

COVER STORY: E.N.O BREATHE

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PAUL BRENNAN **Page 6**

FEATURE: THE KNIGHTS TEMPLARS

PHIL BROWN **Pages 28 & 29**

TAXI

www.ltda.co.uk
20th April 2022 #514

Two fellas get in the cab having asked to be taken to Elder St, E1. I set off knowing the exact route I'd be taking - what I didn't know was that I'd be driving it with tears rolling down my cheeks, laughing longer and harder than I ever had done in my life.

ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA NEEDS YOUR STORIES

CABBIES ASKED TO PEN TALES FOR LONG COVID CHARITY



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Putting more work into Black Cabs

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LTDA
Taxi House 133 Great Suffolk Street,
SE1 1PP
T: 020 7286 1046 | www.ltda.co.uk
✉ @TheLTDA

Editor
Nick Hartop
E: editor@ltda.co.uk

Produced by
Century One Publishing Ltd
Alban Row, 27-31 Verulam Road
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T: 01727 893 894, F: 01727 893 895
E: hello@centuryone.uk
www.centuryone.uk

Advertising Sales Executive
Loren Wedderburn T: 01727 739184
E: loren@centuryone.uk

Creative Director
Peter Davies

Designer
Sean McNamara

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CALLS FOR BLACK CAB ACCESS TO BANK JUNCTION GAIN SUPPORT



On April 21st, the City of London's Court of Common Council will vote on a motion which is calling on the Corporation's Planning and Transportation Committee to present a draft traffic order permitting East-West and West-East access to Bank Junction for licensed Hackney Carriages at all times, seven days a week, for further approval.

The motion is proposed by Alderman Tim Hailes, a long-standing supporter of the licensed taxi trade. It has support from more than 45 members of the City of London Corporation, many of whom the LTDA has been lobbying on this issue.

Since restrictions were introduced in 2017, the LTDA has been pushing for taxi access to be restored. Corporation officers have repeatedly promised to review the restrictions amid growing pressure from members of the Council, but have failed to do so. A recent consultation on the *All Change at Bank Scheme*, which proposed further restrictions on vehicle access in the area – with the creation of a pedestrianised area and new road layouts – found that the majority of respondents favoured exempting black cabs from some of the current restrictions, however in their report on the findings Officers once again deferred making a decision on the future of taxi access, citing the impact of the pandemic and changing traffic patterns as their reasoning.

TAXI Mail

Subject: Hanging Up my Badge

Dear Editor.

After 44 years of driving a licensed cab and 12 years of minicabs before that, I have finally had enough. Enough of the way London Mayors have screwed up London and despite all the empty promises of how the London Cab Trade is a 'Jewel in the Crown' have allowed it to become the shadow of what it once was. The road system is now a permanent car park, increasing pollution tenfold. Perfectly good cabs forced off the road because some idiot thinks it is 'greener' for London. A freehold cab is greener than one costing a quarter of the value of your house. Maybe working on 'the clock' is due to return, if the trade lasts that long. You used to see 'Knowledge boys' everywhere. I can't remember the last one I saw. The one thing I found better was NSL. Garages can't now just look at the reg of a cab and say "£850 son, your cab is getting on" even if you have spent a fortune on it. How many cabs have been forced out of London just too work in other big cities?

You don't get time to stop for a meal in a shelter. They are still there, protected by National Heritage, dark and unused. The one in Leicester Sq. was very popular. Have your dinner then ready for the burst. That's when you could drive into the square. Cambridge Circus was a roundabout with a big Gents outfitters called ALLKITS.

London Taxis, the last of Old London. The pigeon food seller in Trafalgar Sq. The print gone, cabs parked up on ranks all around Fleet St while boys went in to one of the big newspaper offices, clocked on, then took it in turns to either mind the printer or work the cab. Docklands – when I started driving, Canary Wharf was full of ships loading and unloading goods from all over the world. Some of these would take a few passengers that would go on a cruise to parts of the world cheaper than the Queen Mary or SS Southern Cross. The stations



TAXI | Letters

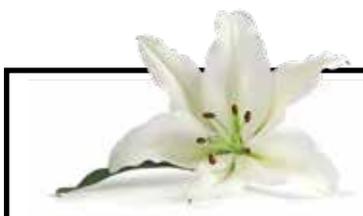
– railway companies have been itching to charge us like Heathrow and now London City Airport. Heathrow was in and out a lot, Sundays in particular and it was free.

It depresses me to see how the best taxi service in the world has withered to what it is. Everybody had a nickname because you spent time on ranks getting to know your fellow cabmen and being so many named Joe, Harry, Bert etc, you had a nickname to be identified, like mine, FRED THE LEG because of Fred the Fireman and a lot of other Freds. The Judge, Billericay Billie, Jack the Baron, Jack Trousers (thought he wore the same trousers all his working life). The Sheriff of Finchley Rd, he only drove up and down from Temple Fortune to Wellington Rd. So many, all gone now to the big feeder park in the sky. Won't be many years before I try and get on the back of that rank. I have enjoyed many years in the trade picking up rides like Prince William, Princess Margaret, Anthony Benn, Margaret Thatcher, Charlton Heston, Lord Denning, a whole cavalcade of Lords, Ladies, film stars, tv and sports personalities – plus a million of the great British public.

I was getting disenchanted... then, COVID! That put the tin hat on it for me. Months of getting used to sitting in with Mrs and my dogs. So, I've sold my cab and hung up the badge (4545). What's the highest number now – so high my nose bled. Remember though, if you get nicked for anything, the LTDA is there looking after you, so keep those subs going. If you don't belong, join – they helped me out with the cab, medicals, and a problem with Bank Junction, all to my satisfaction. Great institution.

So as Dave Allen used to say, "MAY YOUR GOD GO WITH YOU".

FRED THE LEG



FUNERAL NOTICE

The funeral of the late Bill Alsbury RIP will be held at Stevenage Crematorium at Watton Road on Friday 29 April at 3.30 pm. All those who knew him are welcome to attend.

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Get Writing & Help People Breathe!

“The plan is to get a book together of great London black cab stories. Every single penny made by the book will go to the charity...”

Steve's comment

It's nice to occasionally make a prediction that comes to fruition, and my insight on Uber launching a part 8 challenge for the rest of the country was spot on. Last week Uber launched the proceedings in Sefton, Merseyside where they are trying to get the courts to rule that private hire companies outside of London, even though they are licensed under totally different legislation, are the 'principal' in taking a booking from a customer, in the same way that the High Court ruled that operators in London were.

If they are successful, and I am told that the local operators 'up north' are all gearing up to fight it, every company in the country will be liable for a degree of

workers rights legislation and be liable for VAT on every booking, interesting times!

Licensing

There's a lot going on in the world of taxi and PHV licensing. At the end of March, the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill introduced by Conservative MP, Peter Gibson, became law. Based on a Bill originally proposed by Daniel Zeichner, Chair of the Taxi APPG, it creates a legal requirement for local authorities to cooperate and share information to prevent dangerous drivers obtaining licenses – basically to stop licence shopping. Another Bill to better protect disabled passengers particularly in PHVs, has also been going through Parliament. It is currently being considered by the House of Lords before it can become law. Unusually,

both pieces of legislation have been supported by the Government, who seem to be more on side when it comes to the need for new regulation than they have been previously. The Government also recently published a consultation on Best Practice Guidance for Taxi and PHV licensing. This builds on the statutory standards released in 2020. There are still lots of issues which need addressing, mainly in relation to PHVs and cross border hiring which remains a big problem, as we will explain in our consultation response, but it's progress!

I was happy to host a meeting led by the National Institute of Licensing on this and other issues at Taxi House recently, along with organisations including the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. We will keep pushing for the national minimum standards we need and on the specific regulatory challenges

we face in London, via Parliament, through the APPG, at City Hall and elsewhere.

Second-hand cabs

Just recently there has been a record number of new taxis sold and correspondingly, a high number of older cabs changing hands. Unfortunately, a couple of cabbies, who were not members, bought cabs that had previously been written off by insurance companies and subsequently repaired. These cabs, when presented for licensing at NSL, were refused a licence on the grounds that the vehicle was 'unsafe' to be used as a licensed taxi.

LTDA Exec, and ex-mechanic Anthony further explains cab 'write off' categories and digs a little deeper into this topic on page 8, explaining how the LTDA can support you when it comes to buying a second-hand cab.

My mate Harry

I was recently approached by a long-term supporter of our trade and a good friend of mine, Dr Harry Brunjes, who typically for Harry, has had an idea for a book for a charity that helps people suffering with breathing difficulties due to Long Covid. His idea for the book is that it features a selection of short cabbie stories written by London cab drivers and some tales also from celebs about their experiences as passengers in London cabs. We have run a few appeals the past couple of editions for cabbies to send in stories, but I thought I would catch up with Harry and ask him what it's all about and see if I could put a bit of a spotlight on what he needs from cabbies out there with a tale or two to tell...

Right Harry, what's going on?

Harry: Well as you know, I'm Chair of English National Opera and they have been putting their opera-singing tools of the trade to work, helping people with Long Covid who are struggling with their breathing. It's called ENO Breathe and we are helping over a thousand people already but need more funding to reach the numbers out there struggling to breathe.

Okay, so what's the plan?

Harry: The plan is to get a book together of great London black cab stories. Every single penny made by the book will go to the charity. I've some cracking tales from celebrities who have written in but not as yet had submissions from cabbies... In fact, I've only had one sent in so far!

Okay Harry, let's cut to the chase, what can we do?

Harry: This is my plea. There are three ways London Cabbies can get their stories to me:

1. Send me the yarn on an email at cabbiestory@gmail.com
2. Phone my office on **01323 483946** and one of my staff will write the story down.
3. Phone the office and leave their mobile number and I will phone them back personally!

Not all cabbies are Shakespeare y'know Harry?

Harry: There's no need to worry about that. I am often surrounded by scriptwriters and comics due to my work in the West End. We will put it into a form of words that works, delivers and is funny. ENO Breathe needs you! Please get in touch with your cabbie tales!



The newspaper of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association

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CABBIES ASKED TO PEN TALES FOR LONG COVID CHARITY



The Skullduggery Playbook

“Don't pee on me and then tell me it's raining...”

Top rank

Probably two of the maddest schemes in Streetscape ‘planning’ are as follows... In the number two spot, the Park Lane cycle lane and in the number one spot, the Euston Rd eastbound cycle lane.

Widespread condemnation

These two schemes have probably received the most local and national press coverage with almost widespread condemnation of them for the harm they are perpetuating on London residents, visitors and businesses. The usual suspects have trotted out the usual tag lines and skewed data to try and justify these and other schemes, but all they do is infuriate those impacted who are tempted to retort with the old saying, *“don't pee on me and then tell me it's raining.”*

FOI request

I was recently sent the results of a freedom of information request made by my counterpart at the UCG, Karen Proctor who had asked for the figures of cycle counts on both Park Lane and Euston Rd. We were both quite surprised at what came back. Firstly, with Park Lane the request was for the daily cycle counts for Park Lane northbound between 6am and 10pm each day for the following months: September, October and November 2021; January and February 2022.

6 What was received were the figures for the monitoring points located at Brook Gate and Stanhope Gate, nothing unusual in that! That does indeed cover Park Lane as per the request, the times given were not quite as per the request though, instead they covered three periods in the day: 8am-11am, 12pm-2pm and 4:30pm-7:30pm. Yes, you got it – the three peaks – the morning, lunchtime, and evening rush with the other ‘quieter times’ conveniently missing. *“Aha”,* you think, *“that's how they skew the figures – just count the busy hours and ignore the rest”,* and of course you would be right and no doubt unsavoury thoughts like ‘cheeky buggers’ might have also sprung to mind.

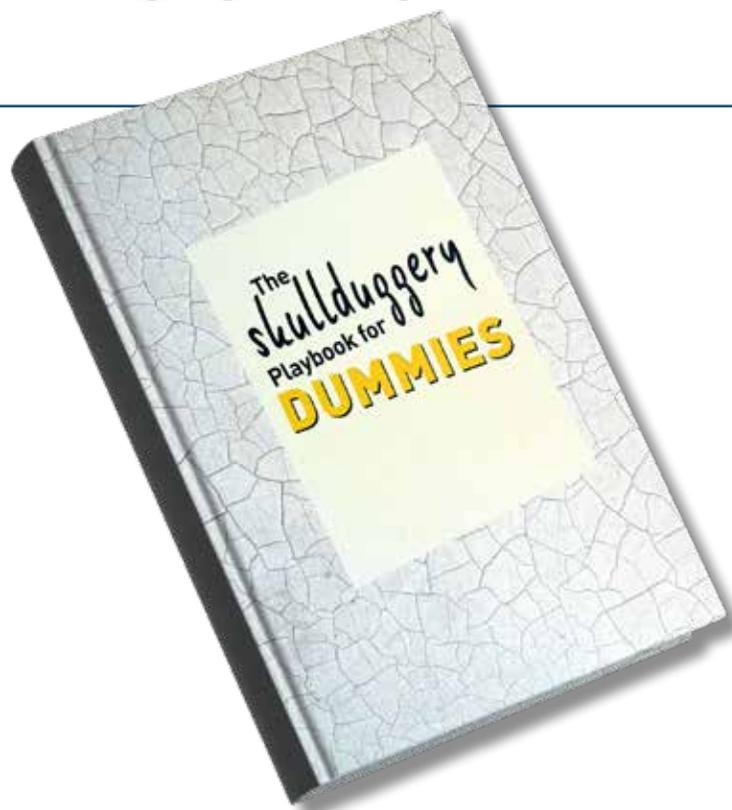
Digging deeper...

Then you carry on looking at what has been provided and you notice they have also included the average counts in West Carriage Drive! Why have they done that? As the crow flies, that's 1.6 km away from Park Lane, very curious! Then you look some more, and they've also included the counts for Broad Walk (for those of you that have never taken a stroll through Kensington Garden, Broad Walk is the big path that runs from Palace Gate up past the Round Pond and Kensington Palace to Queensway), and again as the crow or perhaps more apt for this area the parakeet flies, it is 2.29 km away from Park Lane – curiouser and curiouser...

When you then look at the numbers it makes more sense, and is clearly right out of the skullduggery playbook, with rule number three firmly followed: ‘If you're going to try and hoodwink the public, go big’ – or to relate it to this scenario, using only the busy times is good, but is it good enough? Let's look at the highs and lows across the three peak time periods at the four locations and put them in some kind of perspective:

Highest average hourly cycle count Mon-Fri between July 2021 & Feb 2022

LOCATION	AM	Lunchtime	PM
Broad Walk	484	407	688
W Carriage Drive	299	157	451
Stanhope Gate	231	117	298
Brook Gate	151	115	365



Lowest average hourly cycle count Mon-Fri between July 2021 & Feb 2022

LOCATION	AM	Lunchtime	PM
Broad Walk	158	94	163
W Carriage Drive	131	68	201
Stanhope Gate	83	38	97
Brook Gate	59	42	76

So, what do these two simplified tables show? Well, when it comes to how people cycle in the area, twice as many will ride through the Park on Broad Walk alone than those on Park Lane combined. Also, when it comes to plumping out the figures, adding Broad Walk and West Carriage Drive into the mix sure does make the Park Lane cycling figures look good. If it's figures like these that are used by the likes of Will Norman to claim that 10 trillion billion people are using the Park Lane cycle lane every nano second (ok, that was not the claim, but it might as well be), then shame on them.

Euston Rd chaos

“What about Euston Road?” I hear you ask, how have they massaged the figures on the Euston Road to show that the massive outcry by all and sundry that its causing absolute chaos in the area is wrong, and that it really is just raining? Well for that they've gone straight to rule number one in the skullduggery playbook – just deny, deny, deny, nothing to see hear, move on.

Confused? So were we when the response came back with figures for Marylebone Rd by Park Crescent, because (and this is going straight into the ‘you couldn't make it up file’), they do not have any monitoring on the Euston Road cycle lane. One of the most controversial schemes out there and they have nothing? One can only assume from this, that despite the best efforts of skullduggery authors, even they could not write anything to hide/spin that shower of pee.

Branch election

Following on from the debacle that was the recent FCA members rule amendments ballot (and despite the best efforts of some), our rule amendment to allow for a safe election of branch officers can now go ahead some three years after we first attempted to do so. With that in mind we are asking any Green Badge LTDA members that would like to get more involved in the association and become a branch officer to register their interest by emailing info@ltda.co.uk. We will respond back with further information on next steps and what is required of them to become a candidate and what is expected of them in that role.

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Don't Be Sorry, Get Streetwise!

“Before you hand over any cash – call me. Being an LTDA member is all about us protecting your interests, please make use of it!”

Streets ahead

In the past weeks, there has been a record number of new cabs sold and correspondingly, the second-hand cab market is booming. Sadly, a few cabbies who were not LTDA members, purchased cabs, (one knowingly and one not), that had previously been written off by insurance companies and then repaired. These vehicles were presented for licensing at NSL and were refused licences on the grounds that the vehicle was 'unsafe' to be used as a licensed taxi. I am also aware there have been a rise in similar instances concerning private hire vehicles.

Second-hand cabs

If you are considering buying a second-hand taxi that is not currently licensed or is licensed outside of London, it is essential that you contact the LTDA before committing to the purchase. One of the services we offer to members is a free HPI check on taxi purchases. We can then advise if the vehicle has been damaged or is the subject of outstanding finance – again, another area where you could lose out...

Be vigilant when buying a second-hand cab, I would say most of the time when you are buying a cab from another driver it would be fine, but sometimes can go badly wrong with you being left out of pocket. The option for buying second-hand is especially good for those drivers that want the freedom to work part time 3-4 days a week but be aware of certain pitfalls that may arise when buying any taxi, full stop.

Purchase precautions

There are certain precautions you should take to safeguard any potential investment. I was a motor engineer and qualified to a prominent level when repairing vehicles utilising specialised measuring equipment that would be needed to repair a vehicle that had been involved in a serious accident back to a roadworthy standard. These days, insurance



“If you are considering buying a second-hand taxi that is not currently licensed or is licensed outside of London, it is essential that you contact the LTDA before committing to the purchase.”

companies are more than likely to make the decision not to repair older vehicles due to the cost of obtaining parts and the man hours needed to repair it at official insurance company rates. In these cases, the insurance company would put the vehicle on the DVLA register as an uneconomical repair, formerly known as a category D – but that has now changed to a category N. The Category N is classed as the lesser damage, so if you were going to buy a taxi with a history of this kind, this is the one you would need to buy. When buying the cab, you will need to follow certain guidance to have the taxi licenced.

If you are considering doing this, I implore you, before you hand over any cash, to please call me (Anthony) to help. Being an LTDA member is all about us protecting your interests, please make use of it!

But now things are very different in our trade. Unlike the old TX4s, the new vehicle, the

TXe is loaded with gadgets and technology. What comes with that are parts that are extremely expensive, and it may not always be as simple to write off a TXe and the insurance companies may make the decision to repair the taxi, which in turn can bring about issues for drivers if the process is not managed correctly. Only the most severely damaged taxi would be classed as a total loss and can only be sold for parts, but the body and shell of the vehicle must be crushed and must never be put back on the road.

The simple guide that follows demonstrates what the damaged vehicle or taxi is classed as, if the insurance company decide to write the vehicle off due to it being considered unsafe or uneconomical to repair. There are four categories of a total loss that an engineer can class a damaged vehicle as:

- **Category A:** Severe damage with no serviceable parts, the vehicle must be crushed.
- **Category B:** The vehicle has major structural damage and the repairs cost more than the value of the vehicle. Parts can be salvaged from the vehicle, but it cannot be re-sold or used on the public roads.

- **Category S:** The vehicle is repairable, but the cost of repairs is higher than the value of the vehicle. The damage may include structural damage leading to the excessive cost of repair.

- **Category N:** The vehicle can be repaired and only has minor damage, but the cost of repairs is a considerable proportion of the vehicle's market value.

Once the vehicle has been deemed a total loss by the engineer, the fault party's insurer will offer a settlement equivalent to the pre-accident market value of the vehicle. An insurance write-off is usually best avoided, but I do understand why some drivers may investigate this avenue, especially now we have lost three years on the life of a working cab but do your homework and contact the LTDA.

We have had members that have purchased a cab that's been written off and when they have come to get it licenced, TfL have put up a brick wall and the driver has been requested to provide paperwork that they don't always have. Before you put yourself in the situation, it's all ways best to call the LTDA and speak to me in order to obtain the correct guidance on how to get through this process. ■ **LTDA**

ComCab

London

COMCAB LONDON FAMILY

ComCab London talks about what they do for the drivers, read below to find out more.



Over the last 48 years, ComCab London has lead the industry as the taxi business has undergone major changes and evolution, we have been there to assist as London's most knowledgeable taxi drivers adapt, survive and thrive in each new era.

Established in 1974, ComCab London has one of the largest black taxi fleets in the capital and to make us different from the rest, we aren't just another faceless app on your phone. Our drivers have a great support network with the ability to talk to someone on the phone 24/7 as well as being able to text or email.

ComCab London offers many benefits to our drivers, this includes Fuel Discounts, Totum Pro and EaziTax.

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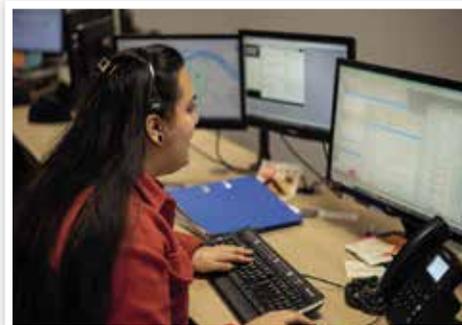
What is EaziTax?

EaziTax have more than 25 years of experience providing tax advice and tax returns for drivers and the best part is they will work with you the way you want to – whether that means working from a bag of receipts, a spreadsheet or an app.

What Fuel Discounts are on offer?

ComCab London has partnered with both Shell and UK Fuels bringing drivers great discounts! Once a driver has joined the ComCab fleet they can choose a scheme that suits their needs best.

Joining ComCab London



It is super easy to join comcab London. Once you have registered that you would like to join, you will be sent an application form. Once you have sent it back, you will be signed up by the next working day!

Once you have joined ComCab London, you will be asked to sign our agreements and you will then speak to your training manager who will talk you through everything you need to know! After that, you will be able to start working. You will then be passed over to the fleet services team and introduced to your support manager.

SCAN ME TO APPLY NOW



The bonus is, you don't have to have our equipment installed if you don't want too! We have a phone app that drivers can download, for both Android and Apple devices.

You don't have to do a certain number of jobs as you are self-employed and can complete as much or as little work as you like.

Driver Statements

There are drivers who have been with ComCab London for over 40 years and we have drivers who have been with us for a couple of days. No matter how long a driver has been with us the support is always there. Martin, a driver who has been with ComCab London for over 15 years now has said all the years he has been with ComCab have been great in every way and now fast-forwarding to today, he is earning the same amount he was 12 years ago, which has only been possible with ComCab London's commitment to go above and beyond.



Jason, a driver who has been with ComCab London for over 24 years now really enjoys the flexibility working on ComCab gives him, he can control how far he is prepared to run for jobs and allows him to schedule his own work.

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Vigilance & Volunteers

“Please take a look at the list of Hot Spots, memorise them and keep vigilant.”

On point

CAMERA SITE HOT SPOTS

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.



LTCFC volunteering

I've included below, the details of a trip being organised by the London Taxi Drivers Charity for Children.

Obviously, these trips have had to put on hold for the last couple of years as we battled our way through Covid, but they are now back on.

I realise that we are asking Cabbies to give up a day's earnings and fuel expenses, but I've done a couple of these day trips myself over the years and the joy on the faces of the kids and their parents

who attend is something that will always stay with me. I salute all those that volunteer and also those who spend so much of their own time organising these trips. If the dates work for you, give it a go – I don't think you will regret it.

The London Taxi Drivers' Charity for Children are having their first comeback trip to Woburn Safari Park on Tuesday 28th June 2022. Could all taxi drivers who would like to volunteer to help on this fun day out contact:

■ John Godfrey 07973 313148 or j.godfrey@ltda.org.uk

Please also share this information with all of your taxi-driver friends, the more drivers we have, the more children we can take!

We would like to stress that drivers are in no way obliged or expected to take their taxi through the monkey enclosure! Drivers can divert around this part of the safari. ■ LTDA

“I realise that we are asking Cabbies to give up a day's earnings and fuel expenses, but I've done a couple of these day trips myself over the years and the joy on the faces of the kids and their parents who attend is something that will always stay with me.”



PCNs have been coming in thick and fast this week and seeing that Tfl have raised their PCN charge from £130 to £160 (£80 if you pay within the discounted period), we have to try and be more aware. Please take a look at the list of Hot Spots, memorise them and keep vigilant.

Council income

Canonbury Villas is a particularly large source of income for Islington. PCNs issued by Lambeth for Cornwall Road off Stamford Street are being seen almost on a daily basis. All the councils are now making the shift and are producing video evidence, and this is very difficult to challenge. Islington seem to have spent a

small fortune on high quality CCTV cameras.

Discount period appeals

All PCNs can be appealed – and as long as you appeal within the discount period it stays at that cost, whether your appeal is accepted or rejected. I took a call from a member last week that had been issued a PCN for stopping on a Red Route by Tfl. The member was very surprised to have received it, and thought that we were allowed to stop on these routes... which we are of course allowed to stop on Red Routes – but only to drop and pick up! Hackney Carriage Law states this, but we can't get away with stopping on one and popping to get a coffee or a sandwich.

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Beep-beep. Transaction authorised!

Unless you're Wile E. Coyote, beep beeps are a very welcome sound...

Dave Cannell,
Working green badge driver, taxi
trade ambassador and BCHT Navigator

The beep-beep of a card payment authorisation is music to the ears of many of us keen to make up for all that lost business in 2021. Remember when workers weren't working, tourists weren't touring and shoppers weren't shopping? Expensive new cabs need beep-beeps as much as they need rapid charging points.

Thankfully, many drivers have been much busier over the past few months despite the best efforts of Covid. Business has definitely picked up now so many people are vaccinated and get regular tests, so the welcome beep-beep of card transactions can now be heard ringing out once again.

that the machines available back then could be more trouble than they were worth. That was a decade ago now, so what's changed?

I signed up with Verifone (now known as Curb) years ago and have been with them ever since. Over the years their systems have been good and Curb rates have certainly been competitive. I know some Curb drivers had problems in 2018 when they upgraded to the new TXN system although I must admit that in my case everything has worked like a dream.

I checked with Mary, who runs the Curb Driver Services Team, and asked her what issues she had to deal with. She explained "There were some instances of old hardware failure made worse by the aging 2G network which meant that coverage was patchy. Now 4G is well established and has proved to be a much more reliable network. Having spoken to those affected at the time, we realised that a back-up system was needed to protect drivers in the future."

Lessons learned

Curb learned from that experience, and it shows. I've tried out the new CurbLite system and it's a triumph. Advanced technology means less parts, and that makes it much smarter and more reliable. It provides 100% coverage and even includes a unique new back-up solution which gives added reliability and reassurance. It's been really well received by drivers already, and is available now for installation at the smart new Curb Operations Centre in W3.

Transaction fees compare very favourably

CurbLite is incredibly easy to use – if you can use a smartphone, you'll have no problem with it. It's even easier than my Curb TXN system which I loved. The transaction fees compare favourably to anything else on the market too, and there are no nasty hidden costs.

Great value

All the popular UK and European EEA debit and credit cards are processed on CurbLite at just 1.7%. That accounts for almost every card



The CurbLite payment solution fixes neatly beside the door to satisfy TfL regulations

CurbLite is incredibly easy to use – if you can use a smartphone, you'll have no problem with it.

you're ever likely to encounter – around 96% to be precise.

After the year we've had, everyone will be reassessing their outgoings so CurbLite is bound to be in demand. If you're in the market for a new payment system or aren't happy with the system you've got in the cab, you'd be well advised to reserve your CurbLite now.

All things considered, CurbLite is beep-beep great. I'm sold on it and am getting mine installed at the Curb Operations Centre this week. Maybe I'll see you there?



Dave's gleaming cab at the Curb Operations Centre

For more information about the CurbLite card payment system or to reserve your device, call Curb on 0333 666 1000 or visit gocurb.co.uk.



Those beep-beeps haven't always signalled good news though. Some transactions can't be completed if your payment terminal lets you down and there's no back-up. I've also heard of drivers thinking they've got a great deal with a decent transaction rate, only to find that hidden extras, like 'per transaction' charges and machine rental, push the cost up unexpectedly - like an Uber fare!

The card payments merry-go-round

I go back far enough to remember carbon paper receipts. That was before microchips and PIN numbers arrived. Since then things have moved on of course, but service has been unreliable and value from many payment system providers had generally been a heap of 'beep-beep' for too long. Many drivers jumped on the card payments' merry-go-round in time for London 2012, only to find

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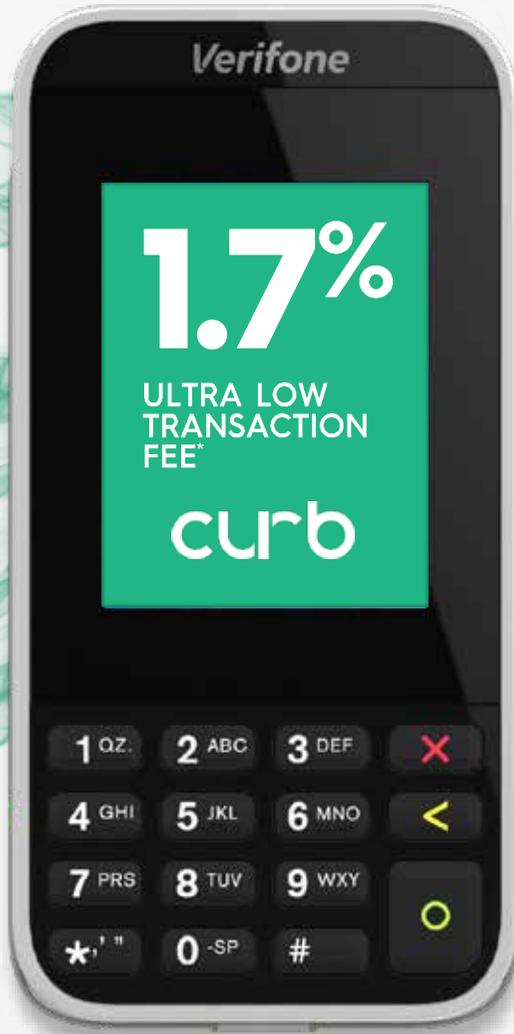
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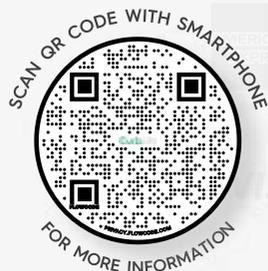
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Lords, Elections, Councils & Objectivity

“With elections fast approaching, current council incumbents would be foolish to take voters’ concerns lightly...”

A man in black

Nothing has polarised local politics in recent years as much as low traffic neighbourhood schemes. They have created a major division in some areas, both politically and sociologically. With local elections approaching, they have once again been catapulted to the forefront of discussion...

Social Injustice

There aren't many subjects that can promulgate as much discussion, rhetoric and vitriol as the LTN debate. On one side, we have residents both able bodied and disabled screaming about the social injustice attributed to being locked into one small area with only a single entry and exit point. Complaints have also been made by those who live on or near main roads, that have seen an upweight in pollution due to the over-subscription of traffic which has been pushed away from secondary arterial roads and side roads. Those residents are being supported by business owners, blue light service workers and of course taxi and bus drivers. On the flip side, you have a clutch of residents who are extremely happy with the LTNs, claiming that there is now less pollution and traffic noise. They also state that not only do they find it easier and safer to cycle but their children can now play in the road. It seems that David Prowse, A.K.A the Green Cross Code Man's efforts, were in vain.

Exposé

As a result of the depth of feeling surrounding this issue, the local elections could potentially throw up one or two very surprising results. One such council in danger of seeing seats overturned is Islington. In an exposé by The Telegraph's, Steve Bird, it was revealed that Islington Council has been accused of “misleading” residents. The accusation came after a report analysing data in the Highbury West and Highbury Fields LTN stated that

nitrogen dioxide levels (NO2) had “decreased at all [LTN] sites” when in fact the council's own report showed pollution had actually risen by 26 percent across Highbury area and even reached a level as high as 44 percent in one part of Highbury.

The findings, which were discovered after residents submitted a formal complaint were compiled by a data analytics company called The Project Centre. Interestingly, The Project Centre have also been linked to data analysis within Waltham Forest's LTNs. Now this in-turn links in the campaigns manager at the London Cycling Campaign (LCC), Simon Munk, who helped Waltham Forest win £27 million of funding from TfL's ‘mini-Holland’ programme. This therefore begs the question as to whether the LCC have exerted any influence over the council in relation to the imposition of Islington's LTNs.

Islington Council admitted some claims were not supported by the report's findings because of the questionable quality of data due to technical errors within the equipment used to monitor results, including a claim that there had been a 42% reduction in traffic on Holloway Road. Now even in your wildest fantasy, that claim would carry about as much credibility as an Uber driver claiming to have a superior topographical Knowledge to a London cabbie. Ultimately, the council admitted that errors had been made and issued an apology, however, this now arguably brings into question whether Islington Council have breached any aspects of the Nolan principle.

The girl group and the Lord

Now for the uninitiated, The Nolan Principle is not an album produced by everybody's favourite female warblers, The Nolan Sisters. It is in fact a code of conduct promoting ethical standards in public life and was established by Lord Michael Nolan, who chaired the Committee on Standards in Public Life from 1994 to 1997. The Committee was established in late 1994, during John Major's



tenure as Prime Minister after the cash-for-questions affair (not to be confused with the Edwina Currie affair). The committee wasted no time in causing controversy, with its first report recommending full disclosure of MPs' outside interests. However, our interest lies with Lord Nolan's report into standards of conduct within local government, which was produced in July 1997. Now despite the principles being embedded in public life in the UK, many people have never heard of them nor understand their function. This of course works to a local council's advantage as they possess a greater ability to dodge scrutiny through public ignorance. The Seven Principles of Public Life in relation to local government are as follows:

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity:** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the

best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Objectivity?

Now the one principle which stands out in relation to a possible breach is ‘objectivity’. How objective have numerous councils been in relation to LTNs. With the evidence which has emerged against Islington Council, it isn't unreasonable to assume that other borough councils haven't acted in the same way in relation to LTNs. Given that many of the emergency traffic orders are coming to an end, resulting in many LTNs becoming permanent features, there is a strong argument to suggest that all permanent LTN installations should be halted with immediate effect until data can be re-analysed. This should perhaps especially apply to areas where The Project Centre have performed the analytics. This should also perhaps apply until any given council can satisfy all aspects of the Nolan Principle – especially the objectivity aspect.

So, with those elections fast approaching, current council incumbents would be foolish to take voters’ concerns lightly and, on that note, *Elected* by Alice Cooper comes on the radio and I've picked up my dogs rubber snake and draped it around my shoulders. ■ TAXI



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Finding the Cheapest Supermarket



“With the cost-of-living skyrocketing, finding the cheapest place to buy food and household essentials is more important than ever...”

Money matters

For many people, their supermarket shop is one of their biggest bills. With the cost-of-living skyrocketing, finding the cheapest place to buy food and household essentials is more important than ever.

Head to Aldi or Lidl

If you want to slash your supermarket bill, the cheapest way is to head to Lidl or Aldi. Both budget supermarkets are significantly cheaper than the likes of Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Asda and Waitrose. Which? runs a series of tests to determine the cheapest supermarket every month, and either Lidl or Aldi is the winner each time. There is normally just a pound or two difference between the two. For example, in February, Which? found Lidl to be the cheapest supermarket. Researchers compared prices for a basket of 23 items every day throughout the month and found that, on average, shoppers would have paid £24.21 at Lidl and just 62p more at £24.83 at Aldi. Which?'s basket included own-brand products such as apples and eggs as well as branded goods such as Hovis wholemeal bread.

Waitrose

The same basket cost £33.71 at Waitrose – 39% more. Groceries with some of the biggest price differences included PG Tips tea bags, which had a difference of £1.52 between Lidl and Waitrose,



and own-label seedless grapes, which had a difference of £1.41. The main downside with Lidl and Aldi is that neither offer home delivery for groceries, although Aldi does offer click and collect.

Online tools

Monitoring research from Which? and surveys from other consumer groups is one way to decide where the cheapest place is to do your shopping, but there are plenty of online tools that can help too. For example, the 'Latestdeals' app compares prices across Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Iceland and Waitrose. Users can search for a product and see where it's cheapest.

The 'Trolley' app is another one worth downloading. Users can see the cheapest grocery prices across UK's largest stores, receive daily deals, get price alerts, and create smart shopping lists. It doesn't just compare food but household



items too and its comparison for these items includes stores such as Wilko, B&M, Superdrug, Savers and Poundland.

You can also compare pack sizes to check you're getting the most bang for your buck. For example, for Ariel washing powder Trolley calculates the price per 100g in various pack sizes at different supermarkets.

MySupermarketCompare.co.uk is another tool to help you compare prices of products across the supermarkets and various other retailers. For example, for baby items it also compares prices at Boots and Superdrug, while for alcohol it also runs comparisons with MasterofMalt.com and TheWhiskyExchange.com.

Food crisis

Unfortunately, the current crisis means thousands of people are struggling to afford to buy enough food to feed them and their family. If you fall into this category, you may be able to get help from a foodbank.

Food banks are community organisations that can help if you can't afford the food you need. Food is donated by people who can afford to help or collected in supermarkets. You'll usually need to get a referral to a food bank before you can use it.

According to a survey by community platform Neighbourly and Aldi, almost all food banks (99%) have seen a surge in demand since the start of the year.

Your GP, school or a charity may be able to refer you to a food bank. If you go to Citizens Advice, they'll probably make you an appointment to discuss your situation with an adviser.

The adviser will ask you some questions about your income and needs. They can check if you should be getting any benefits you're not currently claiming and then give you a voucher for a food bank if necessary. The food bank will exchange the voucher for a food parcel and may also be able to give you other items such as period products and toiletries.

TAXI





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Record Numbers!

“Damaged and repaired vehicles is a world full of sharks armed with MIG welders and spray guns, whose only concern is making the vehicle look ‘right’...”

Cab you drive

Last March I was sitting on my hands glad that I'd cleared any stock I had, this year the world has gone mad! There were over 300 new cabs registered in March, that's twice what a good month would have looked like even at the height of the TX1's reign, long before Uber etc.

The real world

Funniest thing, on the day I saw the figures, I happened to glance at a cabbies Facebook group whilst on a train. According to this lot, the TXE will never sell because it's too expensive - it's incredible how out of touch social media can be. They are online still, spouting doom and gloom whilst in the real world, London cabbies are buying more new vehicles than at any time in history!

Record numbers

Even before I saw the figure's I knew it was going to be a record just by the number of cabs that have been offered to me or that dealers wanted underwritten. I have never been so



busy and for the first time in many years I was able to cherry pick the best examples - in cabbie land that normally means the lowest mileage examples. A high mileage cab is known as a space shuttle, because it's been to the moon and back, and will always trade as such. That's not to say that dealers sell them cheap, by the time they prep them, put a warranty on them and fix all the faults, there's little difference in the price to that of a low mileage cab. I prefer to only buy low mileage cabs to start with if I can.

Price wise, the late Euro VI Vito's and TX4's are still holding up, but only because demand for early TXEs is good and the prices for them are high - late diesels are still a cheap option by comparison.

The London fleet is now gradually creeping back up from an all time low of sub 14,000 after the pandemic

and should reach 15,000 in the next few weeks and we are only months away from the TXE overtaking the TX4 as king of the ranks.

Cut and shuts

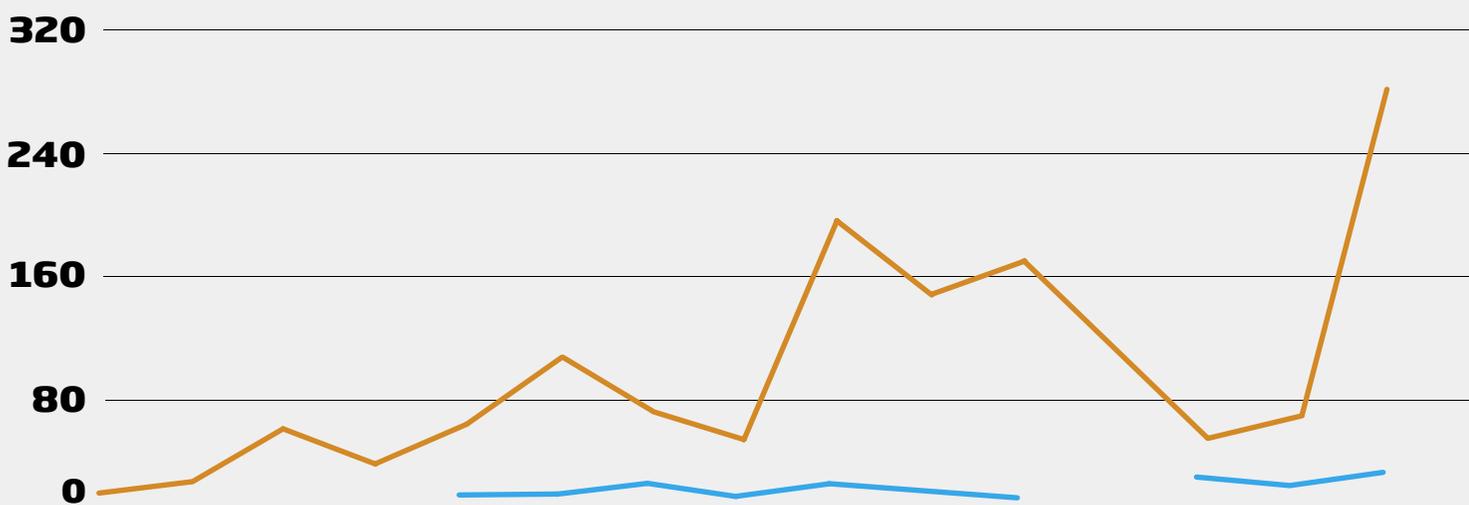
Elsewhere in vehicle news, it's very likely that TfL will soon stop licensing written off and repaired taxis, following reports of some horrendous cut and shuts being presented at NSL.

An insurance write-off is industry jargon for a car that's either sustained so much damage it's unsafe to go back on the road, or it is still safe to drive but is beyond economical repair. What is 'economic' or not depends on the insurance company, the model of car and a few other factors, but it's generally at about 60% of the market value. As an example, if your cab is worth, say £20,000 as a trade in and it suffers damage estimated at around £12000 to repair, in all probability the insurance company will 'write it off,' pay you the trade value and sell the damaged cab on. Never ever buy a second-hand cab or car without having it checked for an insurance report or existing finance. If you do decide to knowingly buy a Cat S or N car it should retail at around 55-70% of the price of a normal

identical vehicle, but always get it inspected irrespective of what the dealer tells you. They will always refer to a Cat S as "...it was only 'light damage' nothing to worry about." To which the answer is "the insurance company obviously never thought so, or they wouldn't have written it off in the first place!" Damaged and repaired vehicles is a world full of sharks armed with MIG welders and spray guns, whose only concern is making the vehicle look 'right' and are not worried about its structural integrity or safety. Cat S and N vehicles are cheap for a reason and my advice is to stay well away from them.

TAXI

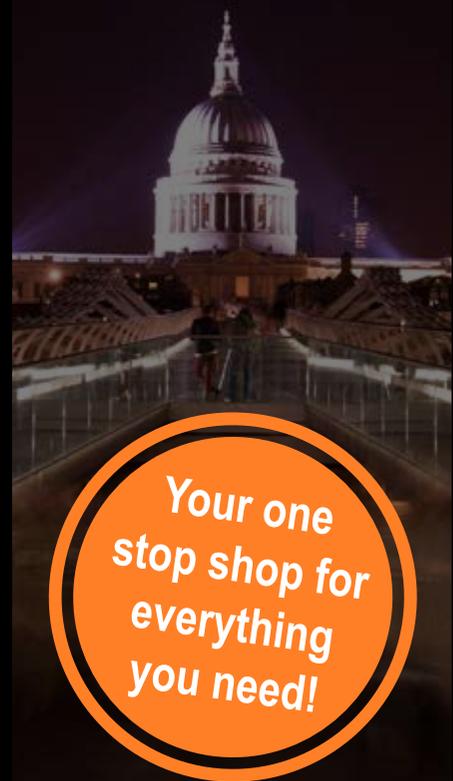
DYNAMO	156
LEVC	5,181
METROCAB	1
TX1	1
TX2	79
TX4	6,624
VITO	2,653
Total	14,695



	JAN 21	FEB 21	MAR 21	APR 21	MAY 21	JUN 21	JUL 21	AUG 21	SEP 21	OCT 21	NOV 21	DEC 21	JAN 22	FEB 22	MAR 22
LEVC	13	15	57	38	61	102	73	52	207	154	167	109	55	73	285
DYNAMO	2		2		2	3	9	1	8	4	1		13	10	16

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Edith Thompson & Frederick Bywaters

Learn Rob's tales of London crime history and 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 case of Edith Thompson and Frederick Bywaters... Born into a respectable, middle-class family on Dalston's Norfolk Road (now Cecilia Road) on Christmas Day 1893, Edith Graydon was an intelligent, talented youngster who enjoyed acting, dancing and excelled at arithmetic. After leaving school, she found employment with a milliners company in Aldersgate where her talent soon saw her promoted to chief buyer – a role which involved regular trips to Paris.

Three's a crowd...

At around the time she started this job, Edith met Percy Thompson, and after a six-year engagement they married at St Barnabas church in Manor Park. They then moved to Westcliff-on-Sea, followed by a stint in Kensington Gardens, before finally settling in Ilford in 1920. That same year, the couple befriended a younger man named Frederick Bywaters, and the trio enjoyed a holiday together on the Isle of White. Edith had in fact known Frederick when he was a schoolboy, and in the ensuing years he'd joined the merchant navy, meaning he was full of exciting stories – which was in stark contrast to Percy who lived a pedestrian life. This, combined with Frederick's good looks, left Edith smitten and the pair



From left to right: Frederick Bywaters, Edith Thompson, and victim, Percy Thompson

"He never acted like a man to his wife. He always seemed several degrees lower than a snake... I loved her and could not go on seeing her leading that life."

embarked upon an affair – which was unwittingly aided by Percy when he invited Frederick to become their lodger.

Betrayal

In the autumn of 1921 Percy discovered the betrayal and a fearsome argument erupted at their Ilford home. Frederick pleaded with Edith in front of Percy to seek a divorce, which led Percy to boot him from the house. Edith later claimed Percy then turned violent towards her, hitting her several times and throwing her across the room. Despite this, Edith remained in the marriage – although she secretly continued to write to Frederick when he returned to sea.

Surprise performance?

One year later, on October 3rd 1922, Edith and Percy spent the evening at the Criterion Theatre. After the performance ended at 11pm, they headed to Liverpool Street to catch a train back to Ilford. The train

pulled into Ilford Station at around midnight, and the couple began to walk along Belgrave Road. As they passed De Vere Gardens, a man pounced from a group of bushes and attacked Percy, knocking Edith to the ground as he did so. The two men wrestled whilst, according to witnesses, Edith screamed, "Oh don't, oh don't!" The fight resulted in Percy being fatally stabbed, after which the attacker fled.

Suspicion

When police arrived on the scene, they found Edith to be still in a state of hysteria.

Once calm, Edith told police she knew the who the killer was and named Frederick as the assailant. She openly described her relationship with him, as to her understanding, she was simply a witness. Unbeknown to her however, Frederick had already been arrested and Edith's prior knowledge of the attacker aroused suspicion. This was made worse when she spotted Frederick being escorted through the police station and blurted out, "Oh God, why did he do it... I didn't want him to do it." Edith was then arrested and charged as an accessory to the murder, despite Frederick insisting that he'd acted alone.

62 letters

"He never acted like a man to his wife", Frederick said when describing his motive for attacking Percy, "He always seemed several degrees lower than a snake... I loved her and could not go on seeing her leading that life." Frederick also claimed however that he only intended to injure Percy; to give him "the opportunity of standing up to me like a man – but he

wouldn't." During the investigation, detectives found 62 love letters, all written by Edith to Frederick. In them, she told Frederick that she'd attempted to murder Percy several times – first it would seem with poison, and then by putting broken glass in his food on no less than three separate occasions, with Percy discovering the shards each time.

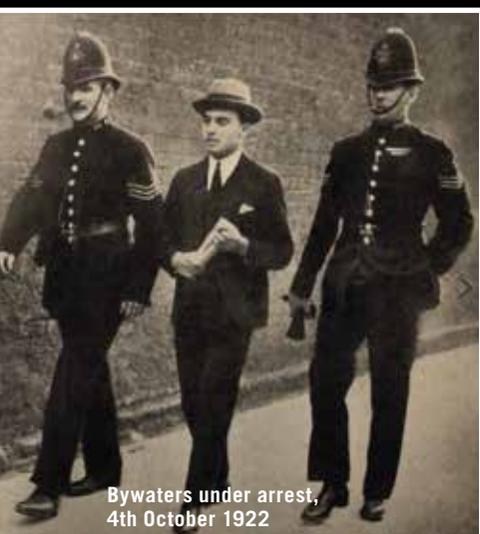
Pulp novel fantasy

At their trial at the Old Bailey in December 1922, Frederick continued to defend Edith and suggested her claims of attempts at murder were nothing more than a fantasy inspired by pulp novels. In his summing-up, the Judge was apparently of the same view, stating that the thoughts expressed in the letters were "full of the outpourings of a silly, but at the same time, wicked affection". He instructed the jury to find Edith guilty only if they were confident that she'd wanted her husband dead, and that she'd been in complete league with Frederick.

Delirium and resignation

Unfortunately for Edith, the jury were of the opinion that she had indeed directed Percy to commit the fatal stabbing. As the verdict was read out, Frederick desperately shouted to the court that he'd acted alone. He too was found guilty, and the Judge proceeded to don his black cap in order to pass the death sentence on the pair. An appeal to have Edith reprieved failed, as did a media campaign and a petition containing around a million signatures. During her final days of incarceration, Edith languished in a state of utter delirium and refused to touch food. Despite this, she managed to gain weight which has led some to speculate that she was pregnant at the time of her hanging – although no post-mortem was held to confirm this.

The executions both took place at 9am on the 9th January 1923, Frederick's at Pentonville and Edith's at Holloway. Whilst Frederick went quietly, Edith panicked, and so extreme was her terror that she collapsed and had to be carried to the gallows. Her chaotic execution left a profound impact on the hangman, John Ellis. He resigned his position shortly after and would later go on to take his own life. **TAXI**



Bywaters under arrest, 4th October 1922



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The Crying Church

The City of London boasts 50 churches within its environs – but only one is known as ‘the weeping church’... Founded in 1123, by the Anglo-Norman priest and monk Rahere, St Bartholomew the Great sits in the middle of Cloth Fair, just by Smithfield Market. This church has a rather strange history, for while in Italy, Rahere had a vision or dream that a winged beast transported him to a holy place, where the high trinity commanded him to erect a church. He then travelled to the location of this holy place, which was a plot of land near Smithfield to build his church. However, Rahere was initially thwarted due to the land being royal property and also a cemetery. All was not lost for the priest – he appealed to King Henry I and explained his divine message. As a result, the King awarded him the title to the land and the rest as they say, is history.

But why is it known as the weeping church? A rather strange phenomenon occurs when the church’s stone walls get cold and wet. As a result of the stones being of a porous nature they start to bleed or weep, only ceasing when the church heating system is in operation. There is even an inscription in the church alluding to this, which reads: ‘*unsluice your briney floods.*’ As a result, St Bartholomew the Great church is known as ‘the weeping church.’ The tale doesn’t end here though, as it is believed that the ghost of Rahere haunts the building. The haunting is believed to have started after repair work took place in the 19th century. It is claimed that Rahere’s tomb was opened, and his sandal removed. Although the sandal was returned to the church, Rahere’s foot was nowhere to be found. As a result, the apparition of Rahere is believed to appear from the gloom, before disappearing into thin air. The ghost is said to appear every year on the morning of July the 1st at 7am, emerging from the Vestry.

London Bridge and the USA

Every taxi driver knows that London Bridge is approximately two and a half miles from Trafalgar Square – that is of course unless you are driving around Lake Havasu, Colorado. Situated approximately 150 miles from Las Vegas, Lake Havasu has been home to London Bridge since 1971 – but how did it end up 5,300 miles from its original starting point?

The popular myth was that the bridge had been mistakenly bought instead of Tower Bridge. This allegation was denied by Robert P McCulloch, the man who purchased the bridge (as well as over 3350 acres of land around Lake Havasu). In fact, in later years, McCulloch, being the japester that he was, actually promoted the myth that he had purchased the wrong bridge as a joke. The fact was, that the 1830s built bridge became available for sale in 1967 – after it had been discovered that the 130,000-tonne structure was sinking into the River Thames at a speed of around 1/8th of an inch per annum. McCulloch purchased the bridge at the behest of his then business partner CV Wood, the man behind the planning of Disneyland. Wood felt that it would put Lake Havasu ‘on the map’ and as a result the bridge was purchased for just over £1,000,000.

At the southern section of the bridge, there is a mini-London theme park where City of London griffins sit. There is also a diminutive Trafalgar Square fountain and a clutch of miniature Landseer lions adjacent, along with a quintessentially London, red phone box. It’s unknown whether Lake Havasu has its own fleet of FX4 taxis, but one would like to think so.



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW LONDON?

The Gunpowder Plot

It’s fair to assume that just anybody residing in the UK who is unfamiliar with the significance of November 5th is likely in a minority. The Gunpowder Treason Plot, also known as the Jesuit Treason, is probably the most famous assassination attempt in British history. That said, what is perhaps not as widely known is just how bigger explosion had the plot succeeded would have been caused...

The event which took place in 1605, saw a group of English Catholics led by Robert Catesby plot to ‘blow-up’ the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament in a bid to kill James I and restore a Catholic monarch to the English throne. The plan was to use 36 barrels of gunpowder to flatten a previous incarnation of the Houses of Parliament, but the explosion would have likely made a significantly bigger bang than anticipated. It is believed that the amount of gunpowder stored inside the undercroft beneath the seat of government was so large that it would have levelled a substantial part of Westminster itself. The one cubic tonne of gunpowder would not only have reduced the entire structure, which boasted seven feet deep concrete walls to rubble, but it would have killed everything within a 100 meter radius and blown out all of the windows within the surrounding area. Due to the geographical layout of London during that time period, the blast would have been heard in excess of five miles away. Ultimately had Guido Fawkes and his co-conspirators not been caught, it’s quite possible that the plot would have failed anyway due to the gunpowder decaying, but of course, we’ll never know.

GUY FAWKES DAY



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Cabbie Community

Al's new community cabbing role made him wonder if he was being asked to be the cab trade's answer to David Dimbleby or Fiona Bruce – to stop the bolshie participants killing each other...

Cabbie chronicles

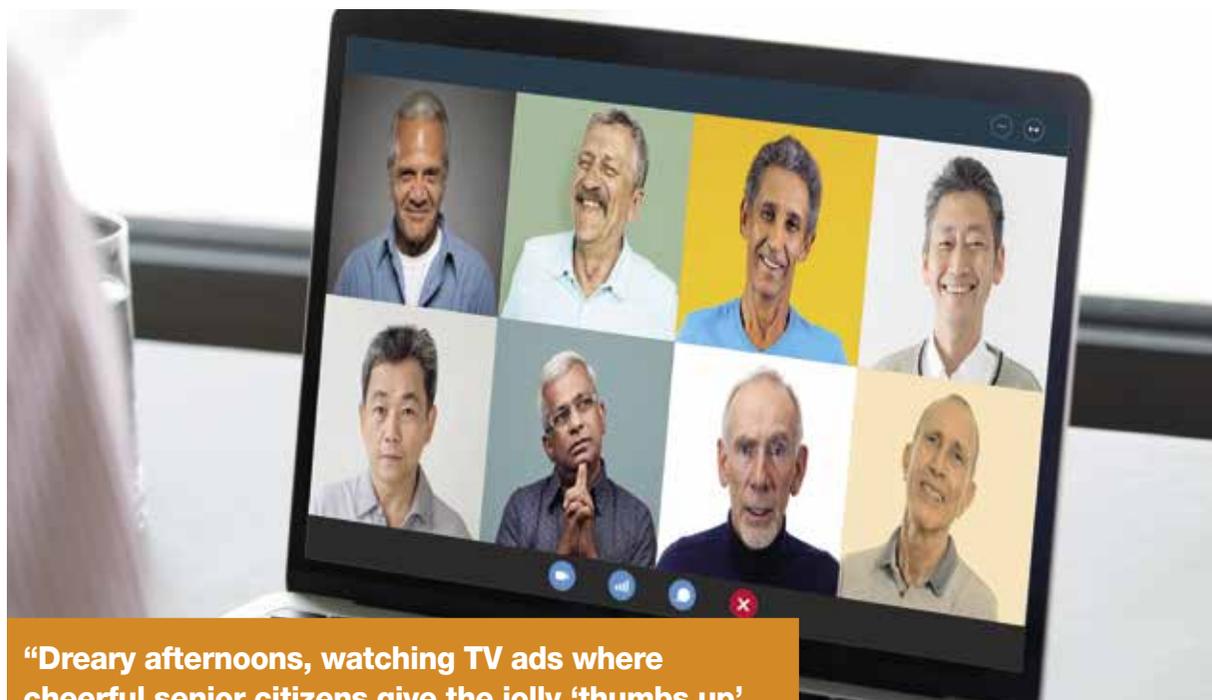
I am continuously amazed by the strength, generosity, and sense of adventure of some of my cabbie colleagues. Here I am, sitting at home by the kitchen table, penning an article, whilst they're out there, formulating plans to conquer Kilimanjaro on roller skates or row the Atlantic in a taxi tyre inner-tube for charity. And they'll no doubt do it if they haven't already done so! I wish I was more benevolent. I think I'm pushing out the charity boat, if I purchase a second-hand paper-back from an Oxfam shop, then hand it back for resale after I've read it. What a philanthropist!

Charitable instincts

The nearest I got to genuine fundraising, was having a Children's Fund collection box dangling in the back of my sherbet. I was chuffed-to-bits when The Fund Treasurer finally opened it, and I discovered that my can, from all the dozens of boxes, had the most money jammed into it. But that was a fortunate fluke. There are taxi drivers out there, that along with the stressful profession of cab driving, dedicate countless hours keeping the charity fund boxes constantly topped up. And it seems, that even when those taxi driver retire, their charitable instincts remain as strong as ever. I was always concerned that I would be bored witless after I handed in my badge – all those dreary afternoons, watching TV adverts where cheerful senior citizens give the jolly 'thumbs up' for DIY funerals or miscellaneous forest glade internments – so that when Nan or Grandpa finally 'pop their clogs', the family can swan off to enjoy a top-notch holiday, courtesy of the smiling departed.

Fiona Bruce-esque

My spirits were lifted by a recent phone call. It came from the head honcho of a nationwide community organisation. She wanted to know if I would like to volunteer as a helper for the community. "What would it entail?" I inquired. I imagined delivering meals on wheels to elderly folk who, needing the company, invite you into their homes, offer endless cups of tea,



"Dreary afternoons, watching TV ads where cheerful senior citizens give the jolly 'thumbs up' for DIY funerals or miscellaneous forest glade internments – so that when Nan or Grandpa finally 'pop their clogs', the family can swan off to enjoy a top-notch holiday, courtesy of the smiling departed."

mellow you with tales of the 'good old days', and regale you with 'baby photos' of grandchildren who are now older than you. No, this was something completely different. They were looking for someone to be a facilitator on a new online video chat group they were introducing, called *Taxi Talk*. Perhaps she wanted me to be the cab trade's answer to David Dimbleby or Fiona Bruce, to stop the bolshie participants killing each other?

Hog prevention officer

It was hoped by the community organisation, to make *Taxi Talk* like a sister group to *Chaps for Chat*, a long-established video chat group for members of the community (mostly men) to meet like-minded individuals and voice their opinions, on all manner of topics – from last night's telly to the war in Ukraine, from the comfort of their own homes. *Taxi Talk*, however, was 'going to do what it said on the tin' – talk taxis, the demographic being elderly, retired cab drivers in search of an hour-long session reminiscing about the past – in a constructive way. It would be up to

me, the facilitator, to ensure that the talk flowed and that everybody had a chance to add their two-penneth worth, with nobody 'hogging' the camera more than anyone else. This all sounded great, though I didn't have a 'scooby-doo' how to handle a hundred cab drivers.

Taxi Talk

I needn't have worried. When each individual had 'signed in' to the group, it was up to me, as the facilitator, to introduce the subjects to talk about. As it was my first time, I chose to take a back seat in the proceedings and allow Barry, a long-standing member of the community video chat groups, to initiate the meeting on my behalf. Barry, like the other guys, who had been a cab driver for many years, introduced me to the other eight members of the afternoon's first *Taxi Talk* group. Apart from being outdone by 95-year-old Mo, who gained his badge in 1939, my fifty-five years behind the wheel, and editorship of various taxi magazines, and newspapers, put me in good stead. From cosy sofas to wooden chairs propped up against kitchen tables,

I watched the participants formally present themselves, although they hardly needed introducing to each other. Barry neatly introduced me and we 'kicked off' at around 2pm. I had no idea what to expect, so I'd spent the last week scanning newspapers and taxi magazines for worthy subjects of interest for the guys to discuss with a degree of enthusiasm. I prayed silently to myself, that I'd be able to keep the ball rolling for the allotted hour. I was pleasantly surprised...

Cabbie community

We talked for the entire hour and topics ranged broadly: "Was the movie actor, Will Smith, justified in slapping comedian Chris Rock for making an insulting comment about his wife, and have you ever reacted to somebody insulting / assaulting you whilst at work in the cab?" Next up I asked, "Had anyone ever befriended a passenger, to the extent they (and possibly their family) were invited to visit the passenger in their home in the UK or even abroad?" The stories made the hour fly by and at 3pm, we bade our farewells, and the first meeting of *Taxi Talk* went shtum. How did it go? Well, I've got another meeting tomorrow so either I'm doing something right or the organisation are thinking tomorrow's my one, final, last chance! It's nice to be giving something back though and engaging in a bit of cabbie community work. Be lucky out there.

TAXI

Meet the LTDA legal team

Driving a taxi for many hours of the day in one of the world's most congested cities is a challenging task. Cabbies often fall victim to complaints and false accusations from police, passengers and other road users (especially cyclists and PHV drivers). When these events arise it's



comforting for LTDA members to know that they have the immediate support of the best specialist in-house legal team in the business. The success rate of the LTDA Legal Team is second to none. In fact, according to Criminal Justice Statistics, LTDA members defended by our team are **FOUR** times more likely than the national average to be acquitted of allegations made against them.



John Luckhurst
Senior Partner



Charlotte Collett
Solicitor



Farouk Merdjane

I was involved in an accident whilst driving my cab in Shepherd's Bush. I wasn't too worried about it because I was confident that it wasn't my fault and the insurance would sort it out. A short while later I received a summons for driving without due care and attention. I had no witnesses to help me, but the other driver had produced "independent" witnesses out of thin air! I quickly contacted the LTDA's legal department and they immediately visited the scene of the incident and arranged for professional photographs to be recorded. I later appeared before magistrates at Lavender Hill Court, where the LTDA barrister tied the witnesses up in knots and demonstrated they could not have seen what they said they had. Thank you, LTDA legal department; you gave me an excellent service.



Tom Poulson

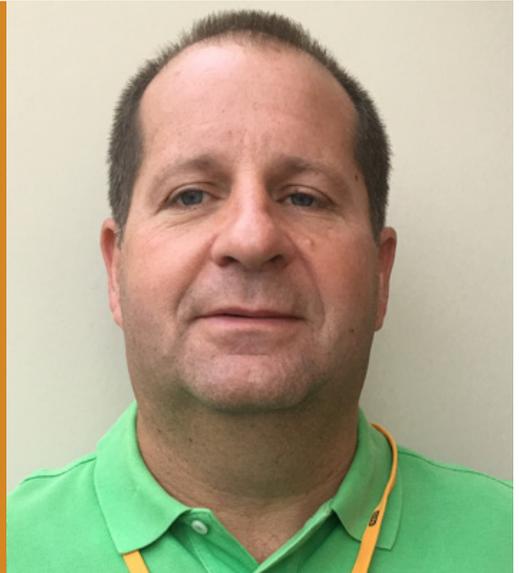
I joined the LTDA when I first got my badge and it turned out to be the best thing I ever did. Due to an unfortunate set of circumstances I ended up getting my licence revoked by TfL. I turned to John Luckhurst, one of the LTDA's legal eagles, for assistance. John went to great lengths to prepare a detailed appeal against TfL's decision and briefed a brilliant barrister to represent me in court. The appeal was successful and saved my livelihood. LTDA subscriptions are only four quid a week, which is less than a pint, and three pounds can be claimed against tax. I can't believe that every cabbie in town is not a member.

“FOUR times more likely than the NATIONAL average to get an acquittal”

Ken Jackson
The LTDA's solicitors and support team, could not have been more helpful when I first informed them that an allegation had been made against me. The LTDA was quick to check all the CCTV cameras in the area and arrange for plans of the location to be drawn up. Witness statements were also obtained and Mr Demidecki was successful in getting the Crown Prosecution Service to drop the case against me. Thanks LTDA - an all-round brilliant service!



Paul Baxter
I was filled with confidence the very first time I contacted the LTDA's legal team and as it turned out, I certainly wasn't disappointed. They did a great job in sorting out my problem with TfL. They've got to be the best in the business!



“LTDA subscriptions cost less than four quid a week”

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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 - 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.



A Passage Through Time



Phil's 'London heritage' knowledge journey is designed to hopefully make your driving day and workplace surroundings, a little more interesting...

Footprints & foundations

The City of London's institutions have shaped the foundations of its longevity. In past articles, I have written about the history of the Livery Companies, an integral part of the city's traditions and customs. In this article I will focus on legal London and expose the extensive history of the Barristers and Lawyers, who reside in the locality of Fleet Street...

Heritage & mystery

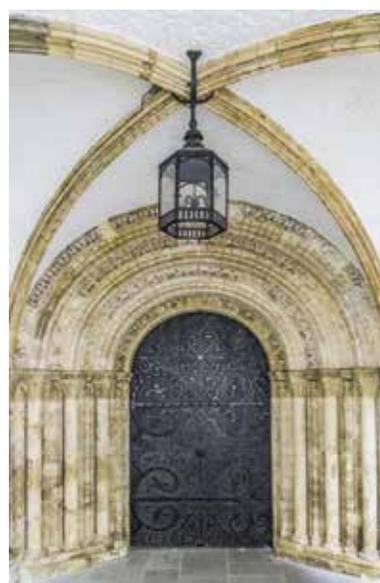
Legal London is an institution that is steeped in heritage and shrouded in mystery. Hidden away behind huge gates and high decaying walls, these legal bastions encompass the Barristers-at-law. There are four Inns of Court: Middle Temple, Inner Temple, Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn – also known as the Inns of Chancery. Chancery Lane (formally the Chancellors Lane) is situated on the doorstep of the four Inns. Taking a fare into these legal denizens and driving along the cobblestone thoroughfares, you may feel you have encountered a scene from Dickensian London. The topography of these sites can be traced back to over a thousand years, where an encapsulating history developed. Behind the facades of these ancient buildings, legal advocates known as Barristers have their chambers. The Barristers attire is somewhat bizarre. Entering a court of law, they dress in long black gowns and their heads are covered by wigs made of horse hair. A practice that began in 1840, the regalia was to distance the legal advocate from personal involvement in the court case. So let me take you on a journey through these legal environs and uncover your curiosity...

The Knights Templars

Middle Temple and Inner Temple are aptly named after a holy order of Knights, known as the Knights Templars, who resided in this domain in the



The Temple Church



Above: Temple Church was originally the precinct of the Knights Templar whose Temple Church was named in honour of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

12th century. If you have read, *'The Da Vinci Code'* by Dan Brown or seen the film you will be familiar with the Knight's Templars. In the present day, the buildings known as

chambers are the home of barristers-at-law. So, how did the home of this ancient order of knights transform into a place for legal advocates?

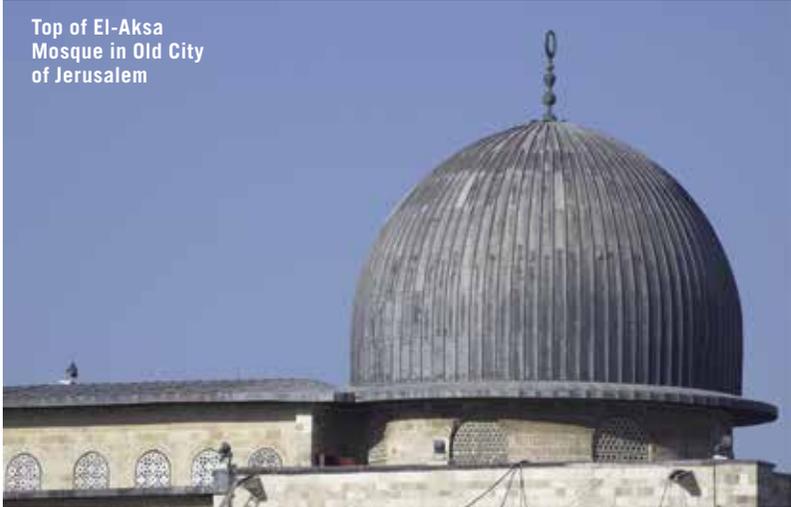
I will take you on an excursion to the Middle East to give you a clearer understanding of the knights Templars. In the 12th century, the Holy Land was a focal point for Crusaders, who established their presence in this place of religious salvation. These biblical lands have always been in dispute as to who has the right for self-rule. Jerusalem is the spiritual home of the three great religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Religious fever swept through Europe in the 12th century, pilgrims seeking salvation were drawn to Jesus Christ's birthplace. The Knights Templars were established during this period and their role was to protect the Catholic pilgrims who had journeyed from Europe to the Holy Land. The Knights were stationed at the base of the Temple Platform

"Within the crypt of the church, secret initiation ceremonies of the knights were performed..."

between the famous Dome of the Rock and the El Aksa Mosque. They became known as the Knights of the Temple of Solomon of Jerusalem and later as the Knights Templar. From humble beginnings these brave warriors were rewarded for their valour and devotion.

Templars by the Thames

Because of their noble exertions in the Holy Land, the Templars were granted land by King Henry II (1154-1189), when they returned from the Crusades. The healing properties of water was a prerequisite for the Knights Templars to build



Top of El-Aksa Mosque in Old City of Jerusalem



Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem

a house of prayer and cloisters beside the River Thames. The Round Temple Church was established. Effigies of the Templars are laid out on the floor of the church in a circular formation. Within the crypt of the church, secret initiation ceremonies of the knights were performed. I would like to point out that these religious houses are also historic buildings, where London's rich tapestry from the past can be appreciated. I encourage you to pay a visit to this ancient house of worship.

“By the early 1300's, the Templars were discredited for their privileged lifestyle. Their property was confiscated, and their ancient order shut down. Many Templars were sent to the Tower of London...”

Downfall of the Templars

The Templars popularity exulted great wealth and excited great envy. The public gave donations towards their maintenance, entrusted them with money, jewels and deeds of property. These commercial agents acted as executors who looked after valuable possessions. However, by the early 1300's the Templars were discredited for their privileged lifestyle. Their

property was confiscated and their ancient order shut down. Many Templars were sent to the Tower of London, where they were incarcerated for the duration of their lives. Their property passed to another holy order of Knights, known as The Knights of St John of Jerusalem who resided in a large estate in Clerkenwell. They were happy to lease the land to lawyers, who found it an extremely convenient location, midway between their clients residing in the City and the King's courts



located in Westminster Hall. It was not until the 1540s that the lawyers received the ownership of the Temple. Thus began the long history of these legal advocates in this domain.

Barristers at play

The mystery behind the facades of the four Inns of Court is somewhat hidden away from the public eye. This ancient profession remains a secret fraternity whose traditions and customs are concealed in centuries of confidentiality. Many cabbies may have done an apprenticeship before you joined the cab trade. The Barrister has to undertake a training contract known as Pupillage. It is essential the trainee attends the main hall at the Inn where the pupillage is taking place. Here, they will be required to eat three dinners in each term. These formal dinner meetings are to engage the fledging Barristers in conversations on all aspects of the law with senior Barristers, Queen Councillors and Judges. Besides the fine gastronomie, fine wines play a prominent part of the evening entertainment. At the conclusion of the evening, the assembly rise to their feet and a toast is given by one of the Masters of the Bench. The

gathering will then make their way gingerly onto the city street to hail a cab for their journey home – most in an inebriated state.

Called to the Bar

The law student will have to endure a long period of study to pass the examinations, which equips the mind with a training of the memory, much needed in later practice. It takes at least five years to become a Barrister, three years for a degree, one year for a Bar course and one year for pupillage in chambers. Once the law student has qualified, she or he will be 'called to the bar'. This is a legal term where persons must be qualified to argue in a court of law. In former times the bar was a wooden barrier that separated the often-crowded public area from the judges. Barristers would sit or stand behind the wooden bar facing the judge. The cab trade has many individuals who have come from differing trades and professions. Perhaps there are a few legal advocates driving cabs on the streets of London. Thirty years ago, I recall a cab driver who qualified as a barrister. In conversations with him he said *"If I can pass the Knowledge of London, I can pass the bar examinations"* a truly remarkable achievement. **TAXI**

Below: The ancient knight's sarcophaguses of the Knights Templar in the Temple Church



WWII Veteran Paints Famous Care Home Cat



“Many years ago I painted what I saw when we exited the glider so that future generations will understand the enormity of WWII and especially the significance of D Day.”

WWII Veteran Bill Gladden, who is 98-years-old, lives in Suffolk and recently joined the Taxi Charity on a visit to The Netherlands. On the trip he heard about Dave – the famous Edensor Care Home cat. Slightly intrigued, TAXI decided to investigate a little further...

TAXI Hi Bill, good to meet you. Can you tell me a little about your love of painting?

Bill: I have loved painting since I was a child, and it has developed into a lifelong passion. When I was young, we lived in Woolwich, and I used to spend all my spare time at the Woolwich Barracks with the horses. I paint all subjects, but I love painting animals – particularly horses and dogs.



I meet through the Taxi Charity. All I ask is that if they like the painting I have done for them, they donate to the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans.

TAXI Do you still paint a lot?

Bill: I do indeed, and I am never short of things to paint. It is such a lovely hobby and fills a lot of my time. I always use water colours; I might have liked to have tried oils but my late wife hated the smell of turps so I never changed the medium I used! I'm very lucky to get lots of commissions via people

TAXI So how did you hear about Dave, the Care Home Cat? What's special about Dave and why is he famous?

Bill: I first heard about 'Dave' over dinner in The Netherlands and I was intrigued by the way he came to live at the Care Home. The Care Home is run by the charity, *Diagrama* and is close to the sea in Clacton. Last year, the staff had asked their residents to reveal something they would love for a wish tree. One of the residents asked, "for a cat to care and love for" and was over the moon when a little kitten, who they named Dave, arrived.

We got talking about Dave as he has become very famous not only in Essex but across the country. He was featured in a local BBC News piece last summer and unbelievably the video became one of the top five watched BBC videos in 2021 and has been watched thousands of times.

very special celebration, with cake for the residents and a special cat cake for Dave, but he went missing the day before. The staff and residents were frantic with worry and made flyers and walked the streets trying to find him! Typical of a cat he finally turned up just as his party was coming to an end.

TAXI What will you be painting next?

Bill: That's the joy of what I do – I'm never sure what I will be asked to paint next. I understand that Dave has a lady kitty friend so I might get to paint her. As soon as people find out that I love painting they ask if I might paint their pet, and if I can make a little bit of money for The Taxi Charity by doing what I love, then all the better. I went with them to The Netherlands in March, and they are taking me and my niece again in May. It's all free and the volunteer cab drivers are an amazing bunch of people who do so much to make sure we are looked after.

TAXI Were you in The Netherlands during the war?

Bill: No. I flew into Normandy in a glider as part of the D Day operations on June 6th. On the 18th I was shot in the ankle and spent the next three years in hospital. It was a very long road to recovery, and I never returned to the Brigade and was finally pensioned out of the army.

TAXI What was the scene like when you landed in Normandy?

Bill: Many years ago I painted what I saw when we exited the glider so that future generations will understand the enormity of WWII and especially the significance of D Day. The gliders were huge – ours carried a tank!

TAXI What other Taxi Charity trips will you be joining?

Bill: In June, I will be travelling back to Normandy for the D Day commemorations. It is always a wonderful visit. It is very moving to attend the services of remembrance and lay a wreath to those we lost. I cannot thank the charity enough for what they do for all us veterans. London Cab Drivers truly are the finest!



When I learnt how Dave has totally changed the lives of the residents, many who live with dementia or complex medical needs, I decided that I would like to send the Home a portrait of him for his first birthday.

TAXI How do you work?

Bill: I work from photos and asked the Home to send me a picture of Dave.

TAXI How long did it take you to paint him?

Bill: I work very quickly and was able to send the portrait in time for his first birthday party on 7th March – which almost didn't happen.

TAXI What happened to the party?

Bill: The Care Home had planned a



‘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.**



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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

- **De-commissioned your tx4's and Euro 5's?** Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect, and drive away. Definitely still buying. John 07702 554934

- **We want your taxi! We come to you.** Any condition, quick decision. Instant cash paid 07763 699767

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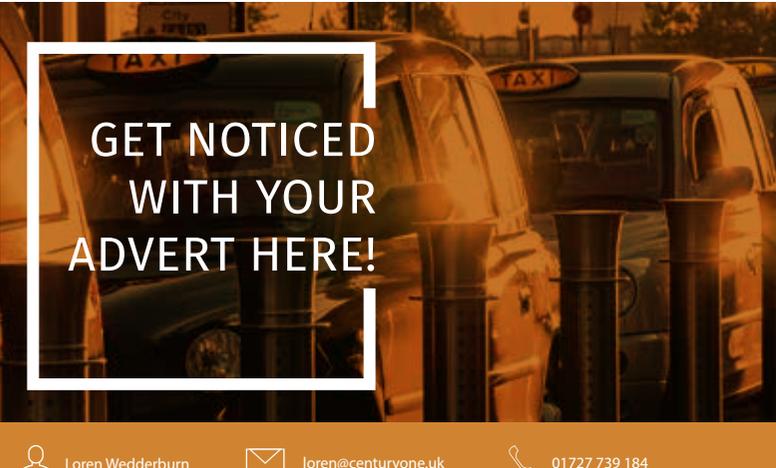
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The LTDA legal service is the **only** trade scheme which defends members for **all alleged offences** (traffic, hackney or criminal), anytime, anywhere in the UK.

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Not Just Any Rabbit



“His routine involved dawn starts, face washes with organic cleanser, teeth brushing and ear massages...”

A woman of words

I thought it would be a lovely Easterly thing to do, especially for the mini-mini-Megs, so I volunteered to look after a pet rabbit when its owners went away on holiday. The first warning that this was not just any rabbit was when my friends, Deborah and Paul, said that, in front of the bunny, I must call them ‘Mummykins’ and ‘Daddy-poo’. You are correct in assuming this pair have no children.

So arrest me

Now we move on to the rabbit’s name. It has three. Star Blossom Heartbeat. “Please don’t shorten it when you are talking to him” they instructed, “It will confuse him.” So much to say about this; Star Blossom Heartbeat is a him? Is it

even possible to confuse a rabbit? Talking to him? I can’t speak Bugs Bunny. The rabbit’s usual postcode is in Kent and because its Mummykins and Daddy-poo were off to Tenerife for ten days, it came to lodge here at Meg Towers. In olden times when the mini-Megs had a rabbit, all that was needed was a hutch, some straw and a few crunchy vegetables. Star B H (yes, I’ve shortened his name, so arrest me), had so much gear in way of blankets, toys, designer straw and food, that the cab was packed to the gills. The list of instructions about how to look after him had more words than a Sunday newspaper. His routine involved dawn starts, face washes with organic cleanser, teeth brushing and ear massages.

No staring

“Great” I said to Deborah, “The grandchildren will love helping

to look after him! It’s going to be so much fun!” Deborah grimaced, “Tell me a little about the grandchildren?” I answered truthfully, using the words ‘energetic, loud, not very coordinated’, but also telling her they are funny, gorgeous and very affectionate. She mulled on this for a while before asking, “Could I request a favour? The children... could they not stare at Star Blossom Heartbeat too much? He finds it very tiring you see...” Finally, after a long goodbye that included her singing a verse of Smile (the rabbit’s favourite song), a stroke under his chin and a long scratch of his groin, Deborah, fighting back tears, left for the airport.

Ten long days

Mr Meg arrived home and was excited to find Star BH in his luxury hutch in the conservatory.

He grabbed a carrot from the fridge and approached our house guest, looking forward to making a furry friend. “No!” I screamed throwing myself between Mr Meg and the bunny. “No?” Mr Meg was baffled. “Deborah says he can only eat Daylesford carrots, or else he will get diarrhoea!” I showed him a wooden crate with ‘Star Blossom Heartbeat’ stencilled on the side that was loaded with posh bunny bounty. Mr Meg looked at me askance. “How long is he here for?” “Ten long days” I replied. He knelt by the hutch and said, “Ok mate, let’s you and I make friends.” “Don’t stare at him. He’ll get overtired” I warned, adding “And use his full name – it’s Star Blossom Heartbeat.” Mr Meg picked up a newspaper and I wondered if he was planning to read to the rabbit – but no, he was just checking it wasn’t April 1st. ■ TAXI

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PUZZLER ANSWERS



Crossword

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

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SUDOKU

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

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: INFLICTED

Cent, cine, client, dent, dine, dint, elfin, feint, fend, fiend, find, fine, fined, finite, flint, incite, incited, indict, infect, infidel, inflect, inflict, inlet, lend, lent, lien, line, lined, lint, nice, tend, tine, INFLICTED.

Word targets:
Excellent: 29, Good: 24, Target: 18, Kids: 13

Futoshiki

4	5	1	<	2	3
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1	4	2	<	3	5
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2	1	3	5	4	
	^				
3	2	5	4	>	1

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