

COVER STORY

STEVE MCNAMARA **Page 5**

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW LONDON?

Page 16

THE SUPERMARKET POISONER

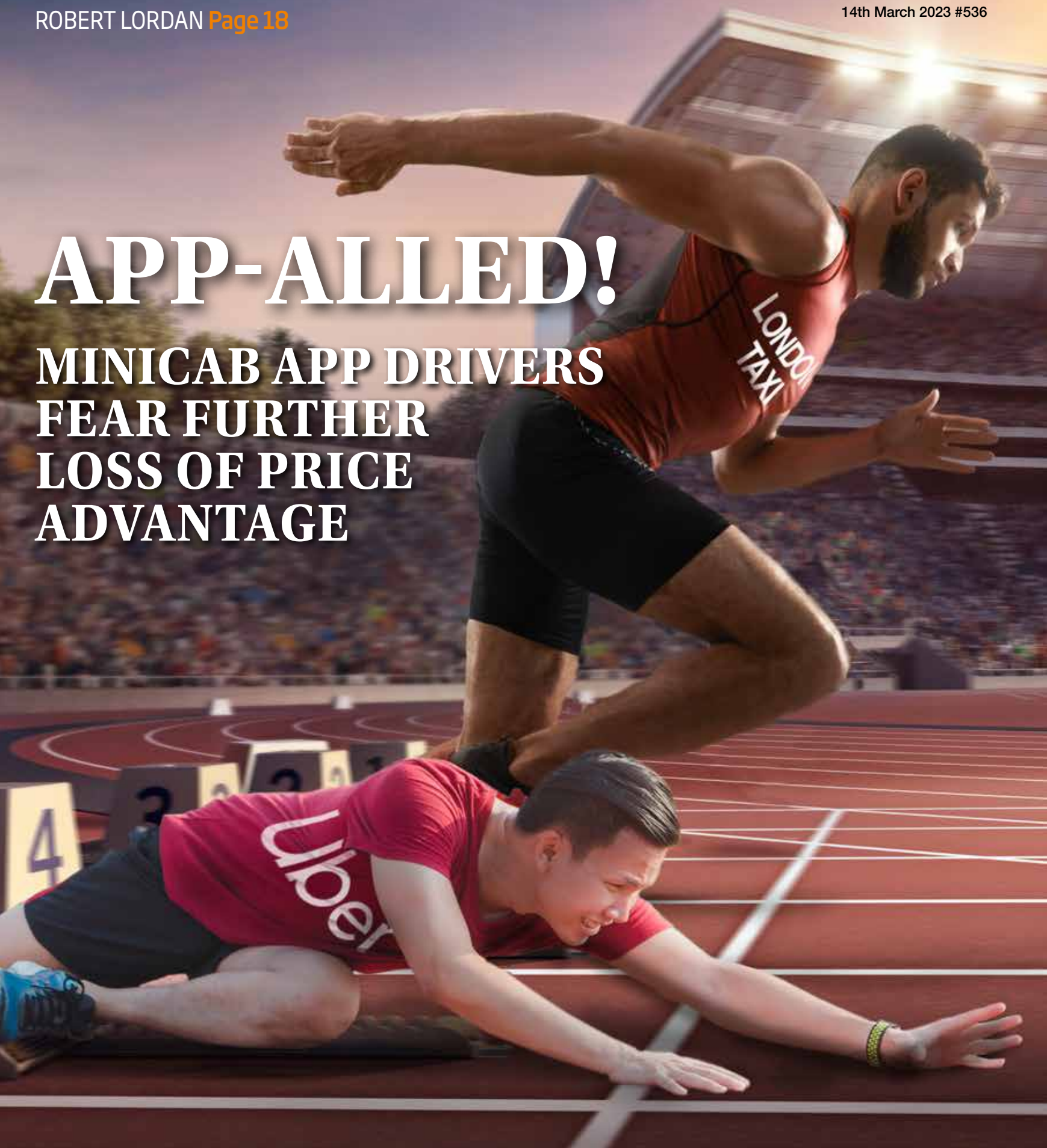
ROBERT LORDAN **Page 18**



14th March 2023 #536

APP-ALLED!

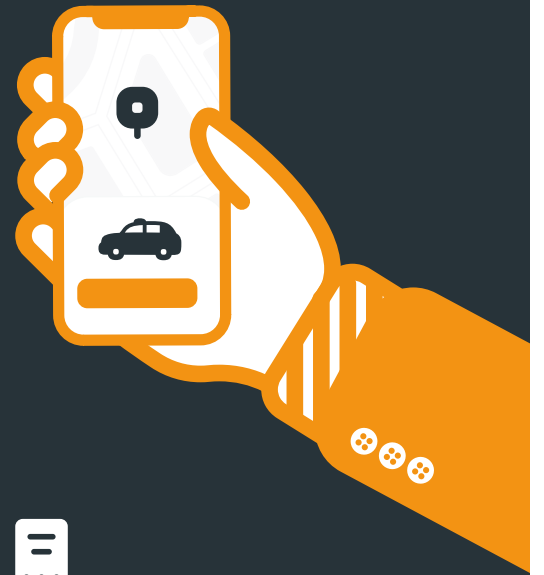
MINICAB APP DRIVERS FEAR FURTHER LOSS OF PRICE ADVANTAGE



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Inside... 14.03:23

- 3 | News
- 5 | Steve McNamara
- 6 | Paul Brennan
- 8 | Anthony Street
- 10 | Lloyd Baldwin
- 12 | Suzanne Sullivan
- 14 | Steve Kenton
- 15 | LTDA Lottery
- 16 | So You Think You Know London?
- 18 | Rob Lordan
- 20 | What's On? West End
- 22 | Phil Brown
- 26 | **EXCLUSIVE:**
Taxi Charity
- 27 | Puzzler
- 30 | Musher Meg
Puzzler answers

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SINGING CABBIE TO GET 'STARSTRUCK' ON ITV

London's Sensational Singing Cabbie Aiden Kent will be performing on ITV's hit show 'Starstruck' in which superfans and performers turn into their idols.

Can he make it through the heats and on to the final to bag the £50,000 first prize? Make sure you're watching to find out and support one of London's finest. Tune in to ITV1 on Saturday 18th March at 8.30pm.

TAXI TRADE MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

To mark International Women's Day, organisations and businesses across London's taxi trade celebrated women taxi drivers. *The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans* hosted an event at the RAF Club in Piccadilly, attended by over 90 guests including women veterans, serving personnel and Taxi Charity volunteers. The guests were welcomed to the event by Taxi Charity Vice President, Frances Wyhowska, who spoke about the changing roles of women in the military. TfL also tweeted to mark the day, encouraging women to think about learning the Knowledge. Lisa Seymour, a cabbie and LTDA member was also interviewed by Eddie Nestor on BBC Radio London, discussing what a great job driving a cab is for a woman and how more should consider doing the Knowledge. Lisa is championing and mentoring women to join the trade through her Knowledge class for women, held once a month at Taxi House.



Bolt 'BOLT BLACK CAB' RECRUITING DRIVERS

Ride sharing app, *Bolt*, is looking to move into the black cab business. The app is now recruiting drivers, with plans to launch a black cab service on its app at the end of April. The app promises drivers the chance to "earn the metered fare". Drivers will be charged a £2 commission but as the journey is classed as having been booked online, they can add a £2 booking fee to the meter, which *Bolt* say means the driver "isn't out of pocket". Green badge drivers can apply online now. Cabbies who sign up and activate their account by 30th April will reportedly pay no commission on all trips completed for the first six months from the launch.



LEVC CELEBRATES MILESTONE FOR TX

LEVC has marked an important milestone, with the TX overtaking the diesel-powered TX4, as the most common black cab in operation, representing more than 40% of all black cabs in London. The TX is the world's most advanced electric taxi and since its launch in 2018, has travelled more than 534 million miles and prevented 162,000 tonnes of CO2 being emitted into the atmosphere. LEVC has recently announced a new brand strategy to become a leading zero-carbon mobility technology company. LEVC's new direction will see it grow beyond manufacturing the world's most advanced taxi, the TX, and commit to delivering smart, green, safe, and accessible mobility solutions to more people than ever before.



65 MINICAB DRIVERS' LICENCES REVOKED FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES

Transport for London (TfL) revoked 327 Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) drivers licences in 2022 for non-medical related reasons. According to the figures released in response to a Freedom of Information Request (FOI), 39 minicab driver's licences were revoked for serious sexual offences and a further 26 for 'other' sexual offences. Other reasons for these drivers losing their licences included non-sexual abuse, drink and drug driving, dishonesty, fraudulent identifiers and drivers being arrested or charged with a serious offence.



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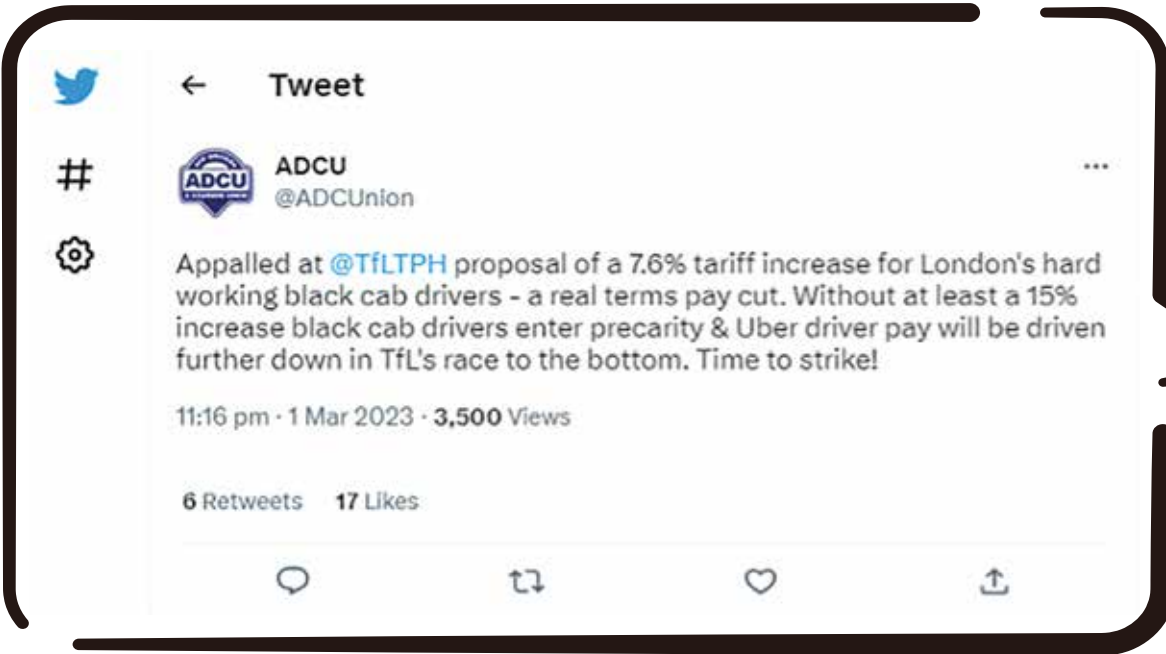


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Fares Increase & Legal Wins

The more sceptical amongst you may doubt the sincerity or concern for our welfare coming from minicab drivers, who are dependant on Uber fares for their survival.



to keep his DVLA licence on the grounds of exceptional hardship, after our lawyers represented him in court, and believe me, that is no easy feat. Having won in the courts, TfL then revoked his cab licence, effectively putting him out of work, and his family into potential financial misery. We appealed the TfL decision to one of their 'reconsideration' hearings, only to get yet another knock back under their new six points and out policy. Our lawyers then appealed this refusal to the courts and were again successful, enabling our member to return to work, hopefully carefully!

With the number of cameras growing, vigilante cyclists and TfL's new policies, going to work without your LTDA membership can be a risky business. If you are not already a member scan this code and get the peace of mind that so many of your colleagues already enjoy. **LTDA**



Steve's comment

Last week, saw the Tfl Board's Finance Committee approve an increase in our tariff of 7.61%, which will be applied from April. The increase will be applied to all Tariffs 1, 2 and 3.

The annual cost index, traditionally used to calculate our fares, had actually indicated an increase of 11.64%, comprised of 7.61% increase in operating costs and a 4.02% increase in average national earnings. It was the 11.64% that all the trade groups had called for, in a joint submission we made.

The response from various quarters in our trade was mixed, some drivers thought 11.64% was too high and would impact on our work levels, others thought the exact opposite, it was divided.

PH drivers 'appalled'

The one surprise to everyone was a tweet from a private hire drivers' union, the App Drivers and Couriers Union, (ADCU), whose members are mainly Uber and other app drivers, criticising the rise as putting us in 'precarity'. Thanks to my dictionary, I now know, precarity means in a precarious or uncertain state!

The more sceptical amongst you may doubt the sincerity or concern for our welfare, coming from minicab drivers dependant on Uber fares for their survival. Their true motive was hinted at of course, when they stated that 'Uber's fares will be driven down by this decision.' The response from cabbies on Twitter was as robust as usual and was to be expected, with many suggesting that with Uber's fares being on par with ours, and often higher, Uber wanted us to push our prices up to lure our customers back onto their flailing app.

Successes on social media

Whilst on the subject of social media, it's no secret that I am not a fan of a lot of the stuff that goes on, on cabbie feeds and sites, a lot of which is untrue. Many of those posting this kind of content are not even real cabbies, and often it causes more problems than it solves. But occasionally, I do learn stuff, I wasn't aware of! It was through a post on a Facebook page that I learned our legal department had saved yet another cabbie, and his family, from the wrath of TfL!

We are now doing so many court hearings and TfL appeals, that our lawyers are spending more

time in courts and hearings than they are at Taxi House. On the few occasions we run into each other in the lift or on the stairs they forget to keep me updated on the victories, and there are many. They are often straight onto the next case, with very little time to take stock after a win, so I popped down to our in-house legal department to find out more.

No easy feat

In this case, a member with 15 points had been allowed





Taxi Numbers Down in the City

The only reason there has been such a big drop in the number of cabs in the City, is due to the fact that it is no longer a desirable place to work for a cabbie.

Top rank

I have now spoken with several City of London officials, who have relayed to me the very real concerns they have about falling taxi volumes. This follows a recent report which confirmed what we already know (and exactly what I had told them would happen), that the number of taxis operating in the Square Mile has plummeted.

I warned City of London representatives on a number of occasions, that if the rollout of road restrictions for taxis continued then taxi availability would drop. Some within the City probably shouted 'hurrah, that's exactly what we

want', but I was clear that this would cause a number of serious issues.

According to the report I've seen, there has been a 20 per cent reduction in availability during the day and during the evening, a 50 per cent drop. Confusingly, the same report also stated in one place that taxi volumes in the City, are 'at or close' to pre-pandemic levels at times. No doubt this is true at one or two of the 30 odd monitoring points used, perhaps on the outskirts of one of the zones with taxi restrictions in place it could possibly have shown that?

It was put to me by more than one of the City officials I've spoken with recently, in various meetings and working groups, that they had been told it might be because taxi drivers are all old men. The implication of this was that they are all at home with

a cup of cocoa in the evening, that explains the drop-off in the evenings. Obviously, they put it more politely than that. I pointed out that the age demographics of taxi drivers has not changed in the 27 years that I have been driving a cab, let alone the last four years. Our membership surveys also show this. In fact, the only reason there has been such a big drop in the number of cabs in the City, is due to the fact that it is no longer a desirable place to work for a cabbie.

I informed them that the significant restrictions imposed on taxi drivers during the day, means that it no longer enters the mind of a driver to go there for work. Why would we go to the City and face the mentally challenging and draining conditions now put before us?

Drivers go to other areas where

restrictions are less widespread, and each journey is not a soul-destroying experience. 'Yes, but some of the restrictions finish at 7pm' they say. So what! Do you really think that after avoiding the City all day and making a good living elsewhere in town, we're suddenly going to think 'Oh it's 7 pm, I can now enter Bank Junction or use Bishopsgate, come on boys and girls let's go fill our boots in the City'? Of course not, out of sight and out of mind during the day, leads to out of sight and out of mind in the evening, and if our exclusion from key roads continues this will likely remain to be the case. I don't have the figures, but I am sure this also goes for boroughs like Hackney, Camden and Islington, which continue to roll out restrictions. ■ LTDA

6



Obituary – Jamie Roberts

A well-respected champion of the trade

It was a massive shock and a serious blow to hear that we had lost Jamie to the cab rank in the sky, not just because he was far too young, but also because I know we have lost a true gentleman from our trade.

The one word that has been used again and again to describe Jamie and his relationship with the trade, that he clearly loved, is 'passionate'. A word often overused when referencing a 'character' in the trade. In Jamie's case, it is absolutely the right word. As well as being very vocal and very passionate, he was also very humble and void of any arrogance or self-importance, which is a rare thing, I can tell you.

Jamie was without doubt UCG through and through but above that he was 'London Taxi trade' through and through. I always greeted Jamie with an inner smile and respect, knowing it would be time well spent and always parted with those feelings still very much intact. I would like to offer the LTDA's and my own sincere condolences to his family, his friends, and his colleagues at the UCG.

When my counterpart from

UCG, Karen spoke of his passing she said: *"We've lost a great advocate for our trade, he was more than a member of our Committee he was a great friend and someone we cared for deeply, we are all still reeling from the loss."*

I also wanted to share some words from UCG General Secretary, Trevor Merralls.

"Jamie was known and loved by many in the trade. Colleagues who worked with him, saw he was passionate, loyal, and formidable in character with a fire he was not afraid to show. He was also deeply compassionate when others needed support and incredibly funny."

Jamie was a passionate trade representative with a long and important legacy with the UCG based on his love for the taxi trade which he gained from his father Michael a now retired cabbie. Jamie was previously the UCG's Chairman and Ranks & Highways Officer and was an integral part in their organisation."

The funeral will be held at 11.30am on Wednesday 29th March 2023 at Basildon Crematorium, Church Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex SS13 2HG.





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Where to?



The Best Cover By Miles

The grounds on which a taxi driver's licence could be revoked or suspended have grown in recent years. Make sure you're protected.

Streets ahead

As all drivers will be aware, there are many legal issues that could threaten your licence, your livelihood and ability to support your family. Drivers can now find themselves in difficulties all too easily, and it's not just things that happen whilst driving your cab that could put your licence, and your finances at risk.

I remember a driver, who arrived at the LTDA out of office hours, desperately hoping he could speak to someone about a parking ticket that had escalated from £65 to £513. This member had followed the correct process. He had appealed the ticket when it was at £65 and then received no further communication from the issuing authority. Sometime later, a £513 bailiffs letter landed on his door mat, with an 'Out of Time' Statutory Declaration. This needed to be signed in front of a solicitor before it was returned to the Court for them to decide the driver's fate. The Declaration had three days left to be completed, before the dreaded bailiffs would come knocking. Luckily, we were able to help that member and get all of his paperwork sorted in time, as one of our team was on hand when he needed us most.

In-person representation

We also have members, who have been arrested for various alleged offences or asked to attend a police station for an interview, over what amounts in the end to a misunderstanding, but could cost a driver dearly. The LTDA legal team believe the best legal representation is always provided in person - that is why all our members get 24 hours a day, seven days a week legal assistance. If you are a member of the LTDA, I want to remind you never to sign or speak to the police on any matter related to an arrest, unless



a LTDA lawyer is present. Our lawyers attend the police station immediately. They advise the client before they are interviewed formally and depending on the case, they are often able to resolve the matter and ensure that no further action is taken often, getting the driver back on the road and earning again in just a few hours.

More ways to lose your licence

The grounds on which a taxi driver's licence could be

revoked or suspended have grown in recent years. They now include being convicted of a single mobile phone offence which results in six penalty points, which could see your licence revoked. Driving too close to a cyclist could also be deemed as 'driving without reasonable consideration' and classed as a major motoring offence, again threatening your licence. More than one conviction for a major driving offence within five years would also merit a licence refusal and no further licence application would be considered until seven years from your last offence.

We are also being contacted by many members, who have recently received a Notice of Intended Prosecution (NIP) after being unknowingly filmed holding or interacting in some way with a mobile phone behind the wheel by a cyclist. I cannot stress this enough - at no time driving or whilst stationary in traffic should you hold or even touch your mobile phone, unless it's in a cradle, because the odds are now stacked against you.



Members who reach 12 penalty points or more on their DVLA licence through the "totting up" procedure can also lose their taxi licence. A driver in this position used to attend court with our legal team, to make their case for retaining their driving licence on the grounds of 'exceptional hardship', and we had a good success rate. This still happens but it is becoming harder to win these cases, with judges taking a harder line on when exceptional hardship should be granted. Then, even if a driver retains their DVLA licence, TfL now has the right to take away your taxi licence under their new policy, if you have 12 or more points. So we now have to have further battles with reconsideration hearings, and in some cases another trip to Magistrates' Court to overturn TfL's decision.

The LTDA currently has around 70 to 80 ongoing cases pending. Our legal department is the busiest we've ever seen it, but we will continue to provide the best legal assistance to our members, no matter what the costs.

What is the latest update on the Euro V to Euro VI conversion?

With many drivers still hanging on waiting for an answer as to whether TfL will approve the Euro V diesel cabs to Euro VI Conversion for the Mercedes Vito we asked TfL for an update. It's been like a game of tennis between HJS and TfL, and it's been going on for some time, back and forth. They have now been given the green light for the cab to undergo a 10,000 miles road test to be carried out in London. When this has been completed, the cab will go to Millbrook for the final testing. Hopefully, we should have an answer from TfL as to whether they will approve it, by summer this year. The TX4 will need to have further modifications which will follow. ■ LTDA

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Always Check the Rear View

I think that over the vast majority of my cabbing life the traffic has always been the same, terrible.

M4 musings

The Congestion Charge recently turned 20 and the anniversary was marked by TfL and the media. It's hard to believe it has been 20 years since the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone introduced it. I have to ask, has much really changed?

20 years on

I remember the first few weeks were very quiet traffic wise, but Red Ken cleverly started it during a school holiday, and as we all know traffic levels drop when the kids are off school. As a taxi driver, it was always a double-edged sword when the children broke up from school for the summer's holidays. On one side, we had a good six weeks of no traffic, but on the other hand work levels dropped off. Soon after those initial weeks, the traffic levels returned to normal as far as I am concerned.

The original charge was £5 a day. At the time, I remember Jeremy Clarkson saying that if Ken really wanted to stop the hideous traffic levels, then he should have made it £50 a day, and then we would see a dramatic drop. He doesn't always get things right but on this point, Clarkson was of course correct.

I do think that over the vast majority of my cabbing life (which showing my age, started well before the Congestion Charge), the traffic has always been the same, terrible. So, it's my opinion that the Congestion Charge has made little to no difference.

You can imagine my shock last week, when I watched ITV News' coverage about the 20th Anniversary and heard a TfL representative give an interview, in which he claimed that traffic levels were down 30 per cent and that the Congestion Charge had transformed our city. (It's worth noting that as above, when the children are off school, traffic levels do drop by around 10 per cent).



It's behind you!

The TfL rep absolutely absolutely refuted the interviewer's claim that City Hall and Transport for London's policies have basically brought London to a standstill. Unfortunately, the spokesperson did this interview outside, against a backdrop of hundreds of vehicles stuck in traffic. The irony wasn't lost on me. What's the old saying about Emperor Nero fiddling whilst Rome burned?

This brought to mind the famous interview Saddam Hussein's Minister of Information gave during the Gulf War, when he claimed that the Allies were nowhere near Baghdad, whilst you could see Allied tanks rolling past in the background. This is by no means the same thing and I don't mean to compare any of this to the actions of that brutal regime, but perhaps in both instances the interviewee should have realised what was going on behind them when they were speaking.

Oh no it isn't

I was also disappointed that the interviewer did not squeeze the TfL spokesperson on the fact that London had, I believe earlier that day, been voted as the

'World's Most Congested City', for the second year running. Although, I suspect even if the interviewer had raised this, his answer would have been 'No, it's not' or 'well it's better than it would be without us'. His attitude and answers were very

uncompromising, similar to the way current Mayor, Sadiq Khan, has addressed criticism of his plans for the ULEZ expansion, including most recently suggesting that those who oppose it are "in coalition" with the far right and "Covid deniers". ■ LTDA

Half Moon Street PCNs



I am seeing a high number of PCNs issued by Westminster for the yellow box at the junction of Half Moon Street and Piccadilly. Be careful there! This seems to have taken over from the Berkley Street, Piccadilly one, as a source of income for Westminster.

Perhaps all the income generated from these PCNs will be ring fenced to pay for a new set of lights at Bolton Street, every time a private hire driver takes them out. I am sure many of you will have been following the story of these lights, which have become pretty notorious on social media channels.





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Card Machine Conundrums

I honestly know very few people who would happily go to work with no guarantee of getting paid.

Airports & beyond

On Tuesday 24th January, all the unions had a meeting with Tfl Compliance at Heathrow. The hottest topic was drivers' having a second hand-held card machine to take payments. Tfl were adamant that no taxi driver should carry a second device.

Back-up

We all stated that this wasn't ideal, as all of us and many of our members often can't get reception on our Tfl regulated machines and struggle to be paid. I asked them what their objection to this was? Their reply was that they get customers who write in, concerned as to why the driver needs to use another credit card payment facility.

Apparently customers get suspicious and think the driver is using another credit card system to scam them. Call me naive, but I don't know of any driver that would risk their badge in scamming anyone. The Knowledge was a hard slog for me and the last thing I would want is to try to gain anything that would put me at risk of losing my badge. Scamming anyone certainly would not change my life for the better!

I did ask Tfl compliance, "How would you like to go to work and not get paid?" I think all agreed they wouldn't like that, but it's exactly what happened to me recently. Anyone who is familiar with the airport, will know that you can get a local journey and only have an hour to complete it. Well, I got a job to Chiswick Park (local and often difficult to complete within the hour). My fare was just over £50 and the card payment failed three times.

I wasted ten minutes trying to get paid. I then made the decision to let the customer off and get back within the hour, in the hope of a better job and making my money up. My customer was really concerned that she didn't have to pay, but if I had taken her to a cash point, there was also no guarantee in it working. So, I gambled on heading back within my allocated

time and it paid off.

Later, I wrote to my credit card payment provider. Luckily, they could see I had attempted to take a payment three times and in this instance, they compensated me for my loss of earnings. It's not always so easy to prove though.

After speaking to a lot of members, I know I'm not alone in this. This is a problem across the board, with all Tfl approved credit card systems. I'm sure as you read this that many of you will be nodding in agreement. I honestly know very few people who would happily go to work with no guarantee of getting paid. If Tfl are going to remain strict in their rules, surely they need to assist drivers in coming up with a solution to this common problem.

Overhaul failure

I had my cab up for overhaul on 28th February. It's seven years old and last year, for the first time, I decided to let a garage present it for me. It paid off, as it passed, and I let them do all the running around. It didn't cost me much more and it was stress free. I had presented it myself the previous five years and it passed every time, but I fancied a break.

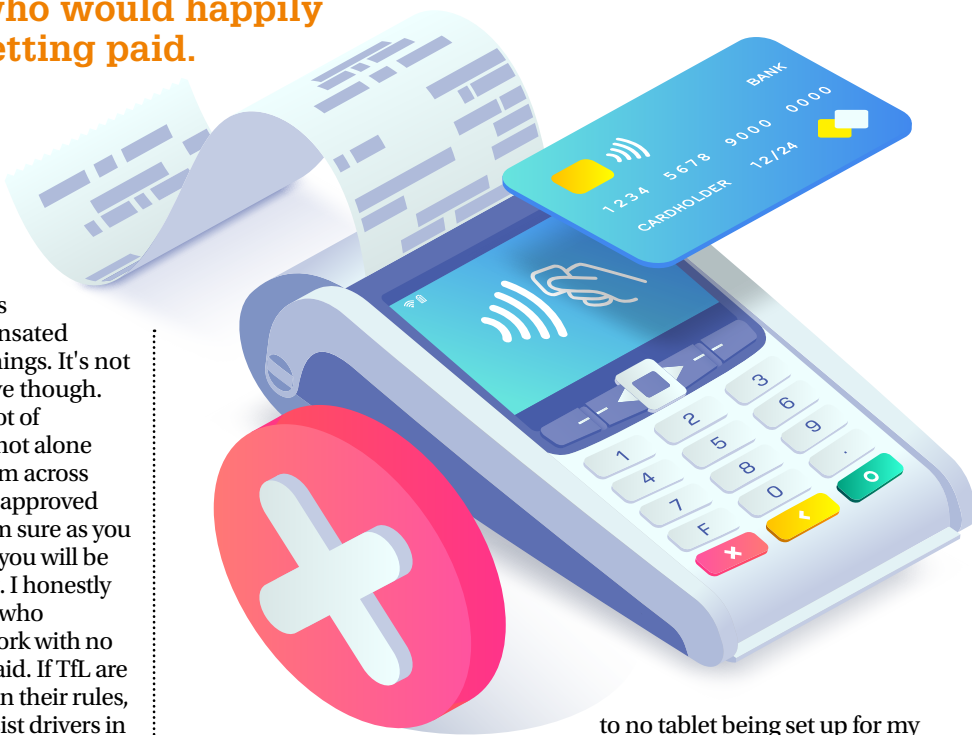
This year, I decided to do the

same, with the same garage. I dropped it off on Monday 27th February early, so they could do any necessary work. Before leaving, I asked if they would like me to set up my credit card machine, as it was in the boot. They said no need, they would look after that. My overhaul was booked for midday Tuesday 28th February. Can you imagine my horror when I got an e-mail from Tfl to say I had been booked in for a retest two days later?

I rang my garage and it was then I was informed it had failed due

to no tablet being set up for my credit card payment system. I wasn't happy. When I asked how this had happened the garage admitted they had no explanation for it. At least they were honest!

Thankfully as I am part of the LTDA, I got Anthony Street on the case for me and I was booked in again the following morning, early. I would have lost two days' money on something so trivial. So be warned, get your credit card system completely up and running before you present it. I think next year I'll go back to doing it myself.



12



Would you like to be a Heathrow Warden?

We are currently wishing to recruit a few more wardens at Heathrow. If you hold a tag, have worked as a regular for one year or more, and are interested in assisting your colleagues in getting the ranks moving quickly, please see me in the LTDA office at Heathrow. Anyone can apply, you don't need to be an LTDA member.

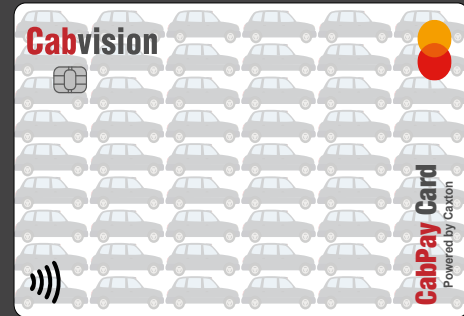
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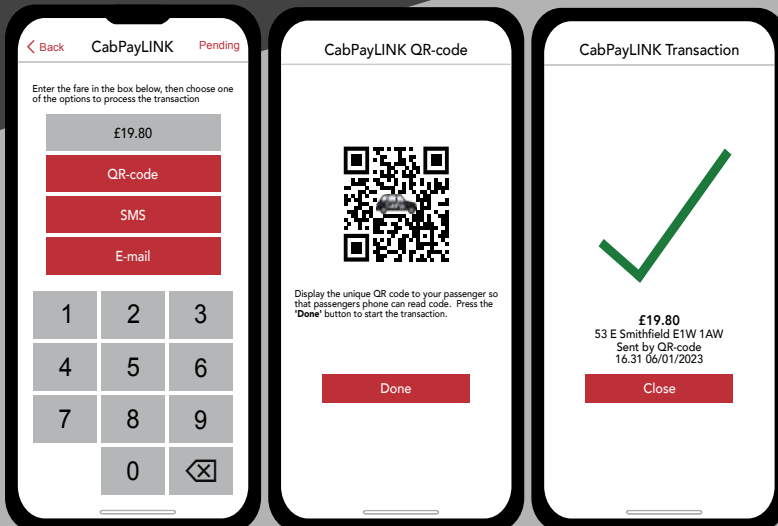
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From the Cradle to the Employment Grave

Over the course of a lifetime we will all witness absurdity in abundance, with stupidity taking many forms.

A man in black

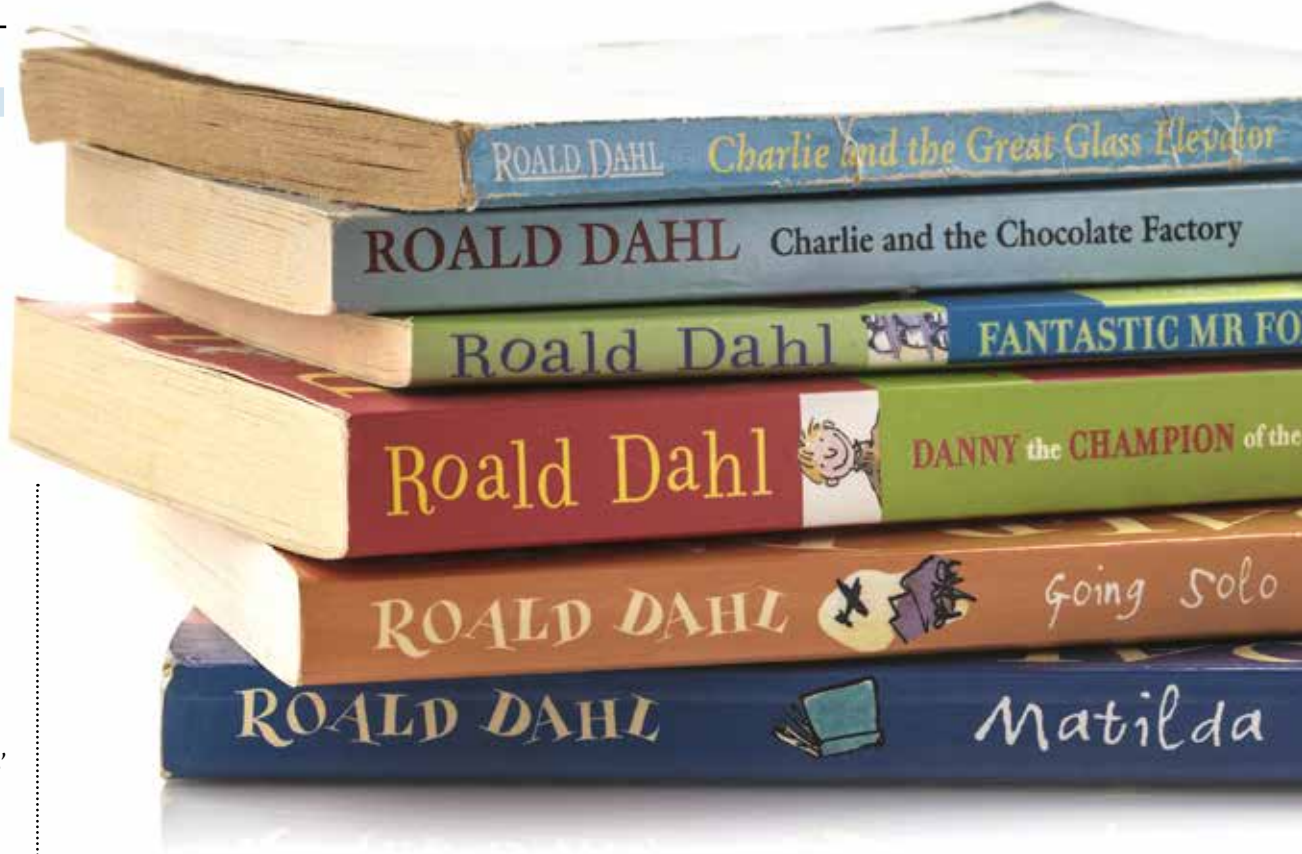
In what is the latest social controversy to make headlines, editions of Roald Dahl's children's books have been rewritten with sensitivity in mind. According to the Telegraph, The Roald Dahl Story Company, alongside publishers Puffin, have undertaken a review of Dahl's works and changed some terminology which they have deemed problematic in the modern era. Out will go references to weight, mental health, violence and gender, replacing them with more 'socially acceptable' phrases.

Charlie And The Chocolate Factory's Augustus Gloop will now be described as 'enormous' as opposed to 'fat'; a word which is being removed from every book, as Loompas will be described as 'small people' rather than 'small men'.

The move has been criticised by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, whose official Downing Street spokesman said: "When it comes to our rich and varied literary heritage, the Prime Minister agrees with the BFG that we shouldn't gobblefunk around with words." The official added: "I think it's important that works of literature and works of fiction are preserved and not airbrushed. We have always defended the right to free speech and expression."

Given the Government's current performance over the last few years in relation to its manifesto, it's hardly surprising the PM wishes to preserve works of fiction. And to be completely balanced, you will find London Mayor Sadiq Khan's occupying space next to theirs on the fiction aisle.

With all of the above in mind, surely it may only be a matter of time before Queen classic, *Fat Bottom Girls*, gets renamed *Rotund Rear-End Ladies*, while the rock group Ugly Kid Joe become Aesthetically Challenged Joe. Speaking of absurd and inexplicable



decisions people make, so is driving with your mobile phone in hand (yes, the preamble did eventually lead somewhere).

Afternoon delight

Despite the recent emphasis on the evils of driving whilst using a mobile phone, legislation to combat this has actually been in place since 2003. Unfortunately, the original rules had a gaping loophole, with the law failing to cover hand-held usage. Therefore, you could have been playing a game of *Carmageddon* on your phone and there wasn't a darned thing that Officer Dibble could do about it.

This bizarre loophole was finally closed in 2022, when it became illegal to hold a mobile phone whilst driving, where breaking this law could lead to a £200 fine and six points on your licence. However, despite it being closed, taxi drivers are still grabbing hold of the phone while driving, which is utterly absurd.

Now, we all know there are some who like to be a bit rebellious and push the envelope. But if you are sitting in the middle of a traffic jam in Hyde Park, looking at Paddy Power's latest

betting odds or scanning Tinder for a spot of afternoon delight, and the phone is in your hand, then you're asking for trouble.

Peeping Mikey

Unless you've been in hibernation, you'll likely be aware of the latest in a long line of two-wheeled road warriors: Michael van Erp. Otherwise known as Cycling Mikey, he has caused quite a bit of controversy. Famed for donning a head-cam and peering into people's cars, he's on the hunt for drivers holding their mobile phones while sitting in traffic. He then films the driver and their details and uploads it to police via the internet. He also uploads the videos to his YouTube channel, which has over 90,000 subscribers and nearly 48 million views. The offending driver is then given six points and a £200 fine. Cycling Mikey isn't alone; there's a sizable number of cyclists doing this, including TV and radio presenter, Jeremy Vine.

Points make bans

Now here is the awkward bit. While Mr. van Erp and Mr.

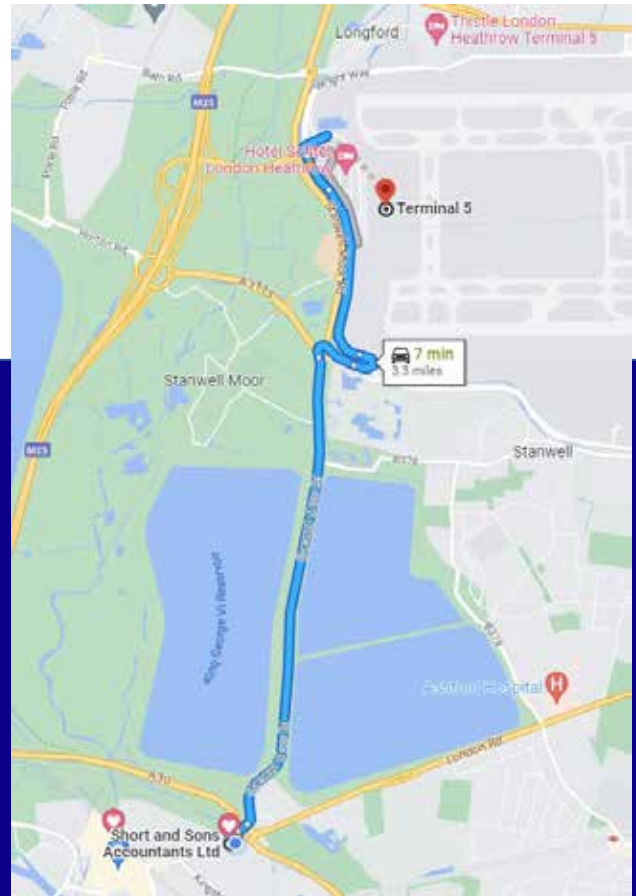
Vine are rubbing their hands together at the thought of capturing an unsuspecting cabbie, you are now left sweating like Augustus Gloop in a sweet shop, terrified that you are going to lose your livelihood. The next step sees you approach your chosen org in a bid to save your taxi licence. Given that Transport for London (TfL) has recently adopted a variation on the current DVSA points system, as part of a driver's condition of fitness, the six points received because you can't keep your hands off of your phone will see you unemployed for a period of time.

It pains me to say, but if you are unfortunate enough to lose your livelihood, it isn't down to Cycling Mikey filming you. It isn't down to TfL for revoking your licence either. It isn't down to your org or solicitor for failing to get a revocation overturned. It's entirely down to you for having your phone in your hand, which is utterly absurd.

The simplest solution to this problem? Buy a cradle. You are then safe against the Peeping Mikeys of this world. ■ TAXI



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David Lessman has been a cabbie and member of the LTDA for almost 50 years. He buys five tickets a month to make sure he's in it to win it!

David plans to take his good lady wife, who is currently recovering from knee surgery, on a well-deserved holiday. We would like to thank David for his loyal support over his many years as a member. We also wish his wife a full and speedy recovery!

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David Lessman receiving his cheque for £5000 from LTDA Chairman, Paul Brennan.

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To be in it to win it, scan above to enter online or call **020 7286 1046** and ask about the LTDA Lottery.



Where'd the Isle of Dogs get its name?

Every taxi driver in London knows where the Isle of Dogs is situated. This large peninsula, surrounded on three sides by the River Thames, has become one of the most popular areas in London to both live and work. Housing Canary Wharf, it has also become one of the UK's major financial districts; however, did you know that the name Isle of Dogs had no official status until the late 1980s and nobody knows where the name actually comes from?

Originally marshland, the island sat several feet below water at high tide. Human habitation was made possible during the Middle Ages by a process known as inking or embanking the Thames. For centuries, the whole area was known as Stepney Marsh, before becoming known as The Island in the 19th century.

The first known reference to its current name was when The Isle of Dogges appeared in the Thamesis Descriptio of 1588. The name is next applied to the Isle of Dogs Farm (originally known as Pomfret Manor) shown on a map from 1683.

Yet the name itself is a mystery, with half a dozen theories attached to it. One of the most enduring explanations is that the King kennelled his hunting dogs on the island, although nobody knows which king. Another explanation is that the name's a corruption of Isle of Dutch, with the belief that it derived from the Dutch engineers who drained the area in the 1600s.

A Dutch theme continues, with the suggestion that the island was originally called Isle of Doggers. A dogger was a Dutch fishing boat and, given the area's maritime history, formed an explanation.

Other suggestions of the name's origin include Isle of Ducks, Isle of Dykes and Isle of Docks. Wherever the name originated from, it now remains an official entity after being recognised by Tower Hamlets Council in 1987.

Pie, mash and eels

Pie, mash and eels are considered to be a quintessential part of East End life. Originating in the Docks of London, this delicacy has filled Londoners' bellies since the 19th century. However, despite its East End roots, did you know that the first recorded pie and mash shop was actually based in South London?

Very little is actually known about Henry Blanchard's Eel Pie House, other than it was situated at 101 Union Street, Southwark, just east of Great Guildford Street. Opening its doors in 1844, it is generally considered to be London's first pie and mash shop, replacing the familiar sight of braziers or carts selling their culinary delights to hard-working Londoners.

Gradually, more and more shops opened, with many of the locations becoming Grade II listed buildings, due to their unique architecture. Shops such as Manze's, Cooke's and Kelly's were a common sight across the East End and South East London. In the late 1800s, there were 110 shops dotted about the capital; there are now less than 90. Incredibly, in 2000, there was only one stall left at Billingsgate Fish Market selling live eels. Despite the reduction in shops selling pie, mash and eels, it still remains a popular dish amongst Londoners and visitors alike.



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

LONDON?

The Rolling Stones

Jagger, Richards, Jones, Stewart, Chapman and Taylor. It can only be one rock group, the original Rolling Stones line-up.

Formed in 1962, the Stones have released over 70 studio, live and compilation albums and some 120 singles, selling over 240 million records worldwide. But their status as one of the biggest selling acts of all time came from very humble beginnings: Platform 2 in Dartford Railway Station and 102 Edith Grove, to be precise.

A chance meeting at the railway station on 17th October, 1961, saw Mick Jagger, who was waiting for a train back to university, strike up a conversation and eventual friendship with Keith Richards. That meeting led to Richards linking up with Dick Taylor, who was a bass player in a garage band formed by Jagger in the late 1950s. Alan Etherington and Bob Beckwith also joined the trio, calling themselves The Blues Boys.

In March of 1962, The Blues Boys sent a tape of their recordings to musician Alexis Korner, who had a residency at an Ealing jazz club. Korner was so impressed with their work that he invited them to the club, where they met the members of Korner's band, Blues Incorporated. The band included guitarist Brian Jones, keyboard player Ian Stewart, and sought-after drummer Charlie Watts. Jagger, Taylor and Richards then briefly joined the group.



Eventually, Jones left Blues Incorporated, and after placing an ad in a music magazine, Stewart, Jagger, Taylor, and Richards joined Jones. Drummer Tony Chapman completed the line-up of the first incarnation of The Rolling Stones.

Later that year, Jones persuaded Jagger and Richards to move into a bedsit at 102 Edith Grove, Chelsea. According to various sources, including Jagger and Richards, the living conditions were filthy and unhygienic. It did, however, allow their creative juices to flow, and after a line-up change which saw Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts join the ranks, they soon escaped the squalor. And the rest, as they say, is history.

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The Supermarket Poisoner

Thanks to various innovations, food containers nowadays are pretty much tamper-proof. But that wasn't always the case.

Rob's history tips

Once upon a time, product vulnerability was tested within the supermarket industry by one particularly twisted individual.

A gifted evil

Born in Hackney, in 1947, Rodney Whitchelo attended Hackney Secondary Modern where he proved to be a talented pupil. Excelling in maths, physics and chemistry, he secured his first job with Johnson Matthey; a chemical firm based in Hatton Garden.

By 1976 though, he'd grown bored of such work and, deciding he "wanted something to do with people," enrolled with Hendon Police College.

As with his previous career, Whitchelo quickly took to his new role. He qualified as an arms officer and eventually rose to the position of Detective Sergeant.

Despite his intelligence, Whitchelo was also a deluded fantasist, as demonstrated by a story he'd spun his girlfriend in which he claimed he'd infiltrated the IRA.

He also saw himself as an entrepreneur and, whilst still serving with the Met, set up his own computer firm. This project soon failed and, after being plunged into debt, he retired from the police on health grounds in 1988.

The blackmail begins

By this point, Whitchelo was living in Hornchurch. He was also desperate for money, which led him to formulate a diabolical plan.

Whilst in the police, he'd attended lectures regarding corporate blackmail and, using the information he'd garnered from this course, reckoned it was a crime he could commit with perfection.

In August of 1988, using his knowledge of chemicals and soldering, Whitchelo poisoned a tin of Pedigree Chum dog food which he sent to the company, stating that he'd sneak many similar cans onto shelves unless he was paid £100,000.



For communication, he told Pedigree to leave messages in the classified section of The Daily Telegraph using the code names Romeo and Juliet.

The payment, meanwhile, was to be left in three accounts, each of which had been set up under false names using Hammersmith-based PO Box addresses.

After being advised by the police, Pedigree began paying out limited sums of money, although in an attempt to narrow down the culprit, the cash was only made available through Halifax machines.

Although many such machines were placed under surveillance, Whitchelo was always ahead of the game, as he still drank regularly with his former colleagues from Hackney police station. Said colleagues remained unaware of their friend's true intentions, and were only too happy to update him on the sinister case.

Whitchelo was also prepared to drive as far afield as Wales and Scotland to make collections, and on one such trip was caught on film in Ipswich,

although he was wearing a crash helmet as a disguise.

After upping the game by placing a contaminated tin of dog food on the shelf of a SavaCentre in Basildon, Whitchelo now began to target Heinz, threatening to put poison and razor blades into baby food unless he was paid £100,000, every year, for the next five.

To prove he meant business, Whitchelo placed caustic soda – more than five times the amount needed to kill an infant – in a jar of baby food that was purchased from a shop in Rayleigh, Essex.

Mercifully, the women who opened it realised something was wrong, despite missing a warning note which had sunk to the bottom.

Caught by greed

By now, the case had gone public, and the subsequent fear amongst consumers meant Heinz were losing millions in sales.

As such, they offered a £100,000 reward for information leading to the blackmailer's conviction; a tidy sum that Whitchelo himself decided to play for, creating a false identity in order to do so.

Scotland Yard quickly twigged that this mystery informant was the same person though, and so it was decided to pay out some of the reward as bait, as by now Whitchelo had grown lazy and was only using machines in and around London.

On the night of 21st October, 1990, Whitchelo attempted to obtain money from a machine in Uxbridge which wasn't under surveillance. It was out of order, so he headed to Enfield, inadvertently opting for a machine that was being watched.

After making the withdrawal at 12.30am, he walked back to his car – complete with crash helmet disguise – and was promptly arrested. The game was finally up.

Rodney Whitchelo's trial took place at the Old Bailey in December of 1990 where, after being found guilty on several counts, he was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment. ■ TAXI

If you want to see more, you can visit my YouTube channel, [robslondon](#).



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What's on? WEST END

Charlotte rounds up this month's top London shows to recommend to your passengers.

Under the Spotlight

Mousetrap - St Martin's Theatre 📍

First performed in 1952, and having run continuously ever since (bar a pause during the global pandemic), November, 2022 marked its 28,915th performance, making it the world's longest running play.

A twisty, quintessentially British whodunit follows a group of seven strangers who find themselves snowed in at a remote countryside guesthouse. News spreads of a murder in London, which triggers the arrival of a Police Sergeant who reveals - to everyone's horror - that a killer is in their midst as, one by one, the suspicious characters reveal their sordid pasts.

Written with the knowing wit we'd expect from crime writer extraordinaire Agatha Christie, the play is full of lines laughing at the snobbery of the upper classes that remain as funny - and scarily relevant - as it was way back when. The twist is a skillful one, that only those with the most eagle of eyes will spot. As the show ends, a member of the cast urges the audience to "keep the secret of whodunit locked in your heart" - and why wouldn't you, when you'd be depriving others of untangling this superb mystery for themselves?

Currently booking until 29th May.

20 ★★★★★☆



Mousetrap Productions LTD



TITUS ANDRONICUS

SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

Titus Andronicus - The Globe 📍

Without a doubt, *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's bloodiest play, with a body count that reaches double figures. Therefore, productions of it are known for being gory and grisly affairs, with the Globe's 2016 production infamously resulting in audience members fainting. Which makes this feminist take, featuring an all-female ensemble, all the more intriguing and refreshing.

After a brutal 10-year battle, the revered Roman general, Titus Andronicus embarks on an era of bloodshed, when he refuses to show mercy to the eldest son of Tamora, Queen of the Goths. Her revenge, an attack on his family, pushes him to the very edge, as he seeks justice the only way he knows how - a tooth for tooth and limb for a limb.

Directed by Jude Christian, this production teases out the irreverence and humour within the blood-stained words of the Bard. In fact, not a literal drop of it is shed - instead, candles make a symbolic substitution, with some equally eye-watering results.

All of this allows for the relevancy of those 400 year-old words to really shine, as a pompous and out-of-touch leader encourages their underlings to fight dirty in a thirst for power. Remind you of anyone?

Running until 15th April.

★★★★☆

What else is on?

■ **Lemons Lemons Lemons (Harold Pinter Theatre) until 18th March**
A tender, funny rom-com, with a science fiction dystopian twist, Aidan Turner and Jenna Coleman play a couple in a world where a new law dictates a maximum daily word limit. A meditation on what we say, how we say it, and what happens when we can't say anything anymore.

■ **Sleepova (Bush Theatre) until 8th April**
A joyful celebration of race, gender, and friendship in the form of a coming-of-age drama about four Black female friends in the months around their GCSEs. The cast is stacked with stars on the rise, including: Amber Grappy, Aliyah Odoffin, Shayde Sinclair and recent Bafta Rising Star winner, Bukky Bakray.

■ **Guys and Dolls (Bridge Theatre) until 20th May**
Having nailed Shakespeare (with both *Julius Caesar* in 2018 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2019), the Bridge's immersive run resumes with this iconic musical, that will transport you to the streets of Manhattan and the bars of Havana in the unlikelyst of love stories.

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A Passage Through Time: Further Through Clerkenwell

Clerkenwell has always been a popular location for notable people to reside in. Through the centuries, numerous authors, actors and artists were drawn to this urban quarter of London.



Footprints and Foundations

22

One such charismatic individual was Joseph Grimaldi, the original archetypal clown. Grimaldi was a humourist who brought joy and laughter to generations of Londoners, performing on the stages of the capital's most prestigious theatres.

Running parallel to Rosebury Avenue is Exmouth Market, as the name implies, this thoroughfare was once a thriving street market servicing the local neighbourhood. At the western end of the market there are the familiar food stalls selling savoury gastronomy. At the midway point on the southside of this walkway, there is an English heritage plaque denoting that Grimaldi lived in a house at number 56. He was an articulate character whose life was a combination of comedy and tragedy. Perhaps he was foolhardy in his aspirations to reach the top of his profession. So let me place Grimaldi under the spotlight and reveal his remarkable life.

Joseph Grimaldi (1778-1837)

Grimaldi was a second generation Italian who descended from a long line of entertainers and achieved great fame in his native country. Born in Clare Market (now demolished) close to the Kingsway, his parents were Joseph

Snr. and Rebecca Brooker, a dancer in the Theatre Corps De Ballet, and no evidence his mother and father were married.

The young Grimaldi made his first stage appearance at the Drury Lane Theatre, at the tender age of three, dressed as a monkey. The childhood prodigy was rocked by tragedy at age nine, when his father passed away. The repercussions of this sad event meant he would have to support the family financially. As Grimaldi matured, he grew in confidence into a fine artist of comedy. It was as a pantomime clown, in particular his roles in *Harlequin* and *Mother Goose*, which had audiences rolling in the aisles. Grimaldi was a skilled entertainer whose innovation into the realms of humour took the tomfoolery of the clown into a new era. His physicality and comedy were extraordinary, as was his ability to invent visual tricks, buffoonery and the phenomenon of poking fun at the audience.

Top of the bill

The early 1800s saw the introduction of the Music Hall, and by this time Grimaldi was playing to packed houses. However, the popularity of Grimaldi caused theatre managers huge problems. The great clown would be booked into two different venues on the same night, so once the early evening show had finished, he only had 20 minutes to get to his next curtain call. Leaving by the stage door of the Sadler's Wells Theatre

in full makeup and costume, he'd run at breakneck speed to the late-night performance at the Drury Lane Theatre. This feat was to the amazement of passers-by, as Grimaldi jostled through the crowded walkways. Amazingly, he always made it on time with just minutes to spare.

Tears of a clown

Whilst enjoying great success as a London celebrity, Grimaldi was again struck by tragedy, after marrying the daughter of the proprietor of Sadler's Wells Theatre. His wife, Maria, died in childbirth 18 months after they married. He found solace in performance and eventually wed again to Mary Hughes. A son, Joseph Samuel, was born and followed in his father's footsteps to the stage, but drank himself to an untimely death at 30.

Behind the painted smile of London's funniest man lay the demons of self-doubt. The routine comedy and tragedy Grimaldi performed for decades was acted out in his private life. The sad loss of family members caused him devastating bouts of depression throughout his life; camouflaged by costume and paint, which hid his fragile emotions. For those close to his private life, many knew that behind the faux smile were the real tears of a clown.

Retiring age

By the 1820s, the body of London's renowned clown was feeling the effects of years he'd spent doing his

exhaustive routines, which included acrobatic jumping and tumbling. Grimaldi was worn out and could hardly walk by this point. His determination to perform saw his tired body eventually enter the stage in a wheelchair. By this time, he was a shadow of his former self and called it a day at the age of 45. As retirement loomed, he found himself completely insolvent. Financial help came through benefit performances and by way of a pension of £100 each year from the Drury Lane Theatre Fund.

The Memory of Joseph Grimaldi

The memory of Joseph Grimaldi lives on in the present. A memorial service takes place in his honour at All Saints Church in Haggerston, East London. On the first Sunday in February, clowns gather from all over the country. The term 'Joey', an eponymous word for clown, is attributed to Grimaldi himself. In the capital, there are many references to the comedic icon, with public parks and buildings adorning his name.

Charles Dickens even wrote *Memories of Joseph Grimaldi*. At the end of it, he wrote: 'the clown left the stage with Grimaldi, and though often heard of, has never since been seen.'

■ TAXI

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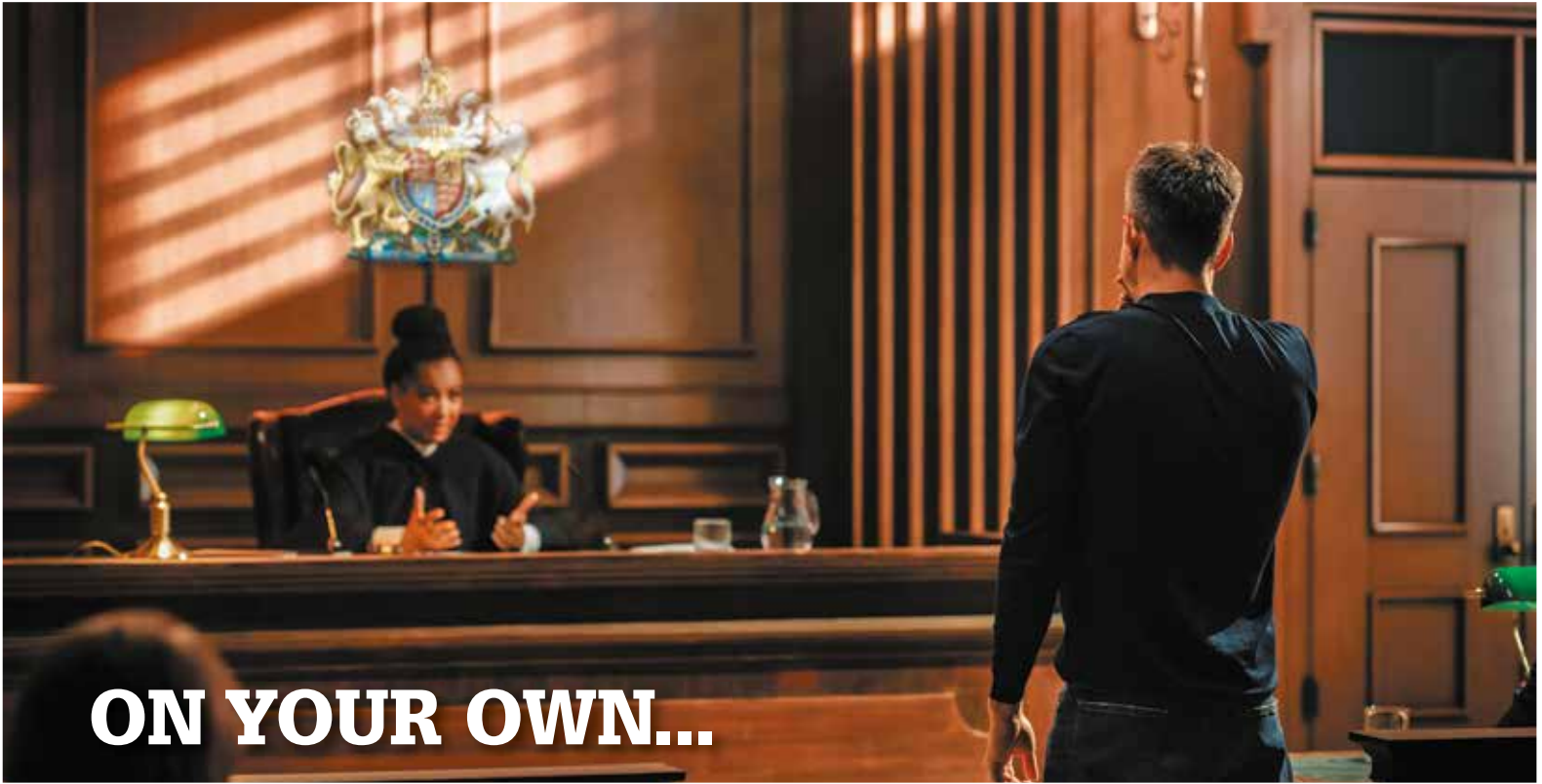


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Each month, over one hundred veterans receive a card from the Taxi Charity. One earlier this year, featuring a Lancaster, evoked memories for WWII veteran, Ken Hay MBE.

“Your card showing the business end of a Lancaster brought back some happy memories for me.

Our group of approximately 250 POWs had worked in the coal mine from September, 1944. We'd left earlier that year, on what turned out to be the Long March to Freedom, on 23rd January from the outskirts of Katowice, Poland. We trudged, with a rest period every five or six days, through snow and ice until spring came, by which time we were in a farm in a forest in Bavaria.

During the night of Friday, 20th April, we heard gunfire coming from the west and knew it had to be Brits or Americans. So, at roll call and through our interpreters, we informed the Officer that the war had finished. He wouldn't accept this but compromised by saying we could have a rest and march tomorrow, which we agreed. That Saturday night, gunfire was much closer. On Sunday morning, the Germans accepted that it was over. I estimated we covered 1,600 km (990 miles) and was later confirmed. We waited. And at about 4pm on Sunday two American tanks arrived at the farm gate. We were freed and our guards taken prisoner.

As so many were being liberated in the area, we had to be patient. Eventually, we were taken by Dakotas to the Theatre of Arts in Rheims, Northern France. Our clothes were taken from us and burnt on a bonfire. We had a shower (you've no idea how good that was!) and then, as it was an American camp, kitted out as Yanks.

After several days, we were informed that we were moving out the following day. And, sure enough, on the morning of Friday, 4th May, 1945, a fleet of U.S. army lorries arrived and, 25 men to a lorry, we were driven to a much bigger airfield than when we had arrived. There was the most magnificent sight awaiting us, I can still picture it as I write this. Looking down the airfield Apron, as far as the eye could see, was a line of Lancaster bombers, all facing inwards and with their respective crews stood in front of each aircraft.

As we alighted, we were



Ken Hay MBE speaking to WWII veteran Robbie Hall.



WWII veteran Ken Hay spoke at the Arboretum on 77th anniversary of D-Day.

greeted by the plane's captain, who introduced his crew whom we shook hands with. We were given a box (akin to a kitchen matchbox) that contained flying rations and a sick bag before boarding the plane. I was on a walking stick due to infected feet so was the last to board. There were no seats, of course, and we just sat on the floor of the fuselage. I was immediately below the mid-upper gunner who, as the war was technically still happening, had to keep swivelling his hatch to ensure there were no rogue German planes looking for an easy kill.

Back in the tail of the aircraft was a bin to use as a toilet and, when I went back to do so, I saw there was a square tube going downwards and pointing backwards. I realised that this was a flare chute which had to point behind otherwise the airspeed would have blown it straight back up.

I could see a glimpse of the

sky through the gunner's turret as we made our way west. A piece of paper was passed back, apparently from the pilot or navigator, which said 'FRENCH COAST AHEAD'. A little later, another made its way down, saying 'OVER THE ENGLISH CHANNEL' and a third and final one that simply said 'ENGLAND'.

As I was the last man to receive

these notes, how I wished I'd kept them, particularly the final one. What I did do was crawl to the back of the plane to look down the chute to see our homeland. But, forgetting for a moment that the chute was pointing backwards, all I could see was water. I waited and then, at the end of the bluish water, a white line of the surf breaking, a yellowish strip of sandy beach, then a glimpse of white cliff quickly followed the beauty of English green grass. I still see those colours, and later thought that they seemed like a medal ribbon.

We landed at Dunsfold to a warm greeting by WAAFs and nurses, and I was home just in time to join the family in going to Mass on Sunday, 6th May, and, of course, in time for VE Day two days later.

Some years later, my wife, Doris, and I went to a charity fair where one of the stalls was a gun turret from a Lancaster, with a chap charging 50p to sit inside. I joined the queue and, when it was my turn, as the chap took my money, I said that in 1945 I'd come home in one. He promptly gave my money back and that I had earned a free go. Such is fame!" ■ TAXI

Atlantic Charity Row update:

After 59 days at sea, the cab drivers rowing the Atlantic for charities, including the Taxi Charity, reached Antigua on 4th March. What an amazing achievement! Everyone at the Taxi Charity is so very proud of Bob, Daren and Stuart.

More information:
www.cabbiesdoatlanticrow.com

About the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans since 1948. The charity arranges free trips (for veterans from all conflicts) to the Netherlands and France, for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or social events across the UK.

2023 is the charity's 75th anniversary, a remarkable milestone for a small, niche charity, peopled by enthusiastic volunteers.

The charity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2021, an award approved by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the equivalent of the MBE for charities.

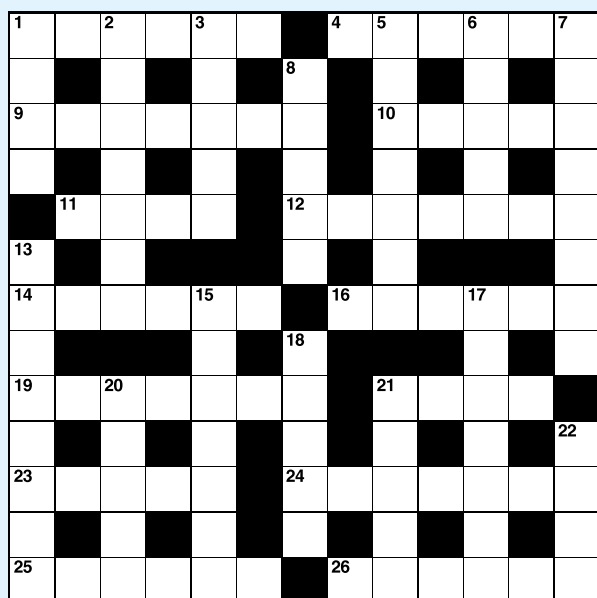
To fund and facilitate their work, the charity is reliant on donations, grants and sponsorship and has launched a '75 for 75' fundraising campaign to raise £75,000 in its anniversary year.

www.taxicharity.org



Puzzler Page

Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Change round (6)
- 4 Absolute truth (6)
- 9 Time outside rush hour (3-4)
- 10 Page within a page (5)
- 11 Mark as correct (4)
- 12 Cloth toy (3,4)
- 14 Messy (6)
- 16 Back-room scientist (6)
- 19 Stage performer (7)
- 21 Fail to win (4)
- 23 Short letters (5)
- 24 Distinctive, unusual (7)
- 25 Private eye (6)
- 26 Risk, luck (6)

DOWN

- 1 Chimney grime (4)
- 2 Administer (7)
- 3 Audacity (5)
- 5 On account of (5,2)
- 6 Green spaghetti topping (5)
- 7 Stay away from (3,5)
- 8 Circumvent (5)
- 13 Electioneering venues (8)
- 15 Place down (7)
- 17 Vogue (7)
- 18 Leave your bed (5)
- 20 Beyond the bounds of what is usual (5)
- 21 Clinging bloodsucker (5)
- 22 Usual colour of sapphires (4)

Sudoku

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

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| | 5 | | | | 9 | | | 3 |
| | | 6 | 8 | | 3 | | | |
| 1 | 8 | | | | 6 | 5 | | 2 |

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 41 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.

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All answers to puzzler on p30

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- Pay by cash/bank/online.
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John
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LINAGE

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- Vans WANTED. ULEZ failures and scrap cars considered. Call Paul 07428 380987
- All cabs wanted. Tx4, euro 4, 5 & 6 also TXE wanted We come to you, any condition, very quick decision. cash

paid instantly. 07702 554934

- De-commissioned your tx4's and Euro 5's? Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect, and drive away. Definitely still buying. John 07702 554934

CABS FOR SALE

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CABS FOR RENT

- TXEs available for rent from £320 a week
- T&S Taxis LTD, New Comfort Plus models available, no ads - Natasha - 07968623209
- TXEs, TX4s and vitos available from £230 per week contact Sabri - 07958973944

28

Get in touch



Loren Wedderburn



Loren@centuryone.uk



01727 739 184



LTDA APPLICATION FORM

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone..... Mobile.....

Email..... Twitter.....

Date of Birth..... Badge No.....

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.

Signed..... Date.....

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Bank/Building Society Address.....

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9 1 4 4 2 8

For Office use only

1 Please write the name and full postal address of your branch in the box (left)

2 Name of account holder.....

3 Account number

4 Bank Sort Code - -

Banks/Building Societies may not accept instructions to pay Direct Debit from some types of account.

5 Signature(s).....

Date.....



This guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer

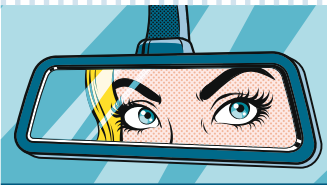
The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit LTDA will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request LTDA to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by LTDA, or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
 - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when 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.

You can now also apply to join the LTDA online, simply scan here to complete an online application:





Lent and Lent

Pancake day has been and gone, but here at Meg Towers? Not quite.

A woman of words

On Shrove Tuesday, Mr. Meg used all his manly force to flip a pancake which went up, and stayed up. After hitting the ceiling, it dropped and draped itself around my (very-of-the-moment) wire and glass pendant light.

I can't send Mr. Meg up to fetch his pancake off my statement fitting because four months ago he lent his tall stepladder to Brian, who lives a street away. Brian is 70 and seems to have confused Meg Towers with his personal branch of the Hire Shop. To him, it's a place where you borrow gear like drills, drain rods, a wheelbarrow and once even some miracle grow for his Dahlias.

And he never says 'thanks' for what he snaffles. Last time, as I heaved a solar panel from the

cab into his garage, the only thing he said was, "It's about time that fella of yours got a better hammer drill. The one he gave me last week is knackered."

I scolded Brian and told him he's not giving you this stuff, he's loaning it. And Brian laughed like a drain. Is he a dodderly, old bloke or a criminal mastermind syphoning off the contents of Mr. Meg's shed?

Mr. Meg and I have decided to take Lent seriously this year. The plan is to give up something that costs money and then donate it to charity. All very laudable, just not easily doable. I am weak-willed when it comes to my vices. At the moment I am addicted to Wispa Caramels.

Never Gonna Give You Up

As for Mr. Meg's vice; when it comes to his rear-end the man likes high-end. Ever since we visited friends who live in Esher, and he experienced their

cushioned aloe vera loo paper, he has been a doo-doo diva. Nothing else will do. This, from a fella who previously lauded Izal, which had all the softness and cushioning of a piece of sandpaper.

We have now been giving up for three weeks. I was doing fine until a fare hailed me on the Aldwych, settled on the back seat and took a Wispa Caramel out of her bag. She was getting ready to unwrap. It was too much of a test. I ordered her to stop what she was doing immediately. She looked surprised and said, "Oh sorry, can't I eat in your cab?" I answered, "No. Only I can," followed by, "Name your price for that bar of chocolate." Woman to woman, she recognised the tone of desperation in my voice and gave it to me for free. I made it last by sucking it all the



way to London Bridge.

And as for Mr. Meg, I turned out the pockets of his trousers before washing them and there were squares of cushion-soft loo roll in there. Busted.

We've decided to give up giving up and make a donation to charity. And then, to teach Brian the true meaning of the word Lent by dawn raiding his garage and getting our stuff back. I'll bring the cab and Mr. Meg the cahoonas. I'll let you know how it goes. ■ TAXI

LTDA A selection of our numerous Distribution Points

- ◆ A1 Taxis, Melody Lane, Highbury, N5
- ◆ Abacus Accounts, Southbrook Road, Lee, SE12
- ◆ Astral Café, Regency Place, SW1
- ◆ Bubbles Car Wash, E2
- ◆ C & S Taxis, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Cabsurance, Seven Kings
- ◆ Camberfield Taxi Services
- ◆ Computer Cab, Mitre Way, W12
- ◆ Coney Allen, Dunbridge Street, E1
- ◆ CP Beehive Service Station, Beehive Lane, Gants Hill
- ◆ Cricklewood Carriers, Cricklewood
- ◆ Dial A Cab, City Road, N1
- ◆ Edgware Station Rank
- ◆ Euston Station Rank
- ◆ G & L Taxis, Crayford Road, N7
- ◆ Globe Transmissions, Cudworth Street, E1
- ◆ The Ham, Brentford
- ◆ Heathrow Airport Canteen
- ◆ Hexagon Garage, Lukin Street, E1
- ◆ Jet Garage, Clipstone Street, W1
- ◆ Knowledge Centre, Caledonian Road
- ◆ KPM, Hemming Street, E1
- ◆ London City Airport Canteen
- ◆ LP Motors, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Martin Cordell, Thomas Road, E14
- ◆ Paddington Station Rank
- ◆ Putney Bridge Taxis, The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6
- ◆ Richmond Road Taxi Centre, E8
- ◆ Safewise Supermarket, Harrow
- ◆ South Bank Service Station, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ TAXI HOUSE, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ Taxi & Private Hire, Blackfriars Rd, SE1
- ◆ Temple Place Shelter
- ◆ Turbo Accessories, Three Colts Lane, E2
- ◆ Ubiquitous Ltd, E1
- ◆ Waterloo Station
- ◆ Wimbledon Station Rank
- ◆ WizAnn Knowledge School, Watts Grove, E3

PUZZLER ANSWERS



Crossword

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | W | I | T | C | H | G | O | S | P | E | L |
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| T | I | C | K | R | A | G | D | O | L | L | |
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| S | E | A | A | E | | | | | | | |
| T | R | O | U | P | E | R | L | O | S | E | |
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SUDOKU

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

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: DAMPENING

All words: Aimed, amen, amend, amending, amid, amide, amine, dame, damning, damp, dampen, damping, denim, enigma, game, gamed, image, imaged, impend, made, mage, magi, magpie, maid, maiden, main, mane, mange, manned, mead, mean, meaning, media, median, mend, mending, midge, mien, mind, mine, mined, name, named, naming, DAMPENING.

Word targets: Excellent: 50, Good: 41, Target: 30, Kids: 25

Futoshiki

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**Passenger base data between Dec21-Dec22