

THE CAB TRADE RUMOUR MILL:
STEVE McNAMARA **Page 5**

COVER STORY:
MATT WESTFALL **Pages 20 & 21**

THE BERMONDSEY HORROR:
ROBERT LORDAN **Page 16**



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5th April 2022 #513



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WORK UNDERWAY TO RE-OPEN
HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE TO MOTORISTS

DfT has announced a £2.93 million funding package for vital restoration works to Hammersmith Bridge, confirming Government will fund one third of the costs to stabilise the structure. The release of the funding comes after ministers approved the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's business case. Pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic will still be able to use the bridge throughout the duration of these works, with stabilisation expected to take less than a year to complete.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps: "We're investing millions into its restoration, ensuring local residents can continue to cross the river by foot or bike, and I look forward to working further with the local council on future works to reopen the bridge to motorists."

Roads Minister Baroness Vere: "Work is already underway to ensure the structure is re-opened to motorists as soon as possible and returned to its former glory."



NEW LOUGHTON ELECTRIC VEHICLE
CHARGING POINTS INSTALLED

Loughton have got their first electrical vehicle charging points! Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) has partnered with InstaVolt, to install two rapid EV charging stations at the Oakwood Hill East car park on the Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate in Loughton.

This is the first public charging point in an EFDC operated car park. Oakwood Hill East car park was chosen as a first site for EV charging following a large increase in requests from residents and businesses for more public EV charging. The location, near to industrial estate, The Crate and the M11, is ideal to meet the needs of higher mileage users or those needing a quick or urgent top-up charge.



LEVC APPOINTS CLIVE SUTTON
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As part of the new agreement, Clive Sutton will offer ultra-luxurious conversions of the iconic London Taxi, including a range of high-specification seating configurations and luxury features. Presented to the most discerning customers around the world, the Sutton VIP Class Taxi brings private jet-style features and finishes to the TX.

Package benefit from modifications including a 20" media screen, front vision camera for passengers, real wood veneer door cappings, built-in umbrellas, mobile WiFi router, high quality audio system, rear seat heating and more. Between the rear passengers, there is a new luxury armrest with cupholders, and the VIP taxi also features a drinks cooler.

On the outside, the Sutton TX can be specified in a subtle yet distinctive 'two-tone' exterior paint finish – typically, iconic black taxi paint for the lower portion, with Grigio Silverstone for the upper section. Customers can also select from a wide range of colours and finishes.

For more details on Clive Sutton's bespoke TX conversion, visit www.clivesutton.co.uk



CHARITY BOOK NEEDS
YOUR STORIES!

Dr Harry Brunjes, Chair of English National Opera, The London Coliseum and LTDA partner is putting together a book to raise money for English National Operas charity, ENO Breathe which is a breathing and wellbeing programme for individuals recovering from the respiratory complications of Long Covid. The plan is to prepare a book about the experiences we all have travelling in black cabs. There will be 50 amusing stories from London cab drivers alongside 50 stories from celebrities and VIPs. All proceeds of the book will be a charitable donation and every penny will support the work of ENO Breathe. The response from celebrities has already been stunning and now more stories from cabbies are needed! All you have to do is pen your favourite anecdotes into an email and send to: cabbiestory@gmail.com

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The Cab Trade Rumour Mill

"A few snippets of fact mixed with a few unknowns quickly become gospel and hard to dispel..."

Steve's comment

The cab trade rumour mill is legendary – even before the advent of social media, a half-heard snippet in the cab on a Tuesday afternoon was rapidly embellished as fact, and by Wednesday afternoon, every cab driver on every rank and at every tea stop in London had heard it. Social media hasn't necessarily made it worse it's just made the half-truths all the harder to dispel. The top two rumours at the moment are that the vehicle age limit has dropped to 11 years and that the Dorchester is shut!

Dispelling rumours

The Dorchester is a misunderstanding because the main entrance is temporarily relocated to Deanery Street whilst renovations are taking place –

meanwhile the Dorchester is open as usual, but the rumours were getting so bad, the Manager felt the need to write in to tell us (see letters, page 23).

The age limit story has come about because in order for a cab to get its full 12 years it has to be passed at NSL – that's passed, not just presented – before its 11th birthday. The rules are that the cab has to come off the road before its 12th birthday and because a plate can only be issued for a full year, it follows it has to be passed before it reaches 11 years defined by the date of first registration in the DVLA V5.

Uber 'local'...

It's not only the taxi trade that loves a rumour, our competitors in the minicab industry also love a gossip and they are currently awash with rumours that Uber are going to launch their 'Uber local' service in London. Apparently all that's holding them up is they have yet to finalise contracts with some of the remaining minicab companies



and any tie in would necessitate using the Autocab dispatch system owned by Uber as opposed to the icabbi or Cordic systems that most London based firms currently use.

The 'local' service launched last year is where a customer opens the Uber app, but the ride request is fulfilled by a local partner minicab firm, effectively making Uber a platform provider and not an operator. It's being rapidly rolled out across much of the north of England including Manchester, Bury, Bolton and Oldham, with Uber taking a service fee from the private hire companies who price the rides themselves not Uber.

The big minicab companies, that have survived in London, all share a profound dislike and suspicion of all of the big app operators, and publicly they are all quick to dismiss the rumours. However, most of them are also struggling with coverage at various times and the possibility of recruiting drivers from other companies, were they the first to do the deal, may cause one of them to break ranks. The argument for unity being put forward, is that the remaining local minicab firms are seeing a good return of customers, as they give up on the apps following cancellations and high prices, so now is the time to hold strong and beat off the 'disrupters' once and for all.

Just like our own rumours a few snippets of fact mixed with a few unknowns quickly become gospel

"It's not only the taxi trade that loves a rumour, our competitors in the minicab industry also love a gossip and they are currently awash with rumours that Uber are going to launch their 'Uber local' service in London..."

and hard to dispel. Uber have launched their local service in the north, they did bring the legal challenge which has impacted every minicab firm in London by making them the 'principle' and are likely to bring another challenge to try and do the same outside London – come to think of it maybe this one is true!

Roy Ellis

I was saddened to learn that Roy Ellis passed away recently. Roy was the head of the old Public Carriage Office under the Met police and oversaw the transition to TfL. Many in the trade will want to pay their respects and details of the funeral arrangements will be shared as soon as they are available

Ukraine Cabbies

What a great job our member Matt Westfall and the boys did with their mammoth ride to Ukraine and back. I am pleased the LTDA were able to help fund the trip, the media coverage our trade received with some great interviews by Matt, really showed everyone why we are known as the best cabbies in the world! Well done. **LTDA**

The newspaper of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association

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Streets ahead

Firstly, I hope you and your families are all keeping safe and well? We all want the best service possible and of course value for what we pay for. LTDA Members can claim back a tax allowance of £12.80 per-month against a monthly subscription of £16.80 when presenting their yearly accounts. Peace of mind really does come that cheap!

Who we are...

The LTDA has highly experienced team of officers on hand five days a week. In reality, this is now seven days as during the lockdown, and since, many members have been receiving calls back in the evening and at weekends to help resolve their queries. London Cabbies are renowned for giving a gold standard taxi service, we at the LTDA give the same service to all our members, no other taxi trade organisation has the staff, experience, or knowledge to supply this service! Many of our members have never ever called or contacted us, so to give an insight

into what services we provide, I have decided to give you a brief snapshot of what goes on daily here at Taxi House, and in future articles I'll give you further examples... but here's a taster for starters.

What we do...

We deal with all things trade related, but for most members it's the personal issues that are most important such as: driver licence renewals; cab licensing and delicensing; medicals and medical issues that impact on licensing; NSL Test Centres; issues and complaints.

We also support members by working on more general trade issues, such as taxi ranks; meeting and representing the trades interests with resident associations and other interest groups; TFL; Local Boroughs; MPs; and lobbying local and national government on all political matters. It's because of this lobbying that taxis are exempt from the congestion charge and ULEZ charges that our competitors in the minicab industry have to pay. A more recent example is the exemption to accept contactless payments at the roadside - without LTDA intervention, every time a cabbie used a handheld payment at the side of the road, he or she

would have run the risk of six points on their licence!

Any member can make an appointment - or as many members now do (following our move to the new, more central Taxi House), just walk in off the street to see someone for advice or help. Don't forget we also offer the best legal protection anywhere, with an in-house legal team that are experts in all licensing, motoring, and criminal law. I have lost count of the number of cabbies who thought they would never get nicked or that their badge would never be at risk, but who had the foresight to join the trades biggest and best trade Association, benefitting from our services - and were so glad to be a part of the LTDA when they needed help the most.

The big picture

The LTDA has built a hard-earned reputation as the respected and authoritative voice of London's

cab trade. We speak up for the trade with a common sense and fact-based approach to protect drivers' livelihoods and to ensure taxis continue to play a vital role in London's transport network, not just now but into the future. This includes the mundane things, like responding to consultations but it is not limited to just that, we respond and make representations on any issues that could impact the trade, at both the London and national level. These could be on anything - from new traffic schemes proposing to exclude taxis, to changes in the law on using mobile phones in vehicles. We also represent drivers interests in a variety of forums, including Department for Transport working groups, TfL Taxi and Private Hire meetings and the London Chamber of Commerce.

■ LTDA

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NEW CAMERA SITES

Cornwall Road Lambeth:	Both left and right hand turns into Cornwall Road.
Charterhouse Square	School Street, no vehicle entry from Monday to Friday 08.15 - 09.15 and 15.00 - 16.00.
Savile Row	Left turn only from Savile Row into Conduit Street
Southampton Row	No U turns signs
Hans Road into Basil Street	No right turn
Hans Road Yellow Box	Camera monitoring junction
Buckingham Palace Road	Hole in the Wall - drivers stopping on red route
Praed Street	Over ranking
Beeston Place:	No entry to Victoria Square.
Wapping High Street:	Bus Gate.
Mornington Street:	Prohibited Zone.
Lansdowne Drive:	Bus Gate.

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.

Medicals - MHC204 Form

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

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.

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Regaining Perspective

"The last ten years has definitely left a mark on some of us. What I do think has happened is that a few of us have maybe lost sight of the positives of being a cabbie..."

On point

There are a few theories going around as to why we are doing okay at the moment (please don't jump on me, I only said 'okay') and whatever it is, long may it continue. The usual twitter attention seekers or trade savers as they like to call themselves are probably claiming it's all down to them. The truth of course, is it's down to various factors: lack of cabs; more people feeling safer in the back of one of our cabs rather than a packed tube or bus; the age limit disgrace that has forced a good few drivers into early retirement; and the restrictions placed on the private hire companies that have forced their prices up.



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Level playing field

Talking of the private hire prices going up, do you remember when the non-tax paying, regulatory ignoring American private hire firm came to London and systematically attempted to remove the London cab from the streets? Well, all the London Cab trade ever asked for was a level playing field and it's an absolute disgrace that it's taken all this time just to get somewhere near to that.

Regaining perspective

Over the last ten years and whilst our trade has had to fight off the threat of the non-tax paying, regulation ignoring, American private hire company, I have found them to have been the most frustrating years I have had as a cabbie. There were a few low moments, where I really did think the trade was in deep trouble and as I may have mentioned before, I told my own son that it was probably best he come off the knowledge and looked for something else to make a living. He of course ignored me (as is usually the case), and he has been out five years now and is happy with his lot. That being said, the last ten years has definitely left a mark

on some of us. What I do think has happened is that a few of us have maybe lost sight of the positives of being a cabbie. I still have friends tell me how they would love to be in a position where they are totally in control of their working day. They also wonder what it would be like to not have to book their holiday around their partners allowance, and a couple I know are told that they cannot take leave at certain times of the year. I admit that there are still many frustrations with our job and believe traffic conditions are as bad as I have ever seen them in all my 25 years as a cabbie. TfL may quote that they are not, but I don't believe that for one second.

I spoke with many members who during Covid had to find other employment and they said that for a short while they quite enjoyed the change of scenery. But to a man, they soon realised that being employed and at the mercy of some middle manager throwing his or her weight around was not for them. I speak with drivers who since have used this experience to reset their outlook on being a cabbie. I had one particular member call me and demand that if he calls me complaining about the job, I

"I had one particular member call me and demand that if he calls me complaining about the job, I am to remind him of what we've been through the last two years!"

am to remind him of what we've been through the last two years!

Age limit misinformation

I had quite a few calls from members this week regarding the age limits on their cabs. They all say they've seen on social media and heard around the ranks that there will now be an eleven-year age limit. This is of course more nonsense spread by the trade savers to hopefully spark some fury or install some fear within the trade. As usual with this sort of thing it's not as described, there is no change to what's been in place for the last few years. Disgracefully, the age limit has come down one year every year on 31/10 since 2019 and this October it will now have reached 12 years where it will

stay. I do sometimes wonder why 'normal' cabbies re-post these rumours without taking the time to check the facts. I've also been told its going around that we won't be able to surrender the plate to get another full year before the 31/10/22. Nonsense, the surrendering of plates has been going on ever since the drops in the age limit, so why would TfL stop it now? I think some have read the TfL notice and not quite understood it. I don't blame people either, because the notice wasn't that clear. I just wish some would seek clarification before posting although there's some of course that likely do understand it but won't pass up the opportunity to stir the pot.

Here to support...

I've got no problem with taking calls from our members and explaining the situation, but most call up really concerned and cabbies don't need any more unnecessary stress. If you are not 100% sure on where you stand with your cab, please, please give me a call with your first date of registration which is on your V5 (Logbook), and I will be able to tell you exactly when your cab has to come off the road.

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Heathrow, New Challenges & Rising Costs

“One potential fly in the ointment is Crossrail, which finally seems about ready to open – bosses have apparently said it will be running before the end of June.”



M4 musings

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Firstly, a huge well done to Matt Westfall and all the volunteer drivers who jumped in their cabs to drive across Europe with supplies for displaced Ukrainians and also bringing some people back to safe destinations. The whole thing seems to have been planned at breakneck speed and partly facilitated by my LTDA airport colleague Suzanne, who is already well-known to some of us for her organisational skills!

Heathrow

Many drivers I've spoken to at the airport feel that it is time to update the suggested prices for journeys outside the Greater London area. These jobs come up fairly frequently and there is a Trade-agreed pricelist displayed on all terminal ranks. The prices are for guidance only – customers will often ask for a quote and it's helpful to have an 'official' list to point to. Drivers are free to make a deal on their own estimation of what they want to take for the job based on time, distance, fuel etc. It's a good idea to look at these prices around the same time as the upcoming Tariff adjustment. One idea is to add five percent to every price in line with this year's change. Whatever the

“It's time we started looking forward to other challenges to our business, like road access, relations with borough councils and

outcome, it's never wrong to use the meter – that's what it's for, the suggested prices are there to give people an idea what the final price might be. You might for example say, *“I'll do it for the meter or the set price, whichever is lower.”*

Business has continued to be strong at the airport, and war or economic uncertainty aside, there's no reason not to expect a busy year. One potential fly in the ointment is Crossrail, which finally seems about ready to open – bosses have apparently said it will be running before the end of June. At first glance, looking at the stations it serves, I think once the initial novelty wears off it's just another train – many people will still opt for a cab. That said, I expect a big publicity push from the usual suspects, so business is likely to be affected in the short term.

Finally on Heathrow, HAL have agreed once more to exempt jobs between terminals from the Terminal Drop-off Charge (TDOC). The TDOC comes into

force for Taxis from 30th April 2022 at the same time as the 2022 Tariff update. You will be charged £5.00 for every drop at a terminal, with £5.20 allowable on the meter as an extra. Drivers are strongly advised to set up an account, to do this type 'Heathrow terminal drop off charge' into your search engine.

VAT of troubles...

I wonder at what point Uber's investors will realise the firm's valuation is ridiculously exaggerated. Perhaps they already have, the number is down from \$91 billion in September 2021 to around \$66 billion in March 2022 although this can partly be attributed to more generalised stock market falls that have hit this year. Still, it's satisfying for those of us who always knew that you just can't provide motorised personal transport that cheaply and make a profit.

I find it odd that some drivers still fixate on Uber in particular, after all, there will always be the next so-called competitor/scam artist trying to do what we do for cheap, and there will always be some customers who are prepared to buy that... for a while. But, there will also always be those who just want a reliable, competent easy to use service that does what it says on the tin without having to resort to Victorian working practices or 'adjusted EBITDA' (Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation & Amortization).

New Licence or not, Uber's time has passed, their flush is busted – it's time we started looking forward to other challenges to our business, like road access, relations with borough councils and spiralling costs.

Cost of living... again

One of the most important constituents of western economies is also the most difficult to measure: sentiment. Sentiment means how people feel about their situation – can I afford to go out to the pub or the cinema tonight or do I need to stay in and save my money? Should I commit to buying the new cab or hedge my bets and buy second hand?

Following a spring statement that seems not to have pleased anyone at all, Rishi (formerly known as 'Dishy') Sunak has suffered a blow to his reputation as PM in waiting, with his approval ratings slipping below those of Liz Truss and Tom Tugendhat. It's hard to see things getting better for Rishi any time soon, as inflation is widely expected to be high for the foreseeable future, and wages unlikely to keep pace.

Two things cab drivers will feel are the immediate five pence cut in fuel duty, already enacted, and the £3000 increase in the threshold for paying National Insurance, although this is offset by the planned 1.25% increase, which remains in place. Of course, the five pence is a drop in the ocean compared to recent increases at the pump but it will still be worth a few quid to diesel drivers.

I saw someone on social media wondering out loud whether they should take a 1.99% fixed rate remortgage for five years the other day – as with all social media it could be nonsense but it sounded pretty cheap to me in the current climate, I'd have snapped it up personally, and the reason why is sentiment. Things look uncertain at the moment, with all sorts of global events rumbling away that threaten economic prosperity. The important thing for governments is to instil confidence in people that they can go out and spend their money today because they will still have jobs and income tomorrow.

Good luck out there. ■ LTDA



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The Super Humanitarian Efforts... of some

“Over the past weeks, long convoys of cabs with drivers from all over Europe have been ferrying precious aid to Ukraine and neighbouring countries.”

International correspondent

We all love certainties in life, like rising prices of derv and electricity... Particularly in these uncertain and uncomfortable days, we all like to embrace certainties in life. Preferably the comforting ones and not the staple ones – like death and taxes. Rising fuel prices like derv and electricity have been a certainty you could count on since well before 2022. Everywhere in regulated markets the race is on for fuel surcharges or permanent fare hikes. Another certainty, since Syria and Chechnya, are Russian atrocities. But human kindness – as in the support for Ukrainian refugees – is another certainty.

Over the past weeks, long convoys of cabs with drivers from all over Europe – traditionally the taxi trade is the first to help in humanitarian crises – have been ferrying precious aid to Ukraine and neighbouring countries. One example amongst many: mid-March, 29 Madrid taxis drove for five days and 3,700 miles to deliver aid to Warsaw and pick up 135 Ukrainian refugees – women, children (many with Spanish family ties), four dogs and a cat – and delivered them to a central Madrid church. “*They are our heroes*”, 22-year-old Khrystyna Trach, whose sister lives in Spain, said.

‘Our people are amazing’

“*The idea for the convoy sprang from a discussion between taxi drivers at Madrid airport. When one suggested driving to Poland to bring back refugees, many agreed*”, said Jose Miguel Funez of the Madrid Taxi Federation, who coordinated the logistics. Soon, dozens had

signed up. “*The response was incredible. We didn’t expect this*,” said Funez. The operation cost about €50,000 (£42,000), mostly for fuel and toll fees, and was raised by fellow taxi drivers. “*Our people are amazing*,” said Jesus Andrades, 38, who transported three young Ukrainian women. “*Some taxi drivers’ children even gave the money in their piggy banks*.”

Madrid taxi drivers have a long history of helping out during a crisis. After the 2004 Madrid train bombings which killed nearly 200 people, taxi drivers ferried the injured to hospitals. And when the Covid pandemic hit in spring 2020, they ran doctors house-to-house. Like many taxi drivers all over the world. “*We are the common people, and at the end of the day, I think common people help out more*,” said Hernandez.

Cheap and empty gesturing galore

They and drivers from other countries took Ukrainians back to EU-countries which – without creating obstacles – all opened their doors to refugees for a three-year-stay. One glaring exception in this wave of human warmth: Britain’s government (not its many warm-hearted citizens), which barricaded itself behind visa-walls and raised heartless registration obstacles. But with so many genuine human efforts comes a lot of cheap and empty gesturing elsewhere: in a press release on March 23, Stagecoach promises to carry Ukrainian refugees in the UK for free. As there are so few, this empty promise from the public transport company is far from generous. On the other side of the Channel, thousands of Ukrainian refugees have since the start of the war been able to travel for free on public transport networks in all European countries.

The super-humanitarian efforts of Uber

Another company which is skilled at making empty promises is – you guessed it – Uber. Having proudly trumpeted its super-humanitarian efforts to carry Ukrainian refugees for free from Polish border towns to further inland, in the



Above: Mid-March, 29 Madrid taxis drove for five days and 3,700 miles to deliver aid to Warsaw and pick up 135 Ukrainian refugees.

Right: Fuel prices in Belgium and the Netherlands (mid-March): £1.90 and £1.98 for a litre of diesel.



“One glaring exception in this wave of human warmth: Britain’s government (not its many warm-hearted citizens), which barricaded itself behind visa-walls and raised heartless registration obstacles.”

Netherlands they then sneakily added a fuel surcharge of €0.50 (£0.42) to their trips – supposedly to benefit drivers – only to pass only half the amount to the drivers. Even the so-called ‘trade union’ which Uber helped form, in disgust turned against its puppet-master.

One of the certainties in life, I talked about before, is Uber promising one good thing and doing another, bad one. Uber now prides itself – following a High Court decision, so not exactly voluntary – on classifying its drivers as workers, it only pays its drivers from accepting a booking until delivering the customer. Yet the February 2021 High Court decision stipulates that drivers should receive minimum wage and holiday money from logging in to logging out. So Uber-drivers in Britain are paid only for about 50% of their working time.

Covid cabs: ‘I’ve never felt such stress’

With Covid-19 measures lifted in most of Europe, many Hong Kong taxi drivers are still coping with a strong coronawave. When corona numbers went up sharply at the end of February, local government set up a dedicated fleet of 430 taxis (and 1,000 minibuses) to divert calls from the ambulance services. Those with mild symptoms can reserve a free ride to one of the city’s Covid-19 clinics. Drivers sign up for a 14-day stint and need to undergo mandatory corona tests during this period. They are paid HK\$3,000 (£290) a day for six to nine trips – more than they earn in the usual 20 trips a day.

Taxi driver, Mars Chan was one of the first to join the special fleet, he told the Hong Kong Free Press. His ‘anti-epidemic taxi’ bears a blue and white zebra-striped label and is off-limits to ordinary punters. Chan said he underestimated the job. “*On the first day, I broke down by noon. I’ve never felt such stress*.”

Covid drivers have to keep windows open and before starting the job, they were issued disposable robes, face shields and surgical masks. Taxi associations supplied drivers with an air filtering machine. Cab drivers were also instructed to wipe down the taxi’s interior with diluted bleach after every day. “*It was like driving in the smell of a swimming pool, but the gratitude and courtesy these passengers showed*” were unparalleled to what he would experience on a typical work day, Chan said.

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Hong Kong runs a special fleet of 430 corona taxis.






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London's Bazalgette's...



The BBC, ITV, Channel 4, London sewers and The Vapours? There is a common thread running through all five of these entities – the Bazalgette family...

Englishman, Sir Joseph William Bazalgette CB, was a 19th-century civil engineer who was responsible for the creation of London's sewerage system. The system was created in response to tackling the great stink of London and relieving the capital of its recurring cholera epidemic. In fact, when you are driving along Victoria Embankment, you are directly above Bazalgette's creation, as his sewerage system runs underneath the busy thoroughfare. The link between the sewers and several of the UK's main terrestrial channels lies with Sir Joseph's great-great-grandson, Sir Peter Bazalgette who was initially a researcher on the BBC TV series, *That's Life* with Esther Rantzen. Later forming his own production company, Bazal, he created television programmes such as *Ready Steady Cook*, *Changing Rooms* and *Ground Force*. Bazalgette is considered to be one of the most influential people in British television – primarily due to his impact and development of reality and lifestyle television programmes. The entertainment link, however, doesn't end there. Sir Joseph's third cousin, Edward Bazalgette was the lead guitarist with The Vapours, who released the 1980 hit, *Turning Japanese*, which reached third place in the UK charts.

The London Eye

The London Eye (or Millennium Wheel) which was formally opened by Prime Minister Tony Blair on 31 December 1999, is at 135 meters (443 feet), the tallest cantilevered observation wheel in Europe. But did you know that it nearly left the UK for foreign climes?

Situated on the South Bank, attracting over three million visitors per annum, it is the most popular paid tourist attraction in the UK. However, if it wasn't for Lambeth Council approving the application to give it permanent status, it would have disappeared in 2005... its next stop would have been Paris, following the expiration of its initial five-year lease. Permanent status, however, was granted in July 2002. The Eye had been the highest public viewing point in London until it was dwarfed by the observation deck on the 72nd floor of The Shard, which is over 100 meters higher at 245 meters (804 feet). The Eye was designed by Julia Barfield and David Marks, each of its 32, sealed and air conditioned ovoidal passenger capsules boast a view of approximately 25 miles in all



directions on a clear day. The wheel rotates at around 0.6 mph with one revolution taking approximately half an hour. The wheel doesn't usually stop except for the elderly or disabled as it travels slowly enough for people to embark and disembark without interruption. Prior to the wheel's construction, it was shipped up the Thames by barge, laying on its side. Once in situ by Jubilee Gardens, it was raised at just two degrees per hour.

Although there are 32 capsules,

which represent the number of boroughs in London, the capsules are actually numbered from one to thirty-three. The number thirteen was excluded. Publicly, this was said to be for 'superstitious reasons' though likely not for UK based tourists – in 2007, research conducted in the US around triskaidekaphobia (the fear of the number thirteen), revealed that thirteen percent of participants interviewed in the study 'would be bothered' by being allocated a thirteenth-floor hotel room.

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SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW LONDON?



Central Line Secrets

The eastern section of the Central line for many Londoners holds a degree of disdain – especially between Leytonstone and Newbury Park, known for its hold ups and sometimes erratic service. You would be forgiven for believing that it was a relatively innocuous stretch of tube line. But innocuous it certainly isn't – in fact this underground network made a considerable contribution during the Second World War – as the tunnels housed a secret factory...

Electronics company, Plessey, (which built transmitters and other components vital to the war effort) was based in Ilford and heavily bombed during the Blitz. A new factory was built in a two-and-a-half-mile section of newly constructed underground tunnels between Leytonstone and Newbury Park, its deepest point being at Gants Hill. This section of the Central line was identified as a safe haven, intended to provide sanctuary from air raids. Work began to convert the line into factory premises with the ability to employ 2,000 staff, working in staggered 24 hour shifts. Workers were able to enter and exit the factory at Gants Hill, Redbridge or Wanstead. As part of the tube conversion to factory use, a miniature gauge railway was installed (mirroring the Royal Mail). These little locomotives were battery operated and pulled along small carriages, ferrying parts and completed components along the tunnels. The tunnels and stations reverted to their original use as part of the tube network at the end of the War.

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The Bermondsey Horror

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

Rob's history tips

Over the years, London has witnessed some truly notorious crimes. Here's the story of one of them: The 'Bermondsey Horror'...

In 1846, 25-year-old Maria de Roux began working as a servant at Stafford House (now Lancaster House) in St James's. Born in Lausanne, Switzerland, Maria had previously worked at a manor house in Devon where she'd acquired a taste for life's luxuries. By the time she came to London, Maria also had a love interest – Patrick O'Connor – a middle aged man from Tipperary who'd she'd met on a ferry. Patrick worked as a customs officer in London's Dockyards but, being something of a hard man, he also ran a side business as a moneylender, and as he charged high interest rates, this hustle had made him pretty wealthy.

Decisions

At around the same time though, Maria had met another fellow – Frederick George Manning, who was employed as a guard on the Great Western Railway. Within the space of a few weeks both men proposed to Maria, who weighed up her options based solely on financial gain. Patrick was minted but was also a borderline alcoholic, which concerned Maria. Frederick, meanwhile had only his guard's wages – but promised his potential fiancé that he stood to inherit a fortune from his mother. With this in mind, Maria opted for Frederick, and the couple were married at



Above: Maria Manning and Frederick Manning

St James's Church in May 1847. Nevertheless, she and Patrick remained friends.

Lies

Once married, the pair moved down to Taunton where they attempted to run a pub named The White Hart Inn. This venture failed, however and they returned to London, taking lodgings at 3 Miniver Place, Bermondsey which was off Weston Street. Much to her despair, Maria also discovered that Frederick had lied about his inheritance – there would be no money coming.

Plotting

In the wake of this, Maria and Frederick formulated a diabolical plan... Over the course of a few weeks in the summer of 1849, Maria had several items delivered to Miniver Place including a bushel of lime and a shovel. Then, on the 8th August, she sent a note to her old flame Patrick, inviting him over

for dinner. Patrick readily accepted, and witnesses saw him crossing London Bridge on the evening of the 9th August. He was also spotted outside the Manning's home, puffing a cigar. That smoke would prove to be his last though...

Murder

Upon entering the house, Patrick was shot in the back of the head at point-blank range by Maria. The bullet didn't kill him immediately though, and as Patrick lay groaning on the floor, Frederick stepped in to finish the job by striking him with a ripping chisel. "I never liked him" – he would later admit. Once the deed was done, Patrick's body was doused in lime and buried beneath the kitchen flagstones.

Run

The following day Maria headed to Patrick's home which was on Greenwood Street (off of Mile End Road) where she rifled through his belongings, finding a large wad of cash, jewellery and a collection of valuable railway bonds. On the 12th August, two men claiming to be customs officers came to Miniver Place saying they were investigating their colleague's disappearance. This sent the Mannings into a panic – they were convinced the visitors were police – and, once they'd left, Maria instructed her husband to go and see a relative named Bainbridge with a view to selling their furniture for some quick getaway money.

This was a double-cross. Maria had no intention of sticking with Frederick and, as soon as he'd left, she gathered everything of value and took a cab to King's Cross, from where she caught a train

to Edinburgh. When Frederick returned home and discovered his wife gone, he quickly realised the betrayal. He too then fled, heading to Waterloo from where he took a boat-train to Jersey. Not long after, police did indeed turn up at Miniver Place and, seeing the mortar between the flagstones was still fresh, they prised up the slabs and discovered Patrick's corpse. Following an appeal, the cabbie who'd picked up Maria came forward – he remembered her due to the fact that she spoke both French and English, and had appeared highly agitated. Police in Edinburgh were alerted, and it transpired they'd already arrested Maria after suspicions were raised when she'd attempted to sell Patrick's railway bonds.

Unlucky

Frederick meanwhile was very unlucky. Whilst in St Helier, he bumped into an acquaintance from London, and when that person returned home and heard about the case, he immediately informed police as to the fugitive's whereabouts. Frederick was arrested on the 21st August. The trial of Maria and Frederick Manning commenced at the Old Bailey on the 25th October 1849. Both blamed each other, and after just two days it took the jury less than an hour to find both individuals guilty. The murderous pair were sentenced to death which infuriated Maria, prompting her to rage at the judge that she'd been treated "like a wild beast of the forest." Maria and Frank Manning were executed side-by-side on the roof of Horsemonger Lane Gaol (which was off of Newington Causeway) on the 13th November 1849.

Dickens

It was estimated some 50,000 people turned out to witness the hanging; the largest crowd at an execution ever recorded. Stood amongst the mob was Charles Dickens, who was so appalled at the spectacle, he felt compelled to write a letter to The Times to express his disgust, saying: "I believe that a sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd that collected at that execution this morning could be imagined by no man, and could be presented in no heathen land under the sun."

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Below: Horsemonger Lane Gaol, in Walworth



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Pedicabs & Politics – A Funny Old Game

“Although the bill is a sensible solution to a recurring problem, it does have more holes than a sweater knitted by my fair hand...”

A man in black

When discussing the absurdities and eccentricities of ‘the beautiful game’, former Chelsea, AC Milan, Spurs, West Ham and Barnet legend, Jimmy Greaves, once said: “football’s a funny old game”. He was right of course, when you consider that Donald Trump did the draw for the semi-finals of the 1992 Rumbelows Cup, Wigan triumphed in the 2013 FA Cup final against Manchester City and Vinnie Jones not only played international football for Wales, but captained the side to a 7-1 defeat against the Netherlands in a world cup qualifier. Strangely enough, Greavsie said of Jones’ call up: “Well, stone me! We’ve had cocaine, bribery and Arsenal scoring two goals at home. But just when you thought there were truly no surprises left in football, Vinnie Jones turns out to be an international player!” (Sorry Vinny, if it’s any consolation, I liked you as a player.)

Absurdities in abundance

Where absurdity is concerned, there are some parallels to be drawn between politics and football. Aside from the general cut and thrust of political combat, we’ve seen a ferry company issued with a contract – despite having no ferries; witnessed lock-down parties at 10 Downing Street – despite the rest of the country hiding away, and Boris Johnson performing the occasional U-turn.

Now if social media were anything to go by, you would be forgiven for thinking that pedicab legislation is a complete absurdity, at least certainly where the taxi industry is concerned. It seems that many cabbies believe that Johnson has performed a huge U-turn – and to be honest I initially fell into that camp. However, after taking a step back and reassessing what he has said in the past in comparison to his recent comments, I’ve come to realise that his stance hasn’t changed.

Cast your mind back to 17 December 2012, the ‘then Mayor’,

Boris Johnson, when talking about pedicabs and rickshaws said: “Even responsible operators cannot ensure the safety of their passengers and are adding to night-time traffic jams.” Adding, “It has become clear a voluntary registration scheme would not produce a robust solution. That’s why we and a wide range of businesses, local authorities and West End institutions are calling for Transport for London to be given the powers to remove them from the streets.”

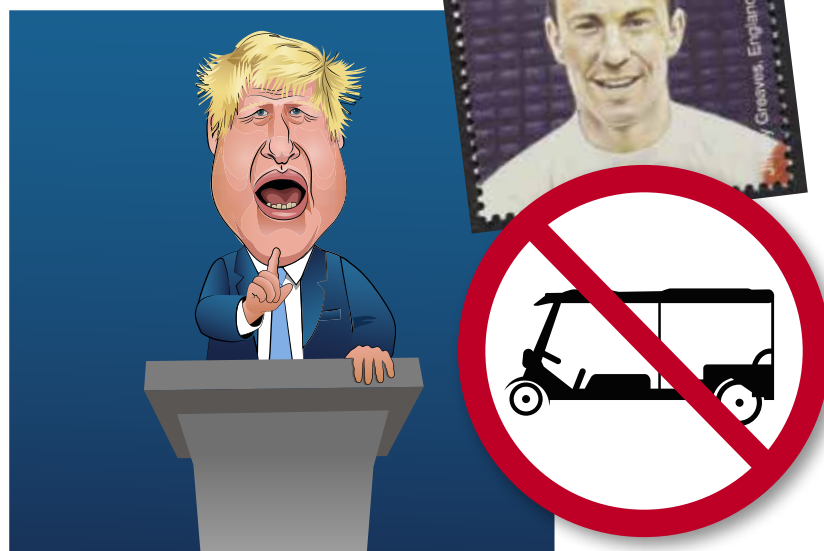
Moving forward to 23 Feb 2022, the now Prime Minister, when talking about the pedicab and rickshaw licensing bill which has been proposed, said “When I was Mayor of London, I always yearned to be in a position to put that through Parliament, and now I am. I am very grateful to my Honourable Friend and we will ensure we give parliamentary time to make it possible. It will be a boon for cyclists and a boon for taxi drivers, and it is high time we did it.”

On the surface this does seem like a U-turn, but when both statements are broken down, Johnson has actually reinforced his commitment to controlling pedicabs. The PM knows that from a legal standpoint they cannot be removed from London’s streets. This therefore means that the only course of action is to license them and have them regulated.

Jump around

Now this is where we jump around (and no this is not a reference to the classic track by House of Pain). In November 2021, the Government gave a commitment to support Conservative MP Nickie Aiken’s Private Members bill, requiring drivers of pedal-powered vehicles (rickshaws) to have a licence from Transport for London (TfL) to operate, with TfL being given the power to regulate the prices that they charge as well as the vehicles that they use, which would have to be of a safe standard – but there was a dearth of real meat on the bones of this bill.

Although the bill is a logical move, there are some major concerns in relation to the taxi industry’s needs. Cab drivers are justifiably complaining about rickshaws parking on taxi



ranks and blocking roads, other businesses are also complaining of pedicab operators continually blocking entrances – they really are seen as a pain in the neck. When you ally this to other road users complaining of a lack of insurance and accountability attributed to these vehicles, what’s not to like about legitimising this three-wheeled menace? The answer to that is ‘plenty’ if not done correctly.

When is a rickshaw not a rickshaw?

In theory (in London at least), a rickshaw is nothing more than a pedal powered, two-seater private hire vehicle – except they aren’t all pedal powered. Many rickshaws (or pedicabs) are electric powered and therefore a hybrid form of transport. This means that part of the power comes from the rider and part of it comes from the motor. The legal speed limit that this motor can power any bike or rickshaw to is 15.5mph. Once you are pedalling beyond that speed the motor will not assist you – and therein lies the first problem. The vehicles no longer act as rickshaws under 15.5 mph, they are in-effect a form of motorised private hire transport because they are no longer solely pedal-powered.

This then leads to a second problem, if these vehicles have to be employed from a static position, they then have to form rank – so where are these ranks going to be situated and will they then be put in an advantageous position directly against licensed London taxis? Will that

advantageous position be cited in pedestrianised areas, leaving taxi drivers who are lawfully plying for hire at a further disadvantage? This question has yet to be addressed.

Another factor which has not been considered is that given that some councils have excluded taxis from a number of roads and bus lanes across London as well as TfL themselves performing the same action on certain roads, will pedicabs be allowed full access at the expense of the London taxi?

Finally, how will Transport for London control rickshaw numbers, given that they aren’t legally able to put a cap on private hire numbers?

Half-baked legislation

Although the bill is a sensible solution to a recurring problem, it does have more holes than a sweater knitted by my fair hand, it addresses none of the above. The taxi industry cannot afford to have yet another interloper encroaching into its market, supported by half-baked legislation. The exceptionalism afforded to the industry isn’t an implied right – it is an earned right, obtained by undertaking and passing the most stringent topographical examination on the planet. To have yet another entity diminishing that exceptionalism by the implementation of a well-meaning but flawed bill is unacceptable, and while the bill may be welcome, it must be scrutinised and adjusted accordingly so that the industry does not suffer.

Politics really is a funny old game.

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Humanitarian Cabbie Heroes

Feature

Unless you've been hiding under a rock for the past week or two, you'll be aware that LTDA member, Matt Westfall rounded up a group of cabbies and embarked on a remarkable humanitarian voyage. *TAXI* decided to catch up with the man himself and get the lowdown on their adventure...

TAXI Hi Matt, thanks for talking with *TAXI* – I understand since returning from the trip, you've had a hectic media schedule to fulfil?

Matt: From the moment this all started around three weeks ago, to now – this is my first day of rest with no follow ups or media appointments... apart from this one! It's been great for our taxi trade. It's highlighted just one instance of the many things this trade does without recognition, but at least in this case, we have been shown on ITV, BBC1, BBC Radio, LBC Radio, Reuter's World News Agency and now the biggest of them all, *TAXI*! The media part, I never accounted for, and it's been 'full on' but I spoke from the heart in the interviews and hopefully came across ok.

TAXI How did the idea for the trip come about?

Matt: It came about as I was watching news one evening and saw a thirty-something fella with his wife and child sobbing at a train station saying goodbye to one another. Dad was off to defend his country, not knowing whether he would ever see his family again. It really got to me and I began thinking of what I might be able to do physically to help out.

TAXI The logistics must have involved some quite complex planning – did you have support?

Matt: My first thought was, how do I finance this trip? The first port of call was to the LTDA. I rang up Taxi House and was told to put in writing my proposal – which I did, and spoke to my friend Suzanne Sullivan, LTDA Airport Rep, who firstly helped ensure my email landed in the right inbox – and later became an invaluable part of the team helping out from the UK with logistics. Whilst the decision was being made, I put the word out for drivers – which wasn't a problem (I'll name them later),

'We had to register with our passport to the Polish army and was asked where we were prepared to go. We unanimously said, "anywhere" ...'



logistically I thought, *'boat ride and a drive, drop off aid, pick up passengers, drop as required, long drive, boat, home – job done'* – it was that simple in my head! I'd been in touch with a guy from Harrow Paolo Arrigo who had done the journey on his own, he gave some advice which really helped.

The support in terms of funding we had was amazing. The LTDA donated £5,000; Cabvision £2,500; CMT £700; LEVC £500; and we raised £6,700 from our *Go Fund Me* page from other generous individuals and companies. All this in just seven days. One of our drivers, an ex-cabbie, Andrew Fuller came in his works van so that we could maximise the aid we were delivering.

TAXI What was the plan for the journey? How did you decide on a route and how many cabs were involved? Were any of them TXEs? What was the charging infrastructure like on the journey?

Matt: The plan to get there was simple. Day one: cross at Harwich overnight to Hook of Holland. Day two: drive up through Holland, Germany and into Poland. To Warsaw, the route was pretty straight forward in regard to fuel stations – we had one Vito, six TXE's and a van. We stopped every 200 miles or so and we all ran on petrol or diesel as we didn't have time to charge. We then dropped aid off at Lublin, east Poland then

onto Chelm – 12 miles from the Ukrainian border to drop further aid off and more importantly pick some refugees up and take them to a safer place.

TAXI Did you transport aid to deliver on the way there or was the focus solely on transporting refugees?

Matt: The focus was firstly on refugees – the £10,000 of aid was simply an incredible bonus.

TAXI Can you tell us any more about the outward journey and any challenges and situations you found yourself in?

Matt: The journey out was straight forward really, just long... very long! It's funny though, the adrenalin was going, and we were all on point – I think that fuelled us for the miles of the drive. No one questioned the drive on the way there – we were all just on it

"I explained I was a West Ham fan and he straight the way began talking about his favourite player, Ukrainian and West Ham's Andriy Yarmolenko... well he's in for a surprise when he opens his post in the coming week or so..."

with a job to do. They did question the drive on the way back though! Something I haven't mentioned and didn't mention is that I have a fear of boats. I'm actually petrified.



It took everything I had to get on that ferry, and I didn't want to tell anyone about my fear. My family on hearing about the trip never asked me about any of it – the only question was, "What, wait, you got on a boat?"

TAXI What was the situation and reception like when you arrived?

Matt: The reception we got when driving through Europe was truly amazing. Cars beeping their horns, people taking photos and giving thumbs up. Even when we arrived at Lublin and Chelm there was clapping hands, shaking hands – they were really happy to see London taxis and I assume London supporting them. That was the first moment I felt proud and emotional about what we were doing.

TAXI How were people allocated to you and your team? Did you know who you'd be taking and where they needed to go before you arrived? Where did the team transport the refugees to?

Matt: Once we had dropped off aid, we proceeded to the refugee place which was a disused old Tesco store. We had to register with our passport to the Polish army and was asked where we were prepared to go. We unanimously said, "anywhere" ... the first two taxis were allocated to Berlin – two families plus an interpreter in Ian Law's Taxi and one family of four in Louis Tamone's cab. They set out on their journey to Berlin and the rest of us proceeded to the next refuge site, a sports centre 3km away. We then had to register with the police once we had been allocated a family or passengers. Andrew Fuller, former Taxi driver was first – he took a mother and child to the depths of Dresden. Alex Mephram set off with two families to Warsaw, as did Terry Harris. Ben Ellis and John Smith had a family of four, and me and Lee Williams had a mother and child all of whom were bound for Berlin. Richard Gough of Eclipse Taxis had family of four going to the UK (who are still awaiting visas now). The passengers we took to Berlin, we managed to put up in a nice hotel with breakfast too – we were told to transport them to a train station but there's no way we felt comfortable leaving them in a strange place in the early hours, so we arranged for somewhere safe, clean and warm for them to stay.



"I have a fear of boats. I'm actually petrified. It took everything I had to

TAXI The people you helped must have been through such an ordeal and I would presume in some cases be quite anxious and probably frightened to be getting in a vehicle with a complete stranger, how did you put them at ease? Are you able to give us an understanding of what they had been through?

Matt: Out of the whole journey, the most shocking and moving thing was that these people had lost everything and even now I find that hard to digest. All they were left with was the clothes they were standing up in and maybe a suitcase or plastic bag. I speak for every driver when I tell you now that upon meeting our passengers, there was a moment in time that stood still for us as human beings. It was a very moving and emotional experience and had a scent and feeling reminiscent of images of the second world war.

TAXI What were the experiences of the drivers whilst transporting the refugees?

Matt: Our experience was composed of every emotion. There was one funny incident... Andrew Fuller who went to Dresden with a mother and child had dropped them off at their destination in a deep dark forest. He was so tired he decided he simply had to pull over and rest for the night in the forest. After just getting off to sleep in the back of his van, he stretched and kicked a door setting off the alarm – it took him a while to find the key because



of darkness and so it's fair to say didn't have the best nights sleep. To add insult to injury, driving down the road at first light, he passed a Shell garage with rooms 300m down the road! The team has since titled him *The Dresden 1!*

TAXI How was the journey home?

Matt: The journey back to Hook of Holland was still a bit tense because we knew we had a set time to arrive, but we all had that feeling of satisfaction that we had achieved something special. When we go on the boat we were supposed to have a beer or two... but we all flaked out after our dinner and fell asleep.

TAXI Is there a chance any of the team will stay in touch with any of the people they helped?

Matt: The team plan to meet up in four weeks for a meal and properly discuss our trip and have them few beers we never had on the ferry! We have also heard from a few of the people we transported. One very young fella, Nazar has written back to us thanking us and saying he will never forget what the drivers did for him. On meeting him I had explained I was a West Ham fan and he straight the way began talking about his favourite player, Ukrainian and West Ham's Andriy Yarmolenko... well he's in for a surprise when he opens his post in the coming week or so, as we have had a whip round to get him some sports stuff to play footy in and one of our team has been in touch with West Ham's kit man and he's getting a shirt signed by Yarmolenko himself.

TAXI I hear you raised a fair amount as well as doing such a good deed transporting people... If cabbies would like to contribute, is there a way they can still do this to support the teams' efforts?

Matt: We have now closed the *Go Fund Me* page as our mission is complete – well almost. So, no more support required to that fund. I will say though that this crisis is ongoing, we did something that really helped some people, but more people still need help, please do give what you can to the DEC appeals, what's happening out there is truly horrific. If I may, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody that made this possible: **TAXI**

THE DRIVERS:

TERRY HARRIS
 ■ LOUIS TAMONE ■ IAN LAW
 ■ ALEX MEPHAM
 ■ BEN ELLIS ■ JOHN SMITH
 ■ ANDREW FULLER (The Dresden 1) ■ LEE WILLIAMS
 ■ RICHARD GOUGH
 ■ RICHARD SCHMIDT (Interpreter)

LTDA HQ:

SUZANNE SULLIVAN ■
 CHRIS GODDARD

SPONSORS:

LTDA ■ CABVISION
 ■ CMT ■ LEVC ■ QUOTAX
 INSURANCE ■ HVC AIR
 CONDITIONING ■ and
 EVERYONE else who donated
 to the *Go Fund Me* page!

Butlers Wharf Chop House

Being asked to undertake a restaurant review that could appeal to drivers planning a special occasion and as a recommendation for tourists, I was rather stumped.

The solution came to me in the form of visiting Butlers Wharf Chop House. It's in a great location, with spectacular views. You've probably noticed it whilst on Tower Bridge. On one occasion when walking by I could have sworn I saw rugby playing prop, Jason Leonard tucking into a lobster...

We visited, Butlers Wharf Chop House on probably the first day of spring this year. My wife was impressed when we arrived at the restaurant and was met by a warm smile, her coat taken, we were shown to our table inside, with a spectacular view of the Thames and Tower Bridge. If there is a better view in London, let me know.

Our waiter (Mr C) would make a

lasting impression and explained how everything worked whilst we reviewed an extensive drinks menu. The drinks appeared in a matter of seconds, and we turned our attentions to the 'A La Carte' menu...

The choices made, my good lady would be having Popcorn Chicken and myself Pate for starters. She loved her choice at first, but after her fourth mouthful the spice was having the impact I expected, so we swapped dishes. Our waiter (Mr C) came to the table, looked puzzled and was insistent on offering another Pate dish to myself. I declined, explaining the quality of the food was first class and that I had planned for this issue, as I had got used to my wife's taste buds over the years. We both laughed but I was very impressed with his eye for detail and the customer focussed solutions offered.



As you would expect the steak and burger we ordered for our mains were fantastic, but they were surpassed by the delightful dessert: Bourbon & Coke Sticky Toffee Pudding. If I ever have a last meal, this is the pudding I will have now.

Everything about the meal was first class, but the level of service provided by our waiter made the occasion memorable.

If you are looking to take someone out for a special occasion, or recommend a restaurant to a tourist, I wouldn't hesitate to steer in the direction of Butlers Wharf Chop House - and if they or you get Mr C as your waiter, success will be guaranteed. Five stars all-round.

TAXI

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

22

Ellexan

Cab rental business seeks suitable buyer

Our client, the owner of a successful and well established cab rental business of over 20 years trading, is selling the entire company to allow for retirement.

This is a highly cash generative business with almost 100 London licenced cabs. With a majority of electric TXEs as well as TX4 diesels, this presents a great opportunity for the right buyer.

For more information, contact Nick Blong at Ellexan.
Please email Nick at nick.blong@ellexan.com

Please note that serious and suitable buyers will be expected to demonstrate proof of funds.

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TAXI | Letters

TAXI

TAXI Mail



Subject: TXE vs TX4/Vito

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the various articles in your paper and elsewhere on the costs and differences of running a TXE compared to a TX4 or Vito.

I have had all three cabs over the years and so feel qualified to add my thoughts and experiences into the mix.

Cost wise, the initial purchase price or the monthly cost of the PCP are the biggest deterrent to buying a TXE, although rather surprisingly they are not massively higher than those for my last cab, a Euro VI Vito. The other major downside is that most

cabbies will never be 'freehold' on a TXE as the out of warranty costs could be prohibitive without buying a third-party warranty. But this is also true of most modern cars, even the mass produced 'family car's' can become eye-wateringly expensive if something goes wrong once you own it. For a premium German car, a gearbox or electronic fault can easily top £5000, so my private car is also now just on a rolling PCP contract, like the cab.

If you live a million miles outside London or if you cannot home charge, then the running cost savings will be far less – but if you live in the suburbs, as most of us do, you can get a home charger fitted and with the right electricity tariff, you can easily recoup the difference in the PCP costs between a TX4/Vito and a TXE.

The biggest thing though is how much better and nicer a TXE is to drive than any other cab – and what is that worth as you go home still feeling as comfortable (how good is that Volvo seat in the TXE!) as when you came to work?

My scorecard:

1. TXE
2. Euro VI Vito
3. TX4

Yours sincerely,
Darren Meyer

Subject: Payment to driver

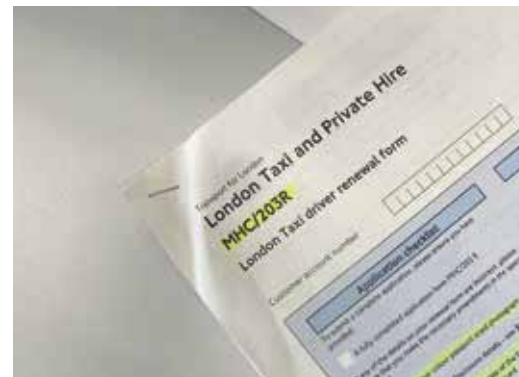
Dear Editor,

I am attempting to locate a black cab driver that took me from Parson's Green to Highbury recently (March 2022). I asked the driver to wait while I dropped some things in at the office. I had some problems getting into the building and when I came out back out, approximately seven minutes later, he'd gone.

I would very much like to make the payment.

Yours faithfully,
Emily

Ed: If this was you (and Emily has given a description of the driver, the cab and the exact date and times that you will have to describe!) please email: Lloyd@ltda.co.uk



Subject: Renewal

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank Barney and Rob for sorting out the impenetrable document, what is the renewal license form.

On previous occasions I have muddled through, using the email method – but on hearing the nightmare examples, possibly down to the covid home sitters, I sought the opinion of the experts at LTDA.

To make things worse, I lost the current DBS certificate which I thought may slow up the progress of the license.

My initial contact was with Barney, who arranged an appointment there and then. Barney e-mailed a list of all the relevant stuff to bring. When I arrived at the posh new offices and parked, I was ushered almost immediately to an office by Barney.

It was all completed in minutes. I was told to walk a few yards down the road to a Co-op, where they had a Post Office inside.

I received my DBS in eight days. I again rang the LTDA offices and spoke to Rob who updated my new DBS certificate, so there will be no need to go through the long-winded process next time – subject to not gaining a criminal record in the interim period!

The whole experience was professional and took away the stress that inevitably comes from such a crucial form that impacts the ability to work.

All the best,
Stephen Berndes



Subject: The Dorchester – A fully open and functioning hotel

Dear Editor,

Many of our guests use black cabs to travel to The Dorchester and a number of them have recently been told by your drivers that the hotel is closed. Despite the significant renovation taking place and the hoarding surrounding the hotel, we are still open and welcoming guests.

Our new temporary entrance is located on Derry Street where there are bays for taxis to pull up and drop off their passengers. And just like our main entrance, there are Doormen ready to welcome guests and assist with their luggage.

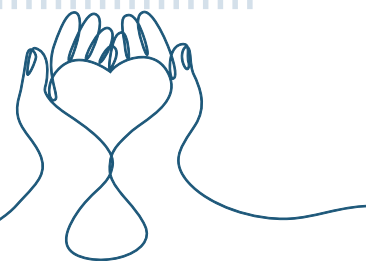
I would appreciate your help in informing your drivers that the Dorchester continues to be a fully open and functioning hotel, and that the location of the temporary entrance is now on Deanery Street. Our Ballroom entrance on Park Lane remains as normal for all guests attending events with us.

Many thanks for your support and I remain at your disposal should you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Vincent McGrath
Hotel Manager
The Dorchester



Cabbies – A Gregarious Bunch...



"I've got nothing but admiration for those drivers who put themselves out to support the various 'cab trade charities.'"

Cabbie chronicles

Where do old cab drivers go when they hang up their badges? Well, if they live on the north-west side of London, you'll probably find 'em hugging the greensward around the café in Trent Park. I wrote about Trent Park a few of issues ago when I was first invited to join the jostle of elderly cabmen (I didn't spot any cab women) who meet as regularly as the weather allows (each month, or so). From afar, as you turn into the park from the main road and begin the drive along the stately 'country home-style' route into the hinterland of the park, towards the cluster of oasis-like trees in the near distance, a gaggle of smartly-dressed guys, chatting, laughing with each other – and flirting with the young mums in the cafeteria.

Veritable lifeline

Cabbies are a gregarious bunch. Since the demise of the (in) famous Granby Grill, Royal Oak and Camley Street eating houses, thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, the need for drivers to vent their feelings and express their predilections, has become almost a primeval urge. Outposts, like the Trent Park meeting spot, are an alfresco bonus. And for many retired cab drivers, meeting up with colleagues who share their history, their highs and their lows is a compelling motivation. It's quite mad! When you're involved in such an intense occupation as driving a London taxi - hour by hour, day by day, it becomes a 'way of life'. Looking around, as I did, at the guys congregating under the trees in Trent Park, I could see and feel the enthusiasm of the participants, leaning eagerly into each other, keen to catch each other's words. Instead of briefly acknowledging a 'face' at the traffic lights or on a rank or in a queue for fuel or a bacon sandwich, these formal meetings are a the coming together of many acts of a play – the completion of a veritable lifeline providing sanity for some guys.

It's amazing seeing the faces of men who haven't seen each other



in an age, watching them 'laser' through the wrinkles, ignore the walking stick and slick back the hair that once was, to discover an old golfing partner, or the bloke you used to regularly share your lunchtimes with – perhaps even a weekend away with your respective partners.

Cabbie serendipity

Not everyone, however, had a happy tale to tell. Age and health have taken their toll. Once familiar faces are absent, to register only as images in the mind and memory; and conversations, halt, stutter on, then continue with sad eyes and a sombre tone. Probably the strongest cab driver friendships occur at the obvious Feeder Park... where you get several hundred like-minded cab drivers, happy to be corralled into HAL ordained, regulated order – with time on their hands to read a book, study a language, learn a musical instrument, or get to know your mate just a little bit better. And if you are a regular face, you can come back, and carry on where you left off (unlike drivers like myself, who dipped into the feeder park on rare occasions, and turned a deaf ear to the raucous diner and sought the sanctuary of the back of my own cab) and hope that serendipity throws you together with a familiar face at a random stop.

Circles of corruption

Coronavirus has seemingly put paid to the seriously malignant cab trade culture – 'hanging it up' outside a hotel or club. Deliberately turning a blind eye to



the 'first come, first served' rule of social acceptance, for the selfish 'me, me' attitude of 'brooming' the ordinary, mundane jobs and 'creaming off' the more lucrative ones – often with the connivance of the doorman, who in turn receive a 'back-hander' from the driver. A circle of corruption, raising blood pressures, inflaming tempers, and causing ill feeling all round. Most hotels, unless the management keep their fingers on the pulse of their staffs' practices, spawn their 'Runyon-esque' bespoke villains. With the tourist trade burgeoning, will the likes of the once notorious, Strand Palace, Browns, and Cumberland hotel's bolshie cliques and dodgy concierges, try to insinuate themselves back into their pre-covid, devious ways?

Nothing but respect

From villains to the good guys. There always seem to be a group of guys (and girls) who rise above the ordinary crowd, to create an atmosphere of good will and bonhomie in the cab trade. I've got nothing but admiration for those drivers who put themselves out to support the various cab trade charities. They take great pleasure in giving up their time for handicapped kids or old soldiers. They spend hours decorating

their cabs, then take their VIP passengers on outings to Paris or Normandy, Woburn Safari Park or Southend on Sea – and spend countless hours in committee meetings searching for original ways to raise the necessary funds to meet their annual objectives.

Over and above

Over the years, as a cab newspaper editor, I've had the privilege to become involved with a number of charities and seen first-hand how much time and effort they put into raising money to take children into the countryside, to a wildlife park, a zoo, the seaside or just out of their normal environment to experience something new. Way back in 1989, in the aftermath of the Romanian Revolution, (culminating in the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena), thousands of children were left in poverty in overflowing orphanages. The Children's Fund not only raised thousands of pounds to buy essential foodstuffs but canvassed several high-profile companies to give clothing, toys and medical products. They packed everything into a van and an articulated lorry and completed the mini-convoy with a sponsored Metrocab and Fairway. Vacating my position as editor of *The Cab Driver*, I went along as a helper, driver and above all, an observer, reporting on the lengths a London taxi drivers' charity would go to take relief to a Romanian Orphanage.

Improved logistics

Nowadays, trade charity members, can sit at the kitchen table, open a Zoom Meeting with other members, in the comfort of their own homes. Functions and events can be organised and responsibilities delegated without having to sit in a cold, draughty church hall, hoping that everyone turns up! Covid slowed up everything though. It is wonderful to see the taxi trade charities are bouncing back and raring to go. Reading *TAXI*, I see cabbies are driving to The Netherlands and Ukraine, climbing mountains and even planning to row the Atlantic! I hope those of our 'gregarious bunch' who are able, continue to put themselves forward and support these fantastic causes.

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

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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.

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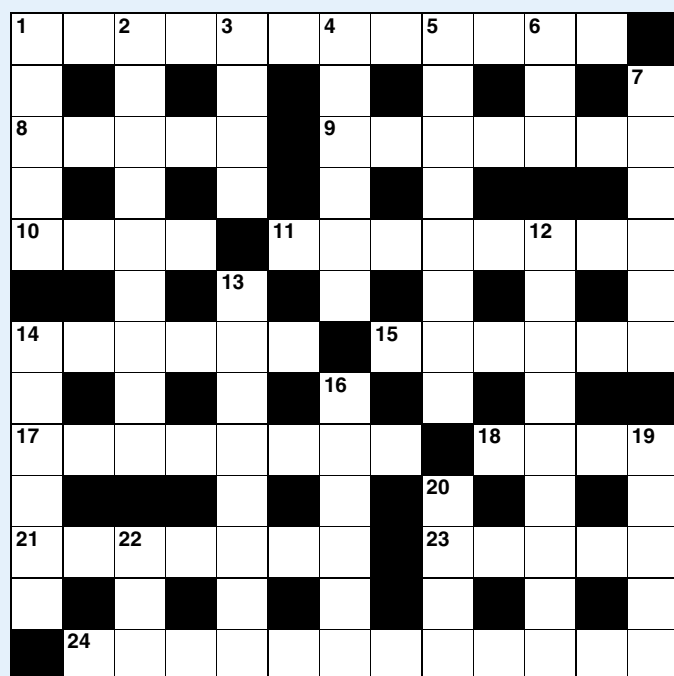
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- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by LTDA, or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
 - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when LTDA asks you to.
- 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

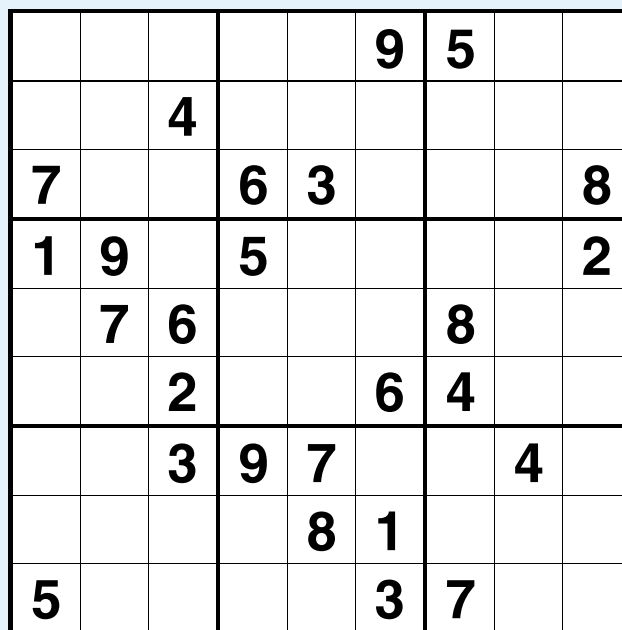
- 1 Seeing twice (6,6)
- 8 More mature, more mellow (5)
- 9 Release from slavery or captivity (3,4)
- 10 365 days, usually (4)
- 11 Giving an answer (8)
- 14 Felt intuitively (6)
- 15 Monetary gain (6)
- 17 Person less likely to win (8)
- 18 Look, search (for) (4)
- 21 Charm, enchant (7)
- 23 Temporary hair-tint (5)
- 24 Warm cocoa drink (3,9)

DOWN

- 1 Match between local teams (5)
- 2 Not arranged in advance (9)
- 3 White cooking fat (4)
- 4 Ship or container (6)
- 5 Colonists, pioneers (8)
- 6 Boat paddle (3)
- 7 Measurement using scales (6)
- 12 Painful cold-like illness (9)
- 13 Hypersensitive, obsessive (8)
- 14 Short and thick (6)
- 16 Sound of noisy sobbing (6)
- 19 Subject proposed for discussion (5)
- 20 Group of three people (4)
- 22 Time-travelling TV Doctor (3)

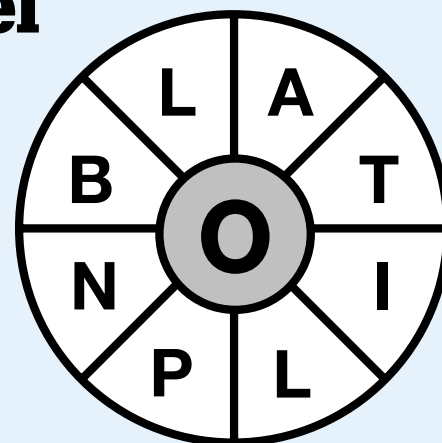
Sudoku

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.



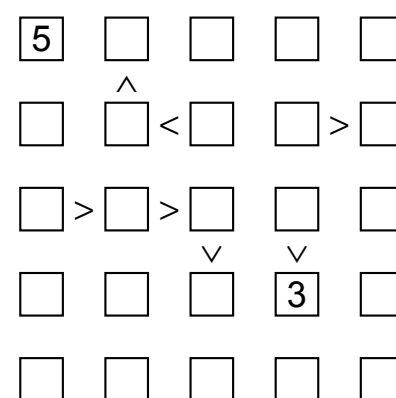
Wordwheel

How many words of four letters or more can you make from this Wordwheel? Each word must use the central letter, and each letter may be used once only. At least one nine-letter word can be found. We found 39 words - can you do better?



Futoshiki

Fill in the blank squares so that each row and column contains all the numbers 1 - 5. Use any given numbers and the symbols that tell you if the number in the square is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



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puzzler on p30

Puzzler
BY THOMSON

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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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Walking Better & Standing Taller...



"These men are heroes, and I love that the Dutch teach their children from a young age that what happened must never be forgotten."

TAXI caught up with volunteer Brian Heffernan regarding the recent Taxi Charity for Military Veterans' visit to The Netherlands...

TAXI Hi Brian, good to meet you, how long have you been a cabbie?

Brian: I've been driving a cab for 26 years and volunteering for the Taxi Charity for the past seven.

TAXI Tell us about your weekend with the Taxi Charity in the Netherlands...

Brian: This was the first visit that the Taxi Charity had been able to arrange on the continent since the pandemic, so it was fantastic to be part of it. The weekend was a chance to get veterans away and plan for future visits. I've been on these trips since 2015 and I know how much the veterans have missed them. We always say that the years seem to melt away when they are together and after a few days, they are all walking better and standing taller.

TAXI How big a job is planning the trip?

Brian: It's huge. The charity is so lucky to have the support of The Market Garden Foundation. Frans is our man on the ground in The Netherlands and helps the charity coordinate their visits. There is nothing he doesn't know about the Battle of Arnhem and the charity is so very grateful to have had his assistance for so many years. It helps to have a Dutch speaker too, even though the Dutch speak better English than many of us do.

TAXI Who did you travel with?

Brian: There were five veterans and I had John Pinkerton and Tom Schaffer in my cab. They say an army marches on its stomach and that was so true. Whilst on board the ferry to the Hook of Holland, time creeps forward one hour... however John and Tom did not put their watches forward, so when they came down for breakfast the galleys had



"It is a privilege to be with these guys and to

the war in Ukraine, followed by a soundbite from John about how war is never the answer.

TAXI Is the museum worth a visit?

Brian: Most definitely. The museum is housed in Villa Hartenstein, a villa with a long history. In September 1944, the building, which in 1728 began as an inn, was the headquarters for the British Airborne Troops. The exhibits are beautifully presented and there is a fantastic experience in the basement which simulates getting on a glider, flying into Arnhem, landing, walking out of the door through the trenches in the woods and fields to Oosterbeek and the fighting in the streets. The veterans were very moved - I think it brought back lots of memories.

TAXI Do the veterans share many personal stories with you?

Brian: It is a privilege to be with these guys and to hear their stories. Geoff Roberts who was in the 7th Battalion, Kings Own Scottish Borderers was taken by the Germans in the Arnhem area and was held as a POW until the end of the war. He talked to us about the harsh conditions, the lack of food and showed us his metal POW dog tag which he always carries with him. The tag was sharpened on one side

so that he could cut what little food he had.

TAXI Where else could you recommend visiting in the area?

Brian: We had lunch in the Hotel de Wereld in Wageningen. This is the site of the capitulation of the German troops on 5 May 1945. The table that the papers were signed on is still there and the boys had their picture taken. You should also visit the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. The cemetery is beautifully positioned surrounded by trees and as with all CWGC sites, it is impeccably ordered and cared for. The boys laid wreaths and then paid their respects at the graves of their friends and comrades who didn't come home.

TAXI You touched on the admiration that the Dutch feel for the veterans - is this widespread?

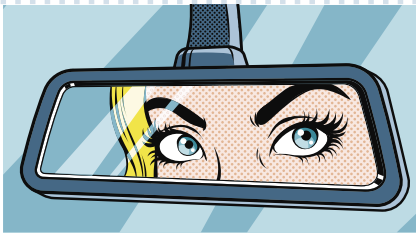
Brian: The Dutch are everything I would want from a second family. They are caring, thoughtful, and there are no language barriers as they speak excellent English. One evening we ate in the Schnoord Restaurant, which was a medical dressing station during WWII. A young man approached one of the veterans, asked if he could shake his hand, and thanked him for fighting for the freedom of the Dutch. Everywhere we go the veterans are shown great respect and everyone wants to have a picture taken with them. These men are heroes, and I love that the Dutch teach their children from a young age that what happened must never be forgotten.

TAXI What's next?

Brian: We are back to The Netherlands at the end of March to see if travelling on the Eurostar might be preferable over the ferry for some of our veterans and to agree where the Taxis could meet them as they disembark in Rotterdam. Then we are back again in May for the Dutch Liberation events.

TAXI

To find out more about the support the Taxi Charity offers veterans, visit www.taxicharity.org



"Hell No!"



Meg is reputed for having such clean patio doors you can barely see them – especially during BBQ season when the green bin is overflowing with empty wine and beer bottles, but still...

A woman of words

Meg Towers has been trashed. The culprits are knee high and in nappies – my three mini-Megs aged one, two and three. It's not that they are hooligans. It's just that they are babies. Naughty ones...

Bald patch

I'm not a dope, I did think 'baby' when I was decorating the kitchen walls. I paid extra for scrubbable paint. But I didn't factor in that my grandbabies would be crack shots with Weetabix. There is no substance known to humankind tougher than dried Weetabix. Superglue? Not even in the running. I have tried shifting it with a cloth, a scourer and squeaky cubes that I bought from QVC. Apparently, these clean any stain off any surface. No, they don't. My friend

swore that her chosen brand of spray cleaner is a cure-all for anything stuck to a wall. It isn't. How would she know anyway? The woman has a cleaner four times a week. In the end it was brute force and a dissolved dishwasher tablet that did it. Hurrah! It removed the Weetabix grit, but also lifted a six-inch square section of the scrubbable paint. Now my wall has a bald patch.

Houdini descendent

Next up, a lesson in destroying floor tile grout. The youngest of the mini-mini-Megs must be a direct descendant of Houdini. I trussed up my kitchen cupboards with safety locks and string and was feeling pleased with myself that they were child safe. In the few seconds it took me to chop up blueberries



for his mid-morning snack he'd opened one and made a paste of soy sauce, brown sauce and ketchup and smeared it over the floor tiles. Even bleach hasn't removed that stain weeks later. I am considering going on Dragon's Den with

a hair dye that never fades made with the same ingredients. I'd make millions and could move house instead of trying to clean the walls and the floors in the one I've got.

A load of woo-woo

Then, there's the patio doors. Mine used to be so clean, visitors would walk into them without realising they were there. True, this was usually after a BBQ when the green bin was overflowing with empty wine and beer bottles, but still. Clean is clean.

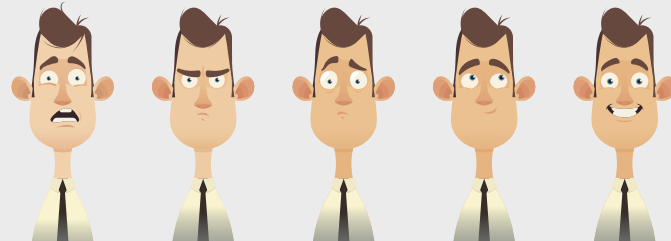
I have a second cousin who has a Harry Potter type scar on his forehead from a close encounter with my patio doors. My grandchildren seem to have hands that are perma-coated in goo, paint, butter, olive oil, grit, snot, crushed raspberries or melted chocolate. And they like nothing better than playing pat-a-cake with the glass on my doors. Their parents don't approve of using the word 'No' when bringing up baby. They say the word is 'toxic.' What a load of woo-woo. I must always be positive and say things like, "Let's try to keep the Weetabix on the spoon, shall we darling?" and "oh look, the colours in that mess you've made on the floor are so pretty!" I think that's just bonkers, but for a quiet life I was willing to go along with it – until one of the mini-mini-Megs suggested they go out to play in Nanny's taxi. My immaculate, squeaky clean and wonderfully fragrant taxi? I screamed, "HELL NO!" ■ TAXI

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Wordwheel

Albino, allot, alto, atoll, atop, ballot, BALLPOINT, baton, bloat, blot, boat, boil, boll, bolt, into, iota, lilo, lino, lion, loan, loin, loti, obtain, opal, panto, patio, piano, pilot, pinot, pinto, piton, plot, point, poll, talon, toil, toll, tonal, topi

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