TAXI DRIVERS CAN'T WORK FROM HOME

LTDA launch new campaign for greater financial trade support
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Putting more work into Black Cabs
Inside... 
03:11:20

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USING A HAND-HELD MOBILE PHONE WHILE DRIVING
The Department for Transport is consulting on proposals to expand the offence of using a hand-held mobile phone while driving to include non-connected mobile application actions, the consultation closes on Sunday 17 January 2021. Drivers can take the survey and feedback using the following link: https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/L51PHF/

FACE COVERING EXEMPTION BADGES
From 22nd September, it became a legal requirement for passengers travelling in taxi or private hire vehicles to wear a face covering for the duration of their journey. Keep in mind, some customers might not be able to wear a face covering for reasons that may not always be visible. If this is the case, the passenger should be able to present an exemption card or badge both of which are available from TfL. The Government also distributes face covering exemption cards (some of which can be displayed on a mobile phone) and badges.

RANK SUSPENSIONS
4364 Millbank (Tate) 08:00 Monday 2 November until 18:00 Tuesday 10 November. Whole rank suspended due to crane operation. The main entrance to the Tate Britain on Millbank will be inaccessible to the public due to a crane operation, collect passengers from Atterbury Street.

5683 Conduit Street (Westbury Hotel) 08:00 Wednesday 4 November until 16:00 Friday 6 November. Front 5 metres suspended due to temporary walkway, while footpath is extended.

5393 Russell Square (Covent Garden), until Wednesday 11 November between the hours of 20:00-02:00 Sundays to Thursdays only. Whole rank suspended during specified hours/days due to deliveries to Covent Garden for Christmas decoration installation. The same suspension as previous years, please move to the kerb side.

6006 Broadway (St James’s Station), until Thursday 12 November. Whole rank suspended due to carriageway work. A temporary rank will be available on Tothill Street.

5534 and 5535 Canfield Gardens, until 18:00 Sunday 15 November. Both ranks suspended due to major gas main replacement works. A temporary rank will be available at C11 bus stop.

LOTTO WINNER!
October’s lucky lottery winner is, Mr James Brawley! James has been an LTDA member for 36 years and buys a ticket every month. James told LTDA Executive, Anthony Street on receiving his cheque for £5,000 that since it started in 1986, there have been over 360 winners. That’s over £1,800,000 million paid out in prize money.

NHS COVID-19 Track and Trace App
TfL are encouraging all licensees to download and use the NHS COVID-19 Track and Trace App. The app is designed to ensure that anyone who develops symptoms of coronavirus can quickly be tested to find out if they have the virus, helps trace close recent contacts of anyone who tests positive for coronavirus and, if necessary, notifies them that they must self-isolate at home to help stop the spread of the virus. TfL state that taxi booking apps and platforms should also encourage passengers to make use of the app in the booking process.

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH TAXIWORLD CAB AID
New Campaign to Turn Up the Pressure

“Through the campaign, ‘Taxi Drivers Can’t Work from Home’, we are calling on the government to step in and urgently provide a dedicated package of financial support for the taxi trade.”

Steve’s comment

In recent weeks, we’ve seen other sectors hit hard by the pandemic, like hospitality, getting specific bailouts from the government to help businesses survive this crisis. But despite our pleas for support and lots of media stories and interest in how taxi drivers are suffering, the trade has been largely forgotten by the government. So, we need to find ways to shout as loud as these other sectors and put pressure on them, forcing them to act. This week we have launched a campaign to do just that...

New campaign

Through the campaign, ‘Taxi Drivers Can’t Work from Home’, we are calling on the government to step in and urgently provide a dedicated package of financial support for the taxi trade. As part of this, we are also continuing to highlight the devastating impact that losing access to ‘our office’ (London’s roads) is having on the trade and asking the Mayor, London Boroughs and TfL to rethink their approach and give taxis the same access as buses. We have written to all MPs representing our members across London and the surrounding areas asking them to support the campaign and help us to get you the support you need.

We need your help to make sure the campaign and the need for a bailout for the trade gets the attention it deserves. LTDA members can find their MPs through our website and write to them using templates provided in the members area, you can also share the campaign video and images on social media using #TaxiCantWfH and tweet at your MP and others asking them to support it. You can find out more on our website here: www.ltda.co.uk/CantWfH

Speaking up for the trade

We’ve seen Mayors and local authorities in other parts of the country, like Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, the new ‘King of the North’, highlighting the dire situation taxi drivers find themselves in as part of calls for more financial support for the region. The Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram has also said that he is looking at ways to provide financial assistance for taxi drivers using some of the money provided by Government to support hospitality businesses. Unfortunately, we are yet to see our Mayor follow suit. We’ve written to him and other key figures at City Hall calling on them to, at the very least, help us in lobbying the Government for more support and speak up for the trade!

Safer travel

On a positive note, we have been working with the Department for Transport looking at ways they can provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for drivers. As part of these discussions, we are also asking them to issue clearer safer travel guidance for taxis to help keep drivers and passengers safe, which they are in the process of drafting. This should help to reassure passengers that taxis can be a safer way to travel and we hope it will encourage people to do so. But even getting these pretty obvious things from the Government has been an uphill battle and an extremely slow process, given that we are now nearly ten months into this crisis.

‘Proudly Serving London Securely’

With ‘tier two’ restrictions meaning passenger demand has gone down again, we are still working to promote taxis as a safer way to travel and to highlight the extra precautions drivers are taking. Building on our radio adverts, we are now launching our Covid-Secure Cab Promise. Our message is that in a world that’s always changing, you can still rely on black cabs to get you where you need to go securely, and our members continue to proudly serve London securely. This will include paid advertising on social media to reach potential customers and there will also be content for drivers to share on Facebook and Twitter. Members will also be able to download a sticker from our website or collect one from Taxi House and we will let them know when these are available.

Keeping drivers in their cabs

Thank you to those who sent across their letters from finance companies. We have been using these to make the case for more support for those drivers being asked to resume finance payments, as payment holidays come to an end. We have asked the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to discuss this. They do not regulate these kinds of agreements, but can and will, encourage lenders to treat drivers fairly.

They have put us in touch with the Head of Motor Finance at the Finance and Leasing Association, a trade body that represents lenders like Black Horse, to discuss how we can work with them to find a solution that means drivers are not forced into surrendering vehicles or having them repossessed. It should be in lenders interests to find a better solution, as there is no market for taxis right now, so if they were sold at auction everyone would lose out. We hope they will see sense.

The FCA didn’t think lenders would be able to offer further payment holidays, but there may be other things they can provide which don’t push drivers into debt or worse. In the meantime, they suggested that getting a package of financial support from Government for the taxi trade would be the best option, to ensure that drivers have the money they need to make payments and survive the winter. This is what we are asking for through ‘Taxi Drivers Can’t Work from Home.’

“Members can locate their MPs through our website & write to them using the templates provided. You can also share the campaign video & images on social media!”
“Mayors in other areas are standing up for taxi drivers – Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, has mentioned taxi drivers many times as some of the people struggling the most as a result of the pandemic”

 Streets ahead

Coronavirus restrictions are changing on what appears to be a near daily basis, and it’s hard to keep up. No one really knows what they can and can’t do, for example we’ve been told not to meet other households indoors, but wait, you can go to a restaurant with other people if it’s for a ‘business lunch’. I guess it could be worse, we could be living in Wales where items like clothes, kettles and mops are apparently no longer considered essential items.

It’s hard to keep up, but at the LTDA, we are always on hand to answer members questions, offer advice or at the very least put them in touch with our contacts who can help.

Close but no cigar

With tier two restrictions now in place across London, a third of further restrictions on the horizon, members are rightly feeling concerned about the future. With Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all in circuit breaker lockdowns, how long can it be before we face the same here? In the gap between the first and second waves of the virus, there was a tiny window where trade had started to pick up. But unsurprisingly, fares have fallen again since new restrictions hit. As people avoid central London and work from home again. Two weeks ago, the Chancellor announced more support for the hospitality sector recognising that with new restrictions, restaurants, pubs and other venues were likely to struggle again. Unfortunately, he did nothing to specifically help the taxi trade. Our business relies on the hospitality sector, the night-time economy and a busy central London, all of which have been hit hard by the pandemic and are now being crippled further by the new restrictions, yet our sector is being forgotten.

SEISS guidance

There was some more support announced through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension for drivers. The Chancellor has now doubled the amount of support drivers will be able to claim from 20% announced in September to 40%. Drivers will be able to claim two grants, each covering three-month periods one from November 2020 to January 2021 and another February 2021 to April 2021. The threshold will be worth 40 per cent of average monthly trading profits, capped at £3750. The rate for the second one will be set nearer the time. Anyone who was eligible for the previous rounds is able to claim and will need to “declare that they intend to continue to trade” and that they are either:

- currently actively trading but are impacted by reduced demand due to coronavirus or,
- were previously trading but are temporarily unable to do so due to coronavirus.

The full details including how to claim should be published shortly and we will keep members updated.

Hopefully, this will help, but we know you need more, and we will keep trying to get the Government, Mayor of London and TfL to recognise the challenges facing the trade and step up.

Mayors in other areas are standing up for taxi drivers – Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, has mentioned taxi drivers many times as some of the people struggling the most as a result of the pandemic using them as an example in his recent battle with the Government over Manchester being put into Tier Three. Meanwhile, Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region has said he is looking at ways to help taxi drivers using some of the funding they are being given to support the hospitality industry. The question is, will our Mayor step up?

On the Plus side

We know times are tough and right now every little helps. Through our LTDA Plus member deals, we are always looking for ways to make savings for drivers whether that’s working with credit card payment providers like Viva Wallet or insurance companies to get drivers a better deal or working with gyms and restaurants to get discounts. We are always on the look out for ways to help drivers or even just to get you a free cup of tea to break up the day. I have a number of meetings coming up in the next few weeks, including with insurance company, Sovereign and will keep you posted.

THE NEXT MAYOR OF LONDON?

Looking to the future

Despite the never-ending saga of Covid-19, life goes on. This includes the contest to be the next Mayor of London, which is starting to heat up. Shaun Bailey AM, the Conservative candidate, David Kurten AM, the Brexit Alliance candidate and Sian Berry the Green Party candidate all remain the same, meanwhile we have a new Liberal Democrat candidate, Luisa Porritt, a former Member of the European Parliament for London and a Camden Councillor. Several independent candidates have also entered the race in the last couple of weeks. Brian Rose, a former banker turned broadcaster, free speech advocate and podcast host, and Farah London, a businesswoman and former Conservative campaigner.

All the candidates have a plan to get London back on its feet, in one way or another but there will be a lot of issues that shape this election, that would not have been as high on the agenda before Covid-19. These include fixing TfL’s finances, the future of London’s roads and whether a candidate will continue to push forward with the disastrous Streetspace agenda. Of course, we want to know how they are going to support the cab trade – help us to get back on track and give us the support we need to create the world’s greenest taxi fleet and continue to serve London. We are gradually meeting all candidates to talk about the support our members need and the manifesto commitments we would like to see, to make sure that whoever we end up with understands the trade and puts the right policies in place to support it. We hope in coming editions to give each candidate in turn, the opportunity through TAXI newspaper to present their manifesto’s and associated policy ideas to members. Whoever gets the job is going to have an uphill battle to get our great city back on track… and I don’t envy them.
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An Abhorrent Blame Game

“People’s lives are being devastated and yet we still have Labour and the Tories playing silly buggers.”

Top rank

The lack of leadership throughout this pandemic is just unforgivable, just as is the blatant party politics being played out between town halls up and down the country and Government. People’s lives are being devastated and yet we still have Labour and the Tories playing silly buggers.

Blame game

In the capital city, instead of the Labour London Mayor and the Tory Prime Minister working together to save the economy of one of the best cities on the planet, they instead feel it more appropriate to play a silly and blatantly obvious to all blame game. It’s childish and completely irresponsible at the best of times, but during this current crisis it is abhorrent.

Sheer arrogance

Millions and millions of pounds is being wasted on self-interest schemes that benefit the few - or at least they would if those few were actually out taking advantage of them. The stark reality that the tenfold increase in cycling and walking (that was banded about to justify the road grab), has spectacularly failed to materialise and all but the instigators can clearly see this is the case. Their sheer arrogance that they can force people to bend to their will simply means that millions of pounds of taxpayer money will be required to be spent removing the schemes, if not today, then in the very near future. That’s hundreds of millions of pounds that could have been used to give grants for EV taxis, vans and cars or even spent on buying EV buses instead of allowing diesel buses to continue to operate on our roads for a couple more decades. You cannot force people out of a mode of transport without giving them a viable alternative - and just telling people that walking and cycling is a viable option just won’t cut it.

Little sense

Those who get to make the decisions on restricting other people’s lives do so with great ease and zero thought because they know it will have zero impact on their lives. The restrictions make no sense, be they the reduction of access to roads for cyclists that are not even there or imposing tighter restrictions that will devastate the already fragile hospitality sector and the myriad of other businesses who have a connection either wholly or partly to them - us included. The recent tier two restrictions announced for London will see workers being able to occupy the same office and work side by side all day but unable to go for a drink or meal together after work. Six extended family members cannot go into a restaurant together but six people having a business meeting can, which makes little sense.

London walls

At the weekend I found myself watching the Tom Hanks film, Bridge of Spies, and if you’ve not seen it, it documents the building of the Berlin Wall, that divides and segregates the city... I couldn’t help but be reminded of what is happening with all the LTNs springing up across London. The barriers may not be bleach cold concrete, but they are barriers nonetheless and they are in place to separate one Londoner from another, they are in place to divide us and they are put in place by people who say, ‘I want to travel down everybody else’s street but I don’t want you in mine.’

As I said, those who are changing the rules do so because it predominantly suits their lifestyle or makes their street a quiet haven for them and political advisors, time and time again caught breaking or bending the very rules they implement.

Insurance certificates

I have seen some silly reasons for a cab failing its test at NSL – hell, I have even been the victim of a ridiculous failure when my pristine white taxi had a single piece of pink confetti found underneath the rear seats, no doubt from the wedding I had worked 48 hours previously. The CO with great joy told me my immaculate taxi had failed because the valet was not up to PCO standards and walked off. I asked another CO where I could find a copy of the PCO valet standards and received a puzzled look back and was told, “No such thing” and yet it cost me 48 hours off the road whilst I awaited a retest, although to be fair it was with Fenton St not NSL... The latest silly failure is on insurance certificates not displaying the correct wording, not that it is a mere certificate or that the insurance is not in place but that certain wording is not in place. A certificate issued for display in our cabs should confirm that ‘The policy complies with the requirements of the London Cab Order 1934’, if it does not, then it does not comply with our conditions of fitness. I did not know that was a thing and I would be very surprised if you did, but the insurance companies that issue them most certainly should and have previously always made sure they did. That was until recently when some companies (for reasons known only to them), decided their ink was better used on something else and left it off. This simple mistake is now costing drivers time off the road whilst they await a replacement certificate. So, do yourself a favour, have a look at your certificate and if you do not see the correct wording, get it changed now.
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I received yet further confirmation last week as to why the London Cab Trade is viewed as the ‘Best in the World’. Not only because of our knowledge and workings of our City, but also the very decent people we are.

Integrity

Look no further than below for evidence of this. I took a call from a member called Matt, who was working one early evening (well trying), when he was hailed by a gentleman in Sussex Gardens, who asked Matt to take him to Bolton Gardens. On arrival at Bolton Gardens, the gentleman asked if he could pay by card, which was strange considering - why, will shortly become apparent...

On arrival at Bolton Gardens, the man paid up, thanked Matt and went on his way. Matt spent the next hour and half looking for another fare without success and eventually deciding enough was enough, headed home. On arrival at his home, Matt did what he's ever done and had a quick look in the back of his cab. He does this as a force of habit and apart from a few discarded tissues and sweet wrappers there's usually nothing ever left behind by passengers of any note. This time though it was different. This time, there was a bag on the floor. Matt opened it and found cash amounting to £15,000. Yes, you’ve read it right £15,000. Fifteen bundles of £1000 in used twenty-pound notes. Matt, after catching his breath and working out it could only have been left by his last fare went indoors and immediately called the police and reported it to them. The police gave him a reference number as conformation he had reported the find and instructed him to take it to ‘Lost Property’ the following morning. Matt told me that he had a sleepless night knowing that amount of money was in his house. Early the next morning, Matt was awakened by his mobile phone ringing. He picked up and it was his credit card company asking if he had found the cash. Matt informed them he had and was happy for the owner to call him and arrange to meet up and hand it back over. Rather astutely in my view, Matt insisted on doing this handover in a Police Station. He did not know anything about this man and what business he was in that would lead him to be carrying around a shed load of cash. So, that afternoon, he met with his fare at Kensington Police station and handed back the cash. The man was obviously relieved and thanked Matt for his honesty and rewarded him with £500. The man, on being questioned by the police about where this money had come from claimed he was a professional gambler, and it was stake money. As a cab trade rep, I cannot be prouder of Matt, who after finding this huge amount of cash made sure it was returned to its rightful owner within 24 hrs. I tip my hat to you Matt, and we at the LTDAs are proud to have you as our member.

Congestion Charge PCNs

I am getting calls from members who are receiving Congestion Charge Tickets because their plate has run out. One member informed me he had received nine after the 6-month extension he was given during the Lockdown period ran out. He obviously did not realise and is now sitting on a huge bill. We have written to TFL on his behalf, asking for mitigation and I hope they see it as a genuine error that would not have been done on purpose. These Congestion Charge PCNs are sent out when a cabs licence has expired and the information that the cab is exempt from the Congestion Charge is removed from TFL’s database on the day of expiry. Please be careful, especially those of you that were given six-month extensions on your plates that ran out during Lockdown.

On point

“The lesson to learn is that when you accept a job off these apps, don’t let your guard down and treat them as you would do a street job…”

Apps jobs

A word of warning when accepting an App job from a hotel or restaurant. These hotels have a cash account with an App, where people wanting a cab can call for one through the concierge. Generally, this goes without incident and it is a way of getting work that we may not have had. That said, I recently had one of our members call me and report that he accepted an app job from the Leonardo Hotel on Prescott St. He turned up and the fare came out and got in the cab and asked for three different destinations on the way to their house. On arrival at the final stop, the lady made some claim that her husband would come down and pay the fare. Well you all know what happened next. As our member took his foot off the brake which released the door locks, the door flew open and she did a remarkable impression of Zola Budd and was out of sight before our member knew it. He immediately then called the hotel to report her and asked for the lady’s contact details with the intention of calling me so I could send her a bilker’s letter demanding payment. When he spoke to the concierge, he stated he did not know the lady at all, and he was not even sure if she was staying at the hotel. This left our member high and dry and badly out of pocket. His next move was to contact the App company and reported this bilk and how he thought that they were partly responsible. As you know I am not a particular fan of the apps but on this occasion, they came to our members rescue and covered the fare. The lesson to learn is that when you accept a job off these apps, don’t let your guard down and treat them as you would do a street job. Taking an app job from a hotel gives you a false sense of security when in reality someone can walk in off the street and order a cab from the concierge without him knowing if they are a guest or not.
If you were planning on trying to pull barmaid, Mabel from the Dog & Duck, Steve's here to explain what a complicated and expensive affair it may just turn into...

A man in black

So, as Boris Johnson lauds his chief medical advisor with raptures of "Oh Whitty you're so fine, you so fine you blow my mind, HEY WHITTY, HEY WHITTY", a massive proportion of business owners, including taxi drivers are singing: "Oh Whitty, what a pity, you don't understand, my house is on the line and my job is down the pan."

I can't believe I'm saying this...

In a statement last week, London Mayor, Sadiq Khan said: "I have said for a while that the current curfew rule needs to be rapidly reviewed. We saw the worrying consequences of increased social mixing on the streets and public transport in the capital around 10pm in the lead up to Christmas. Now London and other parts of the country have moved into Tier 2 and higher restrictions, which prohibit household mixing, the current 10pm curfew policy makes even less sense and should be scrapped. Immediatly scrapping the 10pm curfew would allow more sittings of single households in restaurants throughout the evening, helping with cashflow at a time when venues need all the support they can get."

Guess what (I can't believe that I am going to say this), I agree with every word of the Mayor's statement, he is absolutely right. The whole curfew scenario is utterly ludicrous, the only reason that it was brought in is because it happened to work in, Belgium - BELGIUM, the country that gave us Jean Claude Van Damme for goodness sake - that's hardly any sort of recommendation.

So as taxi drivers, if you are finding that your night-work has dropped off a cliff, don't blame the Mayor, nor the Government, blame the Belgians - and to think, we'll be propping up their economy by eating Brussel Sprouts with our turkey feet and chips this Christmas (a significant step down from griddled squirrel). So, the current rules... well here's my interpretation of what they may mean:

The medium alert level

■ No socialising in groups larger than six, indoors or outdoors, unless there is a legal exemption, so Snow White, at least two of the dwarves are out on their ear.

■ Certain businesses are required to ensure customers only consume food and drink while seated, which means you can't consume your bag of pork scratchings unless you are luxuriating on the chaise-longue down the Dog and Duck. If you do fancy trying to chat up Mabel the barmaid, your charisma will likely need to permeate through a face mask whilst en route to the toilet. Good luck with that. It is worth noting that this may also be one of the only times where you can enter a bank wearing a mask and sell a bank clerk to hand over some moolah.

■ Businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-secure manner, which means swingers clubs are fine, provided everybody is wearing a Hazchem suit and a gimp mask. (As far as Mabel is concerned this perhaps should not be considered first date territory.)

The high alert level:

■ No socialising with anybody outside of your household or support bubble in any indoor setting - so if you were thinking of inviting Mabel from the Dog and Duck, back to your gaff post curfew - forget it.

■ No socialising in a group of more than 6 outside, including in a garden or other space like beaches or parks. This means that you can't have a barbecue in your garden and share a sausage with your neighbour (titter ye not filth mongers), but you can go down the pub together and pretend to be strangers if you are inside, or be friends again in the beer garden.

■ You can continue to travel to venues or amenities that are open, for work, but should look to reduce the number of journeys you make where possible, therefore if you're a taxi driver you are being urged to operate your vehicle from the comfort of your own home.

Finally, the Flash Gordon alert level (although we all know a fourth tier is coming)

■ No socialising with anybody you do not live with, or have formed a support bubble with, anywhere on planet Earth, under pain of death at the hands of Ming the Merciless.

■ No socialising in a group of more than six in an outdoor public space such as a park, beach, the countryside, or a public garden - This means dogging night in Epping Forest is a non-starter (every fourth Thursday in the month according to my source).

■ Pubs and bars must close; they can only remain open where they operate as a restaurant, so even if you were considering chatting up, Mabel from the Dog and Duck and asking her out for a quick drink, you’re in real trouble because any ideas of a cheap date has now turned into a full-blowen meal.

Avoid travelling outside the very high alert level area you are in and avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK, so you’re definitely not going to have ANY luck with Mabel if you live in a level 3 area and she’s in a level 2 area...

Stuffed

Basically, we are all stuffed, financially and socially. The one bright point is the improved offer of support via the SEISS scheme, however for some cabbies, 40% of £200 and a bag of sherbet lemons really isn’t going to cut the mustard.

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The Joy of Kings, Appeals, Greed & Immorality...

“Despite all the day-to-day misery, there are small and frequent moments of joy, of fun and pleasure. No, I haven’t been drinking, honestly…”

How was your week? I hope things are looking up for you, as taxi drivers everywhere are in the same boat – marooned on the HMS Covid-19, with minimum financial government support for self-employed drivers and a dwindling number of customers thanks to tighter corona measures. Like all your colleagues, I bet you’ll be happy to see this ship sail off into the sunset – and preferably very soon.

But despite all the day-to-day misery, there are small and frequent moments of joy, of fun and pleasure. No, I haven’t been drinking, honestly. Often there are little gems - but you have to look out for them. I’ll mention mine, and I bet you’ll like (some of) them...

A glowing credit from the north

My week, ten days ago to be precise, started wonderfully well. In the tug of war between Greater Manchester and Central Government about Tier 3 and compensation, on BBC Breakfast I heard ‘King of the North’, Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham reel off a whole series of professions keeping day to day life going, whilst suffering from the present corona measures. Not often do you hear a mayor specifically mentioning taxi drivers as one of the professions which carry out an important job and are obviously way more of a backbone than the ones going decidedly weak at the knees just thinking of putting their knees in the frame. If they are suffering, I am too.

But the Appeals Court on Thursday October 22nd decided to reject Uber & Lyft’s appeal against an earlier judgement. State and city authorities sued Uber and Lyft in May for enforcing a new state labour law (ABS) aimed at turning gig workers into white-collar workers. They won. The gig companies must apply California’s AB5-law and classify their drivers as employees. This Court of Appeal ruling is the result of a lawsuit brought by the state’s Attorney General and city attorneys of San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego.

‘The greed of gig-companies’

It seems that the California judiciary and the state’s lawmakers have made a backdoor to the ones over here, going decidedly weak at the knees just thinking of putting any obstruction in Uber’s way. If Proposition 22 doesn’t make it, and the ABS-law stands as is, it will be a major body blow to companies which treat their drivers like 19th century piecework slaves. “This is a victory for the people of California and for any driver denied fair wages, sick leave, and other benefits from these companies,” said Dennis Herrera, the San Francisco attorney, in a statement following the Appeals Court decision. “The law is clear: drivers can continue to enjoy the flexibility they currently enjoy while maintaining the rights they deserve as employees. The only thing preventing this is the greed of Uber and Lyft.”

Appeal goes badly for Uber

The best news came at the end of my week: having threatened to up the Uber fares in the US by between 25 to 100% and laying off thousands of drivers if the Californian voters would not vote for ‘Proposition 22‘ exempting gig-workers from California’s new AB5 labour law, Uber CEO Khosrowshahi on Tuesday launched a ‘cross the bow’ PR-shot at California’s Appeals Court.

“In bigger cities, say San Francisco and LA,” he told Business Insider, “the price increases will be in the range of 20, 30, 40%. In certain smaller cities, the price increases would be 70, 80, 100%. These are not estimates.”

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Extensive details...

When writing this, talks continue. Daimler and BMW, who merged their mobility operations (Reach Now, Charge Now, Free Now, Park Now and Kapten) in 2018, have been looking for fresh money. Now and Kapten) in 2018, have been looking for fresh money. Although selling the businesses would recoup some of the millions lost, it would also leave Daimler and BMW without a stake in the mobility game which now seems more advantageous than selling cars.

The law is clear: drivers can continue to enjoy the flexibility they currently enjoy while maintaining the rights they deserve as employees. The only thing preventing this is the greed of Uber and Lyft."
Haunted London Runs

Learn Rob’s tales of London haunted 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!

This being the edition of TAXI that falls closest to Halloween, here are five chilling runs for you to try out, all of which pinpoint some of London’s spookiest hauntings...

We’ll start at 50 Berkeley Square which is widely regarded to be the capital’s most haunted house. During the Victorian era this property lay derelict, and bizarre noises could often be heard emanating from the building.

In 1874 Lord Lyttleton agreed to spend the night in the attic for a bet. Whilst there he spotted an apparition which he fired his rifle at. Then, in 1887, two sailors returning from leave decided to doss in the empty home. That night, they were disturbed by a terrifying, shapeless phantom, causing one of the men to flee. In doing so he tripped, smashing through a window and kicked by an unknown force and disembodied legs have been seen ascending a certain staircase. The cause of this mischief has been blamed on the ghosts of two comedic stars - pioneering clown, Joseph Grimaldi, and music-hall legend, Dan Leno. Apparitions of the two have also been sighted within the theatre.

A good contender for London’s spookiest playhouse is the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Here, actors have seen TV sets in their changing rooms flick through channels of their own accord. Staff have been shoved and kicked by an unknown force and disembodied legs have been seen ascending a certain staircase. The cause of this mischief has been blamed on the ghosts of two comedic stars - pioneering clown, Joseph Grimaldi, and music-hall legend, Dan Leno. Apparitions of the two have also been sighted within the theatre.

How would you run in to the Handel House Museum?

In 2001, staff here reported they felt a strange ‘female presence’ on the property, and a Priest was asked to arrive and perform an exorcism.

The museum now also celebrates Jimi Hendrix, who lived next door in the 1960s. Jimi, who was a fan of Handel, claimed to have encountered the ghost of the composer one evening... although given the legendary guitarist’s penchant for psychedelic, mind-altering substances, this particular sighting is probably open to debate!

Run it from Pond Square to Lower Robert Street - aka “The Batcave”

As any London cabbie will know, this is one of the city’s most secretive cut-throughs. In the Victorian era, an unfortunate woman nicknamed ‘Poor Jenny’ was throttled to death here. Tapping noises have been heard echoing along Lower Robert Street which are said to be the sound of Jenny kicking the floor, as she desperately attempted to fend off her killer.

Pubs are often said to be haunted (I’m sure booze has nothing to do with it). The Grenadier is one such place. In 1818, a young soldier was caught cheating at cards here, leading his enraged comrades to beat him to death. His ghost has been seen moving slowly around the tavern on many occasions.

What route would you take from The Grenadier to The Old Bull and Bush?

For many years, bangs and noises have been heard at this Hampstead landmark, and a ghostly-seeming Victorian figure has been spotted pacing about. During refurbishment works in the 1980s, a potential cause of this phenomena was discovered when a skeleton was uncovered behind a cellar wall...

Run it from Berkley Square to Kennington Station

Where, in 1626, it was slaughtered by Sir Francis Bacon who was experimenting in freezing food. Subsequently, whilst outdoors in the snow, Bacon caught pneumonia and died soon after. The last recorded sighting of the flapping spectre which died at his hand was recorded in 1970.

Run it from St Botolph without Aldgate church.

In 1982, Chris Brackley snapped a photograph, in what he thought was a deserted building. However, when the image was developed, he noticed a ghostly figure (apparently in period costume) on a balcony in the top right-hand corner. The negative and Chris’ camera were both analysed - no evidence of trickery was detected.

How would you get from the church to the Queen’s House, Greenwich?

It was here, in 1866, that an even more unsettling ghost was caught on camera. In this case, the spirit was a robed figure, gripping the handrail of the famous Tulip Stairs. One of London’s more bizarre ghosts is said to be that of a phantom chicken. The bird haunts Highgate’s Pond Square where, in 1626, it was slaughtered by Sir Francis Bacon who was experimenting in freezing food. Subsequently, whilst outdoors in the snow, Bacon caught pneumonia and died soon after. The last recorded sighting of the flapping spectre which died at his hand was recorded in 1970.

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Proofing the Pudding

“After two-and-a-quarter empty hours, I felt like a homing pigeon - without a home!”

Cabbie chronicles

Stepping out of the house on my return to work and getting into my rented, white, ex-wedding cab, MR55 WED, I wondered what sort of comments I’d be getting from my passengers that was, if I managed to find any passengers at all, never mind any who gave a toss about being driven around like extras in an Elton John music video... I’d been told enough times, and by enough drivers that it was hard going out there - and I was about to find out for myself.

The old adage, ‘the proof of the pudding is in the eating’ was going to become the order of the day and my ‘modus operandi’ for the foreseeable future.

My new ‘home’ (thanks to Joanne, my daughter-in-law) was equipped for any Covid-19 eventuality. A sanitising hand wash dispenser was sallotaped to the driver’s partition; a box of masks, dangled from the door handle, thin plastic cover was draped over the rear seats - and various ‘warning’ signs placed strategically around the passenger compartment advising anyone daring enough to venture into London, the protocols of the pandemic that have us all in its grip.

Entertainment for all the family...

The sound of the engine was literally ‘music to my ears,’ a personal silence I hadn’t experienced for such a long time (my friend, Brian reminded me that he’d been out of the cab for sixteen years before re-booting his cabbie career). There was, however, one ‘function’ I wasn’t looking forward to, at all - getting used to a new driving position. For the next two weeks, at least, my shoulders and arms would be aching like hell! I stuck out my arms and flexed my reach and decided to make just a tad of an adjustment to the back of my seat... BIG mistake. My knees were up, my bum was down, my arms rigid in front of me like an F1 driver and I was now looking up at the roof lining. I managed to lever myself forward, search under the dashboard and steering column and switch off the engine before I could safely struggle out of the seat and onto my driveway, I then looked around surreptitiously, to check if any of the neighbours had witnessed my pantomime departure.

Thankfully, no one, except my family, who’d been standing in the window, spotted my Fresco the Clown exit. Cue, clown music. Tears streaming down their faces that I was facing the right way. I chuckled to myself, here we come, en masse, to ‘help.’

Let the adventure begin

Many hands,’ had the consequence of setting the seat up straight and ensuring that I was facing the right way. I searched for my ears, slid the thin elastic bands of the face mask behind them and, faintly incognito, drove cautiously off the driveway into the road, giving the skip and the builder’s truck the respect they deserved. London, I chuckled to myself, here we come. A yellow light appeared on the dashboard. We were almost out of fuel. The mechanic, bringing the cab from Chingford to Stanmore had chucked in a tenner’s-worth of derv for the seventeen-mile journey – then decided to take the M25 instead of the A406. London, therefore, was temporarily on hold. I shuffled my credit cards, took out one that looked less used than the others, and fed the card-taking pump. Relieved, it went through

I set off again, ‘Let the adventure begin!’ Why did I feel like a cross between Christopher Columbus and ‘Just William,’ off to meet the Outlaws?

An odd, empty feeling

The roads were strangely uncluttered. My southerly journey through Swiss Cottage, down Wellington Road and into Baker Street, was uneventful. I checked my taxi app again - just in case its continued inactivity meant that I’d accidentally turned it off... There were no raised hands or app bleeps to welcome me back. I did, however, notice cabs ranked in odd places. After an hour or so of reconnoitring the West End and its environs, I was getting an odd, empty feeling in the pit of my stomach. So far, I’d heeded what my cabbie colleagues had advised – steer clear of stations, hotels and the big stores – you would be lucky to get on a taxi rank, anyway. I gradually deduced, that cabs were ranking in obscure places. If there was a building with a light on and a door open, cabs were plying for hire outside. London wasn’t my London anymore. It seemed nothing more than a film set - a parallel, alien world.

Roaming & Ranking

As I roamed, aimlessly around the sterile Marylebone neighbourhood, I analysed my situation. Ahead of me, I spotted a cab pulling away from the kerb from outside what I vaguely remembered was a medical establishment. I aimed towards it. I was right. It was a two-cab rank. Gratefully, I nailed the second spot. After two-and-a-quarter empty hours, I felt like a homing pigeon - without a home! They say homing pigeons focus on familiar landmarks to get themselves home - but what if there weren’t any of the usual landmarks? There didn’t appear to be any puddings to proof, either.
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The area of Clerkenwell was once a suburb of the City of London. A rural retreat, where city dwellers could hunt, walk and enjoy picnics, surrounded by lush greenery. By the early 1800s, the former ‘greenfields’ of Clerkenwell were covered over by bricks and mortar. Various neighbourhoods in Clerkenwell became a denizen of iniquity. The renowned social chronicler, Henry Mayhew, recorded the following observations of the area, “...this is one of London’s most deprived locations, where wanton need can be observed in its most depraved form.” It was inevitable that a migrant community would choose a dilapidated part of Clerkenwell to lay their foundations.

**Little Italy**

The wandering diasporas of Europe who came to the capital, selected secluded districts, rookeries in back streets with narrow passageways and ramshackle houses, out of sight from native Londoners. From the early 1800s the Italian community converged on Clerkenwell and formed their own enclave. Language, food, traditions and customs gave them a sense of belonging and a reminder of the old country. The area became known as, Little Italy or ‘Il Quartiere’ - the Italian Quarter on the hill. This referred to the incline of the streets, which sloped down into the Fleet Valley. This location engulflng Vine Hill, Eyns Street Hill, Back Hill and Little Saffron Hill. These thoroughfares were boarded by a triangle of roads. Clerkenwell Road on the southside, Farrington Road on the east side and Rosebery Avenue on the westside. This neighbourhood became a little part of Italy where its inhabitants formed a homogenised community. An amusing story often told is of a young second-generation Italian boy at school. During a geography lesson the teacher asked the class where Italy was located. The boy raised his hand and said to the bemused teacher, "Miss, my Nonno (grandfather) comes from Italy, it’s in Clerkenwell". Such was the affinity the Italians had for this neighbourhood.

**A decadent home**

The new arrivals hoped to find streets paved with gold. However, London was a place of disparity, where affluence and decade was apparent in differing localities. The rich and the poor literally lived cheek by jowl. The Italian Quarter was a Dickensian district, where native poverty was present in abundance. Records of Clerkenwell in the 19th century, document its congested thoroughfares as being filled with men fighting and swearing - this being drowned out only by the clatter of horse's hooves and dampened by smells of both horse dung and unfamiliar culinary aromas... In Italy, the poor migrants had lived in the countryside where the air was fresh and the setting idyllic. Here, in the Italian Quarter amongst the slums and hovels, effluence ran in the gutters alongside barefooted, hungry, destitute children...

Many Italian adolescents ventured out to more prosperous neighbourhoods, begging bowls in hand, bellowing out requests for, “il denaro” (money). Even in inclement weather, they sat on the cold cobblestone streets with sullen faces, hoping for sympathetic passers-by to drop a few pennies into their pots. Poverty was a prerequisite for crime, and the punishments handed down to miscreants were harsh. Sentences with long detentions in penitentiaries were common, sometimes for menial crimes. In 1861, the Italian Benevolent Mission was founded, with responsibility for distressed and destitute Italians who were unable to cope with the harsh life of an immigrant. One of the mission’s main tasks was assisting the young children who were being exploited by unscrupulous men, paying them minimal wages and providing abysmal accommodation in dirty tenements.

**Employment**

Employment was centred around trades that had been brought from their former place of birth. These artisans were skilled tradesman who excelled as ceramicists, moulders, painters, plasterers, glassmakers, knife-grinders and asphalters.

One of the first London roads to be asphalted was High Holborn and many of the labourers came from the Italian Quarter. Some of these manual workers went on to start their own asphalt companies and dominated road surfacing for many decades. The Italian culinary palate consisted of a staple diet of pasta, cheese, ham, bread, olives and oil. From the hills of Clerkenwell, these savoury foods were distributed to hotels and restaurants across the capital. Many Italians opened cafes in Clerkenwell and beyond. The Italians went from the manufacturing of food, to serving their traditional cuisine. Waiters, barmen and chefs were employed at all the grand London hotels and restaurants. In the early 1900s, ice cream was a popular dessert. It wasn’t only the production of ice cream, but also in the importation of ice that the Italians dominated the market. The most prominent ice trader was Carlo Gatti, who began to import ice from Norway in 1867. As a result, some of the properties in ‘Little Italy’ became ice houses.

**Legacy**

The Italian community that presided in this small enclave in Clerkenwell has now largely moved on. By the 1970s, many relocated to the north London suburbs to be later found residing in houses with ornate gardens. Their memories were likely full of nostalgia for the place they left behind - crowded streets full of people chattering, children playing and the rich aromas of Italian foods, are now ghosts of the past. Only a few remnants of Little Italy remain in this neighbourhood. The Italian church on Clerkenwell Road was the focal point for the community. The church was important for the parishioners - it offered salvation and social recreation. Next door to the church is Terroni’s delicatessen, still offering the best of Italian groceries and pastries. Half-down Eyns Street Hill is a manufacturer called Chiappa Limited Organ Builders. The business was founded in 1860 by Giuseppe Chiappa and is still producing barrel organs today. These traces of Italian life are but reminders of a once thriving district in Clerkenwell.
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*TAXI* is the membership magazine for the Licensed Taxi Drivers’ Association (LTDA). It is circulated to 15,000 taxi drivers in London every fortnight.

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

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Tom Poulson
I joined the LTDA when I first got my badge and it turned out to be the best thing I ever did. Due to an unfortunate set of circumstances I ended up getting my licence revoked by TfL. I turned to John Luckhurst, one of the LTDA’s legal eagles, for assistance. John went to great lengths to prepare a detailed appeal against TfL’s decision and briefed a brilliant barrister to represent me in court. The appeal was successful and saved my livelihood. LTDA subscriptions are only four quid a week, which is less than a pint, and three pounds can be claimed against tax. I can’t believe that every cabbie in town is not a member.

“FOUR times more likely than the NATIONAL average to get an acquittal”

Paul Baxter
I was filled with confidence the very first time I contacted the LTDA’s legal team and as it turned out, I certainly wasn’t disappointed. They did a great job in sorting out my problem with TfL. They’ve got to be the best in the business!

“LTDA subscriptions cost less than four quid a week”
Billionaires Row

£15+ million to have Justin Bieber and an arms dealer as neighbours?

On the road

As we drive around London we don’t always take in the history of our surroundings. I’m usually too pre-occupied with where I’m going to give history or culture much thought. I just have a general feel for different areas; some places are interesting, some aren’t. Some are affluent and leafy, others you want to get out of as quickly as possible. Being close to my going home route I sometimes found myself driving along one of London’s most upmarket streets; The Bishops Avenue. It’s just another suburban avenue at night, but the daylight gives you the opportunity to marvel at the big houses and wonder who might be living in them. Some people say The Bishops Avenue is in Hampstead, others Highgate. While it’s close to both of these smart North London districts, The Bishops Avenue straddles Haringey and Barnet boroughs and has an N2 postcode, which identifies it as East Finchley. Not as highbrow as Hampstead, but still a decent area.

An upgrade in status

The Bishops Avenue is one of the wealthiest streets in the world. It’s truly exclusive too, with only sixty-six houses on the avenue. This is because they are big houses, and they are well-spaced apart. The houses are influenced by Ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian designs. There’s a touch of the traditional English country house too. Many of the owners come from overseas - seriously rich, and often famous. Owners have included the Sultan of Brunei, plus various Saudi royals and Eastern European arms dealers... oh, and Justin Bieber. The Toprak Mansion was sold to the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, for £50 million in 2008, making it one of the most expensive houses in the world at the time. The road is known as ‘Billionaires Row.’ Interestingly, when I started driving a cab in 1988 it was known as ‘Millionaires Row’. I guess booming London house prices over the years have led to an upgrade in status.

Houses but not homes...

It’s as leafy and pleasant as you’d expect of any suburban road in which houses are among the most expensive in the world. The Bishops Avenue is a useful cut through from Highgate and Hampstead into the centre of East Finchley, but it’s under-used. This makes it fairly unique in London, where the one thing you can always expect is traffic. It’s quiet because nobody seems to live there, and many of the multi-million-pound houses are unoccupied. Some haven’t been lived in for decades. Many are registered to companies in tax havens such as the British Virgin Islands and the Channel Islands. They are houses, but not homes. Buying a house and living somewhere else seems nonsensical to someone of my lowly means, but this is accepted as normal by those who have the money to run more than one home. In recent years, we’ve seen a huge rise in foreign investors buying up properties all over London. The fact is that any home on Billionaires Row is going to appreciate in value. Well almost. In 2019, The Steeple Times reported on the sad decline of Kenmore House at number 58, on the favoured west side of the avenue. This ten-bedroom house was built in 1896, but by the 21st century was suffering badly from many years of neglect. It was marketed as a ‘development opportunity’ in 2016 for £22.5 million. In 2019, the derelict mansion was on offer for a mere £15 million. Kenmore House however, has not sat alone as an example of dereliction on Bishops Avenue. The Guardian, back in 2014, found that sixteen properties on the row were fully abandoned and in various states of shocking disrepair. A further third of all the properties were empty, amounting to in excess of one hundred and twenty unused bedrooms...

Questions of morality?

A conversation on the morality of owners leaving their houses empty often comes up, particularly with such a homelessness problem in our cities. Personally, I think it’s a matter for the owners to decide on. It’s their money. I could never afford to live anywhere near The Bishops Avenue, though if I had purchased a London property in 1988 when I started driving a cab, I’d probably be closer to being a billionaire than I am now!
The annual Service of Remembrance at The Cenotaph will still take place, though due to Government taking the decision in light of the pandemic and associated risks posed that neither veteran participation through the ‘March Past’, nor public spectators will be possible this year, this means the usual Poppy Cab service will not be required. Veterans that normally travel to London to mark this day of remembrance will be thinking of those they lost in a different way this year.

Taxi spoke with Veterans Vic Needham Crofton and Bill Parr, who are both part of the charity’s fundraising collection team...

Vic Needham Crofton, 87, from Greenford, would normally mark Remembrance Sunday in London at the Cenotaph. Vic was in the Enniskillen Fusiliers and did tours of Cyprus, the Suez Canal and spent two years in Kenya. Vic, talking on his plans for the day said, “On Remembrance Sunday I will be wearing a poppy beside my medals with immense pride that I was able to do my bit for my country and I will spend time thinking about those we have lost.” In Kenya, Vic was a cook, and he fed his unit with left over WWII canned food, including bully beef, biscuits and bacon which he threw together into a ‘Dixie’ (a cooking pot) to make a thick stew. He also remembers enjoying the tinned jam and cheese sandwiches in the middle of jungle. His parents sent him publications made by the Daily Mirror and he is still amazed that they always managed to reach him. Vic was wounded in 1954 in Kenya when the lorry he was travelling in at night was shot from under him. The vehicle went over a cliff. The other two passengers managed to jump clear, but Vic couldn’t and was pinned for eight hours under the cab. While trapped he was treated for his injuries by his unit as other men worked tirelessly to free him. Vic spent twelve weeks in hospital in Nairobi with a fractured skull and many cuts and bruises but was very fortunate to fully recover.

Bill Parr, 87, from Hackney, enlisted with the Cameron Highlanders, (79th of Foot) and served in Suez. While there, the Sgt Major told them the Black Watch needed some soldiers and they were all being transferred and going to Korea. Bill said in relation to Remembrance Week, “I have been attending the Field of Remembrance in London (which is normally held on the Thursday before Remembrance Sunday) for over thirty years but sadly this year Remembrance Week will be very different.” In Korea, Bill was involved in the Battles of the Hook. He says, “They came at us in hordes banging lids and blaring bugles, we had to shoot them down from our position in the trenches while we were being shelled from behind.” During the battle, Bill was wounded in the back and neck and was taken to hospital in Kure, Japan, by the Americans which took four weeks and gave him time to recover. Bill, talking on his collector role for the Taxi Charity said “Being part of the charity collection team gives me a reason to get out of bed each day and I have sorely missed our collections at London stations, as well as the other Taxi Charity events which have had to be cancelled, including the annual summer day trip to Worthing.”

Vic, also spoke fondly of the Taxi Charity. “The Taxi Charity usually has a huge variety of things for us to attend throughout the year but of course they have had to cancel almost every event in the UK and on the continent. They have however sent us regular cards and newsletters over the last few months and for Remembrance Sunday we have received a lovely card and a poster designed by their lovely volunteer Susy Goodwin.”

Ian Parsons, Chairman, of the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, commented, “Both Vic and Bill are an important part of our team of collectors who attend our fundraising collections at London stations. They love chatting with the commuters who take the time to stop, donate and thank these men for their service. Our charity relies on donations to support veterans and we are so proud of our veteran collectors who want to help raise funds so that we can continue taking them on trips across the UK and the continent when things return to the new normal. On Remembrance Sunday, I hope everyone will take the time to pause at 11.00am and remember the sacrifice the brave men and women made for our country.”

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

Poppy Cabs badges still available:

A specially designed Poppy Cab badge is available for a minimum donation of £5 by emailing mike@mikehughes.org.uk. The Poppy Cab badges raise funds for The Taxi Charity For Military Veterans and the Royal British Legion.
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.
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 ____________________________________________________________________________________________
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To the Junior office ___________________________________________________________________________________

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer

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.
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 Resident (8) | 5 Facts and figures (4) | 9 Illuminated distress signal (5) | 10 Discover (7) | 11 Common rodents (4) | 12 Party-goer (8) | 14 Vessel for carrying liquids (6) | 15 Fish-eating bird (6) | 18 Advertising flyer sent by post (8) | 20 Sum borrowed (4) | 23 Physics, biology etc (7) | 24 Strike (a door) (5) | 25 A Hard ____ Night, Beatles film (4) | 26 Not checked (text) (8) |
|---------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| DOWN    | 1 Bid (5)     | 2 Muddled (7)          | 3 Fruit’s skin (4)               | 4 Sickening disgust (6)       | 6 Fourth month (5) | 7 Smoker’s dish (7) | 8 Set free, liberate (7)           | 13 Adds salt and pepper (7) | 14 Perplexed (7)                  | 16 Get rid of, eliminate (4,3) | 17 Enter (4,2)                | 19 Frostily (5)     | 21 Unclothed (5)                  | 22 Slide unintentionally (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.

Futoshiki

Fill in the blank squares so that each row and column contains all the numbers 1 – 5. Use any given numbers and the symbols that tell you if the number in the square is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Predictive text

Starting with the highlighted box, try to make a word adding one word part from each layer as you go. Then return to the second layer and use the letters in the unused box to start another word and so on, until you’ve used all the boxes and created six words of decreasing length.

All puzzles © Puzzler Media Ltd - www.puzzler.com
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For me, the best thing about being a cabbie is the quality chats I have with the punters. Of course, some fares are chat free zones - they plug straight into their noise cancelling headphones and off we go. But, for every-one mute fare, there are 10 others gasping for a chat. And I am always happy to oblige.

I’ve only been out a couple of days this week, but the same topics kept coming up. I thought I’d share what’s ‘Top of the Chats Chart’ with you.

First up was married actor Dominic West seemingly getting caught playing tennis with actress Lily James. I shared my view that Mr West seems to love himself, very much, and he was always going to be a hard dog to keep on the porch. My fare (a prin and proper accountant), said she agreed, but still would...

Also, on the most chatted about list last week - more hanky panky (and maybe even spanky) when Boris’s comedy ‘business’ consultant Ms Arcari confessed to the newspapers that yes, they DID have ‘jiggy-jiggy-wotsit’. My passenger, a doctor at UCL, declared that Boris’s brain is in his boxers.

Scrufty Mayors came up after Andy Burnham and Sadiq Khan made important policy Coronavirus announcements recently, both looking like they had slept rough. My fare, a lady travelling from Crawford Street to Piccadilly, and a frequent Taxi user, reckoned any London Cabbie on every day of the week would be better turned out. So true.

Amanda Holden popped up in the papers again this week bemoaning the fact that people concentrate too much on her breasts. Both my fare and I agreed if Ms Holden tuckered her bosoms a bit further down into her dresses that she could solve her ‘problem’ within seconds.

But, remaining at number one for more weeks now than a Brian Adams ballad, the Top of the Chats Chart number one is the barmy, and getting barmier, carving up of London roads. New cycle lanes, wider pavements and road closures are causing havoc. This conversation starts from the back when I am queuing in a single lane of traffic alongside empty pavements and unused cycle lanes...

“This tinkering with main routes through London is like a care in the community project gone wrong!” shouted one exasperated fare who missed his train from Euston Station because of traffic gridlock delays. We tutted about how it seems that complete loons were given budgets, road diggers, traffic cones, road paint and giant wooden planters and barriers and told to go forth and choke up London roads the best they can. My fare, late and stressed, summed up the situation with the same words each time we came to a grinding halt in the traffic, “WHAT THE DUCK?” Only he didn’t say duck.

A woman of words

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Cabsurance, Seven Kings
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Computer Cab, Mitre-May, W12
Coney Allen, Dunbridge Street, E1
CP Beeswax Service Station, Bashley Lane, Gants Hill
Cricklewood Carriers, Cricklewood
Dial A Cab, City Road, N1
Edgware Station Rank
Euston Station Rank
G & L Taxis, Crayford Road, N7
Globe Transmissions, Cudworth Street, E1
The Ham, Brentford
Heathrow Airport Canteen
Hexagon Garage, Lukin Street, E1
Jet Garage, Clipstone Street, W1
Knowledge Centre, Caledonian Road
KPM, Homming Street, E1
London City Airport Canteen
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Putney Bridge Taxi, The Arches, Putney Bridge Stn, SW6
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