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**TAXI**

www.ltda.co.uk  
12th July 2022 #520

# TAXIS TAKE POLE POSITION



## ICONIC BLACK CABS VIP VEHICLE OF CHOICE AT BRITISH GRAND PRIX



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LOTTO  
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You’ve probably heard of the **LTDA Lottery**. What you probably don’t know is that since it started in 1986, we’ve paid out **more than £2,110,000** in prize money to more **than 400 winners!**

LTDA LOTTERY

The first prize in our lottery is **£5,000** - every month! But you won’t win it if you’re not in it. **Tickets cost £5 each per month.** And even if you don’t win, you’ll know that proceeds from the lottery contribute towards the LTDA advertising campaigns run on radio, posters and AdVan.

*Congratulations Mr Edward Saunders! June’s winner was Edward Saunders, who has been an LTDA member since 2011. Eddie buys two tickets for the LTDA lottery every month and was thrilled that his number came up!*



Above right: Cabbie, Edward Saunders collecting his cheque for £5,000 from LTDA Executive Member, Anthony Street.

To be in it to win it, call **020 7286 1046** and ask about the LTDA Lottery.

THE LONDON TAXI DRIVERS’ CHARITY FOR CHILDREN TAXI SAFARI (LTCFC)



LTCFC would like to thank all the drivers who gave up their time to take part in their most recent outing to Woburn Safari Park hosted by the Duke and Duchess of Bedford. The outing was a huge success, made possible by sponsorship from the Worshipful Company of Tinplate Workers, alias Wire Workers Livery Company.

The day started with over 50 drivers going to two schools in North West London and picking up around 100 children with special needs. It was then on up the M1 to junction 13 to Woburn Safari Park. The trip included a drive through the Safari Park to see all the animals, followed by lunch in the Lodge Restaurant. Everyone was then free to explore the rest of the park, before watching a special sea lion show followed by a picnic tea. It was then back to the taxis to take a lot of very happy, tired children back to the schools.

During the tea, a special presentation cheque for £8,000 was handed over to the Chairman of the charity, Michael Son BEM, by Darren Parr, representing the fantastic team of taxi drivers who recently climbed Mount Meru and Mount Kilimanjaro, in aid of the charity. This should help fund more brilliant trips like this one in future!

BLACK CABS VIP  
VEHICLE OF CHOICE  
AT BRITISH GRAND  
PRIX



A fleet of iconic black cabs provided transport for VIPs at this year’s British Grand Prix at Silverstone. The LTDA was contacted by the event organisers just a few weeks before the event was due to take place. They were looking for drivers with electric taxis to provide a professional, clean, green service, transporting high-profile guests arriving by helicopter, from the helipad to the circuit. The drivers had a fantastic weekend working the event, transporting some famous faces, Formula One stars and business leaders. Everyone involved was hugely complimentary about both the drivers and their vehicles and it was a roaring success! The LTDA hopes this will become a regular event.



NEW LAWS TO PROTECT DISABLED  
PASSENGERS

The new Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022, came into force on 28 June billed by the government as “the most significant change to taxi accessibility legislation since the Equality Act was introduced 12 years ago.” The new laws are designed to ensure that the 13.7 million disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales can access the assistance they need and “will not be charged over the odds.” Under the new law, drivers could face fines of up to £1,000 if they fail to provide reasonable mobility assistance to disabled passengers taking a pre-booked vehicle.

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# A Silver Lining?

**“Whoever gets the keys to Number 10 has to be more business and less cycling orientated than Boris”**

## Steve's comment

**I**t has been a busy couple of weeks for everyone. Drivers I've spoken with are all reporting that times are pretty good right now, ignoring the obvious challenges we all know about. It's also been a busy few weeks at the LTDA, with lots of drivers needing our help and meetings with TfL and City Hall reps including an impact assessment meeting discussing further proposed changes to TfL's licensing policy. There's also been a lot going on in the world of politics, in case you were living under a rock and somehow missed Boris and his government's antics.

### All change at Westminster?

Every cloud has a silver lining. Whilst the shenanigans at Number 10 will ultimately impact everyone, Boris leaving may actually be good news for anyone who drives or relies on transporting people or goods to make a living. He was a great supporter of cycling, in fact his only transport adviser, Andrew Gilligan, was his cycling czar when he was Mayor and likely responsible for many of the bad road planning decisions taken during his term as Mayor.

Even whilst in Number 10, he massively increased the national budget for cycle schemes and appointed another like-minded individual, Chris Boardman, as head of Active Travel England (ATE), which is code for more cycle lanes! In fact, as soon as he was appointed Boardman vowed to “*take back streets from motor traffic*,” presumably with help from his 100 strong staff and funding from the £2 billion that Boris allocated in 2020. Whoever gets the keys to Number 10 has to be more business and less cycling orientated than Boris. Time will tell.

### Lobbying City Hall

Along with some of the other trade groups, I met with the new Deputy Mayor for Transport, Seb Dance, and the not so new TfL Commissioner, Andy Byford. I had put several key items on



the agenda including: the new damaging six points and you are out TfL driver policy; taxi access to the road network; and the need for more taxi Rapid Charging Points (RCPs) and ensuring that they are not misused and blocked by other drivers.

**“The Commissioner quickly recognised how concerned we were on this and asked TfL for a full report.”**

It was my first in-person meeting with them both, as opposed to the dreaded Zoom, because Byford assumed his position in the midst of the pandemic and Seb Dance has only been in the role for a few months. Both the Commissioner and the Deputy Mayor started the meeting by confirming their support for the black cab trade and recognising our importance as part of the transport network, which is always a good start, but the next few months will tell us more about what they really believe.

They seemed to accept our concerns around the new driver policy and how it had been brought in, without any consultation or discussion. I also reiterated that this change was not, as TfL claimed, required under new Government guidance,

which seemed to get their attention. The Commissioner quickly recognised how concerned we were on this and asked TfL for a full report. He also told his team to schedule another meeting between us, specifically on this subject.

### Road access

On road access, we again asked for progress on all the usual requests, including Shorter Street, Byward Street, Bus Gate and others. We were asked to prioritise these in order so that they can be progressed when TfL eventually secure their funding settlement from central government. As you would expect, I also raised Bank Junction and Tottenham Court Road. Whilst neither are TfL roads, both schemes received funding from the Mayor and more pressure could be brought to bear on our behalf – something they seemed to take on board. We also discussed Bishopsgate and I was told that our access will be reviewed as part of the consultation that is currently running on the future of the scheme and whether to make it permanent. We will be responding to the consultation in the strongest possible terms.

### A cost-effective solution

When discussing taxi-only rapid charging infrastructure, again TfL told us that it all comes down to money. They told us that the private companies who

supply taxi charge points want “*extortionate amounts of money*” to provide the simple RFID card solution we have been calling for, which would guarantee taxi-only access. We agreed during the meeting that the LTDA would liaise with senior management at one of the providers to seek a solution directly and possibly avoiding all the red tape and bureaucracy that seems to get in the way.

### Proper consultation

The following day, I met with a consultancy conducting an impact assessment on behalf of TfL on the regulator's plans to implement further changes to its taxi and PHV driver policy to “*bring it into line with the Government's Statutory Standards*.” Most of the proposals are common sense measures, mainly focused on raising standards in the PHV market, which we have long called for. There were a few ideas we objected to like introducing more mandatory signage and the blatantly redundant idea of introducing a photo badge for taxi drivers to add to our already significant collection of signs and identifying markers from the badge to the taxi plate.

There will be a formal consultation in September on the final proposals, which will give us a chance to share our views in more detail. As I said to the consultants interviewing me, I might not agree with all of it, but at least this time they are consulting us, rather than rushing through a major change overnight!



# Pole Position

**"Rising F1 star and British driver, Lando Norris ended up taking a turn at the wheel of a cab, which he posted on his social media to his 5.4 million followers!"**

## Streets ahead

**I**n spite of the many obstacles drivers are facing, business is booming and it's busier than it has been in a long time out there. As a trade, we all need to work together to capitalise on this and highlight everything we have to offer.

One way that drivers can do this is to make the best possible use of our ranks and to support big, high-profile events to ensure that when people are looking for a cab for a safe, reliable and fairly priced ride home, that they can find one.

### A unique opportunity

We were recently contacted by the team organising the British Grand Prix at Silverstone looking for drivers with electric cabs to provide VIP transport from the helipad to the circuit. F1 is committed to reducing its environmental impact and the sport being net zero by 2030. Silverstone also has its own sustainability strategy in an effort to have a positive impact on the planet. Our iconic black cabs were a big part of making this a reality at this year's event – providing zero emission, clean, green transport.

The 19 drivers who were selected, out of more than 200 keen to work the event, made us proud. They received nothing but praise from the Silverstone team, the Rotary Club, VIP



Cabs lined up at the Silverstone heliport

guests and heliport staff. What a great weekend and a fantastic piece of PR for the trade! The shuttle bus drivers, who incidentally are mainly racing driving instructors, who provide driving experiences at Silverstone, said it was brilliant to see such professional drivers manoeuvring around the full site so expertly.

### Efficient and professional

The team went about their business dropping passengers from the helipad to the designated hospitality sites quickly and efficiently. Even though the weekend was a sell-out, with 700 flights on Sunday alone (350 in and 350 out), there was never anyone waiting for a vehicle. The helipad marshals found the fact that we can fit six passengers in a cab an amazing benefit. They said that there are normally times when people would be kept waiting, but this year the six-seater taxi eliminated that problem. Praising the drivers one of the marshals said the cabs were *"very efficient and professional."*

### Positive PR

LTDA member Frank, who was leading the team, had told the operations manager to let him know if she needed anything at all during the event, as he and the other drivers on site would be happy help in any way they could. At one point, they were asked to help move the F1 drivers around. The drivers were impressed with the cabs and rising F1 star and British driver, Lando Norris, ended up taking a turn at the wheel of a cab, which he posted on his social media to his 5.4 million followers!

In the end, all the key movers and shakers at the event were transported by iconic LEVC TX taxis, displaying the fantastic service London's black cabs provide. Netflix do a lot of filming in black cabs and their team are well-known to the trade. Frank contacted their representative and arranged to move a few of their execs around the site. McLaren also asked the drivers to transport some key sponsors and shareholders around, including the main sponsor for the British Grand



A driver taking a selfie with Tom Cruise

Prix, Lenovo.

We are due to have a follow-up meeting with the Silverstone events team in September regarding future events and hope this is the beginning of a great relationship between two British institutions.

To all the drivers that took part well done! You represented the trade fantastically, providing a gold standard service and this praise has been echoed by the event organisers. Frank, myself and the LTDA would like to say thank you! **LTDA**

## Cab rank etiquette

Transport for London (TfL) has the power to appoint taxi ranks all over London, except in the City of London, where the City of London Police oversee this. The London Cab Ranks Committee (LCRC) which LTDA reps sit on, has monthly meetings with TfL to voice the trade's concerns about ranks. This could be a rank being abused by PHVs, a rank where the markings have faded or the signage is incorrect, or when a taxi plate has gone missing. Most issues like these can usually be resolved easily. The LCRC also fights for taxi ranks to be introduced in key areas where there is a demand for our services. Every rank the Committee requests has to go through a

consultation process before we know if the London Borough agrees it, and the process takes time. As part of this process, the Ranks Committee also addresses and objects to any negative comments and objections. Many ranks that the LCRC has requested have been agreed and are now being worked by drivers.

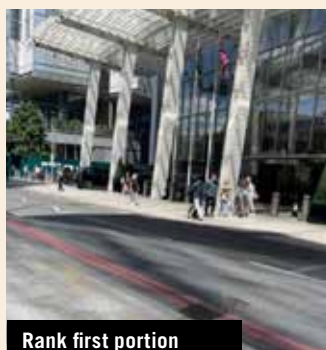
### Shard rank

When it comes to ranks, sometimes we as drivers could do more to work alongside and support each other. One example of this is the rank at the Shard. The rank is divided into two locations. When drivers of the first two taxis, on the first portion of the rank, move off to pick up a passenger then the drivers on the feeder rank need

to move up from the feeder rank to the point rank. It's not rocket science, but a select few drivers seem to remain on the feeder when a space becomes available. This is probably because they want a second bite at the cherry. By remaining in the feeder rank, they are keeping the option of

picking up a street hail open, which is not right and must stop.

Remember, when a rank is divided into several portions, the driver of the taxi at the front of each portion must move their taxi up to fill any space in the next portion, as soon as such a space becomes available.



Rank first portion



Signage



Feeder rank



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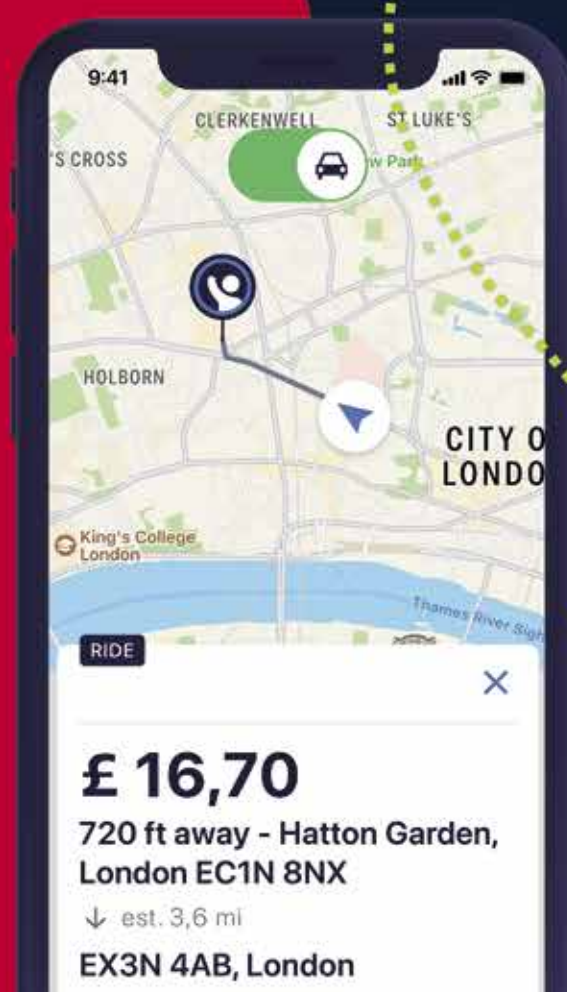
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\* As of April 2022. Offer available until end of August 2022. Commission given back weekly as cashback, offer only for new black cab drivers and those inactive for 60 days as of 30.06.2022





# Don't Get Knocked Out

**"With all the cameras popping up, points are racking up. It's now essential to have the backing of the LTDA."**

## Membership matters

**Y**ou insure your cab, but now, more than ever, it is imperative that you insure yourself. With all the cameras popping up, points are racking up. It is now essential to have the backing of the LTDA who can represent your interests and help keep your licence safe. Being a member means you are not on your own. It's the safety net for drivers, that we all need if something bad should happen.

## Speed awareness

As you may know, alongside the many services the LTDA offers, we recently started offering members who've been caught speeding, the opportunity to complete an online Speed Awareness Course here at Taxi House, if they are eligible to.

For a minor speeding offence, depending on the circumstances and location, you usually have the option to complete a course instead of receiving three penalty points on your licence and a fine, but you can only do this once every three years.



Since we've been offering this service, I've seen first-hand just how many members are getting caught out speeding and how easily.

When facilitating these courses, the most common remark I hear is, *"They keep changing the speed limits, from road to road. One minute you can do 30mph, the next its 20mph, then back to 30mph. Confusing or what?"* Trying to keep your eyes on road signage, cyclists, scooters, pedestrians on their phones blindly walking in front

of the cab – it's all so stressful! It's bad enough having to navigate roads with LTNs still springing up everywhere and anywhere!

## Hot spots

I am hearing a lot about Bayswater Road, Euston Road, and Park Lane as places where changing speed limits are catching drivers out at the moment. Whether it's a new, much lower speed limit suddenly and unexpectedly being put in place or a confusing varying

speed limit on the same stretch of road, it seems to be becoming easier than ever to get a ticket.

Luckily, the LTDA is on hand to help. The option of completing a Speed Awareness Course at Taxi House has been hugely popular, as it gives members the ability to take the course during the working day, with minimal downtime. We now have two rooms available with all the necessary technology for drivers to complete them, so please get in touch if you are interested. ■ LTDA

## Top tip to avoid going over the speed limit

We can't get rid of all of these problems, but something that might help drivers is using a navigation app that shows you what the restrictions are as you drive along and alerts you when you are doing something wrong.

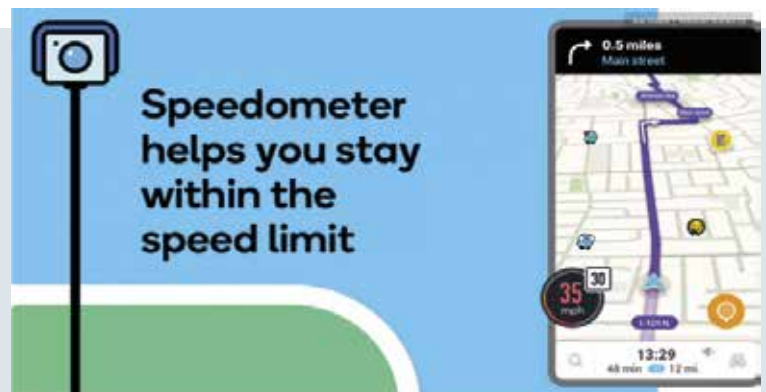
These also show you where there is congestion (more congestion than usual) so you can avoid the worst of the traffic.

I'm a big fan of technology. When it comes to setting off on a journey, even one I do on a regular basis, I always set up **Waze**. There are other similar apps out there, but for me, this is the most user friendly and has the most useful features on it, particularly for cabbies, who already know where they are going.

You can set **Waze** to 'Taxi' under 'Vehicle Type', which

takes into account the use of bus lanes. It's also often more up to date and accurate than other satellite navigation apps as other **Waze** users share information on things such as potholes, police enforcement, accidents, or objects on the road. Most importantly, if you're driving over the speed limit, a visual alert will appear on the **Waze** speedometer. It will stay there until your speed drops below the limit.

To keep things interesting, you can also pick the voice of the **Waze** Assistant – the voice giving you the directions. Between 1st and 7th June this year, **Waze** featured a voice inspired by the Queen to direct you and pronunciation and etiquette tips were delivered in between driving instructions. Other options include Arnold



Schwarzenegger and Morgan Freeman. I have Boy George direct me!

## The key benefits of using Waze are:

- It's free
- Speedometer on map interface, gives your actual speed and that of the road you're on
- You can set it to alert you if you drive over the speed limit
- Available to download on most phones
- Gives you live traffic updates

**YouTube has a very easy to follow step-by-step video on how, please scan the QR code below using your phone camera:**



Alternatively, if you need help in setting this app up, please contact me at the LTDA and I would be happy to help.





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# Back to School

"We all need to do our bit to encourage any Knowledge students out on the road and to show them this really is the best job in the world."

## Airports & beyond

I wrote recently about the Knowledge and the dwindling number of candidates. As I said then, this is an issue that concerns me more than anything else going on right now. If we are going to continue providing the iconic, high-quality service London's black cabs are known for, we need to get as many people as possible to join our trade and keep refilling our ranks.

People are still leaving or retiring faster than new drivers are coming on. If we don't build up a stronger pipeline of new drivers, and pretty quickly, things could start to get difficult, and I would be devastated if London's finest were to disappear.

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## Good money

Cab drivers are earning good money right now, so surely, we should be seeing more people wanting to get into the trade?

My earnings are something I never discuss, and I know many drivers feel the same, but what I will say is that I wouldn't have spent three years taking the Knowledge if it hadn't been worth it. We need to do more to make sure people see the potential in driving a cab and the many benefits it offers as a career choice.

## The game's not dead

I can't tell you how many times I was stopped when I was out doing runs on my moped, by a driver who would roll down their window and say, "the games dead." I lost count. Thank goodness I took absolutely no notice. My brother has been driving a cab for nearly 30 years and he got the same hounding on his bike.

After speaking to Knowledge students, it seems that nowadays it's quite the opposite. I've heard about cabbies pulling over and offering a Knowledge Student a fiver, saying, "get yourself a hot drink and keep going, mate." What a difference just those few words of encouragement could make to



"I've heard about cabbies pulling over and offering a Knowledge student a fiver, saying 'get yourself a hot drink and keep going, mate.'"

someone working so hard.

I think many drivers are finally seeing the bigger picture. If we don't attract more people to join us, then it will be the final nail in the coffin and a real waste, of what I really do believe could be a bright future. We all need to do

what we can to keep cabs as an icon of our city. That includes all doing our bit to encourage any students out on the road and anyone else considering doing the Knowledge, showing them that this really is the best job in the world!

LTDA

## Knowledge school view

I thought it would be good to speak to some of the Knowledge Schools to get their take on the situation. For this article, I spoke to Gert Kretoy at Knowledge Point (KP) to find out what they are doing to support students.

## Knowledge Point

I was a student at KP myself and couldn't have got through it all without their help. I remember the days where Kathy Gerald was the teacher of the beginner's class. I probably wouldn't have gone back if it wasn't for her. She later went on to become an examiner and was super scary, but at the time it was her who kept me going back.

KP was founded in 1985 by Malcom and Pat Linskey. At the time, it was the only school that provided classes. My most memorable was the compass class taught by Derek O'Reilly. I found it hard at the time but in appearances it helped me no end.

From talking to Gert, I discovered that the help and support on offer is now better than ever. With improvements in technology, information has become much more accessible, and it makes the life of a Knowledge student much easier. For example, KP have an app which lets you see points near to your location. This is called 'geopointing'. Another feature on the app, 'the pointing filter' allows you to keep track of points in postcodes that you have visited and those which still need to be pointed. When I was studying the Knowledge, I often spent many an evening looking around for places of interest, this kind of technology would have saved me a lot of time!

I remember a lovely lady who used to run the shop at KP, called Irene Ryan, who recently retired after over 20 years of service. Everything I ever needed was in that shop! I'm told a gentleman called Seva is now there every day from 10am to 5pm with everything students and drivers could need.

I was impressed to find out that KP is still running three classes a

week, and all held virtually at the moment. They also have an online video library of classes going back one year, which can be accessed through their website. See the class timetable below

I was encouraged by what Gert had to say and felt more hopeful for the future. I look forward to speaking to other Knowledge Schools in the next few weeks.



## Knowledge Point classes

### Monday - Appearance Class

Run by Mark Baxter, an official tour guide, holds a blue badge and his specialty is Jack the Ripper murders. The class covers how to behave, present yourself, call over effectively and point correctly. It also covers all stages of appearances.

### Tuesday - Special Sessions

Run by Gert Kretoy a working cabbie with nearly ten years of experience. Each week this class covers a specific topic such as local theatres, turnarounds, football clubs, etc.

### Wednesday - Blue Book Class

Run by Gert Kretoy. During these classes they take a Blue Book run and microscopically study the quarter mile including points, junctions and any other restrictions or turnarounds. They would cover all appearances for all stages of 56, 28 to 21.

All the above classes also include taxi etiquette – something we all need educating on in the early days. Most do learn it on the job, but it's much better if we are guided in the right direction to start with!



ComCab

London

# COMCAB LONDON FAMILY

ComCab London talks about who they are, and drivers have provided some testimonials. Read below to find out more:



## Who are ComCab London Limited?

ComCab London is the last original radio taxi company still in operation, established in 1974 and has one of the largest fleets of black taxis in London.

Offering unrivalled coverage and flexibility to London's business community and valued private clients within the city and surrounding areas.

ComCab London is incredibly proud of its association with London Taxicard, a relationship which has spanned 25 years. The scheme operates within all of the London boroughs and provides Taxicard members reliable, professional and trustworthy transport across London and the suburban areas.

## What makes ComCab London different?

ComCab London are not just another faceless app on your phone, we have a large team of experienced staff to support drivers and customers. ComCab London doesn't do gimmicks; we like to keep things straightforward and understandable for the drivers.

## SCAN ME TO APPLY NOW



## Driver Testimonials



### Introducing Anthony!

"My name is Anthony, I received my green badge on the 7th of July 1987. I joined ComCab a year later in October 1988. There's never been a day when I haven't wanted to go to work, my working association with ComCab makes every day a good day!!!"

### Introducing Robert!



Hi my name is Robert, I have been on ComCab for about 4 years after coming over from Dial A Cab who I was with for over 30 years.

I enjoy working on ComCab as it provides me with extra earning potential, with the backup and support of a professional team behind me.



### Introducing Stefan!

"Hi, I'm Stefan, I have been a taxi driver for 26 years, I was previously on Dial-a-cab for 20 years and transferred to ComCab in 2018 after the acquisition.

I enjoy working with ComCab, during the Covid pandemic, it helped out the taxi drivers by doing food parcels and medical supply deliveries as well as picking up patients from home and taking them to hospital.

I also feel working with ComCab is a safer option for female drivers who work a night rather than picking up off the streets!"

### Joining ComCab London

It is super easy to join ComCab London. Once you have registered that you would like to join, you will be sent an application form. Once you have sent it back, you will be signed up by the next working day! You can start maximising your earnings in no time.

Already on the ComCab London Circuit and interested in referring a friend? ComCab London have some great incentives available if you refer a friend to join! You can receive £50 if you recommend a friend to ComCab London and they complete 100 trips. This offer is also available to drivers who are referred to join the ComCab London App with a referral bonus of £50.

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Missed our last Episode? ComCab London Family - Episode Four



# Aiden Kent – TAXI Talks to

**“When he’s not doing special trips for birthdays, weddings and other occasions, he is just a regular cabbie out working, but when a passenger hails him, they are in for a surprise.”**



## Feature

12

**T**his week, we talk to Aiden Kent, a London Taxi Driver with a difference. Aiden has built a reputation as the Singing Cabbie. Since 2015, he has been entertaining his passengers and offering unique tours and experiences, combining his Knowledge of London, with his passion for the Rat Pack and his skills as a professional singer.

### Early days

Aiden’s first proper job was a bell boy at Claridge’s, which set him in good stead for life as a cabbie. He says in that position he, “*learned a lot about life*,” and how things really operate. He then sold cashmere jumpers for a while, until in his early twenties, he decided to do the Knowledge.

Aiden’s dad was a cab driver and his older brother also followed him into the trade later in life. Like many people, he was attracted by the ability to “*be his own boss*,” and by the flexibility driving a cab offered. It took him three years to do the Knowledge and he never looked back.

### Looking for something

Aiden loved driving a cab, but after 20 years in the trade, he felt he needed something more. He was “*looking for something*,” and felt “*he needed a little push*.” As a boy, Aiden had always loved to sing and perform. He had wanted to go to stage or theatre school, but his family didn’t have the resources to send him. Driving a cab, he really enjoyed

the interaction with passengers, as he is very much “*a people person*,” but he wanted more of an outlet for his inner performer. He decided to train as a London Tour Guide, which he said would give him an opportunity “*to show off*.”

He took the City of London Badge and was about to undertake the Westminster one, when fate intervened. One day, a passenger left a wallet full of CDs (remember those) in his cab. He dutifully took it to lost property, who rang him a while later saying that it had never been claimed, so did he want to collect and keep them? He picked them up and had a flick through to see what was in there. It was an eclectic collection he tells me, but the first two discs caught his eye. They were Frank Sinatra’s Greatest Hits. He had never listened to Sinatra and had always “*wondered what all the fuss was about*,” so he put one in the CD player to give it a go. The first song that came on was “*I’ve got you under my skin*.” Something in it spoke to him. He was immediately hooked. He pulled over and spent the next few hours listening to the albums. He loved the big band sound, the lyrics and quality of Sinatra’s voice. He thought to himself “*I can do that; I am going to be a singer*.”

### The Singing Cabbie is born

Over the next few months, Aiden bought and listened to all the Rat Pack music he could get his hands on. He tells me “*It was a real joy*” to discover all of this amazing music. He then decided that he needed to find a singing teacher. He met Linda Hutchison, now head of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She asked him what





# The Singing Cabbie



**"London's cab drivers are not just the best in the world by a thumbnail, but by two hands."**

with this new passion, until he picked up a fare at Marylebone. Aiden says he *"hadn't thought of marrying the two up,"* until he got talking to this passenger whilst taking her to St John's Wood. During the conversation, he told her he was pursuing singing professionally and she asked him if he would sing for her. Aiden sang acapella for the rest of journey. As she was getting out, the passenger turned to him and said, *"that was the best cab ride I have ever had."* Just like that, he knew he was on to something and the *"idea was born."*

## The experience

Now, he offers tours and trips in his specially modified TX4. He had the cab modified by an ex-Rolls-Royce employee, to enhance the experience. This saw the addition of red Italian leather seats, a star lit sky of LED lights installed on the roof interior (modelled on a Rolls-Royce Phantom), a state-of-the-art PA system and space for a champagne bucket and glasses.

Aiden greets his guests wearing a black tuxedo and is guaranteed to create a fun and memorable journey for everyone. He offers one and two-hour packages, including champagne or shorter 30-minute trips for people looking to make a trip to the theatre, a restaurant, or a hotel extra special. People can also create their own bespoke journey for an extra special occasion. He gets work mainly through word of mouth, but also through his website and business cards.

Aiden also regularly performs at weddings, in clubs, restaurants and bars across the UK. He recently performed at a birthday party where Elton John and Michael Caine were a stone's throw away from him. Just last week he performed at a private function at One Blackfriars Road courtesy of a chance meeting in the cab with a regular taxi user. Aiden is a professional performer who *"believes age is no barrier in wanting to achieve your goals. The beauty of the London Taxi trade is that it gives you the chance to achieve them."*

## A regular cabbie

When he's not doing special trips for birthdays, weddings, and other occasions, he is just a regular cabbie out working, but when a passenger hails him, they are in for a surprise. He doesn't always end up singing – he tells me it very much depends on the passenger, and you have to, *"judge the mood and the person."* He says that a passenger who is constantly checking their watch and tapping their foot as he drives clearly just wants to get where they are going and there is *"definitely a type."*

More often than not, he says that a passenger will notice his ads on the tip up seats, which read: 'Who is driving this taxi? Answer: Aiden Kent, the Singing Cabbie,' and they will ask *"Is this you?"* This usually ends with them asking for a song and it goes from there. The majority are pleasantly surprised and love this unique experience, which really adds something special to their journey. Although, he tells me he once heard a four-year-old girl ask her mum if she could *"please make him stop singing."* He didn't take it personally.

## Fame

He's had a few celebrities in his cab over the years, including singer and actress Elaine Paige, Gary Kemp from Spandau Ballet and tv personality Bradley Walsh.

Thanks to his chance encounter with Bradley Walsh, who he picked up at Oxford Circus one day, when he was heading to a production meeting at ITV, he ended up singing in front of 3000 people and millions more on TV. Walsh saw the ad on the tip up seats. As most people do when they see this, he asked Aiden if it was actually him and then said, *"go on then, sing me something."* Walsh was so impressed that he told the people he was meeting about Aiden. It turned out they were putting together a televised show at the London Palladium and shortly afterwards Aiden got a call from ITV, with the producer who called him asking him to pull over, before telling him that they wanted to include him in the show.

He says that experience was *"truly eye opening for him, seeing how the entertainment world works"* and *"how clever and quick the performers like Walsh are."*

Aiden has been looking to take the Singing Cabbie to Las Vegas and has been over a few times to progress this, but sadly the pandemic *"knocked that on the head,"* at least for the time being.

## Next generation

Driving a cab has *"opened many unexpected doors"* for Aiden and taken him places he never expected to go. He believes that there is a bright future for the London cab trade. His dad told him London's cab drivers were *"not just the best in the world by a thumbnail, but by two hands."* He says that's as true today, as it was then, and notes that we are seeing people realising this fact again at the moment, with more and more turning to black cabs for a reliable service.

Aiden points out that we still need to see more people coming into the trade, as drivers are struggling to cover the work at the moment and he hopes that more young people will recognise what an exciting and varied job it can be. He is very happy that his nephew Connor, who is 29, has recently passed out and is *"loving it"* so far. After three and half years on the Knowledge, he got himself an electric cab and is off to flying start. Aiden notes that he is *"going to be a real asset to the trade."*

The one thing Aiden would like to see, if he had to choose something to improve, would be drivers dressing more smartly – although he acknowledges that he isn't expecting everyone to come up to his standard with a dinner suit and bow tie! ■ TAXI

You can find out more about the Singing Cabbie on his website [www.singingcabbie.com](http://www.singingcabbie.com) or by calling 07956 456360. His musical packages start from £69.00 for a 20-minute ride (prices include the fare and a bottle of champagne or soft drinks).



he wanted to achieve? He said he wanted to be a professional singer. They agreed that she would give him three months of lessons to see if he had what it takes, and they made a pact that she would be brutally honest. At the end of the three months, Linda was sure *"he had something,"* and this was exactly the confidence boost Aiden needed. He started to approach venues about gigs and his career grew from there.

At this point, Aiden had never considered combining his day job



## NEW FUEL SYSTEM PROMISES HUGE SAVINGS

A new fuel system designed to evolve the range extender generator in the LEVC TX has been unveiled. At an event held in central London, trade representatives learned more about SBL Automotive and HP Taxis 'bi-fuel system', which enables the vehicle to run on alternatives to fossil fuels including compressed natural gas, biomethane, LPG and biopropane.

The cabs currently supplied by rental firm HP Taxi to show a prototype, developed by Prins Alternative Fuel Systems, using their VSI-3 hardware, which allows them to run on either CNG or LPG. Now, these vehicles can also adopt zero carbon emission, renewable fuels bio-methane (as a replacement for CNG) and net zero carbon emission renewable fuel biopropane (replaces LPG), with no further vehicle adaptations required.

Adopting these fuels as a replacement for petrol could achieve a significant reduction in carbon emissions, with biomethane and biopropane



producing 99% less emissions. The companies behind the technology also highlight that the conversion would significantly help to reduce a driver's operating costs by between 30 and 50% depending on the fuel used, with

potential for further cost savings as biomethane and biopropane production volumes increase.

The conversion also promises to significantly increase the range of the LEVC TX and VN5 van by around 90% on LPG or

biopropane and 70% on CNG or biomethane. Costs for the technology and conversion are yet to be confirmed but drivers interested in finding out more can visit their website:

<https://bi-fuel-taxis-lcvs.com/>

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# The Cult of Personality

"There are varying definitions to what the so-called Cult of Personality actually is."

## A man in black

As many of you are undoubtedly aware, I love music. And, unwittingly, seem to revolve my entire life around the art of noise tickling my ears. From Ray Charles to Henry Rollins, Glenn Miller to Glenn Hughes, I've a pretty eclectic mix of genres at my disposal. However, one group that has evaded my sensitive lug holes is a band called Living Colour. This hard rock, funk, jazz fusion band started in New York by British guitarist Vernon Reid. Upon being alerted to this band, after listening to Planet Rock presenter and Wayward Sons lead singer Toby Jepson, I decided to check out their first album which was released in 1988, titled *Vivid*. I didn't initially get beyond the first track due to the fact its lyrics were so profound and compelling; I had to put finger to keyboard and begin typing. The track in question is called The Cult of Personality.

## Cult of personality?

There are varying definitions to what the so-called cult of personality actually is. However, they all inevitably amount to the same thing: the creation of an idealised, and sometimes heroic, image of a leader or high profile personality. This is often achieved through unwavering flattery, praise and adulation. It's all usually promulgated via the combined mediums of mainstream and social media, too. Typically an element of fake or distorted news is involved, as well as any given individual's support to a specific narrative, which is likely to be a populist one.

## Persona and personality

One of the lines within the song is: "I sell the things you need to be, I'm the smiling face on your TV". Now, this puts me in mind of a plethora of high profile personalities, from Boris Johnson to Sadiq Khan - and, of course, everybody in-between. People who wish to sell a dream or ideal, whether it be based on a solid belief with corroborative evidence to support it, or those who wish to sell a false narrative to achieve a specific objective; it is of no consequence. Generally, people wish to be led and



as long as the individual feels part of the cause and has the opportunity to belong, it doesn't matter what the narrative may be.

From a bystander's perspective, the problem with this is that you can be fed the biggest load of utter claptrap, but become compelled to believe everything that is told to you because disloyalty to the cause is punishable by ridicule, bullying and mockery. And we see it so much on social media ad-nauseum. However, there is the odd occasion where a given personality may be perceived to misread the room - broadcaster and cycling activist Jeremy Vine may have inadvertently managed to do so on occasion.

## The error of judgement

On 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2022, Vine took to his bicycle, alongside members of the Metropolitan Police, in an event to raise awareness and funds for Roadpeace. At some point during the event a 'close pass' took place between a HGV lorry and one of the cycle-mounted police officers. Vine does a regular video-log of his cycle journeys, and this one was no exception. In a section of his video commentary, he addresses said pass and begins by saying: "I want you to watch this police officer just in front of it [the lorry]."

"Again, the word police is in large letters on his back. You see him flinch, he moves left a bit, raises his right hand as if to say, 'hang on, you just came too close.'"

"Now, I'm starting to think this does look close for a whacking-weight truck like this".

The officer later added: "The lorry just close-passed us. It was so close to me. I was here, and his wheels were

touching the line."

Now to be fair, the lorry driver was a bit close, certainly not the recommended 1.5 metres from the cycle-mounted police officer, however, there is another major issue here. It can be argued the police officer himself exercised poor road-craft and failed to adhere to rule 66 of The Highway Code which states: 'Be considerate of the needs of other road users when riding in groups. You can ride two abreast and it can be safer to do so, particularly in larger groups or when accompanying children or less experienced riders. Be aware of drivers behind you, and allow them to overtake (e.g. by moving into single file or stopping) when you feel it is safe to let them do so.'

The officer's poor positioning and lack of awareness in relation to his surroundings seemed to be ignored by Vine, who then took the registration number of the HGV. Now, this is where the police officer seemed to be seduced by the "cult of personality". Instead of assessing what had just occurred and noting that although the HGV was indeed close, he (the police officer) maybe should have been more aware of his surroundings and shifted to the left so as to alleviate the situation, rather than be drawn into the romance and seduction of being filmed with Jeremy Vine. During the subsequent discussion with Vine, the officer said that the driver would be prosecuted for undue care and attention for the close pass. However, judging by the video, the officer may have been on a sticky legal wicket himself.

The video prompted outrage from all sections of the community and a petition was started calling

for the removal of Vine from the BBC, which garnered nearly 11,000 signatures. This seemed a little harsh given that Vine didn't actually have a hand in the situation other than to film the incident.

In reality, mistakes were made by both the HGV driver and the officer and upon watching the video it could be argued that Vine could have been a little more circumspect in his assessment of the situation. But that is the cult of personality. The idea that 'I am right, even when I may be wrong or wide of the mark - and you will follow regardless - not because I tell you to, but because you choose to.'

## Dead right or dead, right?

Given the latest news that Transport for London is going to implement their own points system for taxi and private hire drivers (I'm going to cast my beady eye over this in the next edition), the above incident could have potentially cost somebody their livelihood (including the HGV driver). Of course, the counter-argument is that it could have cost a life. However, it didn't and therefore is (thankfully) a moot point in all this.

It doesn't matter what you drive, ride or push, we all have a responsibility to ourselves as well as each other in relation to road safety. It is all well and good taking up a position in the road which may be technically correct, however, if stubborn belief ends up with an individual laying on a mortuary slab, then it doesn't matter how 'right' you may be - you're dead. Co-operation, collaboration and consideration is the key to reducing road deaths, with anything else being a recipe for disaster, because one-upmanship will never win the day.

Maybe it's time for those from both the cycling and the motoring lobbies to lower their fists and strive for peace via safety, instead of conflict through this intense need to be 'right'.

**TAXI**



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## The mystery of Aldgate Station

To the casual observer, there is nothing particularly remarkable about Aldgate Underground Station. Opened in November of 1876, the station services those wishing to use the Circle and Metropolitan lines, but did you know that over 1,000 bodies were found buried underneath the site?

During the station's construction in the 1870s, workers, who were excavating a massive trench to accommodate the extension of the Metropolitan Line, discovered the skeletons buried in a relatively compact area. It is believed that the remains were the hastily buried victims of the bubonic plague - however, this itself may be the stuff of urban legend.

With 20% of London's 500,000 population succumbing to The Great Plague of 1665, it's not unreasonable to assume that the site was a burial ground for those killed by it. However, there is no documented evidence that the site was a plague pit. So, what do we know?

We are aware that parish authorities struggled to find suitable burial sites for those who died during the outbreak, especially during its peak which occurred in September, 1665. We also know that statistics confirm that the ward of Portsoken (an area in Aldgate) was one of the worst hit areas. It is known that the bodies were buried hastily and weren't done so on church grounds. This was due to the fact Christian burials of the day dictated that a deceased person's feet should always face in an easterly direction - the bodies at Aldgate were buried haphazardly. Despite these remains not consecrated in holy ground, interestingly the burial site is right next to St. Botolphs Without Aldgate's churchyard.

Another interesting fact is that within Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* his protagonist describes a late-night visit to the Great Pit of Aldgate, and how a 'dreadful gulf' was dug in the churchyard, into which 1,114 bodies were deposited between 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1665. That said, Defoe was just five when the plague hit London, so it is likely his account is more based on historical fiction rather than fact.

All of the above considered, it is highly likely the ground beneath Aldgate station was the last resting place for the plague victims of 1665.

## Albert Gunter and the bridge-jumping bus

In the 2001 film *The Mummy Returns*, we see Brendan Fraser's character, Rick O'Connell, tearing around 1930s London in a double decker bus. At the end of the sequence, he has to dart from the bus near the centre of Tower Bridge and chase the villains who have captured his son via foot. The bridge starts to open and O'Connell is forced to give up the chase as he can't make the jump across the bridge. However, if Albert Gunter had been driving the bus he would have made it across the opening Tower Bridge - and here's why.

On 30th December, 1952, bus driver Gunter was driving his number 78 towards Shoreditch. He was making his way over Tower Bridge when he was caught on a rising bascule, as the bridge had started to open.

The only solution that seemed to be available to the hapless bus driver was to put the metal to the pedal and jump it across the rising bascule. He made it to the north side of the bridge as it had not yet begun to open. All 20 passengers made the jump safely with the exception of Gunter, who sustained a broken leg.

Miraculously, the jump was completed at a mere 12 mph. What was even more astonishing was that the bus was almost completely undamaged. The incident itself occurred because a watchman, who was supposed to ring a warning bell and close the gates before Tower Bridge opened, failed to do his job.

As a result of his bravery, Gunter was awarded a day off work (despite the broken leg) and a reward of £10 was issued to him.



# SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

## LONDON?



## The Dome

The Millennium Dome is one of the modern wonders of the world. With its 1.08 million square foot floor area it is in fact the largest dome-shaped structure on the planet. Incredibly, it cost a mere £43 million, which covered groundworks, its perimeter wall, masts, cable-net structure and the roof fabric; in all, the building was surprisingly inexpensive. The project took only 15 months to complete, too. Yet, upon completion the mainstream media took great delight in savaging the iconic building.

The structure is an impressive 1,200 feet in diameter, with a circumference of 3,280 feet. The Dome reaches a height of 164 feet and is suspended from a series of twelve steel masts, held in place by more than 40 miles of high-strength steel cable that, in turn, support the Teflon-coated glass-fibre roof.

Currently the Dome, which is used as an entertainment hub, is known as The O2 and features a 20,000 capacity. It is one of the world's most successful music venues.

With a dome large enough to accommodate 13 Royal Albert Halls, construction began in 1997 and required 8,000 piles for the foundations. It also required 1,600 tonnes of steel sections. The masts were erected in October of 1997 and the cable net constructed and skin attached during the first quarter of 1998.

The fabric skin was connected to tension cables by a team of abseiling construction workers and, at the height of the project, shortly before completion, there were over 1,500 people on site.

Incredibly, the Dome was completed on time and under budget, opening in the Autumn of 1998.

**TAXI**





# A Buoyant Market

**"If we continue at this level, it will mean annual sales of over 2500 new cabs, which would be almost twice that of the highest sales figure on record."**

## Cab you drive

**D**emand for cabs is as high as ever, although the nature of the enquiries we receive is changing a bit every month.

Most of my calls used to be from drivers looking for either late Euro VIs or TX4s, with a year or two left. 'Just till I retire', was the phrase most often used. My enquiries now are evenly split between drivers looking for TXEs and those who want late Euro VIs. Prices for both are still high, although there are a few TXEs filtering through, as early adopters swap their leases after three, or sometimes only two years, and trade up to a new cab.

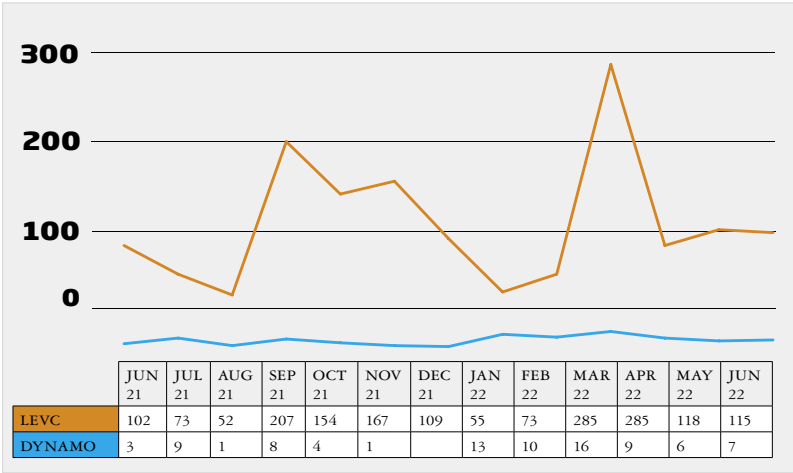
New cab sales are still buoyant with 122 new cabs joining the ranks last month. This is a good figure for June and further indication of the

great work levels drivers are seeing, as well as increasing confidence in our business. In fact, over the past four months, 658 new cabs have been sold in London, bringing the fleet back up to 14,902. If we continue at this level for the next eight months, it will mean annual sales of over 2500 new cabs, which would be almost

twice that of the highest sales figure on record. That shows just how busy it is!

Whenever I get in a cab to go somewhere, I always make a point of talking to the driver and a recent conversation I had, is now typical of what I hear. The TXE driver had done 108,000 miles, he was on his third

set of tyres, still had the original front pads and had replaced the back set once. He estimated his servicing and maintenance costs are about a third of that of his previous cab. More to the point, he loved driving the new cab. I suspect he, and others like him, are the reason for the strong sales figures! **TAXI**



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LEVC	5,521
METROCAB	1
TX1	1
TX2	81
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VITO	2,633
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# Mother and Daughter: The Grim Deaths of Phoebe and Tiggy Hogg

Over the years, London has witnessed some truly horrific crimes. Here's the story of one such case: the murder of Phoebe and Tiggy Hogg

## Rob's history tips

**B**orn in Kent, 1866, Mary Wheeler was considered a kind and sensitive child. She'd arrived in the capital as a toddler after father, James, secured work as a foreman at a wharf in Wapping. The family lived on Gloster Street; a now lost road which ran parallel to Kay Street in Bethnal Green.

At around the time of the move, though, Mary had also received a serious head injury after tumbling from her pram. This resulted in her experiencing regular fits and, as she grew older, an apparent (and alarming) change in personality.

The Wheelers later moved to Maroon Street, Limehouse, and it was here, one fateful day in 1882, that James was brought home on a stretcher, having suffered a workplace accident. James's injuries were dreadful and he died two days later.

This tragedy plunged the surviving Wheeler's into great financial difficulty and, overcome with grief, Mary (now aged 16) attempted to hang herself.

Her efforts to do so failed, and subsequently her depression worsened when her mother, Charlotte, was forced to enter the workhouse with her youngest, Charles, leaving Mary to support herself and her four other siblings.

When she was 19, it looked as if things were finally beginning to look up for Mary after meeting a carpenter named John Pearcey.

She adopted John's surname and the couple moved in together at a property at Manor Place, Walworth.

However, the relationship quickly soured. Mary began drinking heavily and, after one particularly turbulent row, she again tried to take her own life – this time with poison.

John thwarted this by forcing Mary to drink salt water, which made her throw up the toxic substance. He later claimed Mary, whose fits were becoming increasingly disturbing, appeared to have no memory of the incident.

Soon after, the couple moved to Bayham Street. Once in Camden, Mary began seeing two other men: Charles Crichton and Frank Hogg, and eventually ditched John to go and live with Charles on Priory Street (now Ivor Street) in Kentish Town.

Despite this, Frank remained on the scene and, rather audaciously, Mary slipped him a spare key for her new home. Whenever Charles was out, she'd leave a light on in the window as a signal that it was safe for her covert lover to enter.

To complicate matters further, Frank was married to a woman named Phoebe who, in 1889, gave birth to daughter Tiggy.

## Double Murder

On the morning of 24th October, 1890, Mary paid an errand boy one penny to deliver a note to Phoebe. The message was an invitation to tea at Priory Street that afternoon and, as the pair were acquainted, Phoebe accepted.



Mary Wheeler



At around 4pm, Mary's neighbour heard the sound of crashing glass. She called across the fence to check if things were alright, but received no answer. Then, just after 7pm, a lad named Somerled Macdonald was walking through Belsize Park when he noticed a 'dark object' crumpled behind 28 Adamson Road.

Somerled alerted a Constable who was patrolling near Swiss Cottage station, and upon closer examination said object turned out to be Phoebe's body. Her throat had been slashed and, so deep was the wound, it had almost decapitated her.

Meanwhile, over on Hamilton Terrace, an empty, blood-stained pram was discovered, followed by the body of baby Tiggy who'd been dumped on wasteland off of Finchley Road.

As a supposed 'friend' of Phoebe's, the Hogg family asked Mary to help identify the body, and when she did, the strange, hysterical behaviour she displayed in the mortuary raised

immediate suspicion.

This led police to search her home, where they found evidence of a struggle in the kitchen; the window was broken and the ceiling and walls splattered with blood, as was a large carving knife which lay in the vicinity.

As police combed the premises, Mary behaved in a most unsettling manner, whistling, singing loudly and tinkering with the piano. When asked what had caused the blood, she responded by chanting over and over, that she'd been "Killing mice! Killing mice!"

## Confession

Mary also admitted, however, that Phoebe had been present, and she was promptly arrested.

Mary Pearcey's trial commenced at the Old Bailey on 1st December, 1890. It transpired that after killing Phoebe in a savage act of rage, she'd stuffed the body on top of Tiggy's pram whilst Tiggy was still lying inside it, and thus the poor child was suffocated by the weight of her dead mother.

After the murders, Mary wheeled the pram through Chalk Farm. She had been spotted doing this, although in the darkness those who'd witnessed her journey didn't realise the true nature of the pram's grim cargo. The pram in question was later purchased by Madame Tussauds who displayed the artefact in their Chamber of Horrors.

## Sentencing

It took the jury just 52 minutes to find Mary guilty of murder. She was sentenced to death and went to the gallows, in a strikingly calm manner, on 23rd December, 1890.

In a curious twist, it's been theorised over the years that, due to the time, locations and her violent, unstable behaviour, Mary Pearcey could be considered a possible Jack the Ripper suspect. The idea that the notorious killer could have been female was first suggested by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It's a concept that gained credence in 2006, after a DNA sample of saliva (from one of the stamps affixed to a letter supposedly sent by the serial killer) did indeed appear to contain that of a woman's. ■ **TAXI**







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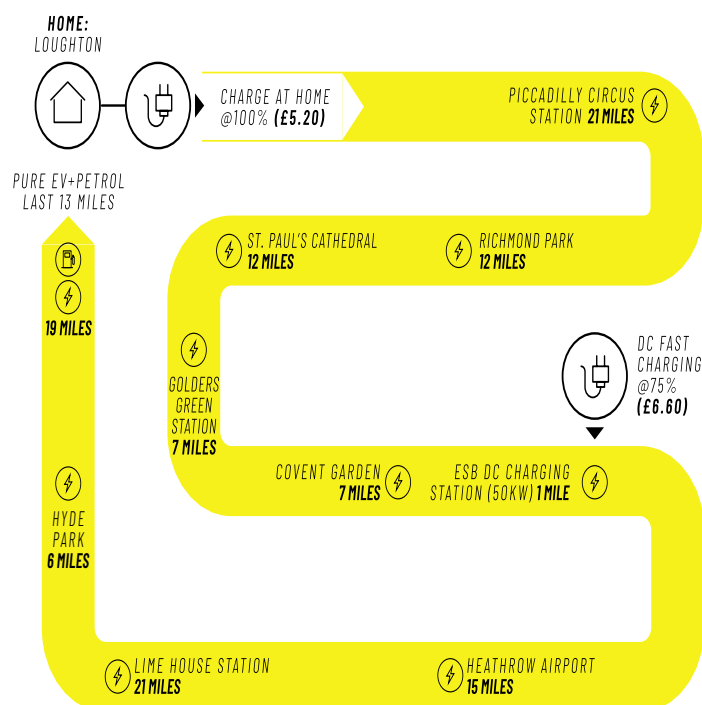
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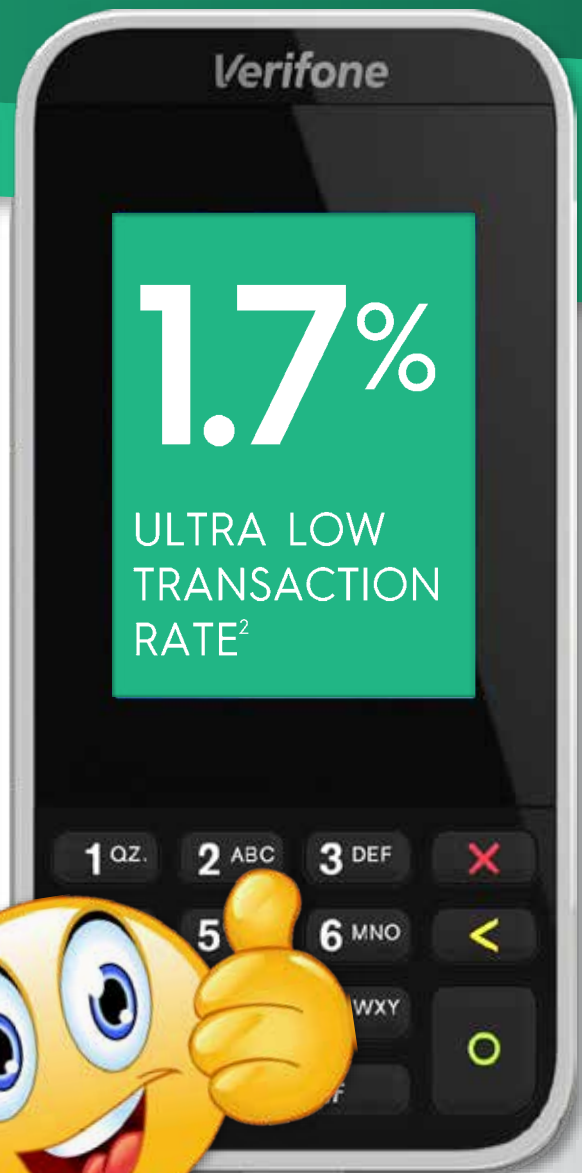
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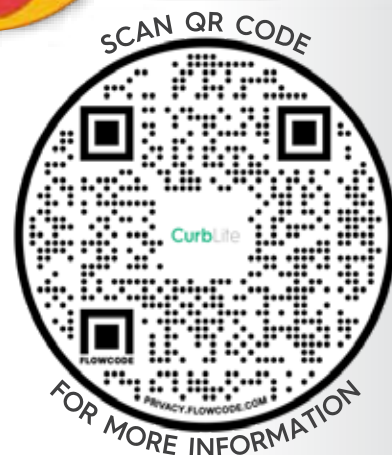
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# A Passage Through Time

Phil's 'London heritage' knowledge journey is designed to hopefully make your driving day and workplace surroundings, a little more interesting...





## Footprints & foundations

**I**n past articles, I've documented the traditional institutions that have evolved in the City of London's historic timeline. These mercantile centres provided the population with employment, as merchants and labourers toiled their services for an honest day's pay. These hard-working citizens prided themselves on self-reliance without resorting to charity. However, for those inhabitants that were idle and without means of supporting themselves, a criminal class developed. The city's authorities, under the Lord Mayor, constructed places of incarceration for those who had fallen foul of the law, where a long or short period of servitude depended on the crimes committed by said felons. Now, I will examine the criminal city and the places of confinement that existed in the past.

## Criminal city

Clink, slammer, cooler, pen and glasshouse are all slang terms for prisons. Holding places for prisoners have been established in the city since Roman times two millennia ago. During the Middle Ages, the Tower of London was not only a Royal residence, but also a prison for the 'good' and the 'great' to be detained; most pending execution on the block. The City of London had its own places of imprisonment for common criminals, too. In the 1550s, a building known as a compter (aka a smaller type of prison) was established on Bread Street. The compter was mainly used for debtors and petty offences including drunkenness, stealing and lewd activities. Other compters were constructed on Wood, Poultry and Giltspur Street. All have since been demolished; but city heritage plaques recall their notorious presence.

## Police presence

Before the City of London Police was established in 1839, watchmen and

constables were appointed to keep law and order in the over-populated area. Those appointed to uphold the law were mostly ineffective, as they were elderly men who were taken from the criminal fraternity and were susceptible to taking bribes. At night, they carried a lantern and bludgeon, as they walked through city streets shouting "curfew!", under the sound of reverberating church bells. As the City of London is a separate entity within its own boundaries, it has its own police force. Its former headquarters was located in a red-bricked Georgian house at the north end of Old Jewry. The City of London's police force maintains its own independence from the Metropolitan Police, which enforces the law outside the city boundaries.

## Notorious prisons

The Fleet Prison was first recorded in the late 12th Century; it stood on the east bank of the former Fleet River, in a location just east of Farringdon Street. It was often used to incarcerate those that had incurred royal displeasure and debtors. The poet John Donne was detained here for elopement, after running away with a maiden without her parents' consent. William Penn, the devout Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania in America, was imprisoned in the Fleet for debt.

Throughout the 18th Century, prisoners in the Fleet remained extremely vulnerable to extortion and maltreatment at the hands of prison keepers, as well as their fellow inmates. The 19th Century writer and social commentator, Charles Dickens, depicted graphic scenes of the Fleet prison in his novel *The Pickwick Papers*. It was published on the eve of the prison's closure in 1842. The buildings were demolished in 1846, where a street sign Old Fleet Lane now records the former prison.

## Newgate prison

Whilst driving a fare through Newgate Street you may have observed a city heritage plaque stating 'This was the site of the Newgate.' The gate was installed into the western wall of Londinium by the Romans some two thousand years ago. However, Newgate Street is also a moniker for the former infamous Newgate Prison, which stood on the site of the Old Bailey. Behind the

façade of the old Newgate gaol a hell-hole of filth, foulness, brutality and infection existed for the beleaguered inmates.

A prison had stood on this site since the 12th Century, where Richard Whittington (of pantomime fame) left monies in his will to improve the buildings and conditions in this gloomy edifice. Newgate was burned down in the Great Fire of London in 1666. The new structure was built in 1672, which had an imposing frontage that included a statue of Whittington and his legendary cat.

Well-known London personalities were detained in the cells of Newgate, including Dashing highwayman Claude Duval, conspirator Titus Oats, Quaker William Penn and novelist Daniel Defoe (Robinson Crusoe). Londoners warmed to lovable criminal Jack Sheppard, a Houdini-like character whose claim to fame was that he was an escapologist who could wriggle out of handcuffs, manacles, chains, locked doors and, here, a sixty-foot drop to freedom to escape from Newgate. Sheppard slipped out on numerous occasions but was always caught. Here, he became one of the principal sights in London as he chatted away to hundreds of curious visitors in his condemned hold. He was later painted by James Thornhill, Sergeant Painter to the crown. A former inmate, novelist Daniel Defoe, wrote an account of the life of colourful character Sheppard. On the 16th November, 1724, Sheppard was taken from there to the execution site at Tyburn (Marble Arch). Here, huge crowds waited in anticipation for this popular rogue to face judgement. Attendees were not disappointed, as Sheppard was duly hanged.

## The prison reformer

Throughout history, there's generally an 'angel of mercy' who has offered compassion to those in need. The protagonist who played a central role in prison reform was Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845). Born in Norwich and the daughter of a wealthy Quaker banker, her childhood was one of affluence, however, on her visits to her home town centre she saw extreme deprivation amongst the poor. These vivid experiences would shape her ambition as a social reformer in later life and, as a Quaker, the hand of charity was already ingrained into her devout

religious beliefs.

In 1800, she married Joseph Fry (also a banker), before moving down to the city to reside at St. Mildred's Court; a small courtyard off Poultry. In 1813, Elizabeth was invited to pay a visit to Newgate prison. Inside, she was in disbelief. The prisoners were living in deplorable conditions; men, women and children packed into the cells. The prisoners did their own cooking and washing in their confined spaces in which they slept on a bed of straw. Newgate was the holding ground for inmates before being deported to Australia. As a consequence of Elizabeth's visit to Newgate, she immediately set the wheels in motion and embarked on her panacea for prison reform.

Fry forced her reform agenda upon the Tory Government, then under Prime Minister Robert Jenkinson's leadership, where legislation known as the Goals Act was passed in 1823. Largely ineffective in its content, however, one important issue was resolved: the separation of men and women prisoners. During the impending years, Fry did not relent for the improvement of welfare for those in servitude. Her reforms would travel far and wide, not only throughout Britain but across the entire globe. By the time of Fry's death in 1845, prison sanitation had improved and felons were trained to do work for future employment. Men would sew mail bags and prepare oakum for the making of rope, while women were taught to use a needle and thread and knitting to provide skills for future work placements upon release. Newgate Prison was demolished in 1902 and the Central Criminal Courts, the Old Bailey, was built on the site.

## Legacy

Elizabeth Fry was often referred to as the 'Angel of Prisons', since her commitment and energy brought salvation for those behind bars. She was a remarkable woman of her time who changed the prison system, from one of extreme despair to one of improved conditions. Throughout London and indeed the country, statues, memorials and heritage plaques recall this innovator, activist and philanthropist. Elizabeth Fry is buried in the Friends' burial ground at Barking, as Seaman of the Ramsgate Coast Guard flew their flags at half-mast when she was interned.

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

Suburban badge sector numbers .....

Have you ever been a member of the LTDA before? (please tick) Yes ☐ No ☐Do you currently have points on your DVLA driving license? (please tick) Yes ☐ No ☐If Yes how many points do you have? Please tick if you **DO NOT** wish to receive information from the LTDA and other related organisations in the future? ☐

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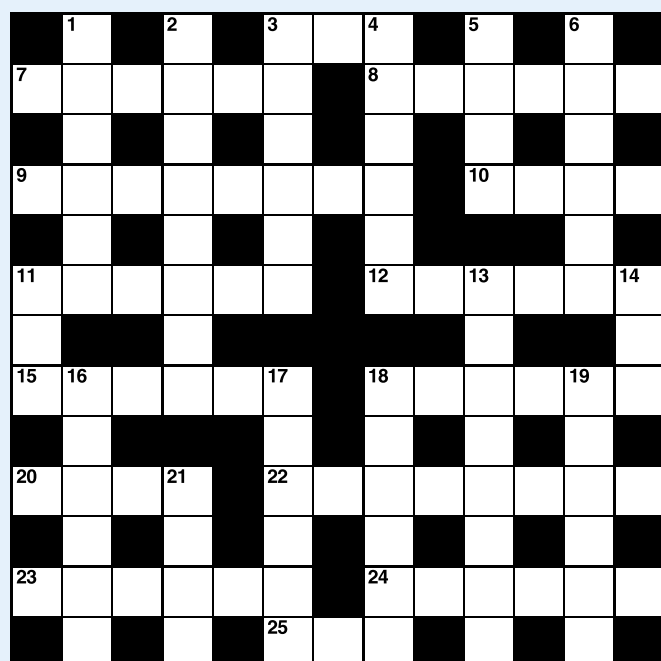




# Puzzler page

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

- 3 Bird of the night (3)
- 7 Feeling of having been somewhere before (4,2)
- 8 On all sides of (6)
- 9 Feline with a mottled tawny coat (5,3)
- 10 Earth (4)
- 11 Bright and jolly (6)
- 12 Light-sensitive part of the eye (6)
- 15 Unnerved (6)
- 18 Wrinkle in clothes (6)
- 20 Dumbfound (4)
- 22 In the usual way (8)
- 23 Go (6)
- 24 \_\_\_\_ Variations, Elgar composition (6)
- 25 Churchyard tree (3)

### DOWN

- 1 Remove, separate (6)
- 2 Sun-up (8)
- 3 Loud protest (6)
- 4 Second of two (6)
- 5 Stalks, shadows (4)
- 6 Naval standard (6)
- 11 Long-leaved lettuce (3)
- 13 Relating to a topic (8)
- 14 Chopping tool (3)
- 16 Intense dislike (6)
- 17 Six times fifteen (6)
- 18 Civil restriction (6)
- 19 Spiced Italian sausage (6)
- 21 Tidy, orderly (4)

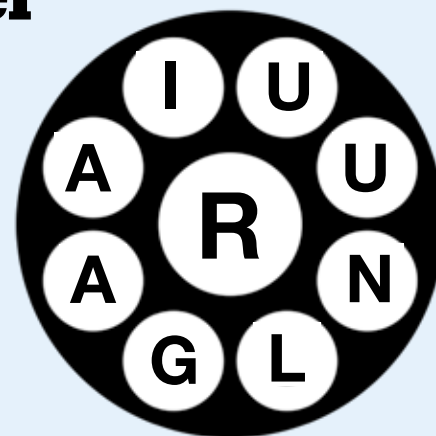
## Sudoku

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.

	6						7	
		8					1	
2			8	3	7			4
			9		6			
6			3	8	1			9
	7	4		6		2	9	
	5	3	1		4	7	8	

## Wordwheel

How many words of four letters or more can you make from this Wordwheel? Each word must use the central letter, and each letter may be used once only. At least one nine-letter word can be found. We found 39 words - can you do better?



## 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.

				5
			∇	
			∧	
			∧	
			∧	
	<			
3			∧	

All answers to  
puzzler on p30

**Puzzler**  
BY THOMSON

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# A Blues and Royals Weekend in France

On 17 June, 2022, The Taxi Charity took four Blues and Royals veterans to Montreuil-sur-Mer. TAXI spoke to London cab driver, Taxi Charity volunteer and committee member, Brian Heffernan, about being part of this prestigious weekend.

**TAXI:** Taxi: Good to talk to you again, tell me about the trip?

**Brian:** The Taxi Charity was delighted to be invited to Montreuil-sur-Mer by Lord Astor of Hever, for a ceremony in honour of his Grandfather, Field Marshal Earl Haig. London cabbie Simon Hawes and I took four Blues and Royals veterans in our taxis, and were joined by fellow cab drivers and Taxi Charity Vice President Frances Wyhowska who does so much to raise awareness for the charity.

**TAXI:** For those who might not know, who was Field Marshal Earl Haig?

**Brian:** People may not have heard of Haig, but will no doubt know the names of some of the battles his name is forever linked with. Field Marshall Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig, KT, GCB, OM, GCVO, KCIE was a senior officer of the British Army. During World War I, he commanded the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front from late 1915 until the end of the war. He was Commander during the Battle of the Somme, Battle of Arras, Third Battle of Ypres, German Spring Offensive, and the Hundred Days Offensive. There is a statue of him outside a theatre in Montreuil-sur-Mer; the town in France that housed the British GHQ from the spring of 1916.

The statue, which had been erected by the French in 1931, was later damaged by the Germans and, following an appeal from the Haig Statue Restoration Fund, is now back to its former glory. We were asked by the Adjutant of the Household Division to support this event by bringing Blues and Royals veterans and we were thrilled to help.

**TAXI:** Tell us about the weekend?

**Brian:** We took the 7.10am ferry to Calais on Friday, 17 June, and I drove 361 miles in total that day - and all in searing 34 degrees heat. We headed to Belgium to the site of the Battle of Waterloo where one of the veterans, Peter Storer, who is a battlefield guide, shared his wealth of knowledge. He was so easy to listen to when he spoke about Waterloo and explained why the battle had happened. After this, we drove to the hotel in Montreuil-sur-Mer in France and had a lovely evening getting to know the boys. The following morning, we drove to



Commonwealth Graves Cemetery in Etaples



Brian and Simon's cabs

Agincourt, a name which I remember vividly from school history lessons with veteran Frankie French. Frankie is a huge Henry V fan, and it has always been on his bucket list to go to Agincourt, so Simon and I decided there was no better way to spend some free time on the Saturday morning than ticking this off his list.

**TAXI:** Don't you have another connection to Waterloo?

**Brian:** We do! Some people think we only support those involved in World War II, but we support veterans of all ages, from all conflicts, and our volunteer drivers have done so for many years, supporting the charity Waterloo Uncovered, which combines archaeology with veteran care and recovery. This July, four cab drivers will be taking veterans (who might not be able to travel unless they are in a cab) to the battlefield in Belgium as part of the Waterloo Uncovered archaeological dig.

**TAXI:** What were your highlights of the weekend in Montreuil-sur-Mer?

**Brian:** The highlight of anything I do with the Taxi Charity is always meeting the veterans, and it was a privilege to be involved with this trip. There was a Gala Dinner on the Friday night, the ceremony on Saturday daytime, when Lord Astor unveiled the statue's

new plaque in the company of senior representatives from many regiments and a reception on Saturday evening. On Sunday, there was a memorial at the Commonwealth Graves Cemetery in Etaples for one of the saddest days in the history of the Household Cavalry where, in 1914, 44 Lifeguards were killed in one day. The poignant Last Post at the CWGC was played by buglers from the Menin Gate.

**TAXI:** How do you fund these trips?

**Brian:** The charity is wholly reliant on generous donations, grants, and sponsorship to make our visits possible, and we are extremely grateful to Taxi advertisers - Ubiquitous and international violin expert Peter Biddulph - for sponsoring the trip to Montreuil-sur-Mer.

**TAXI:** What else is the charity planning?

**Brian:** Next year will be very special. 2023 is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Taxi Charity and the committee is busy planning how to mark this milestone. I will become Chairman of the charity this September and am delighted



Ceremony at Haig's Statue June, 2022

that the anniversary year will be my first full year in the position. As well as celebrations for the anniversary, we will be focusing on fundraising opportunities too. The last few years have been very difficult for every charity, with pandemic restrictions leading to fundraising plans either cancelled or put on hold. The Taxi Charity was no different, and we are delighted that cab drivers and supporters are already looking at challenges and events that will raise much needed funds for us in the future.

Anyone who loves cars should keep an eye out for our summer fundraiser, which will be a lottery with Bridge Classic Cars. The prize is a 1966 MG Midget Mk2 in British Racing Green and tickets will be available from [www.bridgeclassiccarscompetitions.co.uk](http://www.bridgeclassiccarscompetitions.co.uk), so please do consider supporting us by buying a ticket.

**TAXI**

To find out more about the type of support the Taxi Charity offers veterans, or to donate, please visit [www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)

## About the Taxi Charity

The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans of all ages since 1948. The charity arranges free trips to Belgium, France and The Netherlands for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or fundraising events across the UK, to catch up with friends and comrades.

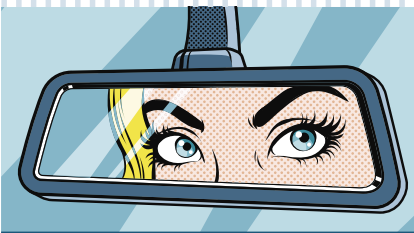
The charity was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in June 2021.

In 2023, the charity will be celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

To fund and facilitate their work, the charity is reliant on generous donations, grants and sponsorship.

[www.taxicharity.org](http://www.taxicharity.org)





# Enough is Enough

**"Mr. Meg had accumulated an impressive junk pile over the years, most of it lifted from other people's skips"**



## A woman of words

**I** forced Mr. Meg to choose. I demanded he either had to order a skip and fill it up with his rubbish mountain in the back garden, or I would leave.

His reply? "Can I have a few days to think about it?"

He caved, ordered the skip, and I cheerfully moved my cab off the front drive to make room for it.

The saying, 'where there's muck there's brass' is true because the skip cost £387.73. I expected it to be formed from solid gold and encrusted in pearls for that money. It wasn't. In fact, the words 'smelly' and 'scruffy' best described it.

Mr. Meg had accumulated an impressive junk pile over the years, most of it lifted from other people's skips. He owns a special pair of trousers with kneepads to

make his skip surfing trips more comfortable and has a torch he hangs around his neck for night raids on other folks' rubbish. He has no shame.

Busted garden gnomes, broken mirrors, bent wardrobe doors, snapped parasol posts, punctured air beds and cracked plant pots all feature in his massive garden erection - the biggest in our postcode by some way.

After I moaned so much that his ears started to bleed, he put up a fence so I couldn't see his litter heap, until the pile grew higher than the fence. He added trellis. And trellis to the trellis. But still it grew.

He insists his stack is a canny way of saving money: "One day you'll need something and instead of going to the shops all I'll have to do is pop down the garden to fetch it!"



Oddly, I haven't yet felt the need for a wheelie bin without wheels or a sun lounger without legs

(both in said junk collection), nor a 3-foot-long straw stuffed canvas fish or a 'pair' of secateurs with one half missing.

During the mahusive clearout here at Meg Towers, our skip has become a local attraction. I went to put the bins out yesterday morning and found two blokes in our skip rummaging at speed like a pair of moles. They simply waved and gave me excited thumbs up signs. Mr. Meg came dashing out of the side gate.

I thought he was coming to remove these men from our property. But no. He was carrying a tray bearing three mugs of tea and a packet of Chocolate Digestives.

Mr. Meg perched on the edge of the skip, as they

sat in it, and all three chatted happily about the beauty of broken microwave plates and the many uses for discarded vertical blind slats. The trio agreed that skips and paradise were in fact the same thing.

He didn't bring hot drinks and biccies to the fellas who came in the dead of night and lobbed into it a bed frame, two single mattresses, a wonky rabbit hutch and two leaky car batteries.

Irritated, Mr. Meg calculated that these freeloaders had taken up £67.29p's worth of space in his skip. But he quickly brightened and said, "Maybe I'll keep the rabbit hutch, it might come in useful." I told him if he kept the hutch, he'd end up wearing it.

Enough is enough.

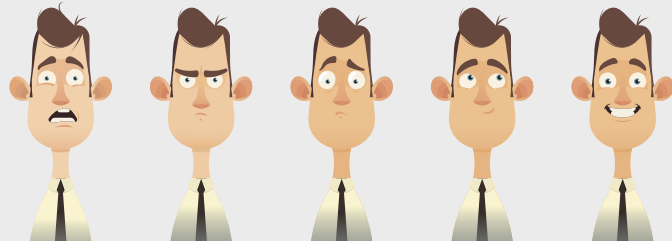
■ TAXI

## LTDA

### A selection of our numerous Distribution Points

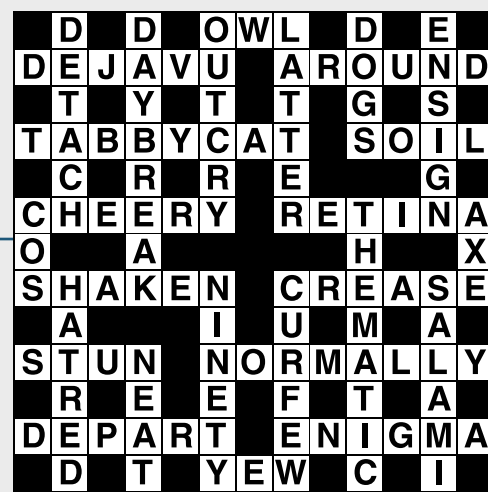
- ◆ A1 Taxis, Melody Lane, Highbury, N5
- ◆ Abacus Accounts, Southbrook Road, Lee, SE12
- ◆ Astral Café, Regency Place, SW1
- ◆ Bubbles Car Wash, E2
- ◆ C & S Taxis, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Cabsurance, Seven Kings
- ◆ Camberfield Taxi Services
- ◆ Computer Cab, Mitre Way, W12
- ◆ Coney Allen, Dunbridge Street, E1
- ◆ CP Beehive Service Station, Beehive 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, Hemming Street, E1
- ◆ London City Airport Canteen
- ◆ LP Motors, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Martin Cordell, Thomas Road, E14
- ◆ Paddington Station Rank
- ◆ Putney Bridge Taxis, The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6
- ◆ Richmond Road Taxi Centre, E8
- ◆ Safewise Supermarket, Harrow
- ◆ South Bank Service Station, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ TAXI HOUSE, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ Taxi & Private Hire, Blackfriars Rd, SE1
- ◆ Temple Place Shelter
- ◆ Turbo Accessories, Three Colts Lane, E2
- ◆ Ubiquitous Ltd, E1
- ◆ Waterloo Station
- ◆ Wimbledon Station Rank
- ◆ WizAnn Knowledge School, Watts Grove, E3

## PUZZLER ANSWERS



### Crossword

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### SUDOKU

4	6	9	2	1	5	8	7	3
7	3	8	6	4	9	1	5	2
2	1	5	8	3	7	9	6	4
3	8	2	9	5	6	4	1	7
6	4	7	3	8	1	5	2	9
5	9	1	4	7	2	6	3	8
8	7	4	5	6	3	2	9	1
1	2	6	7	9	8	3	4	5
9	5	3	1	2	4	7	8	6

### Wordwheel

#### SOLUTION: INAUGURAL


Agar, airgun, angular, aria, augur, aura, aural, girl, gnarl, grail, grain, grin, guru, lair, liar, lira, lunar, luring, rail, rain, rang, ring, ruin, ruling, rung, urinal, INAUGURAL.

**Word targets:** Excellent: 32, Good: 26, Target: 19, Kids: 14

### Futoshiki

4	1	2	3	5
			∨	
5	4	1	2	3
	∧	∧		∧
2	5	3	1	4
		∧		∨
1	<	3	5	4
			∧	∨
3	2	4	5	1





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