Judgement week for Uber as London licence verdict looms
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**Crime**

Essex Police have confirmed the arrest and subsequent charge of a 39-year-old man from Westcliff and a 34-year-old man from Wickford following reports of a taxi driver being robbed in Appletree Way, Wickford in the early hours of Sunday 13th September. The victim suffered facial injuries. Both men are now due to appear at Basildon Crown Court on Monday 12 October after appearing at Southend Magistrates’ Court, Monday 14 September. They were swiftly arrested just a few hours after the robbery had been reported.

**Roads**

According to recent data from the Waze for Cities programme, it appears that congestion in outer London is nearly on average a fifth greater than this time last year and rising. Whilst the data demonstrates a comparatively sharp reduction inside the central Congestion Charging Zone area; the return of schools and office workers, seemingly combined with Streetspace initiatives and Congestion Charge avoidance, has significantly impacted outer London areas as people return to using their private vehicles.

**Private Hire**

Whilst Uber are still seemingly attempting to defend their business model in courts across the world, (see p5 for the news on Uber’s London Licence Appeal where LTDA Barristers have been furnishing the court with argument and evidence as an ‘interested party’), the latest landmark verdict has come from Switzerland, where cantonal Appeals Court Judges have ruled that Uber must behave like an employer in the treatment of its workers. They ruled last week that a man had been sacked in an “unjustified manner” and that he should enjoy the same rights as a driver who has a contract with a private hire company. In other news, Addison Lee have teamed up with Ford, this time to get some new ‘TfL approved’ partition screens fitted to their vehicles.
Black Taxi rentals

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The battle for London’s Streets

“Pressure is mounting on the Mayor and London boroughs to recognise the damage being done by the Streetspace schemes and act...”

Steve’s comment

The battle for London’s streets is heating up. The last few weeks have been busy on all fronts. We’ve been working to ensure that schemes implemented by the London boroughs aren’t damaging for taxi drivers whilst continuing to push for access to the Bishopsgate Corridor; prevent TfL from introducing any more schemes which exclude taxis; fight the Streetspace schemes in the courts and oppose Uber’s attempts to regain its licence.

Protests and pressure

Recent protests did little to help our cause and we’ve been doing damage control ever since. Unfortunately, the actions of a few people and offensive language used have overshadowed the legitimate concerns and frustrations felt by drivers. The videos circulating on social media turned the whole fiasco into a bit of a media circus and the requests for interviews came in thick and fast as the organisers and trade ‘faces’ involved all went into hiding. It’s not easy doing interviews being asked about videos that reinforce every negative stereotype of cabbies as being white, angry and racist but I tried to make it clear that with the very survival of the trade at stake drivers are crying out for support and desperate people do desperate things.

Pressure is mounting on the Mayor and London boroughs to recognise the damage being done by the Streetspace schemes and act. Whether it’s low traffic neighbourhoods, segregated cycle lanes or bus gates. We are seeing more and more shocking examples of badly planned schemes, which are causing congestion and creating problems for local residents and businesses. As a result, every day there’s a new protest or campaign launched, with petitions against the schemes gaining thousands of signatures in a matter of days. In some areas this has already resulted in schemes being scrapped, such as the high-profile climb down by Wandsworth Council.

Time for the Government to step in?

The Transport Secretary has also called on councils to stop using Government funding to introduce poorly thought out schemes which are doing more harm than good. I wrote to him welcoming his comments and urging him to intervene in London. We’ve been lobbying the Government to step in and do more to support taxi drivers – whether that’s ensuring drivers have the access we need to provide a high-quality service; further financial support once the current self-employed furlough scheme ends, or measures to promote and incentivise the use of taxis. We hope to see some kind of support announced soon and will be meeting with the Minister for Roads, Buses and Places, Baroness Vere later this week, to discuss this further.

At a recent ‘transport questions’ session, Daniel Zeichner MP, vice-chair of the APPG on Taxis asked the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps MP what he was doing to support taxi and PHV drivers.

Cover story

Uber unconvincing in fight for their licence

Uber was back in court last week, once again trying to prove that they’ve changed their ways and should be relicensed as a ‘fit and proper operator’.

On day one, we saw Uber claiming that the company had changed, and that London was “a safer place” with them in the market. However, on day two, Gerald Gouriet QC, acting for the LTDA detailed to the court how Uber had tried to conceal the serious photo fraud issue. He told the the court that Uber drivers used incorrect photos on nearly 14,800 trips. Most of the drivers who used the wrong identification had been dismissed by Uber, and some had even had their licences revoked by TfL, putting passengers at serious risk.

This time around, TfL were taking a “neutral stance” leaving it up to the Court to decide whether Uber can be trusted and considered ‘fit and proper’. However, they didn’t pull any punches with their evidence.

Uber seemed on the back foot from the get-go, and giving evidence, Regional General Manager, Jamie Heywood was forced to admit that “there is no question that mistakes were made”. Our lawyers were able to show that Uber has repeatedly done the wrong thing, then tried to cover its tracks and simply can’t be trusted – claims that the company “emphatically rejected”.

The judgement in the case has been deferred until September 28th and we wait to see whether Uber has done enough to convince the Court that it has truly changed its ways. As far as we are concerned, a leopard doesn’t change its spots. Uber is not and never has been a fit and proper operator and we hope to see a judgement to that effect.

Taxi access maintained

Elsewhere, it seems like TfL are beginning to recognise the importance of taxi access. They are yet to admit they were wrong on Bishopsgate; however, we now know that taxis will maintain access to London Bridge and new bus gates due to be installed in and around Monument will allow taxis access. The reasoning behind letting us into one scheme and TfL are also under growing scrutiny over their failure to account for the needs of disabled people and conduct a thorough impact assessment of their Streetspace schemes – which should help us in our legal challenge.

Judgement week for Uber as London licence verdict looms

Responding, the Secretary of State paid tribute to the “incredible” work of taxis and PHV drivers during the crisis, noting that in some areas they are the only means of transport. He went on to say that he would have more to say on support for taxi and PHV drivers during the pandemic “in the not too distant future”. It remains to be seen what this support will look like and we will believe it when we see it. But watch this space.
The LTDA has had a number of meetings with representatives from the City of London to discuss the traffic measures and road schemes being put in place in response to the pandemic. We continue to engage with them to find ways to minimise the impact of these schemes on taxi drivers and to enhance the services provided by taxis in the Square Mile. Below, the City of London explain their approach and encourage drivers to provide feedback - recognising the important role of taxis in the Square Mile.

City Corporation COVID-19 City Streets Update

Life during the COVID-19 pandemic is not what it used to be. ‘Social distancing’ is just one of the phrases that is now in common use and indicates how much we have all had to change the way we do things. As the governing body for the Square Mile we have had to adapt and, as you know, this has included making temporary changes to the City’s streets.

The City of London Corporation has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for all who work, live and visit the City. Of course, during the current COVID-19 pandemic this duty is significant. As we warmly welcome those returning to the City there will, in turn, be an increase in trade for taxis. For City workers to return, they will need to have full confidence in their safety both on the streets and in the offices. In transport terms, we must think not just about reducing road danger, but also how we can safely enable social distancing and reduce the risk of infection.

Temporary measures have, therefore, been rolled out across the City in order to ensure there is enough space for people to safely and comfortably move around the Square Mile, particularly on foot.

The emphasis on providing more space for people walking, reflects the fact that walking is, by far, the most common way to travel around the City. We know that improving the experience of walking and spending time on our streets is key to ensuring the City remains a great place to live, work, visit and study. Following years of growing numbers of City workers and visitors, many pavements have become too narrow to safely and comfortably accommodate the number of people walking on them - even in normal times. Given the new need to enable social distancing, and with more and more people returning to the City, it is vital that more space is made available.

This means the way street space is used must change. As part of our COVID-19 recovery programme we have allocated more space to walking and cycling and introduced access restrictions on some City streets.

The on-street rollout of the City’s COVID-19 response is now largely complete, but there are some refinements to come. Over the coming weeks we will be replacing the current barriers and cones with more robust measures. You may have noticed some of these have already been installed. We acknowledge the impact these necessary changes have had on some taxi journeys, but they have been made with the needs of all travellers in mind. The City Corporation website is being kept up to date with details on changes as they happen, and it remains the best place to find official information.

Importantly, we know that some disabled people require or prefer to use a taxi. The recovery plan retains access for motor vehicles on most streets, although journeys may need to be made by different routes. We are allowing taxis to pick up and drop off disabled passengers on streets that have timed access restrictions for motor vehicles.

Taxis play, and will continue to play, a unique and important role in the City’s and London’s transport mix. However, the level of change required to deliver both our Transport Strategy, and the essential short-term COVID-19 response, means there are some inevitable alterations in the way taxis can be used and operate. We look forward to continuing to engage with the taxi industry on the developing role of taxis, on how the industry can adapt in line with a changing City and what the City Corporation can do in support.

All our COVID-19 transport recovery plan changes are temporary and remain under review with the ability to be adapted as required. We are actively seeking feedback on these temporary changes and invite you to provide your thoughts via our website.

As we all adapt to the ‘new normal’ I would like to extend my appreciation to all City streets users, including the valued taxi trade, who have shown flexibility and understanding as we navigate a time of unprecedented challenges and change in every element of our daily lives.

Alastair Moss - Chair of the Planning and Transportation Committee at the City of London Corporation.

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What does it mean to be a professional in 2020? When does an occupation or a job become professionalised? What makes those with ‘The Knowledge’ different from other ‘... suppliers of transportation services...’?

A brief background search produces suggestions as to what the make-up of a ‘professional activity’ might involve. Modern definitions include notions of ‘accountability; integrity; competency; knowledge and qualifications’ - deprive a Knowledge Boy or Girl of a 4G network and these skills would still exist, though some other ‘suppliers of transportation services’ might well struggle!

Some of the key ingredients of ‘professionalism’ involve:

‘The deployment of formal certified learning’
Can other ‘suppliers of transportation services’ really claim to be engaged in doing this? Possibly, though that might depend on the depth and quality of learning involved in order to be accredited. In what world can those that pass ‘The Knowledge’ be compared to the learning involved to obtain other road-based transportation service operator licenses?

‘A professional owns the power, skills and freedom to problem solve.’
It’s pretty certain that an individual having the means to purchase and blindly follow a mobile device with a sat-nav app doesn’t meet this threshold. ‘Knowledge Boys & Girls’ have in-built ‘chips and processors’ that deploy real knowledge, in real time. Out on the roads, real professionalism isn’t dependent on the battery life of a mobile device or if that device knows that the football kicked off late or is going to penalties - which will impact on both journey time and route choice.

‘A professional possesses the ability to make decisions in the best interests of others.’
We know that this level of responsibility is based on the use of specific, localised, operational expertise - rather than hoping a digital device can provide an AA graded Knowledge rating of a route selection in line with traffic conditions, whilst ensuring a disabled passenger arrives at the entrance to their hotel which has suitable wheelchair access and porter assistance.

Those who possess ‘The Knowledge’ and have responded to the strength of the calling to the highest standards of the profession don’t just know the optimum route within an ever-changing landscape, they know its history too. If the formation of a professional identity is also about ‘providing a specialised service to society,’ those professionals with the ability to share that learning with their passengers are actually, inter-generational custodians of present-day and historical London knowledge. Black cab drivers are trusted ‘old school influencers’ in relation to the sites, attractions, facilities, services and cultural traditions of the capital – including being ambassadors of a historic trade, which is known as the best taxi service in the world.

All this, whilst transporting passengers in the most direct and safest manner, in accordance with codes, ethics and the standards of a professional community of operators.

Those with ‘The Knowledge’ have often picked up and are moving before a passenger has informed them of their destination – professionals are not sat around backing up traffic, typing postcodes into gadgets, in the hope a device can professionalise their practice and make them what they are not.

When people are lost - a professional finds them and gets them where they need to go. When they are too tired to go on - a professional takes the reins and when they are late for what’s important to them, professional road craft and knowledge get them to their destination safely and quickly.

So how are those with ‘The Knowledge’ valued and whose responsibility should it be to promote the identities and activities of such professionals, in turn separating them from other ‘suppliers of transportation services...’?

You are professionals. We know it.
Let’s ensure everybody else knows it and values it too.

The LTDA are here to represent, protect and ensure recognition of the professional practice, identity and standards of our members.
A Minority of Demonstrators Shame Trade

“The fact that 99.9% of our trade were not in attendance and are as far from being racist hooligans as you can get, will mean nothing.”

Streets ahead

Whilst I agree that Mayor Khan has been a disastrous Mayor for London with ineffective schemes to tackle crime (and having made the appointments of inexperienced or agenda driven personnel that have done more harm to London than good) the behaviour of a very small group of individuals outside City Hall was also disastrous for our trade.

Shame on them...

The perception put out by some of our detractors who try to portray us as a trade full of racist hooligans, was given a massive ‘we told you so’ moment, when videos that those attending had happily shared on social media started doing the rounds - and so, our trade got slaughtered in the media. The result will be those who would usually be vocal in their support for us will go silent, because they don’t want to be seen as supporting racist hooligans.

The fact that 99.9% of our trade were not in attendance and are as far from being racist hooligans as you can get, will mean nothing. That said, the blame of that monumental *** up lies squarely on the so-called trade representatives that having been out of the limelight for a while, decided it would be a good moment for a ‘brothers & sisters’ speech and to give a perception that whilst they are not actually ‘walking the walk’, they are very much still, ‘talking the talk.’

Unfortunately, all they did was light the fuse of a very vulnerable group who are frightened for their very future and then sit back and say, ‘nothing to do with me’.

I’d like to say it was an innocent mistake on their part, but these are the same ‘reps’ who called a demo at Bank junction to protest against our exclusion from Tooley St, having already been told that decision had been reversed. They could have cancelled that demo and allowed drivers to be at work but no, they couldn’t miss the opportunity of giving a speech and then halfway through claim some breaking news had just come through and only then passed on the fact we were being allowed in Tooley St... Shame on them.

Driver wellbeing

In the last publication of TAXI, I wrote about the ludicrous Streetspace plans TLS and the Boroughs are implementing. A key example being Bisphospgate - many drivers have returned to work and are calling the LTDA, bamboozled as to what has happened to the streets in which we ply our trade. Not only are we dealing with Covid-19 (and still very few people have returned to work), drivers will be listening to the radio and watching the news being advised by all the guidelines set out by the government. To that end clearly, we all need to stay alert and wash our hands as much as possible, use face coverings, and keep social distancing.

As we know, this a very frustrating, anxious, and worrying time for our trade and such factors will likely impact on driver health and wellbeing - so it’s important we take care of our minds as well as our physical health. Keeping active, eating a balanced diet and managing stress (even simply by speaking openly with someone about how you feel) are all positive steps to enhance wellbeing.

In recognition of this, the LTDA have lined up two different fitness classes that will suit everyone’s needs and abilities - training will start on the 1st October, so don’t miss out!

We have teamed up again with the boxing gym that was extremely successful the last time we partnered up – there was not only a huge uptake from members, but also great feedback in terms of how beneficial drivers said the sessions were. Gary, who will be running the classes is licensed by the IBA and fought for many years in the amateur ranks, with an outstanding record. He then went on to coach juniors and seniors at his local amateur boxing club.

We understand many drivers may still be shielding and are unable to leave the house, so we have also teamed up with Neil, who is able to provide online training sessions. Neil is a qualified personal trainer, his qualifications include being a Level 4 Master Practitioner in personal training, as well as possessing a BSc Hons in Sports Studies. Neil specialises in providing a range of services, such as designing exercise programmes for older adults, creating exercise sessions for pre and post-natal women, exercise referral and helps people to lose weight and feel better mentally as well as physically.

Clients would need to be screened for injuries and health conditions prior to participation and the sessions will last 30 minutes. For Neil’s class, all you need is a space to work out in at home, equipment is not essential, but it is great if you have some to use. To participate, you must be an LTDA member.

Gary and Neil will provide a free introductory training session when taking on a booking and will require your driver membership number that’ll be verified by an LTDA representative as part of the booking process prior to your first training session. All LTDA members are welcome - depending on numbers group sessions may be made available. If you are interested, please contact Gary on 07811 965176 or Neil on 07763 179716 for further details.

The wellbeing of our members is paramount, and we hope members get in touch with Gary or Neil to take part in the sessions that most suit them. For those who after reading this article would like to reach out and discuss their wellbeing with organisations that can support, check out the following sites:

https://www.mind.org.uk
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk
https://www.rethink.org
https://www.samaritans.org

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Rat Run

“Many have looked past the initial pros of working from home, realising it will not remain the utopia they first thought.”

Top rank

I finished off my last article with the statement “If you think that working from home will be a universal normality going forward, you’re wrong, there will be more of it but more and more people are realising it’s not the have cake & eat it utopia they originally thought, but more of that next time…” Well this is the next time and I have been asked why I believe or can be so sure the workers will return.

Novelty wears off...

Well contrary to a few well-placed surveys or stories about the death of the office, many workers can’t wait to return to the office. I’ve spoken to hundreds of workers throughout lockdown and its quite surreal how they’ve gone from, “yeah it’s great, I get to sit in the garden in the sunshine and spend time with the kids” to “I miss the office banter and how I could easily ask a colleague a question and don’t even get me started on the bloody kids, they’re doing my nut in.”

Many have also said that whilst it is true, they’ve been able to work from home it’s not been without its problems. One City trader put it rather well when he was quoted as saying “It’s like driving a car without mirrors, it’s possible, but it’s not safe nor is it ideal.” As time moves on, more workers and firms are confirming their commitment to get back to the office, initially on a rota basis until Covid-19 secure workplace measures can be relaxed.

Duping from home

Office workers are now (quite rightly), also becoming concerned with their own future, having looked past the initial pros of working from home to realise it will not remain the utopia they first thought. The savings many were gaining through not having to commute have already been snatched back by some employers with more and more staff having to take a 10% or 20% pay cut to ‘help the business’ throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with statements like ‘you won’t be any worse off as your saving on the commute to work’ already being cited as why they should not object.

Insurance companies that offer home insurance are already looking at asking the question, ‘Do you work from home?’ and raising premiums for those home workers as more time spent in the home will mean more risk of a potential issue within the home and of course more time spent in the home will mean more wear and tear within the home.

Then there’s the very real concern that when it comes to redundancies, those who are working from home will be out of sight and so out of mind. After all, if a job can be done from someone’s home in Surrey, Kent or Essex it can just as easily be done from a home in any number of other countries across the globe.

Spyware

Many people working from home are finding their employers are now installing spyingware that shows how long they are online or active on the phones. A very good friend of mine who seldom called me during working hours now calls me from his ‘home office’ because it goes through his work switchboard and he needs to increase his phone time.

The water cooler moments spent having a chat or gossip can’t be replaced, neither can the bonding drink after work. As I wrote a few weeks back, employers haven’t spent thousands of pounds over the years on team bonding for nothing. To work well together - they need to be together.

Paying the piper

When the bike schemes fail and they will fail, those who were instrumental in their implementation must go, the likes of Heidi Alexander and Will Norman have caused unprecedented damage to London and at a time when London was already in a critical state. We cannot just forgive and forget; they must pay the price along with all the others that put their own selfish agenda ahead of what’s actually best for London.

Already the blame game on who’s actually responsible for the chaos caused by the introduction of some of the schemes has begun with the Mayor blaming councils for the problems, stating “I’m only responsible for 2% of the network,” i.e. it’s the City of London and local authorities that are messing up the majority of roads. Then the local authorities are claiming it’s not us, it’s the government that is making us do it. The government though have been clear that the money offered didn’t need to be taken, and only a portion needed to be used to implement schemes. They didn’t say. Close roads and put in hundreds of badly planned cycle routes’ - that was the doing of the local authorities. If there is one thing you can be sure of, if the blame game is under way, then the scheme is very much on life support and hopefully soon to be dead in the water.

As I write this, I have just seen pictures of council lorries removing restrictions in Wandsworth and the mainstream media is full of articles of the harm being done by the schemes. The Daily Mail sent reporters to look at these schemes and they saw empty cycle lane after empty cycle lane whilst gridlocked traffic sat adjacent to it. Claims by the cycling lobby that ‘they only looked empty because they are so efficient’ was also published as reporters counted just 7 cyclists in a 15-minute period using the Euston Rd cycle lane whilst 420 mostly commercial vehicles (you know, the ones trying to get London back on track), struggled to get a few yards closer to their destination.
Bishopsgate Accessibility Trial & PCN Appeals

“135 Bishopsgate has a disabled entrance, but we are unable to drop off a wheelchair user outside the building. The nearest we can get is dropping in Liverpool Street…”

On point

Bishopsgate Bus Gate

Recently, I took the cab down to Bishopsgate, to see what it’s like with the bus gates now operating (with only buses and cyclists being able to pass through, from 7.00am to 7.00pm, Monday to Friday). I was joined by a disabled colleague who’s a supporter of the cab trade to help us test out the accessibility of the new scheme, as we have been reassured constantly by TfL that we have the access we need to deliver a door-to-door, accessible service and not disadvantage anyone who relies on taxis to get where they need to go.

There have been a lot of changes to road layouts and signage in and around the bus gates on both TfL and City of London managed roads. Like many members I speak to, the first thing I found was that it was really hard to work out where I could and couldn’t go. It’s true that there are ways to access most destinations and around the bus gates, but those routes are a long, convoluted way round. At one point I got stuck between two lorries that had been forced to take a very narrow dog leg to avoid the bus gates and get back onto Bishopsgate and were struggling to get past parked cars. There are also several sections where no matter which way you go, eventually you hit a restricted turn and so would have to drop a passenger at the end of a side road, a considerable distance away from their destination. We filmed an example journey from London Bridge to 135 Bishopsgate, to demonstrate the challenges this presents for disabled passengers and we will be using this to illustrate how the scheme is negatively impacting the service taxis provide. 135 Bishopsgate has a disabled entrance, but we are unable to drop off a wheelchair user outside the building. The nearest we can get is dropping in Liverpool Street and leaving them to make their own way down Bishopsgate.

The bus gate signage put in place are also not immediately obvious, and we saw a number of cars and the odd cab passing through, clearly unaware of the changes - perhaps this is TfL’s intention as we know they are short on cash! But £130 is a lot for a cab driver, still struggling to make ends meet and find fares, so be careful out there. In one stretch within the bus gates, TfL had taken the trouble to repaint the lines from a wide red line indicating no stopping, to a double red line to allow stopping – ironic considering we can’t use this road at all now most of the time – another great use of tax payers money.

On a slightly positive note, there were a couple of people looking for cabs in the area, but anyone picked up would have quickly found themselves taking a detour around the City and probably wouldn’t have been best pleased with the longer, likely more expensive journey.

Disharmony

All in all, it’s not good at all for taxis and problematic for passengers, but what really struck me is how pointless the whole thing feels. The City was dead with barely any pedestrians and most of the offices and shops looked empty. There are plenty of buses using the new ‘corridor’ but only the odd cyclist and some other unlucky vehicles who have not seen the signs and will be hearing from TfL shortly. Vehicles can also still weave in and out of Bishopsgate using side streets, so there are still lots of other vehicles on the road and it’s definitely not the cycling and walking paradise it’s been purported to be.

Landsdowne Way, Hackney

I am talking quite a few calls lately about PCNs issued in Landsdowne Way, Hackney. I had a call from our member Paul who had got one, and after discussing and looking at Hackney’s evidence, we appealed. The basis of the appeal was that the signage was too close to an exit of the roundabout, where a driver’s attention would be taken giving way to vehicles coming from the right and they would bypass the restriction sign before having chance to see it properly and process it. We also stated, that even if a driver did have time to see the sign and stop – they would have to reverse onto the roundabout. We also threw in that the restriction was in place during school arrival and home time and the school was closed. I thought we had a decent chance and had given Hackney more than enough reasons to cancel, but unfortunately Paul called to say that the appeal had been rejected. Please try to get the message out there about Landsdowne Way as it’s really easy to get caught there and Hackney Council have shown that it’s all about the money.

PCN appeals

I get asked a lot about whether appealing a PCN loses you the chance to pay at the ticket at the discounted rate (£65). As long as you appeal within the timeframe to pay the ticket at £65, it stays at £65 (whether they accept your appeal or not). The amount of days that you are given to pay £65 or appeal varies from council to council - I advise you to read the paperwork carefully. I feel that every ticket should be appealed, even if your bang to rights – it’s worth a go and I am always willing to help. One thing I would say, is that to always appeal online. I’ve had cases before where members have appealed tickets via post, heard nothing and then received a ‘Charge Certificate’ (£195). When contacted about the charge, the council conveniently then claim, ‘we didn’t receive your appeal’, so appealing online through their website I would deem to be the safer approach.

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Executive S.O. | Lloyd Baldwin

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Preferences – Declared or Revealed?

"The political route’ hasn’t failed, it’s just hard graft - but it’s the only route to get us where we need to be."

M4 musings

I was thinking this week about preferences. When people are asked their opinion, whether in idle conversation or a poll, they will mostly declare a preference. But there can be a difference between what people say (declared preference) and what they actually think or do (revealed preference.)

Apparently, people say they would cycle more if they felt safer doing it. I’ve always been sceptical of this. ‘If you build it, they will come’ as Kevin Costner was once told but we’re already seeing that’s not the case. As the nights draw in and the weather worsens, how many people are seriously going to want to go shopping or whatever on bicycles? It’s a nonsense that is costing the economy millions.

The other little nugget we’ve been subjected to is this canard that we ‘can’t have a car-led recovery...’ I’ve heard and read that phrase so often recently as the traffic delays and closures have steadily mounted that it has lost all meaning in my mind. The fact is we ARE having a car led recovery, whether certain people like it or not, and thank goodness for powered transport at the moment.

This is an unprecedented economic crisis and the combustion engine (and its cleaner replacements) are going to play a vital role as we strain to come out of it. This applies to both business and households; powered transport provides huge economic utility and personal freedom; it is ridiculous to pretend otherwise, and self-defeating to suppress technologies that are proven to help both businesses and people increase their productivity.

The DfT et al need to stop playing silly word games and start making life easier for powered transport. City planning is not a zero-sum game; let’s have innovation WITHOUT suppression of powered transport modes.

Heathrow’s targeted quarantines...

The government appears to have bowed to pressure from the travel industry and introduced more targeted quarantines. This has to be the right way forward, although as UK case rates increase above 20 per 100,000 (which is the threshold used to trigger quarantine), there will be people who question the point in quarantining when coming from an area with similar infection levels to the UK. I think the view is that whatever is happening domestically, it’s better not to import cases from abroad. Perhaps this would have been a better approach to implement in March and April?

Heathrow continue to press for mandatory testing at airports to reduce quarantine times, however this has been resisted. I’ve always been surprised that they didn’t go ahead and introduce it anyway, it can surely only help?

As a result of all this, business for taxis at the airport is still at a very low level. The wait varies largely on how many drivers choose to come out that day. Every so often there will be a modest increase in business followed by more drivers coming back to the park. Bear in mind if you see a tweet or WhatsApp saying the park is doing less time than usual, unless you’re very close you will be too late to catch any benefit.

The ‘rule of six’

The so-called second wave appears to be upon us. How severe it will be isn’t yet clear - hopefully it’ll be nothing like as bad as the first. But in the meantime, so everyone knows the government is doing something, we have ‘the rule of six.’ This was announced in a somewhat rambling press conference, along with a new slogan: ‘Hands. Face. Space.’

I’m not sure who helps the government with this stuff, but I’d like them to know I’m available at reasonable rates. People are confused and many see the new rules as oppressive. Thinking about what it means for our business, well at this stage, hopefully not too much; people can still visit pubs and restaurants just not in groups larger than six. As before, one might expect people who are concerned about social distancing to choose a black cab because of the partition, purpose built interior and professional service.

The political route

Have protests become more common in London over the last few years? It feels like it to me. London has always been a place where people from all over the world and political spectrum have sought to have their voice heard, which is something to be proud of. It reflects this country’s history of Liberalism and people getting a fair go. Long may it continue. Protest is only one side of the coin though.

Talking to cab drivers, I’ve often heard people say ‘it’s a waste of time talking to politicians’ or ‘the political route has failed...’ I can understand the sentiment but really this is not a matter of choice for our trade. We MUST continue to engage professionally with politicians and administrators at all levels as well as press and anyone else who will hear us. This is a game that everyone has to play in a modern economy and if we don’t, we will be left behind, protest or not. It’s a cost of doing business. Actually, it’s much more difficult, time consuming and costly than demonstrating, but the good news is we’re becoming better at it.

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Another fine mess…

“I must be honest; I’ve never received a penalty charge notice for travelling in the correct direction…”

A man in black

Greetings peasant-stock (at least that’s what you are according to a number of councils across London).

Erupting spots

So, with Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes erupting all over London like teenage spots on a schoolboy’s face, the odds on getting an offer to relieve you of your meagre income have never been greater. One wrong move and any given local authority will be rubbing its hands singing ‘You’ve got to pick a pocket or two’ like Ron Moody playing Fagin in Oliver Twist.

Now being the consummate professional that I am (stop laughing), I rarely get tickets, except speeding tickets of course, which is a miracle in itself given the average speed across London, however this week I was informed by the garage where I rent my taxi from that I had received a ticket in Binfield Road, Stockwell.

I was slightly perplexed by this as there really isn’t much that you could get a ticket for down that road (other than a parking ticket), however the ticket was issued at around 1am and no self-respecting traffic warden would be prowling around Stockwell at that time of the morning (certainly none that value their safety), besides which, there are no restrictions in force at that time of the morning.

Upon further investigation, it transpires that I had been caught by a Transport for London enforcement camera, whilst passing through a no-entry sign, which was all well and good until it was discovered that I had passed the no-entry sign in the correct direction of travel. I must be honest; I’ve never received a penalty charge notice for travelling in the correct direction through a no-entry is ludicrous - even by their standards. I have of course appealed, and I shall keep you posted because I know that you will be awaiting the outcome with forlorn anticipation.

Unavoidable infringements?

Despite how ridiculous that particular ticket is, there is a serious concern here because tickets are being issued by local authorities for traffic infringements which in many cases are completely unavoidable. Box junction penalty charge notices seem to be a real money-spinner. The Highway Code now dictates that you should not enter a box junction unless your exit is clear or you have no choice but to enter a box junction otherwise you could in theory sit in a side turn or a particular stretch of road until the Messiah arrives. The junction of Queen Elizabeth Street and Tower Bridge Road as a prime example:

Turning left into Tower Bridge Road is controlled by a set of traffic lights, there is also a box junction there. The next section of Tower Bridge Road at the junction of Tooley Street is also controlled by traffic lights. Currently, if the lights between Tower Bridge Road and Tooley Street turn red, the road fills up with traffic with the box junction left clear. The lights in Queen Elizabeth Street then change to green, but you cannot move, those lights then turn red and you are stuck there - and so the cycle repeats. oh and you cannot turn right nor go straight ahead because of a traffic island. This therefore means that it is physically impossible to enter Tower Bridge Road from Queen Elizabeth Street without sitting on the box junction - meaning that you are forced to breach the Road Traffic Act. To quote the words of Suggs from Madness – ‘it’s err, madness.

Clear, precise & concise?

Worryingly, it has now made driving extremely dangerous because arguably, drivers are no longer concentrating on the road ahead, they are concentrating on the signage. Any road sign must be clear, precise and concise, with the minimum of signage clutter. With this being a huge revenue raiser, it is always worth appealing a penalty charge notice on the grounds of signage if there is an abundance of pretty road signs in any given area, or that signage is impossible to process due to its content. It is also important to remember that if you are in doubt, contact the LTDA, they may be able to assist you, of course that only works if you are a member.

I’m off, but just remember peasant stock, you are all revolting and will be fined, put in the stocks and pelted with rotten fruit should you commit any traffic violation.

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The return of Led Zeppelin

Box junctions aren’t the only money-spinner. Confusing signage is a veritable smorgasbord of potential revenue raising, and for me, no council’s signage is more confusing than Islington’s. It’s got to the stage that you physically need to park your vehicle before entering a street, just to make sense of the signage. By the time you’ve read about and digested information regarding Low Traffic Neighbourhood restrictions, school street activation times, restrictions because of Arsenal playing at home as well as all other street paraphernalia, you’ve spent so much that Led Zeppelin have reformed, performed a world tour and subsequently split.

Steve Kenton

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Unsolved London Crime Runs

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

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!

For every crime solved in London, there are plenty more in which the identity of the perpetrator remains a mystery… Here are some runs based upon a selection of unsolved cases.

London’s most notorious crime spree is of course that of ‘Jack the Ripper’ which occurred in 1888. The first ‘official’ victim to die at the Ripper’s hands was Mary Nichols whose body was discovered at 3.40am on August 31, 1888, in Buck’s Row - now Durward Street.

How would you get from Durward Street to the London Fruit and Wool Exchange?

This building occupies the site of the former Miller’s Court where, on November 9, 1888, the corpse of Mary Kelly - believed to be the last victim - was found in a gruesome state.

Less known - but equally mysterious - are a series of eight murders which were committed in the 1960s by a figure nicknamed ‘Jack the Striper’; so-called because all of his victims were discovered undressed.

One of the earliest murders attributed to this individual was that of Gwyneth Rees who was found dead 8 November, 1963, on Townmead Road, Mortlake.

How would you run it from there to Hornton Street, Kensington?

Here another victim attributed to the serial killer - Frances Brown - was discovered in October 1964? Interestingly, Frances had testified the previous year as a witness for the defence at the trial of Stephen Ward, alongside Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies…

On New Year’s Day, 1985, police were called to a property on the Bishop’s Avenue where the body of Aristos Constantiou - a Greek Cypriot who’d founded upmarket fashion label, Ariella - lay following a suspected robbery. Aristos had been shot several times with a rare, Italian pistol and all of the bullets fired were coloured silver. The killer remains at large.

How would you run it from Bishop’s Avenue to Kennington Road?

Where, on 28 September, that same year, gangster and nightclub owner Brian ‘Little Legs’ Clifford was murdered in his bed by an unknown assailant - or assailants? One of the most shocking unsolved murders of recent times was that of television presenter, Jill Dando who was shot outside her home on Fulham’s Gowan Avenue on 26 April, 1999.

What route would you take from Gowan Avenue to Alderney Street, Pimlico?

In 2010, the body of GCHQ employee, Gareth Williams was found locked in a suitcase? There are conflicting opinions on Gareth’s death. Whilst the Met believe it was “probably an accident”, the initial inquest concluded that it was “unnatural and likely to have been criminally mediated.”

A much older crime relates to the death of George Burrington who was found beaten to death and dumped in the water at St James’s Park in 1759.

Burrington was the former Governor of North Carolina; his most notable achievement was establishing a settlement in the region known as Cape Fear. Burrington was, by all accounts, a thoroughly obnoxious man and it’s believed the reason for his unsolved murder was most likely the result of a drunken brawl or a brutal attempt at revenge.

How would you get from St James’s Park to Bedford Hill?

Here, at a grand home known as The Priory (which still exists today, having been converted into apartments), lived a fellow named Charles Delaunay Bravo. In April 1876, Charles fell gravely ill. It was quite obvious he’d been poisoned, and it took him many painful days to die.

What made this case strange was that Charles offered absolutely no explanation as to who might have done it to him. Others however, suspected two of the Priory’s employees - a groomsman who’d been sacked, and the housekeeper, Mrs Cox who’d been threatened with dismissal. It’s also been speculated however, that Charles accidentally poisoned himself whilst in the process of attempting to murder his wife. The case was dramatised by the BBC in 1975.

Finally let’s head to Lynette Avenue, Clapham, which in the 1970s, was home to Georgi Markov. Georgi was a disssident who’d fled communist Bulgaria in the 1960s. Once in the UK, he secured a job with the BBC where his regular broadcasts aimed back home infuriated Bulgarian dictator, Todor Zhivkov.

How would you run it from Lynette Avenue to the Southbank?

This is the route Georgi drove to work each day - he would park up on the Southbank and then walk to Bush House via Waterloo Bridge. He was on the bridge, on 11 September 1978, that Georgi was stabbed in the leg by an umbrella - the tip of which shot a deadly ricin pellet into his thigh.

Although never brought to justice, the assassination is believed to have been carried out by an agent named Francesco Gullino - codenamed ‘Piccadilly.’ Following the attack, the hitman made a quick apology before hopping into a taxi. Despite an extensive appeal to cabbies at the time, the driver was never identified…
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Government to crackdown on rogue private parking

“For drivers who are fined by private parking companies, there will be a mandatory single Appeals Service & Charter to turn to.”

Money matters

Ministers have announced a raft of proposals that will eliminate unfair fines in private car parks.

Under the new Code and Enforcement Framework, there will also be a new Appeals Charter to help motorists challenge fines where they have made a genuine error or have mitigating circumstances. The plans also include the implementation of a tiered system to differentiate between major and minor offences in privately-run car parks.

For example, lower level breaches could see fines up to £80 (discounted to £50 when paid within 14 days) for poor parking, or issues which cause inconvenience to other car park users. These might include parking in bays for other classes of vehicles, use of an expired permit, and re-parking or returning with the prohibited period.

Drivers committing ‘middle level’ breaches could be fined up to £100 (discounted to £80 when paid within 14 days) for breaches such as parking in a reserved bay (e.g. parent and toddler), parking in a staff only parking area, or over-staying a maximum free period.

The most serious – or ‘upper level’ – breaches could see fines capped at £120 (discounted to £70 when paid within 14 days) for misdemeanours such as parking in a Blue Badge or ambulance bay, blocking a fire escape, or parking in a service or loading area.

The tiered breaches would form part of a new Parking Code of Practice and Framework put forward by Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick MP.

Drivers parking in private car parks would also benefit from a 10-minute grace period before a late fine could be issued. There would also be a compulsory five-minute cooling-off period in which a motorist could consider the terms and conditions and change their mind about parking.

Parking firms, meanwhile, would be required to clearly display pricing and terms and conditions.

The new measures will be a major boost to millions of motorists in England, Scotland and Wales and will help to draw people back to their local high streets by eliminating the fear of being penalised with an unfair parking ticket.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said: “These new measures are a victory for the millions of motorists across the country. They will put a stop once and for all to rogue parking firms using aggressive tactics and handing out unfair parking tickets with no right to appeal, while also boosting our high streets by making it easier for people to park near their local shops without being unfairly fined.

“Of our proposals will restore common sense to the way parking fines are issued, while cracking down on the worst offenders who put other people in danger and hinder our emergency services from carrying out their duties.”

For those drivers who are fined by private parking companies, there will be a mandatory single Appeals Service and Appeals Charter for motorists to turn to if they are unfairly fined.

Under options set out in the Appeals Charter, motorists could appeal their fine and see it reduced or cancelled entirely if they have a mitigating reason for overstaying their parking ticket (such as their vehicle breaking down) or they had made a genuine innocent error (like keying in a digit on their number plate incorrectly).
On the road

A business start-up in the cab trade is easy: on the day you’re licensed you arrange to rent a taxi, learn how to stop and start the meter, and away you go. Not a lot has changed in the thirty-odd years I’ve been involved in the cab trade really. Here’s what I remember of my early days on the road…

The Most Challenging Learning Task

Armed with a rented seven-year-old automatic cab, I gradually eased my way into my new career on Saturday December 9th, 1988. The Knowledge was the most challenging learning task I’d ever completed, and it remains so today. London’s cab trade is unique in that you are expected to know much of it before you start. You don’t learn it as you go along as in other cities around the world. The Knowledge forms a good basis on which to build, but you still need to work at it and keep it topped up. London is vast. You learn something new every day, but you will never know it all. There is truth in the saying that your Knowledge is never as good as it is when you’ve just qualified. A new cab driver may have a better grasp of the suburbs than a more experienced driver, as there are some parts of London that cab drivers are rarely asked to go to, particularly in the daytime. I’ve heard experienced drivers complaining about being asked to go to Hackney Wick Station. It was if they’d been asked to find the source of the Nile. I can understand that. I was asked to go there in 2018 and I was well out of my comfort zone, as I hadn’t been there since doing the Knowledge thirty years’ previously. The experienced driver will certainly have a more intimate relationship with inner London though, as that’s where you’re likely to spend most of your time.

Misfits & Freaks

All cab drivers join the trade as part of a career change. They aren’t school-leavers; often, they’re hairy-armed blokes, who have been doing ‘proper man’s jobs’ for years. Cab driving is not something you think of doing while at school, and you can’t take a course in ‘Cab Studies’ at your local further education college. The cab trade is rather like the French Foreign Legion, in that it provides a sanctuary for misfits and freaks from around the world - people not suited to conventional employment. You join to forget your past. It doesn’t involve teamwork though, and there’s no boss telling you what to do. The trade best suits those who are happy working alone and aren’t left to do their own thing their own way. The only authorities we need to worry about are the police and the Carriage Office/TFL if we step out of line; and the parking ‘wallahs’ when we nip into a café for a coffee.

Cabinet Shelters

One of the first things I did early on in my new career was to have a coffee in a cab shelter. It’s something of a tradition for veteran cab drivers to tell newcomers and Knowledge Boys that, “the game’s dead.” On my first visit to the Aldwych shelter, another cab driver asked me how long it took me to complete the Knowledge. On replying that it took me three and a half years, the driver helpfuly told me it would take me “longer than that to get out of it.” I didn’t pay attention to some silly old man and his negative “the game’s dead” attitude, and nor should you if you’re just starting out. As I say, little has changed. Veteran cab drivers like to remind newicomers of their seniority. I had one driver pretend to polish his badge, to remind me that mine was still green and shiny. Actually, they remain green and shiny if you leave them be. The old boys with something to prove make them look old on purpose. They probably spend hours rubbing away the enamel to give it that distressed look. Drivers now have to display an identifier in the back window of their cab with their badge number on it. Drivers who lose their badges get a new licence number and identifier when TFL replace their badge. In order not to be mistaken for a Butter Boy, some of them write their original licence number underneath the new one (sigh).

I found customers nicer than I imagined they’d be. Most people are relaxed when they are going home, and some customers are very generous of spirit. In my early days working late, one or two people invited me into their homes for a Christmas drink - which I declined. One person gave me a bottle of champagne as a Christmas tip.

The Cab Trade Cycle

How long does it take to establish yourself in your new trade? I’d say until you’ve experienced the different phases of the first yearly cycle: the depressingly slow New Year period; the pleasant spring and summer seasons; the busy autumn months; and the fraught and frenetic Christmas period. 2020 has certainly been a challenging year.

Unconventional Work at Unconventional Hours

Gangsters, prostitutes, Essex girls who’ve had too much to drink: who’s most likely to give trouble? You got it; it’s the drinker every time. Certain groups of people have a particular presence among them. You can tell actors, gangsters and prostitutes by a bearing unique to their profession. Some people just look familiar from TV. Sex workers are of course actors of sorts. They are always friendly. Members of these three groups tend to be polite and respectful, charming even. They are respectful of others doing unconventional work at unconventional hours and don’t give trouble. They’re not squeamish about money and have a pragmatic approach to business. Early in my career a prostitute asked me matter-of-factly to take her to the “red light beat” of Stamford Hill. Another cheerful lady who I was driving to City Airport told me how she was being flown out to Paris to meet a client. All our customers have a story to tell.

Butter Boy

“The cab trade is rather like the French Foreign Legion; in that it provides a sanctuary for misfits and freaks from around the world - people not suited to conventional employment…”

Columnist | Chris Ackrill

EASY RUN
Water Poet Pub - Dorset Square Hotel

HARD RUN
Plough Way - Plough Lane
Al Fresco

“The last refuge of the thinking misfit.”

“Discernible remnants of black & white newsreels, tell stories of bygone days, but other vivid recollections of London are not captured by photograph or film...”

Cabbie chronicles

A few years ago, I quite coincidentally caught up with an elderly stalwart of the taxi trade, now sadly, long since gone. He bent my ear over a mug of tea and a bacon sandwich at the Temple Shelter. I’d dropped off a couple of historically awe-struck visitors outside the dingy alley that purportedly led to the site of the Roman Baths in Surrey Street and had stopped for a brief hiatus in my day’s demands. Wisefully, he recounted (almost to himself), that after many years in the trade he admitted a grudging said, “gave the man the chance to...”

Freedom

He lapsed into a quaint reverie – recalling ancient monikers I’d ‘Runyon-esque’ characters, had become extinct.

London Through the Nose

In the 60’s, driving into, out of and beneath the arches of London Bridge Station, the smells that assailed you triggered your senses. Even though the trade of exotic spices, teas and vintage wines had long since gone from the area – once known for its huge riverside wharves holding produce from across our Empire – as the ‘Larder of London’, the redolent smells had lingered on. Drive down one subterranean street and your senses would offer you the aromas of leafy teas and rich spices. Another turn, and you’d be drinking in the heady scents of ports and sheries, stored in weathered wooden casks in the cool arches. In Shad Thames, once known as Pickled Herrings Street, the aromas aligned to the buildings themselves – fused into the brickwork of Cinnamon Court, Cardamom Buildings, Ceyenne and Clove Courts and a dozen more converted wharves. But smells and aromas didn’t stop at the area around ‘The Larder of London.’

On the north side of the Thames, redeveloped Spitalfields Market was once home to a toxic, heady mixture of dying flowers and sweet, fermenting rotting fruit. In the early afternoon when the shops and stalls had closed for the day, scores of individuals rummaged in the kerb, picking up anything remotely edible and ‘cherry picked’ at the decaying mounds of fruit and veg piled by the roadside.

“A Neon Lit Advertisement for Veganism”

If that wasn’t enough to make you tipsy or saturate your senses, you could take yourself to the dank recesses of the 700-year old Smithfield Meat Market, a neon lit advert for veganism. Huge refrigerated lorries would disgorge rigid carcasses of countless farmyard denizens, hauled on you in the 60’s and 70’s, you could get up nice and early, get a whiff of the countryside and ‘overdose’ at Covent Garden’s flower market – the iconic setting for My Fair Lady and a vigorous working fruit and veg market in the heart of theatre land (until its closure in 1974). If my memory serves me well, the site of the Transport Museum once was the wholesale flower market for the whole of England. Can you imagine trying to drive a cab in any kind of a hurry through the heaving mass of porters lugging boxes of flowers, ‘shlapping’ sacks of potatoes or balancing crates of veg in WC2 from the hills of Tuscany. Even more porters pushing and pulling barrows, navigating patient horses’ carts piled with produce set for greengrocers all over England. The only apples you’ll find there now, is the computer store flogging iPhones and MacBooks.

Want to find out how much you can save with LTDA Plus? Try out our newly revamped Savings Calculator via our website.

*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice and correct at time of print. Totum Pro - Offer ends on 1 October 2020. The discount is not available on the...
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3 years for 2 on TOTUM Pro membership
For a limited time only, LTDA members can buy a two-year membership card and they’ll chuck in an extra year FOR FREE. That means that if you can buy a TOTUM PRO 3-year membership for just £24.99, that’s a saving of a tenner over RRP*. Offer ends on 1 October 2020.

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All appliances have already been pre-discounted from washing machines, fridge freezers and dishwashers etc. All prices include FREE UK delivery*.

What’s more, as a LTDA member you will also receive a £10 Amazon voucher on receipt of payment in the 3rd month (i.e. your first subscription payment).

There’s no obligation, you can cancel at any time, even before the first payment but only receive the £10 voucher upon receipt of first payment. Offer valid until 30 September 2020.

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To take advantage of these and other fantastic deals visit www.ltdaplus.co.uk today!
Want to find out how much you can save with LTDA Plus? Try out our newly revamped Savings Calculator via our website.

*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice and correct at time of print. Terms Pro - Offer ends on 1 October 2020. The discount is not available on the PASS-accredited proof of age ID bundle. Readly - Offer valid until 30 September 2020. LTDA Plus is managed and run on behalf of LTDA by Parliament Hill Ltd.
LTDA APPLICATION FORM

Name ____________________________________________________________
Address ............................................................................................. Postcode
Telephone ........................................................................................ Mobile
Email ....................................................................................................
Date of Birth ....................................................................................... Badge No.
Badge colour (Please state whether green or yellow) ................. Year badge obtained
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 ____________________

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 .............................................................................................

Date

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Eden Springs UK Ltd will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Eden Springs UK Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by 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.
So you know every street and every run between two points in London? Let's now see how your knowledge stands up to these brain twisters...

Crossword

ACROSS
1 Greater part of a group (8)
5 Determination (4)
9 Competitions for runners (5)
10 Literary work of enduring excellence (7)
11 Somewhat indistinct (4)
12 Bits of coloured paper thrown at a wedding (8)
14 Solicitor's customer (6)
15 Concave wall and ceiling moulding (6)
18 Outdoor-cooked meal (8)
20 Narrow strip of wood (4)
23 Area between flights of stairs (7)
24 Adjust slightly (5)
25 Totter (4)
26 Young relative (8)

DOWN
1 Gift given to the infant Jesus (5)
2 Spa, hot tub (7)
3 Cunning tactic (4)
4 Wealthy industrialist (6)
6 Added small photo (5)
7 In short supply (7)
8 Bright yellow spice (7)
13 Time between (7)
14 Recipe term meaning a scone topping (7)
16 Ailment (7)
17 Patty of ground beef (6)
19 Span (5)
21 Symbol (5)
22 Astonish (4)

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.

Letterbox

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

CASHMERE

Set square

Place each of the digits 1 to 9 in the grid to make the sums work. We've started you with two numbers.
CABS FOR RENT

CABS FOR RENT

CABS FOR RENT

CABS FOR RENT

CABS FOR RENT

ACCOUNTANTS

CABS WANTED

● VNK Motors - TXIs & TX4s for rent, from £100 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.

● TX4’s & Mercedes to rent. Competitive rate. Full garage and breakdown services included. Phone 07956 135465

● Black 2015 TX4 £125pw. Full back up & AA. Cheshunt based. Call 07890 035747.

CABS WANTED

● All de-commissioned good quality www.ltda.co.uk

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When the fundraising group ‘Cabbies Do Kilimanjaro’ announced that their next fundraising challenge would be to climb both Mount Meru and Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania this October, in order to raise funds for the London Taxi Drivers’ Charity for Children and children’s community project in Tanzania, nobody could have predicted what 2020 had in store for the world...

Daren Parr, London cabbie and founder of Cabbies Do Kilimanjaro, said, “Not only did the world shut down, but people stopped going to work, travelling across the city and the tourist trade was decimated. All the many reasons passengers need cabs in London vanished more or less for the world…

But through all this adversity, fifteen men and women have demonstrated amazing depth of character, prepared to sacrifice whatever it takes to complete their dream and, in the process, raise as much money as they can for The London Taxi Drivers Charity for Children and the Tanzanian Children’s Community Project.

Daren, continued, “We have all completed the Knowledge, recognised as one of the toughest tests in the world and we won’t give up. Testament to this determination is Sarah Tobias, one of our team, who has had this wretched virus but with the aid of a newly prescribed inhaler pump, still intends to be with us at the foot of the mountain to fulfil her dream.

Sarah, from Bethnal Green has been a London cabbie for fourteen years. She has always loved the great outdoors and preparations had been going very well, having just completed a training walk with other cabbies in the Peak District, immediately before lockdown in March, when she began to feel ill.

Sarah said, “Having COVID-19 was terrible. I was at home isolating and felt really ill. My breathing was really affected, and I was terrified when I couldn’t breathe properly. Every day we would learn on the TV about the increasing number of deaths and it got to the stage where I was frightened to go to sleep but too tired to stay awake. There are even a few days from that time that I can’t remember at all. It was a very scary experience.”

Sarah continued, “Having the COVID virus has been a huge set back to my training, but it has not dented my determination to succeed. I will be joining the other cabbies in Tanzania next year and will do all I can to summit. Nothing is going to stop me, and I will keep going back to the doctor until we can find a treatment that will make me feel more normal. The London Taxi Driver’s Charity for Children does amazing work with special needs and disadvantaged children and I hope we smash our fundraising target.”

Sarah has just started taking the cab out again. She says it is still very quiet in London, but she hopes that things will soon bounce back.

Sarah has just started taking the cab out again. She says it is still very quiet in London, but she hopes that things will soon bounce back.

About Cabbies do Kilimanjaro
After successfully raising £18,000 for The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans in 2019 by losing weight, getting fit and climbing Kilimanjaro, two of the original Cabbies Do Kilimanjaro, Daren Parr and John Dillane, put together a much bigger challenge for 2020.

Fifteen London Cabbies will fly to Tanzania where Daren and John will climb 4,562 metre Mount Meru before joining the rest of the cabbies to climb 5,895 metres to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

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

Follow their progress by visiting www.cabbiesdokilimanjaro.com
To donate visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/cabbiesdokilimanjaro

About London Taxi Drivers’ Charity for Children
The London Taxi Driver’s Charity for Children arranges days out in the UK, for special needs and disadvantaged children and provides funding to support children who need recreational, technology and mobility equipment.

Founded in 1928, the charity is funded totally through donations and supported by an amazing group of volunteer London Taxi Drivers who give up their time to take the children and their carers on day trips.

Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall is Patron.
Mr Meg isn’t impressed by Jacuzzis - he thinks they’re just a long fart in a bath...

A woman of words

Judging from the fish and chip bar at the end of my road I’d say for some folks it was more ‘Eat Out to Break Furniture.’ I swear I saw the same bloke sat in the window most Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights in August. His plate was piled high with chips, battered fish and always a pickled onion the size of a tennis ball.

This fella started out occupying one seat and by the time the scheme had ended it looked like he needed two.

Eating out is something I love to do but, sadly, my enthusiasm is not shared by Mr Meg. Even if Rishi Sunak had been giving away breakfasts, lunches and dinners for free, Mr Meg would still prefer to dine at the kitchen table here in Meg Towers.

I understand why - the poor man is still suffering from ‘Post-Traumatic Dinner Disorder.’ It’s affected him for 35 years since our first wedding anniversary. We celebrated with a money off deal offered by the Heathrow Hilton. For a tenner each we got to use their Health Spa for two hours followed by a carvery dinner in the restaurant.

All excited about our posh day out, we travelled to the hotel by taxi - one that I wasn’t driving. It was around 20 years later when I finally passed The Knowledge. I’m NEVER confessing how many appearances I did for that to happen.

Mr Meg tried to get in the jacuzzi with his socks on. Never having been in one before, he didn’t know the etiquette. Jacuzzis don’t impress him much; he thinks they’re just a long fart in the bath. Do you see what I have to put up with?

A couple of members of the health club, who made it clear they weren’t there on the £10 deal, waited for us to settle into the bubbles before looking straight at Mr Meg and I, and commenting loudly ‘This water is particularly dirty today!’

Next stop the Carvery. There was a string quartet playing near our table which added a delightful first anniversary ambience for us.

Mr Meg and I loaded our plates at the serving station and enjoyed our roast dinner so much that we decided to go for second helpings. I only wanted more roast spuds and gravy (I mean, who wouldn’t?) and Mr Meg was having the same all over again. Being a gentleman, he said he would take my plate up for me, so I sat and waited for his return.

I saw him, managing two plates of hot food very well, weaving through the tables and heading back to our table.

And then he sneezed. Thunderclap loud. It was a wet sneeze and both plates he was carrying were covered in spit spray. Other diners noticed and murmured in distaste.

But worse, when he lifted his head post sneeze and mucous was swinging from each nostril, it then plopped onto the plates he was carrying. The other diners gasped in horror. The String Quartet launched into “It’s Not Unusual” which has since been known in our house as “It’s Not Unusual”

Mr Meg instantly imposed a ‘No Jacuzzi’ and ‘No Restaurant’ ban which has been in place ever since.

I tell folks our first anniversary was, ‘unforgettable.’

Crossword

MAJOR ITY WILL Y A U Y S N A RACES CLASSIC R U E OF E K H AZY CONFETTI Z I N R N


SUDOKU

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Letterbox

MATS

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SHUN

SEED

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