U-BOATS ON THE THAMES?
**TAXI NEWS**

**Uber Partner Up with Thames Clippers & Asda**

- Whilst Uber prepare their response to TfL having ruled that they are not ‘fit and proper’ to hold a private hire license, they’ve decided to enter the market via a different route. Perhaps when cabbies were telling them to ‘get in the sea’ they took the idea more literally than one might expect. They’ve now partnered up with commuter boat operators, Thames Clippers and reportedly are going to purchase the rights to rebrand their fleet of vessels and piers – many of the current ‘River Buses’ are already having a black and white new paint job and will become ‘Uber Boats by Thames Clippers’. The ownership structure of Thames Clippers it is said will not change and the company will still operate under existing TfL licensing arrangements. What will change is that customers will be able to book Thames Clipper trips through the Uber app, however as of yet journeys will not be bookable which involve both car and boat services combined into a single journey. Customers will also be able to use traditional booking methods via Thames Clippers and utilising the TfL Oyster Card.

- Uber Eats have partnered up with Asda to launch a trial ‘rapid delivery’ grocery service – the trial will take place in Leeds and Birmingham and may be rolled out to more areas should it be deemed successful.

**Former Uber Driver Gets Life**

- Finally, Mohiussunnath Chowdhury, who planned to target popular attractions, including Madame Tussauds, the Pride parade and an open-top sightseeing bus, using a gun, knife and van, last year has been put away for a minimum of 25 years.

  Sentencing at Woolwich Crown Court, Judge Andrew Lees said he was satisfied that Chowdhury was “dangerous” and posed ‘a significant risk to members of the public of serious harm’. Summing up he remarked, "The danger that you present is ongoing, it’s not possible to say when that danger will abate." Further commenting on his conversations with undercover Police officers, that he had a “devotion to the cause of violent Islamic extremism” and that the conversations with the undercover officers were focused, fanatical and an exposition of Chowdhury's support for violent jihad. "I'm satisfied that you planned to commit attacks of terrorism immenantly," Judge Lees added.

  His sister Sneha Chowdhury, 26, who has been convicted of one count of ‘failing to disclose information about acts of terrorism’, is yet to be sentenced.

- Further to our news article in #471 of TAXI which saw the BBC apologise for depicting Taxis incorrectly in a story about private hire related incidents, BBC News last week picked up again on the story of Dan Williams and his Guide Dog, Zodiac – which was featured in TAXI #468 back in May. They are continuing to prepare their case against Uber under the Equality Act. Whilst such coverage is welcomed, unfortunately, part way down the article they provide a link to RNIB discrimination guidance and make the connection as to how it can be used to challenge ‘taxi’ drivers… which leads nicely into introducing Lloyd Baldwin’s article about how he goes about challenging news companies when they misrepresent taxis in reports about mini cab drivers and companies. Find out how you can support the trade on this issue on page 11.

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"Working alongside, and sharing the costs evenly with UTAG, the lawyers are preparing the groundwork for a challenge in the High Court."

IS LONDON REALLY OPEN FOR BUSINESS?

L ast week, the Mayor proclaimed, “London is open for business again”. Whilst there are green shoots of recovery due to the hospitality sector reopening and the air bridges now in place, a couple of busy Saturday nights in Soho is not going to be enough to get our city and economy going again.

Advice Not Reflecting the Reality

The Mayor and TfL continue to advise people to avoid public transport for all but essential journeys - so the messaging is confusing and doesn’t reflect the realities of London life. If people aren’t going to work (with many still working from home) and they can’t use public transport, they won’t be coming into central London. Meanwhile, schemes like the proposed Bishopsgate Corridor, closing key thoroughfares that keep London moving to all vehicles and instead creating another largely empty bus / cycle / walk only area, lead many of us to question if London is really open? It seems not if you’re a taxi driver.

As anyone working in London right now will know, it’s still slow out there. The main terminus stations are still pretty dead, with the odd wary looking commuter emerging in search of a cab and being greeted by a full rank of eager drivers, who’ve probably been waiting for a fare for hours. The waves of pedestrians and cyclists returning to work, shop and visit bars and restaurants in central London are still yet to appear and the wider pavements and new cycle lanes sit empty. Meanwhile, our roads are increasingly congested and clogged, as all vehicles fight for less and less road space. This madness surely can’t continue. But it seems it can…

Bishopsgate Corridor Scheme

Last week, TfL released plans for its Bishopsgate Corridor Scheme - closing the majority of Bishopsgate and Gracechurch Street to all vehicles except buses between 7am and 7pm. It’s still unclear what access taxis will have, with a vague reference to continued access for “essential trips” and “essential access” in the plans. We are seeking urgent clarification. What’s clear is that they don’t currently intend to give us the same access as buses – the access we have now. We have objected to the scheme and set out our concerns centred on how the plans will undermine the reliable door-to-door service we provide, add to congestion and destroy confidence in the future of the taxi trade. We continue to call for universal taxi access. We’ve briefed key AMs and MPs about the scheme and urged them to keep questioning the Mayor and help us to make our concerns known.

Disability charities and campaigners have also been objecting strongly to the scheme and we are reaching out to see how we can work together on this, to ensure London remains accessible to all.

In the next few weeks, we will be ramping up the pressure as it’s clear that TfL and City Hall aren’t listening to reason and it’s looking more and more like removing taxi access is a foregone conclusion. The promised consultation on the Streetspace plans has not materialised and instead they are introducing schemes one at a time, quickly and quietly to avoid scrutiny. But it’s the wrong approach for our city as it will undermine London’s recovery, and we will be shouting that loud as we can.

It’s Mayor’s Question Time at City Hall later this week, so hopefully Assembly Members will continue to press him for answers on taxis access. On the 22nd July, the Mayor also faces questions from the House of Commons Transport Select Committee about his response to Coronavirus and its implications for transport, as part of the Committee’s inquiry on the subject. We were asked to submit evidence to inform the questioning and hope to see the Mayor grilled on the impact of Streetspace. On the same day, the London Assembly Transport Committee is meeting to scrutinise the impact of Streetspace, and we have briefed committee members ahead of this, to ensure the role of taxis and need for universal access is high on the agenda.

High Court Challenge

We are still pursuing all the above in the knowledge (which is crystal clear to anyone who knows anything about transport in London) that taxis should have universal access everywhere. Denying us and our passengers (many of whom may be using a cab because they are unable to use other modes of transport, or because there is no space on the bus or tube), the ability to complete their journey by the quickest, most direct and cheapest route is not just madness, it’s wrong - and we will challenge it in the courts if the Bishopsgate schemes are not changed.

Working alongside, and sharing the costs evenly with UTAG, the lawyers are preparing the groundwork for a challenge in the High Court. A challenge of this sort is notoriously difficult to bring and even harder to win but faced with a Mayor whose entire transport team seem determined to force us off the streets and consign us to history - we are left with no choice.

Steve McNamara is the LTDA’s General Secretary
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*Subject to qualification and approved. Available at participating dealers only. Business users only. Financial Solutions refers to Personal Contract Purchase. **APR Representative figure based on TX Vesta at 1.8% APR (OTR) figure is not U.K. Meg). An extra VAT which is up to £1,500 and is subject to European Vehicle Type Approval and European Commission data access notification and including an optional 5 year service plan costing £1,700 and an optional 5 year warranty costing £90. **A finance deposit contribution £2,500, a customer deposit of £1,208, followed by 60 monthly payments of £206. It is possible to pay by weekly, biweekly, monthly or direct debit plus a one-off payment of £206. If paid upon an invoice contract, inclusive of £206. You have a right at the end of the agreement to: 1) Return the vehicle and not pay the optional final payment. 2) If the vehicle has exceeded the maximum agreed mileage a charge per excess mile will apply. 3) In good condition the vehicle is returned in a good condition. 4) No restrictions on use of vehicle. 5) Payment is subject to settlement of your existing finance agreement. New finance agreements are subject to status. All prices inclusive of VAT. Two, three or four year plans are also available. Finance is provided by March (a), a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales. © 2019 LEVC

Download the LEVC app to discover our full product guides, including operator handbooks, quick start guides and much more.
LEVC starts VN5 electric van trials with famous British postal service and courier provider

Trial phase will last until Q4 2020 with over 25 business partners taking part.

Converted TX used as trial vehicle

Royal Mail is the latest household name to partner with LEVC and take delivery of a prototype of its new electric van, the VN5, for use in real-world testing.

Thanks to the similarities between LEVC’s TX Taxi and VN5, LEVC is deploying a fleet of converted TX-based prototypes utilising a full interior van conversion, kickstarting trials ahead of official VN5 launch later this year.

The famous British postal service and courier provider is one of 25 business partners taking part in the trials, all using the converted TX-based vehicles.

Joerg Hofmann, LEVC CEO, commented: “Royal Mail is one of the oldest postal services in the world and, like our London black cab, is part of British history and culture. It is great that these two iconic brands are joining forces for this trial. The VN5 prototypes will wear the iconic Royal Mail red livery and be used on routes that will test the vehicles ability to the full. These trials are crucial to the final development of the van, ahead of its launch later this year.”

The VN5 cargo capacity easily accommodates two Euro sized pallets with a gross payload of over 800kg. It has been built with a large side-loading door (enabling a pallet to be side-loaded) and a 60/40 split door at the rear to make loading and unloading easy for the driver. LEVC’s trial phase will take place over the next few months and prototypes will be trialled with a wide range of businesses, from Tool & Equipment hire to Energy suppliers. These companies have been specifically chosen to put the vehicle through a variety of different use cases.

Paul Gatti, Fleet Director at Royal Mail said: “As a Company, we are committed to making changes to our operations that reduce our environmental impact, whilst ensuring we continue to meet customer expectations. Alongside the introduction of electric vans in locations across our business, this trial is part of a programme of initiatives that allow us to experiment with ways to achieve this, whilst enabling us to continue to deliver letters and parcels safely, efficiently and responsibly.”
“With so many changes to the road network we will sometimes find ourselves to be unaware of new road layouts whilst working in real-time.”

BANNED MOVEMENTS, CHANGING KNOWLEDGE & FREE DRIVE THROUGH COFFEE...

The government has finally given ‘the all clear’ for pubs and restaurants to reopen, inclusive of setting out new recommendations and conditions on social distancing in an effort to try and kick start the night-time economy. That kick start will hopefully not only be for those businesses but should also have a knock-on effect for us. I have been told the work levels did improve slightly on the opening weekend but mainly on the apps, rather than traditional street hails.

Streetspace Impacts
The trade has faced huge competition recently. I haven’t got to tell you about the challenges we’ve faced in the recent past, but right now my focus is concerned with what we are facing as London comes out of lockdown. We have TfL banning taxi movements on certain roads and only allowing access for cycles and buses - and this course of action can only damage our industry. Can you imagine a regular cab user who gets in the cab and travels the same route every day knowing exactly the normal cost to them or their company and the journey time, only to find themselves discovering increases in both?

Changing Knowledge
With so many changes to the road network we will sometimes find ourselves to be unaware of new road layouts whilst working in real-time. I don’t know about you, but when you do try to explain to a passenger that this road layout has just appeared and that it wasn’t here yesterday - it can cause problems for us drivers. Even more so when working the night shift and the passenger is taking your cab after they have had a few too many and start accusing you of taking them the wrong way or that you’re doing this on purpose in an effort to increase the fare!

I’ve had this issue before, and it can be very intimidating. What I normally do is try to agree with the passenger as much as possible - even though they are wrong and more often than not it ends well with a nice tip at the end of the journey!

Banned Movements
The City of London, Camden, Islington and TfL are implementing increasingly more of these so-called social distancing measures and closing the roads where we ply our trade. This will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on our livelihoods, the latest one is a part closure of Bishopsgate and Gracechurch Street, with a number of ‘banned movements’ that will have a huge impact on taxis and passengers - especially those who have disabilities.

What I would like to know is who comes up with these ideas? All I see now is empty streets, empty cycle lanes, empty buses and I have been told the tube is the same. If the Mayor of London believes that closing roads and putting cycle lanes in will encourage more people to cycle, I think he needs his head examined.

Ludicrous Plans
Just look at the lovely weather we had been having recently, yet I still do not see more cyclists on the streets - so what will it be like in the winter months? What we need to do is free up London streets from traffic - and that is not going to happen with these ludicrous plans.

Can you imagine a businessman who needs to attend a meeting in London - he travels down from say Coventry and when he arrives at Euston, do you think he’s thinking ‘I know, I’m going to jump on a bicycle to get to my destination’? Of course, he isn’t. My guess is, he’ll be looking forward to jumping into a taxi and arriving at his destination relaxed and ready for his meeting.

Well think again, because these road restrictions will make their journeys an absolute misery and for the life of me, I can’t see how this will be helping the economy to bounce back?

We Carry Those Who Can’t Walk & Cycle
We have raised all the issues with the City of London and the Mayor’s office and made ourselves very clear. All taxis are the only form of public transport where social distancing is even possible. We carry those who cannot walk, or cycle and we absolutely must be given access to the entire road network.

We are trying to position ourselves as being part of the solution and not part of the problem. All we want is to carry as many passengers as we can to their destinations in the safest form of transport available (a taxi) in the shortest way possible and in the safest environment.

TAXI Exemption
Giving taxis access to all these restricted areas would allow us to continue to provide a first-class service and do so with a reduction on the current metered fare for passengers who are subjected to these ludicrous detours. This can only be achieved if taxis are exempt from future schemes and would surely serve as a positive for everyone in these difficult times.

Free Tea & Coffee Anybody?
Amongst all this trade turbulence, it’s nice to be able to offer members something to keep you all going, so... The LTDA has partnered up with the London Hilton on Park Lane. As a continued token of appreciation and heartfelt thanks for all your services, London Hilton on Park Lane will be offering all LTDA drivers 20% off the hotel’s F&B outlets until 31st March 2021. Furthermore, complimentary takeaway tea or coffee from the hotel’s drive-through facility will be available from 1st – 31st August, seven days a week for all drivers, 10am - 11am and 3pm - 4pm.

Enjoy.

Anthony Street is an LTDA Executive Support Officer

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FURLoughed Lycra, Updates & A Conversation Starter...

With some of the ridiculous road plans having now gone ahead and the already disastrous outcome we’re seeing from them, we must and will use every avenue at our disposal to fight back, absolutely no course of action can be left off the table.

Furloughed Lycra

The mantra of; ‘if you build it, they will come’ has not materialised, the middle aged lycra wearing man is still either furloughed or working from home and will probably remain so for many weeks to come. Meanwhile, London’s commercial traffic has begun to return to the streets - and even though it’s not currently anywhere near normal levels, we’re already seeing some of London’s main arteries like the Euston Rd (with its ridiculous clogging/choking scheme), grind to a halt. The result being delays & additional costs for the commercial sector and added pollution for local residents and businesses, all whilst an empty lane reserved for the elusive cyclists goes largely unused. Everyone knows what a clogged artery leads to - death, the death of our great city and all to appease the entitled few by the quite obviously looney few.

The plans currently being introduced by local authorities to allow for better social distancing were all based on a social distancing measure of 2 metres, now that has been changed to 1 metre plus, surely these measures all need a complete rethink. We need of course to be mindful that whilst we need to allow for free-flowing traffic, we do have to give people the confidence to go out and about… and we need both traffic & people to flow freely around town. Having one but not the other is pointless.

Call Me Crazy

Statistics released at the beginning of July by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows footfall increased in June by 40% on the High Street, 50% in shopping centres but the best increase in footfall at 70% has been at retail parks. Call me crazy, but what’s the big difference between our local High St and the Retail Parks? Could it be that one is car friendly and allows people to access it how they actually want to access it, whilst the other has been used as a political football by a minority to enforce access it, whilst the other has been used as a political football by a minority to enforce

Working From Home

showing footfall increased in June by 40% on the High Street, 50% in shopping centres but the best increase in footfall at 70% has been at retail parks. Call me crazy, but what’s the big difference between our local High St and the Retail Parks? Could it be that one is car friendly and allows people to access it how they actually want to access it, whilst the other has been used as a political football by a minority to enforce access it, whilst the other has been used as a political football by a minority to enforce

NSL Testing

If you’re one of the many drivers who’ve been given a 6 month extension on your cabs licence, i.e. if your Taxi was due to be relicensed between 23/3/20 & 30/6/2020 can I suggest that if you can, don’t wait until the end of the 6 months to get your NSL test done. Those who were due a test in March or early April will be joining the list of all those who are due a test in September which is one of the busiest months for testing (as it’s a new number plate month), and with social distancing measures meaning less appointments, it could become more difficult to obtain an appointment before the current licence expires. With the new rules that all cabs now have a maximum age limit, there is no benefit in delaying the renewal of your plate.

Payment Holidays

Mortgage lenders have already been told that they should be extending help for their customers and as a result many drivers have been given further payment holidays to take them up to October 2020. Now, further guidance to other high value lenders to offer assistance & payment holidays for those with Taxi finance for example could be imminent from the FCA, the draft guidance is as follows and will be much needed & appreciated if implemented:

Customers who have already taken a payment holiday should be offered an extension of up to three months if they are still struggling due to coronavirus. Lenders can also offer to reduce payments to an affordable level for up to three months as an alternative. Lenders must contact customers at the end of their first payment freeze to find out if they can resume payments – however, any extension of your payment holiday won’t be automatic, so you’ll need to ask for help if you need it.

Interest will continue to accrue on loans during any payment freeze, and in some cases the interest rate can be hefty – so only consider doing this if you really need it.

As is already the case, it’ll be up to individual firms to decide whether your loan’s term will be extended as a result of a payment freeze, or if you could be asked to make higher payments once the freeze is over. Make sure you check all the implications of taking a payment freeze before you make any decisions.

Customers who’ve not yet requested a payment holiday should have a further three months to ask for one. You must request one by 31 October 2020. Lenders now shouldn’t be able to repossess a vehicle if a customer’s struggling due to coronavirus until 31 October 2020. This measure is already in place for car finance customers who are facing temporary payment difficulties as a result of coronavirus and need their vehicles – the FCA now proposes to extend it by three months.

Conversation Starter

Over the last few weeks, I have spoken with many drivers & outsiders that claim they have the absolute solution to how we save the trade. The ideas as you might expect go from the sublime to the absolute ridiculous. A common idea (and I will not show any bias as to which end of the scale, I believe it belongs) is to reduce our tariff or the flag fall or both.

There are of course, arguments both for and against going down this route and I’m sure some are being shouted at this newspaper right now.

It’s a question that will see many a division between cabbie mates & groups - will it be as close as the Brexit/Remain debate, or will one side come out as a clear leader? I think I know the answer, but I did promise a few drivers that I would at least throw the question out there and get a ‘conversation’ started.

So, what say you? Why not write into our editor quoting your name and badge number and let him know what you think… He tells me that the best letters will be published in a future edition.
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**Telephone**

**Mobile**

**Email**

**Date of Birth**

**Badges No.**

**Badges Colour**

**Suburban badge sector number**

**Have you ever been a member of the LTDA before? (please tick)**

**Yes**

**No**

**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.**

**Signed**

**Date**

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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**

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**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**

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**The Direct Debit Guarantee**

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
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- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Eden Springs UK Ltd, 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 Eden Springs UK Ltd 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.
PRIVATE HIRE ACT, MISREPRESENTATIONS & PARTITION VICTORY...

Misrepresentations
On receiving the information, I contact Private Hire companies and quote the Private Hire Act 1998, section 31, Sub sections 1 and 2 - which is very clear and relates to advertising. These companies after being contacted by me (and after a bit of ‘toing and froing’) usually amend their advertisement - as after reading the act, they know they have to do so - and that it’s not something that I’m going to let go! I ask that where you see a Private Hire firm company advertising themselves as taxis, you please contact me either at the office or at Lloyd@ltda.co.uk and I can deal with it, by furnishing said company with a legal letter. For those interested, the section of the Private Hire Act 1998 that refers to this reads as follows:

1) This section applies to any advertisement-
   (a) indicating that vehicles can be hired on application to a specified address in London;
   (b) indicating that vehicles can be hired by telephone on a telephone number being the number of premises in London; or
   (c) on or near any premises in London, indicating that vehicles can be hired at those premises
2) No such advertisement shall include-
   (a) any of the following words, namely “taxi”, “taxis”, “cabs” or “cabs”, or
   (b) any word to closely resembling any of those words as to be likely to be mistaken for it (whether alone or as part of another word), unless the vehicles offered for hire are London cabs.
3) An advertisement which includes the word “minicab”, “mini-cab” or “mini cab” (whether in the singular or plural) does not by reason only of that fact contravene this section.
4) Any person who incurs, or causes to be issued, an advertisement which contravenes this section is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

Addison Lee Partitions

In yet another instance of working together, I received a report last month from a member of ours, Eddy that he had seen a line of Private Hire cars outside ITV having been fitted with partitions. I emailed Transport for London and asked how this had been allowed to happen. They returned my email stating it was not something that I’m going to let go! I ask that where you see a Private Hire firm company advertising themselves as taxis, you please contact me either at the office or at Lloyd@ltda.co.uk and I can deal with it, by furnishing said company with a legal letter. For those interested, the section of the Private Hire Act 1998 that refers to this reads as follows:

“We have provided TFL with details on the type of screen we are using, the safety standards it adheres to, the way in which it is fixed in the vehicle and a number of images of the screen in the vehicle. We are keen to work with the Mayor and TFL to ensure that this important safety intervention is recognised and installed into vehicles immediately.

As London’s largest fully licensed PHV operator we have a duty to ensure that our drivers install screens that enhance safety. Our concern is that some of the homemade screens currently being installed by drivers across the industry could cause safety issues. This is why we are planning to start installing our safety-tested screens across our fleet so we can to protect drivers and passengers, building on the safety initiatives we already have in place.”

I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again:
If you want to be seen as the best in the world, do the Knowledge and pay for a purpose-built vehicle just like you and I have done.

Crystal Palace Football Club

In another example of getting results when we work together, I received a call from our member Jimmy (a Crystal Palace fan), who reported that on the clubs website, in the ‘Visiting the Stadium Guide’ that you could book a ‘Taxi’ and subsequently listed the contact phone numbers of, Carlton Cars and Addison Lee...

Reporting Sources

Although we are able to quote the Private Hire Act to private hire firms, it does not apply to television companies, newspapers and online publications - because they are not advertising, but reporting. So, upon receiving information from members and other sources - this has led to me contacting an array of newspapers and TV companies in order to raise concerns on behalf of our trade.

Examples of this vary, but the most damaging occurrences which impact on our reputation when ‘reporting’ sources depict us incorrectly, often are in relation to yet another horrific incident someone has suffered in say, a saloon car - rather than a taxi...

I address these misrepresentations by sending the offending party a complaint via their website calling ‘lazy journalism’ and informing them of their ‘unprofessional’ labelling and lack of knowledge or fact checking, demanding that they amend the article to remove the word, ‘taxi’. I have seen instances in the Daily Mail, Sky News, the BBC and Evening Standard where on occasion, not only would they have incorrectly used the word taxi in their report but also had an image of a black cab to boot! I have to say though, that when approached, Sky News were quick to apologise and remove the image of a TX4. The answer many of the others regularly come back with is that the word ‘taxi’ is a generic term… It’s sometimes led to some very heated discussions with editors before they’ve eventually put the phone down on me rather than admit their ignorance.

I asked that if you see or hear instances of this on TV or in a newspaper, you take five minutes to complain via ‘the offender’s’ website. I was told by somebody in the industry recently, who deals with these kinds of misrepresentations, that the likelihood of things changing depend on the weight of complaints… And whilst my work in this area has undoubtedly had a degree of impact, the way I see it, is that the more of us doing this, the better. If you want to contact me before complaining, I’ll happily give you a pointer or two as to how to go about it. I have learnt from my own experiences that when complaining, journalists hate being called lazy or unprofessional and always b Valut. One of our members, Adrian wrote a brilliant (without being abusive), stinging email to the BBC recently and I hope more will do so when these matters arise.

May I ask if the plans outlined will be hampered by TfL’s latest guidance? (Please see link below.)

All the best,
Nikki CPFC
“Now, I had a little lump in my throat at this - and it wasn’t phlegm, a whole street hail - first one in ages…”

IF YOU CREATE THE PROBLEM - THEY WILL PAY…

A MAN IN BLACK

So, as I descend slowly into madness after 15 weeks in lockdown and with a hairstyle which is now akin to a 1979's Scottish footballer (think Willie Donachie), I’ve now started looking at this Joe Wicks fancy dress and exercise malarkey on YouTube.

Long John Silver

The wife has been suitably impressed at the way I’ve managed to turn myself into a pirate, complete with wooden leg, eyepatch and inflatable parrot. She was however a tad concerned after I attempted to go to work in the aforementioned outfit. “You’re not going to work dressed like that, you’ll scare the punters!” to which my reply was “What punters? The last time I had a street hail, Long John Silver was still alive.” To be fair, after she gave me her opinion and then she gave me my opinion (yes you read that right), we both decided that me leaving home looking like Cap’n Jack Sparrow was not an option… ‘Garrrrrrrr.’

Anyway, off to work I went, when slap bang, thud, ker-thump! No, at the last minute - no big deal. Then it happened, ‘bang, thud but the cab either, apart from the door mirror damaged the cab. She was unsurprised when I told her nothing would happen because very few cyclists would ever stop and exchange details or carry insurance. I explained to her that riding a bicycle had become a charter to break the law, because there is no appetite to bring in any legislation to control how they are ridden and as a result the highway code and the road traffic act have gone out of the window. To say she was unsurprised is an understatement.

I have in the past asked a couple of London Assembly members whether they could look into the feasibility of administering a registration scheme for bikes across London, this was however met with a negative response. Cyclists can insure themselves and many do as I have discovered, this seems to be done primarily through cycling clubs, but registration seems as though it’s an outright no, so I’m going to stamp my feet and ‘thqueem and thqueem and thqueem until I’m thick’ and they do something about it.

Congestion & Pollution

In a turn of events which seems like raving lunacy, Euston Road, a major arterial road running across London, a road which is also part of the perimeter of the congestion charge zone, is about to have a lane in either direction removed and given over to the cycling community. Simon Munk, infrastructure campaigner at the London Cycling Campaign, said: “Euston Road is one of the most polluted roads in London for people cycling and walking, well of course it’s polluted, Munky, old boy, drivers are trying to avoid driving through the congestion charge zone, that is the whole point of a perimeter road.

As a result of this wonder of modern stupidity, a road which is already congested and polluted is now going to remain congested and potentially more polluted. If you create the problem - they will pay… This is looking less likely about cycle protection or creating a greener London and more about raising revenue by pushing or forcing drivers inside the congestion charge zone by creating gridlock on the perimeter.

Mr. Kipling & Mandatory Insurance

Now I don’t know about you lot, but I am as shaky on a bike as David Luiz is in the centre of Arsenal’s defence - quite frankly you wouldn’t want me on a bike in any given street in London. The trouble is that there are many just like me and they are dangerous. Just because you can do something doesn’t always mean that you should do it. It is about responsibility for our actions. Therefore, anyone with a vehicle is responsible for their own actions, this means lights, helmets, insurance, safe cycling and highway code compliance. None of this is difficult and there is no argument to be had against it either, comply with the law or get off the road. This of course will never happen because the cycling lobby want to have their Mr. Kipling Fondant Fancy and eat it and they are extremely powerful.

As a taxi driver and general motorist as well as a motorcyclist, I fully appreciate the shift to a greener way of living and driving, nobody wants to see any cyclist injured or killed, but I am tired of being made to feel that I have to virtue signal every time this issue arises. Only the terminally stupid would ever believe that any driver is deliberately and wilfully setting out to kill or injure a cyclist. We should all be taking responsibility for our actions. Therefore, maybe it’s time for the government to look at a registration scheme for cyclists, as well as mandatory insurance.

Anyway, I’m off and as part of my further descent into madness, I’m going to attempt to cycle my Penny Farthing blindfolded up Highgate West Hill #prayforme ✪

Steve Kenton is a Licensed Taxi driver of 30 years

Lesson 1

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One of the earliest pop greats was Buddy Holly, who in March 1958, embarked upon a UK tour with his band, The Crickets. Their very first show took place at the Elephant and Castle, at the now long vanished Trocadero Cinema, which stood on the New Kent Road. Run it from there to Killburn High Road where the band played their second gig at the Gaumont State Cinema (which has since been converted into a church).

During his time in London, Buddy stayed at the Cumberland Hotel (now the Hard Rock Hotel). Another American idol who checked in here was Jimi Hendrix, who also resided at nearby Brook Street.

Take it then from Brook Street to Lansdowne Crescent, site of the Samarkand Hotel. Sadly, it was here, on 18 September 1970, that Jimi was found collapsed. He was rushed to the former St Mary Abbot’s Hospital on Marlous Road where he was pronounced dead.

Perhaps the most celebrated pop star born in London was the late, great David Jones - aka David Bowie. Run it from David’s birthplace - Brixton’s Stansfield Road - to Earl’s Court Road where, in 1973, he filmed the video for his hit, "Life on Mars". Another group who were big in the early 80s were Dexy’s Midnight Runners. They also shot music promos in the capital, their most famous being 1982’s "Come on Eileen" which was filmed on Brook Drive, Kennington. How would you get from there to Cricklewood’s Clayton Crown Hotel where, in the same year, they made the video for the lesser known, but just as catchy, "Cello Soul Brothers?"

Reggae legend, Bob Marley spent a lot of time in London, so much so he once said he regarded the city as his second home. In January 1977, Bob moved to Oakley Street SW3 - and would often take a stroll across Albert Bridge to Battersea Park where he loved to play football. Let’s take it from Oakley Street to Gifford Street N1 which was once home to the Keskieide Arts Centre. It was here, in 1978, that Bob Marley made the music video for his classic, "Is This Love?"

Another Bob with some intriguing London connections is Bob Dylan who, in 1962, played his very first gig outside the USA at the King and Queen pub, W1. What route would you take from there to Savoy Steps where, in 1965, Dylan shot the famous promo for "Subterranean Homesick Blues" in which he flips through a stack of cards bearing the song’s lyrics? A more recent London legend - and famously the daughter of a London cabbie - is the late, great Amy Winehouse. In 2014, a statue of Amy was unveiled in Camden’s Stables Market. What route would you take from the market to Abney Park Cemetery where, in 2007, Amy filmed the promo for "Back to Black?"

Another great female performer from London was Dusty Springfield who was born in West Hampstead in 1939. Dusty later lived at Aubrey Walk where she is commemorated by a plaque. Take it from there to Carlton Street (by St James’s Market), site of the former Olympic Studios where, in late 1963, Dusty recorded her first single; I Only Want to be with You. Olympic Studios relocated to Church Road, Barnes in 1966, the building is now home to a cinema and cafe. Olympic facilitated the recordings of many greats, including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, the Small Faces, Squeeze and Deep Purple. Queen also worked here - so how would you get from Barnes to (although it is slightly outside the Knowledge area) Wembley Stadium where, on 13 July 1985, Freddie Mercury stole the show at Live Aid?◆
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**NEW NORMAL ARRIVES IN SHENZHEN, CHINA**

*WIM FABER*

The first example comes from China, where the pandemic started, and valuable lessons were learned (one being how to get public transport users to use the system again). Shenzhen, a city of 20 million people (close to Hong Kong), came out of lockdown at the end of March, just as we went into lockdown. The Shenzhen Bus Group (30,000 employees, 15,000 buses and 4,681 electric taxis) had already battled the Covid-19 pandemic from mid-January. At the height of the pandemic, in the first weeks of February, demand dropped by a staggering 80% and the company’s remaining cabs provided special services to medical workers, other essential workers, patients and citizens in need.

**Strict Measures**

There has been zero community infection over the past two months. Protective measures (like the screens in the cabs), have gradually been eased out, although masks are still worn and vehicles are disinfected on a daily basis. Ma: “Overall, we are monitoring daily on the development of the coronavirus and we will reinstill more stringent protective measures as and when necessary.”

Above: The daily routine has returned, drivers are happy to be back at work, but the daily operation still makes them a bit anxious.

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Above left: Taxis were disinfected by drivers after each trip.

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"If you can eat food with hair growing out of it, you’re not going to be put off by having to share a pint of ‘Riddles, Very Peculiar’ with a drunken spider..."

**THE TOUGHEST OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

**ON THE ROAD**

What a mad few months it’s been. A lot has happened, and a lot of things have been turned on their heads. For instance, kids could go to Primark but not school; it was declared healthier to visit the pub than the gym; and one of my favourite historical comedy programmes had been ousted as racist. By July, there was no safe space to take my out of shape, long-haired, now apparently racist self. I have a nice ‘benefits suntan’, but with the gym closed my body is hardly beach ready. All that was left was the pubs… and pubs were allowed to open on Saturday July 4th.

**The Beer Hunter**

Planning a post-lockdown pub crawl, I started to take on considerations that I’d expect to make if planning a trek along the Amazon. When I told someone, I’d be at Wetherspoons on Super Saturday, caution was urged. I was told to think of all the insects that would have been crawling over the glasses during the lockdown. I dismissed their warning. I hadn’t been to the pub for over three months and I didn’t care how many critters were in my beer. I routinely eat pork scratchings with my pint. If you can eat food with hair growing out of it, you’re not going to be put off by having to share a pint of ‘Riddles, Very Peculiar’ with a drunken spider. Anyway, what’s more English than a pint of beer with a wasp in it? (My policy is to dry out any insects and return them to their natural habitat.)

**Hard-Drinking Town**

Media hype was building in anticipation of the big day. The BBC filmed in Chesterfield, where a pub sat at each end of the bridge. One pub was in England (Hurrah!), but the other was in Wales, where the pubs would remain closed for a few more weeks (Boo!). It was as if war in the Amazon. When I told someone, I’d be at Wetherspoons on Super Saturday, caution was urged. I was told to think of all the insects that would have been crawling over the glasses during the lockdown. I dismissed their warning. I hadn’t been to the pub for over three months and I didn’t care how many critters were in my beer. I routinely eat pork scratchings with my pint. If you can eat food with hair growing out of it, you’re not going to be put off by having to share a pint of ‘Riddles, Very Peculiar’ with a drunken spider. Anyway, what’s more English than a pint of beer with a wasp in it? (My policy is to dry out any insects and return them to their natural habitat.)

I decided to test the water and stop by at Wetherspoons on my way to the fish & chippery in the early evening. In the town centre at 6:20pm, The Lancer was closed, but the Picture House was open. I could see people inside watching football and there was no queue to get in. The Top Bell was the same. I walked straight in to Wetherspoons. The pub was barely half full. There were Perspex screens at the tills and above some of the seating areas. There was a one-way system indicated on the floor, but you could order at the bar. They were serving food, and the toilets were open (another dire warning I received was of closed toilets). A few tables had been removed too but it was barely noticeable.

I blew the caterpillar off the rim of my glass and proceeded to enjoy this historic pint (only joking, Wetherspoons’ legal team). I don’t know if I was over or under-whelmed. It felt normal and natural sitting having a pint, yet the situation since the beginning of spring had been so surreal that it was going to take a little time to get used to the new old normal. I looked forward to an extended visit to some more interesting pubs on Monday.

**Monday**

It was a sunny morning when I packed my backpack with reading and writing materials and planned my walk downtown. I left out the mosquito repellent but briefly considered packing a map of Birmingham in case I outgrew Leighton Buzzard and felt the urge to catch a train to a city where I could spread my wings.

There were only a handful of drinkers in Spoons at 10.20, but for the first time during the Covid crisis I got a bit paranoid. A woman on the next table was sniffing. Where did she get that cold? Was that a symptom of the virus? I’ve been in close proximity to people at Morrisons, but I was usually mobile. Here, I was rooted to my chair listening to someone sniffing. A woman on a mobility scooter came in wearing a mask – another victim of the plague about to sneeze into her pint? My nervousness faded with the second pint.

When I went to find somewhere else, I found it was the only pub open before noon. I returned to the same seat at Spoons and enjoyed another pint and a delicious plate of hot chicken wings – always the best item on the menu at £5.10. I did something I’d never done before and ordered and paid for a pub meal on an app. I’ll go back to paying cash at the bar when we’re back to normal as it doesn’t really save any time.

I walked into the Golden Bell – ranked 3rd on my list – and was told ‘I’d have to sit on a bench outside as all their tables were taken. I sat on my own for half an hour and reflected on my day. I had to concede that it wasn’t as exciting as I had hoped. If you can get a table in a decent pub it’s pleasant enough, but with space limited in smaller pubs, and some places operating reduced hours, or not opening at all, options are limited. As TTL would say: Delays Possible - Plan Your Journey.

**Showing Solidarity**

Things are going in the right direction though. The Black Lion is opening on July 15th, and on the way to the Golden Bell I met the guvnor of the Bald Buzzard Ale House in the street. He’s opening at 4pm on Wednesday. It’ll make a dent in my Income Support, but I feel I should continue to show solidarity with the community and go for a beer or two next week as well...

Chris Ackrill is a taxi driver and former Knowledge examiner
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Dear TAXI Editor,

As we are all aware, road closures and land grabs are probably the most threatening element of the anti-vehicle policies of all legislative institutions, including central and local government, TfL and the GLA.

I have received a leaflet from a group calling themselves the Barnsbury and St Mary’s Neighbourhood Group, inviting me to fill in their survey, which is a call to arms to prevent through traffic in and around the Barnsbury (Islington) area. Islington Council is, along with other local authorities, inviting resident groups to bring forward traffic reduction and/or banning schemes, with a view to creating ‘play streets’ and cycle routes.

The worrying thing is that a newsletter from the group states that they are aligned with other resident groups and have already had joint meetings to co-ordinate their efforts across the borough. The make-up of the group seems to be middle class homeowners who have the wherewithal and expertise to create professional literature with cohesive arguments, and to present these arguments to council planners. As most inner London councils are already chomping at the bit to close and pedestrianise roads and have a pot of money from central government to do so, they have a sympathetic ear.

These groups sound egalitarian, but their intentions are to colonise their local areas and decide who can and can’t have access. Many of their ranks will also claim to be supporting their local High Street, but that usually means wanting artisan butchers, bakers and candle stick makers, and a plethora of coffee and bistro shops, but not a co-op or a pound shop.

I believe that the streets cannot be claimed by the people who live on them if their creation and maintenance is funded by general taxes. We should not allow London to be divided up into self-appointed cantons that can override the free movement of the general public.

Kind Regards,

William O’Dowd 54220
Q Hi Alex & Janosch, I first read about you guys in a local paper and your story to date really intrigued me. Can you start by telling our cabbie community how you guys met?

A We met through a mutual friend. We had both had similar ideas about retrofitting vehicles with electric motors and our friend suggested we get together. To be honest he was bored with hearing us going on about how great electric vehicles are and didn’t want to hear about it anymore... /AH

Q How soon after that did you decide to buy a vehicle and start tinkering... why was the cab your vehicle of choice?

A Taxis are great and iconic vehicles. What drew us to them is that they are in real use every single day, thereby making them electric will have a much bigger impact on peoples health than swapping a luxury car that is only driven on weekends for example. /JO

There are a number of reasons why a cab is a great vehicle to do... Electric Vehicle batteries like to be used, so it makes sense to convert a vehicle that does a lot of miles. Also, electric vehicles are perfect for cities like London where the traffic is relatively slow and there is a lot of stopping and starting. For me, it’s also about the environmental benefit of replacing diesel engines with pollution-free electric motors. /AH

Q So you bought a taxi for a grand and got it back to your garage. Did you guys pretty much know what you were going to do with it? Did your plans and approaches have to change much?

A Sure, we drove it for a bit, to get a feel for the existing system. The idea was always to make it electric, and then make many of them electric. But engineering projects like this, you jump in the deep end and start getting on with it, while the plan develops. There was a lot to learn about the high voltage system of the donor vehicle, as well as the taxi. Alex has a diverse mechanical engineering background, and my background is in computer programming and some electrical tinkering - that combination certainly helped us to press forward. /JO

Yes, we knew we wanted to do a taxi, but not exactly how to do it, what EV system to use etc. We had done a fair bit of research into EV systems, and studied the TX workshop manuals, but there’s no substitute for having the actual taxi to look at, take measurements, try things out etc. /AH

Q Was there a moment when this project shifted from being a kinda hobby to talking seriously about launching a business venture? Can you share?

A To be honest, there was always a focus on it becoming a business – which has yet to happen properly though - we haven’t sold anything so far. We came from slightly different angles - Alex is very passionate about the environmental impact and I wanted to play with powerful vehicles. In America people do LS swaps where they put a powerful motor into an older vehicle and create amazing hot-rods. I wanted to do that. /JO

A Yes, the prototype is an 80kw motor which give about 100bhp; but the real difference with electric vehicles is that you get full torque from a standing start. This is controlled to some extent by the electronics, so you don’t do wheel spins but it is good to drive. It feels like a lighter, faster sportier vehicle, even though the batteries are heavy and add extra weight in total.

For the next one, we plan to do a TX4, remove its Euro 5 diesel, and replace with the same motor as the prototype which has yet to happen fully. We will however, upgrade the batteries to the next generation, which will give us 40kwh system and extend the range to something like 150 miles on a single charge. We want to keep the fast charger too as this is really important for cab drivers as it will enable 20% to 80% charging in under 30 mins. /AH
“Also, the current taxis are so expensive! How come you have to pay so much for a hybrid when that would buy a new luxury fully electric car. Something needs to be done that gives you guys an affordable fully electric option that retains the iconic shape.”

Q How’s testing going? What’s involved?
A TBH not done much testing recently (see below).

Q Last time we spoke on the phone you guys had been having a bit of a nightmare week… tell me what a nightmare week looks like for two guys launching into the electric vehicle manufacturing market?
A Well it turns out we fried some sensitive electrical equipment, which is not that easy to be replaced. We reached out to the EV-tinkering community and had a phone call with people who design custom circuit boards for EVs etc., turns out many of the experienced guys have fried components like that, it appears to be a rite of passage to break expensive stuff and then fix it!

Apart from that it has been straightforward-ish, but you need a diverse set of skills to press on with this, there is very fine electrical tinkering on one end, and then heavy cutting, angle grinding and welding on the other end, so it has been a fantastic experience despite hardships that need to be overcome. JO

Q So I’ve been looking at your website – you describe the business as being an agile manufacturer in an exploding market… tell me more about the model and how you’d like it to move forward… what do you need to make that happen?
A Well the automotive sector is undergoing massive change as it responds to the need to stop burning fossil fuels, the new regulations and the next generation of vehicle owners and what they want. It’s a perfect time for small companies to get into the electric vehicle market which is going to continue to grow faster than traditional vehicles. Look at Tesla, now the highest valued car manufacturer, extraordinary growth. When we say agile, we mean quick to respond to the needs of drivers and passengers. Janosch comes from a world of software engineering which has adopted agile development techniques to get apps and products out to consumers in very short timescales; and then iterate on live products to make them better. The philosophy of move fast, break things, and fix them again, is very powerful and we think making cars can be the same. Retrofitting taxis is a great example, by putting in electric drivetrain, we can quickly extend the useful life of the cab making it clean, efficient, quiet and cheaper to run. After all, there is very little wrong with many of the TX4s out there, why not keep everyone happy and keep them on the roads for years to come. AH

Q How supportive have external businesses, councils or organisations been?
A We have worked closely with Richmond Road Cab Centre, Sabri Keski. We got the first cab from him, and he has shown us the ins and outs of the taxi itself, how to remove the engine, diesel system etc. He has also helped us greatly understand the market in London, and we are hoping we can work together on the next phase.

We have had great support from the London Taxi community, I know it’s been really tough for business through the virus but loads of you guys have sent words of encouragement already, I just hope we can get you a product quickly. AH

To find out more about Clipper Automotive or get in touch with Alex or Janosch, visit www.clipper.cab
WWII Veteran Roy Miller, a regular on trips with the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, spoke to Taxi about the 75th anniversary of the surrender of Japan, known as VJ Day, that ultimately led to the end of World War II.

“It Was My Duty”
Now 96 years young, Doug joined the Navy in 1940 as a fifteen-year-old having lied about his age, “It was my duty” he said. “We had no idea what to expect and nothing could prepare us for what we would witness over the next five years.”

HMS Bramble
At the beginning of the war, Doug was involved in the Russian convoys on board the halcyon class minesweeper, HMS Bramble and counts himself as one of the lucky ones. He was transferred to the illustrious-class aircraft carrier HMS Indomitable, which was able to handle 48 aircraft - just before HMS Bramble was sunk in December 1942, with the tragic loss of all lives on board.

HMS Indomitable
Doug was on active duty as a Ships Gunner in the Far East for three years on board HMS Indomitable. On the 4th May 1945, the Indomitable was hit by a Kamikaze, but her armoured flight deck saved her from serious damage. In August, with the war ending, Indomitable supported the liberation of Hong Kong and the Japanese surrender. Her aircraft flew the carrier’s last combat missions of the war against Japanese suicide boats which were attacking British forces. Doug remembers vividly that the Japanese didn’t want to surrender, and the ship’s crew were warned that many Japanese aircraft hadn’t surrendered and to be alert and ready to shoot them down.

Eight Campaign Medals
During the week after VJ Day Doug helped guard government buildings in Hong Kong before the Indomitable returned to Sydney. Doug served in the Navy for 15 years and went into advertising after the war. He has eight campaign medals including the Burma Star with Pacific Clasp, and is an active member of the Burma Star Association. This August, the 75th anniversary of VJ Day was to be commemorated by the Burma Star Association before it was wound up and would become the Burma Star Memorial Fund and continue in perpetuity to support the memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. It is so sad that Doug and the other special men who fought on in the Far East after VE Day will not have the opportunity to celebrate this major anniversary due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Taxi Charity Camaraderie
Doug is a regular on Taxi Charity trips throughout the UK and has been with them to France for the D-Day remembrance services and to Holland for the Dutch Liberation commemorations. His regular driver is Dougie Wright, a London Cabbie and a Taxi Charity volunteer. He speaks fondly of Doug: “I have been a volunteer with the Taxi Charity for several years and thoroughly enjoy the camaraderie we share between the cabbies and the veterans on the organised events. I have escorted Doug on many trips including the annual summer trip to Worthing and to Normandy and The Netherlands. Doug is a super guy and we have become great friends over the years. It is so sad that the events planned to mark the 75th anniversary of VJ Day have had to be cancelled and he will not have the opportunity to commemorate this special date with fellow veterans.”
Dick Goodwin, Vice President, Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, said, “Doug Miller is a very popular veteran who has joined the Taxi Charity on many of the free trips we arrange for veterans of all conflicts. These events give the veterans the opportunity to pay their respects to comrades they have lost at commemoration and remembrance services or to join us for social events in the South East. Doug has been a very active member of the Burma Star Association and proudly wears his Burma Star with Pacific Clasp with his other medals which include the Atlantic, Arctic and Italy Stars. Doug was also Mentioned in Dispatches (MiD) in Burma. In this very important year, it is so disappointing that he will be unable to mark the important 75th anniversary of VJ Day at the National Memorial Arboretum, just outside Tamworth in Staffordshire, due to the pandemic restrictions.”

WWII Veteran Roy “Doug” Miller

About VJ Day
Victory over Japan Day (also known as VJ Day, Victory in the Pacific Day, or V-P Day) is commemorated on 15 August, the day on which Imperial Japan surrendered in 1945, bringing the war to an end.

About the Taxi Charity
The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans was formed in Fulham in 1948, to work for the benefit, comfort and enjoyment of military veterans and arranges many trips every year for veterans from all conflicts.

The charity offers international trips to The Netherlands, Belgium and France, UK day trips to concerts or museums, transport to attend fundraising events, as well as special days out to catch up with friends and comrades.

To fund and facilitate these outings, the charity is wholly reliant on generous donations from members of the public, businesses and trusts and the amazing group of London licensed taxi drivers who offer their time and vehicles free.

www.taxicharity.org
Who’s got your back?

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O ur story begins with the outbreak of the First World War and the Germans desire to get the job done quickly. They executed 'The Schlieffen Plan', which meant bypassing the strong French defences on the Franco-German border, racing through neutral Belgium and going through, what was considered by the French Generals as the ‘impenetrable’ forests of The Ardennes. They pushed back General Joffre's French Army through, what was considered by the ‘The Schlieffen Plan’, which meant getting the job done quickly. They executed warfare.

But as the years evolved and after many vicious battles with a terrible loss of life on both sides, the Germans started to retreat on all fronts. Then in 1917, America entered the war and many thousands of their troops under General Pershing (and all wearing their Boy Scouts Hats), forced the Germans to ask for an Armistice within a year. In fact, it was more of a Surrender' because they were penalised multi-millions in cash as compensation to all the countries they had invaded – especially France! In fact, they were still paying this dough some twenty years later until 'Adolf' came on the scene! Thankfully, one large garage did play by the rules and tried to help the demobbed drivers. When The British Motor Cab Company – after suffering heavy losses, decided to discontinue running cabs in 1919, they offered 450 old-type cabs to the returning demobbed drivers. When The British Motor Cab Company – after suffering heavy losses, decided to discontinue running cabs in 1919, they offered 450 old-type cabs to the returning cabbies Union that the situation was being created deliberately by some large garages who were holding back as many as 800 pre-war cabs until the prices went through the roof! One such South London garage was reported as selling two cabs a week at inflated prices – the Vinots for £200 unpassed, and the Darracqs for £500 passed. The asking price in the case of the Darracqs was nearly as much as when they were new, yet they were nearly ten years old! The cabbie's Union complained bitterly to Scotland Yard saying that all the discharged soldiers with London Cab Licences couldn't get employment because of this flagrant scam! But

The battle-weary young cabbies - around 1,000 of them, returning from 'The Killing Fields', struggled to find a cab to go back to work in...”

The Miracle of the Marne

The Taxi Trade in London was in a perilous state after WW1. Times were hard for all, the manufacturers, proprietors ‘mushers’ and also ‘Journeymen’ who worked on the meter for ‘the guv’nor.’ The number of taxis in service were some 3,000 down, mainly due to the air-raids from the Zeppelins and the Gotha heavy bombers. The battle-weary young cabbies – around 1,000 of them, returning from ‘The Killing Fields’, struggled to find a cab to go back to work and earn a few quid for their family. It was alleged by the Motor Co. launched The Beardmore MK1. The founders were Sir William Beardmore and C.H. Allsworth - the man who supposedly had given Edward V11 his first ride in a motor vehicle! Beardmore was a very large engineering concern that made its cabs in Paisley, Scotland. The MK1 was extremely successful and cab historians look at it fondly as ‘the grand old man of the cab trade!’ Not only was it an excellent cab, but it was the first London cab to have been designed with prior consultation with the trade. These consultations were continued before designing any more cabs. Now the manufactures were up and running and three years after the Beardmore MK1, a proliferation of different cabs came on the market. The famous London Taxi Trade was back in business again!

Back Nine’s Dodgy Minces!

My long-term cabbie mate and fellow golf hacker ‘Back Nine’ got his nickname because he always played like a wally on the front nine, then came back looking like a low handicapper. When asked about this anomaly, he would just smile and say something like, ‘I’ve got such big muscles and it takes me nine holes to warm up!’

But ‘Back Nine’ has been having trouble with his ‘Mince Pies’, eyes and TFL have refused him a Taxi Licence because one of them doesn’t pass their test. Yet strange to say, even though the DVLA knew about his eyes, they still gave him a Driving Licence! Apparently, so I am told, TFL operate a ‘Grade Two Test’ for vision and the DVLA operate Grade One! So, you have a situation where ‘Back Nine’ is banned from pooling around London in a cab just doing about 15 -20 mph, yet he can fly around the countryside outside Bournemouth – where he lives, in a private vehicle with both adults and children as his passengers. Somewhere is radically wrong somewhere - in my humble opinion it should be all or nothing!
PUZZLER

CROSSWORD

ACROSS:
1 Hard-luck tale (3,5)
5 Flat circular object (4)
9 Register (5)
10 Hardly perceptible quantity (7)
11 Supply nourishment to (4)
12 Scout gathering (8)
14 Walking (6)
15 On the go (6)
18 From dusk to dawn (3-5)
20 At any time (4)
23 On account (of) (7)
24 Aeroplane driver (5)
25 Sharp bark (4)
26 Unlucky number? (8)

DOWN:
1 Quiver of arrows (5)
2 In a violent rage (7)
3 Shop’s money drawer (4)
4 Endearingly naughty child (6)
6 Bring upon yourself (5)
7 Congregate (7)
8 Reduction (7)
13 Collectable old object (7)
14 School’s senior male prefect (4,3)
16 Contain as a part (7)
17 Separate grain from (husks) (6)
19 In the neighbourhood (5)
21 Snitch, tattle (3,2)
22 Rafter (4)

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.

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.

PREDICTIVE TEXT

Starting in the highlighted box, try to make a word adding one word part from each layer as you go. Then return to the second layer and use the letters in the unused box to start another word and so on, until you’ve used all the boxes and created six words of decreasing length.
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- All de-commissioned your tx4’s and Euro 5’s? Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect and drive away. John 07072 554934

- All cabs wanted. De-commissioned or plated. Best price paid in cash. TX4’s and Vito’s. 07398 512340

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Always look on the bright side of life, as the song goes. Every cloud has a silver lining, all’s well that ends well and behind bad luck comes good luck. Are you getting my drift?

Mr Meg and I have been uninvited from four weddings that were due to take place over the next few months! Isn’t that great news?

I am a little sad for the couples involved who are having to change their wedding arrangements, but I am a firm believer that in the end it is the marriage and not the wedding that is the most important thing.

Mr Meg and I had what may have been the worst wedding in history; no turtle doves, no fireworks, no sit down dinner and we poured Aphrodite Greek wine that tasted like brake fluid and cost 69p a bottle at our buffet – and we are still sweethearts.

Being as old as I am means I can look back and chart just how much weddings have changed in the last three, err make that four, decades.

Saying “I do” used to be a simple affair which went from vowing, to eating and drinking and a bit of boogying over a period of a few hours, and then a taxi ride home to your own bed.

Since then, weddings have somehow blossomed into Hollywood style productions that often require air travel, several nights in a hotel, a pre wedding dinner, a rehearsal dinner, a wedding day dinner and a post wedding dinner. Four solid days of indigestion.

Recently the son of a couple we barely know invited us to his wedding in Bora Bora. Mr Meg snorted when he saw that invitation (which came in a golden box tied with silk ribbon, by the way) and immediately declared himself out. His exact words were “I’m not paying thousands to fly to the other side of the world and be bored watching people I barely know getting spliced!”

Last year Mr Meg was outraged when we were asked to travel to a castle in Scotland to be at a distant relatives wedding. It was a four-day hunting/fishing/marrying bonanza.

“I was thrilled silly I wouldn’t have to travel to East Yorkshire and dance the YMCA in a draughty barn after a five-course, overcooked cold roast dinner... Just reading the invitation and totting up the number of changes of clothes required left me exhausted and feeling hungover. I calculated that if we did go, we would need a minimum 20kg of luggage apiece. Mr Meg insisted he was going to wear the same outfit for all four days and turn his undies and socks inside out twice. The man is a non-believer in baggage charges.

One of the brides who has had to coronavirus cull her wedding is my niece Jane. She was sweet enough to dump me from her guest list in person during a recent socially distanced visit. I was thrilled silly I wouldn’t have to travel to East Yorkshire and dance the YMCA in a draughty barn after a five-course, overcooked cold roast dinner. But I couldn’t tell her that, so I said, “Don’t worry, love - it’s fine”.

“Fine?” she asked, sounding wounded.

“No, not fine” I lied, “It’s OK. Just OK. But we understand” and then I did my best to pull a sad face. “All that matters is that you have a lovely day”. I must be a magnificent fibber because she declared “No! You’re too upset! I’m going to tell John he’ll have to lose 2 from his side. You two MUST be at my wedding!”

Sigh. But let’s always look on the bright side – I wish that the wedding service is short, the food is hot, and the company is as sparkling as the champers. I do.
“The only ray of sunshine is that 36 new TXE’s and 2 Nissans joined the fleet, but the overall fleet dropped by over 600.”

WORD ON THE STREET

Despite all my positive thinking, Zen meditation, praying and hoping, it’s not getting any better - in fact it has got worse. The fleets have spent the last month decommisioning as many cabs as they can, as fast as they can. June saw 652 cabs disappear from the ranks, breaking down as 474 TXIs, 114 Vitos and 64 TXIs. The only reason that so few saw cabs disappear from the ranks, is that they can, as fast as they can. June

The only ray of sunshine is that 36 new TXE’s and 2 Nissans joined the fleet, but the overall fleet dropped by over 600 and we are dropped to £6k. Will this slow the rate going forward or will we see another 600 cabs go in July?

The only ray of sunshine is that 36 new TXEs and 2 Nissans joined the fleet, but the overall fleet dropped by over 600 and we are now at only 18,282 cabs licensed in London.

The work levels, proposed closures and general air of despondency that permeates everywhere in London do not bed well for an early recovery and some of the dealers holding stock are losing thousands in depreciation every week. In March I was outbid on a late Vito and it went for £32k.

The driver who won the auction has just cut his losses and sold it out of town for £22k, after sitting on it for 4 months. That’s a £10k loss in 12 weeks! He told me he was fed up looking at it and he was worried it was going to drop further and decided to cut his losses. The driver who part exchanged it for a TXE back in March was lucky, had he held onto it, he would have been the one suffering the depreciation, and in all likelihood, would now be unable to afford to upgrade.
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