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TOGETHER IN ELECTRIC SCREAMS:

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TAXI

www.ltda.co.uk
8th February 2022 #509

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RANK SUSPENSIONS

The following two ranks will be out of service or partially suspended:

- 5281 Strand (Charing Cross Station Feeder rank), whole rank suspended until 18:00 on Monday 28 February to facilitate trial hole survey work for a HVM project.
- 5496 Russell Street (Hilton Olympia), front 10 meters of rank suspended until 16:00 on Friday 25 February for sewer cleaning.



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DRIVER RECRUITMENT FOR POETRY PROJECT

Poet Dan Simpson – himself the son of a black cabbie – is looking for seven drivers from across London. One driver will be recruited from each compass point of the city (minus the SE), to be paired with one of London's poets from the same area. You and the poet will work together to create a piece of work. This is a paid opportunity courtesy of funding from Arts Council England. Contact Dan for more details at: dan@dansimpsonpoet.co.uk.



WITNESS APPEAL

On the 30th December 2021, on the taxi rank that serves the Winter Wonderland on Park Lane, there was an incident after 17:00 hours involving a female black cab driver who was driving a grey Mercedes Vito and was on point and had refused to take a passenger and their children on a journey. As a result of this, an incident happened which involved a second cab driver who was of West Indian origin driving a black TX4 model taxi. The second driver was behind the grey Mercedes Vito on point. We would be grateful if any drivers who witnessed this incident contact John Luckhurst on the number and address that appears below. In particular, we are interested in tracing a female cab driver who witnessed the incident whose badge number is: 76304.
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Public Sector Return to Work Reluctance?

“We have noticed a marked increase in the number of members receiving inaccurate accusations of moving traffic offences or allegations of failing to stop after accidents...”

Steve's comment

A recent addition to the services we offer to members is the ability to undergo an online speed awareness course here at Taxi House. We initially thought that some members would not have the necessary computer or IT skills and would welcome some assistance in completing the course. We never realised however, just how many members are undertaking these courses and how popular the opportunity to take the course during the working day, with minimal downtime, would be. As a result, the available slots quickly filled up and we have now set up another room, appropriately named Gibson Square, to work alongside the original Manor House. Any

member who needs help booking or completing a course should call us on 0207 286 1046.

Inaccurate accusations

We have also noticed a marked increase in the number of members receiving inaccurate accusations of moving traffic offences or allegations of failing to stop after accidents. The primary reason for these errors is sloppy work from CCTV operators who enter the wrong registration number into a report – which then sets a process in motion which can be difficult to stop ahead of a court hearing. Any members caught up in this sort of nightmare should contact us the moment they receive any allegations or requests for driver details, before responding, so that our legal team can advise you. The same advice also applies to any requests for interviews from the police or TfL for ANY reason. We have the best in-house criminal solicitors and advice anywhere, which is totally free to all members, please use it! ■ LTDA

Public sector return to work reluctance?

It's so good to, once again, see London coming back to life, albeit very slowly. The weekend and social work levels have recovered much quicker than the business and daytime work, but it is getting better and hopefully will continue as more people return to the workplace.

The LTDA has been open and working normally from Taxi House for the majority of the pandemic – we tried working remotely for a short period, but quickly recognised that to provide the 'Rolls Royce' service our members expect, we had to be in the office and meeting members in person.

Some of the banks are insisting people come back in five days a week and others are adopting a hybrid system for now, although more and more employers are beginning to recognise that for many, working from home does not live up to the hype. The often quoted “*I get more done at home*”, whilst true for some, is a complete myth for the majority who find time during their working day to do housework, get the shopping done and even squeeze in an episode of *Homes under the Hammer* or their own daytime TV of choice.

Talking privately to friends and neighbours, they openly share their working from home secrets, such as putting a baked bean can on the keyboard of their computer so that their employer can see the PC is in use – meanwhile they are walking the dog, doing a bit of DIY or popping to the shops. It's an open secret on social media often highlighted with codes such as WFH (working from home) and a sleeping or sunbathing emoji!

The really fascinating bit is that whilst the private sector is gradually recognising the failings and problems associated with home working and asking staff to return to their offices, having to literally drag some staff back to their desks, the public sector is showing few signs of any enthusiasm for returning to normal. Quite why those with guaranteed jobs and wages, all funded by the taxpayer, should expect to be treated differently to those who pay their wages is a mystery. Try getting an appointment to see a GP – the pandemic for them was seized as an opportunity to avoid seeing those annoying patients, and most doctors now rely on an e-consult system whereby everything is done remotely and seems designed to stop patients ever actually meeting their GP. Something some doctor's receptionists have been trying to do for years!

Town Halls are now mainly empty as Council office staff come up with excuses for not supplying services, whilst sitting at home. The massive backlogs in planning applications, parking permits and almost every other council supplied service is evidence that staff working from their sofas doesn't work for the Council Taxpayer.

In Whitehall, some civil servants are openly rebelling against instructions to come back into the office, with some even arguing that because they moved during the pandemic, now live outside London (apparently the Cotswolds are a favourite), that it's too far to come to work! Surprisingly though, it's not too far that they want to keep their London salary and benefits.

It's no different with TfL staff, all meetings are now held remotely with the vast majority of them rarely coming into their desks. With Taxi and Private Hire, despite repeated requests from the taxi reps to return to normality, a Zoom or Teams meeting is still the only option offered, even though its widely recognised as a poor substitute for a face-to-face meet. The mayor repeatedly tells the media he is keen to see London recover, and businesses do well, and he recognises that for many service-related suppliers this success is directly linked to footfall. Quite how this ambition can be achieved with the majority of his own staff rarely, if ever, venturing into the office is never mentioned.



The newspaper of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association

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8th February 2022 #509

LTDA SUPPORTS MEMBERS IN SPEED AWARENESS COURSE ACCESS



Never a Bad Day, 'Insert Name Here'

"We will still have to deal with the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and other ridiculous road schemes implemented by people who shouldn't be allowed near a Scalextric set – let alone this City's Road network."



Top rank

6

As you read this, we should be coming out of the annual early kipper season and a working shift in the cab should be nearer to a 50/50 split between good ones and bad ones from the 75 bad 25 good we all usually experience at this time of year. I say 'we all usually' experience as I'm sure like me, we all know those one or two drivers that despite the fact that absolutely everyone else has had an extended downturn during the kipper, they've had roader after roader – followed by a job home. They will within your circle forevermore be known as 'never a bad day (insert name here)', how I wish we were back to those days when 'never a bad day Pete' was the biggest wind up we had to face.

Re-entering the real world

The next couple of weeks will hopefully see that 50/50 split turn more positive and we will once again have more good or decent days than ones we wished we had never gotten out of bed for. Plan 'B' has now been given the 'heave ho' and we're firmly back to the plan 'A' that brought about some good work levels in the autumn of last year. Whether the decision to leave plan 'B' behind was those in power realising it was extremely detrimental to the economy or just a convenient way of deflecting away from 'party gate' who can be sure, but it is a positive for all those

industries like ours that rely on people getting out of their pyjamas and once again entering the real world. Whilst it will not immediately be the full return to the office, we had before the lockdowns, I believe it will be a good strong return throughout this year. That, along with international travel restrictions lifting or becoming easier and the return of overseas tourists to our streets (especially our friends from the Middle East), should mean a good spring and summer to come.

Detrimental schemes

Of course, unlike the days of old when the only annoyance in our day was listening to 'never a bad day', we will still have to deal with

the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and other ridiculous road schemes implemented by people who shouldn't be allowed near a Scalextric set let alone this City's Road network. With driver numbers currently low, if we do see work levels return to those seen before Christmas we could (and if the poll conducted by TaxiPoint is any indicator it will) see many drivers choosing to stay as far away from certain parts of London like the City, Islington, Camden and Covent Garden as they can. That will be good for drivers' mental health as they will not need to deal with the multitude of problems these boroughs have inflicted, but it is not good for Londoner's or

our trade long term.

Two schemes that have been extremely detrimental to our trade, the Bishopsgate A10 Corridor and Tottenham Court Road are once again being put out there for all to make comment on. Please if you can, do take the time to 'have your say'. I know its just a bit of 'lip service' and a 'box ticking' exercise for them (as I'll highlight further, later in this article when I mention TfL PCN's). It will however make life a bit more difficult for them and hopefully help in the longer term. The feedback links are as follows:

- www.camdenswestendproject.commonplace.is
- www.haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/bishopsgate

PCN's – a disproportionate punishment to the offence

TfL and the Mayors office recently had a consultation on a proposal to increase the fines issued for a Penalty Charge Notice from £130 to £160. One of the questions posed was, 'do you think the fine level is too low, to high or about right?' – except that is not quite what was asked. In a play taken directly from the TfL 'how to ask a loaded question book' what they actually asked was "Do you think the proposed PCN cost of £160 is an effective deterrent?" Well of course it is, but so is £100 or £50 unless of course you're absolutely loaded. Despite the loaded question, many saw through the disgraceful attempt to manipulate the responses and 65% of those that did respond, said it was too high. Now you know what's coming (and why I'm shooting myself in the foot considering what I asked earlier in the article) but to say nothing and do nothing is to give them an easy ride – they are not doing likewise for us so why should we? From the responses I read in the report that followed, it would seem it was only a few cycling groups who thought it was proportionate. I wonder if they would still think that if cycles had some form of an identification plate and they too were issued with fines for their indiscretions?

To put this increase into some perspective, for a person who is lucky enough to earn the so-called London living wage, it would cost them 42% of their weekly income to pay for what might be no more than a slight encroachment into a yellow box – not blocking it entirely mind you, just a small encroachment. No doubt Mayor Khan will have been on the TV, rightly berating the Government for increasing National Insurance or for not cutting VAT on household bills as thousands struggle to stay afloat and yet he sees nothing wrong in someone losing 42% of their weekly income for a minor infringement, has he no shame?

Incidentally, it's not even as if it might have slipped his mind as to what a hardship it might cause. In the report that bears his name, the number one concern of those responding was that the proposed charge is too high and would cause financial stress. ■ LTDA



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The New Rules of the Road



“I also have no doubt that the helmet cameras will be out in force to try to catch out unsuspecting drivers who may not be familiar with the changes, so be careful out there!”

Streets ahead

On the 29th January updates to nine sections of the Highway Code, with 50 rules added or changed, came into force. These new rules introduced the “*hierarchy of road users*” designed to “*protect those most at risk in the event of a collision*” and give them priority.

The key changes include:

- Road users must give way to pedestrians waiting to cross at a junction or already crossing, when turning into a road.
- Cyclists are advised to ride in the centre of the lane on quiet roads, in slower traffic, at junctions or road narrowings.
- Cyclists to ride at least 0.5 metres from kerb edge when on busy roads with vehicles moving faster than them.
- Motorists must leave at least 1.5 metres (5 feet) when overtaking

people cycling at speeds of up to 30mph and give them more space when overtaking at higher speeds and allow at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space and keep to a low speed when passing people walking in the road.

- Cyclists can pass slower-moving or stationary traffic on their right or left.
- Priority given to cyclists riding around roundabouts.

There are some car friendly changes with cyclists advised to take care when passing parked vehicles and leave a door’s width or 1 metre distance, but the ultimate responsibility remains with the driver.

EV Charging Points

There is also new guidance for those using EV charging points stating that drivers should:

- Park close to the charge point and avoid creating a trip hazard for people walking from trailing cables.
- Display a warning sign if you can.
- Return charging cables and connectors neatly to minimise the danger to other people and avoid creating an obstacle for other road users.

Concerns

I have no problem with efforts to make roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and other more vulnerable road users. We all need to get from A to B safely and understand the rules of the road to get us there. As cabbies, particularly when working in central London, we know first-hand how dangerous it can be on our congested and often narrow roads that weren’t built for today’s traffic. But the point here is that WE do everything in our power to keep other road users safe. My problem with these changes is that they seem to lump us with yet more responsibility and give cyclists and pedestrians free reign to do as they please, with no regard for their own safety.

Dangerous situations

Some of the changes like giving cyclists the right to pass a slow-moving vehicle on either side or giving a pedestrian right of way when crossing at a junction, put them in potentially dangerous situations, where if a motorist for any reason fails to see them or

stop, it could be fatal. A survey by the AA last week also found that a third of drivers were unaware of the changes which won’t help. (I wonder how many drive for a certain minicab app?) I definitely won’t be stepping out into the road with blind faith that the next vehicle that turns in stops for me any time soon!

Be careful out there

Unsurprisingly, clashes between cyclists and motorists over the new rules have been all over the news, with cars failing to stop for pedestrians or drivers shouting at cyclists for hogging the road from their new position in the middle of the lane. The government guidance does say the changes “*do not remove the need for everyone to behave responsibly*”. The problem is that in reality (and when we start to see PCNs and prosecutions), it’s the driver that will ultimately pay the price. I also have no doubt that the helmet cameras will be out in force to try to catch out unsuspecting drivers who may not be familiar with the changes, so be careful out there! ■ LTDA

LTDA

Member Notices And Reminders...

Renewals

You will need a Government Gateway user ID and password to complete a tax check, so you should make sure you create an account well in advance of needing to make your licence application.

You should have your Licence Renewal application with you within four months of your current licence expiring. If not, contact the LTDA.

DBS Applications - MHC203R Form

When you receive your Renewal Application form, make an appointment with the LTDA to complete your DBS and your MHC203R Application to ensure you get your licence in time.

Medicals - MHC204 Form

Contact the LTDA regarding any support or information you require in association with your medical forms.

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Back to Black

“It feels like we’ve once again turned a corner – tourists are creeping back and the pubs and restaurants are starting to buzz...”



M4 musings

And so, we stumble bleary-eyed out of another set of restrictions and into the latest bright clear future... Well hopefully it will turn out that way. Am I the only one who feels like the country is in a permanent state of mild chaos? We had a taste of how business can bounce back quickly and strongly in the second half of last year – once the shackles were off, people came out spending and enjoying themselves with a vengeance – only for everything to grind to a halt in December, creating a ‘double kipper.’ A cruel blow to drivers hoping for a bumper Christmas season.

Back in business?

As I write, it feels like we’ve once again turned a corner. Tourists are creeping back and the pubs and restaurants are starting to buzz. Fundamentally, conditions are not much changed from the few months of good business we had last year, but one thing on everyone’s mind is the ‘cost of living’. Now this is not a catch-all concept that applies to everyone – it impacts on different people in differing ways. For example, diesel prices have actually drifted downward slightly from the highs of last year. Nevertheless, one of the government’s top priorities this year (whoever is PM) will be trying to control inflation.

Putting the pandemic behind us

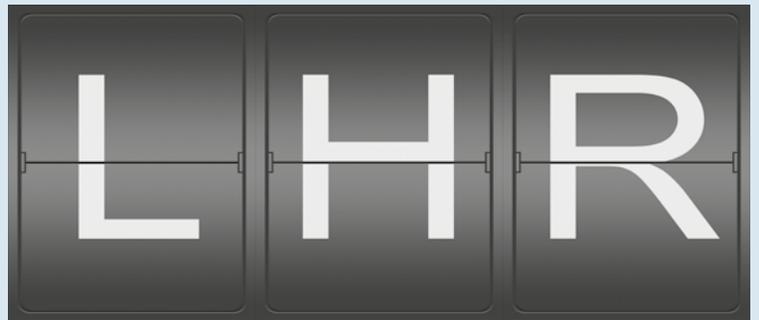
There appears to be a real determination now to move away from the overarching

dominance of Covid-19 in determining government policy. In the doom and gloom days of early December, everyone was convinced there’d be a full lockdown but in the end there wasn’t – and this seems to have been the right decision as the ‘Omicron’ variant turned out to be much milder than previous waves. Rishi Sunak was eventually criticised for the ‘eat out to help out’ scheme in late summer 2020 but some similar stimulus would be very useful now. As winter comes to an end, the government needs to be unequivocal: it’s time to get back to normal, everyone get back to work and back into the pubs clubs and restaurants. The way out of this is to get the economy revving again, and the UK has a head start on other European countries who chose to lock down and did not roll out their booster jabs as quickly as we did.

In other news, there will be council elections in London in May this year. If like nearly every driver we speak to you’re sick of being excluded from LTNs and other anti-motor vehicle measures, take the time to find out who your current local councillor is and contact them to see what they’re doing about it. Some council wards are on really tight majorities, and it can be a lot easier to make your vote count in local elections than in a general election. There’s never a better time to get councillors to listen than in the lead up to an election, so the time to start is now. It’s also important to present your views as a resident, rather than only airing professional concerns as a driver. If you have friends or neighbours who feel the same way, encourage them to speak to candidates as well. This sort of thing really makes a difference.

Heathrow

November had been the best month at Heathrow since before the pandemic, with throughput 66% that of November 2019. However, December and January were very slow – with long waits of six hours or more once again common. Numbers in the TFP have crept up and we have been in the North Park more often, although not all day and not filling it. Consequently, HAL have again refused to release more tags to drivers on the waiting list, only allowing a tag to be issued when one is returned. The LTDA is at the forefront of efforts to get the issue of new tags moving again, as we recognise the efforts recent KoL candidates have made to become licensed, and the unprecedented difficulties they have faced after getting their badge.



PCN or PCN?

I’m sure this is being said elsewhere but we are seeing so many PCNs from unscrupulous private operators. If you look carefully, you’ll see that these are actually called ‘Parking Charge Notices’ rather than the usual ‘Penalty’ Charge that you might get from a council. They’re not enforced in the same way but that doesn’t mean they can’t make you pay in the end – they’ll just ramp up the money and if they think the case is good enough they will take a driver to the County Court to enforce the ‘debt’. In many ways this is worse than the statutory approach of borough councils or TfL, because no-one can tell how a case will go until it gets to the court, by which time the stakes are higher than most people are prepared to risk. The other really sneaky aspect of these fines is that they can be enforced by camera, so half the time you don’t even know you’re getting a ticket until it’s too late.

So, our advice is: signage, signage, signage! If you’ve gone into an area that doesn’t look like a normal road (e.g. private apartments, store car-parks, some hotels) do not stop until you’ve seen the conditions of parking on the signage. Apart from moving traffic offences, the other big camera enforcement racket is red routes. I’ve seen drivers get tickets because they stopped for a few seconds trying to find an address for a customer. If the operator sees you stop and you haven’t picked up or set down, they may well issue a ticket. This is not the case on council-maintained roads, where parking is not usually camera-enforced.

Good luck out there.

LTDA





What you should do before April 2022

You will need a Government Gateway user ID and password to complete a tax check, so you should make sure you have one well in advance of making your licence application.

Airports & beyond

From April, to renew a taxi licence, you will require a special code from HMRC that proves you are a registered taxpayer. To get this code, you will need to have set up an online account through the HMRC Gateway... and this is not an easy task or straightforward process.

Not a simple process

I did spend some time with a driver trying to set up his account – and trust me it wasn't simple. I will share the issues I had, in the hope it helps those going through it. Many drivers will already have one set up, as you needed to in order to apply for the SEISS grant. However, there are many that chose not to claim for whatever reason, so I hope the following helps, or at least highlights the complexities and challenges of the process! If you are like me and not tech savvy, I would encourage you to seek help from a family member or friend that is. It must be you that applies online using your e-mail address and all information is linked to the driver making the application.

Before starting, make sure you have your mobile phone to hand and have access to your e-mail address, as verification codes are sent via text and e-mail. It will give you 30 minutes to enter this. After that you will need to start the process again.

1. So, shall we begin:

■ Start by entering www.gov.uk in search engine

■ Click on personal tax account: sign in – the screen will say personal tax account: sign in or set up,

■ Click on 'Start now' You will have three options: sign in with Government Gateway, or sign in with Gov.uk Verify or create an account.

■ Click on 'create an account' followed by 'continue'

You will need to confirm who you are before you can access your



personal tax account. There are two ways of doing this... Either by: **Government Gateway.** You will need your NI number or UK address, a recent payslip or P60 (likely not to be relevant to taxi drivers) or a valid UK passport.

Or GOV.UK Verify

This works best if you are over 20 years old. You will need a UK address, a mobile phone and at least one valid photo ID from any country.

2. Choose one of these options. I chose Government Gateway.

■ This page will ask you for a Gateway ID and password. You won't have one yet as you are trying to create the account, so scroll down and click on 'create sign in details.'

■ Enter your e-mail address and HMRC will send you a verification code. At this point you only have 30 mins to respond. Check your junk or spam folder if you can't see the e-mail.

■ Enter this code and it will confirm and take you to another page.

■ Enter your full name. It will ask you to create a password using ten or more characters (keep this safe as you will need every time you use Gov Gateway), it will ask you to think of a recovery word as a back-up to your password (just as important to keep safe).

3. The next page will say 'we need to check your identity.'

■ You will need to enter your full name, date of birth, national insurance number and your postcode.

4. Once you've entered these details it will take you to a page to say, 'we need to confirm your identity.'

For me, this is when it became complicated... It will ask you to select items they can ask you about and gives four options:

■ P60 (which most of us won't have as we are self-employed)

■ UK passport

■ Credit reference questions (e.g., the year you took out a credit card or phone contract)

■ Northern Ireland Driving licence (yes, that's not a misprint, it won't allow you to enter a UK driving licence).

As a result of the above, the driver I spent time doing this with could only use UK passport and credit reference questions. He was asked a number of questions on the credit reference, though kept failing the answers as he wasn't precise enough. This wasn't the driver's fault by any means, it is just difficult to know the number of years since he had or took out various cards, loans or phone contracts. We have been in a pandemic for two years and all of us have lost time! The system offers only five attempts at this verification process and as a result, of not knowing the precise information being requested, on this occasion we couldn't complete his application.

I then wrote to the tax office, asking why drivers couldn't use a UK driving licence and only a NI one. I finally got a reply five days later, but no reason as to why not, only that NI driving licence is the only one you can use. So, if you are from

Northern Ireland and have a NI driving license, you'll find this process a breeze! Otherwise, you will need to try and remember questions that can date back to year dot so I would advise being somewhere where you might have this kind of information to hand. In short, we have been advised to set up Gateway accounts and the tax office have not made it easy at all – in regard to this, I was furnished by HMRC with the following information:

"When creating the account users will be presented with a range of potential evidence categories which may apply to them. Not everyone will have evidence to provide in every category and the categories presented will depend on their circumstances. In relation to your specific question relating to UK driving licences, unfortunately, these cannot currently be used to verify your identity on the Government Gateway."

"If you are unable to answer the questions in a specific category, you may be able to answer the questions in another or re-visit the service when you have the relevant document to hand (e.g. the most recent P60). You may also be able to obtain your own credit reference information from a third-party service if you are having difficulty with this category."

"Where users are having difficulties signing in or creating accounts, the online services helpdesk is available to provide support. If you are unable to complete the tax check online, then licence applicants will be able to complete the tax check over the telephone on our General Enquiries help line. This service will also be available from 7th March. Individuals can contact the income tax helpline and companies can contact the corporation tax general enquiries helpline. The phone numbers are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc>"

If you are about to re-new your licence, please engage with this process as soon as possible to avoid complications – which could result in a delay in obtaining your licence and being unable to work as a result.

Get registering and good luck! ■ TAXI



Together in Electric Screams



Despite three jugglers in attendance, along with a fire-eater and Disco-George on the decks, our man in black ensured an inquiry was held by John, behind the bar – and he confirmed that it wasn't a party.

A man in black

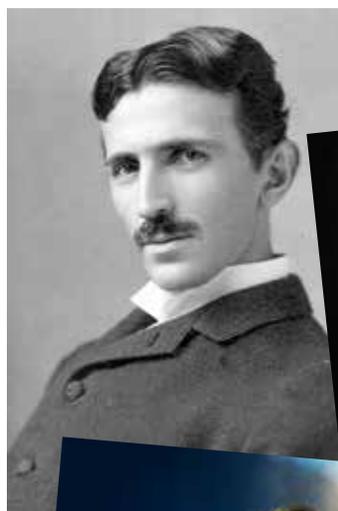
While the lovely Mrs K and I were sitting with friends in a local drinking establishment, one of our group decided to ask me about the benefits of purchasing an electric vehicle. Now I wish to make it very clear that myself and my wife did not attend a party, despite there being three jugglers in attendance, along with a fire-eater and Disco-George spinning the decks. An inquiry was held by John, behind the bar and after serving us copious amounts of Guinness, he confirmed that it wasn't a party.

So, after explaining to our friend that I am no Nikola Tesla, she continued to press me on the subject. I eventually capitulated and told her to ignore the car she fancied and look at how and where she will charge it. Further into the discussion I showed her a few of the electric charging companies site maps, as well as Zap-Map. The maps identified less than 50 rapid charging points within a 150 square mile area. Now it has to be noted that she would be unable to have a charger fitted at her home due to access issues – this wouldn't be a case of electric dreams (a bloody awful song by Giorgio Moroder and Phil Oakey) but more of an Alice Cooper – welcome to my nightmare moment.

Hybrid or full electric?

As a result of what she saw, she is now giving serious consideration to purchasing a hybrid vehicle rather than a full electric. This of course flies in the face of Governmental plans to tackle climate change by halting the sale of fossil fuel vehicles by 2030.

What was apparent in our conversation was that outside of London, in rural and semi-rural areas, the charging infrastructure is woefully thin. However, even in the capital, there are nowhere near enough charging points. According to a Mayoral press release from January 2021, there were 6,000 charging points across London, including more than 500 rapid charge points and over 5,500 residential charge points, with some points dedicated exclusively for almost 4,000 electric taxis



Left: Nikola Tesla (not Steve Kenton)



Below: Disco George



Above: Alice Cooper

operating in the capital.

The same press release stated that “the Mayor’s Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Delivery Plan estimates that by 2025, London may need up to 4,000 rapid charging points and up to 48,000 residential chargers as more and more people and businesses move to electric vehicles”. There are now over 5,000 zero emission capable taxis in London and electric vehicles now account for seven percent of all new vehicle sales UK-wide.

Q Park access failure

This is all well and good until you discover that many chargers are put into car-parks and are difficult to access due to having to pay extra fees or having a car park access card. One such scheme that is run by Q Park in conjunction with Transport for London initially offered taxi drivers free access to BP Pulse chargers within Q park sites by supplying ZEC taxi drivers with a free access card. This increased the amount of chargers fully available to the industry – however, this scheme has hit the buffers.

There had been a number of complaints on social media regarding TfL not issuing Q

park access cards, so decided to see for myself. I applied for a card from TfL last September and received a generic email from them stating that my card was being processed. Four months later, I was still waiting, I even re-applied in November – to no avail. After exhausting all avenues, I asked the LTDA if they had any information on issues surrounding the scheme. After doing a pretty impressive Columbo impression on my behalf, Anthony Street discovered that TfL no longer administer the scheme – it was in fact now Q Park themselves who run the scheme. It was also discovered that even with the card there is now a £2 charge for an hour entry into the car park to use a charger – and a £15 fee for the card.

This problem becomes compounded when you discover that numerous rapid-charging points across London are faulty and not fixed in a timely fashion. I reported several faulty rapid-charge points in Southwark Street SE1, over Christmas – initially three out of five BP Pulse charging points had failed, however a couple of days later a fourth went down. None of them had been repaired in a timely fashion and in fact there are still two out of commission at the time of writing.

To be fair to BP Pulse, their service department was very good and could not do enough to help – but ultimately the units need to be operational – in the taxi industry this is imperative.

Having a TXE with that petrol range extender is a godsend because the reliance on a singular fuel source with an unpredictable and impractical charging network can and will, cause serious issues to the uptake of electric and zero emission capable vehicles... not just in the taxi industry but across the board.

We are about to get Ubered in a bizarre twist, Redbridge Council officials voted to approve a scheme allowing Uber to fund a raft of charging points in the borough, but Redbridge is not alone in approving this scheme. It is unclear what return the company expects from its investment of around £5 million across all of the London boroughs that have approved the scheme. It is believed that councils will sign off on a ten-year contract in relation to the chargers.

Complain, complain, complain

Looking at the ‘on-street’ charging network, there seems to be a real dearth of facilities to charge overnight. Given the current climate you would be forgiven for thinking that on-street charging installation would be a priority for all councils – of course, tackling climate change only suits when it follows a given narrative... so maybe councils are holding back from installing on-street chargers in a bid to get people out of their vehicles, physically forcing vehicles off of the road by not giving drivers enough scope to charge-up – oh now here comes my inner-cynic beginning to pour out of me...

So, moving forward, here is a little tip for you – always register a faulty charger, if there is more than one from the same company, register a formal complaint. Always take down the charging site identification number and the time and date that you attempted to use said charger. If you pay a subscription, request that you receive a few months free subscription due to the inconvenience of having to search for another charger. Given that you may be paying for a service, you should be entitled to full and unhindered access to that service. In the time it takes you to charge up, you could have that email drafted and sent – and not potentially be out of pocket.

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International Trade Commonalities

“Operators are experimenting with a variety of taxi models: Tesla, Hyundai Ioniq5, Jaguar, VW ID4, Mercedes EQS and E-Vito plus the Dynamo-cab.”

International correspondent

What’s happened to the trade in Europe since the start of corona?

Passengers have left and to some extent come back. Drivers have scarpered for greener pastures or preferred retirement. A small number are back behind the wheel. A recent virtual international conference provided an interesting update.

Different countries – similar issues

In most of these countries, developments in taxi-land are the same – heavily influenced by corona. In many countries taxis have been squeezed out of city-centres by impromptu traffic measures and (often) newly invented Low Emission Zones (LEZ). The trade now faces investment in cleaner and more expensive vehicles – often without any government support. Corona still takes its toll on drivers and support staff, and planning in the taxi trade is, according to a Vienna taxi expert “*now by the day rather than by the week*” Yet, corona created work too. An Australian taxi operator even called it “*the gift that keeps giving*” as (local) governments use more and more cabs for vaccination and test trips.

‘The same the world over’

Thirty years ago, when I gave my first presentation for a taxi audience in the USA, I said “*basically the taxi trade is the same the world over.*” And I illustrated my words with a picture of a standard Mercedes 200D taxi somewhere in Germany. Some taxi operators in the audience laughed: with premium vehicles like that, the business in Europe must be extremely profitable. I still believe the trade is – at least – very similar the world over. Thanks to a recent meeting with twelve taxi operators from around Europe, I can substantiate that view...

The European Radio Taxi Association (ERTA), created 30 years ago as a user group for MDI/Motorola dispatch centres, met twice a year to discuss the system’s quirks and other business. Before corona, ERTA ran a yearly meeting for about 40 international taxi-specialists.



“The gift that keeps giving”, in Australia corona created a lot of business opportunities.

With Geoffrey Riesel (former CEO of Radio Taxis) as chairman, this loosely knitted group of taxi pros now meets every two to three months – virtually. In the last meeting, taxi specialists from Scotland, England, France, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, The Netherlands, Austria and Poland were all represented, and commonalities were readily identifiable...

“In Sweden, where taxis use the environmentally friendly Hydrotreated Vegetable Oils (HVO) instead of ordinary diesel, the price of this fuel recently went through the roof.”

An LEZ anyone?

Most cab companies had a good run from September to mid-December, when corona-measures were tightened in many countries. Restrictions hit hotels, bars, restaurants, theatres, cinemas – the traditional suppliers of taxi customers. Businesses were already working from home.

Companies reported a withering of the night economy (partly due to a lack of drivers) and lowered fixed contribution schemes adapting them to include a percentage of trips instead. Some companies also increased their fares. In some capital cities, business was holding up, though some reported a drop.

Several countries reported a new LEZ on the horizon: in the Paris

LEZ no diesel cabs will be allowed from 2024, Glasgow will get an LEZ mid-2024 and Amsterdam opens its LEZ on January 1, 2025. In most cities the taxi trade is investing in hybrid vehicles and e-cabs and are experimenting with hydrogen taxis. The current lack of electronic components in the car trade causes a long delay in the delivery of new cabs. In Sweden, where taxis use the environmentally friendly HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oils) instead of ordinary diesel, the price of this fuel recently went through the roof. Yet in Poland, where hybrid means a combination of petrol and LPG, it’s the price of electricity that shot up. The hike in inflation figures plagues all.

Chicken and egg

When it comes to electric cabs, there’s often a chicken and egg discussion: promoting e-cabs without cities investing in public (fast) charging facilities doesn’t work. Usually, one or the other stalls. The city of Amsterdam has promoted the use of e-cabs and rolled out an extensive network of charging facilities. The main snag remains the range-problem – a Paris cabdriver needs at least a 300 km battery capacity per day – and the availability of decent vehicles. This is particularly difficult in the case of eight-person minivans, which have no comparable range whatsoever to traditional-seaters.

Operators are experimenting with a variety of taxi models: Tesla, Hyundai Ioniq5, Jaguar, VW ID4, Mercedes EQS and E-Vito plus the Dynamo-cab. Many European operators see the TXE as a hybrid with limited range, rather than as a proper e-cab. Throughout Europe, cab drivers are waiting for e-cabs to become more



Many European taxi operators see the TXE as more of a hybrid than as a proper electric cab.



Some ranks in Vienna are fitted with an experimental system connecting the cab to the rank’s fixed electric supply.

competitive in price or are hoping for (new) government support schemes. But there is no support in Poland and the government has just invented a 9% tax on profits. Paris is looking forward to the Olympic Games but also to a decent support scheme for e-cabs.

Last year Hamburg launched such a scheme and within a year welcomed 105 new e-cabs to the fleet. Cologne is testing an inductive e-charging system, and Vienna and Graz are trying out the mechanical charging system Easelink, in which the cab connects with the rank’s electricity supply via a connector plate.

Where have all the drivers gone?

Another international wrench is the lack of drivers everywhere. Polish companies saw ten percent of their drivers leave, but swiftly recruited back that figure of new drivers. In Amsterdam 30-40% of self-employed drivers left. With Australia’s borders tightly shut, Indian or African drivers couldn’t get into the country.

Many cities see large numbers of parked cabs. Self-employed drivers in many countries switched to the HGV or courier sectors. Several taxi companies or radio circuits saw their size halved. Some added different types of delivery work, which is not always popular with drivers (time-consuming: pick-ups, leaving the cab, getting into apartment buildings). And if anyone is wondering: the PHV sector struggles with the same problems. And now for the good news: after ten years of competing with Uber & Co, the Australian taxi trade remains the size it was a decade ago. **TAXI**

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The Siege of Sidney Street – Part One

Learn Rob's tales of London crime history to increase your tips!

Rob's history tips

Over the years, London has witnessed some truly shocking events. Here's the story of one of them: The Siege of Sidney Street. On the night of the 16th December 1910, a gentleman named Max Weil entered Bishopsgate Police Station. He lived nearby at 120 Houndsditch and had been hearing strange noises coming from next door – which, being a jewellers, made him fear a robbery was in progress. Upon closer inspection it appeared the sounds were coming from a tenement at number 11 Exchange Buildings. This property backed onto the jewellers, suggesting someone was trying to break into the shop by knocking through the wall.

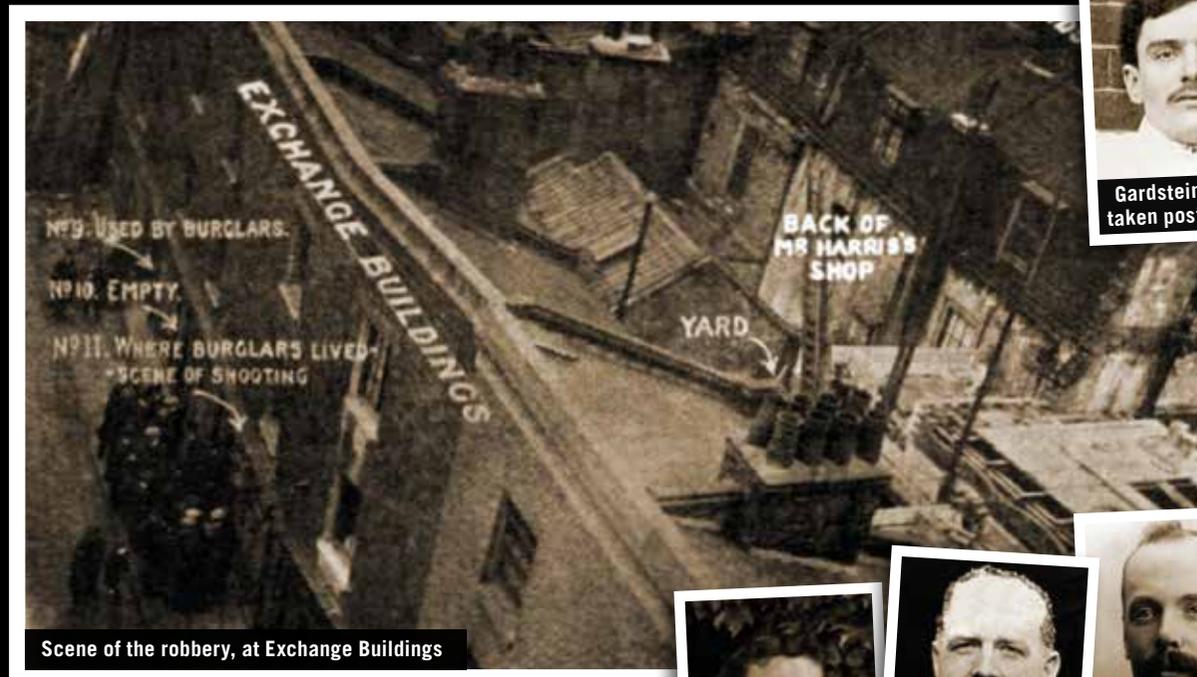
16

Eruption of gunfire

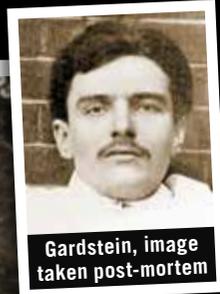
Constable Piper was the first to investigate. He knocked on the door of 11 Exchange Buildings at around 11pm and was confronted by a young, dark-haired man who responded in a cagey manner. This raised Piper's suspicions considerably; so much so that he went for back-up and returned with three sergeants and five constables. One of these officers – Sergeant Bentley – rapped the door again, and it was answered by the same man who'd spoken to Piper. After a few brief words, the occupant attempted to shut the door, which Bentley responded to by barging his way in. As the Sergeant stormed into the hallway, gunfire suddenly erupted and he was struck twice in the neck. Behind him was Sergeant Bryant, who was shot in the chest and arm. The third Sergeant – named Tucker – took bullets to the hip and heart. As the officers lay dying, Constable Woodhams rushed to their aid and was shot in the thigh.

Darkness & chaos

In the midst of the chaos, at least two men and a woman fled from Exchange Buildings, along with the man who'd spoken at the door. He was grabbed by Constable Choate, and as the pair grappled in the darkness, one of the gang fired at the officer four times, striking him twice in the leg and twice in the



Scene of the robbery, at Exchange Buildings



Gardstein, image taken post-mortem



Sergeant Bentley



Sergeant Tucker



PC Choate

back. Constable Choate buckled but being an extremely strong fellow, he managed to hold onto the man with whom he'd been tussling. As the pair fell to the pavement, another gang member took aim, but the bullet struck his compatriot – who they somehow managed to drag away before escaping towards Cutler Street. In the wake of this atrocity, three City of London Police officers – Bentley, Choate and Tucker – were dead, along with another two injured.

Bolshevik activists

The young man who'd been accidentally shot by his fellow gang member was 23-year-old George Gardstein; the leader of a Latvian band of political activists who called themselves *Leesma* (meaning 'flame'). At the time, Leesma consisted of thirteen members (including two women), and were labelled in the press as anarchists, although to be more specific they'd been carrying out robberies – including the botched one at Houndsditch – in order to raise funds for Vladimir Lenin and the Bolshevik movement.

Running from the scene of the massacre, the gang dragged Gardstein into the East End, and a property at 59 Grove Street (now Golding Street), which was home to fellow activists Fritz Svaars and Peter Piaktow – better known by his nickname; 'Peter the Painter.' The bullet had slammed into Gardstein's chest, leaving him clinging to life. A doctor named John Scanlon was sent for, and upon seeing the wound he

insisted Gardstein be taken to the Royal London Hospital. Unsurprisingly the gang refused, and all Dr Scanlon could do was provide medicine to ease the pain. By 9am however, Gardstein was dead.

A nation stunned

Soon after his visit, Dr Scanlon heard about the events on Houndsditch and immediately informed police about the man he'd treated for a gunshot wound. Officers headed for the property, and upon bursting in they found Gardstein's body lying on the bed. Also present was one of the female gang members – Sara Trassjonsky – who was in the process of burning incriminating documents which linked Leesma to other anarchist groups. Trassjonsky was arrested and carted off to the City of London Police HQ, then located on Old Jewry. Gardstein's corpse meanwhile was scrubbed up, examined and photographed, with the eerie image of his dead face displayed on posters offering a £500 reward (around £60,000 in today's money) for information leading to his companions. The slaying of the three officers had left the nation stunned, and a memorial for them was held at St Paul's Cathedral on December 22nd. King George V was in attendance, and the Stock Exchange shut down for half an hour to allow traders to pay their respects as the parade passed through Threadneedle Street en-route to the cemeteries.

Wanted

On the 27th December, Gardstein's former landlord spotted the wanted poster and directed police to the home he'd rented to him, which was on Gold Street, Stepney. Here, a gun, ammunition, and several knives were found, along with false passports and revolutionary literature. During the investigation, in which police from both the City of London and the Met were issued with revolvers, another landlord gave a name up – that of Nina Vassileva. When her room was searched, anarchist publications were found, along with a photograph of George Gardstein. The wanted poster also led to the arrests of several other gang members; Jacob Peters, Osip Federoff and Yourka Dubof. At an identity parade held in Bishopsgate police station, a witness who'd seen several men running along Cutler Street on the night of the killings pointed out Peters and Dubof. All three were taken to Guildhall police court and charged with being connected to the murders. They plead not guilty. There were still members of Leesma lurking out there somewhere though – and when their hideout was discovered in January 1911, it would be with explosive results...

To be continued.

■ TAXI



Signor Sassi Knightsbridge Green



With so many new and trendy restaurants opening its very easy to forget those that have been around for a while (nearly 40 years in the case of Signor Sassi) and will still be around long after the new and trendy, have changed names half a dozen times and then disappeared altogether.

The address may be 14 Knightsbridge, but as every Cabbie knows, it's actually situated in Knightsbridge Green on the corner with Raphael Street. Signor Sassi describes its food and menu as 'an icon of the London culinary scene' and serving 'classic Italian food'. They must be doing something right because the name and food styles are now franchised all over the world, from Bangkok to Kuwait, and their regular clients include many celebrities and locals.

On this occasion we visited early on a miserable, wet, Friday evening and even though the tables were rapidly filling up, the service was great. The menu and wine list were delivered with a massive bowl of olives, cheese, bread, and fresh bruschetta, which is just as well because the menu is as extensive as ever and takes time to read and choose.

We shared

a fabulous starter of Antipasta which could almost have been a main meal on its own. We both went with the fish options - Dover Sole and the other, the Mediterranean Prawns. Both were superb although the garlic and chilli on the prawns made them the winning dish of the two.

The combination of décor and ambiance we felt worked extremely well, and later led us to comment on how at ease we had felt during our visit. The service was first class - the only part of the evening that was not 100% was the pancake we shared for a sweet, served with ice cream, it was served a minute too late and had cooled.

If you are looking for a venue for a special occasion add Signor Sassi, to the list and you can safely recommend it to any customers looking for a quality Italian restaurant experience. ■ TAXI

Food	★★★★★
Service	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Atmosphere	★★★★★



Subject: The Value of Taxi Family History

Dear Editor,

The traditional London taxi trade faces many technological challenges backed by anonymous multinational money which is only too eager to cause harm to London taxi families. How can ordinary people help? Well, one answer is family history.

In recent years, many official records have moved online with billions of records available to search and many special interest family history projects have started as a result. This helps to strengthen the unity of a community - why can't there be a big London Taxi Family history project to be proud of?

Computer-based family history enabled me to find out about my cabman great grandfather, Joseph Elisha. Joe went on to build his own cab firm with 40 drivers in Duncan Street yard, Islington. The firm reached the Islington Gazette headlines in 1896 when the drivers went on strike about meters and union recognition. The taxi trade has faced challenges before and resolved them positively, it can do so again!

I hope you will publish this letter and encourage all the old London taxi families to put their family pride into action with one big family history project, telling the world we are ready to face the future and win!

David J. Elisha
Romford, Essex
(retired and caring for elderly father)

Subject: Thank you LTDA.

Dear Editor,

I am over the moon to receive my re-newed Driving License from DVLA yesterday afternoon, following nine months of nervous wait, full of and trepidations and anxieties. I therefore feel, I owe the LTDA a great gratitude for their expertise in supporting me right through all the challenges and the legal pitfalls that came along my way in renewing my medical driving Licence.

Kindly allow me to shower personal praises to Rob and Anthony for their coolness, calmness, and skilful manners in handling my case - particularly with TFL and Metropolitan Police deadlines - with regard to driving for nine months on an expired driver's Licence. Their approach and intercessions have always yielded results. Thank you so much Rob and Anthony and the entire LTDA staff. Without your support I wouldn't be driving again as a Licensed Cab driver after 28 years and I'm sure many more fellow comrades wouldn't be as well.

Best wishes,
Eric Sackey
Badge No. 67832

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The Speed Awareness Course



“I had been rushing home with a KFC Bargain Bucket trying to prevent my chicken from going cold when the speed camera had intervened...”

On the road

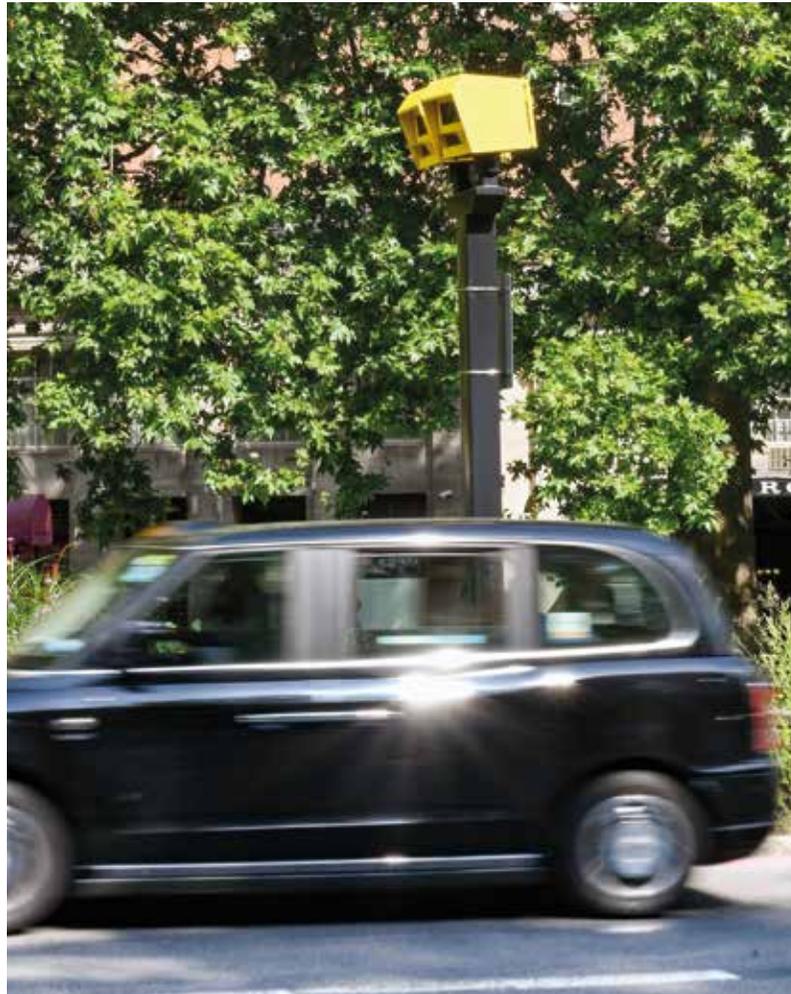
If you're not familiar with the Speed Awareness Course, you're lucky. A Speed Awareness Course is something you can usually opt to take instead of receiving a speeding fine and points on your licence. I've taken two of them. I understand that now (and especially since the pandemic hit), on-line courses are becoming the more frequently chosen delivery method.

Training Courses

It's good if you're offered the choice to take a course on-line, but I feel it's more effective and interesting to take a course in person. In 2020 I was gainfully employed for a while as a careers adviser. The first few weeks largely consisted of training courses. Training sessions used to be days out of the office, meeting people and having a few laughs over coffee and biscuits. Now they're all on-line. It was mind-numbing. As the only person in the office taking the courses, I had no-one to discuss points with, and to bounce ideas off. I just wanted to get the courses over with as soon as possible and print out the certificates to show my employer that I was up to speed (no pun intended) on diversity, safeguarding, data protection, health & safety; and other subjects I've since forgotten about. On-line, the object is to pass, rather than learn. I learnt that you could skip bits, then go straight to the quiz at the end. A risky strategy: and even if you pass you won't have learnt much.

Northampton Bargain Bucket

Both the physical speeding courses I attended were quite informative and interesting. My first speeding course was taken in 2010 when I was living in Northampton. I had been rushing home with a KFC Bargain Bucket trying to prevent my chicken from going cold when the speed camera had intervened. Offending participants were booked in for the best part of a day, with the pace directed by the course tutor. There were a few jokers in the group, so we had a bit of a laugh while we learnt something useful.



Was I deterred from speeding? From knowingly exceeding speed limits, yes; but it's easy to accidentally exceed limits, especially when the limits change between 30 and 40mph numerous times on the same road (and we now have 20mph limits to worry about too).

Bedfordshire Offender

Shortly after this incident, they turned off all the speed cameras in Northamptonshire to save money. I assumed they'd also turned the cameras off in Bedfordshire when I moved to Leighton Buzzard in 2015. I just wasn't careful enough when I was filmed driving at 48 miles per hour in a 40mph limit through Dunstable as I drove home from London one evening. I had the choice of a £100 fine and points on my licence, or to attend a Speed Awareness Course at my own expense.

I was interested to learn that you can book a course in any location you want to. It might suit some people to treat the course as a chore and bang it out as quickly as possible on your home computer,

but some folk would prefer to present themselves in person and to fit the course around their holiday plans. At first, I thought I might like to book a seaside visit to Devon around it, or a nice weekend in Yorkshire. Thinking more deeply, it wouldn't really be fair on my wife to leave her to amuse herself while I attended a lecture on road signs.

Newport Pagnell Penance

I decided to go somewhere on my own, nearer to home. So, I found myself in an office block in Newport Pagnell one Sunday morning. Proceedings commenced dead on 8am. Talk about speeding: the trainer clearly wanted this event over with as quickly as possible and spoke so fast it was hard to keep up. He

set a challenge: if any of us could correctly identify the speed limits on various classes of roads, we could go home at coffee break. None of us managed it. It took me the full four hours to get into my head the difference between a single and a double carriageway (what looks like a dual carriageway is actually a single carriageway if there's no central reservation and the speed limit on a dual carriageway is 70mph unless otherwise indicated).

Do you get irritated by the constant changes in speed limits on smart motorways? The red-circled speed limit signs aren't triggered by a person but are set automatically by radar in the cats' eyes. Rather than having everyone come to a halt on a congested motorway, the system merely slows you down. The idea being that you progress smoothly through. I also learned that we concentrate for about fifteen minutes in every driving hour, and that we tend to drive faster if the music we are playing is faster than our heartbeat. The trainer assured us that we should be OK with Coldplay (I suspect I was blasting out Motorhead on that fateful day in 2017).

Laggardly London

By the way, I've never been caught speeding in London. It's rare to see boy racers tearing down London streets, and for good reason: if you do anything illegal that they can charge you with, there will be cameras waiting for you. I'd venture that even outside of our cities, most of those nabbed have done it by accident, by momentarily exceeding a ridiculously low speed limit for a short period. I don't want to give the impression I'm a serial speeder. I rarely go above 65 on the motorway, and I'm always scratching my head at the speeds some people drive at on country roads which are for sure the deadliest roads of all. The course did its job - I try to drive more carefully, and I'm thinking of switching to Classic FM. ■ TAXI



Online Speed Awareness Courses can be undertaken at the LTDA offices with a dedicated computer available for member use. We have set up a provision for you to come to Taxi House and one of our team will assist you in getting online and taking the course. All you need to do is contact us when you receive your paperwork and book your appointment via our switchboard.

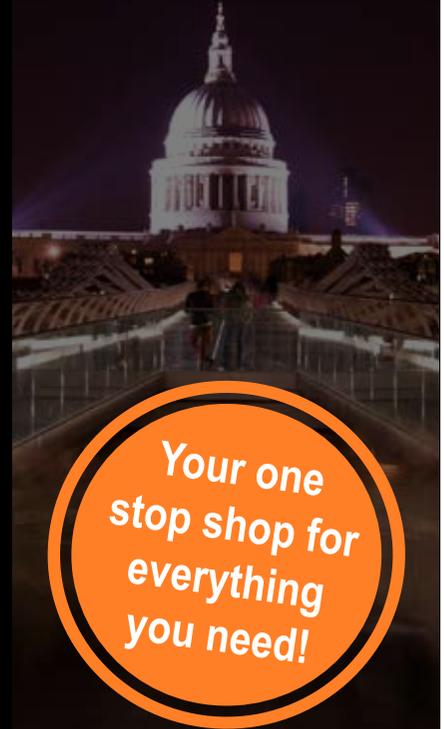
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CAB-E MEDIA launches for 2022 with a Fairtrade, fair deal for all London cabbies!

CAB-E MEDIA will manage integrated campaigns with exciting activations including PR stunts and photo calls with a convoy of client branded cabs to deliver powerful imagery and social media content



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CAB-E MEDIA is an exciting new venture by Mayfair based marketing agency Dovetail which was originally founded 25 years ago. MD, Jayne Alexander, formerly sales & marketing director at Virgin Management has partnered with Jack Dredge, a London cab driver and former owner of a Knowledge of London School. Together they have an impressive network across the black cab community as well as internationally amongst luxury travel and lifestyle brands. Both recognising the potential and power of branded black cabs in London, CAB-E MEDIA was formed and launched for January 2022.

Black cabs are iconic of London and both locals as well as international visitors have a trust and respect for their black cab driver with a knowledge unmatched by any other professional driver in the world. Jayne's maternal grandfather owned a fleet of black cabs in the 1960's and was a freeman of



the City of London.

Jack explains the appeal, "CAB-E MEDIA combines the best of London, offering brands an opportunity to work with a company with proven green credentials with the cleanest fleet of electric cabs to deliver powerful advertising campaigns to launch and build new and existing brands aimed at a sophisticated London target audience".

CAB-E MEDIA will manage integrated campaigns with exciting activations including PR stunts and photo calls with a convoy of client branded cabs

to deliver powerful imagery and social media content.

Jayne adds, "London is starting to find its buzz again and black cabs, iconic with the London landscape, is the perfect platform to advertise. CAB-E MEDIA has been developed as a fair-trade model and owner-drivers will benefit from a working partnership based on transparency, and a respect where everyone benefits from the company's success. It's also very exciting to be supporting the trade after an incredibly tough few years. CAB-E MEDIA intends to attract clients who have never considered

black cab campaigns before"

Jack is keen to emphasise "We really do appreciate drivers are keen to protect their Cabs and owning a TXE myself, I need to know that my cab will be professionally looked after. Drivers have been reticent to partner on campaigns for this reason. We are using the highest quality vinyls and our approach is very much about the interests of the driver and his or her cab"

CAB-E MEDIA invites drivers and fleets to contact jack@cab-e-media.com or via WhatsApp on +44 7985 185867 **TAXI**

Taxiapp Update

Founded in 2016, Taxiapp was established to provide a platform exclusively for the licensed taxi trade, led by drivers and putting their interests first.

Trade news

Taxiapp has written to all its members setting out proposals to become a “partnership of drivers and investors” which will allow the app to grow and achieve its full potential for drivers and the trade as a whole.

Founded in 2016, Taxiapp was established to provide a platform exclusively for the licensed taxi trade, led by drivers and putting their interests first. Currently run on a cooperative model, Taxiapp's founders are proposing becoming a Limited Partnership in order to secure investment and allow them to develop and grow the app further. They hope this will enable them to reach the app's “full potential” and become “the leading licensed taxi app” maximising opportunities for drivers and the wider trade.

The founders also wrote the following open letter to the trade, which was sent to TAXI, setting their proposals out in more detail. These proposals will now be discussed at Taxiapp's upcoming AGM on 14th February.

TAXI are also planning to conduct a Q&A with the founders in a coming edition. Please send any questions you might have to editor@ltda.co.uk and we will include a selection of the most regularly requested to ask during the interview.



An Open Letter to the Trade from Taxiapp:

Dear Taxi Trade,

Taxiapp was established by cab drivers for cab drivers to ensure our trade had its own technology and to successfully grow the taxi market. This, with hard work and a forward-thinking attitude has ensured that we are now on the right path.

We are now in a position where opportunities are open to us which will ensure that we are able to accelerate growth. We want to do so whilst continuing with the ethos that brought us to where we are, as an app for the taxi trade, which prioritises drivers and helps the trade to succeed, with a lucrative and successful future.

As you are aware, we currently run as a Cooperative. With the greatest will, this model unfortunately doesn't give us the opportunity to achieve our full potential. We need investment to grow and move forward successfully and as a partnership of investors and drivers, we can achieve more together and get where we all want to be.

What does a partnership mean for individual drivers?

A driver-led app which continues to prioritise your needs and the future of the trade.



Drivers will have the largest share ownership with dividends on net profits.

The only app to give drivers Golden Share ownership - a type of share which provides drivers with veto rights.

Driver voting rights will include a right of veto on any proposed increase in commission, a veto on adding private hire to the app and a veto on being able to sell the company. A ‘veto’ vote provides drivers with the right to reject a decision or a proposal made by Taxiapp Partnership Ltd outright giving drivers the

final say on the issues that matter most.

A low 10% commission and 5% on business accounts + VAT (working towards lower as we grow).

What does this mean for the trade?

As a trade it is imperative that we remain in control of our own destiny and with an app largely owned by drivers we can ensure that this is the case. We can also utilise data to help drivers work more efficiently and maximise their income.

And finally, what does this mean for Taxiapp as a business?

A partnership of drivers and investors will ensure the longevity and expansion of the business by creating opportunities which match the ambitions of The Taxiapp Partnership, to the benefit of the whole trade.

Taxiapp isn't just another app that will simply raise commissions, look to add Private Hire and then eventually sell the business. Our ethos will always be to ensure that you – the drivers – and your rights, are protected. That's why drivers will have the ultimate veto vote.

The Taxiapp Partnership is different. No other ride hailing app consider their drivers as their partners. We know that together we can achieve more.

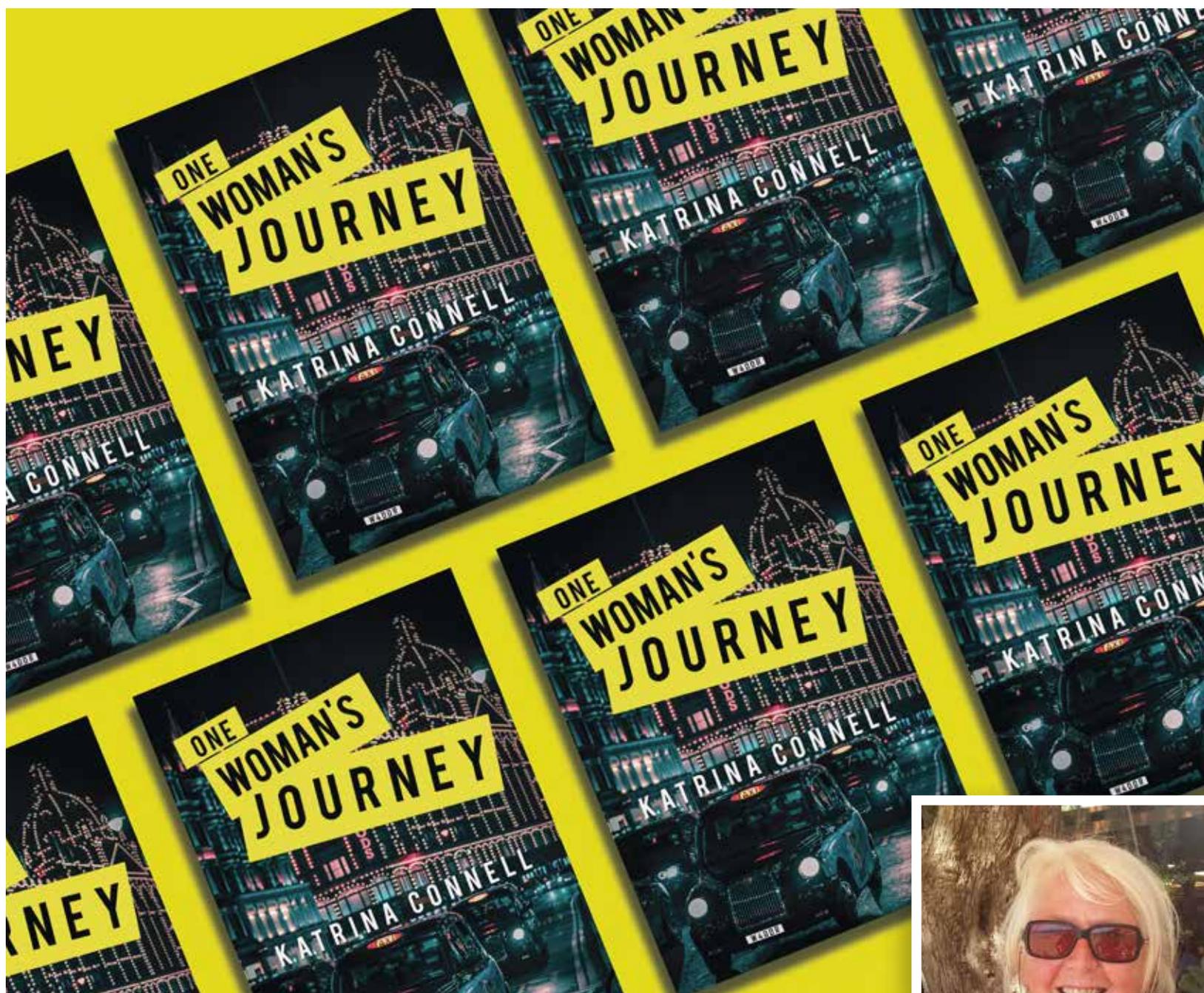
A Special AGM has been called by the Board of Directors of Taxiapp which will take place on Monday 14 February 2022.

The meeting will discuss the Board's recommendations and the vote for the Taxiapp Partnership.

Martin Franks
Director
Business Development

One Woman's Journey

A collection of poems written from first-hand experience whilst working in the best city in the world - behind one of the most iconic vehicles ever known!



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TAXI feature

TAXI recently became aware of a new book written by a driver from our own ranks... to this end, we caught up with author Katrina Connell to find out a little more about her and the new publication.

TAXI Hi Katrina, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Katrina: I'm a mature woman, my age is irrelevant - I like to think that you're as young as you feel. I'm the mother of two sons and grandmother of four. I live in

Kent with my husband of almost 45 years in a converted Victorian church. It's not at all spooky, and the neighbours are very quiet! My hobbies include coastal walking, travelling and watercolour painting. I like telling the stories I've written to my grandchildren. I have enjoyed many careers, with the philosophy that, if something stops being fun, stop doing it. My favourite above all others has been playing with the traffic, driving my taxi around London. I still get a buzz out of crossing Waterloo Bridge - at any time of day the views are spectacular.

TAXI How did you get into cabbing?

Katrina: I fell into it really - some may even say that I fell for it! My

husband was coming up to his 30 years of service (he had been a Police Officer all his working life since he was eighteen). Knowing that he would be too young to 'retire' he looked around for the perfect job to fill the gap and being a taxi driver seemed to fit the bill. With his lump sum he bought a brand new TXII - Gold. Then his boss asked if he would stay on... he had particular skills and they offered him a ten-year contract. Being a police officer was what he really enjoyed, driving the taxi was a bit more challenging! One evening (I may have been complaining a little over the rather large ornament in the garage), he said, "You know what? You'd make a great cabbie - you could drive it!" So I did!



TAXI What motivated you to write?

Katrina: I have always liked words, mostly words that rhyme. I like to tell stories and being in the taxi can give you a lot of material for spinning yarns! During the Covid lockdown I started writing stories for the grandchildren and

illustrating them. My son's young twin boys (who think I'm a bit of a hero, as none of their chums have a grandmother who drives a taxi!), asked me to tell them stories about my adventures in the cab. Over the years I had a few collected and when I started to put them down on paper, I found that I liked to make them rhyme. Then my sons said "Mum - you could write a book!" So I did!

TAXI How long did it take you to write the book - from your very first poems to publication?

Katrina: I'd have to say that in all truthfulness it took years. It needed to be a story based in truth - I had to actually experience the event before putting it down on paper. But once I had the material, it was over a year in preparation. I thought it would be a simple case of handing my 'manuscript' over and someone magically putting it into a readable book. That's not the case. Editors, proof-readers, layout specialists, and cover designers all got involved. It took much longer than I had anticipated.

TAXI Quite a few cabbies reckon they have a book in them! How did you go about getting your work published?

Katrina: 'Quite a few' is un-underestimate... all taxi drivers have a book in them! You only have to listen to them on a rank, recounting their experiences - some of them are incredibly interesting, some funny and quite honestly, some are absolutely amazing! They may just not have the confidence to feel that they can put the words together on paper. But they seriously could if they wanted to devote the time. No one who passes 'The Knowledge' is incapable of writing a book. All drivers are tenacious - remember our 'appearances' - we're used to knock-backs! My book was knocked back a number of times before I found Olympia Publishing. You just need to keep sending it off and not give up trying!

TAXI What can you tell us about the book?

Katrina: The book is called, *One Woman's Journey* and it's basically my journey from start to finish from appearances to the 15th birthday of my taxi. Everything from 'the overhaul' to someone trying to bilk me! All stories within are true, all are from personal experience and written in poetry form (a bit like Pam Ayres), so not stuffy. Some are funny, some are sad, but all are just as it was on the day. Some may have had names changed to protect the innocent!

TAXI Who do you think might like the book? Is it aimed at a particular audience?

Katrina: It's not aimed at anyone in particular. I'd say anyone who has a sense of humour will enjoy it. Certainly, taxi drivers will identify with many of the stories and say, "that's happened to me!" People on 'The Knowledge' may like to read that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that perseverance pays off! But seriously, you wouldn't need to be connected to the 'trade' to enjoy the book - London taxi drivers are known and respected the world over, so anyone who has an interest in London and it's iconic drivers should enjoy the stories.

TAXI Can you give us a taster of one or two of your poems?

Katrina: I'm a parent, and if you are too, you'll know what it's like to have a child in the car (in this case the cab) who can't wait to go to the toilet. As a cabbie, and a mother it's amazing how inventive I've learned to be - especially as on this occasion I'd just had the carpet in the back replaced!

This is a story [see top right] of two sisters who were taking their respective offspring to collect family members from the airport. Amelia-Jayne was five years old and her cousin George was three. Clearly, Amelia-Jayne had never seen her cousin's 'Rude Bits' This one did make me laugh...

The public are a mixed bunch, they come in all shapes and sizes. Some are well dressed, speak well and have no money! Some are moany, some happy, others can be dishevelled, downcast - but unless you talk to them, you'll never know why. I've discovered in this job, one should never judge a book by its cover. As in the following case... [see bottom right] which happened on the rank outside Marylebone Station (on an aside - a good rank, because there's not only the station, but also the Landmark Hotel and the French bank BNP Paribas). Three bites at a cherry. The man who came to my window, had been refused by the driver in front of me. It doesn't often happen, but I am ashamed to say that it does happen occasionally...

TAXI Is the book out now?

Where can it be purchased from?

Katrina: Yes, and available from lots of places! Amazon, Foyles, The Book Depository, Waterstones and direct from the publisher, in paperback for £6.99... **TAXI**

www.olympiapublishers.com/books/one-womans-journey

ISBN: 978-1-80074-247-5

Handy little gadget

*Two young women with kids in tow
To Heathrow Airport they wanted to go.
It wasn't long, the boy's in a state
He needs a wee he cannot wait!*

*Mums look at each other, then both at me
What can we do? He needs to pee!
I can't pull over, it's not safe here
But wait a moment I have an idea!*

*I took my foot off of the throttle
Opened the window and passed her the
bottle
I've got sons, it's plain to see
who often needed to take a wee!*

*Amelia-Jayne who's eyes were wide
with sheer surprise, she couldn't hide
Mummy, I know it's rude to stare
But what a handy little gadget George
has got in there!*

Will YOU take me, please?

*Why?... What's the matter with him?
The driver in front is a little bit huffy
But I'm not a tramp
I'm just a bit scruffy!*

*O...K... says I without being crass,
can I enquire are you carrying cash?
If you are, that would be really fantastic
You know how us cabbies just hate taking plastic!*

*With a smile and a nod he opened his hand
And showed me what must have been more than a grand!*

*All right, jump in - his size makes me laugh
and oh how I wish he had taken a bath,
there's a whiff, not a stink - more of a pong
So I opens the windows as we drive along.*

*I look in the mirror to see how he's doing
And see that his thumbnail is all that he's chewing
Are you alright?' .. he doesn't look well
He opens his mouth there's a story to tell*

*I'm sorry, says he, I know I look barmy,
But I lost two sons to Her Majesty's army
Two lovely boys in Baghdad's green zone,
They shouldn't have gone, they should have stayed home!*

*Tomorrow another year passes me by
They say time heals but it's just a lie!
I've outlived my sons. It's wrong can't you see?
The World's on its head, not the way it should be.*

*I pull up the cab, I tell him 'We're here'
I take out my hankie and mop up my tears.
I get out of the taxi I feel it's correct
To help this man out he's earned my respect.*

*So what if he is a little bit scruffy?
Who am I to be in the least bit huffy?*



Radio Circuit Rivalry

“Their rivalry extended to schmoozing each-others’ major account customers, enticing them away with (pie in the sky) promises of twenty-four-hour priority coverage, fixed rate fares, spotless cabs and polite drivers”

Cabbie chronicles

Over the years, I think I’ve seen all faces of the cab trade – from the empathetic, spontaneous response to the July 7th 2005, terrorist bombings when the licensed cab trade pulled out all the stops to get people home and keep families in touch; the cab trade offering its full support to the NHS during the acute covid pandemic crisis; London-wide bombings and Thatcher disturbances; to our own heartfelt demonstrations against TfL in search of better working practices, standing together with a renewed solidarity, determined to make our voices heard. But, I can’t but help thinking, will the proliferation of ‘Taxi Apps’, water-down, what had been, a burgeoning driver renaissance? I’m talking nostalgia. Radio circuits versus Apps. Much to my chagrin, I can no longer chat away like a genuine 21st century cabbie, I’m merely a resonance of the ‘real thing;’ but there were some delicious moments back in the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s that could never be captured again.

Radio circuits versus Apps

Forget Apps! My memories of cab groups are fond recollections of radio circuits and the friendly rivalry between the three major protagonists, Mountview, Dial-a-cab and Computer Cab. Their rivalry extended to schmoozing each-others’ major account customers, enticing them away with (pie in the sky) promises of twenty-four-hour priority coverage, fixed rate fares, spotless cabs and polite drivers – when the entire enterprise depended on the whether the ‘independent’ driver felt like picking up the job, or not. One way the circuits could lure away each-others’ account clients, was by splashing the largesse, e.g., inviting the staff of the major clients who actually booked cabs, to the circuits’ lavish ‘Annual Dinner and Dance’. And they were *lavish*, almost ‘no expense spared’, to give the all-important VIP booking staff, a most unforgettable time.



Military operations

The dinners and dances were planned, like full-scale military operations, months in advance. There were even designated radio circuit staff recruited to the circuit’s sales department, to ensure that no one on the VIP booking team lists were left out in the cold. The functions were normally held at posh Central London Hotels, on Saturday nights, so that in the event, a guest, (or a radio circuit board member, even?), could avail themselves of a hotel room to sleep off whatever malaise befell them. Other than that, the circuit’s sherbets were despatched across London and the Home Counties, to slap honoured guests into and then out of the designated hotel ‘Pleasure Domes’.

Foot-in-the-door sales

I guess it’s hard for modern day drivers to believe, working as they do alongside hire car operators like Uber, Bolt and Wingz, that the major radio circuits really were an integral part of commerce and big business, enjoying an outstanding rapport with transport departments of some of the biggest financial institutions in the world. So much so, that each year the boards of the respective ‘big three’ radio circuits would dress up in tuxedos and clean underwear, treat their respective partners to new frocks and Jimmy Choos, and independently,

organise a ‘DO’ to celebrate the circuits’ good fortune, by inviting the institutions’ reps to join in.

With Apps, pumping out jobs into cabs with electronic alacrity, cab drivers hardly worry how the jobs are procured. Unlike the old-fashioned marketing-methods, the sales staff of the ‘old’ radio circuits used to employ. Way before the advent of electronic technology, the radio circuits used to sell their services through ‘foot-in-the-door’ tactics, having to convince a transport manager – who needed to get his impatient execs out of the building in the quickest, most reliable way, through either hire car or licensed taxi – and who controlled the purse-strings, to choose one mode of transport over another.

Beguiling bullsh*t

The Dinner and Dance staff relished the opportunity to indulge their creative juices in the name of the circuit. Bouquets for the ladies; cigars and fags for the blokes; cordon-blue grub; free-flowing booze; top-notch music to entertain their VIP guests, and circuit members who had paid to bring along their partners in the knowledge that they would be wined and dined to perfection. Of course, there were the obligatory speeches... Each radio circuit board member would be allocated a table housing VIPs, placed there to ensure that all VIP needs were met, with discreet

charm and cosy banter, only to be interrupted from time-to-time by a well-crafted word from the circuit chairman, who’d emerge from the top table swathed in rampant balloons, to kiss VIP arse, and ‘big-up’ the wonderful relationship the circuit had with the client. Twelve months on, as the editor of a taxi trade publication, I’d be a guest of another radio circuit at their dinner and dance, and hear their chairman regale the very same VIP client – who’d been seduced, by fair means or foul, to swop cab suppliers – with the same beguiling bullsh*t.

Immense lengths

The grub and the venue alone, were enough to capture the hearts and minds of the ‘big-spending’ account customers, or drivers who’d splashed-the-cash to have a great night out with like-minded mates. It was also ‘party-time’ for non-partying/working, drivers, too. If they got roped in to doing a pick-up job of an important account client from Hackney, Haringey or Hertford, they would be ‘quids in’ – and even more so, if by the end of the evening they could figure out how to be around when the call went out to take ‘em all back home. The entertainment however was the key, and the organising committees used to go to immense lengths to acquire the services of the ‘poppiest’ pop groups, the swinging-est swing bands, the funniest comedians or the most original acts. One Saturday evening, as I squeezed between tables taking pics of the party-goers, in a ultra-smart West End hotel for the trade paper, I was forced to take cover and then re-focus my camera as the band of the *Grenadier Guards* trooped through the doors, in full military regalia, marched onto the ballroom and performed synchronised marching in parade-ground unison!

Mind you, not all the performers lived up to their reputations or expectations. Comedians in particular were thrown to the wolves in front of a no-holds barred bevy of ‘merry’, critical, cabbies. One, well-known funny-man, and a cab driver himself, better known for having won ‘*Mastermind*’, and a little worse the wear before he even opened his mouth, died a death at the hands of his cabbing colleagues. What had he been thinking when he accepted the gig? **TAXI**

‘The Professionals’

– What sets those with ‘The Knowledge’ apart from the rest?

What does it mean to be a professional in 2022? When does an occupation or a job become professionalised? What makes those with ‘The Knowledge’ different from other “... suppliers of transportation services...?”

A brief background search produces suggestions as to what the make-up of a ‘professional activity’ might involve. Modern definitions include notions of ‘accountability; integrity; competency; knowledge and qualifications’ – deprive a Knowledge Boy or Girl of a 5G network and these skills would still exist, though some other ‘suppliers of transportation services’ might well struggle!

Some of the key ingredients of ‘professionalism’ involve:

‘The deployment of formal certified learning’

Can other ‘suppliers of transportation services’ really claim to be engaged in doing this? Possibly, though that might depend on the depth and quality of learning involved in order to be accredited. In what world can those that pass ‘The Knowledge’ be compared to the learning involved to obtain other road-based transportation service operator licenses?

‘A professional owns the power, skills and freedom to problem solve.’

It’s pretty certain that an individual having the means to purchase and blindly follow a mobile device with a sat-nav app doesn’t meet this threshold. ‘Knowledge Boys & Girls’ have in-built ‘chips and processors’ that deploy real knowledge, in real time. Out on the roads, real professionalism isn’t dependent on the battery life of a mobile device or if that device knows that the football kicked off late or is going to penalties - which will impact on both journey time and route choice.

‘A professional possesses the ability to make decisions in the best interests of others.’

We know that this level of responsibility is based on the use of specific, localised, operational expertise - rather than hoping a digital device can

provide an AA graded Knowledge rating of a route selection in line with traffic conditions, whilst ensuring a disabled passenger arrives at the entrance to their hotel which has suitable wheelchair access and porter assistance.

Those who possess ‘The Knowledge’ and have responded to the strength of the calling to the highest standards of the profession don’t just know the optimum route within an ever-changing landscape, they know its history too. If the formation of a professional identity is also about ‘**providing a specialised service to society,**’ those professionals with the ability to share that learning with their passengers are actually, inter-generational custodians of present-day and historical London knowledge. Black cab drivers are trusted ‘old school influencers’ in relation to the sites, attractions, facilities, services and cultural traditions of the capital - including being ambassadors of a historic trade, which is known as the best taxi service in the world.

All this, whilst transporting passengers in the most direct and safest manner, in accordance with codes, ethics and the standards of a professional community of operators.

Those with ‘The Knowledge’ have often picked up and are moving before a passenger has informed them of their destination - professionals are not sat around backing up traffic, typing postcodes into gadgets, in the hope a device can professionalise their practice and make them what they are not.

When people are lost - a professional finds them and gets them where they need to go. When they are too tired to go on - a professional takes the reins and when they are late for what’s important to them, professional road craft and knowledge get them to their destination safely and quickly.

So how are those with ‘The Knowledge’ valued and whose responsibility should it be to promote the identities and activities of such professionals, in turn separating them from other “suppliers of transportation services...?”

You are professionals. We know it.

Let’s ensure everybody else knows it and values it too.

■ **The LTDA are here to represent, protect and ensure recognition of the professional practice, identity and standards of our members.**



LTDA APPLICATION FORM

Name

Address

..... Postcode

Telephone..... Mobile.....

Email..... Twitter

Date of Birth..... Badge No.....

Badge colour (Please state whether green or yellow)..... Year badge obtained.....

Suburban badge sector numbers.....

Have you ever been a member of the LTDA before? (please tick) Yes No

Do you currently have points on your DVLA driving license? (please tick) Yes No

If Yes how many points do you have?

Please tick if you **DO NOT** wish to receive information from the LTDA and other related organisations in the future?

I understand that my application for membership of the Association must be approved by the Council of Management and that until this is confirmed I am not eligible to vote in relation to any form of Association matters. I agree that all benefits prior to approval of membership shall be at the discretion of the Council of Management.

Please note: We do not provide assistance for any matters that have occurred prior to you joining LTDA.

Signed..... Date

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Date



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The Direct Debit Guarantee



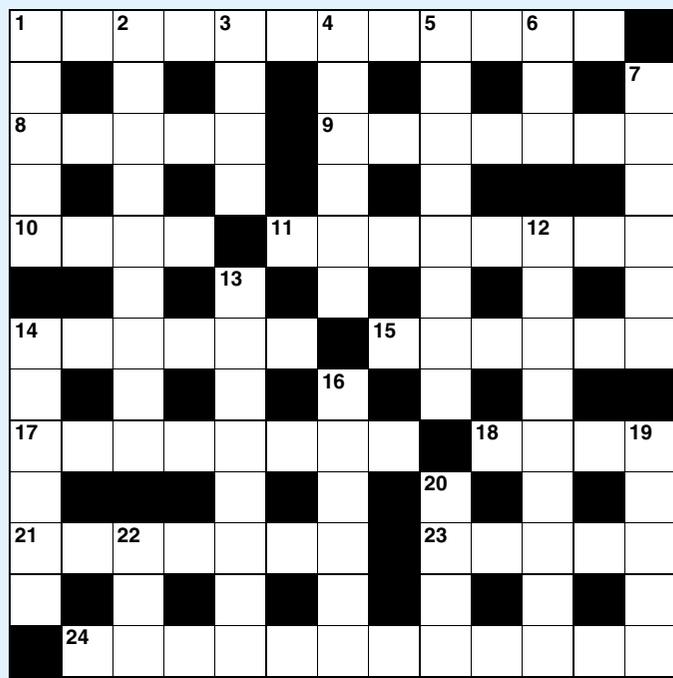
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- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.



Puzzler page

So you know every street and every run between two points in London? Let's now see how your knowledge stands up to these brain twisters...

Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Unflappable person (4,8)
- 8 Extended morning snooze (3-2)
- 9 Darcey ____, ex-dancer (7)
- 10 Newborn infant (4)
- 11 Boldly displayed (8)
- 14 Watery or messy (6)
- 15 Trader (6)
- 17 Uncouth through lack of knowledge (8)
- 18 Colour slightly (4)
- 21 Circular (road) (7)
- 23 Squabble, quarrel (5)
- 24 Cutlery items (5,3,4)

DOWN

- 1 A-list star (5)
- 2 Inflated, exaggerated (9)
- 3 Ice-cream holder (4)
- 4 Delicate, understated (6)
- 5 Hid from view (8)
- 6 Seeing organ (3)
- 7 Aircraft without an engine (6)
- 12 Ticking-off (7-2)
- 13 Pre-dinner drink (8)
- 14 Shoe without laces (4-2)
- 16 East ____, Norfolk's region (6)
- 19 Sharp pinch (5)
- 20 Settled the bill (4)
- 22 Make illegal (3)

Sudoku

Have a go at this medium level Sudoku puzzle. Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 just once.

			1					
		2				4		3
3		9		8	2		7	
	5			1				7
			6	4				
	3			2				9
1		4		7	5		8	
		6				9		4
			2					

Letterbox

Complete the grid so that four words read across and a different four words read downwards using only the letters in the given word.

C		A	W
	A		
		E	R
W		D	

LEVERAGE

	x		+	3
x			+	x
	x		+	
+		x		+
	-		x	4

= 11 = 34 = 25

Set square

Place each of the digits 1 to 9 in the grid to make the sums work. We've started you with two numbers.

All answers to puzzler on p30

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- All de-commissioned good quality TX4s wanted. Instant decision, cash paid. We come to you. Also white TX4 elegance wanted 07973 335739 or 01253 407500

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 e16-taxirentals.co.uk

TX4s TO RENT

- Ascott's maintained.
- Pay by cash/bank/online.
- Mercs also available



CABS WANTED

De-commissioned your TX4's and Euro 5's?

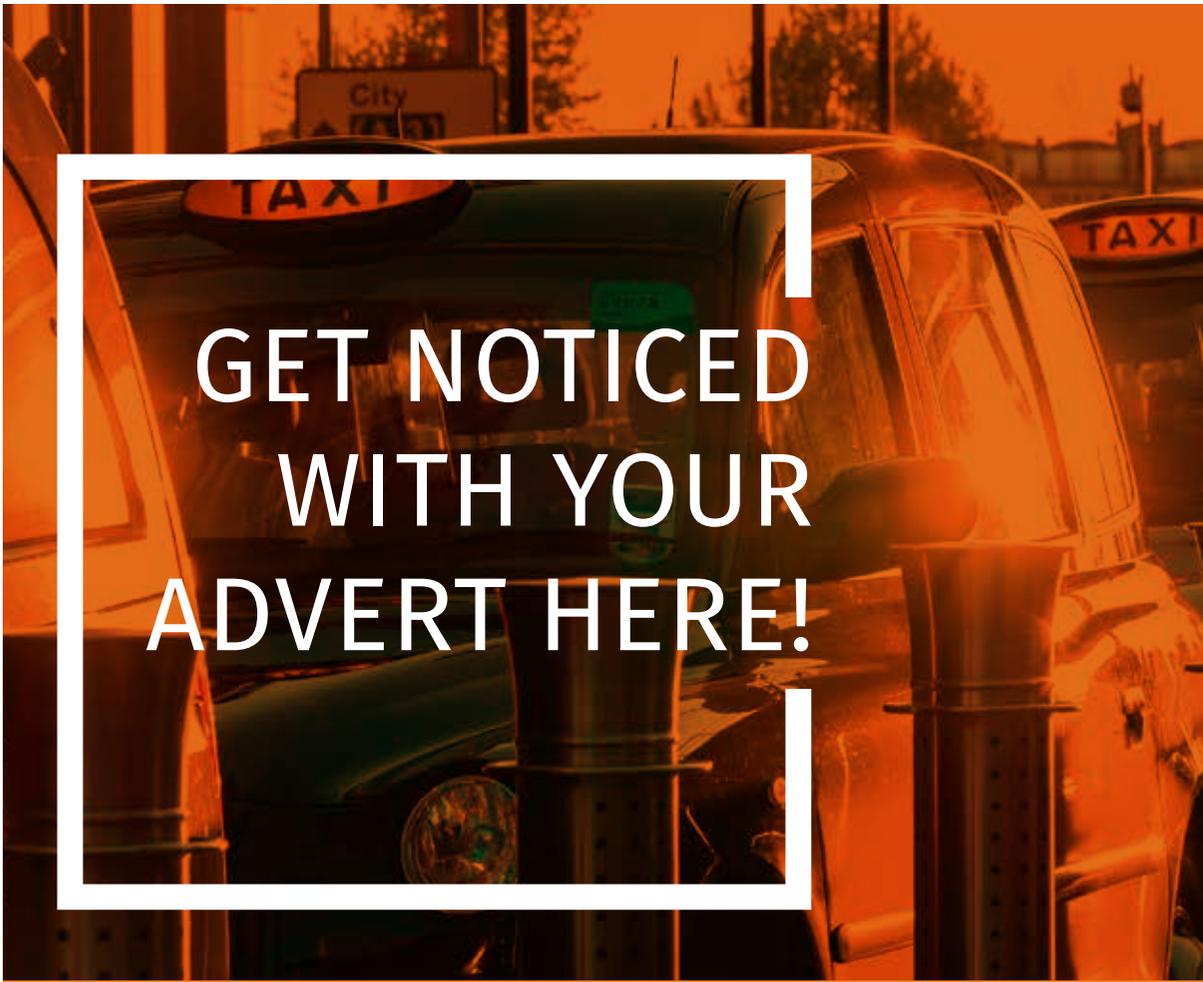
Earn more by selling outside London.

We pay cash, collect and drive away.

John
07702 554934

DRIVERS WANTED

- Driver wanted part time or night time 66 reg TXE elegance change over in Hertfordshire area – 07970915778
- Potential TXE cab share opportunity. East London. Call if interested – 07795823638
- 71 & 22 plate TXEs for long term hire no ads RAC and full backup. Pay weekly directly into bank account - 07980288333



CABS FOR SALE

- Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history. Non-fleet cabs. New stock daily. Cabs also wanted. Finance Paid 07957 465423

CABS FOR RENT

- TX4s TO RENT! Essex based full back up - 07824630247
- New TXE for rent looking for long term drivers, must pay week in advanced weekly direct into bank account – phone Rob 07887696872
- VNK Motors -Electric cabs LEVCs & TX4s for rent, from £195 upwards per week. Full back up, Caledonia Road, North London area, breakdown service, overhauls, running repairs & body work. Also Looking for a taxi mechanic 0207 700 1045 or 07951 661430 – Nick.

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WWII Veteran Roy Maxwell Celebrates his 100th Birthday



In June 1944, as part of the 1st Special Service Brigade, No. 4 Commando landed on Sword Beach thirty minutes before the rest of the brigade, their first objectives were to capture a strong point and gun battery in Ouistreham...

TAXI met up with Ian Parsons, Chairman of the Taxi Charity to find out more about WWII veteran Roy Maxwell and what's planned for his 100th birthday.

TAXI Hi Ian, I understand there is a very special birthday for one of your veterans this month?

Ian: Indeed there is, WWII veteran Roy Maxwell will be celebrating his 100th birthday on 21st February.

TAXI Tell us about Roy.

Ian: He is a fantastic man who is forever smiling and joking. He is always immaculately turned out and certainly the youngest looking 100-year-old I've ever known.

TAXI Can you share any stories about Roy that demonstrate his renowned sense of humour?

Ian: One of my favourites is from the charity's 'Back to the Beaches' trip to Normandy in 2017. On the final day of our trip, Roy joined fellow WWII veterans on stage at the Caen Museum for a Q & A session and was asked, "What was the crossing like on D-Day?"

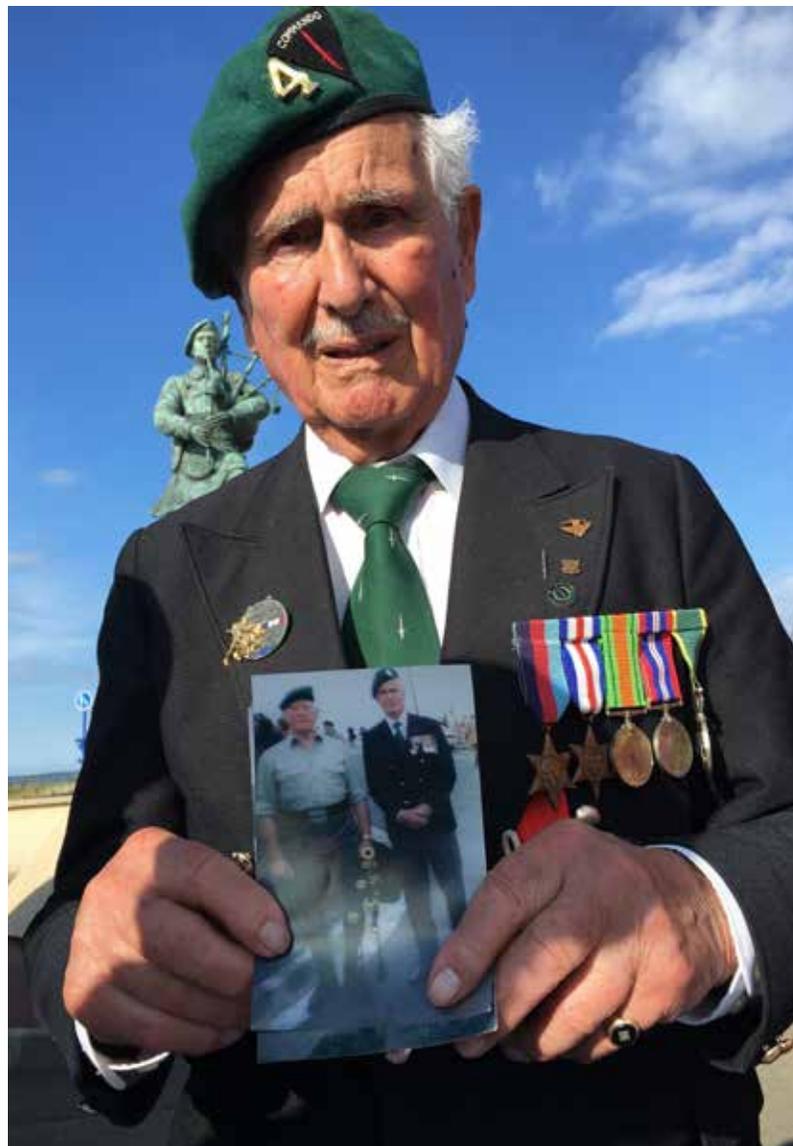
"Oh, it was a lovely crossing," replied Roy. "Very good indeed...but things started going downhill when we arrived...you see, the reception committee wasn't very friendly..."

TAXI What was D-Day like for Roy, does he ever speak about it?

Ian: Roy served with No. 4 Commando. In June 1944, as part of the 1st Special Service Brigade, No. 4 Commando landed on Sword Beach thirty minutes before the rest of the brigade, their first objectives were to capture a strong point and gun battery in Ouistreham.

As part of HQ Troop, Roy came in at 0730 hours by landing craft, shortly after zero hour. As he and his comrades advanced up the beach under heavy enemy fire, the attachment of French commandos under Phillippe Kieffer peeled off to assault the German strongpoint within the old Casino on the beachfront.

Over seventy years after D Day, I vividly remember standing next to Roy as our ferry pulled out



of Ouistreham after one of our trips to Normandy. It was July 2016 and Roy was one of seven WWII veterans we had taken to Normandy in cabs. We looked out of the window and gazed across the Sword Beach shoreline watching holidaymakers playing ball, building sandcastles, and flying kites. We saw the fun and laughter, but I knew Roy was also recalling a very different scene, I could see it in his eyes. It was a poignant moment.

On D-Day, Lord Lovat, the Commander of No.4, had brought his personal piper, Bill Millin, to pipe the men ashore. Piper Bill famously played his bagpipes as his comrades fell around him on Sword Beach. Amid the gunfire

and chaos, Roy told me that he remembers hearing the distant sound of Millin's bagpipes. Roy knew Bill Millin before D-Day and they remained friends after the war when Roy would often visit Bill after he moved to a care home. Today, there is a statue of Bill Millin above Sword beach and attached to each lamppost lining the promenade is a Kakemono (a fixed banner) which displays a picture of a D-Day veteran along with his name and regiment. Befittingly Roy Maxwell and Bill Millin's stand next to each other.

TAXI Does Roy join you regularly on trips to Normandy?

Ian: Yes, he is a regular on trips to the continent and in the UK.

On our 2019 trip to Normandy, we were invited to attend the official unveiling of the sound installation at the Bayeux War Cemetery. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was launching its new sound installation: Voices of Liberation. The installation, in the form of a bench, allows the public to listen to unheard stories from veterans and immerse themselves in accounts of the D-Day landings. The memorial bench has audio of veterans speaking about their war, which is triggered when visitors sit down, and Roy spent a few hours on the beach speaking to serving personnel who had also been invited to the launch.

TAXI Will you be going to Normandy this year to commemorate D-Day?

Ian: We certainly hope too. The pandemic put a halt to all our travel plans for almost two years and with our treasured WWII veterans being in their late nineties or hundreds we know that for some this might be the last opportunity they have to visit Normandy and remember those that were lost. If travel restrictions allow, and we have everything crossed, we will be taking veterans not only to Normandy this year but also to The Netherlands.

TAXI How will Roy be celebrating his birthday?

Ian: Roy is having a party on Sunday 20th February near to his home in Bristol. My wife Anne and I will be joining many other Taxi Charity volunteers to raise a toast to this great man. At the celebration the Charity will present Roy with a framed print. The image is of Roy in front of the Bill Millin statue by Sword Beach, holding a photograph of him with Bill, which I think would have been taken about twenty-five years ago. War enthusiasts from all over the world know the story of Piper Bill and this seemed a very fitting gift for our centenarian. ■ TAXI



Flying High



“Uncle Jim, a virgin flyer, turned up at Luton wearing a cream-coloured safari style suit and caused a right old hoo-hah at the departure desk...”

A woman of words

Trade is middling for me right now – not boom, not bust, but bobbing along. It's the airport runs that are keeping me busiest. As a nervous flyer myself, I am always impressed by the 'oh so relaxed' punters who use airplanes like buses. Don't tell Greta Glumberg but one of my regulars flies Heathrow to Frankfurt and back again three days a week. He's a big cheese, literally because he sells cheese all over Europe. This fella likes to sleep in his own bed after a busy day. My Mr Cheddar counts his commute in time, not miles, and reckons that door to door it is quicker to travel Berkshire-



Heathrow-Frankfurt than if he was getting into and across London travelling by car, rail, tube and cab doing Berkshire-Paddington-Shoreditch. We know who to blame for that, don't we Mr. Mayor?

Trailblazing Uncle Jim

Back in 1977 my Uncle Jim, a London taxi driver (he drove an Austin FX4) was a trailblazer and took his family on holiday to SPAIN in a PLANE. Flying was mostly for celebrities and royals back then. It was proper fancy. Just like now, luggage 'check in' was the first stop at the airport. Uncle Jim, a virgin flyer, turned up at Luton wearing a cream-coloured safari style suit and caused a right old hoo-hah at the departure desk...

1970's 'humour'

After heaving his suitcases onto the conveyor belt, he then hauled his wife onto it, too. Not an easy task as

my Aunt Mary was a big woman. At family gatherings Uncle Jim told and retold a joke about her that he would never get away with in these more enlightened times, "Mary looked at herself in the mirror wearing a new dress and said she was depressed because she looked so fat in it. She asked me to pay her a compliment to cheer her up. So, I told her 'Darling, you have perfect eyesight.'" – It always got him a laugh from the crowd and a cuff around the head from Mary.

Family freight

His wife now loaded up; Jim then beckoned his children forward intending to put them on the conveyor too. The uniformed airline rep hit the stop button and halted the belt. "What's the problem here, Miss?" Uncle Jim asked. "The problem is that your wife is sitting on the conveyor belt" the rep replied. "Oh, should she lie down?" questioned Jim, "We've never flown before so we're not sure what's what." "What's what"

answered the rep in a very icy tone, "is that luggage goes on the conveyor belt and passengers walk that way to the plane..." She pointed to a sign over a corridor that read 'Departures.' "That can't be right" Jim replied shaking his head. "My cash and camera are in those bags. Where they go, I go!" "Do I need to call Security?" enquired the check-in lady. "To guard my bags?" asked a hopeful Uncle Jim. "No. To escort you out of the



terminal so you can go home." He didn't go home, he flew to Spain and loved it so much he retired over there. A case of sell up, up and away. ■ TAXI

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- ◆ Martin Cordell, Thomas Road, E14
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- ◆ Putney Bridge Taxis, The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6
- ◆ Richmond Road Taxi Centre, E8
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- ◆ Ubiquitous Ltd, E1
- ◆ Waterloo Station
- ◆ Wimbledon Station Rank
- ◆ WizAnn Knowledge School, Watts Grove, E3

PUZZLER ANSWERS



Crossword

C	O	O	L	C	U	S	T	O	M	E	R		
E	V	O			U	B	Y					G	
L	I	E	I	N		B	S	S	E	L	L		
E	R	E			T	C						I	
B	A	B	Y		F	L	A	U	N	T	E	D	
					L	A	E	R	A	E			
S	L	O	P	P	Y		D	E	A	L	E	R	
L	W	E	A										
I	G	N	O	R	A	N	T		T	I	N	T	
P													
O	R	B	I	T	A	L			A	R	G	U	E
N													
K	N	I	F	E	A	N	D		F	O	R	K	

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SUDOKU

7	4	5	1	9	3	8	6	2
8	1	2	7	5	6	4	9	3
3	6	9	4	8	2	1	7	5
6	5	8	3	1	9	2	4	7
2	9	1	6	4	7	5	3	8
4	3	7	5	2	8	6	1	9
1	2	4	9	7	5	3	8	6
5	7	6	8	3	1	9	2	4
9	8	3	2	6	4	7	5	1

Letterbox

C	L	A	W
R	A	G	E
E	V	E	R
W	A	D	E

Set Square

1	x	8	+	3
x			+	x
6	x	9	+	7
+		x		+
5	-	2	x	4

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