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News page 3

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Putting more work into Black Cabs
AUTHOR: Malcolm Shaffron via email at  Malcolm.Shaffron@ltda.co.uk

LTD A CABBIES TO THE RESCUE!

Whilst waiting for fares outside Chelsea and Westminster Hospital earlier this month, ex-Royal Engineer, Solomon Malcolm Hirsi, badge no. 75001 (pictured left) and Mohamed Hirsi, badge no. 75001 (pictured right), bravely raced from their cabs on hearing a woman screaming. She was lying on the floor with a man standing over her. Security also were running over, making calls for urgent assistance… Speaking to TAXI, Solomon said, “I feared at first, it was a fight or maybe even a stabbing was taking place - I could see blood where she was laying.” It transpired that in fact the woman was in labour… Solomon’s initial attempts to move her from the pouring rain to shelter were in vain, as the baby’s head swiftly came into view! It was in this moment, Mohamed’s somewhat involuntary career as a roadside midwife began, as he caught the baby in his hands to prevent the child falling on to the pavement. Within moments, Mum had gathered up her new-born baby girl from Mohamed’s ‘safe pair of hands’ though several minutes of pandemonium ensued - the infant did not appear to be breathing or moving. Whilst Solomon kept a watchful eye on his new patients, Mohamed fetched a coat from his cab to protect and keep the baby warm whilst security rallied hospital staff, who some minutes later appeared with a wheelchair and whisked Mum and baby inside for medical attention. Despite the cabbies’ initial fears that the woman was in labour… Solomon’s efforts to move her from the pouring rain were running over, making calls for urgent assistance… Speaking to TAXI, Solomon said, “I feared at first, it was a fight or maybe even a stabbing was taking place - I could see blood where she was laying.” It transpired that in fact the woman was in labour… Solomon’s initial attempts to move her from the pouring rain to shelter were in vain, as the baby’s head swiftly came into view! It was in this moment, Mohamed’s somewhat involuntary career as a roadside midwife began, as he caught the baby in his hands to prevent the child falling on to the pavement. Within moments, Mum had gathered up her new-born baby girl from Mohamed’s ‘safe pair of hands’ though several minutes of pandemonium ensued - the infant did not appear to be breathing or moving. Whilst Solomon kept a watchful eye on his new patients, Mohamed fetched a coat from his cab to protect and keep the baby warm whilst security rallied hospital staff, who some minutes later appeared with a wheelchair and whisked Mum and baby inside for medical attention. Despite the cabbies’ initial fears that the baby was not moving, a nurse came out to inform them that both were in good health. Well done Solomon & Mohamed!

TFL RAPID CHARGE POINT UPDATE

TfL has now delivered 272 Rapid Charge Points (RCP) sites across London. These are listed below:

**RCP sites recently delivered:**

- Church Lane - Leytonstone Station Taxi Rank
- High Street, Car Park
- Rowan Road (opposite No. 5)
- Lillie Road (Norman Park - Layby)
- Well Hall Road (Opposite Co Op Store)
- 201 Green Lane B263
- 4 Power Road (outside the Clayton Hotel)
- 37 - 39 Southgate Road, N1 3JP
- 99 Highbury Park, N5 2XE
- Central Parade / Salcot Crescent
- Bell Road Car Park
- Rosllyn Hill
- Wilberforce Road next to HSBC
- Hoxton Street Near Scorton House
- Amhurst Road, opposite 361 Amhurst Road
- Maple Road, Penge
- 198 Main Rd, Biggin Hill
- Albany Street, NW1 4JF
- Qpark: Westminster

- 75 of the RCPs are dedicated to taxis.

- Further RCP sites, provided by independent charge point operators, can be found on zap-map.com.

- A City Hall-maintained map of RCPs – with data taken from both TfL and other charge point companies – is available here: https://maps.london.gov.uk/ev-chargepoints/

Baynard House Car Park (City of London)

Core works within the car park are due to complete in October 2020. The site is expected to go live in December 2020, following final works by the City of London. Once complete the site will accommodate 6 RCP units.

Glass Yard (Greenwich)

The main build on site commenced in August 2020, with the target to complete by April 2021. On completion the site will accommodate 8 RCP units.

TfL continues to work with a number of private landowners for the delivery of further hub sites across London. Other potential hub site locations continue to be investigated.

**Upcoming RCPs to be delivered**

- 23 Praed Street, W2 1PP
- 10 Gillingham Street, SW1V 1HJ
- 126 Rossmore Road, NW1 6PA
- Cambridge Road, KT3 3OE
- South Lane, KT3 5ES
- North Parade, KT9 1QF
- Brook Street, Hyde Park Estate, W2 2LY
- 10 Belgrave Square, SW1X 1BP
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IN ASSOCIATION WITH TAXI WORLD CAB AID
The newspaper of the Licensed Taxi Drivers’ Association

W ith yet another set of new restrictions now in place across London, we have been out making sure people understand the dire situation taxi drivers are in, and why they urgently need more support. It is an uphill battle, but I can assure you that we are in your corner and doing everything we can to try to get you the support needed to get through the difficult months ahead.

Taxi drivers can’t work from home
Unlike other sectors, taxi drivers quite obviously can’t work from home. There is also no work if everyone else is working from home. It is that simple. We have been doing a lot of work behind the scenes to make sure policy makers understand this. The challenge we face is that pretty much every industry is struggling and whenever we speak to Government it’s clear that they are hearing the same thing from everyone. It is hard to be heard above all that other noise, but we will keep pushing. Over the next few weeks will be campaigning publicly for more support to put pressure on Government and will get members involved as much as possible, with more information to follow.

Fighting for more support
Meanwhile the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Taxis held a meeting with junior transport minister Baroness Vere this week, where MPs, including Wes Streeting and Daniel Zeichner, set out the challenges facing the trade and what the Government needs to do to help.

The Baroness was again supportive but could not offer any solutions. This is not good enough and I told her as much. The Chancellor keeps saying he can’t work from home...
We are continuing to fight for taxi access across London and to make sure that drivers can continue to provide the door-to-door, accessible service that iconic black cabs are known for and which Londoners rely on. This includes our ongoing legal challenges of the Bishopsgate corridor bus gates and the entire Streetspace for London Plan, which we are funding jointly with UTAG.

The Court has allowed us to combine these two matters and the challenge is proceeding on two grounds, firstly on the A10 Bishopsgate Corridor Scheme which excludes taxis. Secondly that TfL’s decision breaches “a legitimate expectation” on the part of hackney carriage drivers that they will be able to pass, repass and ply for hire along carriageways used by London buses generally, and on Bishopsgate in particular.

After some back and forth, the Court will also now hear our arguments on the impact of these damaging schemes upon disabled people, who often rely on taxis as the only means of truly door-to-door, accessible public transport open to them, and are being disadvantaged and unduly impacted by these schemes.

We have also finally been given a date for the hearing, which will take place on 25th and 26th November. Over the last few months, we have been gathering all the evidence we can to support our arguments and we are confident that the legal team will make a strong and compelling case.

As part of the LTDA’s programme to engage with local authorities during this unprecedented period of change on our roads, we recently met with representatives of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, including the Lead Member for Planning and Transport, Cllr Johnny Thalassites, to discuss its plans for the introduction of a segregated Cycle Lane along Kensington High Street. Chief amongst our concerns was how taxis will be able to stop safely along the street to enable our passengers to board or alight. In particular, how are our many vulnerable passengers with accessibility needs, including those in wheelchairs, expected to get in or out of the taxi if the vehicle does not have access to the kerb.

You can read the response from the RBKC’s transport officers and the Lead Member below.

Kensington and Chelsea Council has started work on temporary cycle lanes on each side of Kensington High Street, from Olympia to Queen’s Gate. This comes after Government asked London boroughs to introduce ‘pop up’ schemes to promote cycling on our streets. Our new cycle lanes will be separated from traffic by the wands that taxi drivers will have seen across London. Discussing the scheme, The Council’s Lead Member for Transport, Cllr Johnny Thalassites said: “Of course, helping to link up a temporary London-wide cycling network can help boost Covid recovery, but we also know that taxis play an important role in helping our residents get around. This is why we held a discussion with LTDA to hear their views on this and other schemes we are working on.”

The Council has spoken with the LTDA and listened to their concerns about what the cycle lanes will mean for taxi passengers, especially those who use wheelchairs or find walking difficult. By suspending parking bays, the Council has created several new sections of single yellow line in side streets. This will help to make dropping off or picking up customers safe and easy, while keeping the new cycle lane traffic-free and protecting people cycling.

We have also confirmed to LTDA that there will be longer breaks between the wands at various points along the High Street itself, including on the bus stop approaches and exits, where there are no changes to existing kerbside restrictions.

The scheme has two phases. Phase one is being completed by the Council during October. This will include building the cycle lanes from Addison Road to Queen’s Gate and introducing three floating bus stops. Phase two will happen later in the year, led by Transport for London, to address changes to the junctions and complete the lanes.

With more electric taxis than ever on London’s roads, the Council is keen to encourage the switch to cleaner and quieter electric models. It is installing more charging points, including rapid chargers which are especially popular with professional drivers. With so many local residents concerned about air quality, the switch to electric cars and taxis is an important factor in reducing pollution alongside measures to help more people to cycle.

We will keep the scheme under review and continue to liaise with the LTDA so as to ensure that the High Street remains accessible to all road users.

Kensington High Street is the first of three temporary segregated cycle routes in the borough. The others, also funded by TfL, will be on Chelsea Bridge Road and Queen’s Gate. The borough is joining other central London boroughs in introducing a 20mph speed limit and has recently created seven new school streets, allowing children safer and greener journeys to school and allowing taxis entry to drop off or collect residents in the closed streets.

For more information, visit www.rbkc.gov.uk/kensington-high-street-cycleway.
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“It’s common sense that the action of combining testing centre closures with licensing extensions would result in a later reaction…”

When COVID-19 first hit hard in March, we all knew that there would be hard times ahead, we had all originally thought or hoped lockdown would just be for three months. Advice since March seems to be changing daily with announcements from government telling people to not only work from home but stay at home - some shops, restaurants, theatres and pubs all had to close and there was general confusion on which guidelines we all had to follow. With each incoming additional restriction, the streets became ever emptier and we (along with many others), were all left very concerned on how we would pay our mortgages, bills and for us - the finance on the cab.

Thankfully, mortgage providers and finance companies did eventually offer financial help (and need to continue to do so), as well as the government, who along with those employed workers who were furloughed on 80% of their wages, also put measures in place so the majority of cabbies could claim the SEISS grants. These supportive measures have helped to keep peoples head above water whilst also supporting jobs. But that’s a whole lot more than can be said for TfL...

NSL testing disaster

We quickly realised that TfL’s announcement in response to the pandemic that they would be closing all six NSL test centres, would have an impact on our trade - especially those drivers whose cab licence is due to expire in that period. We asked TfL what plans were being implemented for those drivers that fell into this category. TfL came up with a good idea to resolve all these issues and gave any cab whose license expired between the 23rd March and 30th June, a six-month plate extension. This was a relief for many drivers and TfL were rightly praised for their rare common-sense approach… unfortunately though it would appear they’ve been so busy putting themselves on the back, they’re well and truly taken their eyes off the ball.

TfL must have been aware that if hundreds of drivers have been given an extension, then in six months’ time, they would need to be ready to deal with the additional drivers requiring a cab licence in October & November? Surely someone at TfL would comprehend the impact of closing test centres wouldn’t just disappear? It’s common sense that the action of combining testing centre closures with licensing extensions would result in a later reaction of significantly increased and intensified demand for testing services. Whilst during this period, we did initially see four NSL test centres reopen, this of course was not going to be anywhere near enough to deal with the storm that is now exploding - alarm bells should have been ringing long before the chaos ensued, though sadly it appears they remained silent.

Now the peak has come and drivers are contacting us in their droves, telling us they’re spending three hours plus on the phone and if they’re lucky enough to get through to speak to somebody to give them the date when the plate expires, they’re being told “Sorry, the only date available is 2 weeks after your current licence expires.” Anyone that needs to go to work knows this answer is totally unreasonable and unacceptable as it leaves drivers out of work during these already difficult times.

I immediately contacted TfL and was advised that they are putting extra staff on to deal with this problem and are also opening up the weekends. You can imagine my response (I was a long way from happy) and asked if nobody within TfL saw this coming, only to be told, ‘we are doing what we can.’ Well this simply is not good enough.

Clapham Junction taxi rank

We have been receiving a high volume of calls from drivers that use the Clapham Junction taxi rank on a regular basis that they are now having issues with station staff with regards the taxi rank because due to Covid measures, spaces have been reduced from three, to just two. We sent the local LTDA rep to the station to investigate, made contact with both the station manager and his assistant. Both seemed very supportive of our trade and the issues suffered since the reduction. The problem evolved from drivers continuously over-ranking, mainly at night. The station manager tells us he tries to make sure this area is manned by station staff to assist in the smooth running of the rank but on one particular night there were six cabs on the rank when unfortunately there was an emergency on the station platform which needed an ambulance to attend. Not only were there too many cabs there, but some of the drivers were not even with their vehicles, which obviously created a major problem and complaints. The station staff do understand that currently work levels are not great and they will try to assist all that they can, but any continuance of this type of driver behaviour may change their views or have them told from higher up to take further action.

Updates

Viva wallet

The meeting with Viva wallet last week was very productive with many positive ideas surrounding the launch of their new credit card deal that will be attractive for our members. Topics discussed included:

- Cost of terminals with combined package deals
- Transaction charges
- Technology input to taxis
- Benefits, and much more.
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PCNs, Medicals, Expiry Issues & Keyboard Warriors

“Whilst I’m perfectly content to name names, in all honesty, these blinkered, manipulative and extreme individuals are not worthy of either the ink or my column space…”

On point

Medicals

I’m getting lots of calls from cabbies who after receiving their age-related medical forms, call the GP to book an appointment and are being informed that they cannot offer an appointment for the foreseeable future. TfL are aware of this and if you find yourself in this situation, I advise you contact TfL at Tphlic@tfl.gov.uk informing them of the situation. I strongly suggest you do this by email and not by letter as it leaves an electronically-traceable trail that you have made contact. In most cases, TfL have been sending our members self-assessment forms for you to fill in, sign and return, stating whether you have made contact. In most cases, TfL have been sending our members self-assessment forms for you to fill in, sign and return, stating whether there have been any changes in your medical health. For LTDA members that do not have access to email you can give me a call at the office, and I will assist.

Licence expiry & cabs not in use...

With many drivers taking temporary jobs outside the trade with no immediate intention of returning to the cab due to the current low work levels (which has been given a further blow by the recent increase in restrictions and the work from home messaging from Government), drivers may be wondering what they can do when the cab’s licence is about to expire, but knowing it will be a waste of money to licence it, as it will be sat on their drive with no likelihood of it being used to ply our trade...

The answer? As long as you remove the plates and either hand them into an NSL testing site, or send them back to TfL at: London Taxi and Private hire, PO Box 177, Sheffield, S98 1JY within 3 days of expiring, you can then have it tested when you do return to work as long as it’s within the next 24 months (please note this obviously does not apply to vehicles which are reaching their ‘Age Limit’).

NSL Test Reminder Letters

I have been getting a few calls lately where members call up and report that they have not received a reminder letter from TfL informing them that the Licence plate was about to expire. It seems to me that some of us get these reminders and some do not. My advice is not to rely on TfL and call the NSL booking line on 0343 222 5555 or book through the online booking service 28 days before your Vehicle Licence expires. The phone number is notoriously difficult to get through on and especially this month as cabbies rush to get their cabs passed before the Age Limit falls to 14 years on November 1st. You may find booking online easier. If you have any questions about the process, please give me a call.

PCNs

Hans Place & Basil Street.

I am seeing an increased amount of PCNs being issued at this location for turning right. There is a no right turn sign at the junction and a camera watching you do it. Because of the video evidence they are very difficult to have any appeal accepted. Please be careful at this location and inform any fellow cabbies you speak to of this.

Fortune Street & Golden Lane.

This is another location where I am seeing a large amount of PCNs issued to our members. We do have an appeal for this which we feel is a decent argument to have the PCN cancelled. The appeal is not guaranteed to ‘get you off’ knowing Islington council as I do, but it’s definitely worth an appeal. As I’ve previously mentioned, as long as you appeal within the time frame to pay the discounted amount (£65), it should not go up. These appeals should always be completed online as Islington have been known to claim they have not received the appeal in the post!

Social Media & Trade Reputation

Recently, I’ve had members calling and mailing in to complain about various ‘ecowarrioristic’ individuals, hell bent on painting the cab trade in a light that makes us out to be a demographic ranging from fascists, to terrorists and child killers… Whilst I’m perfectly content to name names, in all honesty these blinkered, manipulative and extreme individuals are not worthy of either the ink or my column space…

My advice? Don’t fuel their Twitter or other social media with content that gives them the opportunity to label the whole trade as representative of a minority of angry comments. Ignoring them would be my preference, but if you do feel the need to take them on, it would be great if you replied to tweets telling them how insulting they are being to a respected group of people, who care about both our city, the wider planet and agree that environmental issues are important. We would all like to see pollution levels fall – in fact, cabbies drive around breathing in London’s polluted air, day in day out, and are more invested in reducing emissions and pollution, than most people.

Many of them also fail to even acknowledge the moves the London cab trade has made regarding take up of electric vehicles, nor see the fact that environmental issues are being to a respected group of people, who care about both our city, the wider planet and agree that environmental issues are important. We would all like to see pollution levels fall – in fact, cabbies drive around breathing in London’s polluted air, day in day out, and are more invested in reducing emissions and pollution, than most people.

Many of them also fail to even acknowledge the moves the London cab trade has made regarding take up of electric vehicles, nor see the fact that if we had greater support from central government in order to have opportunity to ply our trade in such a vehicle, we’d be doing so in greater numbers…

TheLTDA

www.ltda.co.uk
Winter is Coming

Sam talks a tough winter; ‘15-minute villages’; Airport testing & App power dynamics...

M4 musings

We seem to be heading for more restrictions, a depressing state of affairs for everyone - especially now the nights are drawing in and the weather getting colder. The government is desperate to avoid a ‘perfect storm’ of catastrophe this winter, particularly around Christmas.

The new ‘tiered’ approach is designed to address geographical variations in infection rates. The idea is to drive down the virus so that people can be freer to meet over Christmas.

It’s still all bad news though. Expectations that hospitalisation and mortality rates would be lower in this wave than in March/April have so far proved correct. Even though the numbers are steadily rising, the rate of growth is so far much lower than it was in the first wave.

From our perspective there’s no denying the new SEISS round was disappointing – to go from 70% down to 20% is pretty drastic - not that I won’t be grateful when it turns up. Some drivers have taken alternative employment for the winter, banking on security in return to a potentially lower wage.

The ‘Bounce Back Loans’ are a comparatively cheap way to get some money in your bank account for a while, with no payments for the first 12 months and very generous terms. Important to remember though, it’s a debt not a grant and will have to be paid back.

Personally, I’ve taken the view that even if I have to cut payments to some creditors and take on more debt my credit record has to take a back seat for now. Half the population is in the same boat and I can’t see it stopping people getting mortgages or loans in years to come.

Hackney parochialism

I saw the video on social media of the Mayor of Hackney setting out how they don’t want through traffic in their borough. This seems predictably myopic, but he is not alone. There is an idea gaining currency of the ‘15-minute village,’ something also being touted by the Mayor of Paris. It has been decided for us by various luminaries that travel is now ‘a bad thing’ and that the longer we spend within 15 minutes (on foot or by bike obs) of our homes the better it is for everyone. So just stay put, nothing to see over that horizon...

There is of course an argument that commuting can be stressful and time consuming - but believe it or not, some people value that time in their day and even enjoy it. I don’t want to spend my whole life within 100 yards of my house thank you very much - it’s 2020 not 1520.

The problems here once again are not the ideas, but the way these things are being imposed forcefully by a cabal of enthusiasts across disciplines and administrations. Politics is the only answer. Those who believe that changes are being made too quickly and beyond democratic mandate are unfortunately compelled to organise, lobby and campaign to have councillors elected who better reflect the needs and opinions of ALL residents, not just the ones who follow them on Twitter. Whether local, national or supranational, history tells us that attempts by government to redesign economies from the top down, rarely end well.

Airport testing

The move towards testing in the aviation industry is creeping forward at glacial pace. At this rate they should have it up and ready just in time for the end of the pandemic, and not quite early enough to save many jobs. This is not down to a lack of will from the industry - various senior figures have been calling repeatedly for testing for months now.

As government has pointed out, airport testing is not a panacea; anyone who tests negative on the day of a flight may still turn out to be positive in the next few days due to the variable incubation period. However, any measure that reduces the necessity to quarantine by even a few days is better than the situation now, where 14 days is prohibitive for most people. Waiting times at the taxi feeder park have unfortunately lengthened further. If you do decide to put on, bring your slippers...

Apps more powerful now?

Do the Apps have more power over our business now? I would certainly think post lockdown, yes. By more power, I mean they have a larger share of our (greatly diminished) market. I haven’t seen any figures yet, but it seems the intuitive conclusion.

Personally, I hadn’t worked an app for years, but I’ve had to get on one now and I would say it’s increased my hourly take a little. Nothing to write home about but I need every penny at the moment.

There’s no reason to assume that this increase is a one-way process; when this crisis eventually ends, and it will, work levels will return to something like normal. There will be more people on the streets, and people on the streets hail cabs. It’s still the quickest and easiest way to get a taxi in busy areas so if drivers want to prioritise the street hail and not work apps, they will be able to.

People in our business worry incessantly about the relationship between drivers, regulations and the apps - this extraordinary period of economic uncertainty and change should provide some evidence of what really happens when apps gain a larger share of our market. Power comes with responsibility. I used to think TfL should help us develop a simple hailing/payment app under the roundel banner, but people called me naïve...

In the meantime, anyone who tells you they know what is best for our apps is simply guessing like the rest of us. The loudest voices rarely offer the deepest insight...
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A man in black

Well, today, at the point of starting to write this work of literary genius, I had been waiting with anticipation for Boris Johnson’s speech regarding the new restrictions in the UK surrounding Covid-19 - and I was not disappointed with our Prime Minister...

“Help me, Whitty”

Rather than relaying the PM’s speech chapter and verse I shall paraphrase. Mr Johnson started off by saying: “Ah yes, erm, ahh, Coronavirus, ahhh erm, rally together, ermmn stitch in time, naughty people.”

He went on to say: “Guffaw, bluster bluster, haha, nasty Keir, can’t have friends at home but can in a pub unless you know your friends, in which case you can’t be friends in a pub, hahaha errrm, ahhh yes.”

He then concluded, in true Boris style by saying: “errrm yes, local lockdown, Liverpool’s closed, Churchillian spirit, ahithit ermmm, following the science, haha, guffaw, we are being completely clear, harumph, help me Whitty, thank you.”

For those of you not watching live in the Commons, the entertainment at the interval was provided by Starship, who delivered a recrafted rendition of a popular track titled “We Built Chris Whitty (on Cock & Bull...).”

And there you have it folks, crystal clear, but what does this mean to the taxi industry? Well the simple answer is absolutely nothing! Not a sausage will be changing in reality. We will still be fighting to get onto a rank, struggling to pay for our taxis and still offering bribes to passers-by to get into our cabs to give the illusion of looking busy. However, if there is any upside then I think I’ve found it... the tragic beauty that is jolly old London.

The seated position

Now despite numerous councils across the metropolis trying to bring London to its knees by shutting down every centimetre of available road space (forcing us to sit in the subsequently created traffic, slowly dying from the resulting pollution), I’ve spent a lot of time admiring and lamenting some aspects of the landscape across London from the seated position of three feet up.

As cab drivers we all have our favourite parts of the capital, whether it be the usual suspects: St Paul’s Cathedral, Big Ben or Buckingham Palace; or some of the lesser known areas, such as one of the many markets across the capital, or simply a house with a blue plaque on it. London is steeped in a rich and diverse history, a history which seems to be slowly being muffled and muted by the city’s current custodians.

Urban legend

A popular urban legend attributed to Tower Bridge is that American entrepreneur, Robert Paxton McCulloch, who founded McCulloch chainsaws as well as developing the city of Lake Havasu in Arizona purchased London Bridge in the mistaken belief that he was actually buying Tower Bridge. Surely an American businessman really couldn’t be that dim and mistake London Bridge for Tower Bridge - well he wasn’t, and he didn’t.

In 1968, McCulloch was on the lookout for an attraction for his city and in the early 1960s it was discovered that the John Rennie designed London Bridge, which had been built in 1831 had started to sink into the Thames. As a result, the City of London Corporation decided that a new bridge was needed. Rather than demolish the existing bridge, they decided to auction it off. As a result, London Bridge was purchased by Lake Havasu’s founder, for a sum in excess of $2.4 million and a book of Green Shield stamps.

Tower Bridge is a singular example of an incredible piece of London’s history. As cab drivers we all have our favourite parts of the capital, and can’t help but marvel at its beauty, looking across at Tower Bridge I can’t help but marvel at its beauty, even more so at dusk when it is lit up like Blackpool illuminations - for me, it’s the most beautiful structure in London.

Steve ‘Kenners’ Kenton, ‘The Sad Faced Clown.’

This is the bit where I inject a bit of pathos into the proceedings (cue ‘Kenners’ the sad faced clown). I recently took a stroll down Petticoat Lane Market and was saddened to see what it had become.

As a kid I used to hop on a train with a load of other friends from the East End to go and earn a few quid working on a stall down the market. In this day and age I would be told I had been exploited and should find a safe space because I had a job at 13 years old - but I loved it, as did many other kids my age and I had the added advantage of my grandparents living on the estate in Middlesex Street.

At that time, the market was in the Guinness Book of Records as it was the largest open-air market in Europe, selling everything from handbags to gold, it was a living breathing entity. It’s sadly now become barely a shadow of its former self having less than half the stalls that it boasted in the early 80s and gone are the kids who worked on the stalls on a Sunday.

The above are just two of my favourite parts of London, one has had a positive impact on me in its sheer beauty, one has had a negative impact in its tragic decline. As cab drivers we are in a unique position to witness London’s changing landscape better than most, whilst inadvertently becoming its guardians - marking and recounting London’s history.
The Ultimate TXE?

Always interested in a bit of ‘luxury taxi porn’, TAXI Editor reached out to Clive Sutton to tell us a

Taxi Exclusive

On receipt of a press release which appeared in TAXI Editor’s inbox last week announcing the release of the TXE Clive Sutton and his team have developed, it seemed befitting to dig a little deeper and feature a fuller story to our members on how this taxi came to be and what else taxi related is in the offing...

Ed: Hi Clive, thanks for taking the time to talk to TAXI - can you tell us a bit about how you came to be in the business of high-end luxury motors and what your company does?

CS: Hi Mr Editor, I started in the motor industry 40 years ago selling cars for a company called Henlys, which was a large British Leyland and Jaguar distributor. I started my own business in 1985 as an independent Jaguar specialist, providing sales services and power and handling upgrades for Jaguar. I then built up a small group of franchise partnerships for Chrysler Jeep, Jaguar, Rover MG and Cadillac Chevrolet. During this time, we took on more and more bespoke and custom projects on Jaguar, Land Rover, Mini and Chrysler Jeep products.

In 1997, we produced our first branded luxury MPV – the Lords Grand Voyager.

Named after the cricket ground next to our headquarters we took the standard Grand Voyager and installed a five-screen AV system, games consoles, lambswool rugs, walnut veneers, etc. One of our first customers was the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who went on to buy four over a 10-year period. We built about 70 of these.

One of our most recent builds was what I would describe as a contemporary edition. We built this car for the television personality and dancer Ashley Banjo:

“With regard to the taxi community, we are working on a diffused package of affordable upgrades. I believe there is an opportunity for the taxi trade to follow the private hire market by offering a luxury version of the TXE at a premium price.”

Ed: What’s your favourite vehicle you’ve ever produced?

CS: My favourite vehicle is one of the few cars to have starred in a movie. The 1967 Mustang GT500 ‘Eleanor’ made famous in the film ‘Gone in 60 Seconds’. We have been building recreations of the movie car for a number of years. Having first imported cars built overseas, we found we needed to build our own.

One of our most recent builds was what I would describe as a contemporary edition. We built this car for the television personality and dancer Ashley Banjo:


We currently have one more in RHD in build for a UK client and another body ready for the next build.

Ed: In preparation for the interview, I took a look at some of the vehicles currently on your website and I’m only circa £197K short on being able to purchase your re-created 1968 five-litre Bullitt Mustang in metallic Highland Green… any chance of a test drive?

CS: A test drive is free; you just need around £200K to buy it! This Bullitt Mustang has been built using an original ‘68 body, but everything is new technology with modern Mustang drivetrain, suspension and electronics while still retaining a period correct look: https://www.clivesutton.co.uk/vehicles/11400101-ford-mustang-bullitt-renewed-build/

Ed: Fair enough, if the lottery call, I’ll be in touch. Moving on, tell me how it came about that you decided to work on the TXE?

CS: Over the years I have seen some ad hoc taxi-based commissions, mainly TX4’s used by private individuals. Even the Duke of Edinburgh bought a Metrocab about 20 years ago to enable him to attend events discreetly. We have been producing VIP versions of the Mercedes-Benz Viano and V-Class for many years. Before that we based our works on the Mercedes doesn’t work for private hire due to the inability to PCO a diesel. There is a fully electric version coming out, but time will tell if the range works for chauffeuring.

Meanwhile, as soon as the LEVC came out I knew this was a special vehicle. Not only does the plug-in hybrid format avoid range anxiety, it is genuinely a superb overall design. Instantly recognisable as a London taxi but with certain design features similar to some Rolls-Royce models. The other feature that is very relevant to our current Covid-19 era is the division...
Always interested in a bit of ‘luxury taxi porn’, TAXI Editor reached out to Clive Sutton to tell us a bit more about his latest masterpiece…

Above: For the exterior a subtle yet distinctive ‘two-tone’ exterior paint finish is applied; the iconic black taxi paint for the lower portions, and Ferrari ‘Grigio Silverstone’ above for a touch of added sophistication. The taxi sign on the roof will remain to preserve the iconic silhouette of the vehicle, albeit with the ‘TAXI’ lettering replaced by ‘VIP’. The price of the vehicle will be in the region of £100,000 (excl. VAT) for business buyers, or £120,000 incl. VAT for private buyers. A Sutton VIP Class LEVC press car will be available for inspection, filming and media drives before the end of 2020.

providing safe compartments for the driver and passengers.

We built this first VIP Class TX (see associated images on these pages), for a specific client and now we are building a version to our specification which, with our experience with the M-B platform, we hope will appeal to people wanting a discreet luxury limousine that is perfect for London and other city centres.

Can you tell me what you changed on the vehicle and the technical expertise that has gone into doing it – you must work with some highly skilled individuals?

The first vehicle we built at the request of the client was modified to have a front passenger seat. There are rearward facing seats, and these were motorised to open and close. We used a company to hand roll wood veneers on the door tops and created wood trim to the rear quarter panels. There are a number of skills needed from design, fabrication, trimming and electrics.

Within our ‘production build’ we are removing the middle rear-facing seat and designing a centre console including fridge, storage, PS4, waste bin, tissue dispenser and hand sanitiser.

We have bought from Rolls-Royce the motorised door closure parts and are currently trying to enable this option to have electric door closure.

Can you tell me what you changed on the vehicle and the technical expertise that has gone into doing it – you must work with some highly skilled individuals?

The answer is, ‘rarely’. I would imagine for nearly all cabs that this kind of a purchase is out of the question, there’s clearly a market out there for such a vehicle or you wouldn’t be doing it...

What’s the profile of your typical buyer (any more famous clients you are allowed to mention?), and does developing a TXE make that market ‘super niche’ or even narrower than usual?

Our typical buyer is a businessman/woman/high-net-worth individual/family/ where there is usually a Bentley, S-Class or a Range Rover chauffeuring them around. We will also present this to five-star hotels and clubs where they have a house car for their guests. Although during Covid-19 we are not expecting much corporate work.

With regard to the taxi community, we are working on a diffused package of affordable upgrades. I believe there is an opportunity for the taxi trade to follow the private hire market by offering a luxury version of the TX at a premium price. In much the same way as firms such as AddisonLee offer an Executive option based on M-B E-Class and Uber offer an Executive model. In fact, we produce an ‘Executive’ version of the M-B V-Class.

If we could have some input from taxi drivers and operators about such a package, we can build a version that would be TfL compliant and the taxi drivers could charge a premium price for executive taxis. It would not stop executive taxi drivers taking regular fares but would provide an opportunity for enhanced income from those valuing a higher level of cabin. The ridehailing apps such as GETT could list Executive or VIP branded TX in the same way. I use the GETT app and often ride in an LEVC TX. I also ask the driver the same question. “How often do you take six passengers?”

The answer is, ‘rarely’. I would imagine that this was incorporated to compete with the Vito Taxi. Hence, we are designing a centre console for this area in our VIP Class taxi that we could potentially use in an Executive Cab version.

Is there a vehicle you’ve never managed to get your hands on but would love to tinker with or re-create? If so, what is it and what would you do to it?

I am looking at retrofitting electric EV power into classic cars. Currently we are evaluating doing this to the Jaguar XJ6 Coupe, which was built from 1975 to 1979. Without doubt one of the most beautiful pillarless coupes ever made. To rebuild one of these with lighter carbon panels and Tesla running gear is something we are looking into. After Prince Harry drove off after his wedding in an Electric E Type built by Jaguar, there is now interest in making classic cars electric.

For more information about the TXE and Clive’s business, visit www.clivesutton.co.uk
London’s Green Cab Shelter Runs

"...drivers were frequently drunk when plying for hire - hot chocolate laced with rum was said to be a popular cabbies’ tipple at the time."

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!

First appearing on the city’s streets in the 1870s, London’s green cab shelters are an architectural icon. They are managed by the Cabmen’s Shelter Fund; a charity established by a group of social reformers, including the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper (to whom the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain - better known as ‘Eros’ - is dedicated) and newspaper editor, George Armstrong.

The shelters were a godsend. Prior to their formation, cabbies were exposed to the elements (Hackney Carriages of course being horse-drawn in those days) and the only warmth to be found was in the pub, meaning drivers were frequently drunk when plying for hire - **hot chocolate laced with rum was said to be a popular cabbies’ tipple at the time.**

Painted green to attract the attention of weary cabmen, the shelters provided a respite from London’s taverns, with hot meals, tea and coffee on offer - provided you didn’t gamble or swear.

At their peak, just before WWI, there were 61 shelters across London. Today, that number has dwindled to 13, although the structures are still popular and protected with Grade II listings. Let’s take a look at each in turn with this set of runs.

The first permanent shelter was installed on Acacia Road, St John’s Wood in 1875. Today’s hut isn’t too far away - as any London taxi driver will know, it can be found on Wellington Place. The small park beside it - St John’s Wood Church Grounds - is Westminster’s only nature reserve.

### Run it from Wellington Place to the Kensington Park Road shelter.

Hard to believe now, but in the 1830s and ‘40s, the area surrounding what’s now Ladbroke Grove was covered by a racecourse named the Kensington Hippodrome. The main entrance was located close to where the shelter now stands.

Next, let’s go to Hanover Square, long blighted by the ‘Crossrail’ project. The square was built in the 1720s and was the first home for the Royal Society of Medicine; many scientific advances were made here.

### How would you get from Hanover Square to the Thurloe Place shelter?

This also dates from 1897 and, as most cabbies will know, is nicknamed the ‘Bell and Horns’ - taken from a pub which once stood nearby.

Now let’s look at Chelsea Embankment. Sadly, this shelter has been closed for a considerable time due to parking restrictions. In 2018, the BBC reported that plans have been mooted to donate the hut to the London Transport Museum.

### Run it from Chelsea Embankment to Russell Square.

One of London’s most prominent shelters, this green hut is often beautifully decorated with flower baskets. This shelter dates from 1901 and was originally based in Leicester Square. The Grosvenor Gardens shelter is another which has upped sticks; when first built in 1906 it originally stood on Hobart Place.

### What route would you take from Grosvenor Gardens to the Warwick Avenue shelter?

This shelter stands next to a large ventilation shaft, linked to the Bakerloo line station far below. Daniel Craig and Paul Weller are both celebrities reported to have popped by for a nose around at the Warwick Avenue cabmen’s hut.

The Embankment Place shelter opened in 1915, replacing an earlier design by Maximilian Clarke which looked a lot more ornamental.

### Run it from there to the Kensington Road shelter.

Nicknamed the ‘All Nations’; a nod to the Great Exhibition which was held at the huge Crystal Palace in Hyde Park in 1851. Now let’s go to Temple Place shelter. The shelter here dates from 1880 and, like those at Russell Square and Grosvenor Gardens, has also moved from a different site. In this case it stood slightly further north and was shifted in the 1960s to accommodate the now defunct Swissotel.

### Run it from Temple Place to St George’s Square.

This hut was erected in 1893 meaning it would have been familiar to Dracula author, Bram Stoker who lived and died at 12 St George’s Square in 1912. Last but not least is the Kensington Road shelter.

Now we’ve covered a good chunk of London’s history, including the story of the green cab shelters. It’s a shame to see so many of these wonderful examples of public art going to waste, but it’s a testament to the hard work of the Cabmen’s Shelter fund staff and volunteers that many are still in use today.
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“What if we ordered a bottle of Blue Nun - would blokes in checked trousers give us a kicking around the back by the bins?”

On the road

I t’s fair to say that food plays a central role in my life. My working day is planned around mealtimes, and when I’m not working, I’m either eating or preparing to eat.

Prius ‘Out Days’
When I was a Knowledge examiner, getting up at 4.30am for a seventy-mile commute from Northampton made me hungry. By 9am it felt like lunchtime. We examined yellow badge applicants as well as ‘All London’ green badges, and in order to refresh our knowledge of the suburbs, we were sent out in an official TfL vehicle for an “Out Day.” We ran ‘Routes’ and looked up ‘Points’ just like a knowledge boy would. We weren’t allowed to use our cabs (as management didn’t trust us to not take liberties!), so we did it in a TfL branded white Prius. The suburban sectors I chose to ‘survey’ included such ethnic food honey pots as Southall, and the ‘Golden Mile of Kebabs’ of Hill was a footballer from the 70s. Water. I always thought Gordon like Enfield Wash and Freezy were excluded for driving. For the price of a job to grow up with diligence, but with my eye to on high days and holidays. and concentrate on eating full time. The project is on hold under and experiment with different of grandness

Unfamiliar world of grandness
We like to visit our favourite London restaurant, Rules, every year or two. It’s grand and traditional, but extremely comfortable and friendly. I’ve also been twice to Langhan’s and love the place. The Wolseley too. The last upmarket London restaurant I went to was the Savoy Grill - just walking into the hotel lobby is intimidating. You know you’re being watched, and you fear that at any moment you’re going to be challenged as not being a fit and proper person. I’d certainly feel self-conscious walking in with my badge and money bag looking for the loos. Turn left and you’re into the restaurant. It’s big and serious - the poshest place we’ve been to so far. The fact that I use words like ‘posh’ probably indicates that I was not born into this world of grandness, though it is one I could get used to with practice! Anyway, there’s nothing wrong with feeling intimidated in a restaurant as it adds to the feeling of occasion. So long as it’s reasonably friendly, bring on the formality, my man! And it was friendly. Our waiter had a Yorkshire accent, if you please. Before my Sheffield-born missus could enter into a conversation about meat pies, black pudding, and other northern delicacies, our man had produced the menus.

Selecting the food isn’t too difficult, as anything heavy on greenery is rejected immediately. Wine is a bit of a minefield though, as it’s here that you could be exposed as a philistine who doesn’t know the difference between a Claret and a Bordeaux. Our waiter said he’d get the sommelier to talk to us. Never mind the sommelier, mate, fetch me the wine waiter! This sounded serious. Would we be interviewed under caution? Would we be ousted as philistines and shown the door; our names circulated on a blacklist of all the top restaurants of London? What if we ordered a bottle of Blue Nun - would blokes in checked trousers give us a kicking around the back by the bins? No, it was fine. The French sommelier talked through our options, and we made a good choice with his help. The food was great too, and it was a wonderful experience. I’m more a Lamb & Flag man really, but The Savoy’s cocktail bar makes a nice venue for a special occasion too.

I’d like to give up work and concentrate on eating full time. The project is on hold under the present climate, so I’ll mostly be in cafes eating bacon rolls – with just the occasional visit to the Hotel de Posh to look forward to on high days and holidays. Maybe at Christmas?

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After seven months, Al felt the time to get serious about taking back control of his life and getting back to work had come - though the concept of ‘gaining control’ (especially where old cabs are concerned) isn’t always straightforward…

Cabbie chronicles

I woke up with a jolt. I don’t know what a jolt was doing in my bed, but it was welcome company. I had the germ of an idea. I collected my thoughts and set about turning the idea into a plan. It was time for me to get back to work, driving a cab. I prepared myself to wave a fond farewell to long lay in bed, late lunches, afternoon teas of thin lightly buttered triangles of wholemeal, endless cups of decaffeinated espresso and greedy helpings of Jaffa cakes. It was time to get serious about getting back behind the wheel of my droshky and taking back control of my life.

Deceased Parrot Storage Ltd

The rented cab I’d been driving for the past four years was there, outside on the crazy-paved driveway as it had been for the past seven months. From time to time, I’d feel it in turns to climb behind the wheel, turn on the ignition and indulge in the satisfaction of hearing the stuttering chatter of its diesel engine. Well, we did this for a while at least, until the engine gave a final, apologetic cough, a squeak and died. So once again, it was time to venture through the front door and attempt to start up LM05 OTD. On the last occasion, it hadn’t coughed, or squeaked or shown an angry red light. It had refused, point blank, to start. Mind you, even in its ‘deceased parrot’ mode, we’d utilised the cab as a temporary overflow dustbin for Amazon boxes and cardboard envelopes we tended to accumulate.

There was going to be no messing about... I called the AA. No problem. A few minutes later, I was on my way back to the bonnet and fumbled blindly for the latch. No matter what piece of protruding metal I dabbed, poked or ‘fingered’, nothing would shift. By now, a small group of neighbours (scrupulously adhering to ‘social distancing’) were standing around offering suggestions as to how to free up the bonnet catch. Nick, my next-door neighbour’s idea, was the most sensible, and didn’t involve crowbars or angle grinders. Nick kindly stepped in to sort it and by the time we came back from grocery shopping, the bonnet was open and red and black leads were clipped into place on the relevant battery terminals – all it needed was a turn of the ignition key. Magic! LM05OTD, my trusty, rusty TX2, was back in business. Or so I thought...

The pandemic and TX2s

A glance at the cab’s licence plate told its own ‘covid’ story. With seven months off the road, the cab’s licence was due to expire. What was the garage going to do? Like the scores of desperate drivers who’d thrown in the towel, so many garages had called it a day. Was my garage still even in business? The garage phone kept on ringing unanswered and I had begun to get a little nervous... Once however I’d found the correct number in my mobile stored haphazardly under a slightly different name. Colin answered, and I recognised his voice instantly. I re-introduced myself and he genuinely sounded pleased to hear my voice. We discussed the cab. Most importantly, they were still in business and were also happy to rent me a cab at the current going rate...

Elton ‘Fresco’ John

“We have one here that would suit you exactly, but...” There’s ALWAYS a but, “...it’s white. It used to be a wedding cab and it still has its wedding number plate. MR55WED...” After spending years wearing a ponytail and enormous ‘Elton John’ style coloured glasses, a white cab was hardly going to phase me. “I’ll do the paperwork, Al, and we’ll swap the cab over on Monday morning.” FANTASTIC! My plan was beginning to materialise. Almost everything was in place.

54 years to the day...

Over the weekend, the family helped me clear out the old cab. I was actually sitting behind the wheel of the soon-to-be-departing cab having a brief reminisce when the white replacement taxi turned up. At last, the final piece of the jigsaw had fallen into place. A most momentous occasion. You see it was October 5th, and that was 54 years to the day from when I got my ‘raison d’être’ - my green badge at Penton Street. My 54th anniversary and a completely new start. I tried the engine, the lights, the indicators, the washers and the wipers. My ID cards were in place, front and back. Time for a quick coffee, then back to being a licenced London taxi driver. Fortified, I settled in behind the wheel and primed myself for a renaissance. I switched on the radio. Nothing! I switched on the radio. Nothing! I searched for a fitting to plug in my mobile phone. The cigarette lighter was missing. So much for the 54th anniversary. I could see myself spending the rest of the day at the garage. Oh well, at least the driver’s seat was comfortable.
Third SEISS Grant & New Jobs Support Scheme

"Sunak’s third grant will pay a lump sum covering just twenty percent of three months’ worth of average monthly profits up to a maximum of £1,875."

Money matters

The self-employed, have been so far able to apply for two non-repayable grants if their business has been adversely affected by the pandemic.

In the beginning...
The first self-employment income support scheme (SEISS) grant was available from 13 May to 13 July and was equivalent to 80% of three months’ worth of average monthly trading profits capped at £2,500 a month, so worth a maximum of £7,500.

Applications for the second grant closed on the 19th October. It comprised of a single payment made up of 70% of three months’ worth of average monthly trading profits capped at £2,190 month and so worth a maximum of £6,570. You needed to have been adversely affected by coronavirus on or after 14 July 2020 to have claimed it.

Much less generous
Rishi Sunak has announced a third grant for the self-employed to ‘cover’ the period from 1st November 2020 to the 31st January 2021. It’s much less generous than the other grants though. It will pay a lump sum covering just 20% of three months’ worth of average monthly profits up to a maximum of £1,875.

Applicants will need to declare that their business has been impacted between 1 November 2020 and the date of their claim.

What will grant four look like?
The government also plans to offer a fourth self-employed support grant to cover the period from 1 February to 30 April 2021 - but there are not yet details about how much this will be.

Like the other self-employed support grants, not every self-employed worker is eligible for the upcoming grants. Anyone earning more than £50,000, directors of limited companies who are paid via dividends, people who started their business after April 2019, and anyone for whom self-employment makes up less than 50% of their income, is excluded from the support.

Furlough scheme ending
The Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme – the furlough scheme – will come to a close at the end of October. It will be replaced with a new Jobs Support Scheme from November 1st.

In the beginning...
The furlough scheme has been helping employers keep staff on the payroll since the onset of the Covid pandemic in March. Back then it paid 80% of staff wages where staff were unable to work due to lockdown restrictions or a lack of demand for the company’s products or services.

But Chancellor Sunak has gradually been withdrawing the support offered by the scheme since August. Since 1 October the government has been paying 60% of wages, up to a monthly cap of £1,875, for the hours the employee is on furlough. The scheme will end completely on 31 October and will be replaced with the Jobs Support Scheme which will run for six months from 1 November 2020.

Jobs Support Scheme
Whereas furloughed workers were not allowed to work for their company (until July when they could work part time), the Jobs Support Scheme requires employees to work at least a third of their hours to be eligible for government help. The scheme is designed to protect “viable jobs” in businesses which are facing lower demand due to Covid-19, to help keep their employees attached to the workforce.

Split burdens & “Viable Jobs”
The government will pay a third of hours not worked up to a cap of £697.92 per month, with the employer also contributing a third. This means that employees working 33% of their hours will receive 77% of their full pay – 55% paid by the employer, and 22% by the government.

Whereas all types of firm could apply for help from the furlough scheme, the Jobs Support Scheme only supports “viable jobs”.

This means those who normally work in venues that are still closed – such as nightclubs, theatres and sports stadiums – will miss out as they won’t be able to work the required third of their normal hours.

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A Jaw Dropping 184 New Cabs Sold in September?

“The figures show that in September, 170 TXEs and 14 Nissan Dynamos joined the slow-moving ranks and circuits of empty cabs driving around going nowhere.”

Word on the street

Whether I am living in some sort of parallel universe, where the pandemic coupled with disastrous political decisions has devastated our industry, cab sales and values, or the sales figures showing 184 new cabs sold in September are wrong, it cannot be both!

Even allowing for the incentive of the new 70 registration plate, who has bought these cabs and where have all the part exchanges and traded cabs gone? Because no one I know has seen them or has any knowledge of anyone who has. The figures show that in September, 170 TXEs and 14 Nissan Dynamos joined the slow-moving ranks and circuits of empty cabs driving around going nowhere. I spent a day in central London last week and deliberately kept my eye out for a glimpse of one of these 184 new cabs and never saw one. So what we can perhaps deduce from this are that there are are two possible factors at play: either TfL have somehow got their figures totally wrong, or dealers are pre-registering cabs with a view to keeping the factories ticking over, and then selling them as 'pre owned' once we get back to some sense of normality...

This tactic is currently keeping the entire car industry going at the moment and it makes sense our side of the business would do the same - but it's a risky business model. Virtually every single car manufacturer is in a race to bring to market a pure EV mid-sized SUV. Why? Because SUV's are the fastest growing car sales sector and there is no EV model currently available, but there is a substantial demand. Ford, Tesla, VW, Citroen, Nissan and Hyundai will all start delivering their offerings early next year, but with a plethora of new but pre-registered and cheaper hybrids and petrol's backed up across the country and devaluing by the day, it's likely this will impact on new sales and the launches of the new technology.

In our business, we only have limited demand and if that demand (when it returns), is taken up by the pre-registered, and cheaper cabs it must impact on future new sales. It will be interesting to see if they repeat this in October or allow market forces to prevail.

Interesting times!
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’ 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.

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Email ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Date of Birth ____________________________________________________________________________________________________ Badge No. ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Badge colour (Please state whether green or yellow) __________________________________________________________________________ Year badge obtained __________________________________________________________________________

Suburban badge sector number __________________________________________________________________________________________________

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Please tick if you DO NOT wish to receive information from the LTDA and other related organisations in the future?☐

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Signed ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________ Date __________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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Brain twister

Puzzler page

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 Employee of the welfare services (6,6)
8 Cherish (5)
9 Lady taking part in a film (7)
10 Medicinal substance (4)
11 Supply that can be drawn on (8)
14 African adventure (6)
15 Writing tool that needs sharpening (6)
17 Discuss (4,4)
18 BBC time signal (4)
21 ___ roulette, deadly game (7)
23 Big, horned, African animal (5)
24 Estate car (7,5)

DOWN
1 Put money aside (5)
2 Brightly painted (9)
3 Final word of a prayer (4)
4 Taken off milk, as a baby (6)
5 Restricted the amount given (of food, eg) (8)
6 Ram's mate (3)
7 Also (2,4)
12 Resting on your back (9)
13 Malicious fire-starter (8)
14 Biting topical humour, eg (6)
16 Shed propped against a wall (4-2)
19 Cutlery item (5)
20 Close (curtains) (4)
22 Posed (for an artist) (3)

Sudoku

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

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

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All answers to puzzler on p30

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www.ltda.co.uk
CABS FOR RENT

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- De-commissioned you 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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- TX4 Elegance Euro 6, 65 plate, excellent condition, 93,000 miles, plated until January, no expense spared. Priced to sell at only £25,000 Tel: 07851062244

- TX4 2011, 61 reg, plated until October 2021, Ascott Gold warranty until May 2022, 167,820 miles, very good condition, £7,500 call Keith 07565 519276

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- Vito Taxi 10 plate, plated until September 21, good clean cab, 247k miles, £8,000 07956379306

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The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans would usually be in the Netherlands each September with a group of veterans for the annual Wandeltocht in Oosterbeek, where over 30,000 walk a selection of routes, to remember the Battle of Arnhem, in 1944. Over 1,700 British and Polish soldiers and airmen lost their lives during this conflict.

This year, the COVID restrictions meant the 74th organised Airborne March event for thousands of participants would not be possible, but ex Paratrooper and Taxi Charity supporter Chris Willmott, 59, had a very special reason to want to complete the full 40km walk this year.

Accompanied by Eveline Kroot, a Captain, and Anne Haveman, a Reservist in the Dutch Army, Chris set off at 7.30am on Saturday 5th September to walk the route carrying the ashes of 7th Para Battalion Veteran Frank Pendergast, who passed away earlier this year and always loved attending Wandeltocht with the Taxi Charity.

Frank and Chris originally met through the Parachute Association and they formed a great friendship. Chris was a regular visitor to Frank’s home and was soon accompanying him on Taxi Charity events throughout the UK and across the continent. Frank was a 6th Airborne veteran, not an ex Taxicharity supporter, but he loved the Taxi Charity visits to the Netherlands as much as those to France, as it gave him precious time with other veterans and the opportunity to remember the sacrifices so many had made.

After Frank’s funeral, his son David asked Chris if he would carry Franks ashes on the Wandeltocht before they are interred in Ranville Franks ashes on the Wandeltocht with the Taxi Charity.

Chris and Anne had carried the ashes of veterans on the route, as he had carried those of WWII glider pilots Des Page and Iain Bonner on previous walks.

Eveline and Anne mapped out the route and Frans Ammerlaan from the Dutch Market Garden Foundation who helps the Taxi Charity to organise its visits to the Netherlands, supported the three walkers with lunch and encouragement on route. They completed the twenty-five-mile walk just before 4.00pm.

Chris Willmott, said, “Although the official event had been cancelled, the Dutch anticipated that a few hundred people would still participate in some way, with many walking small sections of the route. It was important to me that I walked the full route and I was delighted when Eveline and Anne said they wanted to join me on this special occasion. This was my fourth Wandeltocht, and I fully intend to complete the walk every year until I am no longer able to.”

At the usual annual Wandeltocht event, an official parade begins at 11.00am on the Utrechtseweg, in front of the Airborne at the Bridge Museum. Just before eleven o’clock, the trumpet call ‘reveille’ sounds, followed by a one-minute silence to commemorate the events of September 1944. The march leader then opens the marching event and groups of soldiers, the gendarmerie corps, police, scouting, and civilians present themselves to the mayor and various dignitaries. The Taxi Charity veterans are always included in this parade and the sound of the crowds shouting their thanks for liberating them is always deafening.

Chris first visited Oosterbeek in March 2016 with veteran Arthur Letchford, the Taxi Charity and Arnhem veterans Jeff Roberts and David Whiteman, for the opening of the Airborne at the Bridge museum. Both Chris and Arthur had been in 2 Para – although many years apart. Arthur had been one of the few who reached the Bridge during the Battle of Arnhem. In September that same year Chris completed Wandeltocht for the first time.

Dick Goodwin, Vice President, Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, said, “Wandeltocht is a much-loved occasion for our veterans and the Dutch hold these WWII veterans in such high regard and they meet and often stay with the extended families of those they liberated during WWII.”

About Wandeltocht

The Airborne March is the annual Dutch commemorative event in remembrance of the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944 that began in 1947 and always takes place on the first Saturday in September at Oosterbeek near Arnhem in the Netherlands. The march is one of several events attended by veterans, living relatives, soldiers, British army cadets, RAF, air cadets from the United Kingdom together with Dutch military, police and civilians to commemorate the 1,750 British and Polish soldiers and airmen who lost their lives at the Battle of Arnhem during WWII and who are buried at the Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek. To find out more and join in next year visit: www.airbornewandeltocht.nl/en

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 and 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, trusts and of course the amazing group of London licensed taxi drivers who offer their time and vehicles free. To find out more, visit: www.taxicharity.org
A woman of words

I have never been the curtain twitcher type of neighbour. Don’t get me wrong – I would win Olympic Gold for being nosy – but it’s been hard to keep an eye on what’s happening in my street in Zone 4 when I am busy driving around in Zone 1.

And then along came Covid. Me and my cab are parked at home most of the day, and I am getting to know what the neighbours are up to.

The couple next door are... mature. They are in their 80’s and have had three hip replacements between them. The pair watch Countdown every afternoon at 2pm. I know this because I can hear it at full volume through the wall. Following Countdown, they have loud jiggy jiggys. “Yes, Yes, Yes,”

they do! While the earth moves for them, pictures fall off the wall and ornaments topple in my house. Pre-Corona, I wondered if I had a poltergeist.

Being at home has turned me a bit Miss Marple. I have finally identified where the mystery bags of rubbish that often appear in my wheelie bins come from. Another oldie is the culprit. ‘Mad Marge’ as she is known around here (being PC hasn’t made it to Dollis Hill yet),

has been hiding bin bags up her poncho and in her Asda shopping trolley and dumping them wildly into bins along the street. Mad Marge’s contributions to my green bin last month resulted in a seal of yellow tape marked ‘CONTAMINATED’ around the untaken bin and a letter threatening a fine from the ‘Bin Police’.

On approaching Mad Marge to tentatively request a change in behaviour, she shouted, “It wasn’t me!” and scurried off. A bin bag fell from under her poncho as she disappeared up the road.

My next offender is a young Italian guy who lives three doors down. I caught him ‘rose-handed’ in the front garden. He made a full confession. He couldn’t not really, as he was holding a bunch of my best blooms and a pair of scissors in his hand at the time. This Latin lover apologised immediately.

“Sorry, eez Corona, I no havva the job so I no havva the money and I no havva the girlfriend and...” I took the roses back off him and told Criminal Casanova he no havva the right to nick my flowers, and to clear off.

The lady from no. 24 however, nipped over with two slices of warm apple strudel. “I’ve noticed you’re not able to go out much in your cab at the moment” she said, “a lovely cabbie once gave me a free ride home from the Royal Free a couple of years ago. I was a bit upset at the time. It meant a lot. I can’t thank him... but this is for you.”

The yummy apple strudel is a secret from Mr Meg because I ate both slices before he came home.
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