

**CAB COSTS SOAR GLOBALLY**

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31st January 2023 #533



**TFL LAUNCHES  
NEW TESTING SITES  
NEW VEHICLE INSPECTION SITES  
NOW OPEN FOR BOOKINGS**

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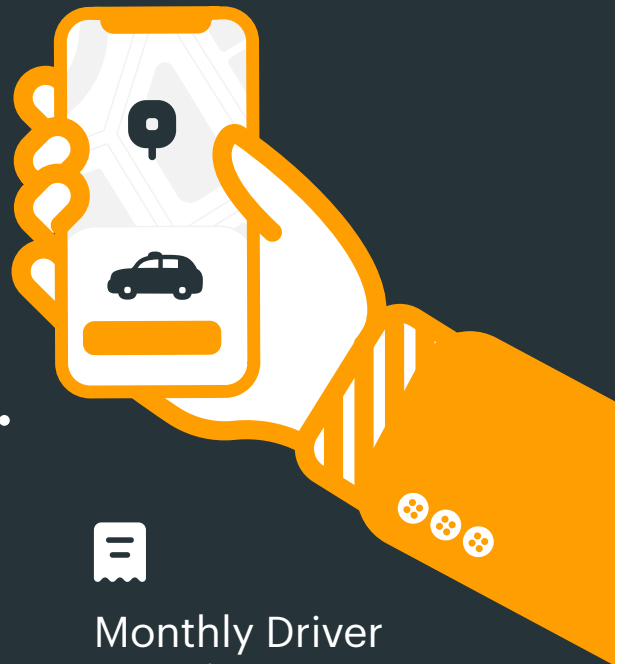
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## GEELY TO UP INVESTMENT IN LEVC

The London Electric Vehicle Company (LEVC) is to receive significant new investment from its Chinese owner, Geely. This comes after the company announced a new strategy in December 2022, setting out its ambition to grow beyond manufacturing the world's most advanced taxi, the TX. The new strategy highlighted LEVC's commitment "to deliver smart, green, safe and accessible mobility solutions to more people than ever before." In a subsequent interview with Reuters, LEVC's senior leaders described how building on the innovative TX Taxi and leaning on other brands within the Geely Group, the manufacturer would become "a high-volume, all-electric brand with a range of commercial and passenger vehicles." The level of this new investment is yet to be disclosed. Geely owns multiple brands including Volvo and Polestar, it also invested in British sports carmaker Lotus in 2021.



## NEW VEHICLE INSPECTION SITES OPEN FOR BOOKINGS

Two new TfL vehicle inspection sites at Rainham and Sidcup are now open for online bookings. With these new sites, there are now a total of five locations for drivers to choose from, spread out geographically across Greater London. The five sites will have the same total inspection capacity as the previous six. The new sites will both have a full range of facilities for drivers, including hot and cold drink vending machines, snack vending machines, toilets, parking facilities and electric charging points, with the exact details to be confirmed by TfL. The Sidcup and Rainham sites will not open for inspections until the end of February, but they can now be booked online.

The five sites are located as follows:

■ **Enfield**  
Address: Unit 2, Watermill Business Centre, Edison Road, Enfield, London, EN3 7XF  
What3Words: ///tribal.bleat.ruler

■ **Heston**  
Address: NSL Inspection Centre, Unit 20a, Airlinks, Spitfire Way, Heston, TW5 9NR  
What3Words: ///fault.bike.commented

■ **Staples Corner**  
Address: Unit 2 Aquarius Business Park, Priestley Way, Staples Corner, London, NW2 7AN  
What3Words: ///record.venue.from

■ **Rainham**  
Address: Unit 10 Segro Park, Rainham, RM13 8HY  
What3Words: ///diner.waving.bind

■ **Sidcup**  
Address: Unit 13 & 14, Klinger Industrial Park, Edginton Way, Sidcup, DA14 5AF  
What3Words: ///muddy.clip.forget

## TFL URGES COMMUTERS TO TRAVEL ON MONDAYS AND FRIDAYS

Commuters wanting a "less stressful" journey have been urged to travel into the office on Mondays and Fridays, by Transport for London (TfL). This comes as figures show passengers numbers on those days remain well below pre-pandemic levels. TfL figures



revealed that the Monday morning peak rush hour is still 15 per cent quieter on the Tube compared to that on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. This is due to many people still choosing to work from home on Mondays and Fridays, affectionately referred to as 'TWaTs', because they only work in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays.

## GOVERNMENT 'FALLING ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL' ON EV CHARGING

The latest government figures have raised concerns that the UK is falling woefully behind on the rollout of electric charging points. Just 800 new devices were introduced per month, according to the latest Department for Transport figures for the period October 2022 to January 2023. According to *Thisismoney.co.uk*, this installation rate will need to increase to 3,130-a-month (a 288 per cent increase), if the government is to meet its target of having 300,000 devices nationwide by 2030. Labour criticised the Government as having "fallen asleep at the wheel" on this issue. Commenting on this news, RAC head of roads policy, Nicholas Lyes said: "It should also be noted that rapid and ultra-rapid chargers currently account for just a fifth of all the network and are growing at a slower rate. If people are to make longer journeys quickly and easily, we need to eradicate the rapid charging 'deserts' that exist and make the fastest possible chargers available much more widely."





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# The 'Good' Old Days

One of the great mis-remembered myths of the cab trade is the affection for the old days at Penton Street.

## Steve's comment

**W**e all know how it goes, we all remember things how we want to. The winters were colder, the summers were warmer, everything was great, etc. But that's not always how it is (or was). A great example is with the latest changes to the taxi inspection sites under NSL.

### New sites

The two new taxi vehicle inspection sites opening at the end of February, at Sidcup and Rainham, are state-of-the-art with more facilities for drivers. There will now only be five sites overall instead of six, but the capacity will remain the same. Hopefully these new sites will be a bit more efficient, so we don't see backlogs building up again. Incidentally, as with so many things, we were able to assist lots of members who were caught up in that, ensuring that they got their appointments and their vehicles licensed.

Even during the worst of the pre-Christmas back log, it was infinitely better than the old system under the Public Carriage Office in Penton Street. One of the great mis-remembered myths of the cab trade is the affection for the old days at Penton Street. I recently had a conversation with one of my peers from the days on the Knowledge. *"You knew where you stood then, our standards were higher then,"* he said. I remember it very differently.

### Brown and white coats

I agree with the other driver that we at least knew where we stood – well sat would be the more appropriate word. You would be sat in your cab, queuing outside from 3am, to get it inspected by what were known as Carriage Officers (CO's). Sitting in that queue, you knew full well, before you even got into the yard, that if your face did not fit, or you had the misfortune to have a



'White Coat' CO walk out to see your cab, it had failed before he even looked at it. Don't get me wrong, the lower grade of CO's, 'Brown Coats' were just as pedantic, but the 'White Coats' used to like to assert their authority by failing more cabs. 'Lack of lustre' on hubcaps was a favourite failure. 'Handbrake compensator felt incorrectly fitted,' also guaranteed you another 24 or 48 hours out of work. My all-time favourite reason for a failure was 'overly loud squeak on rear tip seat!'

### Different day, different fail

Even after these so called 'failures' were rectified and you went back the next day, once again joining the queue at 3.00am, a different examiner would often fail the cab for something totally different, and equally innocuous, just because he could. The fact that 90% of these so-called failures,

would have passed an MOT and that the cabs were totally safe, was irrelevant. It was all about egos and ensuring their own continued existence by highlighting the large number of failures – perpetuating the myth of 'higher standards' that so many still believe. I am not saying we aren't still the very best cab service in the world, we are, but ensuring the tip seats weren't overly squeaky didn't make this so.

### Different standards

What they were not so keen to highlight back then, was how several large and well-known fleets, somehow managed to pass large numbers of their cabs without any of the problems that everyone else

had. It was even more strange because many of these cabs were the tattiest on the road. They were often in an obvious state of disrepair and were well-known to the trade and the poor drivers who rented them, as sh\*t carts. Far be it for me to cast aspersions, but I wonder if this success rate had anything to do with the close friendships that existed at the time between certain CO's and the very same fleet proprietors, those who were regularly wining and dining at certain legendary West End entertainment clubs!

Aah the good old days, thanks for the memories and all that, but the current vehicle inspection system is light years ahead of Penton Street! ■ LTDA





# Creating Congestion, Not Fixing It

**Surely, there can be no excuse for licensing thousands more minicabs, at a time when London has just retained its number one spot, as the 'World's Most Congested City'.**

## Top rank

**I**sn't it amazing how Transport for London (TfL) can't seem to get anything done at the moment – a mere response to an email takes weeks, even months, yet somehow, they managed to licence in excess of 2500 minicabs in a single week in December.

## Contradictory decisions

How can they justify licensing so many new minicabs on the one hand, whilst on the other implementing restrictions here, there and everywhere to restrict vehicle access and “avoid a car-led recovery.” This kind of contradictory decision making is at play across TfL. They are (apparently) on a mission to limit the number of cars on the streets of London, to address pollution and the resulting toxic air Londoners are forced to breathe. Meanwhile, they ignore the fact that the most toxic air that Londoners are forced to breathe is actually found in their very own underground system. Funny how that gets ignored. Perhaps we should call for cycle lanes to be introduced in the tunnels of the tube network, I bet we'd see some changes if that was the case?

It's the same with TfL dragging their feet on the Euro V to VI taxi conversion (which would reduce emissions), whilst demanding that we buy a ZEC vehicle instantly. Then, elsewhere in their network setting a target of 2030 for buses to be ZEC. You might think it odd that the TfL administered Tube and bus networks don't get so much as a mention by the Mayor and his cycling Tsar, when they talk about the urgent need to clean up our air.

Hundreds of thousands of Londoners are also about to be negatively impacted by the extension of the ULEZ, which will hit some of the poorest residents the hardest. City Hall claims it's a vital measure to clean up London's air and there can be no compromise. But hey, whilst we are doing that let's stick another



couple thousand sat nav jockeys on London's roads (as they did in December), – clogging up the ever-shrinking road network even more, increasing congestion and resulting pollution. It will also no doubt lead to more collisions and serious accidents, given their limited expertise and poor working knowledge of the Capital.

## 'Nothing they can do'

Now, TfL and City Hall will tell you 'There's nothing we can do, if they meet the requirements then we have to licence them.' That's true, they do, but whilst there may be a requirement to licence them, there is no requirement to do so at such speed and at such high volumes, particularly when everything else you do moves at a glacial pace.

It's also true that they have previously been lobbying government to give them the power to limit minicab numbers, (generally only after we and other groups have lobbied them, to lobby the government) but is it really something they've pushed hard on? Surely during all the wrangling over successive financial bailouts, they could have sorted out this relatively

simple issue. Plus, since the pandemic, their lobbying has all gone pretty quiet. The cynic in me is beginning to think they might be being a tad bit disingenuous and are simply passing the buck to the government on this one.

## Number one (again)

There can also be no excuse for licensing thousands more minicabs – adding these vehicles to London's already clogged roads – at a time when London has recently retained its number one spot, as the 'World's Most Congested City'. This is not something any of us wanted to see or should be feeling particularly happy about.

You would expect that the man in charge and his team of 'experts', who are largely responsible for this mess, would be very apologetic and telling us how they will fix this congestion. Or at least committing to making sure we don't end up in the number one spot, for a third year running, in 2023. Well, unfortunately that doesn't seem to be the case, their response was instead to blame everyone else and as usual to focus solely on pointing the finger at those using motor vehicles to get around. Will Norman

responded by telling his Twitter followers: “Two thirds of the car journeys made in London could be walked or cycled in 20 minutes.” According to him, if everyone did that, we'd be ok. This response ignores the realities of life in London and will do little to fix the very real problems we face.

## Straight from the Arthur Daley school of statistics

But hang on a minute, surely congestion should be going down? These same people have already told us to expect a tenfold increase in cycling, so isn't every cyclist currently on the road a former motorist? Wait, what, the claimed tenfold increase didn't happen? OK, but there was a massive 40% increase in cycling, I know this because Wee Willie told us so. Oh wait, according to TfL it was actually an 18% increase. Well, that's still impressive, isn't it? 'Err, well, it's not quite that straight forward.' What they can absolutely, 100 per cent state is that a road somewhere with a new cycle lane, definitely did have a 5% increase in cycling. 5% on what figure? 'Err sorry, got to go, the Mayor's motorcade is arriving.' **LTDA**

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# Sneaky Tactics



Little did our member realise, but the reason for the conversation was so the cyclist could film him up close and report him to the Police.



## Hotel forecourt charges

One of our members took a job to the notorious Millennium Gloucester Hotel, just before Christmas. When he pulled up to drop the passenger off, she asked if he would wait for her whilst she took her several bags of shopping to her room, so she could go back out shopping for more. He was happy to and waited as asked. She came down about 15 minutes later and off they went.

A couple of weeks later, he received a penalty notice from a private parking company installed by the hotel to manage the car parking within the forecourt. I suggested he return to the hotel, ask for the head concierge and point out to him that he was in fact under instruction from their client to wait for them. Unfortunately, the hotel did not step in and claimed it was nothing to do with them, leaving out the bit where it's the hotel landowners, who instruct the Private Parking Company in the first place.

I contacted the hotel again on the driver's behalf. I thought I would get the brush off but to be fair to them, they have now come back to me saying they will get the ticket cancelled. They advised that if this happens to drivers in future they should ask to speak to the hotel manager who should be able to resolve it.

When in the cab myself if I'm asked to drop off at that hotel, I will be dropping them off in the street and will not be entering the forecourt at all and I would advise you to do the same. I would also advise drivers to be careful when taking app jobs from some hotels here as you could find yourself sitting outside waiting for a long time and end up with a fine. ■ LTDA

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## On point

**Y**ou would have thought the news that London had been found to have the worst traffic of any City in the world would have sent shockwaves through City Hall, but in fact I suspect that Mayor Khan may have called up his fleet of Range Rovers and taken everyone for a coffee and an almond croissant to celebrate.

## No cars

We all see daily how bad the congestion is. Unfortunately, this plays into the Mayor's hands, because as I've said before, it is my belief that his ultimate goal is to ban cars from central London altogether. The downside of that would be that he would lose huge amounts of revenue from the Congestion Charge. Makes you wonder if that isn't one of the reasons for cracking on with the expansion of the ULEZ despite all the controversy around it?

## Beware the helmet camera

If you do find yourself sitting in this congestion, don't be tempted to pick up your mobile phone. I recently had a call from a member of ours who had received a FPN for 6 points and a £200 fine, after being filmed with a phone in his hand at the wheel. He didn't remember any such incident and had not been approached by a Police officer. I advised that it was probably a report from a cyclist or possibly a member of the public and suggested that he contacted the Police explaining that he didn't know of any incident and to ask them to email him the evidence against him. I told him to relay to the Police that he didn't want to plead not guilty, then attend court only for the Police to produce evidence which showed him making an error he was unaware of. The Police agreed and sent him a video.

The member emailed the video to me. What I watched showed just how sneaky these cyclists can be. Picture the scene. Our

member is sitting in Sloane Street traffic, northbound at the lights with Knightsbridge. A cyclist drives past and has a look through his driver's window. The cyclist saw that the cabbie had his phone in his hand. The cyclist carried on, but then reversed back and started a conversation with the cabbie about how a car had stopped in the cycle box. Obviously, the cabbie showed no interest and gave him a look of 'so what'. Little did he realise, the reason for the conversation was so the cyclist could film the member up close and report him to the Police.

Of course, the cabbie was unknowingly guilty and will have to face the consequences, but it goes to show you can never be too careful. I may sound like a broken record and friends of mine suggest I write about something else (they are happy to tell me how boring I am), but I know what damage these six points can do to a cabbie. So please be careful. In my experience, 90% of reports made to the Police are from cyclists.



# FREE NOW Proudly Support Cabbies Do Atlantic Row 2023 Challenge

Standing with black cab drivers to raise money for charity



## FreeNow

**2**023 is off to an incredibly strong start with three London cabbies doing what seems like an impossible challenge: Rowing across the Atlantic ocean, and all to raise money for charity.

### The Journey

It's estimated that it'll take the trio 60 gruelling days to complete the journey from Lanzarote to Antigua, as part of the annual C-MAP Atlantic Dash event. The three cab drivers – Darren Parr, 55, Bob Barber, 56, and Stuart Lockhart, 49 – set sail on January 3rd, and are now half-way through their 3,200-mile journey across one of the world's most unforgiving oceans.

### The reason behind the challenge

The idea to do the Atlantic Row was born after a fellow London

cabbie suffered a stroke in 2021. The determined team of three set themselves the challenge of raising both much-needed funds and awareness of their friend's condition among the London cab driver community.

The money they raise will be split between the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, The Stroke Association, and Huruma Orphanage in Tanzania.

### What FREE NOW is doing

We're proud to be the main sponsor for Cabbies Do Atlantic Row 2023. After all, taking part in such an incredible feat takes time and resources to get it off the ground and make sure it's a success.

We've made a donation to the cabbies to help them achieve their fundraising targets and we're doing what we can to help spread the word of their efforts and encourage more people to contribute.

Since Darren, Bob, and Stuart began their journey at the start of January, we've been fortunate enough to receive daily updates

about their progress. As is expected, the trip hasn't always been smooth and the team have battled against rough seas, daunting weather conditions, and sickness. But they've persevered, maintaining high spirits and showing truly admirable strength and willpower.

FREE NOW have always been determined to help cabbies achieve their goals and give back to communities, helping others like Darren, Bob, and Stuart with their fundraising efforts across the past few years. We're proud to support our cabbies, support their causes, and do what we can to help.

### More than crossing the Atlantic

This isn't the first time these fearless cabbies have pushed themselves to their limits in the name of charity.

In 2019, they climbed Kilimanjaro and raised £18,000 for The Taxi Charity as part of 'Cabbies Do Kilimanjaro'. Three years later, in February 2022 they climbed both Kilimanjaro and Meru, raising £8,000 for the London Taxi Drivers' Charity for Children and a Tanzanian orphanage.

These are only a few of numerous examples that shine

a light on the extraordinary things Black Cab drivers do for their communities, the people in them, and the causes they care about.

### How you can contribute

If you'd like to donate to Cabbies Do Atlantic Row 2023 and support the team on their transatlantic challenge, go to [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com) and search for 'Cabbies Do Atlantic Row'. You can also visit their website [www.cabbiesdoatlanticrow.com](http://www.cabbiesdoatlanticrow.com) for more information and updates.

They're almost half way to their goal of raising £7,000, and would appreciate any and all donations to help them hit their target. We hope you can show your support for these incredible cabbies.





# Cabbie Admin and Other Concerns

More and more, being a cab driver is starting to require pretty good office skills. The amount of administration has ballooned...



fashioned and creates delays and confusion.

As well as all this, the other day I got a nasty surprise – the insurance on my private car had ‘auto renewed.’ A direct debit of £31.00 gone from my account, even though I scrapped the car last October! I did a search, and lo and behold I’d missed an email on 22<sup>nd</sup> December telling me all about it. I’m of the age that I still think anything really important comes in the post, but maybe that’s no longer true.

## Get yourself some help

My advice is, if you’re one of those people who doesn’t like or can’t do email/the internet, make sure you know someone who can and will help you because if you don’t, sooner or later it will end up costing you money.

LTDA members can of course get help with a range of issues like this at Taxi House if required.

Good luck out there.

## M4 musings

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I recently pulled over on Kensington High Street trying to shoehorn in a last job before heading home. It was a family, and the man came to the window asking ‘could they go to Lyric Square and then on to another address nearby?’ ‘Perfect,’ I thought.

He then said: “will you take a small dog?”

Momentarily confused (as they didn’t have a dog with them) I replied: “I will sir, but I usually prefer cash or card...”

As everyone recovered from their enormous amusement at my witticism, I began thinking about whether I actually prefer cash or card payment.

## Cash or card?

This used to be a no-brainer, but over the last couple of years I’ve realised I actually mostly prefer card payments. Why? Simple answer, direct debits.

This is a time of increased costs for everyone. One of the best things about cab driving has always been that you can go out whenever you want and earn money (in theory...) straight away. Ah, I hear you say, but with cards it’s not straight away, it’s next week, or in three days, and you don’t get all your money; all true. (mine goes in the following day). But for this cab driver, I’d rather

the money go direct into the bank, than me having to traipse around putting the cash in there. This job and this economy are not what they were 10 or 20 years ago, when cash was still king.

I take a lot of cabs and I am fully aware that many drivers do prefer cash, so I try to at least give a cash tip in a cab or restaurant. I also don’t hold with the so-called cashless society, that sounds like too much power to the processing companies and the banks

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not anti-cash by any stretch of the imagination, I think it will always have its place. It’s just at the moment, after Christmas, with things a little bit kipperry, the first place I need my money is in the bank, not the mattress...

## Office skills

More and more, being a cab driver is starting to require pretty good office skills. The amount of administration has ballooned, as more organisations are charging for things and increasingly wanting us to do everything online. Interestingly, TfL has been saying for years that licence renewal is easier online, but that’s not my experience – the website is glitchy and difficult to navigate. The Taxi and Private Hire (TPH) department now clearly prefers to communicate via email, insisting that licensees keep a valid email address.

Perhaps more challenging are the councils who try to use email to reply to challenges and then

hit drivers with increased charges if they haven’t responded within the set time. TfL also has a weird procedure for viewing video evidence that involves them sending you a DVD, which is old

## Airport developments

Worrying times once again at Heathrow. It appears Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) would like to change the status of the Taxi Feeder Park (TFP) from its current designation, whereby it is accounted for under a cost-recovery method, to a more commercial arrangement.

It’s hard to see how this would benefit either customers or taxi drivers, as it would surely increase costs. If this is really what HAL wants then they should make a coherent case to the trade as to how it would improve our business or our offer to customers, otherwise it’s just profiteering.

Perhaps all this is partly because business was good in 2022 – by all accounts it was a record year for throughput in the TFP. However, no-one knows what 2023 will bring; although the park was moving reasonably well in the first few weeks of this year, for the first time since the pandemic, we are almost filling the North Park, and wardens have been required to make sure every driver that arrives can go to work.

As I’ve said before, Heathrow Airport is a great source of



work for the London Taxi Trade; it is a prestigious thing to be the service that greets visitors to London. But HAL is not TfL – its purpose is to operate the airport successfully and (ideally) to profit its owners, not the London cab trade. This means they will come after us, if they can, for a bigger slice of what we make and we have to do our best to stay ahead of the game. That’s business. ■ LTDA



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# The Vinyl Countdown

**They say what goes around comes around; in an era where everything new or modern is considered better than its predecessor, there are some things which buck the trend.**



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## A man in black

**W**ith music streams strangling the life out of artists, allowing 'sharing' platforms to exploit musicians like financial leeches sucking the blood out of the industry, you would be forgiven for thinking that the previous antiquated formats of audio entertainment would be consigned to *Room 101*. Thankfully, you would be wrong (hurrah!).

### Kicking against it

As the great Johnny Cash once growled, *"It's hard for thee to kick against the pricks"*, yet the medium of vinyl has managed to do it. For the first time in 35 years, vinyl has managed to financially outsell compact discs, by a considerable margin of £116.8m to £98.3m (blast of trumpets, please).

But what does this have to do with the taxi industry, you ask?

### Calm before the storm

As a writer, I generally don't mention Uber unless there is a

specific reason, such as revelling in a negative news report. I'm a firm believer that as a company they elicit enough attention and do not need anyone adding to that publicity. However, this is one of those articles that requires the mention of their name.

Cast your mind back to 2012. A glorious summer, the London Olympics and the launch of Uber. At the time of their encroachment onto London, the tech behemoth were breaking taxi and private hire legislation at such a rate that the legal profession was struggling to keep up. They really were moving fast and smashing things, not asking for permission but for forgiveness. Meanwhile, David Cameron's government was inextricably attached to Uber, like a scene out of the film *The Human Centipede*. It was frustrating and nauseating in equal proportion. Many commentators claimed that it would be the end of the licensed London taxi industry. But they were wrong!

### The vinyl countdown (I think not)

London's taxi industry (take note, fellow scribblers, this means the TAXI industry, NOT MINICABS) was deemed surplus

to requirement: an anachronism, a dinosaur consigned to extinction. Commentators across various media outlets, as well as those who enjoy the cesspit that is Twitter, were telling anybody who would listen that we were finished (usually followed by a laughing emoji). There was a new kid in town, propped up by venture capitalists and external funding. They had a charismatic CEO, an app and a desperate workforce. These 'talking heads' were telling anybody who would listen that the Knowledge was also finished because Sat Nav devices would replace driver intelligence. Those same commentators were pontificating on the virtues of a substandard service based on the fact that they were ludicrously cheap. They also failed to mention how many of Uber's drivers were substandard and couldn't make ends meet because the private hire economy had been disrupted, in favour of lining the wallets of the tech company themselves. The prophets of doom were getting something for nothing, and weren't remotely interested in the wider ramifications that cheap labour brings.

Meanwhile, the taxi industry struggled on, being knocked from pillar to post, winning initial legal battles against Uber and other tech service providers, only to have those victories overturned on appeal (but that's another article for another day). The industry also fought against some inexplicable Mayoral decisions, both past and present. Some of the recommendations and edicts should, in theory, have finished the taxi industry. And yet the industry has survived. If nothing else, we have proved that the industry's resilience is second to none. It has evolved and is now seemingly going through a renaissance that has come at a terrible price.

### The struggle is real

With thousands of cabs forced off of the road for no other reason than to satiate a Mayoral vanity project, many drivers have been forced out of the industry entirely. With the inability to purchase a new taxi and problems sourcing second-hand ones, many older drivers have been forced into trying to find other employment or taking up retirement. Thankfully, HJS has developed a retrofit which, subject to passing TfL's rigorous (and in some cases unnecessarily harsh) testing criteria, will convert the remaining Euro 5 diesel taxi fleet into Euro 6 vehicles. It'll allow those cars a full 15-year lifespan. This, in turn, will help the industry from haemorrhaging drivers.

There is an uncomfortable benefit to the reduction in driver numbers. Work levels have risen due in part to the dearth of taxis on the road. This is something that nobody with a conscience would want to benefit from, yet this disturbing fact cannot be ignored.

On one hand, the taxi industry is coming back from the brink of disaster due to customers trying on the emperor's new clothes, only to find they leave them stark naked and vulnerable. And on the other, the enforced reduction has seen a boom.

Ultimately, just like vinyl, you cannot keep a great product down and there is no better transportation industry in London than the taxi industry. Who says tradition and quality is dead? **■ TAXI**



ComCab

London

# COMCAB LONDON FAMILY

**ComCab London talks about ending the year on a high with an incredible £10,000 prize giveaway. Read below to find out more:**

## Who are ComCab London Limited?

ComCab London is the last original radio taxi company still in operation, established in 1974 and has one of the largest fleets of black taxis in London.

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ComCab London is incredibly proud of its association with London Taxicard, a relationship which has spanned 25 years.



**ComCab London driver Daniel**

## ComCab London get into the festive spirit

ComCab London ended 2022 on a high and were overjoyed to, once again, hold a festive draw where this year the number of winners were increased as well as the prize fund which saw them give away a total prize fund of £10,000.



**ComCab London driver Jason**

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drivers have put in, so for the second year running held a festive draw, offering 7 lucky winners the chance to win prizes up to £3,000!



**ComCab London driver Russell**

Russell, one of the lucky winners said *"Brilliant, just brilliant. I can't believe it, Thank you ComCab"*



**ComCab London driver David**

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Tony Marson, Managing Director at ComCab London said "Drivers have continued to work exceptionally hard during tough times and not only have we invested in technology in 2022 and secured an extension of the Taxicard contract we wanted to do more to show our appreciation.

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drivers first and show our thanks throughout the year. Once again, a huge thank you to all our drivers. Be lucky!"

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**Missed our last Episode? ComCab London Family - Episode Eight**





# The Cost Of Cabs

Costs go galloping up, while fares can't keep pace, and regulators are slow to react.

## International correspondent

**T**axi drivers all over Europe face sharply rising prices for vehicles, maintenance, fuel and electricity. Deliveries of new vehicles – cabs and minivans/ minibuses, especially electric ones, are lagging. Fares haven't kept pace with rising costs and galloping inflation. In many cities upping fares is a real wrangle and the (political) process often takes ages. But there are exceptions.

Early in December, there was good news, after 10 years (!), New York City raised the average taxi fare by 23%. Uber and Lyft fares would also have gone up on 19<sup>th</sup> December, had the former not resorted to its favourite pastime of going to court and suing the regulator.

### France: Uber appeals driver payout

But the platform doesn't always get its way: after 139 drivers

took Uber to court in France, claiming they were employees and not independent operators, Uber was told to pay these workers an eye-watering 17 million euros (£14.9 million) in damages and lost wages. The judge referred to an earlier decision of the French Court of Appeal in 2020, classifying the 30,000 Uber workers there as employees. But yes, you've guessed it, Uber will appeal, continuing its unwavering and costly support for the legal profession in many countries around the world.

A few days before the outcome of this case, a number of French unions had agreed a net minimum wage for all app drivers of €7.65 (£6.72) or €10.20 gross (£8.96) per ride – a hike of 27%, starting at the beginning of February.

### Congestion

Back to the Big Apple, with the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), New York City's taxi and PHV licensing authority have raised taxi fares for the first time in 10 years.

The cost of an average taxi ride increased from \$15.97 (£13.36) to \$19.62 (£16.41).

The TLC hopes this will help put more money in the pockets of taxi drivers, after the city solved most of the medallion owners' debt crisis. Although the drivers were happy with the sizeable hike, the issue of the proposed new city congestion charge for part of Manhattan (around \$23.00 (£19.24) a day) still hangs over the market and poses a big financial threat to the trade, with no decision on the toll or an exemption for the trade having been taken.

Mobility experts argue that with 46,800 PHVs on Manhattan's street (compared to on average 5,700 yellow cabs, and a licensed total of 13,587), Uber et al should be paying the toll, as they are actually causing the congestion in the centre of New York City. A similar reasoning would be applicable in London, don't you think?

When Uber took the TLC to court, after two one-day strikes by app workers, it argued that the basis TLC had used for

■ TLC says the last hike should increase the drivers' gross income by 33%.

■ The base rate went up by 50 cents from \$2.50 (£2.08) to \$3.00 (£2.50).

■ Peak surcharges rose from \$1.00 (£0.83) to \$2.50 (£2.08).

■ Nightly surcharges went up from \$0.50 (£0.42) to \$1.00 (£0.83), and the flat rate for trips between Kennedy Airport and New York City went from \$52.00 (£43.32) to \$70.00 (£58.32): an increase of 35%.

■ TLC also increased Uber and Lyft fares by 7% a minute and 24% per mile.

the increase was unsound. Uber won, and in March the TLC will, as planned, be gathering the economic data necessary for an app fare hike.







Yango, Russia's Yandex' taxi service, may continue operating from its Amsterdam hub.

## Meanwhile at FSB HQ

Remember when I told you that (taxi) apps in Russia have to provide booking details to the FSB, formerly the KGB? The largest local app, Yandex, the 'Google of Russia', will now be setting up shop in Europe, away from the Kremlin. It wants to continue from the Netherlands, where it is registered, without Russian activities. It had, under the Yango taxi brand, already branched out to Finland, Estonia

and Latvia (and to a series of African countries), but Estonia and Latvia have banned Yango since the Russian invasion in Ukraine. That war has seen Yandex get into trouble abroad. In New York, trading in Yandex stock was halted, with new international activities likely to be run via the company's Dutch holding company at Amsterdam Airport.

So, no need to install the FSB-app yet. ■ TAXI



NYC cab, in Madison Square Garden.







# The Real Dick Turpin

Over the centuries, few criminals have been romanticised as much as Dick Turpin; the supposedly dashing, daring highwayman.

## Rob's history tips

**T**he story goes that Turpin robbed with honour, and is said to have dashed 200 miles from London to York on his trusty steed, Black Bess. Unfortunately, this legend couldn't be further from the truth. In reality, Turpin was an extremely dangerous individual who spent much of his immoral career with a sadistic gang.

Richard Turpin was born in the Essex village of Hempstead, in 1705, and, following an apprenticeship, established a butcher's shop in Buckhurst Hill at the age of 20. This put him in contact with the Essex Gang; a group of thieves who poached deer in Waltham Forest, and needed someone to help process their quarry.

Turpin later went on to run a pub (believed to be the Rose & Crown at Clay Hill, Enfield), but by 1734 he'd become a fully fledged member of the Essex Gang, leading him to become involved in a brutal spree of house robberies at locations including Woodford, Chingford, Barking and Charlton.

At one such burglary in Croydon, in January of 1735, two servants were slashed across the face 'in a barbarous manner', whilst the following month, at a farmhouse in Loughton, the gang threatened to throw an elderly woman on the fire if she didn't reveal the whereabouts of her money.

By this point, the individual gang members were living in and around London; Turpin opted for digs in Whitechapel and then Millbank, and in February of 1735 the ne'er-do-wells met up at the Black Horse Inn on Broadway, where they made plans to rob a farm near Elstree.

This farm belonged to a wealthy gentleman in his 70s named Joseph Lawrence, and as the gang rode north towards their target, they stopped at numerous pubs along the way meaning they were savagely drunk by the time they arrived.

After seizing a shepherd boy who was working outside, Turpin and his mob burst into

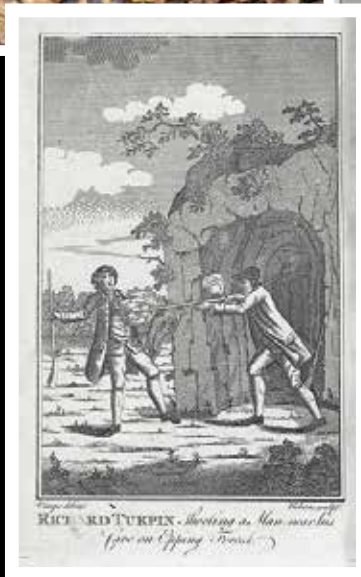
the farmhouse brandishing pistols. They then proceeded to beat Lawrence about the head, before pouring boiling water over him and then, with his breeches pulled down, forced him to sit upon glowing fire coals.

For this horrific deed, the gang managed to net just £30 (approximately £5000 in today's money). A few days later, they targeted a farm in Marylebone, leading the Duke of Newcastle to offer a £50 reward for any information on the gang.

This quickly resulted in the arrest of John Wheeler (who was believed to have been just 15), who immediately ratted on his colleagues, providing details which resulted in the first wanted description of Turpin being published. He was said to be 'a tall, fresh-coloured man, very much marked with the small pox... about 26 years of age... five feet, nine inches high... wears a blue-grey coat and a natural wig.'

With these details circulating, the rest of the gang decided to split, although this didn't stop Turpin, along with a few others, from terrorising homes in Chingford and Woodford.

Before long, a number of the Essex Gang were rounded up, resulting in three of them being



hung at Tyburn, after which their bodies were left to rot in gibbets on Edgware Road. One of the gang meanwhile, a woman named Mary Brazier, was transported to the American Colonies.

Turpin evaded capture by hiding in Epping Forest, and it was from here that he turned to highway robbery, riding out to places as far as Barnes, Putney, Kingston and Hounslow to target coaches.

By 1737, Turpin was in league with two other highwaymen, Matthew King and Stephen Potter, and following the theft of a horse near Waltham Forest, the trio were tracked down to The



Red Lion pub in Whitechapel.

Here, a shootout took place in which Matthew King was wounded, although Turpin managed to escape, eventually making his way to East Yorkshire, under the alias John Palmer, and posed as a horse trader.

Turpin couldn't stop his violent ways though, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1738, he shot a man's prized fighting cock in the street, leading to an argument in which he threatened to kill a man.

This incident led to Turpin's arrest and imprisonment at York Castle, from where he wrote a letter to his brother-in-law. This correspondence was intercepted, thus revealing his true identity and, on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1739, Turpin was slowly choked to death on the gallows at Knavesmire in York. ■ TAXI

If you want to see more, you can visit my YouTube channel, [robslondon](https://www.youtube.com/robslondon).



## See your advertisement here

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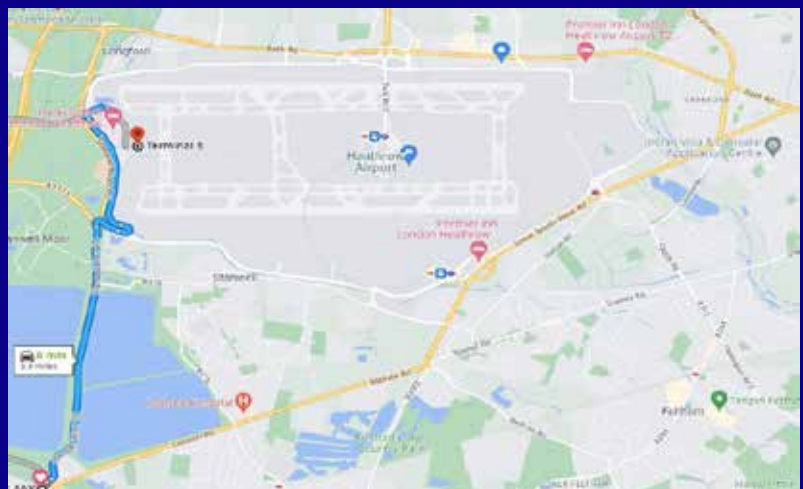
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# Entertainment Corner

Amon is back to share his thoughts on this month's best movie and TV recommendations, so you can impress your customers.

## Reel Talk



Paramount Pictures

### Babylon (18) 🍿

Damien Chazelle grabbed everyone's attention right out of the gate with *Whiplash*, a film that has, undeniably, one of the greatest endings in recent movie history. The final few minutes of Chazelle's latest, *Babylon* – a film which sees him track the rise and fall of multiple characters in the debaucherous 1920s, as Hollywood transitions from silent to sound movies – is set to be a little more polarising. But for the most part, the near three hours that come before it, are a wild riot that features some spectacular filmmaking.

In part, that's down to the performances. Though some intriguing supporting characters like Jovan Adepo's trumpeter Sidney Palmer don't get the introspection they deserve, Brad Pitt, Margot Robbie, and Diego Calva all deliver excellent, movie star turns that add subtleties to their characters' highs and lows. And then there's the score from regular Chazelle collaborator Justin Hurwitz, an infectious, jazzy delight that will have you humming catchy tracks like Voodoo Mama long after the credits roll. All in all, it's a love/hate letter to Hollywood that is, in turn, unhinged, thoughtful, and funny as hell.



**Babylon is in cinemas now.**



Universal Pictures

### The Fabelmans (12A) 🍿

If anybody has earned the right to rest on their laurels, it's Steven Spielberg. With *The Fabelmans* – a chronicle of his own early years as he begins an obsession with filmmaking while dealing with a shattering family secret – he's done the opposite. And we're all the better for watching this rich, honest coming-of-age story, that doubles as an origin tale for one of the greatest filmmakers of all time.

As Sammy Fabelman, the avatar for a young Spielberg, Gabriel LaBelle does an excellent job of portraying the filmmaker's fascination with a movie camera as he learns more and more about his craft. And the divorce of his parents – played with empathy by Michelle Williams and Paul Dano – is never less than human and tender. There's not much more to the story than either of those two elements, and there doesn't need to be. Spielberg's observations about the impact his upbringing and his love of filmmaking had on himself, as well as the people around him, are enough to keep us riveted for a 150-minute movie that flies by. Oh, and the score by John Williams is pretty great too!



**The Fabelmans is in cinemas now.**



HBO

### The Last of Us (Season 1) (18) 🍿

2013's *The Last of Us* is, simply put, one of the greatest video games of all time. Smartly, the TV adaptation brought on the game's original creator, Neil Druckmann, as co-showrunner (along with *Chernobyl*'s Craig Mazin). The result is a show that remains faithful to the engrossing and heartfelt story that made the game such a hit. It builds on its themes by taking advantage of the TV medium, and telling the narrative through different characters' perspectives (episodes 3 and 5 are easily the season's finest hours).

That main narrative, for those not already in the know, initially opens in 2003, as an outbreak of infectious fungus that turns humans into monsters upends the entire world. 20 years later, our dishevelled protagonist Joel (Pedro Pascal) must travel across the US with teenage orphan Ellie (*Game of Thrones*' Bella Ramsey), who may hold the key to humanity's survival. Just as in the game, the success of the show is dependent on this central relationship. Thankfully, Pascal and Ramsey make it easy to fall in love with their characters as their initial animosity thaws into a powerful father-daughter bond. When it's all said and done, if you're a fan of the games, you'll love this show. And if you weren't a fan before, you're about to become one.



**The Last of Us is now streaming weekly episodes on Sky Atlantic, Sky Catch Up and is available on NOW subscriptions.**



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# The Woes of Breaking Down

One of the most irritating and annoying things about driving a taxi is the risk of mechanical failure at any given moment.

## Night work update

**B**reaking down is something that, at one time, affects us all, often on multiple occasions throughout our career as taxi drivers. Usually, fleet owners have some form of breakdown cover, the cost of which is factored into the weekly rent of the vehicle. Many fleet owners also carry spare cabs, in case of catastrophic failure. Therefore, there is some form of security there.

## The cab we drive

For the musher (owner/driver), things can be slightly trickier as access to a spare cab is usually not possible. You may get lucky if you take your vehicle to be repaired by a fleet owner who will rent you a taxi while yours is being repaired. However, generally you are out of the game until you have had your vehicle fixed. For TX4 and Vito drivers, this can be a little more straightforward and quicker than it is for TXe drivers. The reason for this is because of the nature and mechanics of the vehicle. Since the TX4 and Vito taxis are diesel and have been around for many years, parts and spares are freely available. With diesel engines being fairly simple to work on, the time factor is usually not a major issue. TXes, on the other hand, are a different ball game. Despite having a petrol range extender which is relatively simple to work on, the computer technology attached to the electric side of the vehicle is a mystery. Add into the mix that the TXe is a relatively new player in the market, and therefore bereft of spare parts from 'broken' cabs, there could be a problem for the owner.

## Nighttime troubles

Breaking down during the daytime can be a bad enough experience for anybody, with

waiting times for a repair or recovery seeming to take an eternity. However, at least during the day facilities are usually available to grab a coffee or a bite to eat while waiting for a crew to arrive. Encountering mechanical failure at night is an entirely different proposition, with many of the usual facilities closed, including toilets, you really are on your own. It's during

"Encountering mechanical failure at night is an entirely different proposition, with many of the usual facilities closed, including toilets, you really are on your own."

the wee small hours that recovery providers really do need to up their game. Waiting three or four hours late at night is no fun, and can be incredibly dangerous in some cases.

Gone are the days where drivers could simply change a fan belt, tighten an alternator, bash on a starter motor to get it to engage, or even change a light bulb. Everything is designed to stop you from tampering with the vehicle, there is even a cowl placed over the battery on a TXe to stop you using a 10mm spanner to get yourself out of trouble. Sadly, you really are at the mercy of the fourth emergency service.

## Think ahead

In this golden age of modern technology, what should we be carrying to help ourselves in an emergency?

The humble torch is probably

your best friend, preferably one with an orange beacon. If your electrics fail then quite frankly you are stuffed, so need to be well illuminated. Next up is the requirement for a half-decent breaker bar, so that you can change your tyres. Since the invention of the motor vehicle, every single manufacturer has failed to provide a remotely decent tool to loosen your wheel nuts (they are absolutely useless). The only time a manufacturer-supplied wrench has been of any use is when the driver is carrying a length of scaffold pole for leverage. On the TXe, a good breaker bar is very important because the wheel nuts have a relatively short head. It's therefore easy to slip off the nut and burr the head. Add into the mix a can of tyreweld and an electric tyre inflator (or manual pump for those of us that enjoy the exercise) and you can't go wrong.

Again, visibility is key to safety here, therefore it's wise to carry a warning triangle and a hi-viz safety vest. A small selection of tools is also useful, such as a multi head screwdriver, adjustable spanner, scissors and, of course, duct tape and WD40. Anything else would be superfluous.

For many of you in the taxi industry, this is just teaching you how to suck eggs, but for newbies this may be an education. You can only learn by experience and sometimes it's better to learn through another driver's experience.

Note: All of the equipment mentioned above is available from Halfords or Argos. ■ TAXI

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# Bargain Family EV

One of the best cars I drove, and one that made me do a double take on the price tag was the latest MG ZS EV, an affordable mid-size SUV.



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## Car you drive

I had such a good reaction to the last car review I did, with many cabbies asking for a recommendation on the best electric family car to buy. As with everything, and especially cars, a lot of it comes down to how much you want to spend, personal requirements and taste.

Having said that, I was recently invited to a demonstration day for company car drivers that featured almost exclusively electric cars (they are a great tax break) and I drove everything from the latest Tesla, (nice car but the interior trim is a bit cheap and nasty), to the tiniest Fiat 500 (nice car, but a lot of money for what it is).

### Well-priced winner

One of the best cars I drove, and one that made me do a double take on the price tag, was the latest MG ZS EV. It's a mid-size SUV, about the size of a BMW X3 and comes in two battery sizes, a 50kW that does around 200 miles on a charge and starts at £30,500, and a 71kW version that does a very impressive 280 miles on a charge, that's impressive for any EV, let alone one that starts at just under £33,000, and all with a seven year warranty!

There are two trim levels SE

and Trophy. The range topping Trophy comes with a 360 degree camera, leather heated seats, wireless phone charging, Apple and Android play six speaker sound system and loads of safety tech, such as blind spot detection and rear cross traffic alerts. This costs £33,000 with the small battery and £35,500 with the longer range battery. With the extra cold weather we have been having lately, another nice touch on the Trophy models is a mobile phone app that allows you to turn on the heating remotely and set the charging times to benefit from cheaper electric tariffs.

### Great to drive

It all looks great on paper, and to be honest it looks good in the metal as well, but what does it drive like? Honest answer is, it's pretty great. It's not an Audi or a BMW, but it's not far off. I actually preferred the regenerative braking set up on the MG to any of its German rivals. My only criticism of the car is that at motorway and above speeds, the suspension is a bit firm, but around town and at slower speeds it's fine.

To sum up, it's a good sized SUV, with some great bells and whistles if you opt for the Trophy trim, loads of space and practical features for a family, all with a seven year/80,000 mile warranty, for less money than many 'mainstream' EV super minis. It's a bargain! ■ TAXI





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## The Aldgate Pump

The Aldgate Pump is a historic, Grade II listed water pump situated at the junction where Aldgate meets Fenchurch Street and Leadenhall Street. It is considered to be the symbolic start point of the East End of London.

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It has a rather unique design, displaying a metal wolf head on the pump's spout which is supposed to commemorate the last wolf shot in the City of London. It also had an ornate lantern attached to its body. The pump can no longer be used to draw water, but the drainage grating is still in place at the bottom of its structure. The well from where the pump drew water dates back to the reign of King John, which was around 1200 AD.

The pump received its supply from one of London's many underground streams, with the water being praised for its bright, sparkling and agreeable taste. However, it was discovered that this stream acquired its flavour from the decaying corpses buried in the adjoining graveyards, and the leaching of calcium from the bones of the dead. Tragically, several hundred people died during what became known as the Aldgate Pump Epidemic.

With Fenchurch Street railway station being built in 1841, upon the site of Aldgate Pump Court, the pump was moved a short distance to the west and then relocated again. It came to rest at its current location in 1876, as a result of road widening. It is now used to mark the start of the A11 road towards Norwich.

## The Hansom Cab

Most cabbies know that the Hansom Cab is the very distant relative of the taxis that are driven through London's pot-hole strewn streets of today. However, did you know that the inventor of the Hansom Cab never received a penny for it?

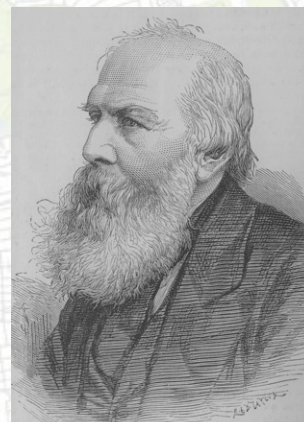
Joseph Hansom was born in York, in 1803. As a young man, he followed in his father's footsteps and became an apprentice joiner. However, it soon became apparent that he showed great talent in the field of design and construction.

Upon leaving his father's joinery business, he became an apprentice to an architect. Excelling in his chosen profession, he designed around two hundred buildings, one of which was Plymouth Cathedral.

In 1828, he set up a partnership with a man named Edward Welch. This sadly went very wrong very quickly. After winning a commission to build Birmingham Town Hall, Hansom and Welch's firm ended up bankrupt due to massively overspending on the project. However, the positive that came from Hansom's endeavours in Birmingham was that he became friends with Dempster Hemmings.

Hansom eventually went on to manage Hemmings's estate at Caldecote Hall. Upon seeing Hansom's design for a cab, Hemmings urged him to register the design. This was completed in 1834, and the idea reached far-flung cities such as Paris and Berlin, as well as being commonly seen in New York.

Unfortunately, Hansom was never destined to make his fortune from the design, because although he sold the patent to a company for the sum of £10,000, the company had financial difficulties, meaning he never got paid.



# SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW LONDON?

## Hornchurch Airfield and the first battle of Britain

Sitting in the borough of Havering, you could be forgiven for thinking that Hornchurch is just another innocuous suburban town – but you would be wrong. Hornchurch was a vital part in the RAF's Arsenal in relation to defending the capital.

In 1915, the London Air Defence Area (LADA) was established. This organisation was the one of the air defence associations who were a precursor to the Royal Air Force. The concept was that airfields were to be built around London to defend the capital from German airships. Sutton's Farm, along with its neighbour, Hainault Farm (renamed Fairlop Airfield), were identified as suitable locations and subsequently re-positioned and renamed Landing Grounds Nos. II and III respectively, joining other existing airfields in the Essex area. Suttons Farm airfield became operational on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1915, initially with two BE2c aircraft.

The first recorded interception of an enemy airship over Britain was made by Lt. John Slessor on the very day he arrived there, on 13<sup>th</sup> October that year. Yet the attack had to be aborted after the airship disappeared into thick cloud. It wasn't until 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1916, that Britain's first aerial victory on home soil happened, after Sutton's Farm pilot,

Lt. William Leefe Robinson shot down a Schütte-Lanz SL11. He was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

Soon after the war ended, Suttons Farm was declared surplus to requirements and the airfield was decommissioned. The land was returned, most of the buildings demolished and farming resumed once more. Later on, the area was re-purchased, together with some further land to the south of the original airfield, after it was believed that it was an ideal spot to defend London from any subsequent threat which may arise.

The airfield eventually closed in 1962 and has since been the subject of much excavation work. A number of pillboxes, command bunkers and gun positions still survive within the boundaries of the former airfield, and can be seen on the Eastern edge of the country park.





# ‘The Professionals’

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

**W**hat 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.**





# Three Men in a Boat

**TAXI** spoke to two of the cabbies in Lanzarote before their mammoth fundraising challenge began.

**O**n 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2023, three London cab drivers – Daren, Stuart and Bob – set off to row the Atlantic to raise funds for The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, the Stroke Association and a Tanzanian Orphanage.

**TAXI** Let's start with the obvious, apart from fundraising for these great causes, why on earth would you want to row across an ocean?

**Daren:** I obviously don't look like an ocean rower, I probably look more like a beer drinker. I try to keep myself fit and go to the gym, but I do like a beer at the weekend. As well as the sense of adventure and the bulldog spirit within me, when people who hear that I am going to row the Atlantic and look at me in disbelief, it makes me more determined than ever to prove them wrong.

**Stuart:** To be honest, I don't know why I'm here! But I don't have much choice now! Seriously though, after climbing Mount Kilimanjaro I was asked to do this and I thought, why not? I am always up for a challenge and they don't come much bigger.

**TAXI** What do you expect the highlights to be?

**Daren:** We all hope there will be lots. For me, I am hoping that being part of a great team will be a major one. I know they will have my back if I feel down and will help me to regain my mojo. Our motto is 'deeds not words' and having your mates behind you will be huge during this challenge.

**Stuart:** I'm turning 50 during the row and isn't that a hell of a way to celebrate your half-century? I think the other highlights will include seeing whales and dolphins, enjoying banter with Daren and Bob, and finally getting back on land after the constant swaying of the boat.

**TAXI** What do you think the hardest part will be?

**Daren:** This is the world's toughest row and we are under no illusions and know it's going to be difficult. It will really put your body through the mill and we will all have aches, pains and blisters. But when we reach the midpoint, I'm planning to celebrate with a nip of Scotch and a cigar.

**Stuart:** I think I am quite strong



Cabbies Do Atlantic Row December, 2022, in Lanzarote.

mentally, but you just never know what the Atlantic might do to us. There will probably be days when we each break down but I think we are all strong enough and know each other well enough to see the signs and support each other through the low times. I just hope we don't crack together! Physically, we know to expect blisters and a sore bum and feet. The first week will probably be awful and I will no doubt be questioning why I am doing this.

**TAXI** What will you miss the most from home?

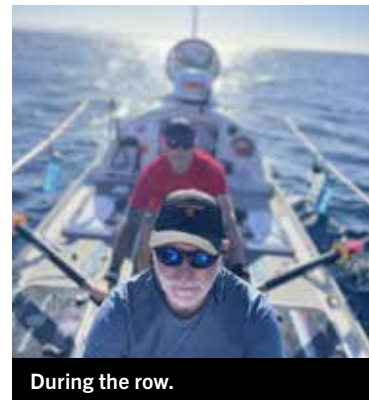
**Daren:** Apart from friends and family whose support has been incredible, the answer is pretty simple: my wife's cooking! The food we will eat on the row will never touch what my wife can cook or my favourite dish of pie and mash.

**Stuart:** I will miss all those things that we take for granted, especially my family and friends. I'll also miss going to work. I love working as a cab driver and meeting lots of different people. I'm sure that being in a confined space with two guys for two months will not be easy. I'm in no doubt that they will probably bore me to tears and then of course there will be Bob's awful jokes and music to endure! I'm also going to struggle with the food. I am a fussy eater and

dehydrated food isn't the best.

**TAXI** What advice would you give to those considering rowing the Atlantic?

**Daren:** The best advice I can give is to allow yourself enough time to get ready. We had to work on our fitness levels and learn to row, but the most time consuming bit was getting support to cover the huge costs to do this challenge. We only had eight months and it wasn't enough! At the moment, we still haven't secured the money to get the boat back from Antigua so hope that during the two months we are rowing, people will consider donating to our Go Fund Me or directly to the amazing charities we are doing this for.



During the row.



CDAR in Lanzarote.

**Stuart:** It's hard to give advice at this stage, as we haven't done it yet so perhaps ask me when we reach Antigua!

To donate to the Taxi Charity in their 75th anniversary year, please visit [www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org) ■ **TAXI**

At the time of going to press, Daren, Bob and Stuart had rowed 1,270 nautical miles, leaving them with 1,621 nautical miles still to go, to reach Antigua.

Follow their progress on the YB Races App, by searching for 'C Map Atlantic Dash 2023'.

## About the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans since 1948. The charity arranges free trips (for veterans from all conflicts) to the Netherlands and France, for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or social events across the UK.

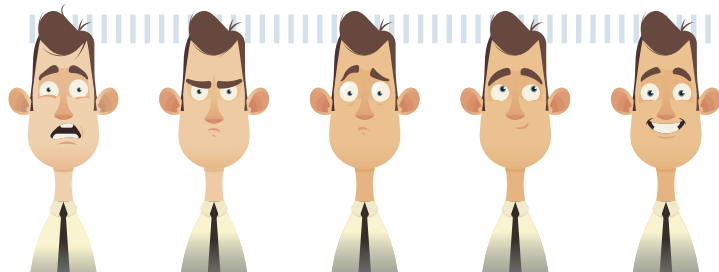
2023 is the charity's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a remarkable milestone for a small, niche charity, peopled by enthusiastic volunteers.

The charity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2021, an award approved by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the equivalent of the MBE for charities.

To fund and facilitate their work, the charity is reliant on donations, grants and sponsorship and has launched a '75 for 75' fundraising campaign to raise £75,000 in its anniversary year.

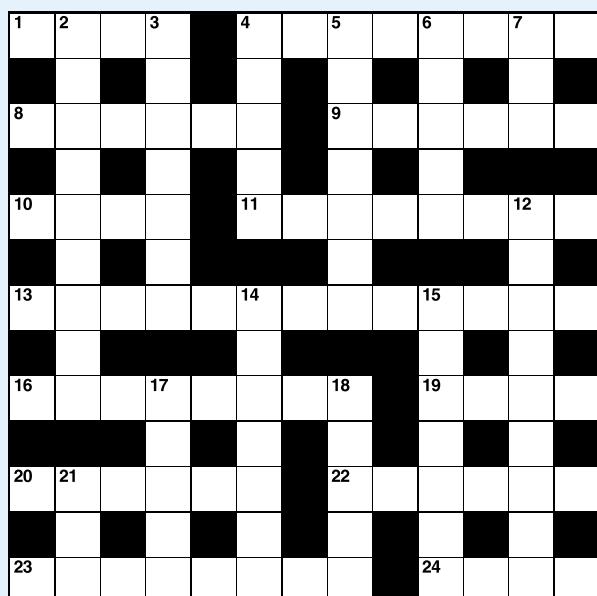
[www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)





# Puzzler Page

## Crossword



### ACROSS

- 1 Not in danger (4)
- 4 Outburst of strong language (8)
- 8 Dim, fogged (6)
- 9 Bumper car (6)
- 10 Aid in a crime (4)
- 11 At the \_\_\_ hour, almost too late (8)
- 13 Silver, perhaps (8,5)
- 16 Pity, fellow-feeling (8)
- 19 Scottish dance (4)
- 20 Interfering in private matters (6)
- 22 Trashy art (6)
- 23 Outer, outside (8)
- 24 Adult kittens (4)

### DOWN

- 2 Entitled (to) (2,7)
- 3 Pliable (7)
- 4 Possibly, perhaps (5)
- 5 Disrobe, strip (7)
- 6 Bushy divider (5)
- 7 Consume (3)
- 12 Portable bed for a baby (6,3)
- 14 Eight-sided plane figure (7)
- 15 Wayward (7)
- 17 Force (open) (5)
- 18 Rustic fellow (5)
- 21 Latin for 'king' (3)

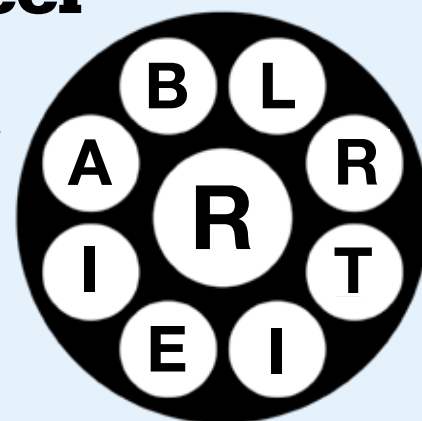
## Sudoku

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

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

## Wordwheel

How many words of four letters or more can you make from this Wordwheel? Each word must use the central letter, and each letter may be used once only. At least one nine-letter word can be found. We found 32 words - can you do better?



## Futoshiki

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

	<			>	
			<		
					2
	5		>		>

All answers to puzzler on p30

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outside London.**

**We pay cash, collect  
and drive away.**

**John  
07702 554934**

## CABS WANTED

● **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

● **All cabs wanted. Tx4, euro 4, 5 & 6** also TXE wanted We come to you, any condition, very quick decision. Cash paid instantly. 07702 554934

● **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

● **All cabs wanted, we come to you,** top prices paid, cash/ bank transfer, instant decision, finance settled, non-runners or sell & rent back, Taxi's available to rent. call 07956 317300

## CABS FOR RENT

● **All vitos and TX4s for rent, full** back up, starting from £200 based in East London – 07872504604

● **TXEs, TX4s and vitos available** from £230 per week contact Sabri – 07958973944

● **VNK Motors -Electric cabs LEVCs** & TX4s for rent, from £195 upwards

per week. Full back up, Caledonia Road, North London area, breakdown service, overhauls, running repairs & body work. Also Looking for a taxi mechanic. 0207 700 1045 or 07951 661430 – Nick.

## CABS FOR SALE

● **TX4 Euro 6 16 reg black 134,000** miles VGC £23,000 – Call Steve 07976 729033

## CUSTOM LICENSE PLATE

● **Private plate for sale "RW61 CAB"** £899 ONO - 07958142483

## Get in touch



Loren Wedderburn



Loren@centuryone.uk



01727 739 184





# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

## LTDA Basic Direct Debit Instructions

### Instructions to your Bank/Building Society to pay Direct Debits:

Please complete parts 1 to 5 to instruct your branch to make direct payments from your account. Return form to **FREEPOST LTDA**

To the Manager of \_\_\_\_\_

Bank/Building Society Address \_\_\_\_\_

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9 1 4 4 2 8

### For Office use only

1 Please write the name and full postal address of your branch in the box (left)

2 Name of account holder \_\_\_\_\_

3 Account number

4 Bank Sort Code  -  -

Banks/Building Societies may not accept instructions to pay Direct Debit from some types of account.

5 Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



This guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer

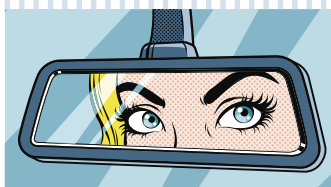
## The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit LTDA will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request LTDA to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by LTDA, or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
  - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when LTDA asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

You can now also apply to join the LTDA online, simply scan here to complete an online application:





# Going Through the Roof

You will, I am sure, be fascinated to hear that there is a new roof going onto Meg Towers.

## A woman of words

**T**he cost of said roof is why I worked flat out over Christmas and New Year. The back of my cab has been packed out with sales shoppers, Somerset House skaters, theatre goers and New Year revellers.

Yes. I worked New Year's Eve for the first time ever, and what an experience it was. People must drink white spirit cocktails on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> December, because I can testify that Londoners on that night are properly piddled.

I had one bloke hail me who had lost his shoes and socks somewhere along the fireworks route and could not, no matter how hard he tried, say where he lived. It was Kilburn. He ended up doing a charade of 'kill' and 'burn' which was so enthusiastic that it attracted the attention of a passing policewoman. She checked his ID,



won charades, then marched him off to meet the paramedics on the Booze Bus parked nearby.

But back to my new roof. This purchase is not an extravagance, it is an essential. Justin, the aerial chap who came out to waggle our Sky dish to improve reception, put one leg on the roof for balance and ended up half in, half out of our loft. I wanted to tell him to stop squealing as he was Just-in the loft but didn't because I judged he wasn't much in the mood for gags.

"Your bloody roof tiles are like digestive biscuits!" he shouted at me. Luckily, the half of him that was in the loft had a soft landing on some bin bags full of spare duvets.

I don't think Justin is going to sue me. He drove off, uninjured, after five cups of sweet tea and eating his bodyweight in actual Digestives.

Finding roofers for the job was not easy. One cowboy said my roof would cost more than the one the late Queen put on Windsor Castle after the fire. The other said my house

needed 'specialised scaffolding' that would cost triple. I asked why and he answered, "You wouldn't understand, love" and followed with, "80% upfront. Cash."

It was a five-day, seven-day, three-week, six-week, nine-week or three-month job, depending on who was lying to me at the time. All bar one said, "Bish Bosh," when describing how fast and efficient they would be. Who knew the saying was so contagious? Consider me infected.

My roof is very nearly finished. I have made 163 cups of tea since 2<sup>nd</sup> December when the job started. And even though the weather has been Arctic, I have still seen builder's bums aplenty. One of the chaps wears his trousers slung loooow, then daily complains that he suffers from backache. I can confirm he suffers from piles, too.

Call me Dr. Meg, providing a cure to relieve his discomfort. I prescribe a pair of thermal long johns pulled up to his chin. Bye bye, back pain. Bish bosh! ■ **TAXI**

30

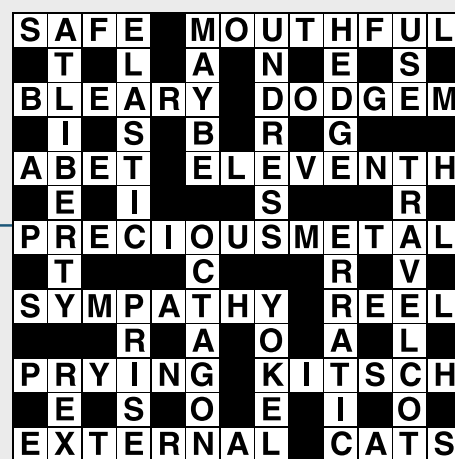
## LTDA A selection of our numerous Distribution Points

- ◆ A1 Taxis, Melody Lane, Highbury, N5
- ◆ Abacus Accounts, Southbrook Road, Lee, SE12
- ◆ Astral Café, Regency Place, SW1
- ◆ Bubbles Car Wash, E2
- ◆ C & S Taxis, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Cabsurance, Seven Kings
- ◆ Camberfield Taxi Services
- ◆ Computer Cab, Mitre Way, W12
- ◆ Coney Allen, Dunbridge Street, E1
- ◆ CP Beehive Service Station, Beehive Lane, Gants Hill
- ◆ Cricklewood Carriers, Cricklewood
- ◆ Dial A Cab, City Road, N1
- ◆ Edgware Station Rank
- ◆ Euston Station Rank
- ◆ G & L Taxis, Crayford Road, N7
- ◆ Globe Transmissions, Cudworth Street, E1
- ◆ The Ham, Brentford
- ◆ Heathrow Airport Canteen
- ◆ Hexagon Garage, Lukin Street, E1
- ◆ Jet Garage, Clipstone Street, W1
- ◆ Knowledge Centre, Caledonian Road
- ◆ KPM, Hemming Street, E1
- ◆ London City Airport Canteen
- ◆ LP Motors, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Martin Cordell, Thomas Road, E14
- ◆ Paddington Station Rank
- ◆ Putney Bridge Taxis, The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6
- ◆ Richmond Road Taxi Centre, E8
- ◆ Safewise Supermarket, Harrow
- ◆ South Bank Service Station, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ TAXI HOUSE, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ Taxi & Private Hire, Blackfriars Rd, SE1
- ◆ Temple Place Shelter
- ◆ Turbo Accessories, Three Colts Lane, E2
- ◆ Ubiquitous Ltd, E1
- ◆ Waterloo Station
- ◆ Wimbledon Station Rank
- ◆ WizAnn Knowledge School, Watts Grove, E3

## PUZZLER ANSWERS



### Crossword



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### SUDOKU

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

### Wordwheel

**SOLUTION: IRRITABLE**

**All words:** Abler, airier, alert, alter, arbi-ter, bare, barrel, barter, bear, bier, biter, blare, brat, briar, earl, irate, lair, later, liar, libra, lira, lire, litre, rail, rare, rarebit, rate, rater, real, rear, relit, retail, retrial, rile, rite, tear, tier, tiler, tire, trail, trailer, trial, tribal, tribe, trier, IRRITABLE.

**Word targets:** Excellent: 53, Good: 44, Target: 32, Kids: 27

### Futoshiki

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





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AVERAGE FARE	£21.40	£21.40
AVERAGE TIP	£0.00	£1.07
DRIVER TOTAL	<b>£21.02</b>	<b>£21.91</b>
RECEIPT OF METER	98.25%	102.50%

