

August 2016



# Call Sign

From the home of Dial-a-Cab International



*DaC's Mark Rayner qualifies for cycling's World Championship!*

*DaC SGM: Rules carried overwhelmingly!*





# NASH'S NUMBERS

From Alan Nash (A95)

*There's nothing like knowing 'What's On' during August – a notoriously slack month. I have only listed events where the 'Burst Time' is known. For a list with about 50 other events in larger print with 'days' also shown, go to: [www.myfav.co.uk/woaug16.pdf](http://www.myfav.co.uk/woaug16.pdf)...*

## What's On - August 2016

Venue	Event	Date	Venue	Event	Date
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 23 (Burst 21:45)	01/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	13/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Swan Lake (Burst 22:00)	01/08/2016	Arsenal	v Liverpool (Burst 17:45)	14/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 24 (Burst 21:50)	02/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 39 (Burst 22:05)	14/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Swan Lake (Burst 22:00)	02/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 16:10)	14/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	02/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 20:10)	14/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 25 (Burst 21:45)	03/08/2016	Chelsea	v West Ham Utd (Burst 21:45)	15/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Taming the Shrew (Burst 21:15)	03/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 40 (Burst 21:30)	15/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	03/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	15/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 26 (Burst 21:55)	04/08/2016	Brentford	v Notss Forest (Burst 21:30)	16/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Taming the Shrew (Burst 21:15)	04/08/2016	Charlton	v Shrewsbury (Burst 21:30)	16/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	04/08/2016	Leyton Orient	v Stevenage (Burst 21:30)	16/08/2016
Fulham	v Newcastle (Burst 21:30)	05/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 41 (Burst 21:15)	16/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 27 (Burst 21:05)	05/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 42 (Burst 23:30)	16/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 28 (Burst 23:30)	05/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	16/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Flames of Paris (Burst 21:35)	05/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 43 (Burst Sold Out 21:40)	17/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	05/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	17/08/2016
Millwall	v Oldham (Burst 16:45)	06/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 44 (Burst 22:00)	18/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 29 (Burst Sold Out 22:00)	06/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	18/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Flames of Paris (Burst 16:05)	06/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 45 (Burst 21:55)	19/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Flames of Paris (Burst 21:35)	06/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	19/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 16:40)	06/08/2016	ENO	Echos of Eternity (starts 19:30)	20/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	06/08/2016	Fulham	v Cardiff (Burst 16:45)	20/08/2016
Wembley Stadium	Liv'pl v Barcelona (Burst 19:30)	06/08/2016	Millwall	v Sheff. Utd. (Burst 16:45)	20/08/2016
QPR	v Leeds (Burst 13:45)	07/08/2016	QPR	v Preston (Burst 16:45)	20/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 30 (Burst 18:10)	07/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 46 (Burst Sold Out 21:35)	20/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 31 (Burst Sold Out 21:45)	07/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 16:40)	20/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 16:10)	07/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	20/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 20:10)	07/08/2016	Tottenham	v Crystal Pal. (Burst 16:45)	20/08/2016
Wembley Stadium	Leic. v Man Utd (Burst 17:45)	07/08/2016	ENO	Echos of Eternity (starts 15:00)	21/08/2016
West Ham	v Juventus (Burst 14:45)	07/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 47 (Burst 18:10)	21/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 32 (Burst 21:40)	08/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 48 (Burst 21:45)	21/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Swan Lake (Burst 22:00)	08/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 16:10)	21/08/2016
Leyton Orient	v Fulham (Burst 21:30)	09/08/2016	Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 20:10)	21/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 33 (Burst 21:45)	09/08/2016	West Ham	v Bournemouth (Burst 17:45)	21/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Swan Lake (Burst 22:00)	09/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 49 (Burst Sold Out 21:45)	22/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	09/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 50 (Burst Sold Out 21:35)	23/08/2016
QPR	v Swindon ((Burst 21:30)	10/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 51 (Burst Sold Out 21:15)	24/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 34 (Burst 21:35)	10/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 52 (Burst 23:30)	24/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Swan Lake (Burst 22:00)	10/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 53 (Burst 21:40)	25/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	10/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 54 (Burst Sold Out 21:45)	26/08/2016
ENO	Thunderstorm (starts 19:30)	11/08/2016	Brentford	v Sheff. Wed. (Burst 16:45)	27/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 35 (Burst 20:55)	11/08/2016	Charlton	v Bolton (Burst 16:45)	27/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 36 (Sold Out Burst 23:30)	11/08/2016	Chelsea	v Burnley (Burst 16:45)	27/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Le Corsaire (Burst 22:45)	11/08/2016	Crystal Palace	v Bournemouth (Burst 16:45)	27/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	11/08/2016	ENO	Name Carmen (starts 19:30)	27/08/2016
ENO	Thunderstorm (starts 19:30)	12/08/2016	Leyton Orient	v Mansfield (Burst 16:45)	27/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 37 (Burst 21:30)	12/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 55 (Burst 21:35)	27/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Le Corsaire (Burst 22:45)	12/08/2016	Tottenham	v Liverpool (Burst 14:15)	27/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 21:40)	12/08/2016	ENO	Name Carmen (starts 15:00)	28/08/2016
Brentford	v Ipswich (Burst 16:45)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 56 (Burst Sold Out 12:00)	28/08/2016
Charlton	v Northampton (Burst 16:45)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 57 (Burst 21:50)	28/08/2016
Crystal Palace	v Albion (Burst 16:45)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 58 (Burst Sold Out 12:00)	29/08/2016
Leyton Orient	v Newport (Burst 16:45)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 59 (Burst Sold Out 21:50)	29/08/2016
Royal Albert Hall	Prom 38 (Sold Out Burst 21:20)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 60 (Burst 21:05)	30/08/2016
Royal Opera House	Le Corsaire (Burst 22:45)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 61 (Burst 23:30)	30/08/2016
Sadlers Wells	Vamos Cuba (Burst 16:40)	13/08/2016	Royal Albert Hall	Prom 62 (Burst 21:45)	31/08/2016

# from the editor's desk

## Fooling the people?

Abraham Lincoln once famously proclaimed: *You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.*

Well good old Abe seemed to get that one right when the man who famously cocked-up London as its former Mayor, Boris "BoJo" Johnson, appeared to get his come-uppance when his so-called friend, Michael Gove, decided that he didn't trust him enough to allow him to do the same to the rest of the UK as he did to its capital city.

In his first few months as Boris' successor, Sadiq Khan has already shown that he at least has a plan for London that might hopefully work – unlike Boris and his stupid bike superhighways! We may not like everything Sadiq does, but we appreciate taxis – which is more than you can say for his predecessor (see the *Mailshot* page).

But, when push comes to shove, you can't help but have a sneaking admiration for anyone who can get stabbed in the back to such a degree that it almost ruins his life as an MP... yet within a week ends up as Foreign Secretary while his backstabber goes – sorry, I mean goes – to the back of the queue! Or has new PM Theresa May found a clever way to keep Boris happy, while at the same time keeping him out of the country and far away from trouble!

## All Party Parliamentary Group on taxis

With London's licensed minicab population well into 6 figures and soon set to reach 110,000, even a cap on numbers is at least one year too late; however, it will have to come with the hope that with PH drivers suffering even more than us due to their ultra-low prices, many will just give up and numbers may eventually start to fall. Just because it's reasonably busy out there, let's not kid ourselves what it will be like after Christmas!

So when I heard that the LTDA had put together an All Party Parliamentary Group on taxis, I took notice and the more I think about it, the more I feel that it could provide us with leverage of the kind we used to enjoy and which has somehow vanished.

There is much to discuss and hopefully take forward. The subjects of 'plying for hire' and whether cars are doing exactly *that* via their company app, or the ridiculous traffic hold-ups being caused by Boris's hopeless cycle superhighways and even how much priority the taxi trade deserves, because we seem to be losing it.

The APPG will bring together an informal cross-party group of MPs and Lords who take an interest in our taxi trade. Whilst they would not have any real power to do anything, they can still undertake a wide variety of activities such as hosting an inquiry, inviting external speakers to come and brief the group on a specific issue or organising an external site visit. And with huge taxi supporter, Ilford North MP Wes Streeting there as Chairman, we know it will be taken seriously.

Also involved is Charles Walker, the MP for Broxbourne and another pro-taxi parliamentarian. In July 2015 in a House of Commons late-night adjournment debate, Mr Walker said that London had to choose between a 'chaotic' Uber or the heavily-regulated but safe black cabs, because the two could not operate side by side. He added that while taxi drivers had to pass the Knowledge as well as undergoing background and financial checks, Uber was 'brazenly ignoring rules' and flooding the capital with minicab dri-



vers. He went on to warn TfL officials at City Hall that Uber ignored most of their regulations before adding – tongue firmly planted in cheek – that if Uber was preferred, then there should be a genuine free for all, releasing taxi drivers from their current regulations regarding the vehicles they drive and allowing them to put "...any old piece of rubbish" onto the road!

In a debate held some two months later, Mr Walker was again speaking in favour of London's taxi service by claiming that there was something slightly sinister about Uber's business practices and pointing out to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, Andrew Jones, that in the USA, Uber's board had met to discuss how to discredit and destroy the career of an IT journalist concerned about Uber's business practices, before going on to add that Uber also bullies local authorities and national Governments and that they should not be allowed to bully HMG.

Also on the APPG are MPs Virendra Sharma and Ruth Smeeth as Vice-Chairs with Yasmin Qureshi as Secretary and Tom Brake as Treasurer. MPs and Lords who have been involved are Kensington and Chelsea MP (not to mention *Call Sign* reader and huge taxi supporter) Lady Victoria Borwick together with Sir Alan Haslehurst, Kwasi Kwarteng, Eleanor Laing, Andrew Rosindell, Stephen Metcalfe, Bob Neil, Dr Matthew Offord, Mark Pawsey, Paul Sculley together with Lord Selsdon and Viscount Simon.

In an article inside this issue, LTDA General Secretary Steve McNamara, says that the LTDA will be working closely with the Chair and Group officers to develop the work programme for the coming year that will likely include an inquiry into taxi and PHV regulation and accessibility. It is hoped that the programme will start in September when MPs and Lords are back after their summer recess.

No doubt some will criticise the initiative, but hey, this APPG has some real taxi supporters in it and you never know, it could help to bring to the fore some truth about what passengers are actually getting when they stand at the roadside looking at their phones waiting for a Toyota Prius and hoping it will get them to their destination without going the wrong way up a one-way street or having an accident! It's time for the talking to stop... and the talking to start! This could just make a difference...

## Oxford Street pedestrianisation

The new Deputy Mayor for Transport, Val Shawcross, is pro taxi; however, she is not *just* pro taxi and neither should anyone expect her to be. But if Ms Shawcross reads this then we must disagree with her recent comment to the London Assembly that she would like to see the two kilometre stretch of shopping overkill known as Oxford Street closed to all traffic from 2020.

In *Call Sign's* January issue, we broke the news

that Living Streets – a charity that describes itself as being 'for everyday walking' – had launched a call to the next London Mayor to pedestrianise its 1.2 miles so that it becomes what they describe as an "iconic, safe and enjoyable place to shop."

In an interview with this magazine, Living Streets' London Campaigns Manager Sarah Williams told us: "The situation is about to reach breaking point on Oxford Street. As it is, it's horrendously overcrowded but with Crossrail due to open in 2018, we're looking at a significantly bigger problem. We must act now to reduce overcrowding, sky high pollution levels and an unsafe environment. For many, the experience of crowds of people on Oxford Street puts them off going altogether. Oxford Street is a very uncomfortable place for pedestrians, leaving them feeling restricted and people say the change they'd most like to see there is less traffic. Those who do take a trip along it end up feeling flustered, frustrated and fed up. What is this going to mean for future shopping on Oxford Street if nothing changes?"

So we asked Ms Williams two pertinent questions. Firstly, how would disabled passengers get to Oxford Street if we had no access? Her answer was that there were 38 side streets along its length and we could drop them there! There was no answer regarding those who had to go right to the door or how we could even access those side streets with the huge amount of traffic that would be using them.

The second question was where would the diverted traffic go? We mentioned the always-congested Wigmore and Goodge Streets and Living Streets answer was more akin to *Dead Streets* because after suggesting the closure of Oxford Street, they told us they hadn't thought about the answers but "wanted to work with retailers, TfL, engineers and planners on making Oxford Street a place which puts walking first."

We know that Sadiq Khan is also in favour of pedestrianising Oxford Street alongside Val Shawcross and in all honesty, even we can see why they would want to do it and in a perfect world, we'd probably agree with them. But this world isn't perfect and the plan will create horrendous traffic problems the like of which we will never have witnessed before.

So is there any other answer? Of course there is! There are far too many buses using Oxford Street; most are 75 percent empty as they cruise along the narrow lanes forcing traffic to stop behind them at each stop because there isn't enough room to get past. The answer is obvious. Buses should only be allowed to go to either the Tottenham Court Road end or Marble Arch end before being forced to turn round and go back. PH (and all private cars) should also be banned and be forced to use those 38 side streets to drop their passengers. After all, they are not wheelchair accessible so have no need to go right to the door.

Oxford Street itself should be left with a few ferry buses that just go from one end to the other, a taxi service rank that will be able to go wherever the passengers want to go along the street – possibly taking four people at a fixed price rate of around £2.50 each – and delivery vans at certain times. After all, with no minicabs or cars and very few buses, these trips will take no time and the air quality will become far more acceptable

Alan Fisher  
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# Reflections of the Chairman

## Demutualisation

This seems to be the topic that most people within Dial-a-Cab - and even outside - are talking about and it appears there is plenty advice available from the *Barrack Room lawyers* outside of this Society. I have read several pieces they have written regarding the subject - some of which were in the trade press - and it is quite obvious that they do not have any idea of what they are talking about! Consequently, if any Member has any type of query on the subject, then just approach me directly and I will be more than happy to deal with any questions or indeed information you may require.

We had our SGM on 11 July regarding the introduction of **Proxy Voting** and the **Ten year rule**. I must say that it went very well, with 92.5% of the Members voting being in favour of introducing Proxy Voting and 89% in favour of the Ten year rule. It was fairly obvious to me from the earlier survey that most Members would be in favour of demutualisation, consequently, it was decided to give you the opportunity to introduce Proxy Voting and in that way you would not have to attend either of the two demutualisation meetings that are required, should you not wish to.

I have already entered into dialogue with our financial and legal advisers and we hope to have something to put before Members in the not too distant future.

**We are endeavouring to have our first of two meetings regarding demutualisation in the middle of September, albeit this is a fluid date as we are making representations to HMRC at the moment and our timetable could be compromised depending on how long it takes them to come back to us with a decision. However, in the meantime I have been working with our legal advisers on our Articles of Association and at the time of writing, we are preparing to present to the BoM at the next meeting for their approval, or otherwise.**

We are not in a position at the moment to engage an agent regarding the sale of **Dial-a-Cab House**; I intend writing to several to ask them to put together a proposal on how Dial-a-Cab should proceed, then together with the participation of our legal and financial advisers, hold a beauty parade to choose an agent to handle our business. I have seen lots of figures bandied about regarding the worth of this building, but it is only worth what someone is prepared to pay for it.

We should also bear in mind that it could have two different values, one being today's value as office accommodation and another in the future if sold with planning permission for development. The planning permission would probably take the best part of two years and cost up to £750k, but of course all options are open to us and when I say *us*, I mean you the Members, because I have made it quite clear to the legal advisers that it will be DaC Members who make the final decision on any sale and not the BoM. After all, the Society belongs to you and the BoM will hopefully be in a position to approach Members with more than one option and just give you a recommendation on



what we consider to be the best option - the decision will then be yours.

Finally on this particular topic, I have read many estimates regarding the initial purchase price of this building and they do vary quite considerably; just for the record we paid £3.7million at the end of 2006 and moved in May 2007. I still shudder when I think what was involved in the move, especially with the IT infrastructure. But fortunately we had planned it well and it went without a glitch. However, if we had to move in the future, it would be probably be easier, especially as we now have the 'Cloud' available.

## VAD Despatch

We have had several pilot schemes where we've put the new system under stress testing with the Members; you can test as much as you like on the bench, but you will never know for certain how something will work until the whole system is put under stress with the whole Fleet using it.

I must say it appeared to hold up quite well, with just a few bugs appearing that needed to be rectified by the IT department. Of course, everyone now seems to be going away for their summer holidays so it will take a little longer to implement the new system. With those few bugs ironed out, it was *Sod's Law* that you're ready to go live just as IT staff are booked to go

away on their holiday! So my best guess is we will be totally 'live' with VAD sometime in September.

In the meantime, we will be in a position to keep our current system V6 running in the background for as long as we wish and if the situation ever arose, we could switch back to V6 immediately. We will probably never need to do that, but it's nice to have it as backup should we ever need it.

## PED latest

You are probably all aware that we still have an outstanding situation with TfL regarding the siting of the PED in our taxis. I was given written permission by TfL in March 2011 to have the PEDs sited in the front of the taxi for safety reasons, then earlier this year it was decided by TfL that all PEDs should be sited in the rear of the taxi. At no time did TfL enter into dialogue with us before the decision was taken, as I could have pointed out that we at Dial-a-Cab had already sought and obtained permission for the equipment to be installed in the front of the vehicle. Anyway, after I pointed out the anomaly to TfL, I had a meeting with **Peter Blake** to discuss the situation and he promised that the topic would necessitate further discussion within TfL.

As you know, rumours abound in the cab trade and sometime later I was told that Peter Blake along with his boss **Leon Daniels** were no longer employed by TfL. Consequently, I immediately sent an email to **Helen Chapman** enquiring if the rumour was correct; she came back to me within thirty minutes to state the rumour was untrue and the situation regarding our PEDs was still under discussion.

So that is the latest information regarding the PEDs, the situation is still under review by TfL!

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

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**L**ondon now has over 100,000 licensed minicab drivers and over 85,000 PHV's, a virtual doubling of numbers in the last few years. The effect of this massive increase in numbers in terms of congestion, pollution and so many other aspects of Londoner's lives is becoming a major problem and a cap on PH numbers is urgently needed. Any cap would need to be combined with legislation covering cross border hirings; otherwise a limit on PH numbers in London would be circumvented by unscrupulous PH companies simply licensing their drivers and vehicles elsewhere before sending them to work in London.

We also urgently require a legal definition of what constitutes 'plying for hire' in order to provide clarity on what is and what is not legal with regard to app companies showing available cars on apps and accepting immediate hirings.

In order to secure this legislation and promote the taxi trade's concerns and agenda on the Parliamentary stage, the LTDA have formed an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on taxis. An APPG is an informal cross-party group that brings together MPs and Lords interested in a specific topic - in this case the taxi trade. An APPG can undertake a wide variety of activities to both better under-

# LTDA Form All Party Parliamentary Group



Steve McNamara

ing Charles Walker MP, Virendra Sharma MP and Ruth Smeeth MP as Vice-Chairs, Yasmin Qureshi MP as Secretary and Tom Brake MP as Treasurer. Outside trade organisations such as the LTDA, London Taxi Company and the apps can assist with the Group's administration and activities.

The LTDA will be working closely with the Chair and Group officers to develop the work programme for the coming year that will likely include an inquiry into taxi and PHV regulation and accessibility. The programme is likely to start in September when MPs and Lords are back from Summer Recess.

The MPs involved to date are Lady Victoria Borwick, Sir Alan Haslehurst, Kwasi Kwarteng, Eleanor Laing, Andrew Rosindell, Stephen Metcalfe, Bob Neil, Dr Matthew Offord, Mark Pawsey, Paul Sculley together with Lord Selsdon and Viscount Simon.

**Steve McNamara**  
LTDA General Secretary

stand and help raise awareness of a particular topic or issue, such as hosting an inquiry, inviting external speakers to come and brief the group on a specific issue or organising an external site visit.

The LTDA and Ilford North MP Wes Streeting - labelled the 'Honourable Member for the Taxi Business' by George Osborne after he proposed a Bill on PHV standards back in March - agreed to set up the Group. In subsequent meetings with MPs, the LTDA has encouraged others to get involved and we have been able to secure the involvement of a cross-party group of MPs and Lords, all keen to support the trade and protect its future.

The Group is run by and for parliamentarians, with Wes Streeting MP as chair and a cross-party group of officers includ-

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**Phil Buchan,**  
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### Val Shawcross on Oxford Street pedestrianisation...

## "I WANT TO SEX IT UP!"

On July 13, the Deputy Mayor for Transport, **Val Shawcross**, announced that vehicles would be banned from **Oxford Street** - the busiest and most polluted shopping street in Europe - within four years.

The current suggestion is that Oxford Street will be pedestrianised from **Tottenham Court Road** to **Portman Street** by **2020** in order to create "a more pleasant environment for shoppers." The Deputy Mayor's office announced that the project



Where will the buses go?

would be carried out in two stages to minimise disruption to businesses and public transport but that the project would be completed by the end of the decade.

Ms Shawcross told the **London Assembly** that by banning vehicles along the 2000 metre stretch of Oxford Street, she wanted to "sex up the walking agenda."

There will be a Consultation this year on what to do with London's buses, vehicles that most would agree cause the most traffic along the single lane shopping street. Oxford Street used to be much wider until the former **GLC** decided to narrow it against the advice of taxi organisations. Will buses now be forced to use **Wigmore Street** or will Ms Shawcross' office go with **Camden Council's** idea to ban all traffic except buses using those streets until 8pm each evening and send taxis into the ever-more congested side streets?

# Jery's World



“Yeah, a few blokes have asked me to be their proxy!”

## 3 MONTHS OF MAYHEM: TOWER BRIDGE TO CLOSE!

*Or as TfL put it, some minimal disruption is expected!*

**Tower Bridge** will be closed in two months' time beginning in October for three months, as the average 21,000 vehicles a day that use the 122-year-old bridge hunt around for another route. The **City of London Corporation** have authorised the job of structural repairs, including re-waterproofing the bridge archways for the first time since the bridge was built at the end of the 19th century. Its timber decking is also being updated while the road and walkways will be resurfaced.

**To add to the congestion to be unleashed two months from now and which will include the busy lead-up to Christmas, Tooley Street is closed eastbound and expected to stay shut until 2018 to allow the rebuilding of London Bridge station. Yet according to TfL, the additional impact will be “minimal.”**

The Chairman of the planning and transport committee of City of London Corporation, **Chris Hayward**, said that the decision to close Tower Bridge to vehicles was not taken lightly and only after extensive consultation and planning in conjunction with numerous stakeholders. He added that it was the first upgrade to the bridge for 35 years.

The closure will not affect the bridge opening to allow ships through nor pedestrians walking across it – undoubtedly many of those who would otherwise have used taxis but who will not be prepared to pay the huge extra cost involved in diverting. It will also cause mayhem as traffic tries to use Lower Thames Street westbound to get to **Southwark Bridge**.

The popular taxi route for many prospective passengers from the **Aldgate** area to around **Shad Thames** will probably increase by some £7 or £8 and even more if the “minimal disruption” turns out to be as bad as we expect – always assuming people still use us!

**Call Sign has no qualms about Tower Bridge’s renovation having to be done and whenever it was, we realise that it would cause inconvenience. But surely the City of London Corporation could have planned the closure either before Tooley Street closed or after it reopens. A grasp on reality is badly needed...**



From October traffic will have to find another route!

Wednesday 6 July saw Maldon play host once again to the **East London Cabbies Outing**. These annual outings began in 1952 when taxi driver **Charles Flemwell** took children with special needs from the east end of London in a convoy of 8 taxis to the Essex riverside town of Maldon. In 1984 Charles became the **Mayor of Newham** but still continued his organising of the Maldon outing almost up until he died in 1996. But his legacy is that this yearly trip continues.

Departing from the West Ham ground in Green Street with a pit stop in Mounthnessing at the George and Dragon for refreshments, the 80 taxis travelled in convoy to Plume Secondary School, where they were greeted by teachers, pupils, and Maldon Town Mayor, Richard Miller.

After lunch at Plume, the taxis drove – again in convoy - down Maldon High Street towards Promenade Park passing hundreds of well-wishers and shops that had been specially decorated with balloons and bunting.

Mayor Richard Miller said afterwards: “What an absolutely fantastic day. It was glorious weather and a spectacular event for Maldon. The youngsters all looked like they had a great time! This outing really is an important fixture in Maldon’s social calendar, a really special day, not just for the children but for Maldon as a whole. It’s just lovely to be able to work with them and put on the mayoral robes. It’s a great occasion.”

**Carl Wakefield**, head teacher at Plume added: “This was my first taxi day, it’s been in place for nearly six decades and I’d heard a

## East London Cabbies Outing

# ELCO kids outing to Maldon



The convoy travels along Maldon High Street

like this for these children.”

At Promenade Park, the children watched and took part in the entertainment that included a magic show, face painting, model balloons, a juggling show, clowns, horse riding, horse and cart rides and lots of

decent amount about it, but never experienced it before. But what an incredible event it was. The academy felt honoured to receive these cabs and the pupils rose to the occasion. Particular thanks should go to **Jean Ingram** and the whole community team for organising it all, and to the significant number of students and staff who wanted to help the cause. I’m so proud of everyone involved and am glad the academy could hold an event

other stuff including a Best Dressed Taxi award! There is also a DJ who provides music for all the little groovers!

At 6.30 pm the police escorted the convoy back to London with individual taxis taking groups right to their front doors to end yet another successful East London Cabbies Outing to Maldon...

**More info on ELCO at [www.eastlondon-cabbiesouting.co.uk](http://www.eastlondon-cabbiesouting.co.uk)**

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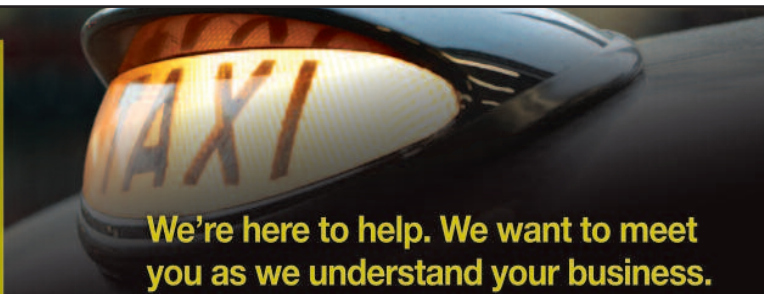
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## The Dial-a-Cab Special General Meeting

**RULE AND RESOLUTION OVERWHELMINGLY CARRIED!**

**J**uly 11 2016 will probably turn out to be as momentous a date as have been many others in the 63 year history of ODRTS / Dial-a-Cab; dates such as **Sunday March 29 1953** when a meeting took place in the back of **Bonnie Martyn's** taxi parked on the **Grosvenor Gardens** rank; or **Sunday June 7** of that same year at the **Albany Tavern** at the top end of **Great Portland Street** when a group of owner drivers led by **Bonnie Martyn** collected £200 in a whip round amongst themselves with the intention of starting a radio circuit for owner drivers only.

Then there was the first official dispatched trip on **Tuesday 26 January 1954** when a gentleman whose name has been lost with time, phoned to go from **Pentonville Road to Gamage's** – a once famous store close to where the **Prudential** is now in **Holborn**. The caller had discovered the phone number from the café across the road that was actually owned by two drivers from the new circuit and was also the place where ODRTS Board meetings were often held!

Also important was the official launch the following year on **Tuesday 8 March 1955** when **Sir Ian Fraser MP** dispatched a job and announced that ODRTS was here! Sir Ian was a hugely respected MP who had been blinded during active service in WW1 and who worked tirelessly to promote welfare for blind people and ex-servicemen. But the reason **Bonnie Martyn** – by then the founding Chairman - was prepared to wait for a year was because Sir Ian was national President of the **Royal British Legion** – an organisation that helped many war WW2 veterans become licensed taxi drivers.

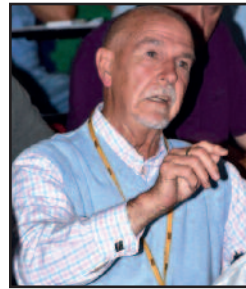
Of course there was also **Monday 11 June 1984** when this Society decided to rename itself as **Dial-a-Cab** and **Saturday 29 April 1989** when DaC made its second attempt to launch a data dispatch system after the first attempt failed. It has stayed on ever since.

Finally, there was our first home at **172 Pentonville Road**, which we bought on **Thurs 24 November 1953** for £2400 before moving onto **144 Shirland Road** (**Monday 8th March 1965**) and then to **Brunswick House** (**Wednesday 11 August 1984**) before finally landing at our current home of **Dial-a-Cab House** on **Saturday 5 May 2007**.

We bought this building outright for around £3.7million – it is now worth an estimated £18million and that was one of the reasons some 90 or so DaC drivers turned up at the **Central Foundation Boys School** in **Cowper Street!** The official reason was to pass one new Rule and one new Resolution.

**The 10 year Rule: 5(e):**

*“(e) A member shall cease to be a member if he/she ceases to be an owner or part-owner of a licensed taxicab which he/she*



**Bill Cobb, Peter Murphy and Dennis Heavin were three of the drivers asking questions**

*uses to ply for hire for all or part of his/her weekly income, save that this shall not apply where the member has completed 10 years of service as an owner driver member of the Society provided that he/she:*

*(i) Continues to pay his/her subscriptions at the rate from time to time determined by the Board of Management; and*

*(ii) rents (and continues to rent) a licensed taxicab which is fitted with the radio or other communications equipment installed by the Society and which he/she uses to ply for hire for all or part of his/her weekly income.”*

**The Resolution: To introduce Proxy Voting:**

*That Rules 9(j) to 9(o) inclusive of the rules of the Society should be deleted and replaced by new rules 9(j) to 9(r) inclusive.*

Because the new rule takes up over two pages, *Call Sign* hasn't repeated it all here, but DaC members received a copy with their 'Notice of Special General Meeting 2016' pack dated 22 June 2016. The first few sentences probably explain what the new rule is about:

*(j) Members shall be provided with an alternative to voting in person at each General Meeting of the Society. This alternative shall be either Postal Voting or Voting by Proxy (but not both). The alternative to be adopted shall be specified in the notice of meeting.*

*(k) A member is deemed to have attended and voted at a General Meeting if he/she has voted:*

*(i) By post in respect of that meeting accordance with rule 9(l) (if postal voting is available for the relevant meeting); or*

*(ii) Via a “proxy” for the relevant member duly appointed in accordance with rule 9(m) if Proxy voting is available for the relevant meeting.*

The meeting began at 6pm and opened with Chairman **Brian Rice** explaining what the meeting was about. He began by saying that the recent unofficial driver's vote to demutualise the Society had been overwhelmingly in favour of that route and that as the procedure involved more than one meeting, the Board felt that it would make life much easier for subscribers if Proxy voting was brought in so that members could then decide whether they

wanted to attend the meetings or not, as legal advice had said that the Society should not demutualise via a postal ballot as that would leave it open to a legal challenge that could make the result null and void. Proxy voting would mean you could pass your vote to a colleague or Board Member to vote on your behalf in the way you want to.

He then went on to talk about the 10 year rule and explained that the BoM felt it was reasonable that drivers whose cabs were close to 15 years old and didn't want to invest in a new cab should be able to rent a cab while keeping the Society equipment in it and still remain a member. The recent vote suggested that drivers were overwhelmingly in favour of such a rule.

Those drivers that hadn't already voted were asked to vote and while the Electoral Reform Services went through the count, the Chairman answered questions, but because the meeting was purely concerned with voting and questions on any other topic were not supposed to be asked, we will not be reporting on who asked what. However, questions brought up mainly involved the payout should we demutualise.

There were questions on what would happen to drivers whose cabs were on the verge of being 15 years old, would drivers retiring after this meeting be entitled to a share of any money received from a sale and would everyone get the same amount. One question bringing a smile asked whether anyone would be getting a “consultancy fee!”

The answers were similar for most of the questions – once the vote has been registered, then any DaC member having to rent but keeping on as a DaC member with our equipment fitted would still be a member. Also any driver after the vote who had to retire for any reason, would be entitled to their share providing that they were genuinely retired and not working for anyone or anywhere else. As to amounts, everyone from drivers to Board members had just the one share and no one would be getting any consultancy fee!

Regarding proxy voting, the obvious question was asked as to how drivers would know that the proxy they passed their vote over to would vote as the person wanted them to? The answer is that anyone wanting to vote in that way could pass their vote over to the Chairman or a colleague.

The meeting closed after around 50 minutes with the final voting results:

**The 10 Year Rule:**  
**In favour 926... Against 110**  
**Proxy Voting Resolution:**  
**In favour 956... Against 77**

*Both were carried and will be put into the rule book.*



1st July saw the 100th anniversary of the **Battle of the Somme**, the worst battle of World War One and where 20,000 British troops were killed on the first day alone. The centre of remembrance was obviously the **Thiepval Memorial to the Missing** in France, but it was also commemorated at **Westminster Abbey** with a service on the evening of 30th June. It was attended by **The Queen, Duke of Edinburgh** and the-then Prime Minister, **David Cameron**.

It was followed by an overnight vigil by both members of the armed forces and civilians around the tomb of **The Unknown Warrior** and the very first member of the vigil guard was the niece of **Jim Rainbird (T25)**, a Sub-Lieutenant in **The Royal Navy**, the 'Senior Service', who led the first watch out in front of **The Queen** and other dignitaries.

She had previously been Guard Officer during ceremonial duties while training at the **Britannia Royal Naval College** in **Dartmouth**. More recently, she was chosen for this important role. The guard was changed regularly during the night and she was on watch three times throughout the vigil. She is currently on **HMS Diamond** and has previously been on **HMS**

**Jim Rainbird's niece** passed out as an officer in the **Royal Navy** last year, but recently she was honoured in front of the **Queen, Duke of Edinburgh** and then **PM, David Cameron**, by taking part in a remembrance service to the **Battle of the Somme**...

## Westminster Abbey 'Unknown Warrior' vigil



Jim's niece on the far right with the cap on during the overnight vigil  
inset pic: Passing out as a Royal Navy officer last year

**Bulwark** whilst it was engaged in rescuing migrants from the **Mediterranean** last year.

Jim Rainbird told *Call Sign*: "My niece's

late grandfather, my dad, was a Chief Petty Officer on the aircraft carrier **HMS Illustrious** in WW2 and he would have been, as are the whole family, so very proud of her."



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# JUST LIKE DRIVING MISS DAISY!

When *Call Sign* bumped into **John Wiles (C60)** recently, he didn't look much like a happy bunny and told us why!

"I don't drive fast at the best of times, but when I suddenly heard a metallic, grinding noise coming from around the front wheels every time I applied the brakes, it didn't take me too long to figure out that something wasn't right, but as I was nearing the end of my shift I managed to complete the stint, albeit driving even more carefully than usual!

"The cab was fine while it was actually running, but at slower speeds the noise would begin to materialise. There was no tell-tale pulling of the brakes to the left or right as I applied the footbrake, so I felt confident in continuing to work out the shift. But admittedly, it was a bit like 'Driving Miss Daisy' until I got to my regular service agent, **Stanway Engineering** at **Chingford** the following morning. I admit that part of me was rather relieved that I actually made it uneventfully to E4!"

The source of John's trouble was a seized brake piston. These are sited either side of the brake disc within the brake calliper and apply pressure to the brake pads, which in turn *squeeze* the brake disc to slow the taxi to a stop when the pedal is pushed down.

"The guys at Stanway managed to free off the seized component so that it moved smoothly again, then bled the brake system of air by pumping brake fluid through the pipes, and got me back on the road with the minimum of fuss," John told us with the smile returning to his face.

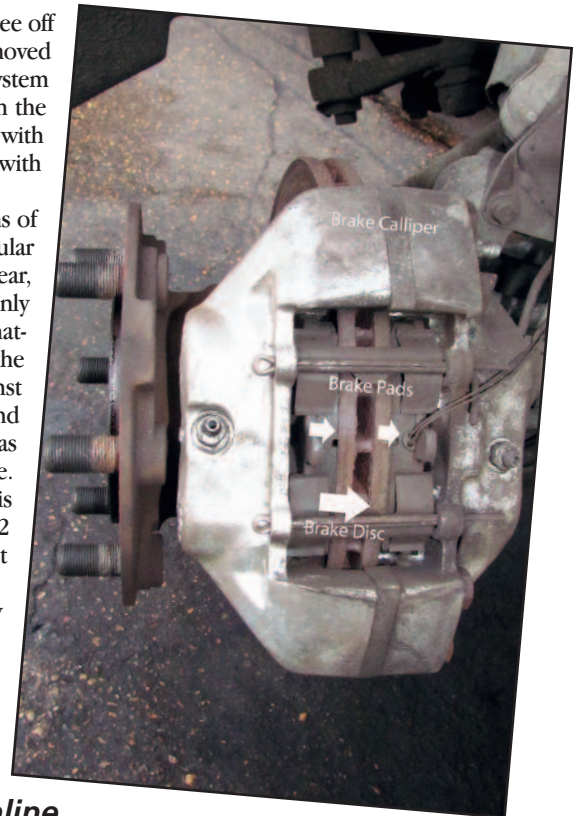
"I can usually get around 18 months of use out of a set of brake pads and regular servicing helps to keep tabs on the wear, otherwise you can find yourself not only replacing the worn pads, but if left unattended they wear down so far that the metal base of the pads can rub against the metal brake disc itself, and you end up having to replace the brake disc as well – and that's an expensive exercise.

Eighty percent of the braking effort is taken by the front brakes, and with a 2 tonne taxi you can see that they must take a lot of punishment!"

With that, John - a happy bunny again - drove off into the sunset, albeit a rather grey one!

**Stanway Engineering is at 14A Chingford Ind. Centre, Hall Lane E4 8DJ Tel: 020 8559 4988**

**Alan Green, Call Sign Online**



## THE BEST VITO EVER!

"So far as I am concerned, this must be the best Mercedes Vito taxi ever," Dial-a-Cab driver **John Davis (V41)** told *Call Sign* after road testing the vehicle at high speeds of up to 90mph at the Millbrook testing station in Bedfordshire.

Mercedes-Benz Vans are almost ready to launch their all-new Vito Taxi to succeed the vehicle that took the industry by storm when first released and which has sold over 3,000 units since that 2008 launch. This latest Vito is said to offer unrivalled levels of space and refined comfort for the driver and up to six passengers.

Currently available in a national specification only, from later this year a London specification will be available for taxi drivers that incorporates the rear steering axle to allow it to meet the 25ft turning circle, a powerful e114CDI engine with a 114hp Euro 6 engine as standard, together with the 7G-Tronic seven-speed automatic gearbox that is now controlled using a steering column mounted lever offering easy gear selection.

Standard equipment also includes fuel-saving *BlueEFFICIENCY* measures that feature an engine Start/Stop function, air conditioning for driver and passengers, electric folding mirrors, improved electrically operated sliding doors on both sides, an electrical nearside step in addition to an additional off-side step and with lighting for both.

**Steve Bridge**, Managing Director, Mercedes-Benz Vans UK, commented: "We are passionate about supporting the UK's taxi drivers and are delighted to be offering the most fuel-efficient, modern, comfortable, reliable vehicle ever seen in the market."

Vito driver **John Davis (V41)** told *Call Sign*: "I love my Vito, but this new one is even better than my one. It feels smoother, quieter and quicker – even the automatic doors are quieter! There is a solid feel to the vehicle and however much my current Vito looks and feels ultra-modern, this latest Euro 6 version is better. It also has an improved cockpit with the controls put on the dashboard in a form of a video screen, including the satnav, radio and even assisted parking – not that I need that of course! One of the few complaints I have with my current Vito concerns the placement of control buttons all over the show – but no longer!

Another bugbear of mine was the rear lighting that kept going off when you pulled away with passengers – even if they wanted to keep it on! That has now been improved and no longer goes off when you pull away, unless the passenger wants it to!

"I have to say it again – this Euro Six Vito is undoubtedly the best taxi ever to hit the road!"



**John Davis (inset) describes the new Euro 6 Vito as the best he has ever driven!**



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# Brazil Calling

## *The future is not yet written...*

This article comes five days after the first of a series of meetings and votes that you, the shareholder, will be called upon to make. Both votes, as I'm sure has been mentioned elsewhere in this issue, were returned with an approximate majority of 9 to 1, showing in no uncertain terms the direction we as Board Members have been called upon to take.

**I believe the demutualisation of Dial-a-Cab will come before the end of the year; we will then have moved from an industrial and provident umbrella to the structure of a limited company listed at Companies House. With a team of city lawyers for guidance, we will be able to direct the Society towards an outcome that I believe will be favoured by the majority.**

It is still just a relatively short time since I stood at the lectern at the Honourable Artillery Company and spoke of what I believed was the true value of Dial-a-Cab and its building; the figure I gave of £18.5million for the building was thought of as incredulous at the time, but has since been borne out by a market valuation given independently as £17.9million. This kick-started a conversation on the day that has reverberated throughout my tenure and profound decisions now have to be made – the most profound of them being whether we want Dial-a-Cab to continue?

**Radio Taxis on its merger with Gett were given a market capitalisation figure in excess of £4.3million. This figure was for the business as it stood after selling their primary asset, the building, for approximately £5million after which they then had to repay monies owed or outstanding. The buyers of the former RT site then subsequently offered it back up for sale at £6.75million! It was a reminder of what happens when you get it wrong! We, on the other hand, maintain our full value and are in considerably better shape within the market place and will be mindful not to make the same mistakes.**

The questionnaire distributed to DaC members returned a figure of 59 percent in favour of winding up the company completely...or



merging. This along with the figure of 40 percent in favour of creating a smaller leaner Dial-a-cab tells me that there is an appetite to continue trading within the market or accepting a merger. This will be open for further discussion in the near future and a merger, if preferred, will be at the behest of the membership to accept or refuse.

If we are to sell wholesale, I believe some members will be looking to the future and saying: "I don't want my income to be governed at any juncture by a company that has not necessarily got my best interests at heart." So a leaner Dial-a-Cab may offer protection.

If asked, I would say that my personal preference would be to create that smaller leaner company. Its structure would have to be appraised with fewer staff, but still maintaining its premium service and the pricing that reflects that premium product. From a premises that at a future point could again be sold with profits distributed to the members, you as shareholders would again profit.

Should the new premises increase in value, just as ours has now jumped over four times the purchase price from its 2007 figure of £4.3m up to £17.9m now, this will entice many drivers to stay with Dial-a-Cab and invest in our future together. However, if a complete sale of all assets is sought, then the best price possible must be the goal of all concerned.

As with all these options, you the driver and shareholder will determine our direction and we must be mindful to always act in your best interests at all times; after all, that's why you elected us...

**Joe Brazil**  
**DaC Board Member**

## **New Call Sign Website**

**C**all Sign has been online since the late 1990s and amazingly, its website has continued year after year with very little maintenance needed. However, it has finally been brought back to earth by no less than **Microsoft**, who told us that our website was so old that within five weeks it would no longer work after being put temporarily onto their last Windows Server 2008.

**In that time we needed to either redesign Call Sign or lose the 'search' capability. So thanks to our website master and maintenance guru, Vince Chin, Call Sign now has that new website.**

The addresses are the same ([www.dac-callsign.co.uk](http://www.dac-callsign.co.uk) or [.com](http://www.dac-callsign.com)) but everything else has been brought up-to-date. After logging on, the choice is simple with the menu easily seen at the top. It will open on the 'Home' screen where you can read the latest issue by hovering over it and clicking the PDF sign.

You can also click on the 'Archive' screen; there you will see a copy of **Call Sign** from every year. Hovering over the icon you will see the year and a message on each one to *click on here to view the monthly magazines*. Click on whichever year you want and then hover over each copy to find the month you want. Hover over the message to 'click here to see full magazine' to see the issue but in a smaller version for those with X-ray vision! Click the PDF sign to see the complete issue, but in a large easy-to-read format.

You can also just go to the 'Call Sign' screen if you want to go straight to the year you want and finally to the 'Search Call Sign' button if looking for something specific by just putting a relevant word into the search box.

**There are also issues from the 1960s/1970s and 1980s in addition to every issue since January 1998. I hope you like the new look...**

**Alan Fisher**  
[callsignmag@aol.com](mailto:callsignmag@aol.com)

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

# Brethren of the Whip



**1916**

*Continuing with my retrospective look at the cab trade of 100 years ago and the effect the Great War was having upon the drivers.*

The main complaint regarding the trade was not even of the trade's doing - whistling for cabs! A shortage of taxis had made it harder for the linkmen and porters to find a taxi for their customers. It had been an exasperating problem from before the war, now

three years on and the problem was epidemic. Large numbers of casualties returning from the front saw tens of thousands of wounded men being hospitalised in London. Many of these soldiers were convalescing and large buildings were handed over to the government to help provide the necessary care. Many of the buildings were in central London, close to hotels, theatres and restaurants and the cacophony of whistles that appeared to go on all night were severely detrimental to the health and recuperation of the wounded personnel. One person complained of a man blowing a whistle in **Courtfield Gardens** for 35 minutes after 10.30pm, a street without any taxi ranks and not likely to be used as a cut through by empty cabs.

Some places, such as the **Criterion Theatre**, experimented as

**Dunhill's of Jermyn Street** had done by using flashing lights in order to attract empty taxis. The use of telephone ranks was more widely publicised in order to abate the cab whistle menace. There were 47 cabmen's shelters, each connected by telephone, as well as nearly 200 other cab stands. When the Home Secretary eventually banned the use of whistling for cabs between 10pm and 7am, it had the desired effect of making the streets quieter again and more drivers began using the ranks.

Many saw the effect of large numbers of drivers that had volunteered to serve in the forces as the reason why there was a shortage of cabs and hence the cab whistle menace. But the problem could be alleviated if women were allowed to drive taxis. As an indication that misrepresentation of the trade is nothing new, the **Daily Mirror** published the "*Life Story of the First Woman Taxicab Driver in London.*"

The paper, like the driver **Mrs Moule**, saw nothing wrong with a person licensed to drive a taxi in **Portsmouth** working in **London** instead for the simple fact that there was more work. For four months she appears to have illegally worked in **London**, proudly proclaiming that the most she ever had in her cab at one time was eleven people!

There was a blackout imposed on **London** and this made for hazardous driving with at least eight people being killed by taxis in 1916 alone. Less seriously, **Ernest Hewlett** sought damages against the **Great Central Railway Company** after he crashed into an unlit post outside **Marylebone Station**. He was eventually awarded £50 damages but the railway company took the case to the **House of Lords** where they found in the company's favour.

## Fuel shortage

Petrol rationing was imposed for the first time during the war in 1916. Taxi drivers were originally limited to 1½ gallons per day, but this was later raised to two gallons when it was found the drivers could not possibly earn a living on such rations. They had wanted 3 gallons per day per man but this was never forthcoming. It was found, however, that if paraffin was mixed with the petrol after the engine had been started, then the equivalent of three gallons could be achieved.

Getting the mileage out of the petrol mix was another problem. The **British Motor Cab Co** had promised its drivers they would get 20mpg, but the men found the actual consumption was closer to 18mpg. Over 1000 drivers walked out on strike, which was short-lived as the company soon backed down and agreed to supply the men with the equivalent of 20 miles a gallon but with no added cost to pay for the extra petrol.

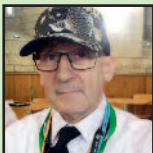
When **John McBlain** was flagged down by an Army captain and told that he would be needed to drive to several army bases, McBlain replied that he did not have sufficient petrol. The problem was solved by the captain siphoning off petrol from his own car, which had broken down, and pouring it into the petrol tank of the taxi. At the end of the job, McBlain said his fare was 9s 10d, but the captain refused to pay this as McBlain had refused to return any of the petrol - only about a quarter of what had been added was used. The magistrate agreed with the captain and McBlain was only paid 5s 8d of his fare, the cost of the unconsumed petrol making the difference. McBlain was not allowed any costs either so the petrol proved to be quite expensive in the end.

A major alert was sparked when a spokesman at a meeting in **Southwark** told those assembled he believed his taxi driver that morning was an enemy alien! **Scotland Yard** stated that all such people who had held licences had had them revoked. Given that a driver could overhear conversations or gain access to areas where the public were usually denied, there was an all-out effort to locate the enemy alien. But they found him - he was Scottish!!!

**Sean Farrell**  
Call Sign Online

Call Sign's **Marc Turner** investigates the latest news from **Camden** and asks...

## Camden Council and Tavistock Place – The End?



Thursday evening 14th July I attended **Mary Ward House** - perfectly situated in **Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury** for an exhibition of proposed revisions to the disastrous implementation of experimental traffic changes to the area by **Camden Council** last year.

There was a respectable turnout of concerned cabbies, far outnumbering the local residents. But on chatting to those locals I was surprised to hear their lives have been blighted even more than ours over the ill-judged 'traffic tinkering' that even **Camden Council** concedes isn't working! It emphasised to me that **Camden local residents** and **London's Taxi drivers** are singing off the same hymn sheet!



Cab drivers look at **Camden's** new options

They exhibited three revised plans, but only one was preferred by the taxi fraternity. It wasn't perfect, but certainly an improvement on what we and our customers are currently suffering.

We all filled in a questionnaire with the welcome option of choosing for the failed experiment to be totally scrapped and for the area to be returned to the area's original layout!

The exhibition was organised by **Imperial London Hotels** prior to **Camden Council's** Consultation document, which is expected to be in **September**.

**Marc Turner (R97)**  
Call Sign Online



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

Despite the dismal performance of the England football team this summer at Euro 2016, our passion for the game will be reignited once again just a week after this latest issue of *Call Sign* drops on your doormat! On the ranks and shelters, bragging rights will once again be claimed, while here in London we'll have an 'unlucky' 13 teams – 14 if you include that other favourite 'local' club, Manchester United!

There were, of course, plenty of near misses and the usual disappointments in 2015/16 with only AFC Wimbledon picking up any silverware. But during the 2016/17 season, I shall feature most of our London clubs and their heritage, flagging up their previous and first grounds, many having long since been victim to the wrecking ball.

Fulham may have been the very first in 1879, as many pub quiz-goers will confirm, with Charlton Athletic the most recently founded (1905). But my first trip down memory lane finds me at E14 in the year 1885. Every cab driver and Knowledge boy will be able to take you to Zampa Road SE16 or Cold Blow Lane SE14, but Millwall Football Club had four previous grounds on the Isle of Dogs before moving to New Cross in 1910.

The Millwall area was named after seven windmills that once stood on the western side of the Island on a bank of earth which kept the Thames from flooding the farmland at high tide. You can still find evidence of that raised bank if you explore the river end of thoroughfares like Cuba Street and Hutchings Street just off the West Ferry Road. The last remaining of those windmills (that ground corn) was the Wheatsheaf Mill, which gave the McDougall brothers from Dumfries the ability to self-raise flour – hence McDougall's self-raising flour. However, the grain workers became known as toe-rags because they had to cover their boots with sacking!

But it was Scotsmen from Dundee in one of the new late 19th century factories that would start up Millwall Football Club in 1885. It was at the junction of Cuba Street and West Ferry Road that existed JT Morten's canning factory which supplied foodstuff orig-



A pavement tile on the east side of West Ferry Rd north of the junction with Cuba Street

inally for the Merchant Navy. The Scottish firm, founded in Aberdeen in 1849, now only has a moderate existence in Lowestoft. Back then James Thomas Morten set up an enterprise that would eventually supply food to the Polar Expeditions led by Shackleton and Scott and was one of the principal suppliers of canned food to the armed forces during World War One.

Morten hired cheap labour from Dundee to work at his plant and it was those guys who liked to kick a football around during their tea break that gave birth to Millwall Rovers and their first HQ, The Islander, a pub in Tooke Street that was eventually a victim of The Blitz in 1940.

These Scotsmen liked to play in blue and white colours of course and once formed, began playing local sides before becoming a member of the Southern League. They would entertain islanders at four different grounds before making the move to south-east London 25 years later. The Islander was ideal for makeshift dressing rooms in those early days when the Iona - the team's initial nickname after a distinctive Scottish name - played their first season on waste ground in Glengall Road (off Tiller Road) in a neighbourhood once coined Tooke Town. Glengall Road no longer exists due to wartime bombing and redevelopment, so it is difficult trying to pinpoint its exact whereabouts.

Bigger space was found and a new pitch laid out behind the Lord Nelson pub on East Ferry Road between 1886 and 1890, but the landlady eventually requested the club move on - the pub still exists, although the area where the pitch would have been is now housing. The team were then nicknamed The Dockers after the occupation of most of their fans. They reclaimed land a little further north when the Mudchute area was cleared of its spoil from the engineering overspill of Millwall Dock.

This third home was known as The Athletic Ground between 1890 and 1901, but the smell of reclaimed mud was apparently nauseous and once caused England international Fred Pelly of Corinthian Casuals to remark: "I don't mind having a tumble on any football ground, but when I fell to the ground at Millwall, I couldn't rid the smell for weeks!"

The club were forced to move on again by the Millwall Dock Company, who wanted to use the land for a timber yard – the ASDA Superstore today covers the former home of the Southern League's first ever FA Cup semi-finalists back in 1900. But by far the Club's most successful home on the Island between 1901 and 1910 was where Millwall Park is today – and a stroll around the perimeter of the public park will reveal trace of the old terraces that once housed over 20,000 for an FA Cup tie with Aston Villa. Originally an open field with cattle, this was the last remaining patch of land for a sports field on the Island and after nearly

10 years here, the last ever game played on the Isle of Dogs was the 3-1 defeat of Portsmouth on 8th October 1910.

Morten's old factory was demolished in the 1980s when the London Docklands Development Corporation began the gentrification process of E14, and the modern high-rise yuppie pleasure dome Cascades was built on the old site.

Later on in the season I'll explain why the club decided to relocate and develop a cabbage patch on the other side of the river and also where their Lions nickname came from. I'll also counter an urban myth – probably next May when the Lions have secured promotion back to the Championship!

But next month it's over to west London to explore the heritage of a club that Dial-a-Cab Chairman, Brian Rice, will hope features in the shakeup of this season's Championship and gives him something in return for the cost of his family's season tickets – Queens Park Rangers!

*I hope your team has good fortune in the coming months! Keep reading – they may feature here!*

**Bob Woodford**  
Call Sign Online

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For those that don't know Dial-a-Cab driver Alec Wilkey (W83), he doesn't just drive a taxi but in a life far away from this job, Alec is also a much respected trainer in professional boxing with several of his Team Wilkey having picked up championship belts including the GBU Women's World Lightweight Champion, Areti Mastrodouka.

Now yet another of Alec's stable, Danny 'Cassius' Connor, has won a Championship belt when at Tolworth on Saturday 16 July he defeated tough opponent, Daniel Bazo, by a convincing 98 - 93. Danny had been boxing to order, but the fight then turned very physical with no quarter given and that resulted in both boxers being warned over a clash of heads when Bazo received a cut in the 6th round.

But Danny won through and picked up the International Light Welterweight Challenge Belt. Being a local lad, the sell-out crowd cheered Danny through the roof and created an amazing atmosphere.

Alec told *Call Sign*: "It was a great night with Danny following orders exactly and deservedly coming away with the gold!"

Alec, who trains Danny at the Lansbury Boxing Gym in Chrisp Street, went on to tell *Call Sign* that they will sit down with

## Another of Alec's stable wins gold!



Alec (left) with Danny Connor and belt, with Alec's right hand man Johnny Sparks

Danny's management team, MGM Marbella, and hopefully push him on for bigger titles next season.

**Jamie Corum**  
Call Sign Online

### TfL's message to Utility companies: Don't mismanage streetworks... or else! **TfL prosecutes second utility company in 7 days!**

Transport for London, having successfully prosecuted BT for not completing roadworks on time, have now done the same thing to Vodafone! They say this is part of their commitment to ensure roadworks are completed on time. This was the 100th prosecution of a utility company since 2010 and the second one in seven days. Vodafone's offence, which followed completion of work in Tooting Bec in January, was for failing to serve a required statutory Streetworks notice. They also failed to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice issued by TfL after the stop notice was not served. The previous week, BT was ordered to pay more than £8,000 for dangerous and disruptive roadworks.

Vodafone pleaded guilty to the offence at Westminster Magistrates Court, was fined £1,250 and ordered to pay £1,386.50 in prosecution costs. Although Vodafone didn't attend the hearing, they apologised in a letter for their "failings" and pleaded guilty. Passing sentence, the Judge said:

"Vodafone has clearly recognised the issue in this case but I am aware TfL prosecuted the company only last year for offences similar in nature to the one in issue today. I take note of the early plea but nonetheless the fine must reflect Vodafone's overall conduct in this matter."

Garrett Emmerson, TfL's COO for Surface Transport, said: "This is the second time in 18 months Vodafone has been prosecuted for failing to provide required Streetworks notices. We are committed to keeping London's roads as clear as possible preventing unnecessary traffic build up, which disrupts people's daily commute and worsens air quality. We will continue to push for the toughest penalties possible for utility companies caught acting unlawfully and are pleased that Vodafone themselves have recognised the need to improve."

The fines are chickenfeed and yes, we still have so many problems with traffic. But it doesn't do any harm for TfL to take these liberty-taking companies to court, because even if the fine is almost nothing to them, the publicity won't do them much good! But our acknowledgement of the fact doesn't mean we are happy.

In the February 2008 *Call Sign*, then Mayoral candidate Boris Johnson agreed to answer questions from Dial-a-Cab drivers. One came from Bill Kibble (K86). He asked Boris:

**"There are road works and congestion all over town, especially with the renewal of water mains. These could be completed in a third of the time if work was carried out at night as well as during the day. In many places such as the Strand, there are few residents to disturb and in any case, surely people would prefer to get work completed quicker, rather than have heavy traffic outside their houses for months on end. Is it something you would look at if elected?"**

Boris responded with this: **"We have to sort out what happens with roadworks. How many times have we all driven past a giant hole in the road left unattended? They do roadworks at night in other major cities and I will certainly look at it, yes."**

So the question is this; Boris was asked that question well over eight years ago. Since then he became Mayor, served two terms - and did absolutely nothing when it came to sorting out Bill's question - other than look at it! And as he was in charge of TfL, they cannot be allowed to think it has all been forgotten... because it hasn't! But we're hopeful that Sadiq Khan as Mayor will do a far better job than Boris ever did. If the prosecutions work and cause the utilities to get their fingers out, then that's a start.

Many of us remember the hole in the Strand that was there for so long, even Westminster Council couldn't tell us who and why it had been started by because by the time we asked, it had been filled in and emptied again by the gas company, the electricity company and the whoever had the water contract there - and all had returned more than once! The result saw the hole remain there for almost two years! We don't want a return to those bad old days! Perhaps these prosecutions are the answer to that problem at least...



Boris did nothing for 8 years!

*London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children*

# LTFUC 2016 Southend Outing

In their 88th year, Wednesday 13th July saw the fiftieth annual London Taxidriver's Fund for Underprivileged Children's trip to Southend, where 300 very excited children in over 100 taxis set out to have the day of their lives! The weather was fair and dry and stayed that way until a few drops of rain late into the afternoon.

The day began at around 6am for the Committee and drivers - including a number from Dial-a-Cab - that had to decorate their cabs at Sainsbury's (Low Hall), who kindly lent their car park once again. Before too long, the excited children began arriving via various forms of transport.

On hand to keep the children occupied as they piled into their taxis

at 10am were a number of children's entertainers including regulars Jolly Jack, the Honey Monster and Furry Tail Folk in addition to jugglers and magicians. Suddenly a big cheer went up as the first cab in the convoy left Chingford and everyone else followed for their day at the seaside.

The huge convoy arrived at Southend just after midday and drove along the sea front to be greeted by hundreds of waving onlookers, many who had left the beach area to come and watch the amazing site.

Arriving at Cliffs Pavilion, the children were met by yet more children's entertainers and the LTFUC have asked *Call Sign* to thank them all for giving up their time making the children's wide grins even wider! The kids gulped down their lunch so as to get their taxi rides down to Adventure Island for a fun filled afternoon, for which the Fund thanks the management and staff for their help and assistance.

There were vouchers for ice creams, donuts, candyfloss and drinks to help keep those grins wide - albeit rather ice-cream covered grins!

At 4.30, the tired and weary drivers and children returned to the Cliffs Pavilion for tea and a Dave Davies disco, but woke up as the music hit! Those too tired to boogie elected to sit and have their faces painted - even some of the drivers!

But all good things must come to an end and at 6pm a conga lead the children out of the room! It was an amazing outing and the smiles on the children's faces all day long were lovely to see.

Of course, without the drivers there would be no outings at all, so well done to all of them as well as the anonymous donor who covered the costs of the driver's diesel and all the sponsors. Here's to outing number 51...!



No prizes for guessing why they are smiling!



Ready to go!



Arriving at Southend - led by DaC's Colin Greaves (M91)



Sim, Malcolm and Mike together with some friends!



Another true story from Geoff Levene...

# RIO TAXIS AND THE LONDON OLYMPICS!

**R**ight now in a *favela* (the Editor says I'm not allowed to say shanty town or slum) in **Rio** or **Sao Paulo**, someone called **Joao** or similar is polishing up a battered old **Mercedes**. He's making sure all the lights are working and that there is some 'meat' on the tyres. He applies tape to the several knife slashes in the seats and paints over the many scratches and gouges in the bodywork. Finally he tests the 'Taxi' sign on the roof and steps back to admire his handiwork!

He is satisfied and ready for the bonanza that is coming. With all the money he is going to make, he'll be able to get **Maria** that new sewing machine and also repair the corrugated tin roof. The **2016 Rio Olympics** are getting closer! Well, I wish him luck. I expect we all do because if it's anything like our **London 2012 Olympics**, he's going to be sadly disappointed.

My only connections to that great 2012 Festival of Sport were firstly when two elderly Americans with Olympic accreditation went from a hotel in Southwark to... another hotel in Southwark, whilst on the very last morning I took a party to the Basketball Finals at Earls Court. And that was it. I never got to the Olympic Park. Subsequently I went once to Stratford International and once to Westfield.

But a month or so ago, a chap stopped me and wanted the Press Centre at the Olympic Park. At last! So off we went. Just to make sure, I phoned my friend **Max**.

"Turn left at the Bow roundabout," he said, "and then turn right further up."

"Can I go over the flyover and turn left," I asked in reply. He said I could but the roundabout slip road was solid with traffic, so I went over the flyover, turned left for Westfield and looked for signs. And looked. And drove. And looked. And nothing...!

I knew it was there behind a fence, but I just couldn't find a way in. Perhaps I didn't look far enough but I was getting a bit hot and I think the passenger was wondering what was going on, although he was very patient. Anyway, eventually I found myself back on Stratford High Street, found the Station and stuck him in a local cab. And I went home completely fed up. Olympic Park...you can keep it - always assuming that you can find it, that is!

Of course that wasn't the first time I've been lost. It's not even the first time in that general area. In my early days, it was at Euston when in climbed three chaps and a racing greyhound. They wanted Clapton Racetrack...or was it Hackney? Either way, I took them to the wrong one, I think I went to Hackney and it was derelict. I now had to find my way to the right place. It became what I called *a map in the lap job*. Eventually the dog started barking.

"We must be getting close," said one of the guys, "he can smell the other dogs!" I resisted the urge to suggest he should walk ahead with our four-legged friend so I could follow, but we got there in the end.

Ever since then the words **Hackney Wick** or **E9** or over the **Marshes** get me into a cold sweat! But let's face it; despite our famous reputation we can't know everywhere.

When I got my Badge, my brother asked me if there was an area that I wasn't sure about. I replied that **Fulham** seemed a bit complicated with lots of little streets. And I have to admit that although I am a life-long **Chelsea** fan, I still feel the same. When I get to the area bordered by **Lillie**, **North End**, **Fulham** and **Munster Roads**, I often don't know whether I'm facing north, south, east or wherever. Thank heaven for the mapping facility on the **Dial-a-Cab** terminal.

About a thousand years ago when dinosaurs roamed the earth and I was fairly young and even more foolish than now, I did a delivery job to Manchester one afternoon. Four packages, four places to find and two hundred miles from home amongst



strange northern folk! I had been there once before. It was 29th April 1970; Leeds 1 Chelsea 2. But enough of that...

I don't know how I found my way around. Did I buy a local A-Z? At one stage, a drunk climbed in. He wouldn't believe I wasn't a local driver so I had to take him home. But I did it

At a place called **Newton Le Willows**, a copper directed me to the motorway and I was on my way home. It makes you wonder how they managed years ago. How did the early flyers find their way around with no radios and basic maps? The first commercial flights to **Paris** started after the Great War. They were operated by **Handley Page Aircraft** and took off opposite its factory in **Claremont Road, Cricklewood**. A pilot explained the route...

"We flew down to the Edgware Road, followed the number 16 bus route down to Marble Arch and across country to the Channel."

They were simpler days.

But even with sophisticated equipment, things can still go wrong. Like the empty **Jumbo Jet** en route to Heathrow whose pilot landed at Northolt. As if that wasn't bad enough, the plane was too heavy to take off on the shorter runway so they had to strip out all the seats etc to get it off the ground! Then they painted a notice on a nearby gasholder:

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

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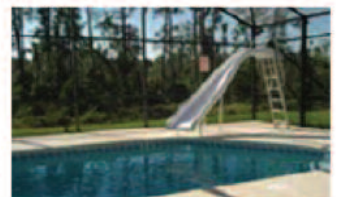
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An explosion at Maplin's or is it...

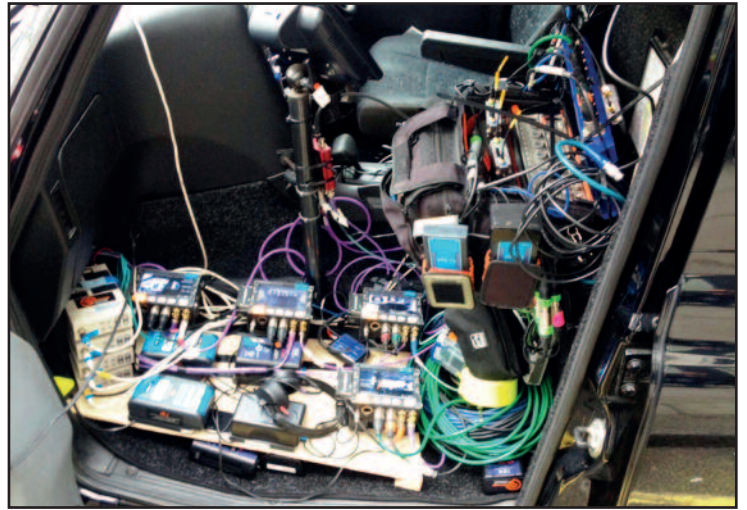
# JUST JIM RAINBIRD'S TAXI!

It may look like an explosion in a branch of Maplin's, but this mess of wires was expertly put in and taken out again of the **Dial-a-Cab** taxi belonging to **Jim Rainbird (T25)** during a film job.

Jim is often involved in filming for cinema and TV and was recently working on a feature film that because of a non-disclosure agreement, he is unable to say which one it was. The actual filming only took around two hours, but the rigging took over five! There were four cameras and three microphones installed into Jim's taxi by a rigging crew of six guys in the car park at **Brewer Street**.

He then picked up the stars of the film and was closely followed by their protection team in a second vehicle, with a third vehicle fitted with remote video screens and carrying the director and crew on board.

Jim told *Call Sign*: "I think the guys at Roman Way would have a fit if they had to install this much gear! Thankfully, it only took the film crew an hour to de-rig and put everything back exactly as it had been before. Then it was back to reality and booking into WISE!"



Wires galore for Jim's filming job

## London Taxi Company and Brexit...

# IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO US!

**T**he London Taxi Company and owners Geely have announced plans to ramp up production by the end of the decade and to sell taxis and vans to other major European cities after also adding that Britain's decision to leave the European Union would not affect its *current* investment plans.



Carl-Peter Forster: No decision until at least 2017

Chairman **Carl-Peter Forster** said that the LTC aimed to produce around 10,000 taxis and light commercial vehicles a year by around 2020, up from 1,171 in 2015.

He added: "We are currently presenting the taxi to major European cities. We've been to Oslo, Amsterdam, Paris, Barcelona and Berlin recently and based on this same platform, we will offer our light commercial vehicle with a horizon between 2019 and 2021."

Now in its new site, LTC said last March that they would invest £250 million in the new site and in October, they said it would add another £50 million pounds to the project.

Although Mr Forster also said future investments would depend on the new relationship Britain forges with the EU, he said that decisions would not need to be made until at least 2018.

"We don't have to make a decision over the next two

to three years. By then we will know exactly what the regulatory framework is and the customs and duties framework. We can then make a decision."



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# From Garry White

they will be hurting now along with their families and country men and women. I know that, like me, you will all be thinking and praying for the French people in these very sad times.

### PH regulations

New private hire regulations have come into effect and it's strange how PH drivers and operators do not like working within regulations and have now written to **Licensed Private Hire Association** Chairman **Steve Wright** asking him to contact TFL/PH to suspend the regulations because they are finding them too hard to comply with!

As we all know, if the PH trade have to meet all insurance and correct booking requirements, it hits their business model and makes them far more unattractive to the occasional worker who doesn't know his **Marble Arch** from his **Elephant and Castle!**

### VAD test

VAD was piloted last month - something no

one was aware would happen until turning on their terminals and seeing a message telling them to book-off and then re-sign in on to VAD. DaC's IT department decided that the time was right for the pilot scheme. It was only for a day, but in that short time I became used to the new functions and found them easy to work with and I'm now looking forward to it going live for real.

### The gold standard

Trying to think about something positive to write about our trade with all the turmoil going on at the moment is challenging. However, you the drivers are what has given us our **Gold Standard** tag over the years and when talking to Knowledge boys and girls, the examiners at Transport for London are still making sure that before they receive their Bills, they are fully equipped for challenges of what this job entails.

The advice I would give to new taxi drivers, if asked, is to respect what you have learned, dress appropriately for work and join a union or trade organisation, because these are the people that work on our behalf with TFL/PH.

### Plying for hire

Defining 'plying for hire' is something that we need to get recognised in law; disruptive technology companies have blurred this by the way they operate, with TfL unwilling or being prevented from stopping E-hailing, something which is rightfully ours by completing the KoL at great personal expense to ourselves.

*Hope you all have a great summer...*

**Garry White**  
DaC Board Member

*Hello Ladies & Gents*

### Nice and Bastille Day

I'm writing this article on the morning after the terrorist attack in Nice, France, on Bastille Day. This was truly shocking to watch on TV news coverage or listening on the radio as it was happening with customers getting in and out of the taxi, while trying to explain to them in my own words what was happening without causing too much alarm.

The French taxi drivers have supported us in our problems with disruptive technology and

*Simon Scott is one of the new generation 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

The recession of the early nineties was biblical; the trade went from boom to bust almost overnight. At the time of writing, the Bank of England interest rate is set at 0.5%. On the 16th September 1992, the BoE interest rate was raised from 10 percent to 12 percent and later that same day, it was raised yet again to 15 percent! Some licensed taxi drivers were already up to their eyes in debt when it struck and many lost cabs or homes, with some losing both.



### Shady punters in the dark!

It was in that economic climate that I felt I had to take some drastic measures; so I decided to work nights instead of days. I'll never forget the first dark shift I worked. I set out with an air of optimism, after all, how bad could it be?

It was two men that flagged me down in **Hackney Road**, I decided to pull past everyone to establish just how much they'd had to drink and so I ground to a halt around two car lengths passed them. One of them slowly shuffled up to the nearside window and said: "Back up, don't turn around and angle that rear mirror up."

I felt the urge to accelerate away, but needs must and those needs were the money! As I pulled level with them, a third one appeared and he didn't look well at all. A voice just told me to go to A and E and to make it fast! With that, they helped him into the taxi and he slumped onto the back seat. Meanwhile, 'Mr Charisma' blocked my view and scowled at me every time I looked over my shoulder to check for traffic. I had a habit of leaving the radio on, but switched it off on this occasion as I was desperate to find out what was going on. They were mumbling and muttering to each other and even shouted at me to hurry up.

Eventually we got to the hospital and I got the same careful advice as before, but with the additional advice about grassing people up and watching my back etc. They almost lifted him out of the cab and shuffled off towards A and E. I turned around to check the back of the cab and couldn't miss the pool of blood across the back seat that had begun dripping onto the floor. I glanced back at them... they had forgotten to pay me!

Recession or not, there was no dilemma in my mind about chasing them for the fare, I just drove away as fast as I could and went to see **Doug Sherry** to get the cab cleaned up. The job had cost me money, but I learnt a good lesson. Trust your initial instincts... they are usually right!

*To be continued...*

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

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**T**ony Cabral is not a cab driver, yet he goes well beyond the call of duty as regards standing up for the London Taxi trade.

Tony hails from Madeira, coming to London as a young man and hoping for a new start. He entered the catering industry where his affinity with 'London's finest' blossomed. He worked in and eventually managed the **Piccolo** eatery in **Hertford Street W1**. He grafted many a long hour and always appreciated the bonhomie and banter of his cabbie customers.

After fifteen years, Tony came to the conclusion that as a grafter, he'd be better off working for himself rather than tirelessly for others. So nine years ago Tony took on a new challenge, becoming proprietor of the **Astral Café** in **Regency Place SW1**. But where Tony differs from others that serve our trade is that he is passionate enough to down his apron and pick up a placard to join trade demos, as we legitimately protest against the unjust treatment we have received from TfL and Government.

Tony has attended UCG demos, while of late **Dads Defending Daughters** has also been a cause close to his heart. Tony is the father of two daughters and was horrified to learn of a recent **Daily Mirror Freedom of Information** revelation of 154 PH sexual

Call Sign's Marc Turner meets a non-cab driver who cares passionately about this trade...

# MEET TONY CABRAL



Tony doesn't just serve the cab trade, he cares about it as well...

collections for trade charities for nigh on 24 years. He told me that he is proud to have met/befriended and been a service to so many cab drivers over the years.

So if you find yourself in the locality of the Astral Cafe, look inside, you'll be greeted warmly...

*The Astral Café in Regency Place is open from 6am to 10:30pm, Monday to Saturday*

**Marc Turner**  
Call Sign Online

assaults in the last year, including 32 rapes that involved Uber drivers (*Are we missing something - July Call Sign*).

Seventy percent of Tony's custom comes from cab drivers; he has shared our trade's trials and tribulations as well as organising

*Regency Place is open from 6am to 10:30pm, Monday to Saturday*

A spin-off of Oxford University's Mobile Robotics Group, UK Tech firm Oxbotica launches...

## Driverless vehicles software!

We talk about it, but it always appeared to be so futuristic that it probably wouldn't really affect us as taxi drivers – that was until late July when Oxford-based technology company **Oxbotica** launched its new **Selenium** mobile autonomy software solution with a purpose built concept vehicle at the **Culham Science Centre**. In English, that spells out driverless software!

Selenium can work in pedestrianised environments, as well as roads and motorways and is *not* reliant on GPS to operate it – meaning it can easily transition between indoor and outdoor settings, over ground or underground. The system has been developed to be *vehicle agnostic* – meaning it can be applied to cars, self-driving pods (eg for campuses and airports) and warehouse truck fleets.

The software was developed by **Oxbotica's team of leading UK scientists, mathematicians and engineers** and is able to provide any vehicle it is applied to with an awareness of where it is, what surrounds it and, with that knowledge in hand, how it should move to complete a task.

The system uses patented algorithms that give vehicles a next generation level of intelligence to autonomously perform a range of mobility tasks, including motion control, braking, calibration, navigation, static and dynamic obstacle detection. Selenium is set to be deployed at a series of autonomy trials.

**Will the system be able to work in a taxi one day? It may not be today, but tomorrow's today is yesterday...**

Google are still testing, but at around the same time as the Oxbotica announcement,

**Rolls-Royce** revealed its vision for the next generation of luxury vehicles with the **Vision Next 100**. This RR is stylish but also futuristic. However, the two-seater was missing something - a steering wheel or in fact, any controls whatsoever! It actually lacks any obvious control mechanism for a manual control, but obviously anticipates a driverless car-filled future. And if RR is experimenting, then it's gonna happen. The only question is when...



**Michael Toomey**  
Call Sign Online

A Google driverless car being tested. Now RR are following suit while Oxbotica has developed a software program

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**“Yes, I was deeply disappointed, but my wife was even more so,” Bob Lashmar (B21J) sighed to Call Sign’s reporter.**

“My wife and I had taken two major international holidays in recent years to celebrate firstly, our 45th wedding anniversary by way of a cruise around the Baltics visiting many countries in the area, and then the following year another ‘trip of a lifetime’ to mark our joint birthdays with a cruise around the Med, including Spain and Gibraltar.”

But Bob and his wife went on the two holidays, so what could have gone wrong? A rather sheepish look appeared on the Dial-

# I nearly lost them all!



Bob's disaster with digital photography

done in the digital age, whereas in the old days of film it was far less common to ‘lose’ pictures unless the back of the camera was accidentally opened and then an entire roll of film would be lost due to unexpected exposure! Sometimes you just can’t win!

Alan Green said: “In the age of digital cameras and other electronic devices, it pays to take many images so that if one or two are accidentally deleted, there is a good chance the bulk of the images will remain. It is also good practice to take several memory cards with you on major expeditions such as holidays or significant events like weddings and family gatherings, so that if a memory card does fail for whatever reason, you can swap it quickly and continue to shoot images. Also, always use a memory card of slightly larger capacity than you think you might need, because you will almost certainly end up taking many more images than you thought you would! Oh yes, and always take spare batteries of the correct type for your camera / device to avoid failure that could stop you taking any images at all!

“Most digital devices offer the opportunity to delete one image at a time rather than several images in one go, giving the user a chance to stop and think before actually pressing the ‘delete’ button, so you do get the ‘are you sure?’ moment to check before committing your images to dust.”

Alan Green ended by saying that users should always read the manual and added that he very rarely deletes images ‘in camera’ and preferred to check them all on his PC first before deciding which images to discard. Then he burns the remaining images onto a CD...

**Alan Green  
Call Sign Online**

## IS THIS THE TX10? MAYBE NOT!

**As we prepare for electric taxis, this is the launch of solar-powered vehicles!**



How will a top-hatted gent get in!!!

**A**t the Hanergy Chinese base in Beijing, they are currently working on a car that harnesses power purely from the sun. These solar powered vehicles do not need a plug-in recharging point but can operate with just 6 hours of sunlight, which will get the car up to 80 kilometres a day.

On July 2, Hanergy revealed four purely solar-powered vehicles where the thin-film GaAs double-junction solar cells on the cars’ surfaces convert PV power to electricity.

Will they supply the taxi market? Well the vehicle seems somewhat low to cover the rule about gentlemen wearing top hats fitting in; and much as we hate to say it... six hours sunshine in a month might even be pushing it!!!

**Michael Toomey  
Call Sign Online**

a-Cab driver’s face when he explained...

“Well, I guess I wasn’t really concentrating fully on what I was doing, but somehow I pressed the wrong button on my digital camera and accidentally deleted very many unrepeatable images from our journeys! Although I did take a small number of pictures on my phone - so there was at least *something* to remind us of our global adventures - it wasn’t really much consolation,” Bob said!

So with the peak holiday month of August rapidly approaching, editor Alan Fisher turned to resident Call Sign snapper Alan Green for some pointers and even he confided that it had happened to him on one occasion! However, he’d saved the day by some quick thinking and taking many ‘safety shots’! But he admitted that it was easily

## Dial-a-Cab Credit Union

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# Bike lanes are literally killing us!

**Call Sign**, along with most of the taxi trade, has long claimed that London's bike Superhighways were undoubtedly the worst idea to have come from TfL under the auspices of former Mayor, **Boris Johnson**. We, on the other hand, are still suffering with the bike lanes as we watch more and more passengers get out and walk.

Now our belief has been turned into fact with recent data provided via sensors from the King's College-led London Air Quality Network at 30 sites around London, showing that the worst clouds of toxic particles, which have been linked to the early deaths of thousands of Londoners, are found in the Square Mile.

How often have you been stuck in **Farringdon Street** struggling to get to Blackfriars Bridge looking around you at a main road that has been destroyed so as to give a huge amount of the road to cyclists? Well, the sensors showed that one stretch of Farringdon Street had higher levels of fine particulates (PM2.5) than even the northern approach to **Blackwall Tunnel** – and anyone living southeast will tell you what that's like every morning. But the part of roadway between **Smithfield** and **Fleet Street** has been deemed the worst in London, except that it isn't just mornings, it's pretty much at any time!

PM2.5s, which are found in diesel fumes, easily inhaled and absorbed by the human body – have been linked to lung cancer and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. An estimated 9,500 Londoners are killed each year by long-term exposure to fine particulates and nitrogen dioxide.

**Dial-a-Cab** Chairman, **Brian Rice**, told *Call Sign*: "I often go that way when going back to Waterloo in the evening and the traffic hold-ups - both north and southbound - caused by bike lanes are absolutely appalling. The worst part is that they are man-made and show no thought whatsoever for motorists. Sitting in the jams daily, it doesn't surprise me about the levels of poor air quality. Of course, you could try Waterloo Bridge as many try to do – except that the number of buses using Aldwych makes that one of London's worst bottle-necks in the City! The report's findings do not surprise me in the slightest and even now I just cannot understand why a section of road users that pay nothing are given so much priority over motorists who pay a small fortune in fuel and taxes."

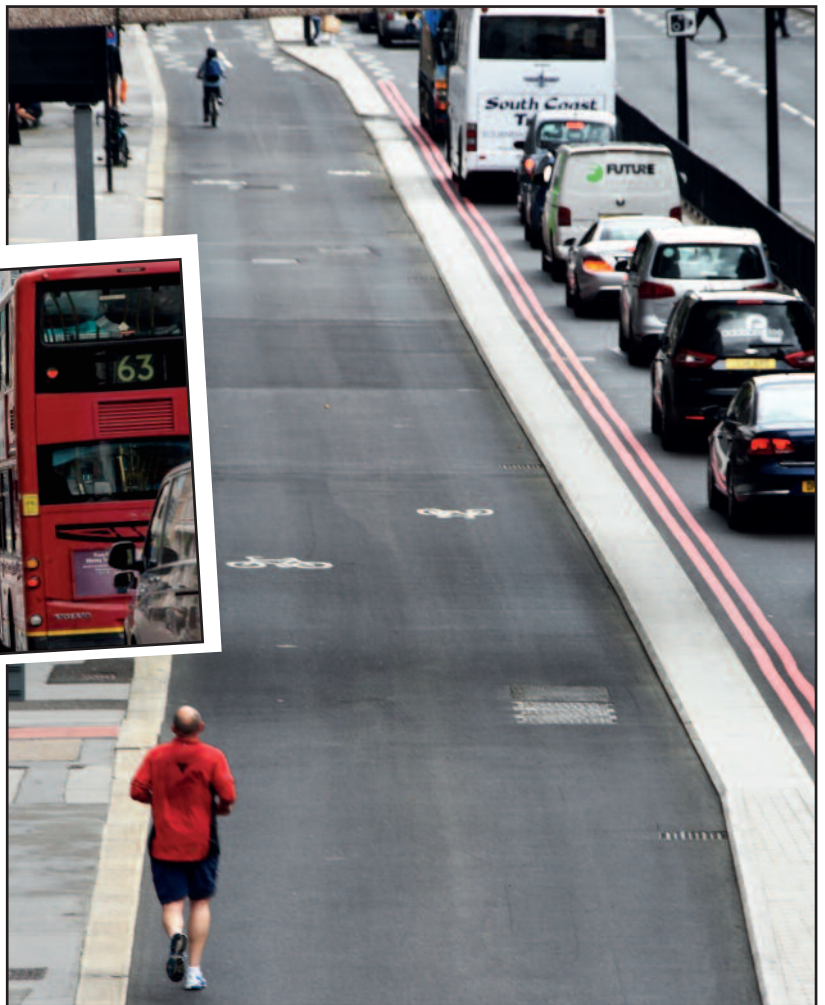
The report, which went to the City of London Corporation's audit and risk committee, said:

*"The City experiences some of the highest levels of air pollution in the country. The main source is diesel vehicles, particularly buses, taxis and vans with a contribution from boilers, other combustion plants and also construction activity."*

Although the report added that not all the City's pollution actually originates within its boundaries, we have no doubt whatsoever that the extra pollution is there because of traffic caused by the cycle superhighways – witness eastbound along **Lower** and **Upper Thames Street** right up until midnight and sometimes even later - yet the **City Corporation** blame everyone and everything else except the bike lanes claiming that they are battling pollution by banning idling engines, introducing a 20mph zone, creating a City Air app and agreeing with Addison Lee to go 'electric only' in key areas in the Square Mile – not to mention ask-

ing staff in City companies to cycle, walk or run to work!

Everything except to dismantle cycling superhighways and accept that London is a major capital city that needs motor vehicles to get around. And while we all 'hum and ha... people are dying.



Lower Thames Street at lunchtime towards Tower Hill with its usual hold-up, while the cycle lane is almost empty with just a single bike and a jogger in view!  
inset. Farringdon Street VHT for yet another bike lane

**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**

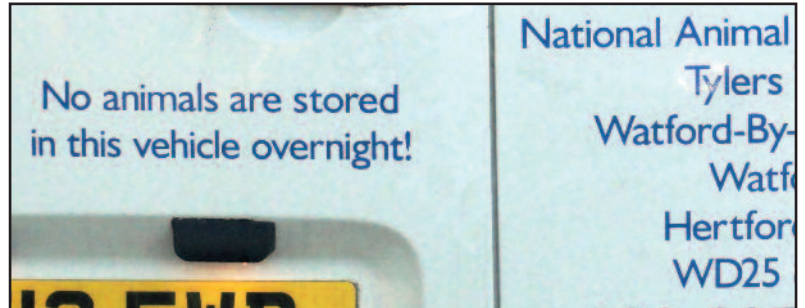
Hard copies £8. Electronic versions to Dial-a-Cab drivers are £5 per copy. Orders via Driver Services with payment deducted from your DaC account.

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

# Sign of the times!



We live in an era of 'signs' where what used to be serious messages are now written with an amusing slant attached. Call Sign's photographer, Alan Green (E52), has been out and about with his Brownie and picked out a few of his favourites from the streets of London town...



Sent them all to Colonel Sanders?



The truth sometimes hurts!



Just what is the world coming to!



Only their umbrellas and phones...!!!

## Island Ranks

Two new Island ranks have been appointed for a trial period of 6 months. **Junction Road (Archway station)** is from 19:00 to 02:00 for Green badge and Yellow badge (Haringey) drivers and **Clapham High Street** is from 19:00 to 07:00 for Green badge and Yellow Badge (Clapham extension area) drivers.

### Call Sign August 2016

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**Printers:** Premier Print Group, E6 6 LP  
**Design:** Aldan Publications  
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The medal that signified Mark has qualified for the World Championships

Mark Rayner took part in the UCI Tour of Cambridgeshire and in doing so qualified for the World Amateur Cycling Championship - not bad for a 58 year old taxi driver!

## MAKING HIS MARK!



Mark on the Tour of Cambridgeshire ride

**M**ark Rayner (V57) has been on Dial-a-Cab for over 20 years and appeared in *Call Sign* several times over the years for his cycling exploits - mainly involving charity rides. This June, Mark entered the *Union Cycliste Internationale Tour of Cambridge* bike ride after being asked to help complete a team to raise sponsorship money for a cancer charity.

Mark was happy to help and even at 58 feels fit and always ready to cycle. But in fact, so well did he do on the UCI

Cambridge ride that his finishing time of 3 hours 56 seconds for the 85 mile course meant that he has qualified for the cycling's Amateur World Championships in his age group!

The UCI Tour of Cambridgeshire is different to any other mass participation UK event because it caters for anyone - whether they are Olympic standard racers or just the guy next door who wants to test himself on the Cambridgeshire countryside where the roads are closed

for the day and do it against some of the world's best cyclists.

Mark trains regularly on his bike around the Wickford area and occasionally pops down to the Surrey Downs either to train or compete. But the World Championships are another matter altogether.

"I very much doubt that I'll be there this year," Mark told *Call Sign*. "The problem is that it's being held in Australia and that's one hell of a journey. But if I can qualify for next years' World Championships, then I'll certainly give that one a go as France is somewhat more accessible!"

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**W**ith the peak holiday periods of August and September fast approaching, there comes a timely reminder to *Call Sign* from our **Roman Way** techie team to hopefully save you grief on your return to these shores, when re-starting your cab after a week or two on the **Costa Lotta**... or wherever.

“Naturally, with their human batteries recharged, drivers are keen to get back to work and possibly without much thought simply jump into the cab, switch on the ignition and hit the starter motor,” Depot manager **Dana Thananjeyan** said. “But if the cab battery is weak, perhaps a year or two old, or an electrical device has been accidentally left on, the battery will be drained and have insufficient power to kick the starter motor sufficiently quickly to bring the engine into life.

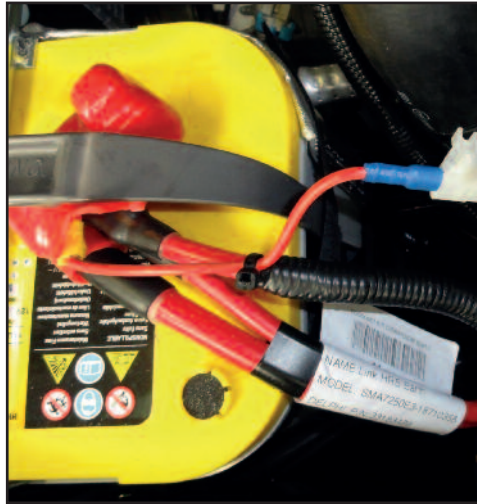
“Diesel engines take a lot of power to turn over, especially when cold or left for a long period of time and anything else electrical is denied power while the starter motor demands everything a battery can offer to the detriment of everything else” Dana added.

“So a ‘jump start’ from a third party is usually the only option and that’s when we hear that the cabs’ MDT is not working,” he said with a sort of half smile.

“The chances are that the main ‘in-line’ fuse that we fit to protect the delicate data system electronics has blown due to the power surge of the third party battery and drivers then pay us a visit to sort out the problem,” he continued.

“So my advice is to *physically remove* the

# Defused taxis!



**TX fuse (in cab) and the Vito fuse (on carpet) should be disconnected before a jump start**

fuse from its holder before leaving the cab idle for any length of time in order to prevent damage to the *Dial-a-Cab* equipment, while also making life easier for the driver.

“On the TX models, we fit the in-line fuse close to the battery in the engine bay, while on the MB Vito the fuse is located close to the MDT on the side panel of the central console for easy access,” Dana advised.

“Drivers regularly attend here with power

issues and with the passage of time drivers do not recall just how long a battery has been in service. So we also suggest gently scratching the date of fitting onto the battery casing as a reminder of how long a battery has been in service. Of course, always keep the battery terminals and connections clean to prolong service life,” Dana said as he returned back to his real job of being in charge at Roman Way..

**Alan Green**  
Call Sign Online

## St Fiacre of Breuil

# Patron Saint of Taxi Drivers

**This month (August 18th) sees the 1346th anniversary of the death of the Patron Saint of Taxi Drivers, St Fiacre of Breuil.**

Born in Ireland at the end of the sixth century, he died in August 670. Ordained as a priest, he retired to a hermitage on the banks of the Nore in what is now **County Kilkenny**. Disciples flocked to him believing he could achieve miracles, but his only wish was for the solitude to pray and in 628 he went to **Meaux** in France where **St Faro** held episcopal sway. Faro gave him a site at **Brogillum (Breuil)** surrounded by forests. Here Fiacre built an oratory in honour of the **Virgin Mary**, a hospice in which he received strangers and a cell in which he himself lived apart. He lived a life of prayer, fast, vigil and the manual labour of his garden.

Disciples gathered around him and soon formed a monastery where his fame for miracles was widespread. He was said to have cured all manner of diseases by laying on his hands; blindness, polypus and fevers are mentioned and especially tumours or fistulas.

His remains were interred in the church

at Breuil where his sanctity was soon attested by the numerous cures wrought at his tomb. His shrine there is still a resort for pilgrims with bodily ailments.

The French cab derives its name from him and he has since been known as the Patron Saint of Taxi Drivers (and gardeners). His feast is kept on the 30th of August.

*Thanks to The Catholic Encyclopaedia for the info...*

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**Tony beat the passenger's satnav!**

**"There used to be a Knowledge School that used the motto: East to West, Embankment's best. But, of course that was before the former Mayor's cycle super-highways," Tony Fahey (C44) told Call Sign.**

"So when an American business man got

# DaC driver v Satnav!

into my cab at Cannon Street asking for Burlington Gardens in W1 while holding his mobile phone in my direction, I suspected he'd been checking the destination location and sure enough he then said 'this WAZE app says 32 minutes via Embankment!'

"So that's when I decided to do my own thing and began planning the route in my mind pretty quickly and almost as a challenge, I told the passenger that I could get him there quicker!"

With the passenger nodding in agreement, off they went.

"I knew the traffic would be bad going his way, so I suggested using Ludgate Hill into Old Bailey, along High Holborn, Saint Giles High Street, left into New Compton Street sliding down Saint Giles Passage

into Shaftesbury Avenue, lining me up with Wardour Street, Noel Street and through Great Marlborough Street. I turned left onto Regent Street, right into Conduit Street, left into Savile Row for Burlington Gardens and there we were!"

Tony grinned proudly as he told us what we assumed he would – they had cut the Satnav's prediction by around 8 minutes!

"The passenger was delighted and I simply smiled, thinking that while technology does have its place - and yes it can be useful - there is no substitute for experience and for me, it was all in a days' work!" With that, Tony drove away to look for his next challenge as a licensed London taxi driver...

**Dennis Latchett  
Call Sign Online**

## Minicab clocking putting passengers at risk...

**New research and investigations from automotive experts HPI and consumer group Licensed Transport Uncovered.com (LTU) has revealed that private hire, minicab and chauffeur customers are at risk due to an epidemic of clocking, with hundreds of millions of miles being removed from odometers across the UK every year.**

HPI and LTU have teamed up to warn of the dangers that clocked private hire, minicab and chauffeur-driven vehicles pose to the public who may be unwittingly putting themselves at serious risk every time they use one. The illegal practice of clocking revealed by an LTU investigation, takes place when drivers look to cut corners by saving on maintenance costs and deliberately defraud second-hand car buyers, when the vehicle is sold on. HPI, the UK's leading authority on vehicle checking services, estimates that used car buyers have a one in 20 chance of purchasing a vehicle with a mileage discrepancy, with the practice costing motorists £800 million every year according to OFT figures. An LTU investigation found hundreds of PH, minicab and chauffeur-driven vehicles in the north west of England operating with clocked mileage. Post private hire usage, some vehicles went to dealers and were offered for sale at inflated prices.

**The investigation found that one driver removed 114,000 miles from his Toyota. A Mercedes-Benz with 180,000 miles off the clock was on sale for £20,250 when it was really only worth £11,150 with its true mileage reading. In the worst case found as part of the investigation, a staggering 460,000 miles had been removed from the odometer of one private hire vehicle.**

**Chris Hargreaves**, of LTU, says: "Clocking within the private hire, minicab and chauffeur industry has reached epidemic proportions and something needs to be done to prevent this unscrupulous practice before a real tragedy happens. The 330 clocked cars we found had about 80 million miles removed, but that was just in the north west of England. UK-wide it's safe to say that hundreds of millions of miles must have been wiped out thanks to clocking. It's truly shocking to discover that reputable leasing companies are giving out lease agreements to the industry based on as little as 10,000 miles per year – 27.3 miles per day!"

HPI and LTU believe that as pounds and pence increasingly take precedence over public safety a major clampdown is urgently required.

**Barry Shorto**, head of industry relations at Cap HPI, said: "Our valuation data conclusively shows the potential cost to dealers and motorists of the clocking problem. With clockers able to add thousands of pounds onto the value of a car, unsuspecting buyers stand to lose out, as do dealers. That's why we advise retailers and consumers alike to conduct a vehicle history check to spot a mileage discrepancy before they buy. It can be almost impossible to tell a clocked vehicle just by looking at it, which makes a vehicle history check an even more vital form of protection for buyers.

**"A clocked vehicle could be hiding serious levels of wear and tear, especially if it has been previously used as a high mileage private hire vehicle for a couple of years, meaning the additional cost of unexpected repairs or even a potentially serious safety threat to driver, passengers and other road users. An HPI Check can help protect consumers from buying a vehicle with something to hide, saving them cash and keeping them safe."**

The HPI Check includes a mileage check against the National Mileage Register as standard, now with over 200 million mileage readings. HPI also confirms whether a vehicle is currently recorded as stolen with the police, has outstanding finance against it or has been written off, making it the best way for consumers to protect themselves from fraudsters looking to make a fast profit.

Barry Shorto added: "Not only should dealers make conducting mileage investigations an integral part of their business process, to protect their reputation and their customers they need actively to promote the fact to their customers that these checks have been done. Our data confirms that consumers are seeking peace of mind against clocking, yet some dealers are choosing to overlook this. Proof of a mileage check should be a key part of a dealer's sales strategy, promoting the quality of their stock, as well as highlighting the dangers of clocking for their customers."

As part of its investigations, HPI found that whilst almost one in three (29%) of used car buyers are believed by dealers still to be unaware of the risks of clocking, more than one in five customers now ask dealers, directly, for proof that they have validated a vehicle's mileage. However, despite growing consumer awareness of the dangers of clocking, only ten per cent of dealers surveyed said they actively declare that they have conducted a mileage check on a vehicle, vitally weakening their sales proposition.

Over 52 per cent of dealers said that consumers who enter their showrooms do know about clocking, but the level of concern varies significantly while 92 per cent of dealers consider clocking a 'terrible' blight on the industry and a major risk to its reputation.

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

## Hadley Wood Golf Course

Looking back at my golf course reviews over the past year in *Call Sign*, I realised that most were from south of the river so I will redress the balance this month with the wonderful Hadley Wood GC.

**Dr Mackenzie**, the course designer of Augusta and Cypress Point etc, created a very good and enjoyable test of golfing skills. All Mackenzie courses are rather good and Hadley Wood certainly doesn't disappoint. We played it on their **Twilight deal** – which is exceptional value and extremely well worth doing.

The course itself is immaculately kept, with bunkering just recently having been refurbished to the original design. The course is not overly long and has some very large greens, which may make you think scoring will be easy; but believe me when I say it isn't! The greens are exceedingly fast and undulating. Ten feet below the hole is far better than ten feet above it!

The signature hole is probably the par 3 10th. It is 185 yards across water and very picturesque; but my favourite hole has to be the short par 4



Hadley Wood GC

16th. Elevated tee shot across a valley to falling right to left fairway, leaving a precise shot in, with a touch of draw to a green guarded by bunkers front left and back right! It is a clever and interesting hole that tests your shot-making abilities.

Play it on the Twilight deal, I can't think of a

finer way to spend an evening in the height of summer and for an exceptional price...

Happy golfing

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

## not a cartoon!

*In Jery Craig, Call Sign has the best cartoonist in the trade and page 6 wouldn't be the same without him. But real life can occasionally be just as funny as a cartoon and here are three examples of real life cartoons that only cab drivers would understand...!*

Taxi driver to passenger: "Upper and Lower Thames Street are always solid with traffic... which is why we used Eastcheap instead...!!!"



The last time anyone gave me Wild Beans to eat, they made me far too much!"



Minicab 1 to minicab 2: "It must be your fault because my satnav told me to go straight on!  
Minicab 2 to minicab 1: "No, it must be *your* fault. My satnav told me to pull out!"  
Policemen to both: "Er, I think you're supposed to watch the road and not your satnavs!"



### Keith Reading

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"Yes, it's been a long time coming back to the start," Charles Levy (R61) told *Call Sign's* youngish reporter.

"I first applied to join when the ODRTS offices were in **Pentonville Road**, but was turned down because I hadn't yet actually started on the **Knowledge of London** so couldn't drive a cab! I was very keen to become a part of the brotherhood; my cousin, **Charlie Rubin** – who died in 2009 - was already a driver on the circuit in those days. He would later become the Control Room Manager at **Shirland Road** and he told me to stick at it and encouraged me all along the way until I did finally did get my All London 'Green Badge. I immediately joined **Lords** as it became known because of the local telephone exchange prefix."

Charles, remembering everything, continued his story: "I worked nights and trained up on radio procedure with the night dispatcher **Johnny Thwaites**. He was quite a character, I can tell you! In those far-off times, the fare meter would change to a higher tariff between midnight and 6am, so on the stroke of 12 o'clock Johnny would call out: 'Tally-Ho gents, Tally-Ho!' That was his midnight call and drivers would know they were on overtime and to put the 'extras' on the clock.

"I'm coming up to 50 years in this trade and during that time I've done every aspect of the job from driving to radio dispatcher, Knowledge Instructor and anything else that has been thrown at me. I even worked a cab in Southend for a year, but had an uneasy experience when a passenger pulled a knife on me and so I have every reason to be very grateful for that bullet-proof division between the passengers and myself as fitted to the London taxi. But after many years with another radio taxi company, I feel I have

# Full Circle!



Charles Levy has come full circle



Charles cousin Charlie Rubin

'come back' to old friends," Charles enthused, clearly recalling the camaraderie that is the hall-mark of ODRTS / Dial-a-Cab of today.

"Over the years I've been to many places, as you would expect after a lifetime of working a taxi on the streets. However, there are two particular journeys that stand out in my mind. On one occasion I went to **Cardiff**. Having set the passenger down at some early hour of the morning and being very tired, I thought it too dangerous for me to continue home directly, so I stopped at a car park on the A4 and offered the attendant 10 shillings (50p) to wake me up after four hours sleep. Refreshed, I continued on to home. I take life a little easier nowadays," Charles told us with a wide grin.

"The other journey turned out a little more complicated due to the fact that the dispatcher on my previous radio circuit had quoted the

passenger £46 to go from **Liverpool Street station** to **Swindon** in **Wiltshire**. But it turned out to be **Swinton** in **North Yorkshire** and the punter steadfastly refused to pay more than the quoted figure! Those were the days when we used voice radio, so somewhere along the way the passengers destination must have been misheard. Nowadays, with digital signals and trip details on the terminal screen, it minimises mistakes and makes life much easier.

"So here I am, having come full circle. When I started out all those years ago I sat and listened to voices dispatching trip offers, and now, here I am re-training in the digital age! To put it mildly, changes within our taxi industry have been momentous during those intervening years...!"

**Jamie Corum**  
*Call Sign Online*

*A personal message to the Editor of Call Sign*

## What do you mean by even me?

Dear Mr Fisher

It has been brought to my attention that in a recent edition *Call Sign*, something you laughingly refer to as a magazine, you stated that: "Anyone would make a better Mayor than Boris - even Bonzo the gorilla..."

Well thanks a lot! It is really very hurtful that you find the idea of a gorilla being Mayor of London so amusing. Contrary to what you seem to think, my colleagues and I are capable of far more than just swinging through trees, eating fruit and leaves. And to be honest, I'm fed up with that diet anyway. If you lot – who claim to be our cousins - can eat steak and chips, why can't I? And if David Attenborough turns up just once more, I swear I'll do time! Anyway, back to Boris...

Have I ever been seen with my hair all over the place? No. Would I walk around with my shirt hanging out of my trousers? Never. Ride a bike without wearing a helmet? Of course not.

Yes, I will admit that I have fathered children by different mothers, even without a bike to get around at the moment, but then so has the blonde-haired one. And now that he's in charge of Foreign Affairs you can probably expect a few more. And I've got another gripe; when people complain about **Uber** the cab trade tends to say that if you pay peanuts then you get monkeys. Since when has that been a bad thing? Mr Fisher, I demand you apologise for your remarks and promise not to repeat them. Otherwise I will cancel my account and you will be hearing from my lawyers - Ape Mann & Co.

Yours sincerely

**Bonzo (trained by Geoff Levene W32)**

**PS As distinct from BoJo**



Bonzo doesn't just eat fruit – he fancies steak and chips whereas BoJo doesn't like fruit... or crash helmets!





Jaweid Iqbal called the converted cab brilliant



Richard Gough is the lucky person who road tests it regularly

July 20 was one of the hottest day of the year with temperatures up at around 33C (almost 92F), but that was the day **Call Sign** had organised its Open Day for drivers to come to **DaC House** and ask questions to the four experts we had on hand about the possibility of converting their older cabs to **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)** and to take a test drive on a converted TX2.

With work beginning to pick up, there was always the possibility that drivers would just go to work instead to try and claw back some of the money they had missed over the quiet times. But not a bit of it with an estimated 120 drivers coming along between 11 and 4pm. Some just came to take a look at the three LPG cabs lined up with their bonnets and boots open, others just wanted to ask questions while a large number took up the offer of test driving the gas cab and **Richard Gough**, the proprietor of **Rent a Taxi** in **Epsom** and the person currently road testing the cab, took out three drivers at a time to keep queues short!

**Jaweid Iqbal's (D65)** comments were typical throughout the day. He told **Call Sign**: "It was brilliant and I'd love to drive one permanently! I drive a TX1 and bearing in mind that this conversion was only a TX2, the difference between the two is astronomical. This one is so quiet, sounding similar to a car. I just hope this passes before my TX1 passes into history..."

Board Member, **Joe Brazil**, also took a turn and was similar to **Jaweid** in his praise saying that it was more akin to a car engine and felt similar to the TX4 but quieter.

"It wasn't as fierce at pulling away as you

# Gas cabs come to DaC...



The converted LPG cab returns to DaC House after another test run



Ian Macdonald (C64) thought it was excellent



Drivers could wander round to all 3 LPG cabs, ask questions and go on a test drive

would expect because some LPG vehicles do tend to be overly fierce, but this seems well matched so far as torque goes. It just has a lovely feel to it and accelerates as though it was a petrol engine. It think it's considerably better than my cab!"

**Richard Gough** told **Call Sign**: "I run a taxi garage in Epsom and have been road testing this TX2 LPG cab for some time and I'm hoping to be able to market them once passed by TfL. I'm used to driving TX4s and this converted TX2 is just so much better. It's light to drive and extremely economical with around a 20%

fuel saving. It also gives a life span of 20 years rather than the current 15. It will give drivers with older cabs a completely new experience of driving taxis..."

With **Roger Kensit (W31)** there to represent the **DaC Credit Union** and give any interested drivers an idea of how much repayments would be if drivers used **DACCU** to pay for the conversion (a four year deal to borrow the £9,800 would cost around £65 a week – considerable cheaper than renting), the day was more than useful and helped some drivers realise that there might still be life in their cabs after 15 years...

**Alan Fisher**  
Call Sign Online

# Mailshot

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

## Credit cards

Hi Alan

So it's 10 weeks since the credit card charge of £8.40 per week was added and I have done a few quick sums on my credit card takings. In those 10 weeks I have taken £630.70 and in those 10 weeks I have been charged £84 - or just about 13.5%. Verifone currently charge 3.95% per transaction, which would have come to £24.90. So it has cost me £60.90, or £6 per week, to have the credit card facility - which still does not always get a signal. I have lost 2 fares totalling £12.80 because of that, but which I did not add to my figures. A comment would be appreciated...

Simon Johnson (A32)

Allan Evans replies: I have read your letter Simon, but I still believe that after October we will see a larger increase in card transactions, so I would therefore assume that your card trips and takings will follow suit. TfL did factor in the extra 20p on every flag fall in the recent fare increase and although you compared your costs to Verifone (charging 3.95%), it is interesting to note that we are now seeing a reasonably high number of these fares in excess of £100 every day, trips to and from Heathrow as an example, which would incur quite a lot more than the £1 presently charged. So in the scheme of things, the present charges that the Board agreed on compare pretty favourably to the others out there in the market place.

## Selling DaC

Hi Alan

So the majority of members have decided to call it a day and dissolve Dial-a-Cab. As a 31 year veteran, I do feel sad but I think the writing has been on the wall for some time. All I will say is that I think we need to initialise this process with the upmost expediency, not only to cash in on the property prices in Silicon Valley, but also of the uncertainty over Brexit. I would respectfully urge our Board to proceed with all due diligence.

Alan Sullivan (F20)

Hi Alan; the voting also suggested the possibility of merging, so your use of the word 'dissolve' could be somewhat premature. But it isn't just by accident that DaC is worth such a lot of money, so I think we should trust those who got such a good price for selling Brunswick House, which then allowed us to pay cash for DaC House and which in itself is now worth around £18million. See Brian Rice's column on page 4 for an update ...Ed

## Is Mayor Khan better than Boris?

Hi Alan

Sadiq Khan has been in charge of London for several months now. Do you know if he has mentioned taxis in any positive way yet as against just doing a Boris; ie calling us wonderful and then doing absolutely nothing to help us other than to stab us in the back, killing the trade with his cycling Superhighways?

Alex Constantinou (N05)

I asked the Mayor's office and this is what Sadiq Khan told us: *"Black cabs are such an essential part of London's transport network and the wider economy, their special status needs to be formally recognised and secured in policy. This is why my new Transport Strategy, which is currently being developed, will include an explicit commitment to protecting and maintaining the taxi trade, which will help address the concerns raised by your writer."*

In return, I believe we need to go out of our way in order to stay in his good books ...Ed

## Taxis and bank robbers!

Hi Alan

Just read the *July Call Sign Online* and I particularly enjoyed the article on PISS (Doc Martin episodes have been broadcast here on North Dakota PBS and I bought my wife five series of it as a birthday present). PISS is my new favourite taxi company name, even better than Spittle Taxi (which is fictitious anyway!)

I always enjoy Sean Farrell's Brethren of the Whip articles. The latest one on taxicab bandits adds more evidence of the impact of the automobile on crime with respect to both the victimisation of drivers and the use of taxis for criminal purposes. As far as I can determine, crime in horse cab days involved mainly luggage robberies and the transport of stolen goods. Drivers were rarely attacked. Kellow Chesney's Victorian Underworld has a few cab anecdotes in it; also see Cab Hold-up Affair on the [www.taxi-library.org](http://www.taxi-library.org) site. The use of cabs in bank robberies has become a standard tactic. I googled 'bank robbery' and 'taxi' and got 261,000 hits! In practically all cases, the driver is an innocent victim and frequently unaware as well. We had an early case in Manitoba in 1913. A bank robber named Krafchenko hired a 'livery car' to take him to and from a robbery in Plum Coulee, MB. The unfortunate bank manager chased after Krafchenko and was shot dead in the street. Krafchenko was hunted down and

arrested, escaped from a Winnipeg jail with the connivance of his lawyer and a jail guard, was eventually re-arrested and ultimately hanged. The driver knew Krafchenko and there was suspicion of his involvement, but he was never charged.

In other news, I tracked down the owner of an FX3 in Stonewall, Manitoba but haven't yet been in touch with her. She apparently owns a gift store in Stonewall but doesn't seem to have an email address so I have written a note to her via some friends who live there. I also found an ad for a second FX3 (judging by the license plate) that was offered for sale in 1978 at about the same time as the Stonewall lady bought her FX3. Hopefully she knows something about that one too.

Best wishes to all at Dial-a-Cab

Norman Beattie

Brandon, Manitoba, Canada

Norman is Call Sign's man-in-Canada when it comes to the history of taxis ...Ed

## Goodbye with memories

Dear Alan

I can top Patsy McCarthy's membership by almost five years (*July Mailsbot*) but my eyes and body - not to mention roadworks - have forced me to call it a day! But I leave with some great memories!

Who remembers our account with the BBC going to Brentford, Ealing, Denham, Hayes, Alexandra Palace and the TV Centre. And then there were our accounts with Mr Millichipe (who lived in Hampstead Garden Suburb), Robin Day, Paul Ross and Terry Thomas. Many other stars of TV, cinema and sport hailed my taxi off the street; stars such as Shirley Bassey, Ed Sullivan, Sidney Poitier, Colin Cowdrey and of course George Best who was always going to or from his Chelsea home in Oakley Street.

Then there were some great stalwarts of his Society such as Jack Taylor, Dennis Samuels, Manny Conway and Dave Kupler. And who remembers Ray Roberts and Peter Fennymore. They would all have been saddened to read that in reply to Patsy McCarthy's letter, Board member Garry White wrote that he could have gone to another circuit to make it worthwhile. Garry, ODRIS, Lords and Dial-a-Cab has been our whole working lives; nothing else mattered. Perhaps that is something you may not yet understand.

Finally, may I wish the Board, drivers and staff the best of luck for the future...

Gerry Webber (Ex-E11)



## Mailshot

Thanks for the letter Gerry and I'm sure everyone connected to DaC including *Call Sign* wishes you a very long and happy retirement. After 50 years (Gerry began at Pentonville Road in 1962), you have undoubtedly earned it! But I think you have misunderstood Garry's reply to Patsy. He didn't say he should have gone elsewhere, what he said was that his 50 years was a great achievement and that it must have been worthwhile or he would have gone elsewhere. That's not really the same thing.

My personal thanks for all the interesting letters you have sent to the magazine, Gerry, and the best of luck for the future ...Ed

### Another nail in the coffin???

I've just come back from a week away with my cousin and her husband. While away they bought a new Samsung J3 Smartphone; no big deal there, I hear you say. As this was the first Smartphone they had used and knowing I'm a Samsung user, they asked me to set it up for them with ringtones, contacts - all the usual stuff you would expect.

Now onto the Apps; you may know that

some apps are preinstalled and some that you don't need. These are called bloatware. Well, to my horror on the Homepage of this new Smartphone was the Uber app staring at me. Thinking about it, Google own the Android system, they also own Uber. So they have decided to preinstall that app on their mobile phones. From a business point of view, it's a smart move; but for the licensed taxi trade and the radio circuits, it's another nail in the coffin.

I'm a forty five year member of DaC and have never known things to be so bad as they are at the moment. The apps have won the war. We are just a tourist attraction...

Pat Keefe (G01)

The problem was always about finance. Of all the radio circuits, DaC have been by far the best managed over the past two decades and even now, with things not going well, we still have several £million in the bank. But even when we had anything up to approaching £10million, for the licensed taxi trade it was a fortune but out there in the world of Google, Virgin and co, even £80million is a drop in the ocean and we were always going to be up against it one day. But hey Pat, they've thrown everything at us and we're still here. And tourist attractions? Yes, but only because we're the best and that is something to be proud of ...Ed

### Shalom

Hi Alan

I never miss an issue of *Call Sign Online* but of late I have been rather shocked at talk of Dial-a-Cab selling the business, with the proceeds - which sound substantial - being shared among the drivers. The share-out is fine because those that have stayed with DaC through good and bad times deserve to take something out of the business, but things seem to have taken a turn in that direction very quickly. What went wrong, because after all these years ODRTS and our days at Pentonville Road are still in my blood. Shalom...

Jack Solomon (Ex-B96)

Eilat, Israel

Hi Jack, I think the answer can be put into one word - competition. The competition is everywhere; then you have Uber whose drivers are knocking themselves out for a pittance! But hey Jack, we're still here! And Shalom to you ...Ed

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  
1989

## DIAL-A-CAB FLASHBACK

This Flashback goes back to 1989 and something the trade had never seen before...

From *Call Sign*, July 1989...

### A matter of DaC mechanics!

Dial-a-Cab driver **Alan Fisher (F07)** made a phone call to **Redbridge Technical College** at the tail end of 1988 regarding their advertised mechanics course. He asked whether there were any for licensed taxi drivers as there were many of them in the surrounding Redbridge area. The answer was no, but that he should try **Barking Tech**...

So Alan arranged a meeting with the head of Barking Tech and asked why they couldn't run a taxi driver mechanics course? The answer was that no one had ever asked before! So Alan asked and was told that if he could get 10 drivers interested, then the college would find a teacher and set up a course! Alan had the message put out on the radio and 20 drivers put their names down for what was to be called the **Dial-a-Cab Mechanics Course**. The term would culminate with a *City and Guilds* diploma for successful candidates under the stewardship of teacher **Mike Martin**.

However, word about the course got out and a delegation from **Computer Cab** approached Alan asking if they too could go onto the course. So he dropped the DaC prefix and the course became known as the taxi driver's mechanics course. With news of the added drivers reaching the rest of the taxi trade, it began running with four classes each week at Barking Tech.

At the recent **1988 DaC AGM**, Alan met up again with **Mary Leaming (C44)** who was not only the first woman to go on the course, but was also the first person to pass it and gain a **City and Guilds 3830** and the **Valeting 4001** exam accreditation. Mary told *Call Sign*:

"I remember thinking that Alan's idea was brilliant and put my name down as soon as I heard about it. I had always tinkered with our car, so I wasn't totally green as to what the various parts did, but I found the theory part of the taxi course to be much easier than the practical side. When actually working on the cab, there always seemed to be something in the way of whichever part you were trying to get to! But I must say I enjoyed doing it and was so grateful that someone had thought of the idea. And yes, I was proud of gaining my *City and Guilds* diploma."

And does Mary still do all her own mechanics?

"No, I take it to the garage!"

And Alan? Well as the founder member, he was also the first to give it up. Why?

"I didn't like getting oil on my hands!"

The only real downside we heard was that they made a lousy cup of tea!!!



Mary Leaming was first to get a City and Guilds accreditation on the mechanics course



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