front door where he was eagerly greeted by his wife and children. I assisted by taking luggage from the cab while he disappeared into the house and emerged a few minutes later with cash to pay me off.

“We bid farewell and as I turned the cab around to head back to London, his wife called out to thank me for bringing her husband home safely, which for some reason I found quite touching. I finally got home at around 05.30 hours and completely shattered!”

Tony admitted with a twinkle in his eyes that the next time a passenger asked him for Notting Hill, he would double check that they didn’t mean Nottingham...!

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

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Hillier Buchan, 01322 553313

How much is your licence worth???

When shock news from the **Victoria (New South Wales)** government came into the **Call Sign** office, we were stunned. Their State government wants to deregulate the taxi industry and abolish taxi licences so that there would only be one single registration for taxis, hire cars, ride-share services such as **Uber** and they were offering taxi drivers a compensation package that the drivers claimed was a long way from what the licences were worth to them.

Taxi drivers in **Melbourne** unsurprisingly staged demonstrations in protest against the Victoria government and their plan to buy back taxi licences issued by them.

Several hundred taxis reportedly blocked **Bolte Bridge** in the **Docklands** area of Melbourne as part of the protest at 8am causing huge tailbacks and major delays for commuters for over 2 hours.

Drivers clad in bright yellow t-shirts later gathered in streets around state parliament demanding full licence compensation. Many carried signs emblazoned with the message: “Fair go for hard work in Victoria.”

Victoria proposes to compensate taxi licence holders by paying A\$100,000 for their first licence and A\$50,000 for up to three others. However, there are some licences costing up to A\$500,000 with many of those licence holders fearing that the buy-back scheme will send them broke.

Drivers are now planning to bring **Melbourne Airport** to a standstill with organiser **Linda De Melis** confirming that everything was on the table and that unless the Government stepped forward into “good faith” discussions, they would continue the disruption.

Taxi driver **George Goutzioulis** said he would fight for proper compensation of his family’s three licences, with the current offered deal set to refund just 20percent of their investment. He said they had bought the licences under the impression that it was a regulated industry, but now that had been ripped away from them.

The story got us thinking; how much do you think your licence is worth? Are there any circumstances when you would consider accepting a pay-off from TfL in return for your licence???



Drivers demonstrating in Melbourne

In early January, Call Sign was sent a video which allegedly showed a London Uber driver working in Brighton telling his passenger who filmed the journey and resulting conversation, that Uber told him and other London drivers to go to Brighton to work, even though they were licensed to work in London.

The video was published by the Brighton and Hove taxi section of the GMB Union. It shows the driver, who said his name was Rashid, telling the passenger that he is really busy in the seaside town as the local companies do not have enough drivers and repeated that Uber had asked him to go down to Brighton. Rashid says this is his first time in Brighton, which is why he has difficulty finding his way around. He admits not being licensed by Brighton and Hove City Council, which apparently has much stricter regulations than London. Whilst talking to the passenger, Rashid goes through a red light.

Uber was granted a Brighton and Hove licence last October and told the council it would only use Brighton licensed drivers; as a result of doing that, they would be abiding by the same rules as the city's existing minicab firms. However, Uber tried recruiting from the City's three cab firms, but only one driver took them up. Rumour had it that the three cab companies told any driver that left them for Uber that they would not be welcomed back.

According to GMB section secretary **Andy Peters**, the Union were pleased that at the Uber council licensing meeting in 2015, Uber had declared they would only use Brighton and Hove licensed vehicles. But he added: "It appears that London has become the licensing centre to send London minicabs all over the UK, rendering local councils redundant in taxi licensing."

Call Sign sent a copy of the video to several members of Transport for London including Helen Chapman, Leon Daniels, Garrett Emmerson and the Mayor's Deputy for Transport, Val Shawcross, asking if any of them would like to comment. We said the video gave the impression that anyone could do anything they liked - providing they weren't taxis! We received a response from TfL Taxi & PH General Manager, Helen Chapman. She wrote:

Dear Alan

Thank you for your email of 3 January. As you will be aware, PHVs are not legally restricted from taking bookings anywhere in England and Wales, provided the vehicle, driver and operator are licenced by the same licensing authority and the booking is accepted within this authority. This is commonly referred to as 'the triple licensing requirement'.

Issues of cross border hiring are concerning both for Transport for London and the

Cross Border hirings and TfL

Mayor: A national change is needed to address this issue so that all taxi and private hire vehicle journeys either start or end in the area in which the driver, vehicle and operator is licenced. As part of the Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan, we committed to lobby government for a change in the law and both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Val Shawcross, have raised this issue with Government Ministers and the Department for Transport.

In the meantime, we are in the process of bringing in a number of regulatory changes for all London licenced private hire drivers, including an English language requirement and an enhanced topographical assessment, in order to raise safety standards within the industry.



We were made aware of this video when it was posted online, however there is not enough information in it for us to identify the driver. Having said that, I would like to reassure you that we are in touch with Brighton and Hove City Council about this matter.

Helen Chapman

General Manager, Taxi and Private Hire

Call Sign's reply to Helen Chapman:

Hi Helen

Thanks for the response.

I know about the regulatory changes for London PH drivers. Anyone connected to TfL that I write to 'copies and pastes' the same response - just as yours was!

The thing that puzzles me is this: If the Mayor and TfL have to wait for HMG to bring about any changes, then what is the purpose of TfL? It appears that taxis and private hire are treated identically nowadays, yet anything that benefits taxis needs to be addressed nationally, while we all can see any PH difficulty as they seem to get away with anything they want. Travis Kalanick has already come out and said that Uber will do as they want regardless of TfL.

Re the Brighton video, I can obviously understand problems re identification, so what could you actually tell Brighton and Hove City Council?

Helen, I have been a licensed taxi driver

since May 21 1971 and over those almost 46 years, my record is pretty much immaculate. Feel free to look at my files - your records on me start from 1965! I had my share of cursing the old PCO but always accepted them as the authority, knowing they would always push the taxi trade as being the best in the world of its kind. Now that has changed.

Thanks to TfL, the taxi trade is on its knees while PH is taking over. If we need help it's down to central government legislation; PH do as they wish.

On the plus side, your dancing at the TDoY dinner was almost as good as mine!!!

Alan Fisher

Editor, Call Sign Magazine

My thanks to Helen Chapman for responding, however, it shows that cross border hiring now has affected London, while TfL admit there is nothing to stop the reverse happening. It means private hire vehicles licensed elsewhere can legally come into London to work and we can't do a thing about it. Meanwhile 100s of TfL licensed PH drivers - mainly Uber - are working all over the country under the TfL licensing banner.

As I pointed out to the Taxi GM, what is the point of TfL???



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Since returning after the Christmas break, Dial-a-Cab's Sales team has been busy completing some tenders and setting out our marketing strategy for the year. We have also opened a small number of new accounts and seen a substantial number of personal credit cards being registered with us.

We have also been working on one new account for many weeks, which will be a significant addition if we are successful. I really thought it would have been finalised by now so that I could make this report more upbeat than my last one.

The trend by all clients is to cut down on their transport spend. As well as generating new business, we constantly speak with our existing clients - especially those where we see their usage falling. All say how expensive and time consuming it is to travel around London, with instructions being issued to use public transport and only take a taxi if absolutely necessary.

Those clients who use both cars and taxis are reporting their car usage is down slightly, mainly because of the time journeys take with no bus lane access for them.

Fixed prices

We continue to offer fixed rates for all journeys and have been stating that the further you travel

DaC Sales Report

With Keith Cain



in a taxi, the cheaper the journey cost is compared to private hire companies. We ask those-

clients who order an executive car - which can work out very expensive - if it is necessary for that vehicle to be taken? If there was a choice of a taxi for the same price, would that be an alternative option. So far we have had a good response to the question, which should start to work in our favour moving forward.

Total ground transportation service

We have been promoting our total ground transportation service and received some good enquiries asking for more information. Our Concierge service was renamed Encompass and just to reiterate to everyone, the Encompass booking platform is another part of the Dial-a-Cab service we offer. It is not owned by any one person within DaC; neither does any individual benefit personally from the service it provides. It is purely a tool that allows us to offer clients the facility of ordering all their vehicles in one place, receive one invoice and one set of management information.

We have our large customers using the Encompass platform and apart from two, their taxi usage per day is between 75%-85% of their total number of bookings. One client uses the facility with no car vendors' - just 100% taxis. This is because the Encompass facility offers so much more than just ordering a vehicle. The management information clients have at their fingertips of their usage on a daily basis is without doubt the best on offer. Our IT team designed it to be simple, quick and intuitive to use, which clients like enormously. Since we introduced the total ground transportation solution in 2004, all our accounts have been migrated to use the booking functionality part of the tool and more clients are using our On-line and Smartphone app facilities to book their taxis.

And an old chestnut!

There is just one old chestnut that I have to make drivers aware of... coverage! Since the introduction of dispatching work to the nearest vehicle, we see some trips not being covered in our usual quick time; it is amazing to see drivers who are within yards of a pickup still rejecting the trip.

The old system would show how many drivers looked at a trip, the new one still does but it also logs the distance a driver was from the pickup location when it was rejected.

Coverage is still an important part of our service and has received many compliments from customers. If we don't service all the trips in the same way, by just one having poor coverage, it sets off the alarm bells because our drivers have set the bar extremely high when it comes to providing a service to our clients. Customers get used to receiving that service but if it was 'don't expect a vehicle to turn up in less than 20 minutes' then that is what they would expect.

Dial-a-Cab clients have come to expect a vehicle to arrive within 10 minutes - more often within 5 minutes - and when we don't give our normal service, it makes it look a lot more serious than perhaps it really is...

Keith Cain

DaC Head of Sales

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

1992

Mardy Bum...Arctic Monkeys

Now then Mardy Bum, I see your frown and it's like looking down the barrel of a gun!

In the 1990s, marches and road closures seemed to be far less frequent and so avoiding them was much easier than it is today. Even so, when you've got passengers in the back, it can still be difficult to avoid a **Gay Pride** march that is about a mile long and steadily snaking its way through central London. In 1992, it was the first ever **Europride** march, with an estimated 100,000 people snaking their way through the **West End** to **Trafalgar Square**.

There was no **Twitter** and no **Google Traffic** info to assist in making life easier; you had to rely on your instincts and the occasional gamble.

You may have guessed by now where this is going; if my memory is correct then I was traveling eastbound along Bayswater Road and heading towards Marble Arch when the traffic began to slow down rather dramatically! I could feel the tension in the back rising as we edged forward very very slowly.

Eventually we reached Marble Arch and it became obvious that a highly exuberant Europride march was making its way across the junction towards **Park Lane** - and it wasn't stopping for anyone or anything! The drivers in front and either side of me had taken advantage of a small gap in the proceedings, leaving me at the head of the queue and straining at the leash to get through.

I glanced to my left; there were thousands of brightly dressed men and women tightly packed in, but I thought I could see a slight chink in the armour. A small gap had opened up and I was desperate to exploit it. The tension in the back was rising steadily - I could hear the low grumbling noises and the foot stamping, but the small gap was getting nearer and nearer until eventually with the engine revving I released the handbrake and thundered forward.

I had committed myself - I had to make that gap! But as I got closer to squeezing through, a **Margret Thatcher** lookalike threw 'himself' in front of my cab, bringing me to a grinding halt.

He was wearing high heels, fishnet stockings, lacy knickers, a corset and a big blonde wig. He stood right in front of the cab, hand on hip and pointing his finger straight at me and then gave the kind look that the **Arctic Monkeys** so eloquently described in the opening lines of **Mardy Bum** - *Now then Mardy Bum, I see your frown and it's like looking down the barrel of a gun!*

I wanted to get out and take the tube home! The embarrassment was overwhelming as dozens and dozens of marchers whistled, laughed and waved at me. I daren't look in the back; I just had to wait out in the middle of the junction whilst kisses were blown at me from all angles!

Eventually I made it through and dropped the passengers off, all of us very grateful that this journey was over.

To be continued...

Simon Scott (O40)
Call Sign Online



For those that read the financial columns, you may have seen that Dido Harding is stepping down as TalkTalk CEO after around 7 years. The fact that shares in TalkTalk went up on the news probably says more than I can about Baroness Harding. But I will anyway.

An article in a 2016 online version of the **Daily Telegraph** from Dido praised Uber and came out as being against any moves by TfL that involved placing restrictions on the PH trade. She expressed a love affair with what she referred to as Uber's innovation and how they offered customers a solution to the "nightmare" problem of getting around in London. The fact that customers already had a solution called taxis or legitimate private hire never got a mention.

So let's take a brief look at Diana Mary "Dido" Harding, Baroness Harding of Winscombe. She "earned" her title by being the daughter of Lord Harding and granddaughter of Field Marshal John Harding, 1st Baron Harding of Petherton who was deservedly immortalised for commanding the famous Desert Rats in WW2. So I doubt that Dido was brought up in a minimum wage family and undoubtedly had a privileged lifestyle as a youngster.

She went to **Oxford University** and graduated in Politics and Economics, studying alongside a certain **David Cameron**, before jetting off to the **Harvard Business School** where she gained a Master of Business Administration (MBA). She must have learned business practice well because she became the CEO of **TalkTalk**, while offering

FAREWELL DIDO HARDING!

And good riddance...



Uber user Dido Harding: Under her watch TalkTalk was hacked and voted almost the worst company!

that approval of Uber's drivers - many of whom are said to earn below £5 an hour, far below the minimum wage. But, of course, THAT is why people such as **Diana Mary "Dido" Harding, Baroness Harding of Winscombe** like Uber! Hands up if you thought that slave labour ended in July 1833 when a Bill to abolish slavery was passed by MPs in the **House of Commons!**

Back to good old Dido; anyone remember

TalkTalk being hacked last year when a cyber-attack on its website saw nearly 157,000 customers' personal details accessed, with over 15,600 bank account numbers and sort codes stolen - under Dido's watch? And did I mention the *Which* survey published in September 2015 where 3,501 members were asked about the large brands they had interacted with during the previous 12 months. Each brand was rated on whether they made their customers feel valued, knowledge of their products and services, helpfulness of staff and how well they resolved customers' complaints and problems etc. Number 1 on the list and the best company to deal with was cosmetics firm **Lush**, which was said to have very knowledgeable and welcoming staff. The worst brand and in 100th place was **Scottish Power**.

They just beat Chief Executive Diana Mary "Dido" Harding, Baroness Harding of Winscombe's TalkTalk to the title that no one wanted - that of worst company to deal with. They finished in 97th place.

The Lady may not need our help, but we certainly don't need any advice from her either and bid her a not-so-fond farewell. Look out Uber... she may want to "help" you out. Please, PLEASE, say yes to her!!!

Alan Fisher
Call Sign Online

Mayor's dirty diesel scrappage

Sadiq Khan has made air quality a top priority and consulted on plans including a 'toxic' charge for the most polluting vehicles, bringing forward the introduction of the **Ultra-Low Emission Zone** and expanding it up to the **North** and **South Circular Roads**. But the Mayor says that without a clear plan to tackle emissions from diesel vehicles, the city's air will not improve.

In his manifesto, he committed to put forward a proposal to Government for a diesel scrappage scheme and has now published a report with **TfL** and **Cambridge Economic Policy Associates** on its merits. The package of proposed measures could be delivered by Government over a two-year period and would help fulfil the UK's legal obligation to comply with European pollution limits, incentivise 'dirty' diesel drivers to switch to cleaner vehicles and protect the health of people in the capital and across the country, says the report.

The key recommendations have now been presented to Chancellor **Phillip Hammond**, Transport Secretary **Chris Grayling** and Environment Secretary **Andrea Leadsom**.

On taxis, it says: Payments of £1,000 to help scrap up to 10,000 older polluting London taxis (this is in addition to extra TfL help for drivers to upgrade to greener taxis). Traditionally the taxi trade has had a limited choice of heavy, polluting diesel vehicles but this proposed fund would be used alongside wider existing support to help drivers switch to new zero-emission models.



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More than a bit of a wobble!

DaC driver and experienced cyclist learns an important lesson..



As a serious and one-time long-distance charity fund-raising cyclist, **Dial-a-Cab** driver **Donald Dacas** (P76), on his own admission, should have known better. However, as

he recently pointed out to *Call Sign*, his momentary lapse into forgetfulness cost him dear. Donald explains...

"It was a dry, sunny Sunday afternoon last autumn. I was sitting in the house with our boys as my wife had gone out. The children seemed a bit quiet so on the spur of the moment I suggested we all got on our bikes and took a ride into the nearby park and forest. The boys jumped at the idea, so we threw our coats on, grabbed the bikes from the shed and headed off into the countryside. We soaked up the late sunshine, filling our lungs with fresh air and observing all the wildlife out there. It was a real joy!

"But on the way back home, my youngest son challenged me to race him home along the last block of the street. He was just slightly ahead of me and I clearly remember my front wheel closing the gap on his rear wheel as my feet pounded the pedals; but the next thing I recall is waking up inside an ambulance. What happened was a complete blank. I remember asking the medic where I was, only to be told that I'd had an accident and fell off my bicycle. The ambulance crew patched me up as much as they could before taking me to **Whipps Cross Hospital** for further treatment.

"I had broken my collar bone as I fell off the bike, bruised several ribs and needed many stitches for a head wound that was gashed wide open as I hit the ground. The consultant looked at my X-Rays and told me in no uncertain terms that in his experience and with the injuries I had sustained, I should have been in a coma! That made me feel slightly better," Don said, "because at least it meant I had survived!" At least Donald was smiling now!

"Talking it through afterwards with the children, it appears most likely that my bike wheels skidded sideways on the paving stones with the bike going in one direction and me going in the other. I probably landed on my shoulder and hit my head on the stones. Apparently the boys thought I was messing about at first and feigning injury, but when I failed to respond to their calls and gentle prodding, they changed their mind and even thought I might have been dead, panicked and started banging on neighbour's doors shouting for help while telling people I was dead. Fortunately one kind soul dialled 999.

"I was off work for a month while my injuries slowly healed to the point where I could move around a little bit and I now have full movement in my shoulder and ribcage again. But I do have a lengthy scar on my head." With that Don pointed to his scalp to a rather squeamish *Call Sign* reporter. Why do people like showing their scars!

"If it had happened while we were riding in the nearby woods a few minutes earlier," said

Donald finishing his story, "I don't like to think what might have happened if my head had struck a tree trunk – but all this was because in one moment of excitement and speed to get our bikes, I forgot to wear my cycle helmet! I should have known better!"

Don asked this magazine to pass on his story and respectfully suggest to a wider audience that however careful you are, always wear suitable protective head gear!

Jamie Corum
Call Sign Online

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

SIMON'S GOLF COURSES

Royal Blackheath Golf Club

When you drive along Shooters Hill Road and through the open expanse of the common, spare a moment to picture how a golf course would have looked over 400 years ago!

Royal Blackheath Golf Club is the oldest one in the world outside of **Scotland**.

Reputedly, club minutes only go back as far as **1745**; however, there is some evidence that a society of **Scottish** golfers, emanating from **King James VI** court enjoyed a game there as early as **1608**.

In **1923**, it was deemed too dangerous thanks to the traffic on the **A2** that travelled through the now 18 hole golf course, so a merger was agreed with **Eltham Golf Club** and the Royal Blackheath Golf Club moved to its present location.

That's the rather impressive history, so you now want to know about the golf course itself. Well, I have been reviewing courses in Call Sign since March 2015 – bet you didn't realise there were that many to review! But I have to say the RBGC is not the best one I've reviewed!

In some ways and given its history, I've always thought this to be quite disappointing. It's a fairly average course with some nice holes but which aren't too testing; it finishes with a rather short par 4 that has a hedge in front of the green to stop you going for the green. That is a rather ridiculous finishing hole... that, of course, is just in my humble opinion.

Let me also add that from a personal point of view it's worth playing for the impressive 17th century clubhouse with its lovely views across the course and the museum upstairs!

Other than that, let's just say I've played it once and whilst it was fun because it's golf and I love golf, it's not a course that I'd rush back too.

As always, happy golfing...



17th century clubhouse

Simon Wallis (M11)
Call Sign Online

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

IT IS NOW!

Bob Woodford looks at London's long lost sporting venues

This month I want to wrap up West London's football club's origins, having previously featured **Queens Park Rangers** and **Fulham** – who both have their roots based at religious institutions. Both **St Jude's** (QPR) and **St Andrew's** (Fulham) may well have considered drink to be *refreshment of the devil*, but pubs seem to be a common theme around the beginnings at both **Brentford** and **Chelsea** football clubs.

An historian once said the first recorded instance of football in the capital was when **Julius Caesar** kicked a skull over the **River Brent** after drinking copious amounts of wine – but it took another 1800 odd years before Association Rules took hold in London!

The **Oxford and Cambridge Pub** formerly of **18 Kew Bridge Road** is now demolished, but it was on land adjacent to it that a new recreation ground with a pavilion was provided for the formation of a new club ground for the **Brentford Rowing Club** by the **Brentford Local Board** in 1889. The BLB is now engulfed by the **London Borough of Hounslow**; the Rec was swallowed up by **Sainsbury's** and **Costa Coffee**. A quick nip around the back to **The Hollows** is the closest you'll get to a playing surface these days. The nearest pub is **One Over the Ait**, a little closer to the banks of **The Thames**.

One would have thought that the rowers would have plumped for Rugby, but perhaps many of the 13 committee members voting had indeed had 'one over the eight' – because Association Football won the day by 8 votes to 5!

Negotiations to utilise the land to be provided broke down just ahead of **Brentford FC's** first fixture against a **Kew XI** from across the water, the clearing for the pitch never got laid out and it was the nearby **Clifden House** ground that witnessed a 1-1 draw in that inaugural match. If you want to go snooping around the back streets of Brentford looking for the sacred turf that played hosts for the first 3 years of the clubs' existence, I'm afraid that site is now covered by a school and housing between **Clifden Road** and **Lateward Road**.

Brentford FC were on the lookout for a new home ground when the owners of **Clifden** sold out for property development and a suitable field (owned by a mysterious **Mr Benn**) was found behind the **Wesleyan Chapel** on **Little Ealing Lane** - quite apt as many of the rowing forefathers worshipped here anyway - although these days many locals worship in **The Plough Inn** instead!

Benn's Fields was short lived, as was the next move to **Shotters Fields** off **Northfields Avenue** and the following move to **Boston Manor Park** where the cricket ground gave way to football in the winter; but the cricket club came to the conclusion that getting their field churned up wasn't much of a tea party.

The pivotal point in Brentford FC's history came in 1904 when they grabbed the offer from **Fullers Brewery** - **Fuller, Smith and Turner** back then - to take over an old orchard on **Ealing Road** for a nominal peppercorn rent. Within no time, supporters fell over in the rush to cut down the trees (they got to keep the wood!), cleared away a camp of gypsies and fetched the grandstand from **Boston Park** to sit on the **Braemar Road** side of the ground. The closest pub to the new home ground was called **The Griffin** and so it made sense for fans to started coining **Griffin Park**. London fans will now know that Griffin Park is the only Football League ground to have a pub in each corner – **The Royal Oak**, **The New Inn** and **The Princess Royal** being the others.

Millwall fans may remember back in the 70s when the game was so dull that one of the visiting spectators lobbed a hand grenade onto the pitch to liven things up a bit! But there is life in Brentford FC these days, as they are holding their own in the second tier of English football. Mind you, **Millwall** in the FA Cup quarter finals against **Tottenham** is far from dull!

Chelsea FC fans would also know of the pub connection to their club's formation in 1905, one of the newer kids on the block in historical terms of London football. It was in an upstairs room at the **Rising Sun** pub in **Fulham Road**, which saw the birth of **The Blues**. But don't

wander too far around **Fulham Broadway** seeking out a boozier with that name - these days it's called **The Butcher's Hook**.

The chief backer was millionaire **Gus Mears**, who had already constructed a huge, ambitious stadium across the road from the pub, opened in 1877 and home to the **London Athletic Club**.

Mears built up a huge arena to hold 60,000 fans and to ensure the terraces were often well-packed, he made sure his player manager **Jack Robertson** head-hunted some of the best professionals in the country. Long-time buddy of Gus was **Lord Cadogan**, who not only took on the role of Club President but also got the players running out in **Eton Blue**, which also happened to be his racing colours!

Football's first ever 4-page match day programme appeared at **Stamford Bridge** in their debut fixture - a 4-0 demolition of **Liverpool FC**; and when promotion to the **First Division** (equivalent of today's **Premier League**) was achieved in just 3 seasons, the newly nicknamed **Pensioners** attracted the biggest crowds ever known in **Great Britain** at the time.

The swagger that accompanied this fledgling club continued to be very apparent and in just a few brief years the personality and character of **Chelsea FC** was being laid down; ambitious, wealthy and fashionable, just the sort of pulling power needed to attract players and enough spectators for such a large stadium!

The Bridge has hosted various other sports down the decades – cricket, rugby, greyhound racing, speedway, baseball and even American football, but **Chelsea FC** have never moved 'home' away from their home on the **Fulham Road**.

Bob Woodford
Call Sign Online

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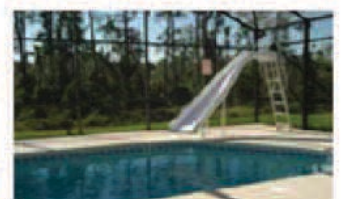
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Stephen Field (F99) has been on Dial-a-Cab since 2006 and over those 11 years has never been afraid to ask pertinent questions of Board Members or even the Chairman via *Call Sign* – not to cause trouble, but to benefit the Society in the long term. However, in March 2016 Stephen had a non-fault accident that left him with limited sight to such an extent that he is now no longer deemed fit enough to continue driving a taxi and as a result has had no other option than to retire from the cab trade.

Stephen's last big campaign that he shared with *Call Sign* came, ironically, in the February issue of the magazine – just weeks before his accident – when he felt that the only people left to write to complain about this trade's treatment that he hadn't already written to was the European Court of Justice.

He told them that he and the trade in general were just fed up with the way things were going and the way we were continually being pushed around. He said that the taxi trade was in as bad a state as he could ever remember, although he then went on to praise **Brian Rice** for being the first to recognise the signs and referring to them at an AGM several years earlier as a "race to the bottom" – a phrase that many in the trade later picked up on.

Stephen also told the Court that he was irritated our trade organisations didn't appear to be doing enough to stop the rot. His letter to the **European Court of Justice** continued:

"I am a licensed London black cab dri-

STEPHEN'S SAD RETIREMENT



Stephen has been forced to retire following a non-fault accident

ver. To get a licence I must first do the **Knowledge of London**. I must then undergo an enhanced **Criminal Records Bureau** check and if that is not enough, a **medical** too. I must also have public liability insurance so that if I carry your partner or siblings in my taxi, I am fully insured. That insurance costs me £220 per calendar month, so it's not cheap!"

He then went on to write about **Uber**. He told them that their drivers should be forced to have proper insurance and quoted just one of many incidents involving an Uber car. This involved an accident at **Trafalgar Square** where the driver then ran away leaving his passenger in the car. It was later discovered that there had been no insurance, no CRB test and no licence for the Uber driver.

Stephen continued his diatribe with the ECJ over several months. Then the accident happened and everything changed.

Stephen told *Call Sign*: "To all Dial-a-Cab drivers and people at the **DaC Credit Union** that I may have upset over the years, I apologise and wish everyone at the Society a bright future. Hopefully, if there is a dramatic improvement, my sight may one day get good enough allowing me to come back, but at 66 already that seems very unlikely.

My sincere thanks go to **Jackie** and **Marie** in **Drivers Services**. Good luck to you all at DaC..."

Good luck to you too, Stephen. Here's hoping you eventually get some good news.

From June 1997 for the next 10 years, Vince Chin wrote a monthly column in *Call Sign* telling readers how wonderful something called the Internet would be for the radio circuits. They all listened eventually, but it took years. With Alan Fisher announcing his retirement as Editor next month, Vince, who still is responsible for *Call Sign Online*, reprises his column for one final time...



COMPUTER CHINCHAT

With Vince Chin

On 21st April 1988 I passed The Knowledge; in July 1995 I graduated from the Southbank University with a 2:1 Hons in Computing and it was in 1994 that I was introduced to the Internet at Uni. It was there that I realised it was going to be massive! I remember talking to punters and telling them how fabulous it was going to be, streaming movies straight to our houses. I presume most people thought I was mad at that time!

What has this got to do with *Call Sign*, you ask? Well around 1997, I went around the Radio Circuits, trying to get them to realise the benefits of the Internet. I remember a conversation with the "IT Guy" in a north London radio circuit (*Radio Taxis...Ed*) who said the Internet would never take off; how wrong he was!

At that time, Dial-a-Cab were already well into their booking system so were not interested, however Alan Fisher quickly realised the benefits and *Call Sign Online* was born. In those early days, it was very time-consuming converting a paper version to HTML and as a result a limited number of pages were put online. Web pages consisted of simple text and images where you could spice up pages by including animated GIFs.

Client devices were either PCs or laptops and that was it. Nowadays, there are a plethora of client devices including Mobile Phones, Tablets, PCs and Laptops where each of these devices have vastly different screens and resolutions and web pages can seem more like interactive experiences that resize according to the screen size of the client device.

How things have changed in 20 years. **Yahoo** and **AltaVista** were the major search engines and **Google** was a late-comer arriving in 1998. Google now is the search engine of choice for 80% of all browsers and is also the search engine for *Call Sign Online* since 2015.

I had such big ideas in those days, especially once I managed to grab the **taxicab.co.uk** domain name. In 1997 I started the first UK online taxi discussion forum on **taxicab.co.uk** called **Discuss** – only the second in the world after Canadian **Terry Smythe** released **Taxi-I** onto unsuspecting North American taxi drivers, with just Alan Fisher and myself in the early days representing the UK.

I wanted my **Discuss** to unite the trade in an open forum for all licensed taxi drivers, especially Londoners, because since passing the Knowledge I could not understand why such a great trade was being ruined by in-fighting. Sadly it was just me being incredibly naïve as it didn't last very long thanks to in-fighting. I'm also afraid in-fighting will ruin this great trade before it unites to fight the elephant in the room, **Uber**.

Another area I thought would be huge was GPS and navigation software. My final year thesis was based around **The Knowledge of London** where you would select a blue book run and the software would display a taxi travelling along the route on a map of London – this was in 1995! I got 'a first' for this where it was deemed as one of a few final year theses that was actually commercially viable. After University, I approached a very well-known cartographer who quoted £100,000 for a single licence to use their map of London in one copy of my software. That was extortionate and as a result I didn't take it any further. Now everyone has GPS navigation – I often wonder if I gave them the idea!

Call Sign Online was the first monthly online magazine and its readers are spread throughout the world. It has been a great pleasure working with Alan Fisher and I will miss his monthly chaser emails asking when the mag will be online!

All the best in your retirement, Alan...

Vince Chin
Call Sign Online

Last month's Call Sign published a two-page report on the magnificent London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's Mad Hatter's Tea Party. LTFUC Press Officer, Raymond Levy, has sent the following to Call Sign...

Thank you *Call Sign* for your coverage of our **Mad Hatters Tea Party** in your February issue. There were so many wonderful people to thank and although you mentioned all the performers, the Committee would be very grateful if you could find room in your March issue to also mention some of those that worked so hard behind the scenes.

Following the disco finale, the children went through our famous **Toy Grotto** piled high with lots of toys, goodies and chocolates; here we must thank **Jelly Cats** for their kindness and support and **Justin** for his help in delivering the toys on a Sunday. Can we also thank **1966 Entertainment** for their donation to help pay for the toys, Mars bars and chocolates to go in the goody bags. Thanks also to **Jelly Belly** for the sweets and of course to the grotto's crew of helpers.

Important additions to the party are those who stay on the surround of the **Great Room** and work tirelessly all afternoon, some without a break; so our thanks go to **Denise** of **Angel Faces** and her wonderful team of face painters and balloonists, portrait artist **Danny Green**, Colour Sergeant **Richard Angel** and his army cadets, **Soho Fire Station (Green Watch)**, **Oxford Street Policing ORB Team** and **DG Leisure** who provided the chocolate fountain.

Grateful thanks also go to **Amanda Miller** and the **Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham & Westminster Volunteer Police Cadets** who helped keep the children safe at the party and what a great job they did. They are a credit to the **Metropolitan Police Service**.

Thank you **Sainsbury's** at **Waltham Cross** for sponsoring and supplying food for the 'rink' buffet. Special thanks going to **Susan Ramthor** for organising and coordinating the catering. Sincere thanks go to the **Red Cross** and also to **Ears Radio** for providing two way radios. In between acts, **LTFUC** Hon Chairman **Mike Son** introduced Olympian **Anne Wafula-Strike MBE** and we thank her for giving up her valuable time to be with us. We must also thank the Editor of **Dial-a-Cab's Call Sign** magazine, **Alan Fisher**, for sponsoring Anne's return taxi trip, enabling her to join us.

We were also pleased to be joined by the **Hon Alderman of Westminster**, **Mrs Anne Mallinson** and her husband **Terence** and grateful thanks also go to **Vicki Michelle** for joining us. We are especially grateful to them for staying after their interviews and signing so many autographs for the children.

There are so many wonderful people to thank and we apologise to anyone we may have omitted. However, further special thanks also go to the following:

Management and Staff at the **Grosvenor House** and Event Manager **Felix Persijn**, **Mark & Sarah Cohen** from **Genie Events**, **Nick Thompson** of **Manic Ltd**, **Steve Davis** and the technicians at the **Grosvenor House**, **John Lewis**, **Peter Jones** and **Harrods**. **Radio Taxis**, **Nintendo (Mario & Luigi)**, **Brecks Food**

Mad Hatters party: An LTFUC thank you...



Hon Alderman of Westminster, Anne Mallinson



The Army protected the Crystal Girls - lucky chaps!



Some of the stars from Diversity on stage

Honey Monster, **Entertainment One's Peppa Pig**, **Kent Balloons** for the helium, magician **Matthew Buckley**, **Maurice Gilliam's** video, the **Met Police of West End Central** and **Miss Ballooniverse**.

The Hon President, Hon Chairman and Committee are grateful to all the wonderful people who helped us to make this party such a great success and look forward to next year's 90 anniversary celebration! The children had a magical afternoon that they will treasure forever. Unfortunately Hon President, **Bill Tyzack BEM** and wife **Grace** could not be with us again and we send them our love.

In finishing, we would like to share with you one of the numerous letters we received after the party...

"Dear Committee,

I want to thank you on behalf of my two sons. Each year they look forward to the taxi dri-

ver's party and it never disappoints. This year was no exception with great food and entertainment and of course an eye-popping treat at the end. My wife and I remarked how kind it is that so many people put so much effort into the event with very little recognition. This isn't something the taxi drivers or committee need to do, but they do it anyway. It's a great gesture of kindness and compassion that is too often lost in today's world. The whole event is a throwback to the days where people genuinely cared about each other and provided communal support.

Well done and thank you again. We look forward to next year and will surely have a 'Frozen' song in our heads until then!

Noah & Melissa

Raymond Levy
LTFUC Press Officer

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

Flashback
2001

DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This month's Flashback looks at the October 2001 issue of Call Sign and a football match that saw the end of the Dial-a-Cab football team...

Near riot as DaC footballers storm off!

The reputation of the football team who were as difficult to break down as the gates to the **Bank of England** and who recently won the **Champion's Cup**, took a further knock recently when **Dial-a-Cab**, said to be the best team in the **City Lunchtime 5-a-side League**, fell to pieces during what looked like being their second consecutive drubbing.

At 5-1 down against middle-of-the-table **Jago** - a team we had never lost against - DaC were refused a blatant penalty decision by a rather weak official. Immediately, the Dial-a-Cab players surrounded the ref and within the melee, team captain **Lee Morland** was shown a red card for "unbecoming conduct." Then **Paul Richards** jumped in to speak up for his captain and he too was shown a red card leaving the DaC team with just three players - **Joe Brazil (K16)**, **Warren Barbieri (K19)** and **Paul Roma (G70)**.

At a signal from Lee Morland, the three remaining players walked off the pitch, leaving a stunned looking **Jago** team together with an equally stunned referee!

"No referee is perfect," DaC captain **Lee Morland** told *Call Sign* after the match, "but this is the third time this season that we have had this guy and he has never been better than hopeless! It may be a bit of fun for him, but we take our football seriously."

Both **Lee Morland** and **Paul Richards** now face automatic three match bans, while the rest of the team may well face similar or even longer bans for failing to finish the match.

Lee had intended retiring last season when his knees started to show unpleasant reactions to match batterings, but agreed to continue for one extra season.

"But that's it," said a furious Lee, "you won't see me on a pitch again, not while we have referees like that. That was my last match - I'm retiring..."

Joe Brazil chimed in: "Two sending-offs from a five man team was a disgrace. Lee and Paul shouldn't have sworn, but when referees give such awful decisions - not once but constantly - it becomes difficult to stay quiet. In all honesty, had we not walked off, it would have been just seconds before the whole team got their marching orders!"

DaC's super scorer, **Trevor Smith (V78)**, wasn't playing in the match, but explained to *Call Sign* that he often acts as a buffer for Lee.

"Lee has a temper on the pitch, but when controlled, it works in our favour as a hard but fair form of aggression. When I'm playing and see him about to boil over, I seem to have this way of calming him down, but I wasn't in the team this time and it just blew up. But don't you worry, we'll be back..."

Just six weeks ago, DaC were at the top of the league when holidays disrupted our small but successful squad. Then we played the mid-table team of **The Zeds**. At half time, we went in leading 3 - 0, but in the second half and for no apparent reason, the previously undefeated DaC just crumbled and we held on for a 4 - 4 draw.

With our confidence battered, the next match against **Willis** saw DaC put in our worst-ever performance resulting in a 9 - 4 thrashing. That has now been followed by almost a riot against another team we should have beaten easily. What's gone wrong with the Dial-a-Cab football team? The last word came from **Lee Morland**...

"At the moment, even Mountview could beat us and they are next to useless! But have no doubt about it, the Dial-a-Cab team are by far the best in the league and capable of beating every single other team in it. We'll soon be back at the top where we belong - although hopefully it won't be with that

Lee Morland was sent off soon after being sandwiched! Inset: **Joe Brazil** said the whole team might have been sent off!



rubbish referee and it certainly won't be with me."

The DaC team are currently facing a 6 week ban after the referee's report was believed. The question is whether they will actually return after their treatment in this match...

J.P. Duval
Call Sign sport



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With Sadiq Khan approaching his first year in office as Mayor and head of TfL, Call Sign went out to gauge the views of Dial-a-Cab drivers as to his success or otherwise by posing a question:

Do you think Sadiq is doing a good job as London Mayor?

Debbie Hope (W18): "Let me ask him this: What is he doing about the appalling traffic conditions? I don't listen to housing reports - important though they are - I'm only concerned about traffic and pollution and it seems to me nothing much is happening there!"



Phil Jacobs (D13): "Doing what exactly? Has he even started? The traffic is getting worse by the day and air pollution is high; so when is he going to start doing something? Cycle lanes are ridiculously wide, encroaching on already limited road space and now there is talk of closing the Bank Junction to most road users except a select few, which naturally includes cycles of course!"



"We taxi drivers have to take an advanced driving test to ensure the safety of our travelling public, and yet statistically we are lumped in with Private Hire Vehicles. We have not knocked any one down or worse as a result of poor driving, yet we are all grouped together. We are the safest form of road transportation and have no need to constantly refer to a sat-nav screen and so take our eyes off the road to know where we are going. So, I think the answer to your question of whether the Mayor is doing a good job is... NO!"

Mick Gentry (M52): "Is he doing a good job? No! Totally ineffectual! Nothing! He must be aware that Uber are subsidising fares by around 60%, ie passengers pay some 40% of a realistic tariff. It was in the *Financial Times* so TfL must also be aware of their business model to eliminate all opposition and conquer. That done, then they will substantially increase their fares to realistic levels - possibly quadrupling them - and by that time there will be no-one left to compete, as we will all have been driven out of business."



"That applies nationwide as well, going by what I read in the trade press about what is going on in the provinces. As I understand it, the Mayor and TfL's remit is to protect the travelling public as well as licenced taxis and private hire, but they seem to be doing nothing to assist the taxi trade. If Sadiq Khan allows TfL to renew Uber's licence in May, he will be allowing TfL to fail in their 'duty of care' to the travelling public. And I haven't even begun on the cycle lanes, North London Cycle Route or Bank Junction closure. Totally ridiculous!"

How is Sadiq doing as Mayor???

"May I respectfully suggest that the Mayor has the power to statistically separate taxis from PHV and we return to the old PCO regime as TfL always group us together with private hire, even though we are the professionals and the old PCO supported us, maintained our high standards, understood us and appreciated our commitment and professionalism."

Roy Phillips-Brill (O04): "From what I understand, despite the prestige of the office of Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan would have expected to have more control than he actually does. I listen to LBC radio and whenever he has been interviewed, he says there is little he can do about the predatory pricing policy of Uber, whereas licenced private hire has a regulated fare and pricing structure. He claims he does not have total control over TfL."



"Change the pricing structure of Uber, regulate their fares, demand a physical general office like Dial-a-Cab or Addison Lee as an example - for admin, lost property, dispatch or complaints. In fact, other countries see them as illegal, so, why don't we? And that brings us back to Mayor Khan in London! If he is helpless, then he isn't doing a good job..."

David Burnetts (S43): "I would have hoped he could have been more pro-active than the previous incumbent regarding traffic flow for instance, but the cycle lanes expansion seems to be going ahead with vigour and the mutterings about closing certain roads to vehicles are very concerning. He must surely have conversations with council leaders regarding the closure of Bank Junction and Camden's cookie ideas for Tottenham Court Road? Unfortunately, he appears to be all gas and gaiters... or should that be all pollution and traffic!"



James Barwick (J68): "Well, he's only been in the job 5 minutes, but I don't think it is Mayor Khan so much as more TfL - but he *is* responsible for the cycle and bus lanes and he is talking about extending and expanding those. But in fairness to him, he has opened up some bus lanes to taxis from which we were previously barred, so I guess he is damned if he does and damned if he doesn't! And it was *he* who introduced the English Test for PHV drivers (*currently been put on hold...Ed*), as well as the requirement for PHV to display a valid insurance certificate in the vehicle at all times."



Jackie Kott (Y88): "I haven't really heard of anything he is supposed to be doing or done, but in all fairness he cannot be as bad as the last two! Whether *anyone* can do *anything* to

reduce the traffic congestion is up for debate; more traffic, more emissions, more pollution, so widening and increasing the cycle routes does not and has not helped! As he has only been in the job less than a year of a four-year term, I'm prepared to give him a chance, but I'm not holding my breath."



Dennis Rayner (V72): "I do not really have an opinion from the viewpoint that I do not feel he has been in the job long enough to have made his mark. Anyway, I think his powers are restricted by government statute and TfL. But having said that, I am aware that the expansion of cycle lanes and their inevitable encroachment into valuable road space will seriously affect our trade."



Mark Holmes (J26): "Done or doing a good job? No! If someone can tell me what he has done, I'll be happy to listen - but I won't be holding my breath. If he would like to come out in the cab with me, I'll show him exactly what is going on - and I will do it for free too!"



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"My Dial-a-Cab terminal gave a familiar beep,"
Ergan Halil
(Y57) - his

friends call him Eddie - told Call Sign,
"with the trip offer being an As
Directed cash ride for Charlie. As I
like an adventure, I readily accepted
the journey from Ledbury Road in
Notting Hill," said Eddie.

"I rang on the doorbell and a strange looking lady answered dressed in a skimpy white dressing gown and silver hair piled high on her head. She beckoned me to enter and I momentarily felt I was on the film set of the *Addams Family* as we climbed the creaky stairs to meet Charlie. I entered a room that looked like a bomb site; litter was strewn all across the floor, books were stacked up on the carpet and American style car number plates from just about every US state adorned the walls. She pointed to a cage with a parrot perched on a bar inside and mumbled Charlie, motioning me to pick up the cage by the hook at the top.

"As I gently lifted the cage, Charlie decided he was not having any of it and noisily flew out into the room and temporary freedom from underneath the cage. That's when I realised there was no floor to his cage!"

The lady in the dressing gown coaxed Charlie down and he slowly

Squawk! Squawk!



Who's a pretty boy!

him on the floor in the back of the cab.

"He seemed comfortable and was very quiet," Eddie continued. "He was looking around warily but not making any noise, so I opened the envelope the woman had given me containing the cash and my delivery address where I had to take the multi-coloured bird to and had to look twice... it was to a farm in Norfolk!"

"I moved off carefully so as not to startle Charlie and continued driving as gently as I could because I didn't fancy the idea of him being sick on my cab floor! After an hour or so into the journey, the bird had not made any noise at all - he was just totally silent - which certainly had not been the case when we first met! So I pulled over to the kerbside and cautiously looked into the back of the cab to check him out. But I must have spooked him as he caught sight of me from those beady eyes because he started jumping around inside the cage, noisily squawking his head off and flapping his wings like crazy - a bit like a Demon in a horror movie!"

"I was quite worried that he would hurt himself while in my care, so I tried to calm him down by calling his name and repeatedly asking him 'who's a pretty boy' as I thought that might do the trick! Sure enough, he eventually regained his composure with the response of 'Charlie's a pretty boy'!"

"Much to my relief, I found the farm soon after. The farmer told me that the lady sent Charlie to him to look after whenever she went back to the States to visit. With a deep sigh of relief, I returned to the cab and headed back to London, far more relaxed than when I started out!"

With that, a smiling Eddie got back into his cab with a *Call Sign* reporter calling out to him as he drove away... "Who's a pretty boy then!!!"

Alan Green
Call Sign Online

Bubbles carwash closure

OWNER JAILED: WORKER ELECTROCUTED

There must be hundreds of Dial-a-Cab drivers that used the Bubbles carwash in Malcolm Place off Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green. The wash was ok, the price reasonable and within minutes you were back in the City, as shown by the never-ending queue of taxis waiting...

But it came out in Court that below the surface not everything was that good when Bubbles owner, **Shaip Nimani**, was jailed for manslaughter after one of his workers, **Sandu**



Bubbles: A favourite wash for DaC drivers

Laurentiu, was electrocuted taking a shower next door in what were described as the dilapidated conditions provided by Nimani in premises provided under the railway arches.

Mr Laurentiu was said to be living in cramped, rat-infested conditions with five other Romanian men who all worked at the carwash. The Court heard that the wash area was so dangerous that workers told investigators it was not unusual for them to get electric shocks while showering, but they believed that it was normal. It transpired that the mains electric meter had been bypassed to avoid paying for electricity used with electric plugs overloaded and extension leads plugged into more extension leads. Fuses had been tampered with so they didn't cut out when overloaded.

Investigators also discovered that the electrical installation to the shower had no earth connection and had not been properly maintained.

An ambulance was called to the carwash on August 19, 2015, when Mr Laurentiu collapsed in the shower. He was taken to the **Royal London Hospital**, but died later that evening.

Nimani, 52, was jailed at the Old Bailey for four years and ordered to pay £20,000 to the family of Mr Laurentiu after being convicted of manslaughter. He was also banned from becoming a company director for 10 years and has to pay £20,000 costs.

Look at this cover of Forbes Magazine and the Travis Kalanick quote claiming that the "opportunity is in the trillions!" That must have made those banks currently owed the money by Uber quake in their boots!

In the first nine months of 2016, Uber are said to have lost over \$2.2 billion. In the third quarter alone, they are said to have lost in excess of \$800 million and that doesn't include its now-defunct business in China, when they came to an agreement with rival Didi Chuxing to leave the Chinese market in exchange for 17.5 per cent of the Chinese company.

Yet Uber's valuation has risen to almost \$70 billion, although they are always reluctant to talk financial figures. The company are said to have generated \$3.76bn in net revenue over those first nine months of 2016, yet still lost that \$2.2 billion and no matter what it does, it keeps losing money – money that must be coming from banks and private backers who by now are probably afraid to stop the lending process for fear of what would happen if Uber were to pull the plug.

Writing several months ago, transport industry expert Hubert Horan (*see January 2017 Call Sign*) explained that Uber's current operations depended on \$2 billion in subsidies funded out of the

Call Sign presents Uber boss Travis Kalanick with an award...

Funniest story we've seen this year!



According to Uber boss Travis Kalanick, the opportunity to make money is in the trillions! In his case - to lose them!

billions pumped into the company by investors. He suggested that Uber passengers were only paying 41 per cent of the actual cost of a trip, with Uber using

subsidies to undercut their rivals in the hope of one day achieving a total monopoly.

He added that since 2012, Uber's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortisation and rent/restructuring costs (EBITDAR) has reportedly been worse than negative 100 per cent, with the total loss increasing and not decreasing with time.

Forgetting finance, Uber also has problems thanks to its total disregard of authority – TfL included, although they seem to go along with anything that app comes up with. As an example, recently Uber began testing self-drive vehicles in San Francisco, even though they failed to get a permit from state officials. Then on the first day of testing several of the self-driven cars were spotted going through red lights and committing various other traffic violations. They had previously said they had a problem with the way the vehicles crossed bike lanes.

So yes, the award must go to young Travis for his quote that the "opportunity is in the trillions!" We just aren't sure whether he is referring to profits... or losses!!

Uber: Taking one step at a time!



Uber are taking one step at a time!

TfL favourites, Uber, are apparently taking things just one step at a time as one of their drivers showed when taking a shortcut through the Broadgate Circle. Most sensible drivers would have dropped their customers at the nearest accessible point, but this Uber chap obviously felt that he should take his passengers right to the door and wasn't going to let a set of steps stop him! After all, TfL had licensed him as a fit and proper person to do whatever it was he was doing! Uber said the driver hadn't signed on to their app for some time and wiped their hands of him. The driver was reported for driving without due care but not charged.

After all, he was only taking one step at a time...!

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Roy enjoying his pipe while making a Channel 4 documentary on the London taxi trade

With the death of Roy Perkins at the age of 100 years and 10 months, the London cab trade has lost its last living connection with the pre-war years.

Most people in the cab trade will not have heard of **Beardmore Motors**, the company with which Roy was involved for thirty years, but through most of the 1920s it was the biggest maker of London taxis. Bad business decisions drove the parent company into administration, but a management buyout of the taxi making and sales companies saw pro-

ROY PERKINS



The Beardmore MkVII model that Roy once sold and then later drove

duction restart, albeit in penny numbers compared to the Austin cabs of **Mann and Overton**.

Roy suffered an injury to his leg as a child, which left him with a permanent limp. In 1938, at the age of 21, he became the first disabled man to be given a London cab driver's licence. Exempted from military service by his disability, he drove the prototype **Oxford** cab through the Second World War, covering an astonishing 300,000 miles. Beardmore Motors subsequently took over the sales and servicing of the Oxford at their premises at **The Hyde, Hendon**, but when production of the Oxford stopped in 1953, Beardmore's introduced a new model of their own - the

MkVII and Roy joined the sales staff at the Beardmore showroom in **Great Portland Street** to sell it, the only alternative to the **Austin FX3** and **FX4** to a small number of musers. He stayed with the company until 1967, when it ceased trading. He returned to driving a cab full time until 1987 when his wife, Alice persuaded him that, at 70 years of age, it was time for him to stop.

Roy was also very keen motor sport fan and until just a few years ago, also a regular pipe smoker.

Bill Munro

Earlswood Press

www.earlswoodpress.co.uk

New LCA destinations

British Airways is offering almost two million seats from **London City Airport** this summer and launching a new three-times-a-week service to **Skiathos**. This is the third **Greek** Island route, alongside **Mykonos** and **Santorini**, from LCA but is the first time BA has operated to Skiathos, a destination favoured by tourists for its many pine forests and over 60 beaches. In addition, flights to Mykonos will increase from four to five flights a week. Last month British Airways also announced the launch of a new weekly service between London City and Manchester from May.

Hopefully it will mean more taxi work to and from LCA..

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!!!

With the news that Alan Fisher intends stepping down as of next month from the editing role he will have carried out for the past 20 years and together with Dial-a-Cab's change of status, Call Sign staff have put together some information and photos on this Society's history...

A glimpse at the past...

The photo of the Board of Management (bottom right) is interesting because it was taken at the 1972 ODRTS dinner & ball – something that used to happen every year. It's interesting because it provides the last BoM with a link to very beginnings of ODRTS in 1953.

L-R: Former Chairman Jack Taylor, former Chairman Jack Russell, founder Chairman Bonnie Martyn, 1972 Chairman Martin Gellman, founder Board Member and former Chairman Frank Duncan and former Chairman Eli "Trixie" Solomons...

Every one of the group is not just a former Board Member but also a former Chairman. Bonnie Martyn and Frank Duncan were both in Bonnie's cab parked on the Grosvenor Gardens rank on Sunday 29 March 1953 where they – together with Arthur Cutmore, Doug Naismith, Albert Hall, Eric Stoffel, Alec Cobden and David Fiertag – decided that London needed an owner-drivers radio taxi circuit. Eight months later (November 1953) we were registered...

DaC / ODRTS Chairmen, Secretaries and magazine Editors

Chairmen

Bonnie Martyn	1953 – 1957
Frank Duncan	1957 – 1959
Eli (Trixie) Solomons	1959 – 1962
Frank Duncan	1962 – 1964
Jack Russell	1964 – 1969
Jack Taylor	1969 – 1972
Martin Gellman	1972 – 1976
Peter Fennymore	1976 – 1984
Ken Burns	1984 – 1990
Phil Messias	1990 – 1992
Aubrey Siteman	1992 – 1996
Brian Rice	1996 – present

Editors

ODRTS Newsheet	Bernie Lyons	1955 – 1957
ODRTS News Monthly	Joe Toff	1965 – 1969
ODRTS News 'n Views	Phil Emden	1971 – 1983
Call Sign	Jery Craig	1983 – 1997
Call Sign	Alan Fisher	1997 – 2017

Secretaries from 1953 to now

Doug Naismith
John Robinson
Eric Ives
John Bernadout
Trevor Clarke
Howard Pears



The first two editors:
Bernie Lyons (left) and Joe Toff



This DaC driver was told to park as close to the pick-up as possible!

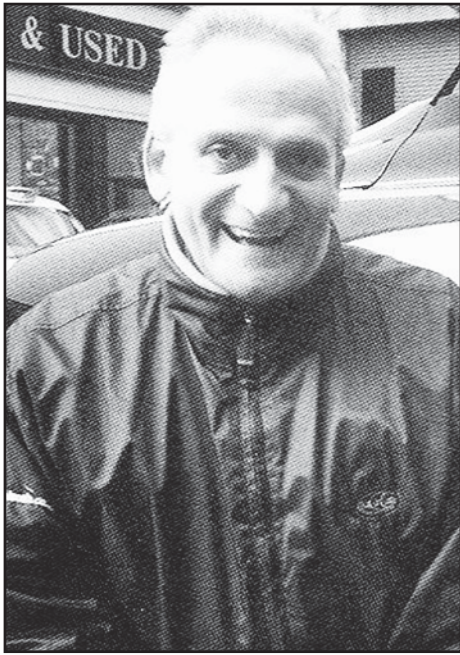
Can't think what this DaC taxi was doing outside a Soho strip club!



Those were the days! Diesel at 2/1 per gallon, which for younger drivers works out at just under 6p per litre. No wonder they were sold out!

The last BoM with a link to the beginning of DaC at the 1972 ODRTS dinner & ball





The latest in an occasional series where DaC drivers write about what they'd like to see happen to the trade. This month: Bruno Manfredi (F23) who joined DaC in July 1979...

What I wish for...

account for the damage they have caused.

Looking back on my 44 years as a licensed taxi driver, there have been a litany of disasters; starting with the type of taxis we have had to purchase, fitted with the most obsolete, useless expensive-to-run engines that could be imagined.

We have had to deal with overheating, engine fires and complete engine failures at around 70,000 miles, as many could attest to, including my colleague, Paul Hammett (V42).

Through all these trials and tribulations, we have had little or no support from our trade leaders and we're now facing a huge attack on diesel. All of this, as I understand it, is our fault!

Thankfully there are some - such as Tommy Whitford and Georgie Pool of Pool Motors - that have offered solutions and assistance to help keep us on the road.

Then there's the poor traffic light co-ordination, road works and cycle lanes that all seem to be part of a concerted effort to kill London.

If only all of our trade leaders could unite, forget their differences and implement a really serious protest. After all, 22,000 determined, angry voices might just get heard in the Westminster bubble. We have the brain power. I just hope we have the courage to fight for what is left of our future.

Finally regarding Dial-a-Cab; I hope the Board of Directors will consider sending a print-out of our yearly accounts so we can see exactly what our financial position is. Attending at the office in person can prove to be really difficult at times due to parking restrictions...

Bruno Manfredi (F23)

Firstly, on looking at what has happened to our working environment, I think it is about time the politicians and civil servants at Tfl were held to

Liverpool Mayor: We don't want TfL cabs here!

Minicab drivers are reportedly going into **Liverpool** from as far away as **London**, making money in the city and then heading home. Now **Liverpool Mayor Joe Anderson** has said he is taking steps to clamp down on the "free for all" private hire trade has formed across the city region.

The Mayor said: "We have evidence of drivers coming into Liverpool to work in the city centre. There was an Uber driver who came from **Leeds** on a match day in Liverpool and stayed to work until 3am, picking up a few hundred quid, then going back to Leeds - that does not help Liverpool. It is a free for all at the minute, with people working here who do not understand the city."

One group of local taxi drivers appeared to take matters into their own hands recently by blocking in an Uber driver who was allegedly displaying a Transport for London licence and then "escorted him out of the city!"

Now the Mayor says he is taking steps to clamp down on the "free for all" private hire trade.



Mayor Joe Anderson doesn't want TfL cabs in Liverpool

TX5 windscreens from Croatia

Lipik Glas, one of the biggest auto industry suppliers in **Croatia**, will this year start manufacturing windscreens for the new electric powered TX5 taxi.

Based in western **Slavonia** in the east of Croatia, Lipik Glas have won the contract to produce windscreens for **The London Taxi Company's** latest cab, which is scheduled to arrive by the end of this year.

Director **Danijel Zadjelovic** said: "This is a very important job because for us it is a very large quantity. The planned level of production is up to 7,000 taxis per year, which in future will make up 10% of our income."

This is not the first UK contract the company has had, having produced the glass for the **Aston Martin DB10**, famously used in the James Bond movie, **Spectre**.



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Dial-a-Cab House
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LPG conversion

Hi Alan

Would you happen to know the date that the LPG engine will be approved by TfL?

Karen Menpes (E01)

There is an update inside this issue, Karen; but you have to remember that we aren't Uber. Anything new on our side of the business has to be checked and double-checked before TfL double-check the double-checking. Uber just tell TfL they are doing something and then do it... Ed

Good question!

Hi Alan

Not sure if I'm going mad, but I don't seem to have seen anything in *Call Sign* to remind drivers about attending our AGM – usually in February – or even voting in it. Is there one this year?

Alan Nash (A95)

Company Secretary Howard Pears responds: "Dear Alan, I can put your mind at rest and you are not going mad. As a result of the demutualisation of ODRTS Ltd, there will be no AGM this year as the entity no longer exists as a mutual trading organisation. I envisage that the next shareholders AGM will be around this time next year for Dial-a-Cab Limited with an accounting period end of 31 August 2017. However, once the audited results for ODRTS Ltd for the year to 31 August 2016 have been signed off, copies will be available for inspection or if necessary, individual copies can be requested and emailed accordingly."

EC5 and the Twilight Zone!

Hi Alan

As you know, EC5 opens at 20:50 and there is a 10 minute delay between 20:50 and 21:00. For those that don't know, this was brought in when EC5 was physical and it allowed cabs to rank up on **Finsbury Square** at 20:50 and book in one after the other until 21:00 when EC5 started. All work during these 10 minutes was dispatched from their own zone. Over the years and with various operating systems, this 10 minute delay has been replicated. However, with the advent of VAD and the GPS dispatch system, this 10 minutes has now become "the twilight zone."

I don't think that the new VAD system lends itself to this delay anymore. I have found that after booking into EC5 and getting a queue position, any jobs in the EC zones between 20:50 and 21:00, instead of being dispatched from their own zones, somehow get transferred into EC5 and

because they have been redirected, do not give destinations with no reject button.

Do we need this 10 minute delay anymore? I don't think so and with GPS dispatch, why can't work in the EC zones be dispatched up to 21:00 at which time EC5 can be opened and drivers can book in, thus alleviating "the twilight zone."

Alan Sullivan (F20)

The DaC IT department now have this documented as a request. It is a rather complicated update due to ASAP and pre-bookings having to behave differently, so it isn't a quick change; but it is on their 'to do' list... Ed

Uber in Brighton

Dear Alan

It seems that **Transport for London** are earning themselves a reputation as the 'go to' licensing authority for **Uber** private hire drivers who want to work in more lucrative areas such as **Brighton**, while **London** remains saturated. Uber, the "cheap as chips get freebies while you can" ride app has been blown away - they claim - by the demand they are receiving in the south coast resort.

However, there is a slight hiccup. **Brighton and Hove Council** are proud of their strict high standards of licensing for both private hire and Hackney drivers, who all have to pass a topographical knowledge test. However, if you get licensed by a less-strict regulator such as TfL, you can work anywhere in the UK! No wonder Brighton cabbies are up in arms about Uber drivers not knowing their way around and picking up and setting down their passengers on Brighton taxi ranks!

Brighton and Hove Council have said they don't condone what is happening, but are powerless to stop it, at least for the time being. They hold TfL in a very low light.

Uber drivers are now going to the cheapest councils with the lowest standard of PH regulation – such as TfL - but not actually operating there! They were only granted an operators' licence in Brighton if they used licensed Brighton drivers but have so far failed to recruit any. Uber say their drivers are getting torrents of abuse in Brighton, just as *Call Sign* said last month and that their drivers are now being imported from London to work there.

I spoke to someone in the Taxi and PH section of Brighton and Hove Council and they told me they were powerless to stop London licensed Uber drivers going down to Brighton to work, even though they had managed to worm their way around the strict Brighton regulations! However, they do not condone and certainly do not encourage what's going on. They said we should keep an eye on the legislation, which could soon change.

Dave Heath (Ex-W27)

Brighton and Gloucester

Brighton and Hove Council have a reputation for being tough with both taxis and private hire, which is why Uber are finding life there so difficult and why hardly any of the current Brighton PH drivers wanted to join the Uber ranks. On the other hand, TfL have a reputation for being tough in London... but only with London taxis! It appears that PH can do as they wish in the capital, while more and more London registered PH cars are working all over the country.

There is also the question of whether Uber are a transportation or technological company and whether its drivers are self-employed or employees entitled to sick/holiday pay etc. The recent Employment Tribunal case brought by two Uber drivers has suggested that it is the latter while Brazil is now the latest country to say that a driver using the Uber app was an employee and entitled to workers' benefits. The Brazilian Judge ordered Uber to pay one driver around 30,000 reais (£8,000) in compensation for overtime, night shifts, holidays and expenses such as fuel, water and sweets for passengers!

Uber will undoubtedly appeal both decisions, but if the rulings are upheld, more drivers will follow suit and it will be interesting to see whether TfL relicence them next month. After all, there is a huge amount in licensing fees at stake for the authority... Ed

DaC and Southern Halo

Hello Alan and the DaC family

Wow! What a surprise! As I was looking through February's *Call Sign*, there on page 14 I read about my three granddaughters who make up **Southern Halo**. It was so nice and I thank you. I am forwarding the magazine to them and I know they will be very impressed.

Jim Moore

President/CEO RadioMobile
San Diego, California

Some years back, Jim Moore used to pay regular visits to the DaC IT department at Brunswick House as the CEO of the company that supplied and maintained part of our infrastructure when we operated on a private network, in addition to supplying and maintaining our modems. Jim's three granddaughters, Natalia, Christina and Hannah, form hot country group **Southern Halo** and recently won the best up and coming new artist group in Nashville... Ed





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