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STREET ROBBERY:**

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**MEET YOUTUBER 'TOM THE
TAXI DRIVER':**

FEATURE **Pages 22 & 23**

TAXI

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26th July 2022 #521



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OBITUARY

DAVID JOHN MILLEN
1948 - 2022

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Dave Millen, who passed away peacefully with his wife Jane and children by his bed side, on Friday 8th July, just before 11.00am.

David had been battling cancer for about six and a half years. He dealt with it stoically with his wife Jane by his side and his four children in regular attendance.

David was a London Cab driver, passing the Knowledge in a remarkable nine months, in 1970. He was one of the founder members of the LTDA, with the membership number 53. He went on to become the Chairman of the Southeast Branch and was then elected to the LTDA Council of Management, which he served on loyally for over 20 years.

The LTDA launched London Wide Radio Taxis (LWRT) in 1974, with the first call signs being Lima, Tango, Delta, Alpha (LTDA). David took Delta 01, as one of the first drivers. He subsequently became a part of the LWRT Management Team and was instrumental in its recovery, when the new team took office in 1976/77. He remained a loyal servant of the company for the next 26 years, fulfilling a variety of roles and making a significant contribution to taking the Company from just over 248 to over 4000 drivers.

David wasn't only about work. In 1977, he joined the newly formed, London Wide Scuba Diving Club, becoming a dive leader and helping to train new divers. He dived with the club in different parts of the world over the next 12 years.

David leaves behind his wife, Jane, who so lovingly looked after him throughout his long illness, his two sons, Dominic and Robert, his two daughters, Harriet and Cate, and his sister, Christine.

David was a meticulous man, who was liked and loved by all who knew him. He will be sorely missed. Rest in Peace, David, you certainly earned it.

The funeral service will take place at 12.30pm on Thursday 28th July 2022 at Mountsett Crematorium, Ewehurst Road, Dipton, Stanley, County Durham DH99JP. Afterwards, the family invite you to join them at Three Horseshoes Inn, 41 Lancaster Road, Maiden Law, Lanchester, County Durham DH7 0QT.

For those who are unable to attend the funeral (in person), it can be viewed online at:
www.Wesleymedia.co.uk/webcast-view
Webcast Login PIN: 818-5532

The family request no flowers and ask instead that donations are made to Prostate Cancer UK, Macmillan, or St Cuthbert Hospice Co Durham.



UBIQUITOUS ACQUIRED BY US MARKET LEADER FIREFLY

Taxi advertising company, Ubiquitous, has been acquired by US out-of-home advertising firm, Firefly, as the company seeks to expand its international footprint. London-based Ubiquitous is the leading provider of taxi advertising in the UK with more than 40 years' experience. Ubiquitous has seen strong growth post-pandemic, as commuter and tourist travel has returned. It now joins forces with Firefly, a next generation car advertising solution, which specialises in digital car top advertising and in-car screens, across major US markets including New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Miami. In the US, Firefly has recently expanded its suite of products and solutions for advertisers to include experiential marketing, vehicle wraps and programmatic opportunities, as well as Firefly En Route, an in-car tablet.

UBIQUITOUS
ICONS ON ICONS



FLYING TAXIS TO BE TRIALLED FROM HEATHROW

In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, rail strikes and severe staff shortages creating havoc at airports across the UK, the government is reportedly investing a whopping £9 million in trialling zero-emission 'flying taxis'. Bristol based company Vertical Aerospace, has agreed a partnership with Heathrow to "help launch the first air taxi flights by 2025." Heathrow is exploring how Vertical's electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft could fit into its airlines' flight schedules and take passengers to onward destinations across the Southeast of England, helping to ease congestion around the airport.



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Uber-Exposed

As I told *Panorama*, the most shocking part about all of this is that Uber was able to get away with it for so long and that nothing has ever been done about what went on.

Steve's comment

As you can probably imagine, I took real enjoyment in watching the *Panorama* programme, exposing Uber for exactly what we always said it was, a couple of weeks ago now.

We knew that the Uber files were coming out, as we were approached by a number of media outlets that were investigating them. *Panorama* and others were looking for people who could corroborate and comment on what happened at the time. They were primarily interested in the period around the consultation on updated private hire regulations in 2015, when TfL was proposing measures to properly regulate the industry and to ensure that Uber, and other new entrants to market, were playing by the rules. I was of course all too happy to oblige.

The truth

We have been repeatedly calling out Uber and the politicians who cosied up to them, since this all happened. We had responses to Freedom of Information requests that showed that the government had intervened – encouraging Boris Johnson and TfL to back off. We'd also been in meetings during which the likes of Daniel Korski, then a Number 10 special adviser, had all but told us that they were throwing their lot in with Uber and that was the future, whether we liked it or not.

The problem was that until now, we had never been able to categorically show that this was the result of a relentless lobbying campaign, drawing on Uber's friends in high places, namely former Chancellor George Osborne, and using undue influence, to get what they wanted.

Illegal tactics

We also all knew about their illegal tactics, such as the use of 'Greyball' and the so-called 'Heaven' and 'God View' technologies, which it now seems they used to track and target key officials and decisionmakers, including former TfL Commissioner, Peter Hendy. Hendy has now rightly called for an



"At the end of the day, most of this is old news for us. Uber just isn't the threat it once was to the trade."

investigation into how his personal data was used by the company.

Again, I can't say I am shocked by any of this. It was obvious to anyone who wanted to see it, that Uber would stop at nothing to protect their business model and position in London, and in all the other cities they operated in. But, seeing what we in the trade were up against, set out in black and white, in the many documents the whistleblower provided to the Guardian, really makes you realise what a fight we had on our hands.

A worth adversary

The LTDA was mentioned in many of the leaked documents and clearly seen as a worthy adversary, whose lobbying Uber needed to counter. At some points, they even seem to have tried to claim that the LTDA and other trade orgs had their own politicians in their pocket, suggesting they were simply trying to counter the power and influence of the cab trade. Whilst this is quite flattering for the trade – and I am

sure our own lobbyists would like to think they had the same power as a global, billion-dollar company – this just isn't the case.

We worked incredibly hard to get politicians on side and to make the case for greater regulation and that Uber was not a 'fit and proper' operator. We had some successes too, like the imposition of the congestion charge for PHVs. But, crucially, we did it through good old fashion persuasion and using simple facts about the company and its practices to make our case. We were always outmatched, as Uber was spending £90 million a year on lobbying but, ultimately, we had right on our side and that's why those who supported our cause did so.

Many MPs have spoken out following the release of the Uber Files, including Sarah Champion MP, who noted that whilst the government, were drinking the Uber Kool-Aid, she and some of her colleagues were listening to the concerns of the cab trade and specifically the LTDA, to the safety groups and other interest groups, and were questioning whether Uber really was the shining beacon of technology and progress that it was being painted as.

What now?

As I told *Panorama*, the most shocking part about all of this, is that Uber was able to get away

with this for so long and that nothing has ever been done about what went on.

He might be on his way out, but I have written to Boris Johnson, who basically fell victim to Uber's lobbying campaign himself, as he was hamstrung by the government and prevented from doing, what he clearly knew was right, as Mayor of London. Whether he still feels that way, now that he has been in government, is another matter. I have urged him to launch an inquiry into potential breaches of the ministerial code by senior ministers in the Coalition Government, who failed to disclose meetings with Uber representatives and then pushed a pro-Uber agenda. This includes some who are still in power, such as Priti Patel, who has now been accused of breaching the ministerial code multiple times!

I am also in contact with TfL about whether there is scope to review Uber's operator's licence and fit and proper status, in view of this new, undeniable evidence of their wrongdoing.

At the end of the day, most of this is old news for us. Uber just isn't the threat it once was to the trade. If you ask me, this is just another blow for the company and its failing, unethical, predatory and downright illegal business model. **LTDA**



The Power of Lobbying

"Lobbying itself is not the problem. As an organisation fighting for members and their interests, the LTDA does its fair share of lobbying."

Top rank

I doubt there is anyone reading this article, who saw the revelations from the Uber whistleblower and was the slightest bit surprised by the revelations. The Uber Files as they are now known, exposed by the Guardian newspaper and explored on the BBC *Panorama* programme, laid bare the underhanded and illegal tactics used by the company.

In the cab trade, many of us knew what was going on behind closed doors. Whilst some people in power believed us when we told them, others of course did not, with suggestions that we were 'just paranoid' or 'scared of change'. Now, the leak has well and truly shown, and shown beyond any shadow of a doubt, just what we were up against back then.



Deaf ears

What the Guardian articles have also shown was that a very senior member of Uber staff had real and serious concerns about how Uber was operating, and he reportedly recently offered to share this information with the Mayor's office. As the Chair of TfL, you would think the Mayor would be all over that?

Someone at TfL or in the Mayor's team would have surely known the whistleblower by name or reputation? He was formerly the senior lobbyist for Uber in Europe, which clearly gave him some credibility. They should have at least listened to what he had to say. Sadly, it seems they decided not to. I know one of the key pro-Uber TfL employees at that time is no longer at TfL, but I've no doubt he was very busy making sure no one listened during his time there. He may be gone, but others who failed to take notice – whether intentionally or accidentally – are probably still in place. I can imagine they are the same people still making decisions like not supporting the world's greatest taxi trade to have access to roads like Bishopsgate and Tottenham Court Road.

At the very least, TfL needs to conduct a full and public inquiry into why no one decided to listen and why more questions weren't asked.

Vested interests

The *Panorama* programme showed just how powerful Uber's lobbying was, in fact, if anything it underplayed just how powerful their lobbying machine was. Hopefully, it also gave those who watched, some idea of exactly what this trade has been up against, and it's always been the case. Lobbying didn't just start back in 2012 when Uber began their quest to dominate the market and avoid regulation at any cost. It's also not over even though Uber has, once again 'turned over another new leaf'.

Today, and I'm not saying it's on the same scale or as underhanded, as in Uber's case, but we still have vested interests with immensely powerful lobbying groups, using questionable methods and skewed statistics to push their own agenda, with no regard for anyone else. If I'm honest, I have to tip my hat to them, as

Someone at TfL or in the Mayor's team would have surely known the whistleblower by name or reputation?

some of them have managed to get themselves into positions of power, where they are the actual decision makers. Sadly, it seems that unlike the days of old when the policy makers were neutral, these people are anything but, a quick look at their LinkedIn or social media will often show exactly what they prioritise and why.

To see what I mean, you only have to look at the top office in the land, Number 10, and the fact that the top transport adviser with the ear of Boris Johnson is a keen cyclist. Of course, Boris Johnson is now soon to be gone and so it remains to be seen if this remains the case or whether new interests take hold at the top and push cyclists and cycling down the agenda.

A powerful tool

Lobbying itself is not the problem. As an organisation fighting for members and their interests, the LTDA does its fair share of lobbying. I can't emphasise enough just what a powerful tool lobbying can actually be, but only if it's done right. Done right, it can reap rewards, by putting forward our wants and needs and ensuring that these issues are then taken forward.

All the hard work done by the trade can however be easily undone (and is all too often) by the 'trade savers' via social media posts. These can be very harmful and people who engage in this kind of thing need to look at the bigger picture and think about how they voice their very understandable frustrations. I'm not saying don't call out the complete and utter nonsense put forward or respond to attacks on us, but please do so with some decorum. Do not resort to personal attacks and insults. The words you use are not just between you and your iPhone. They are seen by everyone and paint a permanent picture of this trade that we all love and care about.

■ LTDA

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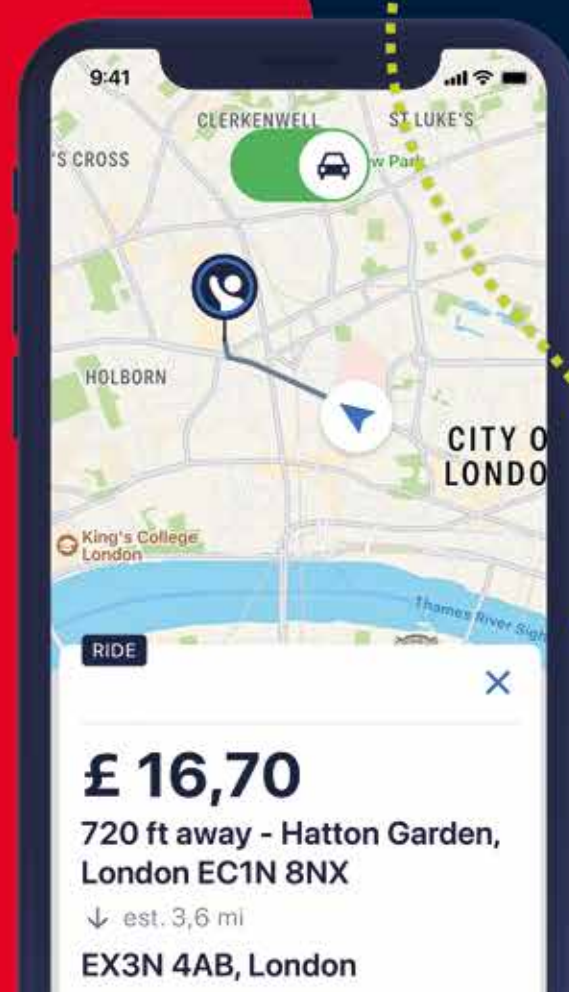
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Jumping Through Hoops

We are seeing drivers' licences being put in jeopardy, through no fault of their own, but because of a poorly designed system that doesn't work.

Streets ahead

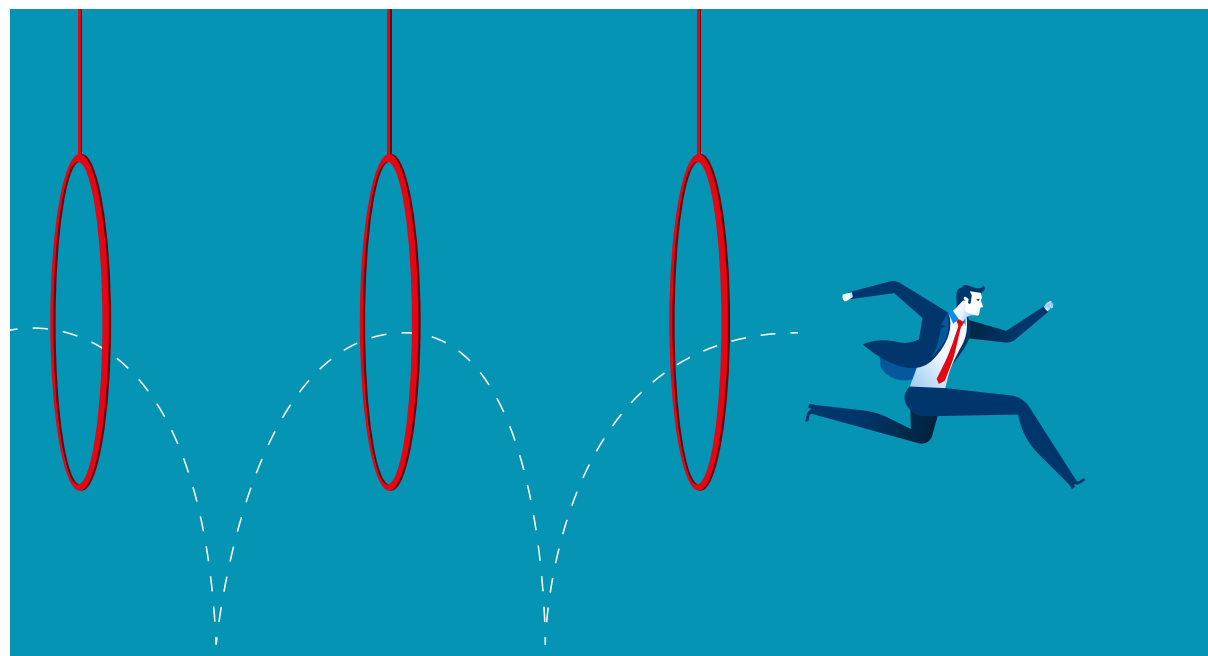
I am hearing more and more from drivers, who are finding it almost impossible to speak directly with anyone at TfL or even to get a reply to an email, when they have an issue that they are trying to resolve. These issues can be something minor or something which threatens their ability to work – everything from medical issues to letters referencing a driver's 'fitness to be licensed' or even stating that their 'licence has been revoked with an immediate effect.' This can be extremely stressful for a driver.

Tax check challenges

The latest new licensing requirement is that drivers must undergo a tax check to confirm that they are appropriately registered to pay tax with HMRC. This was introduced this April and as part of their application, drivers must now provide an HMRC code on their licence application to allow TfL to confirm their status. The code is accessed through the GOV.UK website. Drivers need to know their Government Gateway ID and password to obtain the unique 9-character code.

Unfortunately, many drivers did not receive the updated MHC203R application form from TfL, which had a space to provide the code. This has created problems for lots of people, who applied for their new licence using the old form. Unfortunately, they then received a letter informing them that TfL could not proceed with processing their licence application, until all the necessary information was provided, as the application is considered incomplete. This can cause serious delays and mean that a driver ends up without a licence for a period of time, at great inconvenience and personal cost.

It is stressful enough to complete all the necessary forms and jump through all the different hoops to renew your licence. I don't think it is right that on top of this, drivers are now being penalised, for something which clearly isn't their fault. The government introduced a new requirement, which TfL then implemented, but they then failed to change the licence application to reflect the latest information they



wanted from drivers. Whose fault is that?

DVLA dilemmas

Another licensing requirement is providing a DVLA code. Similar to the new tax check, this code gives TfL the authority to check the information on a driver's DVLA licence, such as whether they have any penalty points. At the LTDA, when we assist members to complete their licence application, we help them to find their DVLA code and put the details on their application form, but to be doubly sure TfL have everything they need, we also print a copy of the DVLA code, which we highlight and enclose with the application.

We are seeing many instances of TfL contacting drivers, stating that they cannot proceed with the application because they can not access the DVLA information, using the code that was submitted and that they require a new code to progress the application. TfL have 21 days to access the information using the code a driver supplies, before it expires. If they can't do this within that timeframe they should take it up with the DVLA and come up with a better system.

Again, we are seeing drivers' licences being put in jeopardy through no fault of their own, because of a badly designed system that doesn't work! I wonder if TfL really understand the stress this is causing drivers, who too often seem to receive the letters informing them of a problem with their application, just a

week before their licence expires.

Drivers put blood, sweat and tears into the Knowledge and becoming one of London's finest, they shouldn't then have to fight to get their licence. I am in the process of setting up a meeting with senior TfL representatives to try to resolve both of these issues and to ensure that our members are not put in this unfair position.

The good old days?

To many of us, being licensed under the Metropolitan Police was a complete nightmare. If only we could have looked into a crystal ball and seen the future, we may have viewed things differently.

The boys in Penton Street were renowned for being rigorous on your yearly overall. Sometimes this meant revisiting two or three times, before your cab was granted a licence. The vehicle had to be in tip top condition inside and out, and mechanically sound, before it was passed.

I remember speaking to a driver who, waking up one day, found that he couldn't go out to work, because in the early hours of the morning the carriage officers had visited his home address and jacked his cab up on his driveway. They had found a number of faults and the taxi got a stop notice, deeming it unfit for use.

Back then, the Police could even stop a driver on the street because the taxi was dirty. The driver would then have to visit the yard up at Penton Street to have the stop notice

removed, but that gave the boys a chance to reinspect the cab, and more often than not, they would've found more faults! If you had a choice, would you drop TfL and return responsibility for licensing to the Met?

One thing that was definitely easier, was renewing your licence. You simply had to turn up at Penton Street with all the relevant documents to be licensed and wait in a queue. When it was your turn, you passed all the paperwork to a very pleasant lady, had a little chat and paid your licensing fee. Then you got your licence, there and then. Compare that to today with all the hoops we have to jump through!

The best support in the trade

If you are a member of the LTDA, we can help you to avoid making mistakes and encountering unnecessary delays. We can also get you the answers you need from TfL. We are always happy to help members or new drivers navigate the licensing and renewal process. Our support officers will even take a member through the process from start to finish, making sure they have everything in order, if that's what they need.

You probably invested years in becoming part of the best taxi service in the world, so make sure that you also belong to the best taxi organisation – the LTDA – that represents its members on every level and does everything it can to keep them on the road working. ■ LTDA



TAXI and LTDA Member Mail

Get writing to TAXI
We want to hear from you! Send your well-penned, publishable letters or emails with your full name and postal address to: editor@ltda.co.uk

Subject: Caught in a trap

Dear Editor,

When I started driving a cab in 1983, I got a single speeding ticket in Hampstead. Since then I've never had a speeding fine in my cab. That is, until this month.

I had been off work for around three months for a hip replacement operation. I decided to return to work slowly. I thought that working the weekends only, would be a good way to break myself in gently.

In the three months I had been off work, there had been many changes to London's speed limits. I should have been aware of the changes, but they were not simply reducing the limit on every street, just some. Up until then, streets like Marylebone Road for example, remained at 30mph, whilst others were reduced to 20mph, such as Park Lane northbound, where the speed limit changed overnight from 40mph to 20mph.

Since my operation I had worked a total of four days. During that time, I was issued with a speeding ticket for travelling at 24mph on Park Lane, which as I said was a 40mph limit a short time ago. I was also issued with a speeding ticket for doing 33mph on the Albert Embankment, which a few weeks ago was a 30mph zone.

I'm sure that the powers that be, have a very good reason for reducing the speed limits, but it escapes me, unless it is to raise revenue? I suppose it's a very cheap way of raising money, but I feel as if a trap has been deliberately set to separate me from my hard-earned cash.

Remember that I had been a hard-working, full-time cab driver in London, who had never had a speeding ticket in my cab in almost 40 years and then received two speeding tickets in just four days. Taking into account the fact that I hadn't worked for three months, I feel as if I have been ambushed!

My taxi licence is up for renewal in about four months. I won't be renewing it. That's if the authorities haven't already disqualified me for accidentally speeding into their traps before then.

When the motor car was invented, it was a requirement in England for a man to walk in front of a car waving a red flag, are we returning to those days? Be careful out there, they are out to get you!

Be lucky and good health to all the good friends that I have made in my four decades as a Licensed London Taxi Driver.

Peter Boag
Badge 42385



Subject: Reunited with lost painting

Dear Editor,

In May, I left a painting in a cab. I filled in the relevant lost property forms, but I never heard anything back.

Then the other day, by chance, I got into the same cab again. I couldn't believe it, but the driver Ian remembered me straight away! He told me he had handed the painting into the Police and he had even helpfully kept the receipt.

Today, I was reunited with my painting! Ian if you're reading this, THANK YOU!

Ina





Uber and Out

I thought a politician like Boris would be more likely to stick up for the cab trade against a big, nasty American private hire company – boy was I wrong!

M4 musings

I'm sure plenty will be written elsewhere on this, but my take on the publication by the Guardian and others of a massive trove of leaked Uber communications, is that a lot of this stuff was already known by the cab trade. The LTDA and others have been screaming from the rooftops for years about back-channel lobbying and the unlawful operating model, but it was incredibly difficult to get anyone to care, because all they saw were the cheap rides.

The Uber Files

I remember at the time that much of the trade talk was of 'brown envelopes,' suggesting actual bribes I suppose, but it never had to be that. Lobbying, particularly in countries like the UK, can be achieved without anything so vulgar as a transfer of money. It was simply

a matter of getting into rooms, and persuading politicians that 'here is the next thing, the future, it's almost inevitable, and you can be on board, or you can miss out.' Plus, the Coalition Government of 2010 to 2015, was obsessed with productivity, deficit reduction and in particular big tech investment.

Well, fast forward a few years and lo and behold we were right all along, only this time Guardian readers care as well. As it turns out, the wheel wasn't reinvented, all they ever had was a map in a box. That's not enough to offer rides that cheap or to justify bypassing perfectly good regulations that were designed to protect the public, not the cab trade.

Disaster capitalism

It was pathetic how many people fell for the mirage of 'ride sharing,' hook, line and sinker, but the idea soon fell by the wayside, as did the notion that we'd be having driverless cars by 2020. Indeed, it's a mark of how things have changed that back then TfL people that you spoke to were fully on board with 'deregulation' as a principle. It was seen as a virtuous aim, not mention it was official government policy.

It's possible to see Uber now as the low point of 'disaster capitalism' – rapacious to the point of absurdity, never even close to profitability and insufferably arrogant to boot. Driving people around in a big, busy city like London requires skill and patience. It also costs a certain amount – not over the top – but certainly not as cheap as Uber were claiming they could do it. It's sad how easily TfL and others were taken in by this snake oil, but at least now the truth is out.



The fall of Boris Johnson

The Tories have finally managed to chisel Boris Johnson's fingers away from the doorframe of Number 10. Not quite in fact, he's still in residence, probably planning how much money he's going to make once he's gone, and how he'll get revenge on all his enemies. We are told in the recent Uber revelations that Boris was minded to take a stronger line on Uber, until he was informally warned by the then government to back off.

I remember that time well. I hadn't been driving for that long and it just seemed incredibly unfair that you would let Knowledge candidates go through so much to be qualified, only to completely abandon support for the system in practice. I'm not a natural Tory voter, but back then I thought a politician like Boris would be more likely to stick up for the cab trade against a big,

nasty American private hire company – boy was I wrong!

Careful what you wish for

So, I won't be sorry to see the back of Johnson, but I do think the Conservatives should be careful what they wished for – a lot of people voted for him and in particular his manifesto commitment to 'get Brexit done.' The 2019 General Election was equivalent to a second referendum, as the other parties were committed to either another referendum or to reversing Brexit altogether.

Of course, in theory, in the UK, you vote for an MP, not a Prime Minister, but many people don't see it that way. They vote for a personality, flawed or not. In the end, the weight of Boris Johnson's flaws have finally brought him down – let's hope the new PM recognises the importance of London's cab trade!

Good luck out there. ■ LTDA

Heathrow troubles

Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) has been in the press quite frequently of late and not for the best reasons. What could have been a storming return to 'business as usual,' has unfortunately not gone to plan. It appears HAL has either underestimated summer demand levels or has been unable to recruit enough staff, or a bit of both.

Britain's busiest airport now finds itself in the unenviable position of requiring airlines to cancel flights – essentially turning away business, and, more importantly, ruining the cherished holiday plans of thousands of customers, who might choose a different option next time around.

What you won't have read about in the press, is the chaotic administration of the Terminal Drop-off Charge (TDOC) by contractor APCOA. You also won't have read how HAL has managed to completely run out of tags for entry into the Taxi

Feeder Park, meaning even existing tag-holders cannot get a replacement, if their tag malfunctions, which, given the ageing technology, is a frequent occurrence.

Clearly the needs of the cab trade are not high on HAL's agenda – let's be honest we're 'any other business' at best. Despite this, drivers have done a heroic job recently, often working late into the night to get people to their hotels after cancellations and delays.

We are told that new tags are 'on order.' I believe HAL when they tell us they are as frustrated as we are (people call me naïve), but if they had ordered the tags a year ago, when trade reps first raised these issues, we wouldn't be in this situation now.



How to maximise your earnings with FREE NOW

We're FREE NOW, Europe's leading ride-hailing app.



FREE NOW ✓

FreeNow

Ever wondered how to make more money with your taxi? Especially in the quieter summer period when the business demand drops sharply. FREE NOW is the UK's No.1 app for personal taxi users, which comes in handy in periods like this. As we all continue to feel the pinch of the current cost of living crisis, we thought we'd share more detail about the earning opportunities for London Black Cab drivers.

Most London taxi drivers use apps, but few of them have explored all opportunities to boost their earnings, so even if you use FREE NOW already, the information below will help you earn more. FREE NOW recognises that their drivers are at the core of helping us deliver a brilliant service and experience to passengers, and that's why drivers earn more at

FREE NOW than at any other platform.

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FREE NOW operates on a 15% commission model (12.5% + VAT), significantly less than major competitors. What is more, until the end of August, FREE NOW's offering new and inactive drivers (for 60 days prior to 31/05/2022) 0% commission to come back to the FREE NOW platform. Commission will be given back weekly as cashback when you join, and is a great way for drivers to increase their work, and earnings during the summer period.

More valuable fares than on street

Average fare at FREE NOW is much higher than on the street. Moreover, it continues to increase, with an increasing number of trips to airports and train stations. In April it was £21, in June it went up to £23

and at the time of writing this article it is approaching £24.

Destination at the offer screen

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Most profitable times of the week

FREE NOW recently launched a new bonus programme where we will offer additional bonuses during busier times. These bonuses will appear automatically on the offer card in the app, so keep your eyes peeled for these. You can expect to see them Monday-Friday 7:30-10am and 5:30-8pm and in the evenings during weekends (5:30-8pm).

Referral programme

Know a friend who's thinking of joining the taxi trade? Or maybe someone who isn't already driving through the FREE NOW app? You can now refer them to FREE NOW in order to earn more.

By referring a new driver to FREE NOW, they will get £200

after completing 50 jobs in 14 days, and you will receive £250 once they reach the 50 jobs target. And most importantly, there's no limit to the number of drivers you're able to refer, so share the love, and earn more.

Weekly bonuses

Every week comes with its own challenges - transport strikes, school holidays, rainy days... etc, which could all influence the demand we have on our platform. That's why drivers receive a weekly update with bonus opportunities, which will be added on top of the metered fare, and helps drivers further maximise their earnings. There is up to £750 of bonuses up for grabs every week available to all active drivers.

Ever growing passenger base

The FREE NOW business continues to grow, with more demand going through the app, meaning more opportunity to increase earnings for drivers.

The current cost of living crisis situation is dampening everyone's spirits, with the price of petrol, monthly energy bills, or weekly shopping reaching sky high levels, and many households are struggling with the squeeze in disposable income. It is unsurprising, therefore, that many people are seeking out pay rises, or an additional income stream to help make ends meet, and with FREE NOW, maximising your earnings couldn't be easier. Driving with FREE NOW means driving on your own terms. All app features above are to help drivers ensure that when they get into the drivers' seat, they're getting the most out of work. If you need support outside of our opening hours, you'll find plenty of common queries in the help centre on the FREE NOW website.



Download the FREE NOW app



'Uber' is Not a

In the glitzy world of Hollywood, what might plans for a big budget adaptation of the explosive Uber revelations look like?

International correspondent

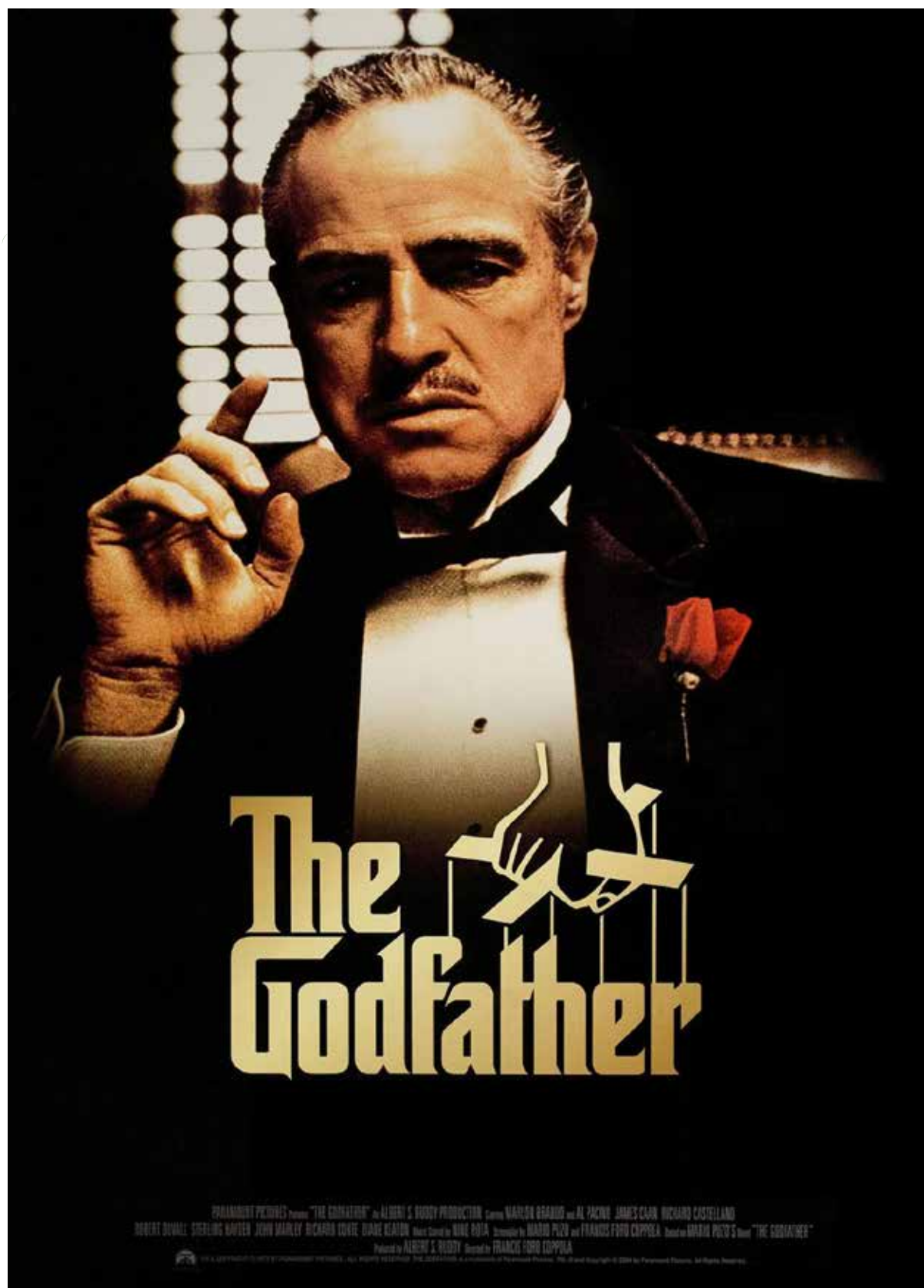
As you know, I used to write for specialist film magazines—mainly about taxi movies, which is why I had time on my hands to moonlight for this mag. Hollywood has just informed me that planning is underway for a riveting *Godfather*-style movie, *The Uber Files*, coming to cinemas next year! Nothing is signed and sealed yet, but this will be the ultimate uber production, so to speak. Of course, the above may be wishful thinking, but there are certain parallels which can be drawn between the Corleone family and this American ride-hailing organisation. The former, however, works in a more direct and, shall we say, persuasive way and certainly with a honourable code of conduct, which the latter clearly lacks.

Palms greased

One worry for producers could be that the official history of the cab firm—or even the recently released Uber files—doesn't leave much scope for exciting shoot-outs or well-planned assassinations like in *The Godfather* films. One of the producers might have told me in confidence: "Hell, how many scenes can we shoot with political people and regulators schmoozing in darkly-lit back-rooms and greedily outstretched palms being greased with wads of crumpled dollar, pound and euro bills?" But, Hollywood being Hollywood, I'm sure the scary car chases and conflict between Uber and taxi drivers will make up for that.

Cast aside

As so many of the original *Godfather* cast and production crew have unfortunately passed away, the hunt is on for a number of new actors—preferably with an active driving licence. Under the



guidance of Mark MacGann, who was intimately acquainted with the subject matter between 2014 and 2016, candidates for the roles of Travis Kalanick, Dara Khosrowshahi, Pierre-Dimitri Gore-Coty, amongst others, should be undergoing screen tests.

Indicating a stellar salary, Kalanick—aka Mr. Evil, in true *Godfather* style—insists on playing himself. He has recently been spotted practising in front of a mirror in the men's. Finding an actor who can play the rather wooden character

of Khosrowshahi is creating a major headache, but using an avatar is being discussed. As this production will have a truly international scope, the hunt is still on for major characters like French president Emmanuel Macron and EU Commission's

Image from Paramount Pictures Studio Store

Scrabble Word

"...there are certain parallels which can be drawn between the Corleone family and this American ride-hailing organisation."

Neelie Kroes, who—whilst still being in 'quarantine' after leaving the EU hotspot—did some quiet moonlighting for the innovative transport company. Unfortunately, both Macron and Kroes have since declined to play themselves in this sequel and will be replaced by look-alikes.

Shooting in London

However, another major headache remains: finding a huge number of extras to drive the many cars and to stand accused of assaulting women passengers, plus staffers to create a terror-laden, unfriendly office working climate and apply the 'kill switches' for all computer screens to go black when police raids are taking place. As bent regulators and lower-level politicians (only too eager to take Kalanick's dosh) are two a penny, filling these shoes will be no problem. Finding the top politicians who were happily folding to the will of the ride-hailing company will be a somewhat tougher hunt for producers.

Sources assure me that shooting on location will take place in Paris, where Kalanick and Garrett Camp got the luminous idea to start UberCab, because they couldn't find a local taxi and was the place where several local cabs went up in flames during anti-Uber protests. London and New York City are also in the running for location shoots, "because these cute black cabs and yellow taxicabs make such a lovely backdrop for the Uber cars," one anonymous producer quipped.

Uber: 1 reference; Taxi: many

During my extensive and time-consuming research for this piece, I was reliably informed that 'Uber' is not

a Scrabble Word in the English language. Why is that important? The everlasting linguistic contribution this company has made to the English lingo amounts to 'Let's take an Uber,' a recent BBC *Panorama* documentary on their shenanigans informed us. Meanwhile, the taxi vocab—developed since the first punter held up a hand to make the next public conveyance stop—has not only made the language unmeasurably richer, it has added many socio-cultural references. As I'm doing the research for a book chapter dealing with cultural taxi references, I'll get back to you with a few choice examples of how the taxi trade (over many years) enriched the language in my next column.

One of my favourite expressions linked to 'taxi' is 'taxi dancer'. In the early part of the 20th Century, taxi dancers in dance halls were hired to liaise with their customers on a dance-by-dance basis. Male patrons would typically buy dance tickets and when he presented it to a chosen taxi dancer, she would dance with him for the length of a single song. The taxi dancers got a commission on each ticket earned.

By the way, the word 'Taxicab' gets 18 points in English Scrabble, not including the 50-point bonus for using seven letters. ■ TAXI





What do Points Make? Crises!

TfL were good enough to furnish me with the latest Taxi and PHV Driver Policy, and at 105 pages it really isn't the easiest of documents to read.

A man in black

Renewing your taxi licence can be an arduous affair, with the whole process leaving one sweating like Boris Johnson during a press conference. However, to be able to continue operating a taxi, it is something we must do—endure and overcome. Unfortunately, there is now a new obstacle which 'hard-bitten' cabbies must now negotiate—the adoption of a points system that effectively reduces the amount of points you can hold before a driver's fitness to work is brought into question.

Play your cards wrong

During the TV series *Play Your Cards Right*, legendary entertainer Bruce Forsyth used to bellow to a studio audience, "What do points make?". An irrationally excited studio audience retorted at the top of their lungs, "Prize!". This, of course, doesn't apply if you are a licensed London taxi driver. In reality, points could effectively end your career; with the prospect of just six consigning you to the sidelines—that's certainly not a good game, my love.

TfL were good enough to furnish me with the latest Taxi and PHV Driver Policy, and at 105 pages it really isn't the easiest of documents to read. As you would expect, some of it was logical and made sense, while other aspects left me scratching my head thinking somebody up there really doesn't like the industry.

The document states:

"The Mayor's Transport Strategy commits to delivering a 'Vision Zero' approach in London to make its streets safer for all by reducing deaths and serious injuries on London's roads. Licensed taxi and PHV drivers are professional vocational drivers responsible for carrying the public. They are therefore expected to demonstrate a high standard of driving. It is accepted that offences can be committed unintentionally, and a single occurrence of a minor driving offence would not prohibit the granting of a licence. However, applicants with serious or multiple driving convictions may indicate that an applicant does not exhibit



the behaviours of a safe road user and one that is suitable to drive professionally.'

Now, on the surface this is a prudent statement, however, there is an issue here. Professional vocational drivers are generally trained to a higher standard than other road users. HGV and bus drivers are professionally trained—they also have to undertake a separate vocational driving test to allow them to drive those vehicles. This also used to apply to Knowledge candidates in their bid to become licensed London taxi drivers, this course being called 'The Drive'. Yet, in October of 2017, 'The Drive' was ended by the DVSA due to costs.

TfL have stated that a new operator would be found to fill the void left by the DVSA, but as of today (four years and nine months later) the search for this new operator is still pending. To put this into perspective, it has taken less time to build the Dartford Bridge, Canary Wharf and the Shard—all of which were around three years to complete. This therefore begs the question as to why it has taken nearly a demi-decade to outsource a driving test.

Safety when it suits

Interestingly, despite the bus network being operated by TfL, bus drivers do not have to comply with the same driver regulations as cabbies. This is because although TfL operate the bus network, they do not employ a single bus driver; companies such as Arriva and Stagecoach are the employers. With the average driver responsible for the safe transportation of up

to 90 people, you would expect a similar universal voluntary system to operate across London's various bus operators. However, along with numerous local authorities and regulators across the UK, they (the bus companies) won't touch it. This is because it is a minefield which may be riddled with legal anomalies.

This isn't the first time that such a policy has caused consternation among the taxi and private hire industry. On 22nd September, 2021, Leeds City Council approved the Taxi and Private Hire (Convictions) Policy. This policy related to minor traffic and vehicle-related offences, potentially threatening the livelihood of drivers who may have reached nine points or more for minor convictions. This policy led to protests from taxi and PH drivers across the city concerned that their jobs could be under threat for minor offences. By March of 2022, the protests ceased after an agreement had been reached with Leeds City Council as well as neighbouring local authorities.

Common sense

Now, I'm not going to go over the ground already covered by my colleagues; it is blindingly obvious that there are certain driving offences which should negate somebody's taxi licence with immediate effect. Therefore if you're driving around London with a line of Colombian marching powder in your bloodstream, it's a pretty safe bet you are asking for trouble. With that in mind, four fixed penalty notices for doing 22 mph in a 20 zone is a different story. Given the reduction in speed limits

across London, combined with the massive increase in speed cameras, common sense has to prevail.

Safety is always going to be a primary factor in any journey—and so it should. But there needs to be a balance in relation to the arbitrary punishments that are dished out for minor offences. This is where the totting up process may no longer be fit for purpose.

Introduced in 1988, the penalty points system was brought in as an additional punishment designed to deter poor driving. The points system pre-dates the first speed camera which was first placed on the M40 in 1991. Since their combined introduction, millions of points have been accrued by Britain's motorists. It's hard to argue against the mantra that speed kills, yet there is a stark difference between hurtling through a 20 mph zone at 40, as opposed to hitting 22 in the same area. The technical offence may be the same but it could be argued that the level of punishment is inappropriately punitive where low level speeding is concerned. With the issuing of points comes a financial penalty and a potential rise in insurance costs—a real triple whammy.

This is merely an aggravation for any normal driver, but for a professional driver this could spell catastrophe for them and their families—in effect being punished an incredible four times for a single offence—and it gets worse. Generally, if you wish to fight a fixed penalty notice you have to attend court. Should you lose in court you could potentially receive a higher level of punishment. Therefore not only does this potentially affect a cabbie's livelihood but could hinder their access to the justice system as drivers become fearful of an increase in their punishment should they try and challenge a fine for an alleged offence.

Ultimately, it could be reasonably argued Her Majesty's judiciary should be the sole arbiter of justice. A regulator's role should be to look at every case and make an assessment on its own merits and within the current legislative frameworks. **TAXI**

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The 'Gin Craze' of Old London Town

The UK has always had a long, and sometimes not so illustrious, relationship with alcohol. In fact, it's safe to say that the UK would not fare well under prohibition, but did you know that London went through its very own 'Gin Craze'?

Between 1720 and 1751, men, women and children were consuming up to two pints of the alcoholic beverage every week. The Craze started when Parliament deregulated the distilling trade in a bid to tackle a corn surplus. As a result distillers swamped the market with cheap gin.

The Craze was eventually ended when legislation was passed by parliament to tackle the raging alcoholism that had developed in the capital. Laws were passed to restrict distillers and the sale of it. Daniel Defoe commented, *"the Distillers have found out a way to hit the palate of the poor, by their new fashioned compound waters called Geneva, so that the common people seem not to value the French brandy as usual, and even not to desire it"*.

Gin itself became popularised following the accession of William of Orange in 1688. It was regarded as an alternative to French brandy after parliament restricted its sales due to the conflict between Britain and France between 1689 and 1697. The government of the day actively encouraged gin sales by reducing taxation on the distillation of spirits. This assistance was further encouraged by removing the necessity to have a licence to sell alcohol.

After the Gin Act of 1751, consumption dropped, this was attributed to the cost of grain rather than the Act itself.

Although there was a resurgence during the Victorian era, with the emergence of Gin Palaces, consumption never reached the same level as the fascinating 18th Century craze.

When London wasn't just the capital of the UK

London may be the UK's capital, but did you know that at one point it was the capital of five other countries at the same time?

During the Second World War, the Nazi regime had successfully displaced the leaders of Belgium, France, Holland, Norway and Poland. As a result they all took up residence in the comparative safety of London. They were also joined by representatives from both Greece and the Czech Republic.

With Hitler invading numerous countries across Europe, Parliament passed legislation giving full diplomatic protection to any leader taking shelter in London. With this legislation being passed in March of 1941, the Czech Republic's leader, Edvard Benes, became the first to receive protection upon moving to Putney High Street. However, prior to the passing of the legislation, Polish Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski moved his entire government to Portland Place in London. This all came after France had fallen under German control in 1940.

With the subsequent German invasion of Norway, government officials also took exile in London, residing at Prince's Gate. Belgian Prime Minister Hubert Pierlot joined the exodus to the capital a few weeks later, along with Dutch and Luxembourg officials. Approximately one year later, the Greek government took refuge at Claridge's Hotel.

All remained in London until the conclusion of the war, and that is how London became the capital of multiple countries.



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

LONDON?

London and its pair of falsies

London's residential architecture is considered to be some of the finest in the world. Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings are spread about the capital like the little green houses on a Monopoly board; but did you know that there are two houses in the Bayswater area that are actually fake ones?

False facades on properties are nothing new, they are usually kept as a front for more modern architecture to the rear of the facade, however, there is an architectural peculiarity in Leinster Gardens.

In 1863, the Metropolitan Railway began conveying passengers and became the world's first underground train. The route of the line between Paddington and Bayswater



required the demolition of 23 and 24 Leinster Gardens. In order to maintain the integrity of the street, they built a 5ft-thick facade which matched the houses on either side of the break—resulting in false fronts. This, however, left a void to the rear of the facade leaving part of the railway track open to the elements. This proved to be an ideal section of track for passing locomotives to literally let off steam or 'vent'.

If you stand by the bridge on Porchester Gardens, you can still see the gap between numbers 22 and 25 Leinster Gardens and the metal braces preventing the adjacent buildings from collapsing onto the railway tracks.

During the 1930s, a rather elaborate hoax took place at the location, after a fraudster made a small fortune by selling tickets to a charity ball at 23 Leinster Gardens. After paying 10 guinea a ticket for entry to the ball, duped guests, dressed in all their finery, knocked on the fake door, only to find out that they had been taken for a proverbial ride.



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The Charlotte Street Robbery



It was decided the next target would be Jay's the Jewellers, located at 73-75 Charlotte Street.

Rob's history tips

On 25th April, 1947, three robbers—Christopher Geraghty, 20, Charles Jenkins, 22, and Terence Rolt, 17—sat inside a stolen Morris Ten outside a jeweller's on Queensway.

With little security and just two middle-aged members of staff, the gang figured the shop was the perfect target and so, when the time was right, stormed in and snatched over 40 items—mostly rings and watches—which were valued at £4,500 (approximately £123,000 in today's money).

After the heist, they itched their car on Bishop's Bridge Road and quietly slipped onto a bus headed for Victoria.

The men intended to split the loot three ways, but unfortunately for them they were involved with 37-year-old William Walsh; a villain from Plumstead, who demanded a 50% cut.

Feeling short changed and no doubt humiliated, the gang retired to their local pub in Bermondsey to plan their next score.

It was decided the next target would be Jay's the Jewellers, located at 73-75 Charlotte Street.

Jenkins had partially scoped out the building—although he hadn't studied the interior—and insisted it would be 'an easy job'.

It was also decided they would go in armed; Rolt had access to three guns he'd stolen from a gunsmiths on Union Street, and which he'd been hiding at a bomb-site over on Fair Street.

At midday on 27th April, the men travelled by tube from Shadwell to Goodge Street, purchasing return tickets because, as before, they intended to use a stolen car and finalise their escape on public transport.

Once up west, they spotted



Catherine Street now

the ideal vehicle, a Vauxhall Saloon, parked on Whitfield Street, which was easy to pinch as Rolt owned a key capable of starting such a model—this, of course, during the 1940s when car security was almost non-existent.

The gang then had lunch at a greasy spoon on Tottenham Street where they finalised the plan, agreeing to act fast and avoid firing their guns, before donning their handkerchief masks and making the short drive to the target.

But little did they know that a disaster was about to unfold...

Spanner in works

Rolt parked up and remained in the car as the getaway driver, whilst Geraghty and Jenkins marched into the building.

The pair quickly discovered that, whilst the Queensway jewellers had been tiny, Jay's was huge; spread over two floors and containing multiple sections.

Furthermore, it was beefed-up with ample security, including locks, bars and multiple alarms.

The first room Geraghty and Jenkins encountered contained a secure office in which the manager, Bertram Keates, sat. There appeared to be nothing of value present and, being

elderly, vision-impaired and hard of hearing, Keates didn't even appear to notice a crime was in progress.

The pair then stormed into the next room which was the main sales department.

Here, they found a large group of staff—most of whom were young, fit and strong—and were in no mood to be intimidated.

Shots fired

With the plan quickly unravelling, Geraghty fired a warning shot into the ceiling, whilst Jenkins hurried back to the bemused manager's office in search of the safe.

After finally spotting the gun being brandished, Bertram agreed to unlock his office, but as soon as Jenkins entered it turned out the pensioner knew how to handle himself. He proceeded to punch the youngster and knocked his gun to the floor.

Geraghty, meanwhile, had fired another shot and pistol-whipped an older member of staff named Albert Stock but, with the alarm now triggered, the pair decided to flee empty-handed.

Once his panicked mates were in the Vauxhall, Rolt turned the ignition. But nothing happened.

As Rolt fought to get the car started, a delivery lorry pulled

up in front, blocking the way ahead.

Then, at the moment the engine did splutter to life, a second truck appeared from behind, cutting off that route too.

Unsurprisingly, the bungling crooks decided to run. Jenkins and Rolt dashed towards Torrington Place where they hid in Brook House.

The Great Escape

Once the coast was clear, they caught the tube home as intended, tossing their weapons into the Thames—although they didn't do a good job of it as the guns were later found, having been washed up.

Geraghty found himself cornered on Charlotte Street by an angry mob who were spurred on by shouts from Albert Stock; his face dripping with blood after the pistol-whipping.

Passing by on his motorbike at that moment was Alec de Antiquis; a 34-year-old father of six from Colliers Wood.

Seeing what was happening—and how Geraghty was still armed—he drove his bike at the suspect. Geraghty responded by firing his gun; a bullet struck Alec in the head, killing him.

In the renewed chaos, Geraghty managed to escape.

Following an appeal from police, a cabbie came forward to say he'd seen a masked Jenkins and Rolt enter Brook House.

This led to a search of the building, where it was discovered the pair had hidden certain items of clothing; one of which was a coat that contained a label from a tailor's on Deptford High Street.

This trail eventually led to Jenkins and his two associates and, when arrested, Geraghty admitted to the fatal shooting of de Antiquis.

The trio were tried at the Old Bailey in July of 1947, and it took the jury just 15 minutes to find them all guilty of murder.

Geraghty and Jenkins received the death penalty and were executed together at Pentonville on 19th September, 1947.

However, Rolt being only 17, was detained at His Majesty's pleasure, whilst de Antiquis was posthumously awarded the Binney Medal for bravery. ■ **TAXI**



Too Hot to Handle

It might now be an even rarer breed, but I am still generally very pleased with my cab. The biggest problem I am having right now, is the lack of effective air conditioning in the back.

Electric Dreams

When I first got my Dynamo, I liked the fact that I was one of just a few drivers out there and that the vehicle was a rare sighting on London's streets. I thought of myself like the famed Battle of Britain pilots 'the few' – outnumbered, but never outmatched. Sadly, I never realised that 'the few' would become the very few and only, after Nissan stopped building the donor NV200s.

It might now be an even rarer breed, but I am still generally very pleased with my cab. The best things about it are the range, and how cheap it is to run and service. Plus being a Nissan, its well-made and almost nothing goes wrong!

The bad bits about this cab all

stem from the conversion and the fact that the vehicle was never intended to carry passengers in the back. The main issues I've encountered have been the steps, the steering gaiters, and the intercom, but these are all sorted now.

The biggest problem I am having right now, is the lack of effective air conditioning in the rear of the vehicle. In the recent hot weather, with the panoramic roof, small windows and little to no air conditioning in the back, I've found that the temperature can reach 40 degrees! It's fine for me – the air con in the front works brilliantly – but on very hot days, my passengers are literally cooked alive.

A real effort has been made, well several actually, to sort this issue out and to find a workable solution. This has included replacing the windows with larger ones that open (and as a bonus no longer rattle) and rerouting the air ducts in the front to



the back. Unfortunately, neither of these has proved effective enough.

I've also tried various fixes myself, including mounting a fan

in the back. I think other drivers are finding the same, as I have now seen several Dynamos without passengers, driving with the rear door open. They are presumably trying to drop the temperature a few degrees before picking up the next fare.

I get that it's only on rare few weeks a year that this is a problem, but it's still embarrassing when a passenger tells me it's very hot and asks can I turn the air con up?

At the time of writing this, I have just read online that the best solution is to cover the panoramic roof from the outside with a black sticky plastic, similar to that used by the taxi advertising companies with their door ads. I've seen a recommendation for one firm in the East that will cut a sheet to size and fit it for you in 20 minutes. I am heading straight there in the morning to give this a try. I will let you know how it works out. **TAXI**



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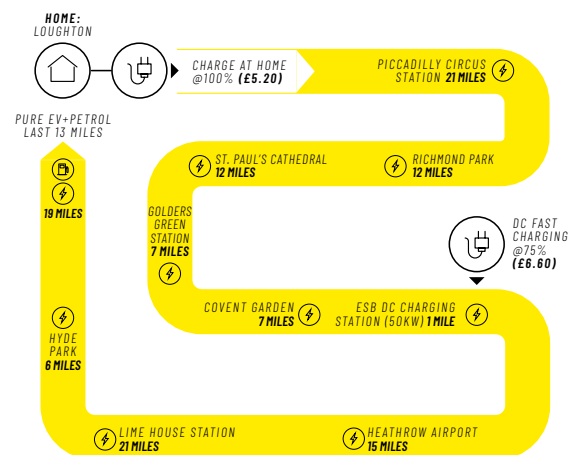
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Best for reducing waste

Olio lets both individuals and businesses share things that would otherwise go to waste.

Everything listed on *Olio* is given away free to people who live nearby. Items might be furniture, clothes, toys or sports equipment that would be thrown away otherwise.

Olio also works with supermarkets, bakeries and cafes, to send out volunteers to collect surplus food. These volunteers then list the free grub on the app so people who live nearby can come and collect it for free.

TooGoodToGo also fights food waste—and reduces your grocery bill. The app flogs food from local cafes, restaurants and supermarkets that they can no longer sell as fresh. Typically, you'll have a day or two to eat (or freeze) the food before it goes off.

You usually get a bag of food worth about £10 to £12 for less than £5—but you won't know what's in the bag until you've bought it.

Best for saving

There are several apps that use 'open banking' to allow authorised third parties to share and analyse data from your bank account.

Some of these apps encourage you to save or invest regular, small amounts of money. For example, *Chip* uses open banking to look at your bank account and artificial intelligence (AI) to calculate an affordable amount that can be saved automatically without affecting your day-to-day spending. The cash is moved into a savings account.

Plum works in a similar way by using open banking, AI and automation to analyse your spending and move small, affordable amounts into another account. The money can either be saved as cash or invested in the stock market.

Another one is *Moneybox* which links to your current account and credit cards to round up purchases to the nearest pound and invests the 'spare change'.

Best for budgeting

Emma also uses open banking—this time to see what's going on with your finances. It uses the shared information to provide an overview of your financial situation, including account balances, debts and investments in one place. You can categorise your transactions, with outgoing analytics giving you a detailed breakdown of your spending.

One handy feature is tracking your subscriptions and regular payments so you can spot any that are a waste of money.

HyperJar is a novel idea—it turns the concept of 'buy now, pay later' on its head with a 'pay now, buy later' approach. *HyperJar* provides users with a prepaid debit card and app, and allows you to split your cash into virtual 'jars' linked to specific retailers, such as *Shell*, *Megabus*, and *Bloom & Wild*. It pays a 'reward rate' (a bit like interest) of 4.8% on these pots of money. When you spend with a partner brand, the money will come out of the relevant jar.

Best for splitting bills

If you struggle to keep track of shared expenses with your partner, flatmates or pals on nights out or holidays, *Splitwise* can help.

The app allows you to create groups with various friends, enter who paid for what, and calculate what each person owes. *Splitwise* tracks borrowing and lending over time—over the duration of a holiday, for example—with each person's outstanding balance going up and down until settled.

Other apps that work in a similar way include *Settle Up*, *Splid*, and *Splittr*.

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Tom the Taxi Driver – TAXI talks

"We continue our look at different personalities from across the cab trade. This week, we spoke to 'Tom the Taxi Driver.'"



Feature

22

This week we spoke to Tom Hutley, known to many as 'Tom the Taxi Driver' through his popular YouTube videos. Originally from Braintree in Essex, Tom has been a cab driver since 2017. In 2020, he started a YouTube channel making videos about life as a London cabbie. He has since gained a strong following and made a name for himself by sharing insights into what really goes into driving a cab and the unique perspective it gives him on London.

He now has over 51,200 subscribers who regularly watch and interact with his videos, which cover everything from an inside look at a night shift in the cab to dealing with complaints. He also covers topical issues such as the impact of road closures on the cab trade, new developments in London transport like the recent opening of the Elizabeth Line and the rising price of Uber.

Beginnings

Driving a cab was never something Tom had considered as a career. He went to university, where he studied media and film. After university he worked in a few jobs in TV and media in London, but eventually ended up working in a sales job in Holborn that he didn't enjoy and that wasn't really going anywhere. Tom tells me he had a moment of self-reflection and thought to himself 'what the

hell am I doing.' He sums up how absurd his situation was, telling me that he had to wear a suit to work every day, yet he never met anyone – in person and sat in a corner cubicle, selling training courses over the phone. He realised that life wasn't for him.

He didn't know anyone in the cab trade, but a friend of a friend told him about the Blue Books and "it sounded like it could be fun." The friend of a friend was an ex-Met Police officer, so Tom thought it must be a decent job for him to put all the time and effort into to becoming a cabbie. Tom decided that taking the Knowledge could be an interesting challenge and he also viewed it as a way to really get to know the city that he loves so much. With a bit of blind faith, he decided to go for it.

Two years and 11 months later, Tom finished the Knowledge. He says it gave him a huge sense of achievement commenting, "It was the best thing I've ever done. I've never applied myself so much, I think that must be how gold medal athletes feel when all of their training and hard work pays off." He also thinks that doing the Knowledge was "twice the intensity" of his degree. He says that he, "didn't want to leave any stone unturned so it became his life."

The keys to the city

Tom is very passionate about the Knowledge and still today, that's what he loves most about the job – really knowing London inside out, with all its quirks and rich history. Tom also completed the Worshipful Company of Hackney



Carriage Drivers taxi guide course, which is run in conjunction with the Museum of London to further enhance his Knowledge. After completing this, he used to do a lot of tours in his cab, but he is now more focused on his YouTube.

Tom describes the Knowledge as "like being given the keys to the city and being able to unlock it and see what's really going on." For example, when he comes out of the notoriously complicated Bank Underground Station, while tourists and many Londoners find

themselves lost and confused, he knows exactly what he is doing and where he is going, and he can probably tell you the history of the buildings to boot.

Enriching lives

The other thing Tom loves about being a cabbie is the interaction with passengers. He says he has previously worked in retail jobs, for big companies like Apple and Starbucks, and has always enjoyed working in customer facing jobs. He likes working in roles which,

to Rising YouTube Star Tom Hutley



"You have an opportunity to really connect with and learn about a passenger, and if someone is having a bad day a cabbie can be their saviour."

him out when TfL wrote to him suggesting that he might have been breaking the rules by filming passengers and using video equipment in his cab.

A growing platform

As his channel gets more popular, he knows his platform and voice is growing with it, but he doesn't want to get *"too political."* If he sees an opportunity to add something useful to the conversation or a fresh angle on an issue that is causing problems for the trade, he does something on it and isn't scared to speak his mind.

"It's not about complaining," he tells me, but equally he's not trying to *"glamorise the trade."* He tries to present the relevant information to the everyday public, in a way that they will understand and care about. He says, *"sometimes I try to film something to show how bad it is for us, but it doesn't come across on film, like the impact of the LTNs and road closures, it can be hard to show it and really convey what's happening."* For Tom, it is all about communicating an issue in a way that ensures it has the most power and impact.

He explains that he was *"really fearful"* when he started his YouTube channel. He says, *"I could imagine fellow cabbies thinking 'here is this fresh-faced butter boy putting out these videos, what does he know about it?,' but I have actually had lots of support. Someone will always have a problem with whatever you do in life, but as long as I am doing something I am proud of and it's favourable for the trade, I will carry on."*

TX pros and cons

Tom drives a LEVC TX electric taxi. He thinks there are good things and bad things about his cab. He likes the sense of ownership and knowing you are putting money into something, but he bought it just before the pandemic, when times were suddenly really hard, which wasn't the best timing. He tells me that he sometimes finds the hefty monthly repayments a bit of a burden – he doesn't feel as free as he could do, as he knows that it needs paying for every month, so he couldn't really decide to take a month off if he wanted to.

He also thinks the TX4 seats were probably more comfortable, but the panoramic roof in his cab is great for tours and filming, so overall he is happy.

Promoting the trade

Tom thinks TfL need to do more to promote the trade and that the benefits of taking a black cab and driving one should be made more obvious by the regulator. He also thinks that black cabs should have more privileges or should at least retain the privileges they have. He feels like some of the unique benefits of cabs, like the ability to use bus lanes, and *"go where buses go,"* are in danger of being lost. This is due to the advent of LTNs and other Streetspace schemes like Bishopsgate, which he has previously made videos about.

His YouTube channel is helping to bring a younger, different demographic into cabs. Sometimes his passengers recognise him, or people stop him on the street, and he's been told by some that his videos made them use a taxi for the first time. People now come up to him and tell him proudly *"I got a cab the other day"* and he tells me that they are often impressed by the service they receive and their experience.

Through his videos, he also wants to show how diverse the trade is. *"We are just all individual drivers and there are lots of different types, I hope my channel shows that."* Tom's main concern for the trade's future is the way the vehicles are going – he is worried that if the powers that be don't sort out the charging infrastructure, then the vehicles themselves will start to become a problem for drivers.

Tom believes that now is trade's time to shine, to win back customers it may have previously lost to Uber and to demonstrate everything it has to offer, *"in vehicles which offer greater comfort, a private space and that are probably cheaper."* ■ TAXI

"enrich peoples' lives" to steal a phrase from his old employer, Apple. He thinks that you can simply look at working a cab and the experience of using one, as purely taking someone from A to B, but in actual fact you have an opportunity to *"really connect with and learn about a passenger, and if someone is having a bad day, a cabbie can be their saviour."*

YouTube channel

With a background in TV and film, Tom had always wanted to do something on YouTube but had been putting it off. Then the pandemic struck and like many of us he found himself with no more excuses.

When lockdown was first announced, Tom took a month off from driving, but then decided to go back out. He tells me that at that point, he took the mindset that he was *"just going for a drive"*

so there was less pressure to find a fare, otherwise driving around the empty streets could have been quite soul destroying. During that time, he found himself often ranked up at Kings Cross starring into the shiny YouTube and Google HQ buildings and thinking of ideas for YouTube content.

His first video was all about the Knowledge and how you learn it. He hoped to show prospective drivers that it is not as daunting as it might seem at first when you look at the map and everything you need to learn. For the wider public watching, he hoped to provide an insight into the amount of work London cabbies put into the Knowledge. It proved popular and the channel grew from there.

Tom is a member of the LTDA, and he credits Steve McNamara for helping to ensure that he could keep making his videos for YouTube. The LTDA helped

You can subscribe to Tom's YouTube Channel 'Tom the Taxi Driver' or watch his previous videos at www.youtube.com/thutley. You can also sign up to receive his Sunday Summary newsletter for more insights from life in the cab and top tips on his website at www.tom.taxi.



'The Professionals'

- What sets those with 'The Knowledge' apart from the rest?

What does it mean to be a professional in 2022? 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 5G network and these skills would still exist, though some other 'suppliers of transportation services' might well struggle!

Some of the key ingredients of 'professionalism' involve:

'The deployment of formal certified learning'

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

'A professional owns the power, skills and freedom to problem solve.'

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

'A professional possesses the ability to make decisions in the best interests of others.'

We know that this level of responsibility is based on the use of specific, localised, operational expertise - rather than hoping a digital device can

provide an AA graded Knowledge rating of a route selection in line with traffic conditions, whilst ensuring a disabled passenger arrives at the entrance to their hotel which has suitable wheelchair access and porter assistance.

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

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

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

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

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

You are professionals. We know it.

Let's ensure everybody else knows it and values it too.

■ **The LTDA are here to represent, protect and ensure recognition of the professional practice, identity and standards of our members.**



SANZIO

26 Station Parade, Willesden Green

Seasonal tasty food, with a varied menu.

Sanzio is a small, friendly, family run bistro, located on Station Parade, close to Willesden Green Underground Station. It's really easy to find and well worth a visit.

Maria Sundrica created the restaurant to give patrons a taste of Italy in London. Sanzio's menu offers dishes that Maria's grandmother served her as a child in their seaside home on the Adriatic Sea in Southern Italy.

The restaurant's ethos is 'feeding people with beautiful food.' They serve fresh, seasonal, tasty food, from a varied menu, which includes pizza, fish, various pasta dishes and risottos through to tender rib-eye steak and chips.

Sanzio was recently renovated and it feels warm and welcoming. The renovation also included the addition of a new extension and garden room, where you can enjoy a drink with a starter from their aperitif menu, while looking through the French windows onto

the small patio area covered in olive trees. These tables are popular as they allow customers to dine al fresco in the summertime and really do give you the feeling of being in Southern Italy, in the heart of Willesden Green!

The restaurant has an old-world atmosphere and guests can relax and take their time. The service is quick – but not too quick – which for me is the mark of a good restaurant.

On arrival, we were given a complimentary saucer of black and green olives. We had a starter of calamari and fresh baked bread, served with oil and balsamic vinegar, to share. For our main courses, we had rib-eye steak with herb butter and fries and pasta with chicken and mushrooms in a lovely creamy sauce. The rib-eye steak was so tender, and the French fries lovely and crispy. All of this was washed down with a nice fruity bottle of red wine. The meals are filling, so we declined a dessert, but there are some tempting sweet



treats on the menu.

Overall, this is a nice, if slightly pricey bistro for the area, but well worth the money for the quality and taste of the food offered. If you're a local or in the area it is definitely worth visiting.

It is advisable to book as it can get busy, especially at weekends. You can book online or by phone.

SANZIO, 26 Station Parade, Willesden Green, NW2 4NH

www.sanziorrestaurant.co.uk

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TAXI is the membership magazine for the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA). It is circulated to 12,000 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.

Get in touch

To see your advertisement in the leading magazine for black cab drivers in London contact us today:

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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? ☐

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.

Please note: We do not provide assistance for any matters that have occurred prior to you joining LTDA.

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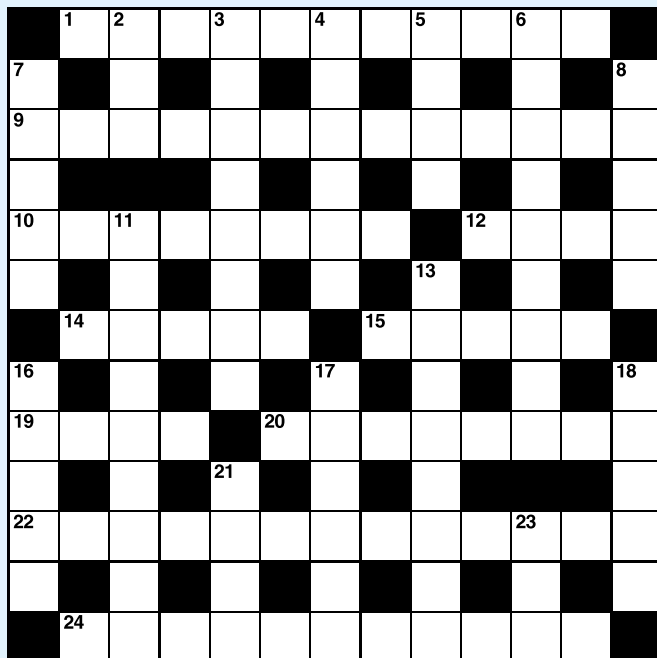
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 - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when LTDA asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.



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 Crowded with celebrities (4-7)
- 9 Impossible to impose (13)
- 10 Current-affairs journalist (8)
- 12 Drink in great gulps (4)
- 14 Representative object (5)
- 15 Shrub of the gorse family (5)
- 19 Machine for weaving (4)
- 20 Dispatch, forward (8)
- 22 Area in which objects are drawn to each other (8,5)
- 24 Willing to take risks (11)

DOWN

- 2 Alternative to a cravat (3)
- 3 Changed for the better (8)
- 4 Serving dish (6)
- 5 Intense (4)
- 6 Adequate space (5-4)
- 7 Eccentricity, foible (5)
- 8 Extreme edge (5)
- 11 Extended the duration of (9)
- 13 Footballer's club move (8)
- 16 Quite fat (5)
- 17 Person with a creative vocation (6)
- 18 Home office (5)
- 21 Plural of 'was' (4)
- 23 ___ de cologne, light perfume (3)

Sudoku

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

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

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
	>			
	^		v	
		<		
	^		^	^
	v			

All answers to
puzzler on p30

Puzzler
BY THOMSON

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Veterans Enjoy Road Trip to Worthing

This week, Taxi sat down with London Cab Driver Paul Cook, who recently decided to find out what Taxi Charity for Military Veterans was all about.

TAXI Hi Paul, good to meet you, please introduce yourself.

Paul: Great to meet you too. My name is Paul Cook, I live in Barnehurst and have been a London Cab Driver for 17 years and drive a white TX4 which I use for weddings.

TAXI How did you get involved with the Taxi Charity?

Paul: My good friends, cab drivers Colin Mills and Dean Euesden, have for years been telling me about what an amazing time they have volunteering for the Taxi Charity and saying I ought to get involved. I repeatedly told them that I was too busy to do any volunteering and although I knew they thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the veterans I didn't think it was for me.

TAXI So, what changed?

Paul: I got a phone call from the charity in May to say that a driver had had to drop out of their trip to The Netherlands and Colin and Dean had suggested to the organiser that I might be able to help. I tentatively agreed and two days later I was on my way to Harwich with a WWII veteran on my way to the continent.

TAXI And what was it like?

Paul: I can honestly say that I had the best time on that first trip and really regret not signing up as a volunteer years ago. I can't put into words what it's like to be part of the Taxi Charity family and spend time with these incredible people. I had a WWII veteran in my cab called Bill Gladden, who flew into Normandy on D-Day. He was such great company and was very happy to answer my questions and share his stories. Bill is well-known to Taxi, not only for his WWII story but you have also shared his great love of art and featured some of his pictures.

My Grandfather, Raymond Robert Cook, was a member of the Barnes Wallis team who developed the bouncing bomb used by the RAF in Operation Chastis, which everyone knows as the Dambuster raid that attacked the dams of the Ruhr Valley during WWII. I asked Bill if



he would paint a picture for me and I am over the moon with what he has created for me. A great tribute to the work of my Grandfather that the family will always treasure.

TAXI As well as The Netherlands, what other trips have you done?

Paul: I was part of the charity trip to Normandy for the D-Day commemorations in June. Then, on 5th July, I was one of the 60 cabs that took a group of veterans to Worthing. It's a trip that the charity has been doing since 1948! I picked up two Chelsea Pensioners from the Royal Hospital and took them to the rendezvous point in South Holmwood near Dorking in Surrey, before heading down the A24 for a meal and entertainment on Worthing Pier.

The villagers of South Holmwood are amazing and I was lucky to chat with resident Ian Fairbrother who hasn't missed a Taxi Charity visit for 74 years! They had prepared a huge buffet for us and offered copious cups of tea or beers, and



had dressed the village hall with bunting.

As we set off for Worthing, some of the villagers came up to the road to wave us off. We were met in Worthing by the Mayor and Town Crier, as well as a crowd of locals and tourists. The veterans and cabs certainly draw attention everywhere we go and it's a great advert for the London Cab trade and generosity of the volunteer drivers.

Once in the Promenade Room on the pier, we enjoyed a fish and chip lunch followed by ice cream and strawberries, and were then treated to an inspirational guest speaker. The charity had arranged



Ian and Sue Fairbrother, in South Holmwood, welcoming cab drivers and veterans from the Taxi Charity

for Darren 'Swiftie' Swift, a double above-knee amputee injured by an IRA bomb in 1991 while serving with the Army's Dog Unit in Belfast, to share his story. His inspirational speech took the audience through so many emotions, including despair and hope, and there were quite a few tears as he finished. The room gave him a much-deserved standing ovation.

TAXI What's next for you?

Paul: Three drivers have just returned from a few days in Belgium, supporting the charity Waterloo Uncovered that combines an archaeology project on the battlefield of Waterloo with a support program for veterans and the military community, which sounded great fun. For me, I'm waiting for the next call to see how I might be able to help.

TAXI

To find out more about the type of support the Taxi Charity offers veterans, or to donate, please visit www.taxicharity.org

About the Taxi Charity

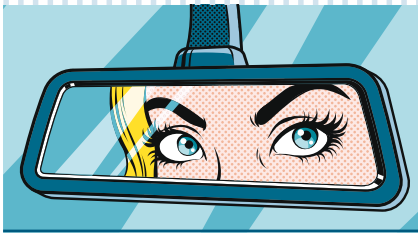
The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans of all ages since 1948. The charity arranges free trips to Belgium, France and The Netherlands for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or fundraising events across the UK, 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 75th anniversary.

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

www.taxicharity.org



Feeling Hot, Hot, Hot?



If I could sleep in my cab I would, because it's so lovely and chill. And because indoors all Mr. Meg wants to talk about is the weather.

A woman of words

More than anything in the world right now—more than Mr. Meg and even the mini Megs—I love the aircon in my cab.

Every fare climbing into the back is a slimy, sweaty mess after just a few moments on the scorching London pavement. And me? I'm like Elsa from *Frozen*, cool and composed.

If I could sleep in my cab I would, because it's so lovely and chill. And because indoors all Mr. Meg wants to talk about is the weather. Correction: moan about the weather.

There's a metal, fish-shaped thermometer, two-foot long, hanging on the back fence in our garden. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Meg found it in a skip. The thing is so

ugly and doesn't work properly but he considers it a treasure because it was free. In this heatwave he checks it a few times an hour and announces the temperature in a shouty, town crier kind of voice. In Fahrenheit.

"67 and climbing!" he yelled in a panicked voice around 8am this morning.

Mr. Meg thinks it is unbearably hot when it's 65 degrees Fahrenheit, so you can imagine the tizzy he gets himself into when it's 91 outside. He has some favourite—and oh so irritating—hot weather phrases, including, "*You could fry an egg out there!*" and "*It's so hot out there even the squirrels are leaving their nuts uncovered!*"

Talking of nuts, Mr. Meg wears shorts all year round and only,

reluctantly, covers his knees when they are about to get frostbite. He especially loves one pair: a heavy duty canvas in camouflage print. They were a bargain at £2.49 from an army surplus store circa 1983.

He says they are vintage. I say they are clamping and roasting his manhood and costing us a lot of money in Vaseline.

Mr. Meg likes to think he is the same shape as he was in his teens: a hungry-looking lad with a 28-inch waist. Today, if you add up 1 and 9 and 8 and 3 and double the answer you're getting close to his, *ahem*, mature measurements.

Over the years, he has inserted panels and elastic into the shorts to

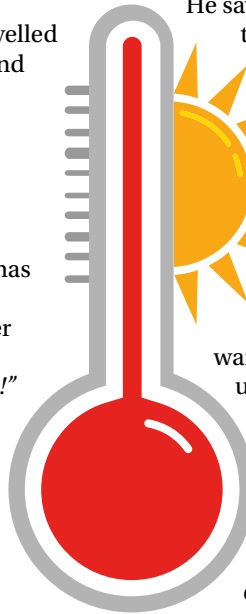
keep the 'Look, they still fit!' lie alive. But moving on from the hot shorts and we get to his summer footwear. Apparently, socks and sandals are back in. Here at Meg Towers, they seemingly never went out.

Then, there is his unseasonal long-sleeved T-Shirt because he insists he needs his arms covered for tackling 'big jobs' in the house and garden.

He's not living in the wilderness and wrestling bears. He cuts the grass with an electric mower and dead-heads the roses. He won't be in any mortal danger if he wears a short-sleeved one, that's for sure.

Right now, he is laying on the lawn under the water sprinkler, getting his far-too-tight shorts, long-sleeved top and socks wet. He called over to me, "*I can't take this anymore, Meg! I'm hotter than a jalapeno's armpit!*"

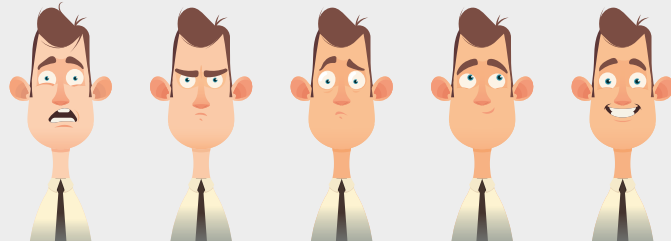
I'm off to drink an iced tea and read a book in my cab. Bliss. **TAXI**



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PUZZLER ANSWERS



Crossword

	S	T	A	R	S	T	U	D	D	E	D	
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SUDOKU

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

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: BLACKMAIL

All words: Alkali, bail, bill, claim, climb, kill, lick, lilac, limb, mail, mica, milk, mill, BLACKMAIL.

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

Futoshiki

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