LTDA & UTAG TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST CLOSURES
Welcome to TAXI #474. As well as updates from the General Secretary, Chair and Executive Officer on LTDA campaigns and court action on pages, 3, 6 & 8, see p5 for a full write up on the IWGB Court of Appeal failed bid against the mini-cab Congestion Charge. Wim Faber, TAXI’s International Correspondent tells the remarkable story of the New York Times Metro Desk writer who won the Pulitzer Prize for his Taxi journalism, p18 and the member debate around fares and tariffs continues with your letters on p11. Since the last edition of TAXI, protests have gathered momentum around Streetspace accessibility for wheelchair users who have featured prominently this week across local & national TV, radio and newspaper platforms, voicing a multitude of valid concerns. Islington Residents have also continued to protest against the ‘People Friendly Streets’ scheme, calling on Islington Council to reverse its plan for low traffic neighbourhoods - for further comment, see Steve Kenton’s column on p15.

TIL has launched a new app, ‘TIL GO’ - the travel app is only available on Apple iOS devices (TIL hope to have an Android version up and running in the Autumn of 2020) and places emphasis on facilitating walking and cycle journey routes whilst providing live updates on Tube, Tram, DLR, London Overground and TIL Rail lines. TIL have also released a TPH News Update, containing information on vehicle age limits, MOT’s, DoH & SC Asymptomatic Testing Trials and Streetspace - acknowledging the following on the latter: “While many of these changes are temporary, we’d like to make them permanent. We want to understand how these changes are affecting you. We’ve put together a map of all the Streetspace For London interventions we have introduced so far, the map includes a survey function to enable you to provide feedback on each scheme.” You can read the News Update and follow the feedback link to the ‘Sustrans’ website (who have ‘partnered up’ with TIL) at:


Earlier this month, TIL also released its Taxi and Private Hire Guidance for Developers - The purpose of the document is to “…provide guidance to developers, borough planning officers and other relevant parties who are carrying out works on the public highway or private land where works might impact existing taxi rank facilities or where there is an opportunity to incorporate provision for taxi ranks.” The document is available to read along with the criteria for ‘rank developments’ at:


TfL has launched a new app, ‘TfL GO’ – the travel app is only available on Apple iOS devices (TfL hope to have an Android version up and running in the Autumn of 2020) and places emphasis on facilitating walking and cycle journey routes whilst providing live updates on Tube, Tram, DLR, London Overground and TfL Rail lines. TfL have also released a TPH News Update, containing information on vehicle age limits, MOT’s, DoH & SC Asymptomatic Testing Trials and Streetspace - acknowledging the following on the latter: “While many of these changes are temporary, we’d like to make them permanent. We want to understand how these changes are affecting you. We’ve put together a map of all the Streetspace For London interventions we have introduced so far, the map includes a survey function to enable you to provide feedback on each scheme.” You can read the News Update and follow the feedback link to the ‘Sustrans’ website (who have ‘partnered up’ with TfL) at:


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“TfL still don’t seem to get it. In their official response to our feedback on the Bishopsgate Corridor scheme and the concerns we raised, they fail to recognise the damaging impact of the scheme.”

A COMPLICATED, EXPENSIVE BUT NECESSARY EXERCISE

Without a doubt, the biggest single threat to our long-term future and financial wellbeing is anything that limits or restricts our ability to move our customers by the shortest, quickest and most convenient route. We have been successful in retaining access to most of the current spate of closures, both those being brought in as part of ‘Streetspace’ through TFL, and the more localised schemes, via the various Councils. Unfortunately, all of our efforts to ensure we can access, and drive through, Bishopsgate have fallen on deaf ears and TfL intend to exclude us from the bus ‘pinch’ points.

We will be able to access most parts of Bishopsgate, albeit through some very tortuous and convoluted routes, but a simple, and very common journey, from London Bridge Station to the City, they are so committed to, ensures they will throw everything they can into stopping us from winning. They will also have realised that this case could set a precedent, enabling us to challenge future schemes that exclude taxis, further ensuring the importance that they will place on defending this action.

Media Focus on Negative Streetspace Impacts

We’ve continued working with disability equality campaigners to generate some much-needed media scrutiny of the schemes. This resulted in a BBC London news feature, looking at the impact of new cycle lanes on wheelchair users, black cab access and the need to ensure new road layouts work for everyone. The Telegraph and Daily Mail also covered our concerns - noting that the Mayor’s Streetspace approach is not the way to promote recovery for the taxi trade or for London.

Criticism Mounting

Meanwhile, we have also continued engaging with charities and other organisations representing disabled people, to ensure they were aware of the Bishopsgate scheme. We let them know that whilst TFL and City Hall claimed taxis would have “access”, this is not the case in reality. They have since been pressing TFL for answers and in some cases publicly criticising the scheme and the failure to give taxis the access that we need to provide a truly door-to-door service.

Despite all of this, TfL still don’t seem to get it. In their official response to our feedback on the Bishopsgate Corridor scheme and the concerns we raised, they fail to recognise the damaging impact of the scheme. In fact, they confirm that there are some areas where taxis will not be able to go and that within these stretches “access would need to be made on foot”. This is not the total access we were promised and will clearly impact passengers particularly those unable to walk at all!

In order for the area to remain fully accessible, the answer is clear and obvious: give taxis the same access as buses – universal access. Parliament and the London Assembly are both now not sitting until September, but just before they broke up for summer, we saw London Assembly Members continuing to shout about the negative impact of the plans on the taxi trade and pressing the Mayor for answers. I also had a positive call with Brent MP, Dawn Butler, discussing our concerns about the effect Streetspace will have on taxi drivers in her constituency, as well as on the passengers with limited mobility who rely on cabbies to go about their daily lives. We will pick up these matters with all the key supporters of the trade in both Parliament and the London Assembly as soon as they return.

New Legislation Needed Now

Elsewhere, I have been speaking to Daniel Zeichner MP, one of the Vice Chairs of the APPG on Taxis, regarding the missed opportunity that is the Department for Transport’s new ‘statutory standards’ for the taxi and private hire vehicle trades. While a step in the right direction, this statutory guidance falls far short of what is needed to keep passengers safe. We need national minimum standards across the board. Daniel has agreed that Parliament should take up this matter on its return in September and the APPG, will continue to push for proper legislation to address the concerns that the taxi trade still has.

We have repeatedly told the Department that only legislation will enforce higher standards and this guidance will do little to end to the practices of cross-border hiring and licence shopping. Equally, there is nothing in this guidance that will ensure that licensed taxis are the only vehicles allowed to ply-for-hire, with the guidance doing nothing to clarify the lines that unscrupulous ride-hailing apps like Uber have blurred. This is particularly concerning given Uber’s recent acquisition of Autocab, which I think we can all recognise as a ploy to expand their operations into new areas and avoid licensing issues. They are clearly hedging their bets should the upcoming appeal of TFL’s licensing decision not go their way.

We have also arranged a meeting in September with Baroness Vere, Minister Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport - the minister with responsibility for taxis. We will be discussing, all of the above issues, alongside other ways the Government can help to support the trade in the wake of the pandemic.

Policymakers might be off on their holidays, but we’re still here making the case for the taxi trade and ensuring that they don’t undermine our ability to recover from this crisis. Hopefully, September will bring a boost for the trade, as more people return to work and ‘normal life’ resumes. Let’s just hope TfL and others see the error of their ways over the break, so we can provide people with the safe, socially distanced, door-to-door service they need.
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PERSONAL CONTRACT & HIRE PURCHASE OFFERS:

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** Fuel savings calculations are based on real-world fuel consumption and the current average fuel prices, assuming that drivers travel 30 miles per day, five days each week, in a previous model such as the TX4 Euro 6. For the full illustration of fuel saving figure calculations please refer to levc.com/tx-cost-comparison.

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Following the IWGB’s High Court challenge last year in relation to minicabs being liable for the London Congestion Charge, the union brought its case to the Court of Appeal last week. Mr. Justice Lewis, back in July 2019 dismissed the union’s claims, saying the decision was “a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, namely the reduction of traffic and congestion within the congestion charge zone without reducing the number of designated wheelchair-accessible vehicles”.

On Wednesday, three senior judges dismissed their appeal of the decision, deciding that the Mayor was entitled to introduce the measure. Lady Justice Simler commented: “Although this is a case in which an increased level of scrutiny is called for, that does not mean no margin of discretion is to be accorded to the decision maker. To the contrary, in my judgment the Mayor had some margin of discretion both as to the aims and as to means adopted to achieve them.”

“The ruling acknowledged that it was ‘common ground’ that 94% of licensed minicab drivers in London are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and that 71% of minicab drivers reside in deprived areas of London, earning, on average, less than £23,000 a year. Comparatively, the ruling also acknowledged that 88% of taxi drivers, remain exempt from the charge and are white…”

Lady Justice Simler went on to note: “This significant disparity of impact between black and minority ethnic minicab drivers on low incomes on the one hand and white taxi drivers on the other is stark and has raised legitimate questions about the measure adopted by the Mayor – It has made this appeal particularly troubling.” Chancellor of the High Court Sir Geoffrey Vos also agreed with the ruling, stating “I too found the case troubling. At first sight, the Mayor’s decision had a disproportionate impact on black and minority ethnic mini-cab drivers. Sadly, it did not consider by the legitimate aim of reducing traffic, congestion and pollution.”

In response to the ruling, IWGB President Henry Chango Lopez vowed to continue the campaign, saying: “The court confirmed what we have stated all along, that the Mayor’s decision had a disproportionate impact on black minority ethnic mini-cab drivers. Sadly, it did not consider that the congestion charge on minicabs was unlawful. While this is a setback, we are determined to continue fighting against this policy, which is having a crushing impact on some of the most marginalised workers in London.”

Trade Union Fails in Appeal Against Mini-Cab Congestion Charge
“So, come on TfL, tell us how we would complete a simple journey from London Bridge Station to Liverpool St. Station or from Liverpool St to Shoreditch High Street without penalising passengers in terms of higher fares and increased journey times?”

RICHARD MASSETT

THE MASSETT FILE

Transport for London’s Streetspace scheme in Bishopsgate and Gracechurch Street has left us scratching our heads over where the Trade now stands with the Mayor and his senior transport planners.

**Taxis Not Considered to be Public Transport?**

First, we were told that in regard to the Mayor’s strategy to promote the use of public transport that Taxis are not considered to be public transport in this respect. However, Taxis clearly are Public Transport by virtue of the fact that they have to take the public where they want to go, on demand; the only vehicles that can be used are the vehicles that the licensing authority dictate; while the fares charged are also laid down by the licensing authority.

Unfortunately, the City of London did not show the same resolve and it now looks as if the City could become a no-go zone for Taxis if Farringdon Street next in line.

We were told by Westminster City Council that it did not agree with TfL’s plans and that it had refused to let the Strand and Waterloo Bridge be part of the scheme. Unfortunately, the City of London did not show the same confidence which way the decision would go. All this is unlike the private hire trade which is as it says private transport, this should be pre-booked and there are no rules to ensure that the public is taken to wherever they want to go or what the fare should be. The only rationale for the Mayor’s recent statements can only be that taxis are not mass transit and of course we never claimed to be. What Taxis do is to provide a ‘last mile service’ that in a complicated city like London gets people to the City, but the question is, how would we get there when the Bank Junction restriction remains in place and with Cannon St closed to west bound traffic? So, come on TfL, tell us how we would complete a simple journey from London Bridge Station to Liverpool St. Station or from Liverpool St to Shoreditch High Street without penalising passengers in terms of higher fares and increased journey times - not forgetting that many of these passengers would be those with various accessibility requirements.

But Transport for London ignores the fact that Taxis are currently the safest form of public transport, where social distancing can be guaranteed. Where also is the evidence of the hordes of people that TfL tell us want to walk or cycle around the City? The City is currently dead, and all the evidence points to the notion that the people currently working from home want to continue doing so.

**Simple Questions Unanswered**

We are told that there is no need to worry because Taxis will be still able to get to all the destinations they might be asked to go to in the City, but the question is, how would we get there when the Bank Junction restriction remains in place and with Cannon St closed to west bound traffic? So, come on TfL, tell us how we would complete a simple journey from London Bridge Station to Liverpool St. Station or from Liverpool St to Shoreditch High Street without penalising passengers in terms of higher fares and increased journey times - not forgetting that many of these passengers would be those with various accessibility requirements.

**Trade Contest Measures**

The LTDA and and UTAG have jointly decided to do all it can to contest these measures and have engaged a group of lawyers headed by an eminent QC to work up a Court challenge.

Richard Massett, LTDA Chairman, and Chairman of the London Cab Ranks Committee
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"Today, the London I love appears to have been overtaken by just a few - and they have turned my London into a very selfish city that only works for the 2% & that's the London I hate."

LONDON LOVE & HATE

PAUL BRENNAN

TOP RANK

I both love and hate London, I never thought I would say that, I’ve always loved London. I loved the London I grew up in and spent my early adult life in. I loved it so much that when I embarked on a career that would support me and my family I never thought about one that could possibly be taken around the country or around the world. Why would I? I was in London! London is where others not only from across the country but also across the globe are inspired to come to.

It was often thought by these outsiders that London was a city were the streets were paved with gold - of course that’s not true and when people arrived it quickly became clear they were actually more awash with red and white cone shaped plastic than gold and today that plastic has just grown and grown. Today the London I love appears to have been overtaken by just a few and they have turned my London into a very selfish city that only works for the 2% - and that’s the London I hate.

Tomorrow’s Just Another Day

I’ve never been just a Labour or a Conservative supporter, I haven’t followed in the footsteps of my parents and like them just because I’m a proud working-class man from a London council estate put my X next to Labour on a ballot paper. I have instead voted for different parties or indeed independents based on their policies and sometimes I’ve voted for a particular candidate not because of something they’ve said they will do but because of something they’re opponent has said they will do.

London is predominantly a Labour town and has been for a long time, not because its current values echo that of today’s Londoners but because too many people vote for them because they always have or because their parents always did - so now, they do as well.

The last general election saw this change outside of London with Labour strongholds turning to the conservatives because they no longer see the ‘London’ Labour party as the houses’ just to get people from A to B and today that plastic has just grown and grown. Today the London I love appears to have been overtaken by just a few and they have turned my London into a very selfish city that only works for the 2% - and that’s the London I hate.

Driving in my Car

Mayor Sadiq Khan amongst others, say they don’t want a car led recovery, which is why they’ve put in all these anti car policies. Trouble is, other than the over saturation of cars we’ve seen by allowing thousands of private hire cars onto the road, the other vehicles are not people out on a drive just for the love of having a drive. They are all the walking men and women who have no realistic alternative to using their car or more predominantly their commercial vehicle.

After the 2008 banking crisis it wasn’t a few Lyca负载s or the bankers who got this City and country back on the road to recovery, it was the many small businesses that did that. It’s those small businesses that now, either directly or indirectly are being hampered by the measures being introduced across not only our city but also many others. Mayor Khan and the other blinkered lot can well say they don’t want a car (of course it won’t be cars, that’s just misdirection it is actually commercial vehicle led recovery but I say better a commercial vehicle led recovery than no recovery at all.

Embarrassment

Right now, inside the zones with the excess cones there is no recovery, which isn’t really surprising because the 2-4% of the population or Lyca负载s as they are better known that will benefit from them are not enough to bring about a recovery. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps was himself forced to campaign against his OWN anti-car policy after pavement barriers and a new road system turned his constituency in Welwyn into a ‘Ghost Town’, this led to more than 1,500 people (and rising) to sign a petition asking Hertfordshire County Council to ‘use common sense’ after the measures and one-way system implemented just created ‘another dead high street.’

One Better Day

Our trade has often been falsely accused of being a dirty, highly polluting menace for London. We of course know that’s absolute codswallop and what’s more that we’ve had zero choice in the vehicle we could buy. The lack of options for us when it came to buying the tool of our trade was not of our choosing or making, in the 25 years I’ve been on the road I’ve only ever had a choice of two possible vehicles and for a significant part of those years it was only one.

The green revolution that is so highly sought by many councils had actually well and truly arrived in our trade before lockdown, with almost 4000 cabbies in London already in possession of a ZEC Taxi or having placed an order for one. For this to continue, those who are leading the ‘Green Revolution’ need to realise that our trade needs not only the confidence but the funds to make the switch. Banning us from key sections of the road network will not install that confidence or allow us to earn the funds to make the change. I know they don’t care that by forcing us to ‘go around the houses’ just to get people from A to B that our passengers (many of whom can’t walk or cycle and have mobility issues), will have to pay more for the pleasure or that the longer than necessary journeys will also cost more environmentally - not only in the short term but in the longer term. Drivers who had been planning to upgrade to ZEC will now not be able to, not because they don’t believe in it and not because they don’t want to, simply because they cannot afford to. Diesel Taxis that might have come off the road in the next 2-4 years and be replaced by a ZEC cab will remain on the streets for the foreseeable future and that is something the ‘Green Revolution’ should be concerned with - their short-sightedness today can come back to bite us all in the future.

Paul Brennan, LTDA Executive

Did You Know?

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“Three months’ finance payment or cashback payment will be payable within 30 days following delivery and acceptance of the vehicle. Offer is available up to the value of £1,700 only. “Business users only. Finance illustration refers to Personal Contract Purchase. 6.6% APR Representative figure based on TX Vista at £53,244 OTR. OTR figure is net of OLEV Plug-in Grant. The Grant is up to £2,700 and is subject to European Whole Vehicle Type Approval and European Commission state aid notifications. Incl. insurance, with optional 5 year service plan costing £1,700, optional 8 year warranty costing £549, with addition deposit contribution of £2,200 and a customer deposit of £1,700. Plus paid by end of monthly payments of £365.69 (excluding any weekly payments of £183.33). The estimate is based on an assumed cover of 12,000 miles per annum at 5 per cent per annum. The maximum amount of finance is £56,394. The above price is inclusive of VAT. Two, three or four year plans are also available. Finance is provided by Black Horse Ltd, a trading style of Black Horse. Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 and over. All prices and promotions are valid for vehicles ordered and delivered before 30 September 2020. Excludes meter, credit card equipment and any local authority tax. For full details of LEVC servicing and warranty inclusions please refer to the LEVC Operator’s Guide available to download via iOS and Android. LEVC reserves the right to terminate offers at any time. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.”
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The indicated values were determined according to the prescribed measurement method - Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP). Figures shown may include options which are not available in the UK. *CO2 figures have been converted into NEDC-equivalent values for use with the current VED and BIK tax legislation. Figures shown are for compatibility purposes; only compare with other cars tested to the same technical procedure. Figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the factory fitted options, accessories fitted (post registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Further information about the test used to establish fuel consumption and CO2 figures can be found at www.mercedes-benz.co.uk/WLTP.

Dear TAXI Editor,

Although I retired from taxi driving some four years ago, I still take an interest in the trade. It seems to me, as we come out of this forced economic nightmare. Some drivers seem to be questioning, whether it is economically viable for them resuming working a cab. Others are promoting the old idea of reducing the fare rate, in the hope of encouraging more punters. Back in the late seventies when Labour were in power, our fare rate was kept low while living costs and fuel prices were rising. We were cheap and extremely busy. accepting only the local and Airport jobs was the only economic option. South of Thames really wasn’t viable then. That is until Mrs Thatcher got into power and gave us a 30% increase. Of course, we lost some work, but our workload significantly decreased for the same money. I for one was much better off. We no longer Busy Fools. The point being, reducing the rate may bring on board a few more punters in the short term, but, not necessarily more income. Then you have the problem of getting an increase when things improve. Until people get back working in the offices and tourist return to the Capital, all you will be doing is giving a cheaper ride to the present level of passengers.

The problem I see, is, that quite a few drivers won’t return, leaving a void so when things improve, as they will eventually. There may not be enough cab drivers to cover the work. Punters will have no alternative but to use Minicabs, which will in turn become their first choice at the best possible rate in the hope he can earn enough to live on after their time to get the cost calculator in the first place. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It will be very disrespectful to all of those who gave up drivers lost money to get that cost calculator. It was a 60/40 the garage owner getting the capital exposure. Where you could rent a cab for just a day or a night, cab driver on my own insurance. As this is no longer possible anymore, I wonder if the LTDA could negotiate an insurance scheme where willing drivers could take a cab for just a day or a night, or work on the clock, think it was a 60/40 the garage owner getting the 60%. But no cost to the driver. It might tempt some drivers back into town to test the water, without them committing to a week’s work and rent. I know years ago as an owner I could rent my cab to any licensed cab driver on my own insurance. As this is no longer possible anymore, I wonder if the LTDA could negotiate an insurance scheme where willing owners could rent their cabs to non-owning cab drivers. An easier insurance procedure would help both owner and renter, especially as fewer cabs become available.

I S Connelly,
‘…the only way to resolving any issue is through meaningful dialogue - not donning a pair of camouflaged underpants and sitting behind a keyboard spewing vitriol.’

SMART MOUTHS VS. SMART MINDS

A MAN IN BLACK

W ell the last couple of weeks have been interesting have they not?

Covid Kenton

So, I’ve been spending some time on the Costa Del Sol trying to top up my tan but failing miserably. Rather than looking like something out of Baywatch I actually resemble something closer to the surface of Mars than NASA’s Perseverance. As if to add insult to injury I’m now forced to resemble something out of Baywatch I actually failing miserably. Rather than looking like Costa Del Sol trying to top up my tan but So, I’ve been spending some time on the Covid Kenton has been cancelled, not because of the perils of Covid-19, but because nobody can bloody move in Islington due to the raft of road closures creating gridlock. Don’t bother suing me Islington Council because a) I have nothing to take, b) I know it isn’t true, it’s called satire and c) I still have nothing to take.

And finally, following on from the previous point, we’ve seen the leaders of Islington Council effectively annex the borough after imposing what can only be described as the road closures from hell. In fact, I was getting phone calls whilst I was in Spain asking me how to get from places such as Bounds Green to Southgate Road. I’ve been back nearly two weeks now and the same person has now asked me how they get out of Southgate Road to go to Bounds Green - it’s seems they’ve been stuck in Southgate Road for so long that their 5 o’clock shadow has turned onto a full blown Edwardian beard.

Vitriol Derision & Hatred

Now I’m not paranoid - I know they’re all out to get me, but whilst I was luxuriating in Spain, I spent some of my time looking at the den of iniquity that is Twitter – ‘good grief’ is the only way to resolving any issue is through meaningful dialogue - not donning a pair of camouflaged underpants and sitting behind a keyboard spewing vitriol.

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LONDON SQUARE RUNS

ROBERT LORDAN

ROB’S HISTORY TIPS

Whilst 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!

Squares are an integral part of London. Their development dates back to the early 17th century - so there’s plenty of history to discover. Here are some square-based runs for you to try.

You can probably guess which square we are going to look at first… Gibbon Square, that infamous address from the first run on The Knowledge which is etched upon the mind of every single London cabbie.

Gibbon Square was created in the 1830s by Francis Edwards who’d studied under Sir John Soane (the architect behind the Bank of England and Dulwich Picture Gallery). Have you noticed the small, domed structure on the square’s northern end? Although it’s designed to look older, it in fact dates from the early 1970s and disguises a ventilation shaft for the Victoria line which passes below.

As mentioned, there’s a John Soane link with Gibbon Square, so let’s run it to Lincoln’s Inn Fields where you’ll find Soane’s former home which is now an eccentric museum.

Dating back to the 1630s, Lincoln’s Inn Fields is London’s largest public square. In days gone by, cattle grazed here, and were penned in by turnstiles - after which the streets, Little Turnstile and Great Turnstile are named.

Next we’ll head to Red Lion Square, which was originally known as Red Lion Fields, named after the pub which once backed on to it. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, it was decided to dig up Oliver Cromwell (who, by this point, had been dead for two years) and, rather bizarrely, have his corpse tried and executed. It’s believed Cromwell’s body was taken to the Red Lion Inn and stored over night before being hauled to Tyburn for its hanging. One theory suggests that during the night, Cromwell’s body was swapped with another and swiftly buried during the night, Cromwell’s body was taken to the Red Lion Inn and stored overnight before being hauled to Tyburn for its hanging. It’s believed Cromwell’s body was taken to the Red Lion Inn and stored overnight before being hauled to Tyburn for its hanging. It’s believed Cromwell’s body was taken to the Red Lion Inn and stored overnight before being hauled to Tyburn for its hanging. It’s believed Cromwell’s body was taken to the Red Lion Inn and stored overnight before being hauled to Tyburn for its hanging. It’s believed Cromwell’s body was taken to the Red Lion Inn and stored overnight before being hauled to Tyburn for its hanging.

Run it from Red Lion Square to Charterhouse Square which also harbours a gruesome history: in 2014, evidence was found that the site was once a huge burial pit, into which victims of the 14th century ‘Black Death’ were dumped. On a more cheerful note, Charterhouse Square’s ‘Florin Court’ was used to represent Hercule Poirot’s apartment in the long-running ITV series.

Let’s head south now to Cleaver Square which dates back to the 1760s and is named after former landowner, Mary Cleaver. This square is noted for its boules terrain, where you can play the French game, Pétanque.

How would you get from Cleaver Square to St Peter’s Square, Hammersmith? In the past, both Sir Alex Guinness and Vanessa Redgrave lived here. St Peter’s Square was also home to Island Records (house within a former laundry) where Bob Marley and the Wailers recorded much of their 1977 album, Exodus.

Until recently, Grosvenor Square was famous as being home to the American Embassy which has since relocated to Nine Elms. The US link can be traced back to the 1780s when Founding Father, John Adams lived here in what was essentially America’s first embassy.

Despite the embassy moving out, a number of American monuments still stand in Grosvenor Square, including statues of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan. There are also memorials to the victims of 9/11 and the 244 American pilots who volunteered to fight with the RAF in ‘The Eagle Squad’ before the USA officially entered WWII.

What route would you take from Grosvenor Square to America Square which was laid out between 1768 and 1774 by Charles Dance the Younger?

Although it was established in the 1870s to house railway workers, it’s hard to envision today, but in the 1980s almost every property on Bonnington Square was occupied by squatters. Their action saved the square - all of the empty properties collected over a decade.

In the 1850s, Soho Square was home to Mary Seacole, the British-Jamaican nurse who tended to soldiers in the Crimean War. Every year, on the Sunday closest to 10th October, fans of Croydon-born singer, Kirsty MacColl gather in Soho Square to celebrate the late singer’s birthday; the reason being that Kirsty wrote a song entitled Soho Square which includes the lyric, ‘An empty bench in Soho Square, If you’d have come you’d have found me there…”

Robert Lordan has been a Licensed Taxi driver and Qualified London Taxi Guide for over a decade.
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SHINY NEW BADGE? HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW(ISH).

The stereo supplied with my TX4 isn’t quite the apex in sonic technology - a high-end system would be wasted on a vehicle with a noisy diesel engine and the aerodynamics of a cathedral anyway.

ON THE ROAD

Last time, we discussed the glorious day when you are awarded your badge and licence. So, what happens next? As a Knowledge examiner I saw many people leave Palestra in their suit and head straight to a cab garage. I understand that you’re keen to make a start, but I think it’s best to start off slowly and ease yourself into it, as you would in any new job. Rather than go out on a Friday intending to push it out until the early hours, I always advised my charges to start on a Saturday or Sunday and be prepared to return home exhausted after just a few hours. A new job takes it out of you.

Cash & Credit
You’ll need to know how to use the credit card reader; putting an “Out of Order” plastic bag over the device won’t wash these days. Leave that scam to Del Boy and the parking meters. Only a minority of customers pay in cash now, but you’ll need a float of small notes and coins. I guarantee you’re keen to make your first punter will hand you a £50 note at Harrods.

Nice & Clean
I drove some horrendous cabs early in my career, and I learnt through experience to rent the best cab I could afford. You want a garage that maintains their vehicles, supply you with oil and water, and call their cabs in for servicing every now and again.

Start ye go, you’ll need to make sure your cab is clean and tidy. Many cabs have a lived-in look, but there’s no need to keep a dirty vehicle. To keep the air fresh and to deter germs I used to open the windows and give the cab a blast of air every day on my drive into London. A hanging air freshener helps to keep the freshness going during the working day. I favour those fresheners shaped like trees, but if you are lucky enough to pick up a gaggle of Arab girls who have spent the morning on Selfridges cosmetics floor, that does the trick too.

Take it Easy
You’ll be nervous at first and you’ll find it hard to think straight. If you start off on a weekend morning, you’ll be going from Piccadilly Circus to Harrods all day and you’ll wonder why you needed the Knowledge at all. The more taxing jobs will come, but weekend work mostly consists of tourists bobbing around the Central London attractions, such as Harrods, Selfridges, St Paul’s, London Eye, Borough Market, and the Changing of the Guard Ceremony. Transport hubs are popular too, so make sure you know how to get in and out of the main line stations. I’m not being paid to say this, but I’ve had an old-style Cabbie’s Mate and over the past ten years it’s got me out of many sticky situations. If you keep it updated, you’ll always be able to find those hotels that change their names every week.

Smoke, Stairway, Paranoid
Starting out now, you’ll find things quiet. You’ll be spending a fair bit of time cruising around or sitting on ranks. You’ll be spending several hours in the cab, and you’ll have to make your own entertainment in-between customers. I dare say some drivers listen to music on their mobile telephones. I prefer a traditional radio.

Things might be different with the new cabs, but the stereo supplied with my TX4 isn’t quite the apex in sonic technology. A high-end system would be wasted on a vehicle with a noisy diesel engine and the aerodynamics of a cathedral anyway. Music sometimes sounds good on a CD, sometimes it doesn’t. The holy trinity of Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath sound OK on a cab stereo, but even the nuanced dynamics of Zeppelin’s quieter passages can be hard to follow with the engine and wind noise should you be lucky enough to reach forty miles an hour. Heavy metal and punk rock cuts through pretty well: you’re fine with Motorhead, Metallica, Maiden, the Clash or the Sex Pistols. Folk and country-type stuff can go either way: Dylan sounds good, less so Neil Young. Jazz and classical is too subtle for motorway use. I’m a big fan of Herb Berhow. You might get away with Ludwig Van’s nosier symphonies, but a piano concerto is wasted on a cab stereo at high speed. Horn-led jazz can be OK, but you won’t hear the bass properly. Any difficult jazz is a distraction anyway, especially when Coltrane goes off on one. I’ve got to say though, you can’t beat the calm ambiance jazz or classical has on a busy night when there’s madness on the streets all around you. It’s great for the theatre burst. Right, let’s nail it all around you. It’s great for the theatre burst. Right, let’s nail it once and for all: punk and metal for the motorway, jazz and classical for urban work. You need to be careful with what music you play if you have passengers on board. My friend, Paul, had a customer threatening to withhold payment after he assaulted a passenger’s ears with Tangerine Dream. My Fali CDs would probably have the same affect, so I only play music when I’m on my way home. So, if your tastes run to difficult kraut-rock such as Tangerine Dream, best keep it to yourself. Or listen to talk radio like a proper London cab driver.

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11 August 2020

CHRIS ACKRILL

CHRIS ACKRILL is a Licensed Taxi driver and former Knowledge examiner.
Our TAXI International Correspondent, this edition tells the remarkable story of the New York Times journalist who unearthed a taxi licence scam that won him the Pulitzer Prize.

**PANDEMIC HITS NEW YORK TAXI TRADE HARD**

**INTERNATIONAL**

There are not many journalists in this world who write about taxi drivers and their trade. It's a select, specialised, and above all, a very small group. Are we 50? A round 100? Or perhaps 500? Worldwide, mind you, less than than that is more likely. Most of my colleagues write for taxi magazines in their local markets or for regional or national publications - and in their own language.

I’m one of an even smaller band of ‘taxi journalists’ who writes in his native tongue (Dutch) and in other tongues (English and German). And works for his (own) native mag and internationally for a large handful of others, like Taxi Newspaper. Oh yes, let me not forget this qualification: our select gathering is also well-informed and also unusually opinionated, with extremely experienced ex-taxi drivers.

**A Pulitzer Prize for Writing About Taxis**

Many colleagues from the dailies, ordinary middle-of-the-road magazines and TV programmes, drowned in taxi reporting – usually from a lack of knowledge about this rich (and informative) ground which they could easily mine themselves.

Sometimes this happens with unusual results – like winning one of America’s most-prestigious awards for newspaper and magazine reporting: The Pulitzer Prize …


The Medallion Bubble

‘Over the past year, a spate of suicides by taxi drivers in New York City has highlighted in brutal terms the overwhelming debt and financial plight of medallion owners,’ Rosenthal wrote. ‘All along, officials have blamed the crisis on competition from ride-hailing companies such as Uber and Lyft. But a New York Times investigation found much of the devastation can be traced to a handful of powerful industry leaders who steadily and artificially drove up the price of taxi medallions, creating a bubble that eventually burst. Over more than a decade, they channelled thousands of drivers into reckless loans and extracted hundreds of millions of dollars before the market collapsed. These business practices generated huge profits for bankers, brokers, lawyers, investors, their own credit unions. The leaders of nonprofit credit unions became multimillionaires.’

What Rosenthal focused on most of all, was that “the methods stripped immigrant families of their life savings, crushed drivers under debt they could not repay and engulfed an industry that has long defined New York. More than 90% of medallion owners have filed for bankruptcy (May 2019 – ed.), according to a Times analysis of court records. Thousands more are barely hanging on.” Even today.

**New Yorkers Robbed the Chicago Taxi Trade**

Rosenthal received the Pulitzer Prize for (in the words of the Pulitzer Prize Board) “an exposé of New York City’s taxi industry that showed how lenders profited from predatory loans that shattered the lives of vulnerable drivers – reporting that ultimately led to state and federal investigations and sweeping reforms.” These reforms are still making their way through the system.

From the three plagues which visited the New York City taxi industry over the past 10 years, the ‘Medallion Bubble’, which Rosenthal described, may have done more harm to owner-drivers than the rise of Uber & Lyft. But the coronavirus plague may well wipe out the taxi industry completely unless local or federal restructuring measures are taken.

“We’re finished – Pandemic hits taxi industry hard,” local Fox News recently reported. “New York City’s taxi industry may be at its breaking point, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the previous medallion debt crisis. With many drivers still drowning in debt from this crisis, the pandemic has not only killed over 60 drivers and made many others ill, but its economic impact has been severe, with the Taxi and Limousine Commission reporting that trips fell as much as 84 percent from their pre-virus days.” ‘We’re finished, we’ve been destroyed,’ taxi driver Mouhamadou Aliyu – still $600,000 (£458,000) in debt – told Fox. ‘Trips are still down 70 percent.’

The Rise & Fall of the ‘Taxi King’

In the weeks after his first articles, the Times published these gems: ‘What Actually Happened to New York’s Taxi Drivers’ (May 27, 2019) and ‘The Myth of the Medallion’ (June 6, 2019). Worth a (re)read via the search function on the New York Times-site: www.nytimes.com. Not that Rosenthal stopped there. Four months later he switched his attention to the Chicago cab trade, which was plundered by New York investors: ‘We Were Wiped Out’ – New Yorkers Preyed on Chicago Cabbies.’ (October 5, 2019). Two months later the New York Times ran another two taxi pieces by Rosenthal: ‘The Epic Rise and Hard Fall of New York’s Taxi King’ on December 4, 2019, describing the astonishing ‘career’ of Evgeny A. Freidman, also known as the ‘Taxi King’, a Russian immigrant and son of a taxi driver, who owned $255 million (£190,739,163) in assets, including 800 taxi licences (then worth at least $650,000 – £496,153 - apiece). Five years later he was destitute, convicted of tax fraud, but avoided prison by cooperating with a federal investigation into one of his partners, Michael D. Cohen, President Trump’s former lawyer. Just before Christmas, on December 22, 2019, Rosenthal delivered his last ‘taxi piece’ from the series about a New York taxi driver who killed himself out of despair (and shame) about his ever-mounting debt: A $750,000 Taxi Medallion, a Driver’s Suicide and Brother’s Guilt.’ A very touching article.

Together these articles were the ones which won Rosenthal the Pulitzer Prize. He documented the (artificial) rise and fall of medallion prices: from well over $1million (£765,156) in 2013 to $650,000 (£496,087) in 2015 and much less than $200,000 (£152,642) now. In 18 months of reporting, Rosenthal did over 600 (!) interviews with people from every angle involved, often working at his desk until deep into the night. His articles showed how poor immigrants were driven to bankruptcy, and sometimes suicide. His motivation? ‘I’ve always liked the underdog’, Rosenthal said.

So where is the New York taxi trade now? In January Rosenthal described how a high-level government panel was working on a debt restructuring package of as much as $500 million for thousands of taxi drivers trapped in exploitative loans, but corona delayed this process.

On July 29, the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) organised a demonstration with 150 cabs driving from New York’s City Hall to the Greenwich headquarters of investment fund Marblegate, now the largest medallion owner with over 3000 NY medallions ($350 million worth, which it acquired for on average $72,000 each, along with some loans and medallions from other cities). If the New York City restructuring plan is to succeed, it needs Marblegate’s support. The plan aims at restructuring the loans to $125,000 (£95,384) per medallion, forgiving all other debt and refinancing the remaining value at 4% over 20 years (for a $757,48 - £578 mortgage). As part of this stimulus package Congress should set up 0% interest loans and tax exemption for medallion debt forgiveness. To be continued, post-corona no doubt.
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ELECTRIC DREAMS

I was saddened to read the Cab you Drive article in the last edition of Taxi, where the trader details the grim state of affairs for many of the fleet owners. I have seen the pictures on social media of the fields of cabs that he mentions.

Personally, I have been mostly insulated from how bad things are, as a result of my decision back in March/April to advertise my services locally, and I got lucky with a few regular runs that spawned other contacts and more jobs, which are now keeping me busy near home. I am still 40% down on my gross take most days, but running exclusively on battery and my cheap night rate electricity at home means no fuel bills, and that I can do my shortened day’s work for almost nothing.

Last week I had a wait and return job to Canary Wharf for one of my earliest customers, he was in the office for 4 hours, but I chose to just sit and wait rather than try to work - just in case I got a job that took me away, and I couldn’t get back (I don’t want anything to risk the regular work). I was plotted up outside a coffee shop in Poplar and got talking to another cabbie. He was driving a very old fleet cab, that he admitted was well past its best, but he explained it was all he could afford and that he was only paying 50% of the regular rent. As we chatted, I quickly worked out that even with the cheap rent he was paying, and his daily diesel bill, his outgoings were very similar to mine. It was then that the penny really dropped, if I were in his position, I would not have got the work I did - the aircon, green credentials and contactless were my main selling points, and I would not be able to charge what I did if I had a diesel bill every day. The reality is that being a TXE owning Musher has got me through the pandemic relatively unscathed!
The eclectic bunch of individuals that make up our trade rarely fail to interest, surprise or simply impress with their community mindedness. Bradley was no exception to this criteria and TAXI Editor decided to find out a little more…

Q. Hi Bradley, thanks for talking to TAXI! How did your association with the Charity come about?

A. I started as a driver for the charity shortly after I got my badge fifteen years ago - a friend of mine who already drove for the charity asked me to participate. I have loved every minute of my time with them and seeing the smiles on the faces of the children, families and carers is all the reward I need.

Q. How long have you been Chairman? What are your responsibilities?

A. I have been Chairman of the LTCFC since December 2019 and I oversee the running of the charity and assist the committee and volunteers to arrange days out in the UK, for special needs and disadvantaged children and oversee the allocation of funding to support children who need recreational, technology and mobility equipment. This year our very popular summer outing, taking hundreds of disadvantaged and special needs children to Southend had to be cancelled for the first time in 90 years and we are not sure if our other major event the “Mad Hatters Tea Party” in central London, will be able to go ahead either. Like all charities we have been affected by the pandemic so if you can help please do donate to the London Taxi Drivers’ Charity for Children please visit www.ltcfc.org.uk or text TAXI £5, £10 or £20 to 70085

Q. So people will have been drawn into reading this from looking at some of the images on this page – tell us about your love of herpetology – where did this stem from?

A. I have always been interested in natural history and fascinated by animals for as long as I can remember, but I suppose my love of reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates started at the age of 16 when I was given a Royal Python by a friend who could no longer keep it - much to my parent’s horror. They were definitely not happy and weren’t initially too keen, especially as it was going to live in my bedroom, but I did manage to turn them around. I christened it Monty and I had it for about 12 years.

Q. How did your hobby become a business?

A. By the age of 18 I owned many lizards and snakes, keeping one snake at home and the rest of my growing collection in the premises of my Direct Mail business. My Direct Mail customers were always fascinated to see the collection and often visited me instead of phoning just so that they could have a look at the latest additions. I was living at home with lots of disposable income and not much sense, instead of saving for my future, I used to sell all sorts of reptile amphibians and invertebrates, some of the most popular snakes were Corn Snakes and Boa Constrictors and I sold Lizards including Leopard Gecko’s and Bearded Dragons. I also had a large selection of venomous snakes including Rattlesnakes, Cobras and Mambas and it may surprise readers, but I also kept Caiman Crocodiles and Mississippi Alligators! Although I no longer have my Herpetology business, my love of reptiles and amphibians is still as strong. I love recreating habitats including providing the correct temperature, humidity and getting the environment as close to their natural environment as I can. Currently I keep Royal Pythons, Children’s Pythons, Spotted Pythons, including a 5ft long Short Tailed Python from Malaysia, Brazilian Rainbow Boas, Gray-Banded Kingsnakes, Arizona Mountain Kingsnakes, California Kingsnakes, Rosy Boas and a few other interesting creatures!

Q. Have you been out working at all lately – what’s been your experience out on the roads?

A. I have been working for the last seven weeks, and currently I keep Royal Pythons, Children’s Pythons, Spotted Pythons, including a 5ft long Short Tailed Python from Malaysia, Brazilian Rainbow Boas, Gray-Banded Kingsnakes, Arizona Mountain Kingsnakes, California Kingsnakes, Rosy Boas and a few other interesting creatures!
Q. Back to the Charity, how can Cabbies help? What are the biggest challenges facing the charity right now and in the coming years?

A. The charity has relied on the support of cabbies who have volunteered their time since it was formed in 1928. One of our volunteer cabbies has been with us for over 16 years. Cabbies who want to consider helping us can either volunteer to help at our outings or help with fundraising collection days or indeed both. As well as our annual day trip to Southend and our Mad Hatters Tea Party, other events over the years have included Legoland, Woburn Safari Park, Chessington and theatre trips where we’ve taken children to see Grease, and Hairspray. All our activities are currently constrained by pandemic restrictions but when things return to some sort of normality, we would love cabbies to consider volunteering and spreading the word about the charity and what we do.

Q. As Chairman what would you like your legacy to be when you depart the role?

A. With a 92-year history and many excellent Chairs in the past I hope that when my tenure with the London Taxi Drivers Charity for Children ends, it is still in a position to continue its work helping disadvantaged and special needs children for another 100 years.

“The blue poison arrow frog contains an average of 200 micrograms of poisons which could cause harm or possibly prove fatal, even to a human.”

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
“Passengers were purloined en route to the ranks; jobs were ‘nicked’; bags and cases dragged out of luggage compartments; fights started; anarchy festered...”

DINOSAURS AT HEATHROW?

CABBIE CHRONICLES

In 1966, when I joined the licensed London taxi trade, I guess I could have been rightly described as, ‘green as grass.’ Naïve, even. Not yet married, my knowledge of the world was a road trip in my ‘Mini’ with three mates to Barcelona, two years as a clerk in the Ministry of Public Building and Works; a Saturday job at John Collier, the window to watch, aka, The fifty shilling tailor, in Angel Lane, Stratford; and on a Sunday, depending at what stage of my retail career, it was ‘Down the Lane’, flogging ‘shmutters’ from my friend’s stall, or, latterly, in the crockery department of the Houndsditch Warehouse Company.

Overnight Transformation to Geezer

The change to driving a cab – from that slightly wacky, genteel style of mercantile expertise – to the ‘Wham’, ‘Bam’, barely a thank you ma’am hard core business – of cabbaging, with no prisoners taken, was dramatic. Overnight, I grew from a shy, timid young man, to a ‘shy, timid, bit of a geezer’. It didn’t take me long to adapt to the aggressive characteristics of my peers, who appeared to spend their working lives ‘ducking and diving’ (or at least, that’s how it seemed from their brusque language and frequently animated conversations). I was soon to discover, along with the myth that the ‘streets of London were paved with gold’, that cab drivers were not the ‘knights in shining armour’ I imagined them to be. Licensed London Taxis were the ‘Marmite’ of the capital’s transport system – you either loved us or hated us. In what measure? It didn’t take me long to find out!

Media Poisoning of Trade

Like now, the media played a big part in poisoning the public against the licensed trade. Stories of ‘little old ladies’ being ‘turned over’, tourists being fleeced and decorum and decency being ‘put to the sword’, by unscrupulous taximen, along with their audacious, rapacious tactics. That anyone ever hailed a cab was a miracle. And it was nowhere more visible than at Heathrow Airport. The serendipitous nature of all manner of people, travelling from all corners of the globe and approaching the airport’s taxi ranks, dispersing at random to anywhere in the United Kingdom, was a force of natural physics almost greater than gravity, and too much for the licensed ‘Spivs’ to withstand. And it drew eager participation from the darker side of the cab trade, under its thrall. The ‘Duckers and the Divers’. Glad, similarly in double breasted overcoats, mufflers and dark glasses, they were a breed apart; nurtured, so it seemed, from the dark days of coupons, rationing and the black market. They were a licensed, mobile version of the street-wise hustlers, hawking ‘nylon stockings’ from battered suitcases to fashion-starved ladies; or fast fingered ‘geezer’s inviting the gullible to ‘find the lady’, and scarping at the first hint of a ‘long arm’ and a collar being felt. And they were there, roaming the ranks, controlling cabs to their personal agendas – only allowing friends and acknowledged colleagues access to the limited spaces from which to ply for hire to the burgeoning Heathrow thousands. Frustrated by being left on the fringes without any apparent official police intervention, cheated cabbies began taking the law into their own hands. Passengers were purloined en route to the ranks; jobs were ‘nicked’; bags and cases dragged out of luggage compartments; fights started; anarchy festered.

Naughty Boys

But we weren’t just being naughty boys at the ‘flyers’. In town, out on the streets, everyone was experiencing difficult times. The unwritten laws of the cab trade were being blatantly ignored. Whilst drivers queued patiently at the front of the rank, ‘chancers’ were nicking them off the back; radio jobs being hijacked, customers filched by drivers who’d not been despatched the job. They would casually turn up outside the door of a radio job and drive off with the passenger - before the legitimate driver arrived. Sometimes, they’d be caught in the act and fists would fly. Before computerised despatch, job callers/despatchers relied on the honesty and integrity of the circuit’s members to allocate a job to the nearest cab. Who was nearest? Fox challenged Victor, Angel competed against Whisky; Romeo battled against Juliet, for each piece of the diminishing cake. A band of brothers; all for one and one for all – another apothegm falling on deaf ears. Every avenue of deceit conceivable, was being conceived, and more besides. Lack of trade across the Capital degenerated into the ‘mother’ of all kipper seasons, not just for a place for faint hearts. In October 1966, when predatory dinosaurs, in mufflers and dark glasses, were roaming the taxi ranks at Heathrow Airport, strutting about intimidating and menacing passengers and cabbies alike, ‘The meek shall inherit the earth’ was not an epithet that flowed freely at ‘The Flyers’. On the legitimate ranks, rogue cabs shuffled backwards and forwards in a well-choreographed ballet, arrogantly displaying a bleak performance of selfishness and greed. Selfishness in the form of blocking off the rank only to the clique of drivers ‘in’ on the scam. My ‘exciting’ three pounds ten shilling ride to Heathrow morphed from a profitable experience into a bitter education. The bully-boy cabbies on the ranks had it ‘all sown up.’

The Unseen Enemy

But that was a lifetime ago. Over time, smooth running of the taxi ranks has evolved into a well-managed, well organised, extremely relevant scion of London’s taxi industry. That’s not saying there aren’t issues. There will always be issues, but for now, I’m given to understand, the issues are between the cab trade and the commercial rivalries of 21st century opportunism coupled with the ugly face of HAL’s self-interest. Unfortunately, now instead of bartling each other, we’re fighting an unseen enemy that’s decimating not just the cab trade more than anything we could have imagined last year, let alone a quarter of a century past, but the entire planet. Covid-19 is playing havoc with our lives - the ordinary has become the extraordinary; the simplest of tasks has become a logistical nightmare - from putting out the bins to walking the dog. New rules and regulations permeate society. Last year if you had walked into a bank wearing a mask, they would have called the police. Now, if you walked into a bank not wearing a mask – they’d call the police.

All that aside, here’s a bit of impromptu irony. Last year, Terminal Five held a historic natural history exhibition – the display of a complete skeleton of a 500-million-year-old dinosaur. It was en route to France where it was being put up for auction. I didn’t catch its name, but when they opened the box it came in, they were amazed to discover a double-breasted overcoat, a muffler and a pair of prehistoric dark glasses...
APPLICATION FORM

Name ____________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Postcode ___________________________________________
Telephone ____________________________________________
Mobile ______________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Email ______________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Date of Birth _________________________________________
Badges Number _______________________________________
____________________________________________________
Badges Colour (Please state whether green or yellow) ________ Year badge obtained ______________
____________________________________________________
Suburban Badges 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 __________________________

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 __________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

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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• 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.
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HAVE YOU HEARD OUR 2020 RADIO CAMPAIGNS ON LBC?

We have set aside £100,000 to help promote the trade in getting our message out there that Taxis are the safest option for the travelling public to use.

Listen to our radio ads here: www.ltda.co.uk/media-centre/ltda-radio-adverts
PUZZLER

ACROSS:
1 Having a high pH (8)
5 __ Brolin, Sicario star (4)
9 Make an adjustment to (5)
10 Loud crockery noise (7)
11 Unaltered (4)
12 Very thin tall person (8)
14 Widespread food scarcity (6)
15 Seize (a criminal) (6)
18 Picture-developing area (8)
20 Oven for pottery (4)
23 Dependent (on) (7)
24 Dull brownish-yellow colour (5)
25 Absence (4)
26 Large (sum of money) (8)

DOWN:
1 Hoard (5)
2 Stay silent! (4,3)
3 Board-game with counters (4)
4 Silvery-white metal (6)
6 Surpass or better (5)
7 Yield (7)
8 Place for treating leather (7)
13 Beg (7)
14 Pertaining to political unity of states (7)
16 Muslim country similar to a monarchy (7)
17 ___ board, graduate’s square cap (6)
19 Old artefact (5)
21 Unpleasantly loud (5)
22 Outer body covering (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.

ALL ANSWERS TO PUZZLER ON P30

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- VNK Motors - TXIs & TXIs for rent, from £90 upwards per week. Full back up. Caledonia Road, North London area, breakdown service, overhauls, running repairs & body work. 0207 700 1045 or 07951 661430 – Nick. Looking for a taxi mechanic.

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**ACCOUNTANTS**

- Chartered accountants specialising in the taxi trade. Accounts and tax returns £312 inc VAT. Call 0208 360 1446

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**07957 465423**

e16-taxirentals.co.uk

**TX4s TO RENT**

- Ascott’s maintained.
- Pay by cash/bank/online.
- Mercs also available

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**CABS WANTED**

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- All good quality TX4s required. Top prices guaranteed. 07566 225156, 07787 513629

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- All de-commissioned good quality TX4s wanted. Instant decision, cash paid. We come to you. 07973 335739 or 01253 407500

- All cabs wanted, we come to you, top prices paid, cash/ bank transfer, instant decision, finance settled, non-runners or sell & rent back, Taxi’s available to rent. call 07966 317300

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

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**BUSINESS FOR SALE**

There are a lot of us cabbies who, in this post lockdown summer of 2020, find themselves in ‘reduced circumstances’ as Lord Grantham of Downton Abbey would say.

To balance the books here at Meg Towers we have turned to buying and selling pre-loved items (that’s second hand in plain speak) on eBay. This has turned out to be:

a) a money maker
b) a money saver
c) an opportunity to clean a stranger’s toilet

Our first sale was of a pump for a garden water feature. Brand new and boxed. Mr Meg didn’t use it because he decided to make his own from an old vacuum tube and some washing machine parts. A chap messaged to ask if he could come and inspect the pump before bidding on it.

He arrived at our front door and Mr Meg told him, “Social distancing! Please, use my back passage!”

The potential buyer asked Mr Meg, “Are you having a laugh?” Mr Meg who did not understand what could be considered at all funny replied, “No” and gave a puzzled shrug over to me.

The fact that Mr Meg, thanks to a typo, had listed his pump as a ‘Water Pimp’ probably hadn’t helped the introductions. The visitor forensically examined the pump and, finally, told Mr Meg that it wasn’t worth the starting price of £15. Mr Meg responded with, “Too right mate. It’s worth more!” Yet again the buyer said, “Are you having a laugh?” But Mr Meg had the last laugh when the chap went home and had to bid £37.77 to beat the competition for the pump.

We got some (much needed) great news this month when the mini-est of the Mini Megs got engaged to be married. She is planning a, fingers crossed, Covid restriction free wedding in late 2021. Frugal, like her Dad, she spotted a designer dress she was after on a secondhand wedding dress website, and the owner of the dress suggested she come to her home and try it on. That is how we ended up in Arabella Montesque-Forsythe’s mansion (or summat like that) in Cadogan Square last Sunday. Judging from the house this woman probably burnt £50 notes as fuel in her magnificent open fireplaces. I was puzzled as to why someone so clearly loaded needed to flog her preloved bridal dress. She read my mind and told me, “I’m selling for my charidee, dahling!” Then she breached all social distancing rules and lay a hand on my shoulder.

The woman was wearing a diamond ring so huge her arm should have been in a sling to support its weight. The dress was a fail because my daughter’s bosom was more out of it than in.

I asked if I could use the loo before I headed back to the car and the drive home and the woman led me to a bathroom the size of The London Palladium. All her toiletries were Yves Saint Laurent and I eyed them with envy. If I don’t get back in my cab soon, I’ll be showering in Tesco Value Washing Up Liquid.

As I prepared to have a wee, I noticed ‘deposits’ on the toilet bowl. And, they wouldn’t flush away. I didn’t want Lady Lahdidah thinking it was me wot did it.

Strange times indeed that we are living in.
See your advertisement here

TAXI is the membership magazine for the Licensed Taxi Drivers’ Association (LTDA). It is circulated to 15,000 taxi drivers in London every fortnight.

The LTDA is the definitive voice of and for London cab drivers and is responsible for ensuring best practise in the trade, making sure its members’ voices are heard and serving members with the back up and support they need.

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