

CABBIES IN CORONATION CHOIR

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23rd May 2023 #541



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Manson Group, St Albans

Published on behalf of the LTDA by



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FREE LONDON ZOO TICKETS FOR CABBIES OVER TWO WEEKENDS IN JUNE

For all those times you have given directions to London Zoo, or dropped of a passenger, ZSL wants to say a little thank you for all your hard work. For two weekends in June, ZSL invites the 'Voices of London', otherwise known as cabbies, concierges and tourist information staff, to enjoy a visit to London Zoo, free of charge. As special guests of ZSL, from Friday 16th to Sunday 18th and Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th June 2022, you are invited to explore London's wildest attraction, home to nearly 15,000 animals in leafy Regent's Park. Find yourself beneath leaping



Lemurs, face-to-face with endangered Sumatran Tigers or even facing your fears in Europe's only spider walkthrough. And it doesn't stop there, with a full schedule of live animal talks and feeds throughout the day, you can be transported to Africa, India or as far as the Outback right in the

heart of the capital you know so well.

There are only a limited number of tickets available so head to the website to claim yours. You can **book your tickets online here:** <https://zslondonzoo.seetickets.com/zsl/zsl-london-zoo-voices-of-london/>

To validate your e-ticket you must bring your taxi driver badge as proof of entitlement. Free entry for this event is limited to a maximum of 2 adult and 2 child tickets per person. Tickets are limited and must be booked in advance. There will be no allocation on the door.

ARE YOU AVAILABLE TO HELP THE CHILDREN?

On Wednesday 12th July 2023, the London Taxi Drivers Charity for Children (LTCFC) is off to Paradise Wildlife Park EN10 7QA. Paradise park is an exciting new adventure for LTCFC with lots of opportunities for drivers to interact with the children and no stress of having to worry about your cabs, as it is not like a safari park so there is NO driving through animal enclosures.

We will be leaving from Asda Car Park E14 3BT. Start Time Asda 7.30am, return to Asda 5.00pm. Breakfast will be provided for drivers before we leave. There will be a bluetooth speaker prize for the cab with the most balloons on arrival at Paradise Park.

If you are available and would like to help, please contact John Godfrey, Drivers Liaison, London Taxi Driver's Charity for Children. Email j.godfrey@ltcfc.org.uk or text John on 07973313148

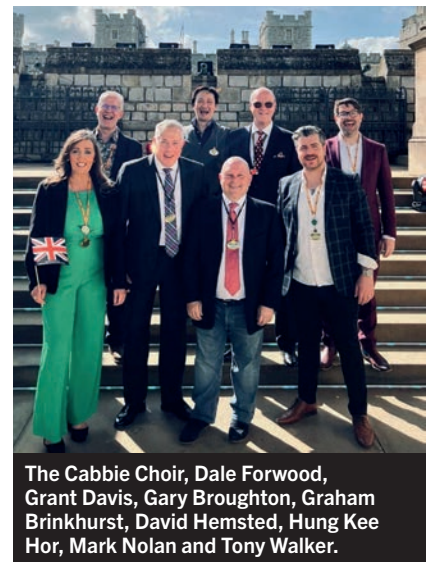


CABBIE CHOIR TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT CORONATION CONCERT

On Sunday 7th May, London's licensed taxi drivers were represented in the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle, where the newly formed 'Cabbie Choir' had the privilege to Sing for the King.

It was a historic and truly magnificent occasion. The drivers were honoured to be part of this and the Cabbie Choir did the trade extremely proud. The eight cabbies were in a prominent position at the front of the stage for the live televised performance, with their badges proudly on display, cementing the important role taxi drivers play as an iconic part of London and the country. Congratulations to everyone involved!

The Cabbie Choir was formed a couple of weeks before the Coronation, when drivers responded to a WhatsApp post and were asked to send in a video of themselves singing Happy Birthday. They were then invited to meet up at a NCP car park in St. Cross Street EC1 London, where they were asked to sing songs including *You can't hurry love* by Phil Collins, watched unexpectedly by TV's Amanda Holden. When they finished singing, Holden announced they had passed the audition and would be singing for His Majesty King Charles III, as part of the Coronation Choir! Over the next few weeks, the Choir had coaching, including working with legendary choirmaster, Gareth Malone and learned the songs and moves for the performance. The full process is documented in *Sing for the King: the search for the coronation choir* available now on BBC i Player.



The Cabbie Choir, Dale Forwood, Grant Davis, Gary Broughton, Graham Brinkhurst, David Hemsted, Hung Kee Hor, Mark Nolan and Tony Walker.

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0 Points, Nearly Out!

Fortunately for him, he is an LTDA member and within two hours of getting the refusal letter, he is sitting on the third floor at Taxi House, with our lawyers.

Steve's comment

There's an old adage that bad things come in threes. Personally, I don't buy into it, but after years in this job, I've seen it all and know that a few simple errors or mistakes can combine, with serious consequences - as one of our members, who, in the most appalling sequence of coincidence, bad luck, and timing, found out.

Cautionary tale

This member's story is a cautionary tale for all cab drivers, and especially for those who aren't members of the LTDA, who wouldn't have access to the support and assistance that this member had, for who the outcome could have been very different.

It's the middle of the pandemic in December 2020, just before Christmas. Our member has just moved house, he's incredibly organised and immediately in the New Year, when everything reopens and he's unpacked all his stuff, he changes the address on his driving licence, car, cab, banking, TfL licence etc. Within a few weeks everything is confirmed, but he notices his V5 for the cab has not been returned. He emails, calls, and chases and eventually gets it

back about August 2021.

Fast forward to this year. He applies to renew his cab licence, only to be told it's not happening, because he has six points for a mobile phone offence, and he failed to tell TfL. This news is more than a surprise. He has no points as far as he's aware, hasn't received a ticket or anything, and so had nothing to tell TfL. Fortunately for him, he is an LTDA member and within two hours of getting the refusal letter, he is sitting on the third floor at Taxi House, with our lawyers.

Mistaken identity

After a Herculean effort by our legal team, it eventually transpires that a vigilante cyclist had sent a video to the police. Whilst the video clearly showed it was not our member's cab, on the audio the cyclist read out our member's registration number, which was one digit off that of the offending vehicle. The police had then looked up our member, wrote to him at his old address, and then kept writing to him there, even though he had changed all his details, everywhere. Eventually, a court summons had been sent, this was followed by a missed court date (as our member was unaware of the summons), and the whole process had resulted in six points on his DVLA licence and an unpaid fine.

The pandemic hadn't helped the situation, as everything was



delayed and perhaps records hadn't been updated properly. It was a nightmare for our team to unravel exactly what had gone on and then there was a load of work involved in getting it back in front of a court, squashed and removed from the member's DVLA record. Fortunately, after our lawyers presented signed statements to TfL, our member

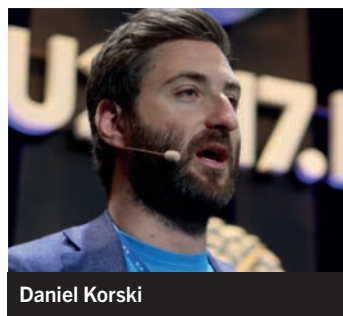
was allowed to carry on working while it was all sorted out.

Even though this driver had done absolutely nothing wrong, had he not been an LTDA member it may have all ended up so differently, and it certainly would not have been sorted as quickly as it was. This could have been a case of 0 points and out!

Mayoral race

The race to be our next Mayor of London has officially begun, with a number of Conservative candidates now in the mix, wanting to take on the incumbent, Sadiq Khan, who will be seeking a third term in office.

One name, I wasn't happy to hear again, and especially as a candidate for Mayor, was Daniel Korski. Many will remember him as David Cameron's tech adviser and a close personal friend of Uber's then communications chief, Rachel Whetstone. He was the one pushing Uber's agenda from within Number



Daniel Korski

10 and telling Ministers that Uber, and the gig economy more generally, was the answer to pretty much every problem out there.

I once met him in Number 10 to discuss our concerns

about the company and its exploitative business model, which at the time was inflicting huge damage on our trade, on London, and putting the public at risk. Korski basically gave me a cup of tea and a quick tour of Number 10 (I'd been before) and sent me on my way. He wasn't interested in hearing anything that didn't fit his biased, personal agenda. Definitely not someone we want making decisions about how things are run in London.

In better news, the Minister for London and MP for Sutton and Cheam, Paul Scully, has

announced that he will also be running. He's always been a friend to the cab trade and a strong supporter of ours, he also already pledged to roll back the ULEZ expansion and get London moving again, if elected. Other candidates include a former adviser to Boris Johnson, Samuel Kasumu, and London Assembly members Andrew Boff, Nick Rogers and Susan Hall, who has always been vocal on issues impacting the taxi trade within the London Assembly. We should know who the candidate is by the end of July. Watch this space.

LTDA



Time to Question Why

It's a bit like building brick walls in the Bakerloo and Northern line tube tunnels between Embankment and Waterloo and then wondering why no tube trains are arriving at the station.

WHY?

6

Top rank

In the bankrupt world of TfL, you have to wonder whether (and hope) that there is someone in there, who has asked the question, 'Have our scarce resources been used to the most beneficial effect for Londoners?'

If the response (or lack of) to the severe backlash by Londoners to Mayor Khan's ULEZ expansion is anything to go by, or the spending of millions of pounds on enforcement cameras, before the consultation even ended, or the millions spent on underused cycle lanes, (and don't even get me started on the crime wave we are forced to go to work in each day), then I think that the answer is clearly a big fat NO.

Oversupply of minicabs

Likewise, you have to wonder if anyone within TfL has had the bottle to voice the obvious question, 'if we don't want unwanted car traffic on our roads and we're spending millions

of pounds closing roads doing research and development on road pricing, all under the guise of reducing pollution, why the hell are we licensing so many minicabs?' Clearly, either no-one has or if they have, they've been told to keep quiet, as TfL probably need the money that's rolling in from those licences.

Here's a fact that should shock anyone - right now, in London, there are enough minicab drivers licensed that every 87 Londoners could share their own driver, that's how oversaturated we are with minicab drivers.

If you then factor in the totally accurate and without any recourse statistics, showing how millions of Londoners' now cycle, following the 10-fold increase in cycling, then that would mean

"In London, there are enough minicab drivers licensed that every 87 Londoners could share their own driver."

that many of those 87 people would never need to use a minicab (as they are supposedly cycling everywhere now), so we are probably getting close to all Londoners' having their very own TfL licensed personal chauffeur, in the form of a mini cab driver.

Obviously, that last paragraph is very much written in jest, but that astounding statistic that there is a minicab for every 87 Londoners, is as about as far from being funny as you can get. Yet I hear nothing about the obvious impact that must be having on all the things TfL claim to be wanting to change like congestion, air pollution and road safety.

Rethink

With cycling uptake not at all what had been touted, surely the sensible move would be to rip out all the cycle lanes that have replaced bus lanes and stop building any more until, or if, an actual real upturn in cycling takes place? The number one (surface) mode of transport is walking, followed by buses and yet they appear to be the two modes that have suffered at the behest of the cycling Lycraerati.

'Increased demand'

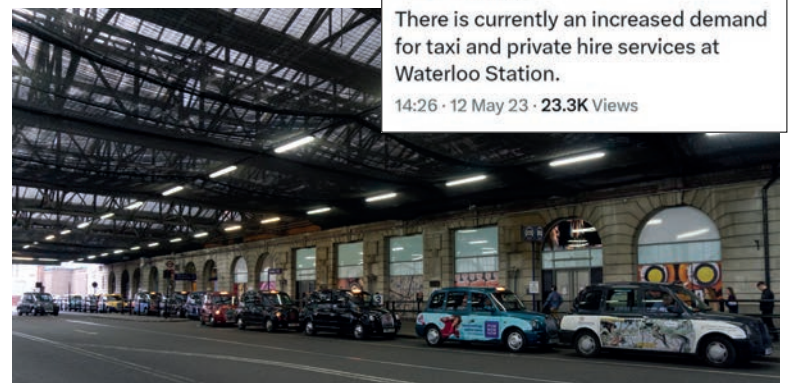
Some of you will have seen the tweet pictured below at the time it went out. It is wrong on so many levels, I don't know where to start. Firstly, how did they supposedly know there was demand for private hire? Was someone going around the concourse looking at people looking at their phones and seeing if they had an app open? I mean it's easy to know there is taxi demand - no taxis and a queue at the rank tells you that.

Instead of encouraging hundreds of minicabs to swarm to Waterloo and the likely fallout from that, perhaps someone should be questioning why at 2.26pm on a Friday afternoon there are no taxis at the capital's busiest station? In all my years behind the wheel, if there was going to be a time that I would expect a queue of cabs going back through the tunnel and out to Addington Street, 2.26pm on a Friday afternoon is it. Especially as now those who work from home a couple of days a week, always do so on a Monday and Friday.

It can't be the road layout and rank facilities which are to blame (even though they are beyond pathetic), but if anything, they should have ensured that the chaos of cabs ranking went all the way back down York Road and beyond. It is however a fact that road closures like those on The Cut mean Waterloo is becoming unserviceable. It's a bit like building brick walls in the Bakerloo and Northern line tube tunnels between Embankment and Waterloo and then wondering why no tube trains are arriving at the station.

It makes you wonder why Will Norman and Mayor Khan are not tweeting about the thousands of cycles entering and leaving Waterloo Station, as passengers stick two fingers up to taxis and get on their bikes instead, I mean they keep telling us cycling is booming.

Have you ever seen a tweet from them or TfL apologising for the lack of Santander bikes due to the demand from all the converts? No, me neither. ■ LTDA





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7

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Where to?



Deciding What's Next

With only one vehicle to buy and the cost of charging skyrocketing, many are concerned about what to do next. It's a personal decision each driver will need to make.

Streets ahead

Over the last couple of weeks, I've been inundated with calls regarding the Euro 5 to Euro 6 conversion from members. Many are getting worried and disgruntled as it comes closer to the end of their cab's life under the new 12-year age limit, and rightly so.

Weighing the options

There are many reasons for drivers to be frustrated with the Mayor of London and his team at City Hall. He claims to have done lots to support our trade. In reality, he's done very little and some of his policies have outright damaged our business and drivers' livelihoods. With only one choice of vehicle to buy and the cost of charging that vehicle skyrocketing, many drivers are concerned about what to do next.

Going back some time ago, when the conversion was first discussed, there were ideas on how much it might cost and the figure talked about was around £6000. There was also a suggestion that the Mayor



of London might aid drivers financially. This all sounded like a viable solution for some and particularly whilst still recovering financially from the Pandemic.

The cost of the conversion now seems to be creeping up, making it potentially less appealing and less viable financially for some. We recently sent a survey to members to asking about their plans for the future, and whether they might consider the conversion, so that we can

make sure we are supporting our members effectively. I am hearing that drivers are now questioning whether it will be worth it price wise for an extra three years.

I know you can't buy a Euro 6 cab for anything like the estimated price of the conversion, but the younger generation of drivers, who work fulltime and find themselves in a vehicle that is getting older and more expensive to maintain, may be thinking, why not put

their hard-earned money into a new TXE instead? This is a decision each driver will need to make for themselves based on their unique circumstances. We should know more details about the final price of the conversion soon and will keep members updated, so you have all the information you need to make this decision.

Opting for a TXE

If you do purchase/lease/PCP a new TXE, make sure you have a five-year manufacturer's warranty and take the service plan – it's a good deal and you will know that if any unexpected problems arise they will be sorted, giving you a peace of mind when working. Then after the five years you will have the choice to give the cab back and start again with a new deal.

Another option would be to purchase a second hand TXE, but I know that raises uncertainties on maintenance costs. If you do decide to go down this route, make sure you get a vehicle health check, which you will need to validate any warranty claim, this will save you time and stress knowing any work required will be covered under the terms and conditions.

LTDA

Illegal number plates

We are getting calls from drivers who have been stopped by the police and TFL compliance officers for displaying illegal number plates. The drivers I have spoken to are adamant that they are legal, because they have been told so by the seller, but this is not always true. My advice to you is do your research before deciding to purchase one. If you don't, it may end up getting you a letter with a fine from the police.

We are London Taxi Drivers and would never intentionally break the law, but we can all make a simple mistake. Any member receiving a notice from the police is asked to come into the LTDA so we can help and advise them, and if necessary, get them the best legal advice.

On the government website, the DVLA clearly state that number plates using 3D materials are legal. This alone doesn't make them legal; they must also follow all the rules for number plates as set out in law, which relate to the correct use of letters and fonts, the colours and spacing

of numbers. All vehicles need to be road legal and conform to DVLA number plate rules to avoid the risk of prosecution.

The number plates on your vehicle must:

- be made from a reflective material.
- display black characters on a white background (front plate)
- display black characters on a yellow background (rear plate)
- not have a background pattern
- be marked to show who supplied the number plate.
- be marked with a British Standard number - this

is 'BS AU 145e' for plates fitted after 1 September 2021

- The characters must not be removable or reflective.
- If your number plates were fitted after 1st September 2021, they must also be a single shade of black.

Your number plates can also:

- have 3D (raised) characters.
- display certain flags, symbols, and identifiers
- display a green flash if you have a zero-emission vehicle.

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Doing What We Do Best

London often empties out a bit when these big events happen but people soon come back to town and want to eat, drink, shop, and take taxis again!

M4 musings

April was another very good month in terms of Taxi Feeder Park throughput; we must be doing something right, as customers keep getting in the cabs to all points.

Some drivers felt that the reduced gate fee might have contributed to slightly longer waits, but in recent weeks the Park has been moving well.

There have been some 'aspirational' out of town price lists circulating – reps are hoping to have a new Trade agreed list soon, ideally with new information boards on the Terminal Ranks. Thanks to members for their patience on this.

10 Interest rates rise

As I write, the Bank of England has just raised interest rates by a further 25 basis points to 4.5%.

Temporary agony

There must be a better technology out there somewhere than temporary traffic lights... How many hours, days, weeks of teeth gnashing frustration do we lose from our lives to these unsuitable solutions, to a problem that often isn't even there?

Recently, the middle of Richmond (a one-way system) was dug up for about three weeks, and the contractor had to post marshals, as well as the lights, to make sure the entire place didn't become irredeemably snarled up.

I've often thought that actual people directing the traffic might be a better answer to helping vehicles navigate around roadworks. After all, this is how traffic direction used to be, and still is, in a few places. They'd have to be properly trained and equipped of course, but I bet the cost wouldn't be that different from the exorbitant sums no doubt charged by contractors and rental firms at the moment. Plus, they could go home at night when it's quiet and they are not required, unlike the lights that you're often left waiting pointlessly at in the middle of the night.

Nothing could be worse than the current situation, where the default appears to be to throw in a four-way temporary light system at the drop of a hat, which leaves everyone waiting for an arbitrary, but always lengthy period of intense annoyance, increasing delay, cost, pollution and blood pressure.

If anyone has a better idea, write in and let us know – or better still, write to the contractors instead, you never know, you might end up making a fortune!



This piles the pain on anyone who has a tracker mortgage that moves in line with interest rates or who has a fixed rate, that is coming to an end and wishes to rearrange.

We are told that this is the intention – specifically to reduce 'demand', in the hope that this will reduce the rate of inflation, (the rate at which prices increase).

Of course, not everyone wants

demand to fall; if demand for taxis falls, we all make less money, so we're losing at both ends – increased costs, less income. Monetary policy is an inexact tool at best, but it seems it's the only method central banks have to get inflation under control.

There are at least positive signs from abroad. In the USA, where the Federal Reserve also recently increased rates, inflation has fallen to around 4.9%, significantly lower than here. Let's hope the UK rate follows suit, and sooner rather than later, as constantly rising prices is bad for everyone in the end.

King and country

All the coronation news has probably died down by now, hopefully the criticism as well as the praise. I thought it was an excellent day with lots of highlights – the 3 cheers, Bryn Terfel, 'Zadok the Priest' (who knew it wasn't just for the

Champions League?)

With the late Queen's Jubilee and then her sad passing, and now the recent Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, we've had a lot of these things lately, and they've all gone off without a hitch. It's a relief to see we still do this stuff excellently well in this country. Patriotism is a bit of a dirty word in certain sections of UK society, nationalism even more so and sometimes this is justified. We all know where too much nationalism leads to, not a good place, or anywhere we want to go back to.

But the Coronation, and other similar celebrations are expressions of nationhood – as represented here by the Crown and the Monarch. These are crucial elements that bind us together and provide unity through difficult times, for example when the country is challenged by hardship or conflict. It's made up, for sure, just another story we tell ourselves and our children, but this is what society is, and what has allowed humans to advance so far from our humble roots to dominate the planet, for better or for worse.

Anyway, now I've got that off my chest, let's be honest, the work in the week between the bank holidays was mostly underwhelming, so let's hope the Summer season will be a good one. London often empties out a bit when these big events happen but people soon come back to town and want to eat, drink, shop and take taxis again!

Good luck out there. ■ LTDA



FREENOW drivers can unlock 0% commission

Plus major improvements to airport fares & the removal of non-app payments



FREENOW

FREENOW's reduced commission incentive

As a FREENOW driver, you can now pay as little as 0% commission on your trips as part of our reduced commission incentive.

The incentive is simple, the more trips you complete in the FREENOW app, the lower the commission. This is one of the ways we want to look after the drivers who are working hard.

Complete enough trips and the commission rate drops to 0%, meaning that every trip drivers complete for the rest of that week, they'll keep 100% of their fares.

FREENOW UK general Manager Mariusz Zabrocki says "Drivers are our top priority, and with the increasing cost of living crisis, we want to continue to reward drivers and provide them with the tools needed to maximise their earnings. This is why we're so excited to launch a reduced

commission quest; it's a win win. Drivers are rewarded for their hard work, and passengers benefit from having more taxis available on the app to get them from A to B."

You can learn more about FREENOW's reduced commission quest by scanning the QR code below or visiting www.free-now.com/uk/reducedcommission



Improvements to airport fares

We put a lot of value on driver input and actively look for ways to keep making improvements that are both profitable and beneficial for them. One way we've done this recently is by updating airport fares.

We've now adjusted airport

FREENOW The Mobility Super App

trip fixed fares so they're much closer to the metered fare than they've been before. Offering fixed fares to passengers means that they're more likely to book through the app, which guarantees a good level of work for the drivers. And keeping them close to the metered fare means that airport trips are still high-earning jobs.

Removal of non-app payments

Another change we've introduced to benefit our drivers has been to remove the option of non-app payments for trips that aren't for business or hospitality passengers. The reason we've done this is so drivers don't need to pay the extra charge that comes when passengers choose to pay using the card machine.

More passengers means better driver earnings

In April we launched our latest marketing campaign in the capital. Some of you might have noticed new FREENOW advertising in London across billboards, on TV, on radio and more.

That's because at FREENOW, along with regular improvements to the app and driver experience, we strive to maintain a strong presence to bring more work for our drivers. By doing so we can keep growing our multi million-strong passenger base while also reminding existing passengers to keep using us as their go-to app. The more people know about FREENOW, the more passengers. And this means higher earnings for our drivers.



Using an unapproved payment device? Time for a re-think.

Headline rates are just the tip of the iceberg.

Cabvision's research shows that drivers earn more tips when they used approved payment devices rather than unapproved handhelds.

On average, **CabPay customers averaged 102.5%** of the metered fare after transaction costs and tips, which is **4% more than drivers using unapproved devices** after transaction fees are deducted.

An illustration of an iceberg floating in water. The tip of the iceberg is above the water line, and the much larger base is submerged below. A horizontal blue line represents the water surface. Various text boxes are placed on the iceberg: one on the tip, one on the water line, and several on the submerged part. The submerged part contains more text boxes.

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1. Unapproved Handheld Payment Device

Example 1:

£20.00 (average fare) - £0.30 (transaction fee) = £19.70

MONTHLY PROCESSING VOLUME	0.99% (fees calculated on average 1.5% transaction for all card types)	MONTHLY TIPS	EARNINGS AFTER COSTS
£3000	£45.00	£0.00	£2,955.00
£4000	£60.00	£0.00	£3,940.00
£5000	£75.00	£0.00	£4,925.00

2. CabPay Approved Payment Device

Example 2:

£20.00 (average fare) + 5% (tip) - £0.52 (transaction fee) = £20.48

MONTHLY PROCESSING VOLUME	1.99% + 10p	MONTHLY TIPS	EARNINGS AFTER COSTS
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£4000	£100.00	£200.00	£4,100.00
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A Passage Through Time: Farewell Clerkenwell

Throughout my long period of writing articles rooted in London's history for **TAXI**, I have always encouraged drivers to do a tourist guide course.



Footprints and Foundations

14

Just of late I have received several enquiries regarding information about said available courses. If you are contemplating one, please don't wait to take that leap of faith. Challenge yourself to a period of learning. I assure you that once you begin to immerse yourself in London's heritage there will be no turning back!

A few weeks ago, a taxi driver I've known for the past 20 years contacted me. It was to advise me that he was in the middle of the City of London guiding course. This particular cabbie had an extremely good knowledge of London's history. We spoke some 15 years ago about this course and how he should apply for it. He finally had the fortitude to do so and is finding it very rewarding. I have been helping him with his exam presentations whilst he is nearing the end of its duration, and can provide assistance by giving you extra help with your application and presentations too.

Clerkenwell conclusion

For the past several articles I have featured Clerkenwell's eclectic history. It is soon time to move on to pastures new. Indeed, Clerkenwell has evolved from a monistic quarter in St

John's Square, where the Knights of St John of Jerusalem resided. The nearby holy waters of the Clerk's Well, found beneath the basement of an office building in Farringdon Lane, gave the area its name. Centuries of change and renewal have reshaped the landscape. If you take a walk through its hinterland you can still observe this location's fascinating past.

Evolution

Former old factories and warehouses that serviced industrial Clerkenwell, now provide a living space for urban dwellers. Creative minds have come to reside in this domain. Furniture makers, photographers, contemporary art galleries and fashion houses are now the leading players in the future of Clerkenwell. The old trades are still evident and continue to provide centuries of craftsmanship. Hatton Gardens is still a thoroughfare of precious stones, goldsmiths and silversmiths, all offering the public a valuable commodity. Leather Lane street market opened in 1666 and continues to trade, however, now mostly in continental hot food takeaways.

The post-war years

The 1950s were systematic in a programme of rehousing and slum clearance. Tower blocks rose high above the Clerkenwell skyline. An example can be found on the northside of

Skinner Street. The Finsbury Borough Council constructed a huge estate for the use of social housing. The design was High Modern. Residences were provided with a living space of enhanced amenities, where a library, community centre and a playground for children's recreation was an improvement for former slum dwelling residents.

This style of architecture was repeated throughout the capital. Although the concept had positive reviews when the schemes were inaugurated, the gradual decline of communities' new found living standards became apparent through the 1970s. The lack of council funding left the properties in a bad state of repair. This led to anti-social behaviour, where out of work adolescents caused a multitude of problems for those residing on these council estates. An important fact is that most of the occupants had come from old two-storey housing where next-door neighbours could have a chin-wag and the front door was opened onto the street. Having moved to the new high-rise tower blocks, their hopes and dreams slowly faded away as communal living did not prove to be their panacea.

Echoes of Italy

London is a melting pot of nations, where new arrivals have domiciled in homogenised quarters of the capital. Here, at the beginning of the 1800s in Clerkenwell, the Italian community made their home

within the Mount Pleasant area, contained by the perimeters of Clerkenwell Road, Gray's Inn Road, Rosebury Avenue and Farringdon Road. This enclave became known as 'Little Italy' or 'Il Quartiere' – the Italian Quarter on the Hill. The Hill referred to streets that sloped down the Fleet Valley. This location encircled the thoroughfares of Vine Hill, Eyre Street Hill, Back Hill, and Little Saffron Hill.

Italian immigrants had hoped to find a better life in the capital but it initially proved difficult as the hardships of life became evident. This was a Dickensian district where abject poverty was present. The streets were congested with men fighting and swearing – this was drowned out by the clatter of horse hooves and dampened by smells of both horse dung and unfamiliar culinary aromas. These were truly days from a different world. The Italian community had moved out by the 1970s and relocated to the North London suburbs. The legacy of the Italian church and Terroni's Italian delicatessen are a reminder of a vibrant culture that once flourished in Clerkenwell.

In my next article I will be delving into the location of Covent Garden: a place of rich history, traditions and customs.

TAXI

If you are contemplating a tourist guide course, or have any questions, please contact me via journeythroughtime@hotmail.com





Theresa Villiers and the Ten Minute Bill

When reclining in the sauna at Chateau Kenners (aka my bath), my usual listening pleasure consists of the dulcet tones of Joe Bonamassa, Cream, a slice of Jimi Hendrix and, of course, some Iron Maiden.

Man in black

However, today's was taken up by a rather unusual source - the voice of Theresa Villiers MP. Now, I must admit that despite there being no guitar solos or intricate bass lines available to my sensitive ears, her vocal performance was positively sublime.

On 3rd May, 2023, Ms. Villiers, the MP for Chipping Barnet, addressed the House of Commons. She did so with a Private Members' Bill (PMB) to amend the Greater London Authority Act 1999.

Her honourable colleagues heard her say:

"I beg to move, That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to give the Secretary of State power to review and overturn decisions made by the Mayor of London relating to transport and to air quality; and for connected purposes."

She went on to explain how her proposals would tackle concerns over London's impending Ultra Low Emission Zone (Ulez) expansion, low traffic neighbourhood schemes, the Mayor's Streetspace initiative, the unfettered growth of cycle lanes across the capital, and the reduction in speed limits along major arterial roads such as Finchley Road and Park Lane.

Bills, bill, bills

The bill would give Secretary of State for Transport, Mark J. Harper, a legal remit to overturn some of the Mayor's more controversial schemes. Fantastic. Marvellous. This is a great bill, in my humble opinion. What's not to like? There is,

however, one small issue with her proposal. This bill has been proposed under the Ten Minute Rule.

This is the part where you may be scratching your head and asking *what on earth is he talking about?* Allow me to elaborate.

Rules, rules, rules

There are several ways that a Private Members' Bill can be proposed to parliament, either by ballot, by presentation or by the 10 Minute Rule.

The differences are as follows:

■ When a proposal is made by the ballot method of trying to bring in new amendments to legislation, members who apply are drawn from a ballot. If they are successful they are given parliamentary time for their bill to be read and debated. There is a greater chance of legislation being passed via this method due to greater parliamentary time given to ballots. The general rule of thumb is that the first seven ballot bills get afforded a day's debate each.

■ The second method available to a parliamentarian (in relation to proposing a PMB) is via a presentation. Taking this route can only be pursued if a Member of Parliament has given a prior indication that they intend to introduce a bill. It is then introduced but no discussion takes place to support it. It is rare for a bill to be passed via this route.

■ The third and final method used to present a PMB is (you guessed it) the Ten Minute Rule. This particular route allows the introduction of a bill after a brief debate under Standing Order 23. The MP making the proposal will speak for up to 10 minutes on the subject, followed by an opposing member making a 10-minute speech.

Now this is where the wheels generally come off. If a motion is passed under the Ten Minute Rule, the bill is then introduced and given a formal first reading. It is, however, unlikely to make any further progress. This is because it will not be given enough time on the parliamentary calendar as it is not given priority status.

The Ten Minute Rule is generally used to whip up publicity for a particular issue. PMBs are very rarely passed into legislation. In fact, the figure is quite surprising.



Theresa Villiers MP.

Numbers, numbers, numbers

Now this is the bit where I turn into Carol Vorderman and look at the figures. Since 1983, 248 bills have received Royal Assent through a ballot. 53 have passed via presentation and a paltry 16 have entered legislation through the Ten Minute Rule. This means that just one bill passes via the Ten Minute Rule every two-and-a-half years.

None of this is of course new



to the taxi industry. On 22nd March, 2016, Wes Streeting, MP for Ilford North, entered a PMB under the Ten Minute rule to bring in the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Operators (Regulation) Bill 2015-16. Mr. Streeting, who is now the current Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, also attempted to bring in legislation in July of 2018. Unfortunately, these attempts failed, not because of any particular flaw in the legislative proposals but because the bill simply ran out of parliamentary time.

The reality is that while Ms. Villiers' bill is considered to be an excellent proposal, it is unlikely to succeed. What it could do is rally the Conservative Party to put forward a serious, viable mayoral challenger to Sadiq Khan. Despite Ms. Villiers admitting via her own website that her bill is not likely to proceed, it could be enough of a trigger to rally support to take on Mayor Khan.

Another issue which seems to have eluded many is, as unlikely as it seems, should Labour find themselves elected to lead the country and Conservatives leading London, this legislative proposal could be used directly against a Conservative mayor.

When there's an election in the air, there is political blood on the streets - but whose will it be? Answers on a postcard please...



What Another Base Rate Rise Means for Your Money

The Bank of England base rate went up 0.25 percentage points in May to 4.5%, meaning it is now at its highest since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008.

Money matters

The base rate (or 'bank rate') is the interest rate set by the Bank of England (BoE) for lending to other banks. It is also used as a benchmark for interest rates generally, so it will affect how much you pay on your mortgage and other borrowings, as well as how much interest you'll earn on savings.

May's rate increase is the 12th consecutive hike since the BoE started raising interest rates in December of 2021, in an attempt to curb inflation. Previously the base rate had been at a historically low level, standing at 0.1% from March of 2020 to December of 2021.

Your mortgage

A rise in the base rate has the biggest impact on borrowers, with a variable rate mortgage such as a tracker or a Standard Variable Rate (SVR) mortgage.

If you are on a tracker your interest rate will rise 0.25% – this type of mortgage always rises and falls in line with the bank rate. Those on SVRs will be at the mercy of their lender on whether it decides to increase the rate. The majority of lenders will raise rates on SVRs when the base rate rises.

Exactly how much your mortgage payments will go up will depend on your pay rate and mortgage size. For example, someone paying a tracker rate of 6.5% (base rate plus 2%) will see it increase to 6.75%. On a £150,000 repayment mortgage repayable over 20 years, this will mean a monthly payment will go up from £1,118 to £1,141, a rise of £23. This might not seem much, but just a year ago the monthly payment on the same mortgage would have been £832 – so monthly payments have gone up more than £300 within a year.

Fixed rates explained

If you are on a fixed rate mortgage deal, the rate rise won't affect you. A fixed

mortgage means the interest rate you pay remains the same for the duration of the fix, regardless of what happens to the base rate. However, if you're looking to remortgage, you're likely to find the rates you're offered will be higher than before.

Alice Haine, personal finance analyst at Bestinvest, said:

"Whatever happens in the short term, the 1.4 million people with cheap fixed rate deals expiring this year are now facing a significantly more expensive mortgage market than the one they left two or five years ago."

"While some may have already secured a new deal, those whose product ends in the next few months might be wise to overpay, if possible, to cushion the blow of higher repayments."

Other borrowing

An increase on the base rate could also affect how much borrowers pay on loans, credit cards and overdrafts. Those paying a fixed rate of interest on existing personal loans or car finance will be protected, but new borrowing is likely to become more expensive.

Unfortunately, the cost of living crisis means Brits are borrowing more money to fund their everyday living costs. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), almost a quarter of adults in Britain reported borrowing more money or using more credit in the past month compared with a year ago.

Savings

A rising interest rate is, however, good news for savers. In theory, banks and building societies should increase the interest they pay on cash savings. But how much more interest you will earn will depend on whether your bank fully passes on the Bank of England rise.

Adam Thrower, head

of savings at Shawbrook, said: "Savings rates don't automatically change in response to the Bank of England fluctuations. So, if you haven't moved your money since interest rates began to climb, you could be literally throwing money away. Ignoring your rate means you're neglecting a really easy way to reduce the impact of inflation, eroding the value of your savings, and potentially growing your pot if the rate you earn starts to exceed the rate of inflation."

"Switching requires considerably less time and effort than many people think. It is in savers' best interest to jump at the chance to make themselves more money by switching to a new provider."

Easy access savings accounts tend to offer the lowest interest rates, as your cash will earn more interest in a fixed rate bond. However, some one or two-year fixed savings accounts are offering up to 4% interest, which is handy if you have some cash stashed for a rainy day.

■ TAXI





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Brentford's POTUS

Many would think that Brentford, in West London, is famous for just one thing: Brentford Football Club's former home ground of Griffin Park, having a pub on every corner of the stadium. But you'd be wrong. The area has several rather illustrious aspects of history attributed to it. One of those is its connection to one of the Presidents of the United States.

Born 11th July, 1767, in Braintree Massachusetts, John Quincy Adams, who served as the sixth President of the United States, lived in the heart of Brentford from June of 1815 to May of 1817.

He was seconded to the UK after becoming the 7th United States Minister to the United Kingdom, renting a house called Little Boston. This property belonged to James Clitherow who was the owner of Boston Manor House. The Manor House and its extensive grounds had been in the Clitherow family's ownership since the early 1670s before being sold in 1923. Little Boston, which was part of that estate, was sited at the corner of The Ride and Windmill Road. The building no longer stands after being demolished in the early 1920s.

During his term as Minister to the UK, Adams negotiated a limited trade agreement with Britain and spent time helping stranded American sailors and prisoners of war. He was elected President of the United States in 1825 and served a single term.

Adams died in 1848 at the age of 80. The former president kept a diary of his time in England. One of the entries recounts an incident where he managed to evade the attention of a pickpocket at the Brentford Fair.

Odeon Leicester Square

Odeon Cinemas are synonymous with British culture. They entered the entertainment lexicon in 1928, after Oscar Deutsch opened his first cinema at Brierley Hill, Staffordshire. Although Perry Barr, Birmingham, saw the first cinema use the Odeon name in 1930.

Contrary to popular belief, the word ODEON is not an acronym for Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation - it is actually an ancient Greek word meaning 'place for singing'.

Subsequently, numerous Odeons opened across the UK. The franchise isn't London's oldest cinema either, that honour falls to an independent cinema in Regent Street, which opened in 1848 as a theatre. It is believed that London's oldest Odeon is in fact sited in Welling. However, their best known site, the Leicester Square location, became its flagship cinema in 1937.

The Odeon Leicester Square boasts the first Dolby Cinema system to be installed in the UK and also sports the largest single-screen cinema in the country. It is also one of the few cinemas that still has a circle and stalls.

Over the years, the cinema has premiered numerous blockbusters and has also been the setting for the BFI's (British Film Institute) annual film festival and Royal Film Performance.

Nowadays, the Odeon brand is owned by AMC, but the name remains and Leicester Square Odeon is now known as Odeon Luxe.



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

LONDON?

The myths of the London Stone

Every taxi driver will have heard of the London Stone. Cited at 111 Cannon Street, for many years it was shrouded by the Bank of China, but did you know that there are several myths attributed to the mysterious stone?

It is oolitic limestone, which was brought to London for building and sculptural purposes during the Roman period. It was, however, also used during both Saxon and mediaeval times for the same reason. Originally it stood near the southern edge of Candlewick Street (now Cannon Street), opposite St Swithin's Church (called St Swithin at London Stone by at least 1557). This would have placed it in front of a Roman building, often identified as the provincial governor's palace. It is believed that it may have been a Roman milliarium, the central milestone from which distances in Roman Britain were measured.



One of the myths which has since been debunked was offered by John Strype, in his 1720 updated edition of John Stow's *Survey of London*. He claimed that the stone was a monument of heathen worship erected by the druids. This theory was quashed on the basis that there was no evidence of it being erected before the Roman period in history.

Other myths include John Cade, leader of the Kentish Rebellion, entering London and striking it with his sword to proclaim himself Lord of London. This was nothing more than an excerpt from Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part II*.

Another common myth is that it has never been moved. The stone has been moved on numerous occasions over the centuries. This, in turn, debunks the stories that if the stone has a long line of protectors and is moved then London will fall.

Finally, it is claimed that the London Stone is the magical heart of London. This belief was promulgated by 19th century folklorist George Laurence Gomme. Ultimately, it has also been debunked as nonsense.



COMCAB LONDON FAMILY

ComCab London and London Councils talk about the fantastic Taxicard account and what it means to customers and drivers. Read below to find out more:

Who are ComCab London Limited?

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

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

ComCab London is incredibly proud of its association with London Taxicard, a relationship which has spanned over 25 years.

Importance of the Taxicard Scheme

Earlier this month Alan McDonald, Strategic Account Manager for the Public Sector at ComCab London and Andy Rollock, Mobility Services Manager at London Councils met up for a chat about the fantastic Taxicard account and what it means to customers and drivers.



Andy explained "All of our customers are either vulnerable or disabled and without the Taxicard service they will be socially isolated, they wouldn't be able to move around because their disability means they can't use Public Transport, so without the Taxicard scheme and ComCab London, people would be housebound and not be able to get out"

Alan added "ComCab London are very proud of being the sole contractor for Taxicard for as long as its existed. It really means a lot to ComCab London drivers, knowing that they are able to deliver a service to people with vulnerable positions and impairments."

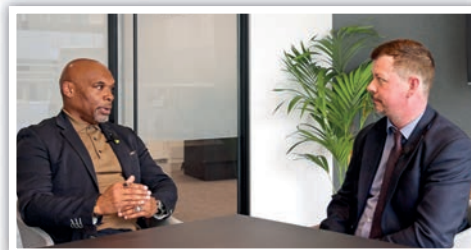
Giving something back to people who really need help

Andy said "I think for drivers it's probably not so much about the financial gain, it's more around the social aspect because they are giving people the opportunity to get out. They're building relationships with customers and it's having that trust in that driver, someone the customer can rely on, someone they know, if they have a disability whereby, they need assistance, that driver knows how to provide that bit of assurance and safety. So, I think, for a driver coming onto the scheme it's more about giving something back to people who really need that help in probably the most vulnerable time of their lives. The scheme is more around the social aspect and that relationship than anything else for me."

Improvements to the Taxicard scheme over the years

There have been quite a few improvements to the scheme over the years, such as customers being able to book over the telephone as well as having the option to book via the app or online. ComCab London have gone from 1-2% of Taxicard holders booking digitally 5-6 years ago to 15% booking digitally now. Alan advised "we've done a lot of work with the accessibility monitoring team to make sure our digital channels are accessible."

Another improvement has been the introduction of Futures, where drivers can schedule their work for the day, Andy said "ComCab London drivers don't have to drive around the street trying to find street hails, they know they have advance bookings in place which gives customers reassurance too as they know their taxi is coming, they know if they have to go to a hospital appointment that they're going to get there. It's a great advantage for drivers working on the scheme to be able to plan their day."



Joining ComCab London

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Already on the ComCab London Circuit and interested in referring a friend? ComCab London have some great incentives available if you refer a friend to join! You can receive £50 if you recommend a friend to ComCab London and they complete 100 trips. This offer is also available to drivers who are referred to join the ComCab London App with a referral bonus of £50. And best of all, there is no limit to how many drivers you can refer.



SCAN ME TO APPLY NOW

Missed our last Episode? ComCab London Family - Episode Ten





Fighting for the Black Cab

Harry Relf is a young man on a mission to get his generation into taxis and to recognise the value of the iconic black cab.

A worthy project

Countless times I have been out with friends, mostly between the ages of 20 and 25 and transport home is imperative to the night out. I write this as a 22-year-old student photojournalist who is this week, exhibiting my work that aims to pay homage to the black cab trade in London.

The Knowledge

I don't think my generation understands the value of working on things for the long run, like dedicating several years of your life, to bank every road and major landmark within a six-and-a-half mile radius of Charing Cross: The Knowledge. I started this voyage

"I want to express that the black cab's survival is a matter of public interest, not just sentimental value."

Harry's project

My project 'Can I catch a Cab, cabbie' was born out of my fascination with the

identity of London and a desire to understand what makes this great city tick. I started developing ideas for the project at the time of the Brexit referendum, when I was just 16 years old. Through it, I want to express that the black cab's survival is a matter of public interest, not just sentimental value.

I had the opportunity of interviewing and photographing General Secretary of the LTDA, Steve McNamara and I was grateful for the opportunity to do so. It was also a great conversation starter when jumping into any black cab. This led me to interview Chris Burns, a taxi driver for more than two decades, who couldn't have been a nicer bloke. I wanted to understand the psyche and purpose behind why taxi drivers do what they do and more so, how they do what they do.

We arranged a journey from Charing Cross to my home in Northampton, which I documented this on my mini dv camcorder. An hour of footage, but a lifetime of wisdom. I was blown away by Chris' integrity, determination and holding the cab trade to his heart.

Uber not the issue

I was probably quite naïve when starting this project, as I thought that the Uber conversation would still be a prominent issue. I found it was more about upholding the differences between the taxi and minicab trades and preserving the unique, important service taxis provide, and the regulator's struggle to balance the interest of the different parties and to do the right thing.

This was always a good topic to get a driver talking when I got my mates into a taxi at 4 am on a Sunday morning. Instead of trying to haggle down an e-hailing service like Uber or Bolt. My mates soon realised I might be right, the cab drivers got us from point A to point B, safely and quickly. Plus, trying

to tell a cabbie about my project after a few Nelson Mandelas was always a laugh and we had some great conversations. This would not have happened had we opted for public transport or E-Hailing services - as the driver either tends to be on the phone or intently navigating their GPS.

Steve McNamara's words when I first shook his hand were: "You're very persistent, I will say that." When asked why I wanted to interview him and what a young budding journalist was doing at the LTDA HQ, I said, "I want to prove to the older generations and the taxi trade that young people are still interested and put this journalistic opportunity to good use. In other words, I shall not waste my days... I shall use my time!"

If you would be interested in seeing my project entitled Can I Catch a Cab, Cabbie, you are welcome to join me at the London College of Communication graduation showcase in Elephant and Castle on the 26th, 27th and 30th May, where I will be exhibiting this project and would be pleased to see you there.

■ TAXI



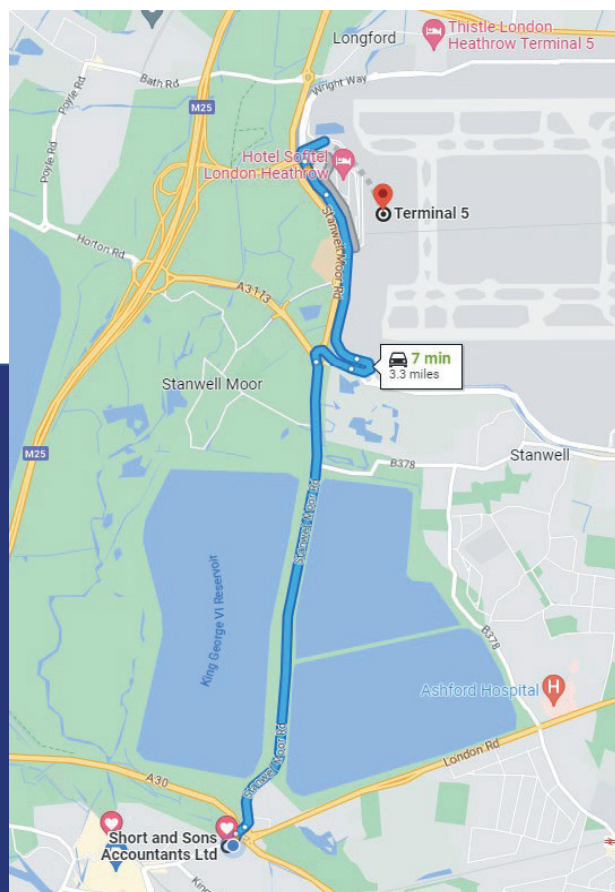
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The Lavish Lifestyle of Elvira Barney

In the 1920s, London's nightclub scene was dominated by the so-called 'Bright Young Things', a term devised by the press to describe a group of wealthy socialites.

Rob's history tips

Known for partying hard and indulging in drugs, this clique inspired Evelyn Waugh to write his 1930 novel *Vile Bodies*, whilst a dancer named Louise Brook, who was familiar with the scene, later claimed the group were "a dreadful, moribund lot."

One of the Bright Young Things, was a woman named Elvira Barney (née Mullens). Born into an aristocratic family in 1904, Elvira grew up at 6 Belgrave Square and studied drama. She enjoyed a short stint as a performer at the Gaiety Theatre, once located on Aldwych.

22 Party people

At a party in 1927, she met John Sterling Barney; an American singer who was part of a popular trio dubbed The Three New Yorkers (who were famed for their residency at the Cafe de Paris) and within a year of this they were married.

However, Elvira soon discovered that her new husband was a particularly nasty individual. Regular, violent rows became the order of the day, and Elvira told her friends that Barney enjoyed stubbing cigarettes out on her - indeed, she had the burn marks on her skin to prove it.

After just a few months, Barney abandoned Elvira to return to America and was never heard from again. In the wake of her collapsed marriage, Elvira went off the rails and, as her biographer Peter Cotes later claimed, "started sniffing the snow."

Changing places

Elvira also moved into a new apartment located at 21 William Mews off of Lowndes Square, where, over the next few years, she entertained a string of dubious lovers, most of whom seemed keen to exploit her wealth.

One such fellow was Michael



"Elvira's trial took place at the Old Bailey during the summer of 1932. She claimed the argument had erupted after she'd threatened to kill herself with the gun."

Scott Stephen. Officially a dress-designer by trade, Stephen also happened to be a drug dealer and the very man believed to have been supplying Elvira with a flow of cocaine.

One fateful night

On the evening of 30th May, 1932, the couple hosted one of their regular parties at William Mews.

Then, at around midnight, they took a cab from Knightsbridge to Coventry Street for a late dinner at the Cafe de Paris, where witnesses described them as being "excitable" and in "high spirits."

Once fed, they headed on to the Blue Angel; a nightclub once located on Dean Street, where more booze flowed, before finally returning to William Mews at around 4am.

Shortly after their return, neighbours heard shouting coming from the apartment which, apparently, was normal. Although this row took an alarming turn when Elvira was heard to shout, "Get out, get out! I will shoot you!"

Sure enough, these heated words were followed by the crack of a pistol, after which Elvira was heard sobbing, "Chicken,

chicken, come back to me!"

Following a panicked phone call, a doctor named Thomas Durant quickly arrived on the scene at 4.50am, where he found Michael Stephen sprawled dead on the stairs.

Stephen had twice been shot in the chest at close range with a .32 Smith & Wesson revolver. Elvira, who sat sobbing beside his body, kept repeating the same line over and over: "He wanted to see you to tell you it was only an accident."

After being taken to the police station, Elvira lashed out at the arresting officer, striking him in the face and shouting, "I will teach you to say you will put me in a cell, you vile swine!"

She was then taken for a hearing at Westminster Magistrates' where it was reported she fainted in the dock and, after being placed on remand, was promptly carted off to Holloway prison in a taxi.

Elvira's trial took place at the Old Bailey during the summer of 1932. She claimed the argument had erupted after she'd threatened to kill herself with the gun. When Stephen tried to intervene, the weapon had gone off by accident.

Foul play?

Elvira was defended by Sir Patrick Hastings, who argued Stephen's death was a mishap as the pistol bore no safety catch and had a very sensitive trigger.

Consequently, Elvira was found not guilty of her lover's murder, despite witnesses saying she'd taken a shot at Stephen through an open window some time before, and that an older, third bullet hole had been found in the apartment.

Following her acquittal, Elvira Barney continued to live a hedonistic life and, on Christmas morning of 1936, she was found dead in a Paris hotel room after bingeing on a cocktail of drugs and alcohol.

If you wish to learn more, you can visit my YouTube channel, [robslondon](#). ■ TAXI

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Entertainment Corner

TAXI's resident film critic takes us through the month's best cinema and TV releases to recommend to passengers.

Reel Talk



Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3 (12A)

It's rare that a third movie in a franchise is good. And if it's a superhero franchise, it's even rarer that it gets a proper ending. But both things are true in the case of *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, which sees James Gunn complete his excellent trilogy with style, heart, and more head-bopping tunes.

The story this time round focuses on Rocket (voiced impeccably by Bradley Cooper). After an attack on Guardians HQ leaves him gravely injured, the rest of the team traverses the galaxy to find a way to save him. Their quest sees them cross paths with Rocket's creator, The High Evolutionary (played with pointed menace by Chukwudi Iwuji), and Gamora (Zoë Saldana). Given that the latter has no memory of her previous time with the group, there's some new notes to the character dynamic that have rich payoffs. And the tonal balance somehow never sacrifices heavy moments for humour either.

The action, when it comes, is visually vibrant and just plain cool, with one particular sequence late on proving to be especially spectacular and memorable. And that is one of many reasons why this is the best *Guardians* film in the entire franchise.

★★★★☆

Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3 is in cinemas now.

The Mother (15)

It's becoming increasingly trendy for an actor who is late in their career to take on a role that sees them turn into an action hero. Like Liam Neeson in *Taken*, Denzel Washington in *The Equaliser*, and Bob Odenkirk in *Nobody* before her, it's now Jennifer Lopez's turn to be a badass with a gun in Niki Caro's *The Mother*. Her titular character's maternal instincts kick in when she comes out of hiding to protect her estranged daughter, who she had to give up at birth, while on the run from dangerous arms dealers.

Aside from one sequence that looks like it was taking tips from *Taken 2*'s school of over-editing, the action is satisfying and impactful, and Lopez easily convinces as a deadly assassin who is able to dispatch her targets with a sniper rifle or fisticuffs. Misha Green's script is at its strongest when mother and daughter get to bond in the Alaskan mountains, the scenes finding a nice balance between levity and heart. But it's at its weakest – and thinnest – when any of the male heroes and villains are on-screen. Still, this is a perfectly watchable, if forgettable Netflix outing, with a movie star performance from Lopez at its centre.

★★★★☆

The Mother is now available to stream on Netflix.



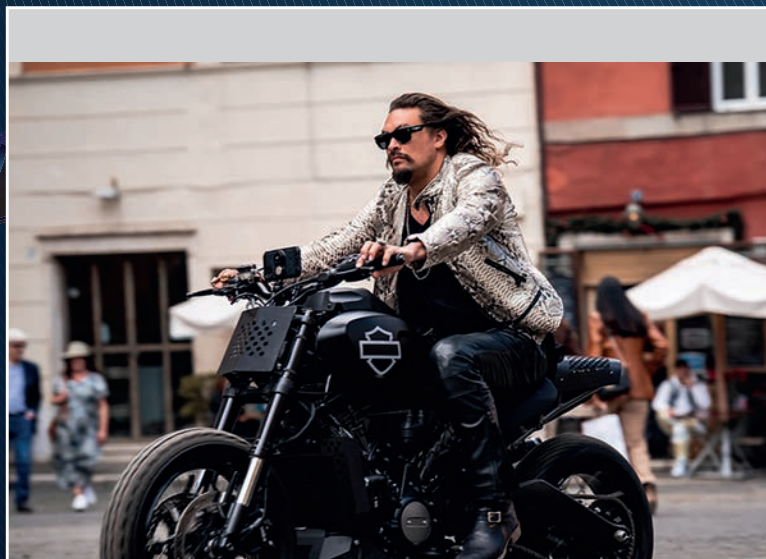
Fast X (12A)

Who would've thought that the *Fast and Furious* franchise would make it to 10 movies?! Along the way, it's evolved from a humble story about a gang of street racers to a bonafide summer blockbuster about a multicultural found family, led by Dom Toretto (Vin Diesel) who have gone on to save the world. The *Fast* saga's storied history is recounted in one of the funniest scenes in *Fast X*, a feature that somehow manages to up the ante with its car theatrics (an early sequence set in Rome is a franchise high point).

Momoa is *Fast X*'s other not-so-secret weapon. He's having the time of his life as the villainous Dante Reyes, choosing to go over-the-top with every other line reading to delightful effect. But there's a difference between smart dumb and lazy dumb, and *Fast X*'s storytelling gauge tips over into the latter far too often. It's also bursting at the seams with characters, and many of them get the short shrift. But with two more (and reportedly final) instalments coming, perhaps these are problems that can be rectified.

★★★★☆

Fast X is in cinemas now.



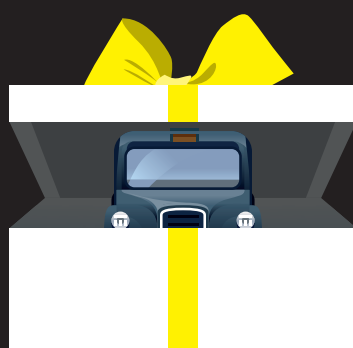
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Convoy of Cabs take Veterans to the Netherlands

TAXI Spoke to Chairman Brian Heffernan about the recent five-day trip.



Cabs arrive at the hotel in Wageningen.



Marie Scott and British Ambassador Joanna Roper.



WWII Veteran Roy Smith.



Taxi Charity volunteers in the Netherlands.



The Dutch Liberation Parade.

TAXI Hi Brian, how was your trip to the Netherlands?

Brian: It was my first Taxi Charity trip to Europe since becoming Chairman, so I was a little apprehensive but the visit was a huge success.

TAXI What was the visit for?

Brian: Since 2012, we have been taking veterans to Wageningen in the Netherlands for Dutch Liberation. On 4th May, the Dutch commemorate the deaths of all their civilians and members of the Armed Forces who died in service since WWII. The following day they celebrate their liberation from Germany. In Wageningen, there is a liberation parade on 5th May and we are given the honour of leading it.

TAXI What were the highlights?

Brian: There were so many! The atmosphere at the parade was unforgettable. Thousands of Dutch men, women and children line the route to applaud their liberators and it is wonderful to see the veterans thanked so warmly for the part they played. On 4th May, WWII veteran Marie Scott was invited to light the liberation flame at midnight and became the first woman to receive this honour.



Veterans in the Dutch Liberation parade.

Joanna Roper, Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Piers Strudwick, British Defence Attaché in the Netherlands, took time out of their busy schedules to surprise us with a visit at our hotel. And let's not forget why we do this: seeing the veterans walking tall, speaking confidently and laughing together has to be the greatest highlight of any trip we organise.

TAXI What would you say to the drivers who volunteered their time?

Brian: You are simply the best.

TAXI What's next?

Brian: On 4th June we are off to France for the D-Day commemorations with a group of Normandy veterans. We are all really looking forward to that one.

TAXI



The Taxi Charity trip to the Netherlands.

About the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans

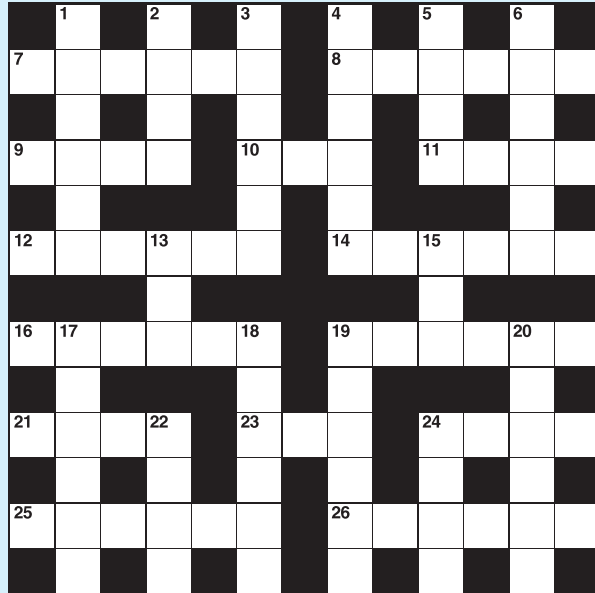
The Taxi Charity is run by volunteer London black taxi drivers and has been supporting thousands of veterans since 1948. The charity arranges free trips (for veterans from all conflicts) to the Netherlands and France, for acts of commemoration and days out to museums, concerts, or social events across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

- 7 Front part of the neck (6)
- 8 ___ of the Guard, Beefeater (6)
- 9 Meals list (4)
- 10 Backward flow (3)
- 11 Non-gloss (4)
- 12 Channel Island (6)
- 14 Suffer (6)
- 16 Relating to a racial group (6)
- 19 Member of a slimming club, perhaps (6)
- 21 Move extremely slowly (4)
- 23 In the past (3)
- 24 Coastal bird (4)
- 25 Inspire (6)
- 26 Harsh, loud (6)

DOWN

- 1 Chesty sound (6)
- 2 Soya bean curd (4)
- 3 Hard as a certain metal (6)
- 4 Ta-ta! (3-3)
- 5 Earth-dwelling creature (4)
- 6 Someone who holds another prisoner (6)
- 13 Offend against God (3)
- 15 Artificial colour (3)
- 17 Switch on a radio (4,2)
- 18 Dry red wine (6)
- 19 Call in, visit (4,2)
- 20 Sign on (6)
- 22 Secrete (4)
- 24 Mother's mother (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.

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

		<		
1		<		<
		<		

All answers to puzzler on p30

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still buying. John 07702 554934

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● Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history. Non-fleet cabs. New stock daily. Cabs also wanted. Finance Paid 07957 465423

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● TXEs for hire, no ads – 07980288333

● TXEs/TX4s available from £230 - 07932740902

● Euro5&6 vitos for rent, full backup, prices starting from £200 please call – 07956211478

● All vitos and TX4s for rent, full back up, starting from £200 based in East London – 07872504604

● TXE New Comfort plus models available, no ads from £320 pw - Michael - 07877313910

● TXEs, TX4s and vitos available from £230 per week contact Sabri – 07958973944

Get in touch



Loren Wedderburn



Loren@centuryone.uk



01727 739 184



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

Suburban badge sector numbers

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Date



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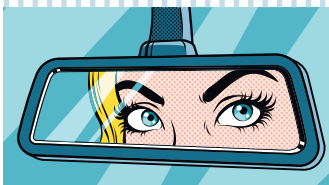
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Love and Sausage Dogs

They say a man's best friend is his dog. And during one particular cab ride that really came to light.

A woman of words

Earlier this week, I picked up a young chap near Vauxhall Bridge who wanted to go to Wandsworth. As soon as he was buckled in, he started tugging at his shirt collar and tie. He called out, "I'm sweating back here. Can you whack up the aircon, please?"

For mid-May it was blooming cold outside, but I did as he asked. Then, with cool air blowing around him, he started muttering away to himself and wringing his hands.

"All OK back there?" I asked.

"No" he replied, "Stop the cab! I can't do this!"

Looking at the state of him squirming around in the back I thought to myself he's either on the way to a job interview or

an exam. So, I asked him which it was.

"Worse than that," he cried.

I couldn't stop mid-bridge, so drove a bit further, long enough for him to tell me he was on his way to his girlfriend's dad's house to ask for her hand in marriage, and he was terrified.

I'd read in the paper earlier in the week that technically this fella was off the hook for asking permission to marry because the society bible Debretts say it's outdated.

Mind you, who takes any notice of Debretts? They have strict rules about the right way to drink tea; and guess what? It's not from a mug sitting in a little green hut.

The lad then asked if I would listen to what he planned to say to his prospective father-in-law. He started with, "I have been out with over 60 girls..." I had to interrupt and tell him that



describing himself as a modern-day Casanova was not the way to go.

"OK, OK. I did think that," he agreed. "This one is better," and then he launched into a love letter to his sausage dog, Charley. He said that he loved Charley more than anything or anyone in the world and never thought he could find a greater, deeper love. He spoke passionately about how it was being able to love Charley that helped him realise he was ready for marriage. Then he blurted, "And with your permission I

want to marry her!"

I broke it to him gently that it sounded like he wanted to marry the dog. This made him wail, "I knew it! I can't do this!" When Mr. Meg visited my dad to ask for my hand in marriage four decades ago, he arrived at 6pm on a Monday evening. He made nervous small talk for five hours about the latest episode of *The Sweeney*, the price of onions and how best to fix a bicycle chain. But couldn't pluck up the courage to ask the question. By 11pm, my bemused dad had changed into his pyjamas and was winding his alarm clock, a big hint that Mr. Meg should go home.

He did, returning at 6am and finally declared that he wanted to get married. My dad, eating cornflakes at the time, said that was nice and to whom?

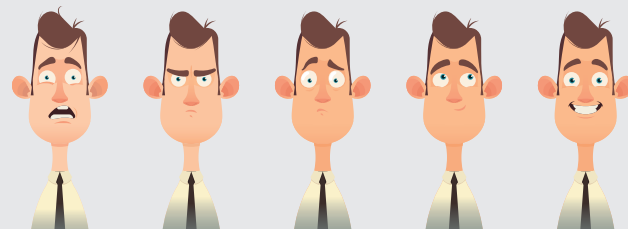
So, I advised this young chap to be brief, clear, to big up the love and keep the sausage dog out of the conversation. **TAXI**

30

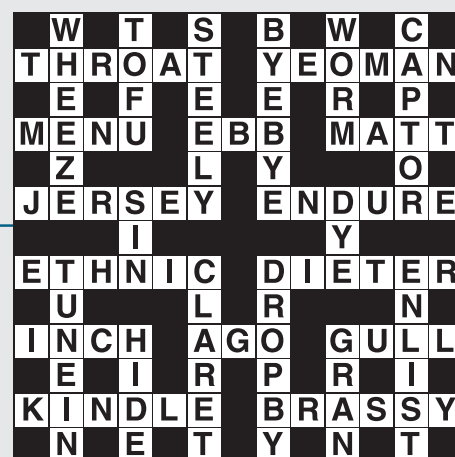
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- ◆ KPM, Hemming Street, E1
- ◆ London City Airport Canteen
- ◆ LP Motors, Dunbridge Street, E2
- ◆ Martin Cordell, Thomas Road, E14
- ◆ Paddington Station Rank
- ◆ Putney Bridge Taxis, The Arches, Putney Bridge Station, SW6
- ◆ Richmond Road Taxi Centre, E8
- ◆ Safewise Supermarket, Harrow
- ◆ South Bank Service Station, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
- ◆ TAXI HOUSE, Great Suffolk Street, SE1
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- ◆ Temple Place Shelter
- ◆ Turbo Accessories, Three Colts Lane, E2
- ◆ Ubiquitous Ltd, E1
- ◆ Waterloo Station
- ◆ Wimbledon Station Rank
- ◆ WizAnn Knowledge School, Watts Grove, E3

PUZZLER ANSWERS



Crossword



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Sudoku

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

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: FINANCIER

All words: Acne, cairn, cane, canine, cine, crane, earn, fancier, fern, fiance, finance, fine, finer, franc, inane, infer, inner, nacre, near, nice, nicer, nine, rain, rein, FINANCIER.

Word targets: Excellent: 28, Good: 23, Target: 17, Kids: 12

Futoshiki

3	5	4	1	2
^		∇		
5	2	<	3	4
				1
1	4	<	5	2
				<
				3
2	3	1	5	4
				^
				^
4	1	<	2	3
				5



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