MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

TRADE AWAITS PROPOSAL
DETAILS FROM TFL

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON
EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

✔

HM Treasury

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? ? ?
WHilst awaiting TfL and the Mayor to alleviate trade concerns and announce taxi access details to the Streetspace schemes, there’s been at least one much-welcomed announcement, in that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme will be extended. Those eligible under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which has so far seen 2.3 million claims worth £6.8 billion will be able to claim a second and final grant in August. The grant will be worth 70% of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment, covering three months’ worth of profits, and capped at £6,570 in total.

Continuing with the good news, competitive sport has been given the green light with the Premier League set to return on June 17th. The fourth round of testing players and staff has taken place, revealing no new cases – a further fifth and sixth round of testing is imminent. The first three rounds of testing found 12 people positive for COVID-19 from over 2,700 tests carried out. Fans are still awaiting fixture dates and venue details which are expected to be released in the coming week. There are 92 matches left to play and plans for all the matches to be screened live on TV. Only 47 of the remaining 92 games were due to be shown this season but now, the other 45 will also be televised, 25 of them by Sky, 10 of them by BT, and four each by Amazon Prime and the BBC. It is anticipated that of the ‘new’ games added to the live TV schedule, they will be available ‘free-to-air’ to fans, with the BBC showing live Premier League games for the first time ever.

Taxi Driver Murderer Colin Cheetham has died in prison. The man who murdered father of three, Stuart Ludlam in September 2009 had been described as a ‘gun fanatic.’ He executed Mr. Ludlam shooting him twice in the head with no clear motive for his actions. Cheetham was caught by police due to him topping up his mobile phone using a credit card registered to himself – the phone had been used to call Mr. Ludlam in his taxi to the scene of the crime. He died in HMP Wakefield having served a decade of his 30-year minimum sentence.

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TOP TRADE STORY

T he good news is that the ‘furlough scheme’ for the self-employed is being extended, the bad news is that we are still desperately trying to get detail on any road or lane closures and if, or how, they will affect us. We are also trying to get answers from the finance companies on plans to extend the payment holidays.

HM Treasury Feedback

On Friday afternoon I received another call from the Treasury, not the Chancellor himself this time, but one of his senior civil servants. They advised me they were extending the furlough scheme and I was able to raise the various ways in which members had fallen through the gaps in the current scheme. Specifically, problems with Capital Allowances on cab purchases, issues with members who received some sort of pension, those receiving carer allowances and several others. I cannot guarantee they will resolve all the issue’s - but they have agreed to take them away and look at it.

TfL Yet to Release Proposal Details

On the road closures front, my meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Heidi Alexander, was re-scheduled, at their request, I hope this is to allow them time to secure more information and data on the impact of the Streetspace proposals. Until I have this meeting, and despite all the reports circulating on social media, neither the LTDA nor anyone else, has any detail on what is being proposed by TfL, City of London or Westminster.

Joint Statement and Letter

One of the great cab trade myths is that the various trade groups spend their time arguing and disagreeing with each other. It’s true we have our moments, and there are loose cannons, but on issues like these, we do come together with a common aim. However, until we know what is happening it’s impossible to formulate any response or strategy but together with the LCDC and UCG we have issued the following joint statement:

The implications of the possible ban on taxis using Waterloo and London Bridges, along with certain main routes, through and across the capital are extremely concerning. If implemented without allowing universal taxi access these schemes would have a disastrous impact on both our trade and our passengers who rightfully expect to be taken to their destination via the most direct route. Disabled and vulnerable passengers would be at a serious disadvantage and with the reduction in capacity on the tube and bus network, many would be unable to travel.

London Taxis are the only form of Public transport where social distancing is possible, have a partition separating the driver and passenger and are fully wheelchair accessible. To exclude them from any road scheme is counter-productive and increases congestion and pollution.

As yet, we have been unable to obtain details of how the proposals will, or even if they will impact on our business. We, as a trade must be prepared to take appropriate action if necessary. To back this up, we have written a joint letter to Heidi, highlighting all of our concerns and laying out what we see as our legal position going forward. Hopefully, common sense will prevail, and this will be the last legal letter necessary. The letter can be read on our website: https://www.ltda.co.uk/media-centre/campaigns/streetspace/

New Transport Commissioner

It’s no secret that we had major concerns over a few of the candidates in the running to replace Mike Brown as Transport Commissioner, one, in particular, had a long and well documented history of being ‘Uber’s Man’ at TfL.

Fortunately, Andy Byford, Mike’s replacement, comes without any history, having overseen the New York Transit Authority, the Toronto Transit Commission and rail networks in Australia since leaving London Underground 30 years ago. I am trying to set up a meeting with him, as soon as he arrives in London, to reintroduce him to the world’s best cab service.

Steve McNamara

Steve McNamara is the LTDA’s General Secretary

Despite social media reports, neither the LTDA nor anyone else as yet, has any detail on TfL, City of London or Westminster proposals…
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A Cabbie, His Classmates & College of Naturopathic Medicine Embark on £20,000 NHS Fundraiser

NEWS

LTDA member, David Kirby has been a cabbie for just over a decade. Last September, he enrolled on a 3-year diploma course at the College of Naturopathic Medicine and is studying to become a nutritional naturopath. David, and his first-year biomedicine classmates, with support from the college are on a 20K targeted mission to benefit the following causes:

- NHS Charities Together. (Who have teamed up with GETT to help fund frontline key- workers to travel to and from work for a fixed fare of £10 in the safety of a partitioned, sanitised, social distance enabling, black cab.)

- The Royal Foundation’s Mental Health Charity. (Who are supporting frontline workers and people experiencing COVID-19 related grief and trauma, through a mindfulness approach.)

- The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

However, for David and his classmates it doesn’t stop there. They also intend to deliver nutritional health care packages to the UCLH hospital, and a London based care home, using items donated by nutritional companies. Furthermore (once social distancing restrictions allow), to support the wellbeing of frontline staff suffering mental and physical burnout, the group are arranging complimentary walking tours of London, facilitated by ten qualified London Tourist Board Guides (one of whom is also a first-year biomedicine student at CNM).

Elle Fox, Head of Public Relations at The College of Naturopathic Medicine who are supporting the fundraiser, is proud of the efforts of the first-year class and particularly David, who she describes to TAXI as the person ‘driving the venture forward.’ “We are very proud of David, he is a positive force and a hugely compassionate individual, and we are fortunate to have him as a student at CNM.”

Cabbie David, told TAXI, “As a team, our intention, together with the help of CNM, is to support the future mental wellbeing of all the front-line workers, from the cleaners to the nurses and consultants. In the meantime, we are raising money to sponsor black cab rides for as many staff as possible in order to get them to and from work in safely partitioned vehicles.”

If you’d like to support David and his team in their efforts by donating, or to learn more about their plans, please go to the following web address: https://www.gofundme.com/f/NHS-Care-Givers or alternatively, visit the gofundme.com homepage and search: ‘For the heroes of covid-19’ – which will link you to the groups fundraising page.

‘Safe Partitioned Passenger Travel’ Campaign Launched

London Taxi PR (LTPR), has announced the launch of a new ‘Safe Passenger Travel’ awareness campaign, which will be displayed on both sides of hundreds of Black Taxis.

The campaign, which was planned, designed, agreed, and sent to the printers within a 48-hour time frame, came to fruition once the Government had decreed that they wanted to get those who were unable to work from home back to work.

Working in conjunction with Colts Cabs, who had kindly agreed to donate free of charge the side-panel advertising spaces on a significant number of its rental Black Cab fleet, it was felt the message needed, had to convey the safety aspect of travel in a London Taxi - particularly highlighting the safe partitioning between the driver & passenger compartments, which is installed as part of the Black Cab’s manufacturing process and has been paramount throughout its history. Another feature was the sanitised interiors, with all Taxis undergoing the sanitisation process before and after each journey, and importantly the contactless payments, with all London Taxis fitted with card payment readers.

The side-panels advertising messages will initially be fitted to the TX4 & TXe electric models of Taxi, but the intention then is for it to be also made available for other models such as Vito.

All the campaigns and publicity that have so far been generated by London Taxi PR have been funded by fellow London Taxi drivers as well as supportive companies and organisations.
As the Lockdown continues to loosen, with various parts of the economy slowly starting to come to life again, the LTDA has been working with the City of London to hopefully ensure that Taxis can be part of the solution rather than the problem in the Square Mile.

**Lockdown Easing**

As I write, everything appears to be going in the right direction in relation to the numbers of reported daily deaths, and new infections of the virus are for the moment, gradually declining. Whilst this is happening, there is a slow increase in activity and of people going back to work. It has been announced that non-essential shops are to be allowed to re-open from 15th June with social distancing measures in place, and parts of the hospitality and leisure industry will be assessed for possible re-opening in July. Unless there is an unexpected resurgence of the Covid-19 virus over the summer months, then the wheels of the Taxi industry may eventually also be able to start turning again.

**Unwelcome Measures**

When Taxis do get back to work, the roads in central London and the suburban town centres are going to look very different due to the implementation of social distancing measures. Plans to facilitate social distancing measures include the widening of footways, the introduction of new cycleways (which will be needed to accommodate the predicted increase in the number of people who will want to travel by bicycle), and changes to the spaces outside shops and other businesses. Lower speed limits are also likely to be introduced and the City has mentioned an advisory 15mph limit and there could also be shared spaces, with limits possibly as low as 5mph. While all of this may be unwelcome - clearly, our over-riding concern is to maintain access.

**LTDA Working with the City**

In the face of media reports about a car-free central London, the LTDA has set about trying to find out what all this will mean for the Taxi trade and has sought to ensure that all taxis, not just ZEC’s, will continue to have a future in what has been termed, ‘the brave new world’. We initially utilised our contacts with the City of London and have established an on-going dialogue, which we hope will enable taxis to operate as efficiently as possible - bearing in mind the kind of restrictions that seem to be necessary. We hope that this will mean Taxis will be able to continue to provide door to door services, which are so valued by our numerous patrons that are unable to cycle or walk. Such patrons require transportation services that fully protect them - by employing social distancing measures that are only available in a licensed taxi, with its central partition, fully segregating passengers from the driver.

The City, although displaying a positive attitude to Taxis have not so far been able to agree any specific measures with the trade, because like everyone else it is waiting on TfL to finalise its plans, so that it is not out of step with how the roads will be managed elsewhere.

Whilst waiting for TfL to announce its plans, A City of London Corporation spokesperson stated the following: “We are keen to get the City back on its feet in a sustainable manner as the current lockdown restrictions are eased.” “In order to achieve this, it is necessary to make changes to the City’s streets to facilitate social distancing. “Taxis will still be able to travel around the Square Mile but there may be changes to access on some streets or the routes that they can take.”
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London Cabbie Takes on New Role Supporting Front Line NHS Staff

For the last month, London cabbie, Lianne Rolls, 46, from Poplar, has been working at Chase Farm Hospital, for the Enfield GP Federation COVID-19 Clinical Assessment Centre. Lianne has been delivering Oximeter machines, which monitor patient’s oxygen levels via video call, taking medication to patients isolating at home, and driving doctors from one surgery to another in her taxi.

Cabbie, Lianne told TAXI “I am working 12 hours a day, 5 days a week and sometimes I can drive up to 150 miles as we cover 27 surgeries in North London. It is a very demanding role emotionally, as when I arrive at people’s homes you can see their panic and concern – it’s been especially hard when I have had to witness patients being taken to hospital, leaving their loved ones behind.”

Lianne continued, “I have been particularly moved by the sincere gratitude of people and the unfailing level of care the NHS doctors and nurses offer, despite sometimes working 12-hour shifts for up to two weeks without a break. I am so very proud to be able to do my bit and to be part of such a dedicated team. I rent my taxi from Paul Byron of HP Taxi Company, and it was his idea to organise the contract work with the NHS. Paul works tirelessly to promote the trade and I would like to thank him for his efforts and for of course organising the work that was much needed for me and several of his other drivers by securing the NHS contract.”

Lianne is a member of the fundraising group of 25 London cabbies called “Cabbies Do Kilimanjaro” who are adapting their training during lockdown to ensure they are fit enough for their attempt to climb Kilimanjaro later this year to raise £7,500 for the London Taxi Drivers Charity for Children, who like most charities across the UK have seen their fundraising opportunities cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Cabbies do Kilimanjaro

A group of 25 London Licensed Taxi Drivers, will be attempting to lose weight, get fit and travel to Tanzania this October, to climb 5,895 metres to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

The Cabbies do Kilimanjaro team is hoping to raise £7,500 for the London Taxi Drivers’ Charity for Children and £2,500 for a children’s community project in Tanzania.

Follow their progress by visiting www.cabbiesdokilimanjaro.com

To donate visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/cabbiesdokilimanjaro
I have been receiving many calls from drivers asking me if they should return back to work and what the work levels are like? Well, I have been out working over the last few weeks - not much, but enough to test the water. We are all creatures of habit (well I am), so I’d been trying my normal routes and tricks but with very little reward for my efforts. Initially, I tried ranking up at mainline stations but with waiting times between one and two hours (and sometimes not even moving up the rank significantly to be on point, let alone get a fare), that didn’t pan our well. Other times, I’d drive around endlessly trying my luck and sometimes it would pay off with a 25 or £10 job, which is better than nothing - but hardly worthwhile for three hours graft. With so little going on, I found it tough to stay out and after a few hours each time, I’ve decided to head home, and on the journey back, think of ways to try and turn things around, to give myself a better chance to get some work another day.

Thinking Differently

I tell you this not to be all doom and gloom (or for you to think ‘woe is me’), it is after all, early doors and we are all in the same boat - and we’ll need to use all our experience or try something new when returning to work in this current climate. I don’t know if all drivers do this, but I remember changing my work pattern around the summer holidays and half terms as we know these are quieter times and many cab users would simply go on holiday or stay at home with the kids. The next time I ventured out in the cab, I was determined to try something new and I started noticing a lot of cars and vans parking on our ranks, probably thinking ‘why not’ with so many cab drivers having not returned to work and using them, so see it as a free parking space. I’m sure that’s what they think, and I have to say this is one of my biggest bugbears.

Using the Ranks

Taxi ranks are located in positions designed to maximise public demand, and so I decided the next time I see a rank I would sit there for 15-20 minutes - this is out of the ordinary for me, as I like driving around knowing I am always the point cab. I’m a member of the London Cab Ranks Committee and so decided to have a look at some of the issues that had been raised to me by members, such as signage and road markings - and at the same time sit on the rank and try my luck. I eventually worked my way to Archway Taxi rank and low and behold, I started to get a few jobs, both from the hospital and from passengers that just wanted to go a short distance. So, I started to use taxi ranks that I’d never used before and ‘done ok’, I just think in these unprecedented times, we may have to change our normal working pattern to get the most out of our working day. We need to make all our ranks known and what purpose they serve, this will have many benefits for us highlighting our presence and letting the public know, that if they want a taxi - they can definitely get one at that rank instead of using a PHV company.

It’s Not Always Us

As London taxi drivers we face many obstacles in our day-to-day job such as cyclists and construction vehicles and it’s not always factual when being portrayed on social media. We are being given a bad name for being rude or argumentative towards other road users. We are professional drivers who ply for hire every day on the streets or from taxi ranks - and it doesn’t help when you are prevented from doing your job by lorries, lawlessly parking on ranks. This impacts on the way we earn a living and is doubly frustrating knowing there is a good chance that they will not receive a PCN. When drivers approach these offenders and ask why they are parked there or try to reasonably explain what a taxi rank is used for, they are faced with either “I’m only trying to earn a living” or a barrage of foul-mouthed abuse. Our members often send in pictures as evidence, which I forward onto TIL to act on, or I contact the companies involved, alerting them to the complete disregard their drivers have toward the working practices of our trade.

Filming Whilst Cycling?

Our City is becoming harder to move around due to road closures and having to give up road space for cycle lanes. I am a supporter of safe cycling, but these routes must be implemented on quiet ways and not main arterial roads (unlike the ill-thought out ‘east to west super cycle highway’ disaster). You’ll find on Twitter many cycling groups posting negative comments regarding the taxi trade and especially about the way we drive. Contrary to these views, we have never claimed to own the roads (well not that I know of) and seriously, how is it that it’s always us at fault and nobody else? I think not. Recently, I’ve come across instances where cyclists have filmed drivers on their phones, which can only be a danger in itself - don’t tell me they can look at the road ahead and film us at the same time without endangering themselves and others… Fortunately, our legal team have challenged NIP’s for our members and won (though using the phone whilst driving is something I wouldn’t recommend you do).

Assault & Criminal Damage

Not so long back, a member contacted me immediately after an incident with a cyclist - literally seconds later. He was shaken up, for good reason and recounted the following story… Whilst attempting to complete a U-turn (which is not illegal) and after having checked his mirrors beforehand to confirm that nothing was approaching from the offside of the cab, before he could proceed, a cyclist punched the rear of the cab. The driver calmly opened his window and said, “You need to be more careful”. This was greeted by the cyclist spitting into the face of the driver and punching the door mirror of the cab - the expression on the face of the cyclist apparently indicated that this was a very painful experience - but what did he expect? It didn’t however end there. The cyclist became more enregned and proceeded to the front of the cab and began lifting the bike to launch it across the bonnet. Our member tried to avoid his cab being damaged and mistakenly ran toward and over the bike, which was sadly crushed under the cab.

Cycling Without Due Care

The police attended the scene and took a statement from a witness that verified everything our member said had occurred and an ambulance attended to deal with the cyclists injured hand. I advised our member not to sign anything or give a statement to the police even though they told him the cyclist was at fault and wanted to know how our member would like to proceed. He replied, ‘Nothing, I just want to go home.” I advised him to have the man arrested for common assault, ask for a DNA sample to be taken and get payment for the damages caused to his cab. This was all happening when trying to move the bike from under the cab - which became a major job. The cyclist claimed that the drivers speed was 50mph (doing a U-turn in a cab) and the policeman apparently laughed at this… instead estimating the cyclists speed at 20-30mph and also now being potentially liable to recompense for his victim for assault and criminal damages.

Anthony Street is an LTDA Executive Support Officer

“A BIT OF RANKING, RANTING & RECOMPENSE

“...This was greeted by the cyclist spitting into the face of the driver and punching the cabs’ door mirror…”

Antony Street is an LTDA Executive Support Officer

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“As a nurse who has just worked 65 hours this week a ride home in a black cab with a fantastic driver has been such a wonderful treat. Thank you to all the cabbies doing this for NHS workers. I actually don’t have words enough to thank you all. You are amazing!”

Ciara, London
LIES, DAMNED LIES & STATISTICS

TOP RANK

PETER BRENNAN

It’s been said that, ‘the one thing most humans have in common is that they don’t like change’ - which in itself is quite ironic, because it’s the only absolute constant in life. There’s nothing wrong with change, as long as it’s not ‘just for the sake of change’ or change that benefits the few, rather than the many.

Already, small changes to the road network, like that seen in Hackney with the closing off of Old Ford Road, has not resulted in what we were told i.e. with people walking and cycling. Instead, its seen horrendous traffic levels on surrounding roads, and all so a handful of cyclists can ride around for fun. Make no mistake, this outcome will spread across the city if the ridiculous roll-out of road closures continues.

Cycling extremists have long been trying to make changes that benefit just them - now however, they are no longer trying to do so by stealth with a few small changes here and there, they’re going ‘all in’ with a gamble that could hopefully see them lose it all. They think they have us fooled with their ‘temporary measures’ but we all know, regardless of how big a flop it is or the damage it causes, they will hail it a great success and demand for it to be made permanent. Already, so called ‘temporary barriers’ to segregate and layout road space are beginning to look very more permanent than temporary.

Essential Journeys to Promote Empty Cycle Lanes

We’ve seen the Deputy Mayor for Transport travel halfway across London for a ‘photo op’ to promote what has to be one of the most ridiculous schemes to date - the Park Lane cycleway. There is after all, just a few feet away, a massive green space that we like to call Hyde Park - it can accommodate many pedestrians and also has its own segregated cycle paths for safe travel. After completing the journey (which surely can’t be classed as ‘essential travel’), this deputy mayor not only posed for a photo, but uploaded said photo on to her own social media account to highlight the fact. Quite remarkably, she didn’t find it all ironic that the cycle lane was being used by, wait for it… no-one else whatsoever. In fact, there was another cyclist in the photo, however (like many cyclists we see on a daily basis), was on the other side of the segregated cycleway riding on the main carriageway.

Damned Lies and Statistics

The usual extremists in the green lobby haven’t missed the opportunity either, they would have us all believe that with virtually no vehicles on the roads, there has been a forty to sixty percent fall in pollution levels. That figure is of course absolutely absurd, and one that you would expect the extremists to put out there - after all, it suits their narrowminded agenda and the real figure wouldn’t have the same punch. It is actually quite difficult to get a true figure on the reduction, as most of those who are either coming up with the stats or publishing them are far from impartial. It’s also quite difficult due to the many different ways in which pollution is measured. If we factor in all the many ways it can be measured, the reality is that we’re looking at a reduction figure that is approximately seventeen percent, by my calculations - and if you put that against the seventy percent reduction in traffic levels (which has been far easier to prove), then the rhetorical claims that ‘motor vehicles are to blame for everything’ which have been made over recent years, are a long way from accurate.

Taxi Emissions - ‘The Blame Game’

Now don’t get me wrong, a seventeen percent drop is to be welcomed, but this figure, if you were to believe the anti-car lobby, should have been three or four times higher. We’re constantly told for instance, that London Taxis alone make up twenty-five percent of all London’s pollution, therefore the fact that the number of cabs on the road can currently be counted on one hand, highlights just how ridiculous these claims are. If they were true, we should have seen a reduction at least twenty percent, just because of that. If you were to then factor in all the other traffic that’s not on the roads, then surely, we should have seen an even bigger reduction - after all, pubs, clubs, restaurants and non-food retail shops are all shut with no deliveries being received.

So, if not from vehicles, where is all the pollution coming from? Why are we only seeing a small drop in pollution levels? If the green extremists are to be believed, we should have seen reductions nearer eighty percent. These claims that have been falsely made are being used to bring in draconian measures against all motorists (I know it feels like it’s only against us), to reduce pollution.

Drivers are being denied access to roads and now also being heavily fined for having an idling engine whilst for example on ranks, despite the fact it’s those engines that supply the heat to keep us warm in what is after all our office and also allows the windscreen to remain demisted so we can see out of it and therefore be safe.

Drivers on Kings Cross have received these fines whilst our friendly local Camden Council employees, sit in their office just a few feet away - have they switched off their heating and air conditioning? Are the lights off when not in use to minimise electricity usage? Y’know, the electricity that requires vast amounts of polluting coal to be burned in order to be produced…

Lockdown Wind (or trapped gas...)

Whilst a high percentage of office-based staff are currently home-based and away from their offices, it begs the question to know if their office buildings are still contributing to the pollution levels due to energy still being unnecessarily utilised? I’ve even read attempts to blame the lack of a pollution decrease on the ‘easterly wind’ blowing pollution over from mainland Europe (that’s not usually mentioned in any figures when they are playing the blame game), I could be wrong (I’m not), but I’m pretty sure the easterly wind doesn’t only blow when we’re in lockdown…

Taking Advantage

‘Covid-19 has delivered unusual environmental benefits: cleaner air, lower carbon emissions, a respite for wildlife. Now the big question is whether we can capitalise on this…” - is the kind of statement that I’m seeing and hearing from all the usual suspects. They are actively trying to take advantage of the horrible situation we are currently in, to further their own agenda. Having seen the responses to this cowardly ‘land grab’ as our general secretary quite rightly calls it, from many London businesses, journalists and assembly members, I think they may have just over played their hand.

Paul Brennan,
LTDA Executive

I think the police are overdoing this lockdown.

DID YOU KNOW?
The man who invented one-way streets, roundabouts, Taxi ranks and stop signs, never learned to drive.
“There are no rules regarding red lights - I make a ‘judgement call’ on whether to stop or not…”

THE TOUR DE LONDON STREET RACE COMMUTE

ON POINT

Firstly, I would like to pass on my heartfelt condolences to all the families and friends of fellow cabbies that have lost their lives to this awful virus. I wish everybody the best at this terrible time - take care.

Perfect Job

One day last year, I was coming in to work, and as I drove down Lower Richmond Road, I was delighted to see a hand go up. The fare stopped for was a man on crutches, wearing one of those big plastic boots. I lowered the passenger window for him, and he asked for Tower 42 in Old Broad St, giving me very clear instructions, on which route he would like me to take (why he was so specific became clearer later on in the journey). It was basically Putney Bridge, Peterborough Rd and Townmead Rd, through Chelsea Harbour and down the Embankment. Naturally, I was delighted with this - a perfect job to start my shift.

Kneecaps...

Pretty much straight away, I enquired what on earth he had done to himself. He replied, saying he’d come off his bike and dislocated his kneecap and fractured his ankle. After discussing how much that must have hurt, I asked him how it happened. He said he hit another cyclist when riding into work the week before. He seemed a bit cagey however, about how the accident had happened. As we made our way down Chelsea Embankment, approaching Chelsea Bridge, the fare shouted out, “Slow down for a minute mate” - he then lowered his window and called out to a cyclist, “Jonny, what’s your time?” To be honest, I’m not sure what came back, but it left my fare channelling to himself. “He’s got no chance of beating the record today”, he told me. Obviously, my next question was, “what record?”

Cycle Street-Racing

He then went on to explain that he and six other co-working cyclists in his office had a £50 bet per man to see who could get from the lights at the south side of Putney Bridge, to Tower 42, in the quickest time, using funnily enough the exact route he had asked me to drive. Well, it turns out they had a leader board up in their office with the details and dates of the quickest times. Any new record or personal best had to be proved by the GPS on their phone. He then went on to tell me how competitive it was, and as we made our way down Chelsea Embankment, approaching Chelsea Bridge, the fare shouted out, “Slow down for a minute mate” - he then lowered his window and called out to a cyclist, “Jonny, what’s your time?” To be honest, I’m not sure what came back, but it left my fare channelling to himself. “He’s got no chance of beating the record today”, he told me. Obviously, my next question was, “what record?”

Red Light Rules

I then had to ask the question, “What are the rules with red lights?” I knew what was coming back and wasn’t surprised to hear, “There are no rules regarding red lights - I make a ‘judgement call’ on whether to stop or not… It depends on what my time is.” The worst thing was, he did not for one minute give the impression that he and his silly mates were doing anything at all wrong. I think this story goes some way to show the big problems London has with the attitude of some cyclists.

Dutch Lessons

One of my wife’s oldest school friends met and married a Dutchman - they live in a lovely little town south of Amsterdam called Hilversum. We try to get over once a year for a long weekend and we always have a day trip into Amsterdam city centre. I am sure plenty of you have seen for yourself, but there are cycles literally everywhere you look in Amsterdam. On our last visit (and after having enough of following the girls as they looked in the shops), I wandered off to find somewhere to sit, have a drink and watch the world go by. As I sat sipping a beer, I wondered to myself if Amsterdam were facing the same sorts of problems with cyclists as we do in London. To be honest, I did not see any problems or confrontations and I’m not saying it doesn’t happen, but it was not too long before something occurred to me…

Race Cycles

Although as I said, there were cycles everywhere, what I did not see were race bikes. The vast majority were just riding normal style push bikes, and although people in my view can wear whatever they want, there was no Lycra or Spandex either. People just cycled along and did not seem to be in too much of rush. If you look at our city, most cyclists ride race bikes and ride them as quick as they can. As the country slowly comes out of lockdown, I’m seeing more and more social media and press reports of the ‘Cycle Lobby’ demanding road space and silly politicians looking for the ‘Green Vote’ are happily playing along. We all realise we exist side by side with cyclists, but until they have some sort of acceptance that they are part of the problem, there will always be tension. You do not need me to tell you, there is generally only one winner when you get into any conflict with a cyclist and I give the same advice I got when at my ‘Passing out Ceremony’ at the Carriage Office all those years ago. The other Cabbies in my view can wear whatever they want, there was no Lycra or Spandex either. People just cycled along and did not seem to be in too much of rush. If you look at our city, most cyclists ride race bikes and ride them as quick as they can. As the country slowly comes out of lockdown, I’m seeing more and more social media and press reports of the ‘Cycle Lobby’ demanding road space and silly politicians looking for the ‘Green Vote’ are happily playing along. We all realise we exist side by side with cyclists, but until they have some sort of acceptance that they are part of the problem, there will always be tension. You do not need me to tell you, there is generally only one winner when you get into any conflict with a cyclist and I give the same advice I got when at my ‘Passing out Ceremony’ at the Carriage Office all those years ago. The other Cabbies that I got out with that day were advised, ‘Do not get into a confrontation with another car driver or passenger, because in 5 seconds time, they’ll be gone - and you will never see them again.’ Cyclists were not mentioned that day - but they are certainly relevant now.

Lloyd Baldwin is an LTDA Executive Support Officer

LLOYD BALDWIN

TAXI /// 2 June 2020

www.ltda.co.uk /// @TheLTDA

Lloyd Baldwin is an LTDA Executive Support Officer
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It’s believed Paddington takes its name from an old Anglo-Saxon chief named Padda who ruled a small settlement- a ‘tun’- close to where Marble Arch now stands.”

“Liverpool Street. It was here, during the morning rush hour of 4th June 1886, that Joseph Merrick - aka the ‘Elephant Man’ disembarked from the Harwich boat train.”

“London Terminal Runs – Part One”

**ROB’S HISTORY TIPS**

W hilst on the Knowledge, I became fascinated by the hidden stories associated with London’s countless streets and points. I’ve been passionate about the city’s history ever since - and have discovered that sharing these tales with the public often results in a nice tip! London’s mainline railway terminals are bread and butter to a cabbie. We’re so familiar with them in fact that it’s easy to overlook the fascinating histories they hide. Let’s remedy that with a whistle stop set of runs.

London Bridge is the capital’s oldest railway terminal. It opened in December 1836, providing a route to Greenwich via an almost four-mile long viaduct consisting of 878 brick arches; all of which remain in use today. In the earliest days, there were attempts to incorporate houses into these arches. The idea never took on; judging by their use today, it would seem garages and workshops are more suited. The pioneering London and Greenwich Railway was opened in sections. London Bridge was the last piece in the puzzle. For almost a year prior to that, the original terminus was Deptford which technically makes that prior to that, the original terminus was Deptford which technically makes that the station today is connected to Heathrow. The line was masterminded by the legendary Isambard Kingdom Brunel who, aged just 27, surveyed the entire route himself in just three months whilst travelling by horse and cart. Construction on the project wasn’t always easy. Whilst ferociously tough and hard-working, the navvies who forged the railway also had a reputation for being hardened drinkers. In 1838, a brawl broke out between English and Irish work gangs on a section between Ealing and Acton. So bloodthirsty was this riot near Hanger Lane that the army had to be sent in to quell it and many men were severely injured.

Now cut across town from Paddington to Liverpool Street. It was here, during the morning rush hour of 4th June 1886, that Joseph Merrick - aka the ‘Elephant Man’ disembarked from the Harwich boat train. He’d been on tour with a freak show in Belgium but had ended up being robbed and abandoned by his callous manager. Despite being ill and penniless, Joseph managed to make it back to London alone. As he shuffled through Liverpool Street however, his large cloak and hooded disguise drew unwanted attention and he was quickly surrounded by a mob. Joseph was rescued by two kindly Bobbies who had to barricade themselves in with him, in a waiting room. Once it was safe to do so, he was provided with a cab which whisked him to the Royal London Hospital. This terrifying ordeal was portrayed in the 1980 film version of Joseph’s life (in which he’s played by the wonderful Sir John Hurt) and the scene was shot at Liverpool Street station itself which, at the time, had yet to be redeveloped and still closely resembled the building as it would’ve appeared in the Victorian era.

Now run Liverpool Street to Marylebone which, having opened in 1899, is the youngest and smallest of the capital’s railway terminals- Sir John Betjeman once described it as resembling “a public library from Nottingham which has unexpectedly found itself in London.”

Marylebone was the terminal of the Great Central Main Line; the brainchild of Sir Edward Watkin. Watkin was a visionary. He attempted to dig an early Channel Tunnel and also planned a structure which would’ve been London’s answer to the Eiffel Tower. Construction on what was nicknamed ‘Watkin’s Tower’ started in the 1890s on a spot now occupied by Wembley Stadium. Only the first stage was built though; the project was abandoned due to unsafe foundations.

Now let’s go from Marylebone to Cannon Street. Despite its name, ‘Cannon’ has nothing at all to do with weaponry. The name’s a derivation of ‘candlewick’, the area once being known for its candle makers.

The station opened in 1866 and once boasted a grand hotel. It was here, in 1920, that the British Communist Party was founded, and in 1927 former Prime Minister David Lloyd George had his coat pinched whilst attending a dinner. However, after hearing the “pathetic story of distress related by the thief”, Lloyd George insisted that the petry crook be set free. Cannon Street also had a grand, glass roof which was removed and placed into storage during WWII. Unfortunately, the factory in which the panes were held was bombed, smashing the glass to smithereens.

To be continued…

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

ROBERT LORDAN

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The Man in Black is as “Mad as Hell” and He’s “Not Going to Take This Anymore.” Well… sort of.

IT AIN’T OVER ‘TIL THE BUXOM WENCH YODELS

A MAN IN BLACK

My first article for this edition of TAXI was submitted very late on Sunday night of the bank holiday weekend - and duly returned by my editor at 6am on Monday morning. My writing was likened to Peter Finch’s ‘I’m Mad as Hell and I’m Not Going to Take This Anymore’ rant from the 1976 film, The Network. Apparently though, my article was perhaps more of an ‘occasionally punctuated stream of frustrated rhetoric’ targeting Streetspace plans; mayoral double speak around partitions; the cycling lobby; and government staff brazenly breaching lockdown rules… Oh, and how many social media active cabbies have turned on each other, akin to poorly organised factions opposing Roman rule in Monty Python’s, Life of Brian. ‘Splitters!’

In my defence though, I was ‘mad as hell’ (and surprisingly sober) when I wrote it - so much so, that as I typed, my cat, Fat Bastard (that’s his actual name), had drawn blood with his claws whilst sitting on my leg and I hadn’t even noticed. I was also sad to lose that article as it had a great gag that linked a government official (who appears to have breached lockdown), singing along in a garden in Durham somewhere to ‘Abba’, whilst most of us who remained in London are not able to get anywhere near to the point of singing about or driving near to, ‘Waterloo…”

The final points I made however, regarding central government trying to bend the trade over; rectal examinations; carrots; and being beaten by Mistress Whippy and her big stick… on reflection, I might have taken too far.

The Second Cummings?

So, just like Jesus, here’s my second Cummings, sorry I mean coming. I’ve got Planet Rock on the radio and a bottle of Shy Pig wine on the go and I’m ready to write.

After looking at the Streetspace documentation, the only positive that I could draw from it regarding the taxi industry was the fact that it is still in the “construction phase”, trade representatives are still in discussion and nothing has remained, unless of course you plan to use a microlight aircraft or parachute in from 15,000 feet. The only way that I can currently see in a bid to get through is Tooley Street, over Tower Bridge, Minories, Goodman’s Yard, Mansell Street, St Botolph Street, Dukes Place, Bevis Marks, Camden Street and then right into Old Broad Street.

Facing my Waterloo

I then attempted to see if I could do Euston to Waterloo - again it took every ounce of my 159 IQ to work this out, here goes: Turn right into Euston Road from the Station, left Gower Street, right to Holborn Station, but I decided against it, and phoned the speaking clock for a more interesting conversation. You know how to do it and you don’t need me to tell you!

Keep on Rockin’ in the Free World

It’s really odd, but as I’m writing this and pondering the potential loss of our freedom to ply our trade on the glorious streets of London, what pops up on the radio, Neil Young’s’ classic, (keep on) Rockin’ In The Free World, I then growl “yeah, can beat the bastards.” With that, Fat Bastard looks at me like I had declared war on him, and he legs it out of the room faster than Dominic Cummings can dive into his car to drive to Durham, (hopefully he was catching driving way over the speed limit as well - because I’d like those rules adjusting too) but it occurs to me that we CAN overcome this.

We have, not unjustifiably assumed that the impeding road closures are an attack on our trade, but they aren’t. At worst it’s a flawed ideal designed to try and develop a utopian travel network, one where everybody walks and cycles, doffing their cap to each other whilst saying, “Ow do.” The thing is though EVERY trade that has to work, travel or operate in the City of London will be affected and eventually their businesses will also become adversely hit. The minority (us) will gain numbers until a breaking point is reached and changes have to come. I suspect this won’t take long given the arbitrary nature of the closures. The fallacious (Covid-19) implementation of the Streetspace initiative will not go unnoticed by those who will suffer at the hands of this project. 

Best in the World

So, in summary, the upshot is that the licensed London taxi industry has been consistently recognised as the best in the world - I believe we have a responsibility to keep that mantle. This therefore means we have to keep providing a world class service to the public. Register your discontent to the Mayor, to the London Assembly, to Boris Johnson, Grant Shapps and your local MP, it may just make a difference BUT what WILL make a difference is to keep providing a world class service to the public, people who deserve better than what they are getting from our politicians (this is the bit where I jump into a helicopter in my combat fatigues and make a motivational speech to the Greta Thunberg Appreciation Society).
“The examiners might have made things difficult for you, for their own cruel amusement…”

REMEMBERING THE KNOWLEDGE

ON THE ROAD

Since applying for my cab licence in 1985, I’ve seen the Knowledge from all angles: from Knowledge Boy to driver, plus, two short spells as a Knowledge examiner. I only wish I could remember it all!

As a Knowledge of London Examiner, I’d often reflect on when I sat on the other side of the table. Some of my colleagues could remember the details of their appearances at Penton Street or Palestra, but some of us older ones couldn’t remember things so clearly. Dave Hall remembers his time on the Knowledge, of course. The “Smiling Assassin” remembers everything. He passed out at about the same time as me and has a detailed memory of many of his appearances. I don’t remember any questions I was asked. I don’t even remember which examiner gave me my Req (wreck). I remember a Mr Orme. I didn’t meet the dreaded Mr Orme. I don’t remember the details. I remember Mr Melly. I remember a few of the examiners though. I know my mask was divided: all the other examiners said you couldn’t do it, I said you could. Maybe I had less fear in my twenties, or perhaps the Knowledge was a little easier in the 1980s? Although the examiners were more austere and it was a bit more formal than it is now, London was smaller and less complex. For example, Canary Wharf didn’t exist, and hotels didn’t change their names every week. The examiners might have made things difficult for you, for their own cruel amusement - but they usually stuck to Points that might be asked by a real live cab passenger.

With Points changing so frequently, we were all guilty of asking for places that no longer existed - Ghost Points. Well, the Mirabelle restaurant still looked open to me, and how did I know that St John’s Wood Police Station had closed months ago? Where the buildings still physically existed, ghost points were seen as legitimate. Illegal turns weren’t, and we’d have to be sure of ourselves for allowing or penalising manoeuvres we weren’t certain about. I penalised someone for turning right from Prince of Wales Road into Kentish Town Road. It’s completely legal; in fact I completed that turn myself driving in to London that very morning! I had to make a humiliating turn right from Prince of Wales Road into Kentish Town Road. It’s completely legal, in fact I completed that turn myself driving in to London that very morning! I had to make a humiliating turn right from Prince of Wales Road into Kentish Town Road. It sounded wrong, but I wasn’t 100% sure. My computer wasn’t switched on so I couldn’t check it out quickly. I’m sure he went on a Knowledge web forum afterwards to boast how he turned over an examiner. Fair play to him.

Examiners didn’t always agree with each other in interpretation. Coming from the east and setting down at Marylebone Station was a bone of contention. Opinion was divided: all the other examiners said you couldn’t do it, I said you could. Mark Gunning was adamant that you had to make an illegal U-turn, whereas I maintained that you turn right into Harewood Avenue, then turn again into Melcolme Place. The matter still comes up on Knowledge web forums.

Nerves

Some people are let down by nerves. I ran some mock appearances at a Knowledge school when I finished at TfL. Candidates would invariably perform well, but up at The Towers they’d lose it. Candidates have been known to declare themselves ill when they’ve seen Dave Hall come out to call them in. People have collapsed in the waiting area. At least one person couldn’t wait to use the toilet before being called, and went inside the examination room. Occasionally, someone would put in for an appearance before they were ready, and would fail to answer a single run, but generally if you’ve got as far as having appearances you know you can do it. The Knowledge is very democratic: it doesn’t matter where you come from or what your background is. Aziz from Afghanistan was better at the Knowledge than I ever was, as were a few others. We always looked forward to the arrival of Vera. She was extremely good at the Knowledge and she had a delivery as calming as the shipping forecast.

Anyone who has completed the Knowledge can show a high level of determination (remember that around 70% of those who start the Knowledge give it up). You have proven study skills, as your brain is constantly computing road patterns. After the Knowledge I felt I could do anything – even become an examiner.
Who’s got your back?

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Mortgage holders are now able to take a second three-month break from paying their mortgage after the Government announced extra help for people struggling to keep up with household bills during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Government initially announced that three-month mortgage payment holidays would be available on 17 March. The first people to take up the option would need to start paying their mortgage again in June. But the extension to the scheme means homeowners can now take another three-month break.

But before you decide to take a mortgage payment holiday, it’s a good idea to fully understand the consequences.

First of all, it’s not free money. Although your payments are paused, interest is still added to your balance during a payment holiday.

Secondly, when your payments restart after a payment holiday, they will be higher than before. How much extra you will pay depends on the size of your mortgage, the remaining term on your mortgage, and the interest rate.

For example, say you had a mortgage of £200,000 over 30 years and had 20 years left to go, and your interest rate was 2%. Your monthly payment would go up from £739 to £751 after a three-month payment break. It would jump to £762 if you had a six-month break.

If you had just three years to go on the same mortgage, your payments would increase from £739 to £808 a month after a three-month break, and £892 after a six-month break.

Calculate Your Payments

Emma Harvey, product director for mortgages at MoneySupermarket, said:

“That you can use MoneySupermarket’s mortgage payment holiday calculator to work out how your monthly payments will be affected when your payments restart. So far, we’ve had 35,000 people visit the calculator on our website so it’s clear that this is something people are seriously looking into. Anyone looking to take a payment holiday must talk to their lender to agree the change, and you should never just stop your payments as this will have a significant impact on your credit score.”

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the UK’s financial regulator, has said that taking a mortgage payment holiday agreed with your lender won’t mean a negative mark on your credit file.

However, experts have warned it could still affect your future borrowing options.

Credit Rating Impact?

Martin Lewis, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com, said: “The FCA has confirmed, sadly, that while credit files shouldn’t be impacted by mortgage or other payment holidays, lenders are still allowed to take them into account when making their acceptance decisions.

“It’s impossible to say yet how widespread this will be or how substantial the impact will be - we’ll start to learn that over the next year. Each lender’s assessment process is different, it’s a dark art that’s hidden from the public and never published, so this is likely to be yet another factor applicants will need to navigate.

“My hope is that as these holidays are specifically for the short-term financial hit of coronavirus – and as the practice is so widespread – it won’t be used by many firms, and where it is, it won’t tarnish an individuals’ credit reputation for too long. But there’s no real way to know.”

While the Government is keen to help homeowners with their finances during the coronavirus, it is yet to announce any significant help for tenants. Landlords can benefit from the mortgage payment holiday too, but there is no obligation for them to pass it on to struggling tenants who remain liable for the full rent.
Tony Pinner is a London Cabbie. His life has stalled. His marriage is turning stale. When one of his regular fares disappears, Pinner sets out to track the man and his kidnappers down. His actions bring him to the attention of an ancient order within the ranks of London's Black Cabs.

**His life is soon turned upside down.**

Set in 1970s London, 'The Knowledge' is a rapid, razor-sharp thriller, following a Taxi Driver, who has to use all his knowledge and courage to stay one step ahead of his pursuers as he tries to uncover the truth behind the kidnapping of his fare. The journey takes him to the city’s underbelly and, ultimately, London's black heart.

As he races to stay one turn ahead of his hunters, Pinner learns what really matters to him and who he can really trust. This knowledge might just keep him and his family alive.

'The Knowledge' is the first thriller by Mark Jackson - author, photographer and award-winning short film maker.

Q So, your 4th book and you've gone full Taxi! What made you embrace the subject and all the generic conventions associated with the 1970’s London Taxi world?

A The first time I travelled in a London Taxi would have been in the 1970s. The excitement, wonder, curiosity and joy of that first trip has stayed with me. In the book’s acknowledgements, I pay tribute to what a Taxi would have been in the 1970s and London Taxis. During the writing of The Knowledge, finds that he has to act. He knows two things - London and the difference between right and wrong.

My hope is that Cabbies reading 'The Knowledge' will get a buzz out of the sense of life on the streets in 1970s London and will enjoy the ride with Pinner as he descends through those streets into a different London – dark and deadly. To survive, Pinner has to use THE KNOWLEDGE. Cabbies hear things, see things, know things. Information that other people in London are not party to. They are the Keepers of London's Secrets. They meet all walks of life. From the ‘Glitz to the Gutter.’

The premise of The Knowledge is that some secrets are perhaps better not learned and certainly not shared, but Pinner, the Cabbie in The Knowledge, finds that he has to act. He loves by a code, A Cabbie's Code. 'The Knowledge' was inspired by Cabbies and my love of London. I admire them as a collective. Their depth of insight into their city. They are an integral part of it. An Institution that serves London. The Knowledge is one Cabbie's journey into the shadows.

Pinner crosses that line and is soon ensnared in a deadly game of Cat and Mouse through London's narrow back alleys and underpasses. Perhaps other Cabbies will join him.

Q Tell me something about the title that Cabbies will love - something that can't be read on the back cover.

A The public see the iconic Black Cab. 'The Knowledge' is about the guy driving it - his world and what he cares about. Tony Pinner is not an obvious hero, he has his troubles, is trying to work his way through them, but he knows two things - London and the difference between right and wrong.

Q So as you, yourself are not a licensed cabbie – tell me about your research. How did you get the inside track?

A From reading your first few chapters, you’ve certainly done some research.

Q What made you embrace the subject and all the generic conventions associated with the 1970’s London Taxi world?

A So many such conversations.

I had one very animated conversation with a Cabbie around the merits or otherwise of the Arsenal squad, which won the First Division title in 1971. It was a team I remembered as the side that edged out Don Revie’s Leeds United to the title. It was a discourse more passionate and informed that many football pundits I have heard. I’ve cited that example, but I was often struck by the range of topics and depth of knowledge across many such conversations.

My hope is that Cabbies reading 'The Knowledge' will get a buzz out of the sense of life on the streets in 1970s London and will enjoy the ride with Pinner as he descends through those streets into a different London – dark and deadly. To survive, Pinner has to use THE KNOWLEDGE. Cabbies hear things, see things, know things. Information that other people in London are not party to. They are the Keepers of London’s Secrets. They meet all walks of life. From the ‘Glitz to the Gutter.’

The premise of The Knowledge is that some secrets are perhaps better not learned and certainly not shared, but Pinner, the Cabbie in The Knowledge, finds that he has to act. He loves by a code, A Cabbie’s Code. 'The Knowledge' was inspired by Cabbies and my love of London. I admire them as a collective. Their depth of insight into their city. They are an integral part of it. An Institution that serves London. The Knowledge is one Cabbie’s journey into the shadows.

Pinner crosses that line and is soon ensnared in a deadly game of Cat and Mouse through London’s narrow back alleys and underpasses. Perhaps other Cabbies will join him.

Q Tell me something about the title that Cabbies will love - something that can't be read on the back cover.

A The public see the iconic Black Cab. 'The Knowledge' is about the guy driving it - his world and what he cares about. Tony Pinner is not an obvious hero, he has his troubles, is trying to work his way through them, but he knows two things - London and the difference between right and wrong.

Q So as you, yourself are not a licensed cabbie – tell me about your research. How did you get the inside track?

A From reading your first few chapters, you’ve certainly done some research.

Q What made you embrace the subject and all the generic conventions associated with the 1970’s London Taxi world?

A So many such conversations.

I had one very animated conversation with a Cabbie around the merits or otherwise of the Arsenal squad, which won the First Division title in 1971. It was a team I remembered as the side that edged out Don Revie’s Leeds United to the title. It was a discourse more passionate and informed that many football pundits I have heard. I’ve cited that example, but I was often struck by the range of topics and depth of knowledge across many such conversations.

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Q Tell me a bit about how you picture your worked on them.

I remember one cabbie telling me that passing The Knowledge was like getting your own very personal PhD. It wasn’t just a badge – it was part of you, that grew as you worked. That take on it has stayed with me. That is how Pinner sees it.

Pinner boxed in his youth. He is not someone to mess with. Physically, he is a presence. Despite his background, he might not have become a Cabbie. He had a dream to be a musician. He played in a Jazz band and was part of the London Jazz scene in his youth.

Q What’s your writing process when it comes to crime thriller? Do you have an idea and a plan with all the characters, the plot and ending pre-written and set out before putting pen to paper or do you just sit down and start writing the words from a blank canvass?

A It can be anything that can trigger an idea. A name that strikes a chord with me. I love the names that Dickens gave many of his characters. They just seem to fit. I have always loved sitting in cafes, people watching, as they greet each other, as they part. Names that Dickens gave many of his characters.

As I started out writing film scripts, I tend to get an idea, a kind of welcome, but slightly annoying thought – it might be just a word and then after a while, I map out a structure in bullet points. It can end up being pages. Like a one word per line shopping list. This is the quick part.

Then each word is revisited. It becomes a sentence, followed by a paragraph. I am making this sound nearer and far smoother than it actually is in practice. However, gradually an outline forms. In script writing terms this becomes a treatment.

At this stage, I often write a script. It’s sparse, keeping in only the essentials. It charts the Protagonist’s journey, his challenge, his journey, what is at stake. What he cares about. His adversary. The Antagonist is crucial. Having a good baddie is vital. Very often, they become the most memorable characters in the story.

Q Pen and ink or keyboard – do you still have old school preferences when it comes to being creative and getting words down?

A Pen and ink in the first instance. I’ve carried a notebook and pen around with me since I was in my late teens. Small, black, hard covered. Cheap. About six inches by four inches. If they have an elastic band around them to keep the pen and notebook together – even better. For a while I had a batch of old surplus Police notebooks. Later, a very good friend of mine kept me supplied in notebooks – one of many kindnesses – I dedicated The Knowledge to her and her husband.

If something strikes me, it goes into the notebook. It might be the name of a shop or a street, a new musical track or an idea for a book. Sometimes it might just be a name that appeals in some way. I keep them all. You never know. I have old shoe boxes crammed with them, that I rummage through periodically, usually when I am facing a steep wall of writer’s block.

Nowadays, you have to use technology. I am something of a Luddite, but there comes a point when the handwritten notes have to make the leap on to a computer. Rewriting involves both the ‘new’ and the ‘old’. I print out the manuscript and take three different coloured pens to it; Red is delete, Blue is a change, Green is new material.

Q What sets ‘The Knowledge’ apart from the other books you’ve written?

A ‘The Knowledge’ is my first thriller. That makes the tone and pace of it different. As it grew out of conversations with Taxi Drivers and the people I had met at Spitalfields, it was important to retain that texture, that sense of an alternative deeply rooted London. A darker, unseen underground. The book has a sense of London not that I’d like readers to breathe in.

Q I note in the promotional images so many shots of Spitalfields – what’s the relationship there?

A Spitalfields Market is a very special place for me. I came across it in the late 1980s. At that time, anyone could just walk through the market. For a young photographer, access was not a problem. It was in the run up to the entire market moving to Hackney Marshes. Working with fellow photographer Huw Davies, we would record the market and its characters. Men who had worked there since they were 12 years old and still grafting at 70; slightly bow-legged, former boxers, full of early morning humour and sometimes darker tales of the East End. A Victorian emporium of hand-pulled carts and high-stacked wooden crates. Forklifts were still uncommon. The aroma of freshly cooked Seafood from a stall on the central avenue competing with the earthy scent of fresh fruit and vegetables.

I owned and I worked with 35mm Black and White film. In total, we took about 4,500-5,000 images of the market and the surrounding area. We both had other jobs, but we began to spend more and more time there. It hooked us. The images depict something of life there in the last 38 months before the market moved. The collection of photographs is now housed at the Bishopsgate Institute.

Q Tell me a bit about how you picture your lead Cabbie in the book, Tony Pinner…

A Pinner has a code. He comes from a family with a tradition of being Black Cab drivers. It is deeply ingrained in him. He feels himself to be responsible for the people in his charge, his fellow Londoners. His heritage is a very strong part of him and of being a vital part of the city. He is loyal and trustworthy. He is dedicated to his family, even though his wife and he are in choppy waters.

However, it would be wrong to paint him as a saint. He has a short fuse; he reacts then thinks afterwards. In ‘The Knowledge’, Pinner has to learn to curb that instinct and use his head. After all he has passed The Knowledge, so we know he has a good brain.

They just seem to fit.

THE KNOWLEDGE

MARK JACKSON

“We would record the market and its characters. Men who had worked there since they were 12 years old and still grafting at 70; slightly bow-legged, former boxers, full of early morning humour and sometimes darker tales of the East End.”

Mark Jackson

2 June 2020 23
Thank You Paul Fleming - 74295

Hi TAXI newspaper,

This is a very late thank you that I wonder if you could pass on (along with my apologies for it being so late!) One of your lovely drivers, Paul Fleming, rescued me in December - I left my purse in his cab when he dropped me off at Cannon St Station and he rang me (my card was in the purse) and drove all the way back with it. It had all my cards, cash and other items in - and I so appreciated his kind action. I took his number - his cab was 74295.

If you could let him know I was very grateful for his good deed - and have kept his card to thank him - even if I'm only doing it now.

Best wishes,
Tee Dobinson

RE: New Bill - Thank you Rob!

Dear TAXI,

During the lockdown period I had problems with TfL renewing my bill. When I completed my DBS check I unwittingly failed to put down my shortened name of Jon, my given and birth name is Jonathan.

TfL rejected my application. A quick phone call to the LTDA and I was put on to Rob Nanasi, and he told me that I had to take out another DBS check at my own expense and then when I received the new E number I should forward all of the details to him and he would take care of it.

I received my new bill about a week ago - the advice and instructions which Rob gave me were invaluable. It shows that even during a national crisis the LTDA is there to help its members.

A big thank you to Rob once again for everything you did for me.

Yours sincerely,
Jon Lines
Badge number 70901

Thank You Paul Fleming - 74295

On receiving his ‘self-distanced’ cheque, Darren commented, “Wow, this could not have come at a better time, I am now well chuffed I bought the tickets each month!”

March winner, Darren Simpson receiving a cheque for £5,000

RE: Medicals - Thank you to LTDA’s Lloyd!

Following the article by Lloyd Baldwin in a recent issue of Taxi regarding Medicals (21st April 2020), I would like to share my recent experience of this process. I turned 56 in March of this year and was required to go for a medical beforehand. As I had still to receive the relevant documentation from TfL, I contacted the LTDA and spoke to Lloyd, who contacted them and emphasized that I hadn't received the documentation and it would be near impossible to get a doctor's appointment within the timeframe of my impending birthday. They agreed to an extension to the due date.

The doctor's appointment for my medical was made. No problems with my medical (I'm a non-smoker, very moderate drinker and exercise daily) but I explained to the doctor that I had been to the opticians two weeks previously for a routine eye test and had brought my prescription with me. He refused to fill the optical section, insisting I return to the opticians for them to sign. This I did, although I had to jump through hoops to obtain a signature due to the lockdown. I sent the medical form to TfL thinking that would be that. I received an email a few weeks later stating that I hadn't met the optical requirements and I would be required to take another optical test called the Esterman, bearing in mind when I went for my original eye test in February, the optician said I was fit to drive. Also, I had lens replacement treatment on my eyes (aged 52) so my eyesight should be above average, so this came as a shock to me. I took the test and sent the results off, as I had not scored 100% I was worried. After an anxious week, TfL replied confirming the renewal of my license and I was fit to drive.

In my opinion this all came about because the doctor refused to do a routine eye test (although on my first medical at the age of 50, this was performed during my appointment). Also, I believe the whole episode has come about because someone did not want to take responsibility and ticked a “box” in error without realizing the consequences. I would like to add Lloyd was supportive throughout this anxious time. When I returned my Esterman results to TfL, I cc’d Lloyd on all communication. During these times more than ever, the LTDA are an important organisation to belong to, of which I have been a member for the 15 years that I’ve had my badge.

- Paul Keogh
Badge number: 73575

You’ve probably heard of the LTDA Lottery. What you probably don’t know is that since it started in 1986, there have been over 360 winners. That’s over £1,800,000 million paid out in prize money.

LTDA LOTTERY WINNERS!

Due to lockdown and social distancing restrictions, meeting with all our lottery winners to present them with their prizes has proved challenging of late! So, General Secretary, Steve McNamara caught up with the March and April winners in order to present them with their prizes...

LTDA LOTTERY

The first prize in our lottery is £5000 - every month! But you won’t win it if you’re not in it.

Tickets cost £5 each per month. And even if you don’t win, you’ll know that proceeds from the lottery contribute towards the LTDA advertising campaigns run on radio, posters and AdVan.

MEMBERS ONLY

To be in on it, call 020 7286 1046 and ask about the LTDA Lottery.

On receiving his ‘self-distanced’ cheque, Darren commented, “Wow, this could not have come at a better time, I am now well chuffed I bought the tickets each month!”

March winner, Darren Simpson receiving a cheque for £5,000

April winner Edward Panton receiving a cheque for £5,000

Eddie said “I could not believe it when I got the call to say I had won, fantastic news! I obviously cannot go out to celebrate, but we will do the moment we can!”

April winner Edward Panton receiving a cheque for £5,000
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. Then return the form to the LTDA, FREEPOST, (PAM 2005), London W9 2BR

To the Manager of ____________________________

Address ____________________________

Origantor’s Identification No. 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 ____________________________

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.
NE PAS DE TOUCHER!

LESSON 1 (1945) & 2 (1962)

L ooking through the papers in early May, I suddenly realised they were all talking about cancelling the VE Day celebrations on 8th May because of the Virus Pandemic. I found it hard to believe that it was going to be the 75th Anniversary, because events on that day in 1945 at our Street Party could have cost me my life! The day is so clear in my mind that it could have been just seventy-five days ago!

The Townsend family had returned to London about six months before the end of the war, after spending some four years in Cornwall having been evacuated. We settled in a little house, owned by one of my Mum’s clients on her early morning ‘Charring’ situated in Twyford Street, off the ‘Cally’, with the old ‘Cally’ Baths on the corner.

The news came filtering through in April when I became ten years old, that the Germans were going to surrender soon. A committee was formed to organise a street party. When VE Day eventually arrived on May 8th, 1945, a massive line of wooden tables and chairs appeared in the middle of the street that had been blocked to traffic, and all sorts of goodies suddenly appeared from the mums who had been hoarding them. I particularly remember the wonderful, freshly made chocolate and cream cakes. When the seldom-seen bananas appeared, the young kids had to be shown how to eat them by peeling back the skin.

Lesson 1 (1945)
All the chairs were occupied with our neighbours - noshing all the goodies. I noticed that the Chairman of the street party committee was on the other side of the road fixing up an old-fashioned spotlight. So being an inquisitive ten-year-old, I crossed the road and became his ‘personal assistant!’ He gave me some little things to do and suddenly said, “Could you move the ‘spot’ a little to the right please Alfie?” So, I grabbed hold of the large steel spotlight and that’s the last thing I can remember. It hadn’t been earthed properly and I was knocked unconscious with a massive electric shock!

When I eventually came around, I was lying on the floor and seeing all the faces staring down at me and a lady was wiping my face with a wet flannel. They sat me up and the Chairman, (looking deathly white with worry) said nervously, “Give him a large lump of chocolate cake and he’ll be alright!” So, that was that - no ambulance, no nurses and no doctor, just a large lump of chocolate cake!

Oh yes, I remember VE Day in 1945 very well!

‘The Butterboy and Miss X’.
It was approaching 1963, during the ‘Swinging Sixties’ when I eventually said my farewells to the old PCO in Lambeth Road. I was now a fully-fledged London Cabbie starting my job that I would do for the next fifty-six years!

I had the habit of visiting ‘The Taxi Shelter’ in Warwick Avenue for a cup of tea and a sarnie after the evening rush hour. It was very convenient because they had a rank outside, and the phone was always ringing. One evening, I was just finishing my cuppa and a job came in. One of the regulars playing cards answered the phone and took down the details. When he returned, he said to me, “That was Miss X one of our regulars, would you like the job - it’s a decent wait and return, but we’re all playing cards at the moment?” I jumped at the chance, because a wait and return job is not to be sneezed at. He gave me her address and I noted many of the regulars in the Taxi Shelter were grinning - and I was soon to find out the reason why! I rang the bell at Miss X’s address, and she came out. I remember her being a buxom and good-looking older woman - very much too old for my taste, but well made up and wearing a very expensive looking, full length fur coat and glamorous high heels. ‘Probably an ex-showgirl,’ I thought to myself.

Lesson 2 (1962)
“Have you taken me before cabbie?” she asked in a refined voice. “No Madam, I haven’t had the pleasure”, she smiled at the compliment. “Well,” she said, “we go to Regent’s Park, once round the Inner Circle then back again.” We were halfway round the Inner Circle when she shouted out, “Can you stop a minute, cabbie?” So, I pulled up the cab leaving the engine running. Suddenly the lights went on in the back and she shouted out again, “What do you think of this, cabbie?” I turned around in all innocence and was confronted by quite a sight… She had pulled open her full-length fur coat (with not a stitch of clothing underneath) - I remember thinking at the time in my embarrassment, ‘I bet you don’t get too many of those to the pound…!’ I mumbled something in reply like, ‘Very nice, Madam.’ For me, it was certainly only for looking at, and definitely - ‘ne pas de toucher’. Then it was lights out and back to her home without another word being spoken!

All the guys were still playing cards when I returned, and you can imagine the ribald remarks shouted at me. It was almost like an initiation test at an Officer’s College or a famous University! I had passed the test with flying colours because I had the ‘bottle’ to come back to the rank and suffer the crude remarks thrown at me. I suppose you could say that my formal acceptance as a fully-fledged night man! I might sound like an old softie, but I often wonder what happened to the sad Miss X!

“What do you think of this, cabbie? I turned around in all innocence and was confronted by quite a sight…”
PUZZLER

CROSSWORD

ACROSS:
1 Feel a shiver down your spine (2,3,3,4)
8 Swivel (5)
9 Red street furniture item (7)
10 Elbow jab (4)
11 Spread like ___, multiply very rapidly (8)
14 Rigid support for a broken bone (6)
15 Give aid (6)
17 Cost label (5,3)
18 Voucher, receipt (4)
21 Takes part in an election (5)
23 Bug (6-6)

DOWN:
1 Rise from bed (3,2)
2 Common herd (3,6)
3 Short stiff ballet skirt (4)
4 Mealtime clothes protector (6)
5 Counter at which customers pay (4,4)
6 Chemist's workroom (3)
7 Suppose or anticipate (6)
12 Dish of mutton, potatoes and onions (5,4)
13 Make uneasy (8)
14 Evening snack (6)
16 Appealing and memorable (slogan) (6)
19 Full of flavour (5)
20 Finished (4)
22 Contents of a balloon (3)

SUGURU
Each cell in an outlined block must contain a digit: a two-cell block contains the digits 1 and 2, a three-cell block contains the digits 1, 2 and 3; and so on. The same digit must not appear in neighbouring cells, not even diagonally.

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

WISTERIA

ALL ANSWERS TO PUZZLER ON P30

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CLASSIFIED

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Linage:
Up to 15 words: £35
Up to 25 words: £45
Up to 35 words: £55

PLACED YOUR LINAGE BY WEDNESDAY MAY 10TH FOR TAXI 470

CALL JONNY ON 01727 739 193
I hope you are all following the Government’s recent guideline and staying alert? Mr Meg was reading the 2013 Screwfix catalogue on the Sunday evening of the PM’s broadcast and was not fully concentrating, and he heard ‘staying alert’ as ‘staying alive’. I then made a sarcastic quip, suggesting that his next ‘essential journey’ should be to go get a hearing test… I’m uncertain if what followed next was designed as a diversionary attempt to distract from his embarrassment and lack of enthusiasm to follow my directive or that his ‘staying alive’ moment turned to music in his Screwfix’d brain.

Sunday Night Fever
Engaging full, ‘Saturday Night Fever’ mode, he leapt off the sofa, (to add to the image, readers, he was wearing his lockdown superman boxers and matching baggy t shirt) and launched into the John Travolta, ‘pointy arm staying alive’ dance moves. In doing so, he accidentally punched the front room light fitting off the ceiling. It fell to the floor, shattered, and for the second or two it took his brain to tell his body to cease dancing, he managed to impulse the top of his big toe on a shard of glass from said light fitting.

Not Staying Alert
Mr Meg ‘not staying alert’ is becoming a thing. Last Thursday, I was nearly arrested as a result. Going to the supermarket is something we have traditionally done together. It’s Mr. Meg’s big opportunity to take on the ‘manly mantle’ of driving me somewhere. I can’t however shop with him due to his need to read the paper in the car and my need for the supermarket experience not to take up the entire day. He always likes to park in the space furthest from the shop. This is because he is convinced that all the people with shopping bags are not there to buy groceries. Oh no. They are part of a conspiracy tag-team with a mission to park too close to his 2008 Nissan Note and scratch his precious paintwork…

My orders are to text him when at the till, and he then drives round and waits for me in a spot nearer the shop. This protects his car and saves me the mile walk back to his wilderness parking spot. I go along with it, but always thought this to be very silly, so when I get in the car (always in the back because the dog hogs the front seat in Mr Meg’s car and makes it hairy) it’s like he’s my getaway driver. I thump the back of his seat and holler “GO! GO! GO!” - It’s our little joke.

It was all OK until the day it wasn’t. I dashed out of the shop with a carrier bag full of essential goodies, jumped into the back, did the “GO ! GO! GO!” shout and thumped the seat in front of me. It was then I noticed the baby, next to me in the back seat. My first thought was “Where did Mr Meg get a baby from?” and then I heard a woman shriek “Help!” Help! She’s trying to steal my baby!” The baby began to cry. Other shoppers ran to her aid. They began filming and taking photos of me. One of them dialled 999. And I couldn’t get out of the back seat because there was a child lock on it.

Crimewatch, Here I Come
It took a while to explain to the lady, and the crowd, that her car was identical to Mr Megs and that I always run out of the store and jump in the back screaming ‘GO GO GO’, because we think it’s funny. She curled her lip in disgust and clutched her still crying baby to her chest and demanded, “Why would anyone normal do that?”

A young, understanding police officer escorted me back to Mr Meg’s car. Mr Meg had his seat tilted right back and was snoring like a hippopotamus when the officer knocked his window. The officer made a sarcastic quip about ‘staying alert’ but Mr. Meg - he didn’t hear.
At least one trader I know, panicked and sold three cabs at a substantial loss’

DONT’ PANIC MR MAINWARING - IT’S SOCIAL MEDIA FAKE NEWS

Distribution Points

A selection of our numerous traders wanting to buy “All the cheap Euro VI’s in London”?

Apparently, the story originated on social media, and that London is awash with cabbies and fleets desperate to unload diesels and especially Euro VI cabs. I hadn’t had any more calls from sellers than usual, in fact I had received more enquiries from London buyers than sellers, and a quick ring around with my usual contacts confirmed the story as totally untrue.

Insidious Social Media

What it shows is just how insidious social media can be, so many people believed it, that for a while at least, it skewed the pricing for the entire market and at least one trader I know, panicked and sold three cabs at a substantial loss. Moral of the story?

Don’t panic Mr Mainwaring!

WORD ON THE STREET

While I, and no one else, has ever lived through anything like the current crisis, I do know that the golden rule in any crisis is not to panic or kneel ask. We don’t yet know what will happen when we get back to a sense of normality, although most pundits predict we are to reopen, which probably won’t be until late August or September at the earliest, I’d hazard a guess...

Diesel Owners Not Selling Up

So why is it that I’m getting lots of calls from around the country from garages and traders wanting to buy “All the latest, I’d hazard a guess…

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

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LETTERBOX

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