

CHECK YOUR BREAKDOWN COVER

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**A FINAL PASSAGE THROUGH
SOHO'S HISTORY**

PHIL BROWN Page 18

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11th June 2024 #566

NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES

CABBIE'S GOOD DEED REWARDED





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Puzzler answers

LTDA
Taxi House, 133 Great Suffolk Street,
SE1 1PP
T: 020 7286 1046 | www.ltda.co.uk
@TheLTDA

Editor
Katie Combes
E: editor@ltda.co.uk

Commissioning Editor
Mike Williams
E: mike.williams@cplone.co.uk

Produced By
CPL One
Alban Row, 27-31 Verulam Road,
St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 4DG
T: 01727 893 894
E: info@cplone.co.uk
www.cplone.co.uk

Advertising Sales Executive
James Martin T: 01727 739 185
E: james.martin@cplone.co.uk

Creative Director
Peter Davies

Designer
Sean McNamara

Printed by
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LOWEST NUMBER OF DEATHS ON LONDON'S ROADS OUTSIDE PANDEMIC YEARS

New statistics from Transport for London (TfL) have shown the lowest number of people killed on London's roads outside of pandemic years. TfL has published the 2023 road casualty data, showing road deaths in the capital fell by six per cent from 102 to 95 – the second lowest level on record. The number of people killed and seriously injured on London's roads also reduced overall by 24 per cent against the 2010-2014 baseline. The Mayor and TfL reaffirmed their target for the Met to "take action on a million speeding offences" stating that this is on track to be achieved "by the end of 24/25". It was also noted that across 2023/24, more than 800,000 speeding offences were enforced at the same time as speed limits were reduced on many TfL-managed roads, with the creation of many new 20mph zones, which cabbies will now be all too familiar with.



VETERANS GATHER AT BIGGIN HILL HERITAGE HANGAR

On 28th May, the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans escorted a group of veterans to the Biggin Hill Heritage Hangar. Among the group who attended the event were 13 veterans who served during World War II – and one was to have the surprise of her life. Colin Mills, Chairman of the Charity, welcomed the veterans to the hangar and thanked the team at Biggin Hill for inviting the charity, which houses 13 Spitfires. Then to the amazement of 99-year-old veteran Dorothea Barron, who trained troops on the use of semaphore ahead of D-Day, she was told that charity ambassador, Johnny Gallagher, was about to make her dream come true. Dorothea, who celebrates her 100th birthday later this year, had been asked by Johnny what she might like as a present to mark this milestone. Without hesitation, Dorothea had told him she would love to fly in a Spitfire. Without Dorothea having any idea of the plans, the Spitfire flight had been booked for later that day. Unfortunately, just as the plans for the Normandy invasion were thwarted by the weather, so too were the plans for Dorothea's flight. Low cloud, coupled with a strong wind, meant the plane couldn't take off, but Dorothea was briefed, got dressed in a flying suit and sat in the plane which taxied along the runway. Just as D-Day had to be rescheduled for 6th June, Dorothea's flight will be rescheduled too.

HEATHROW SPANISH LESSONS

Spanish lessons are held at the Heathrow Learning Centre every Tuesday from 10am to 12pm. The course runs for 12 weeks at a time. You can learn while you work. You can book on and earn a ride while you study. For more details, contact Terry Brosnan on terry_brosnan@hotmail.com



LOTTO WINNER!

You've probably heard of the **LTDA Lottery**. What you probably don't know is that since it started in 1986, we've paid out **more than £2,205,000** in prize money to more **than 400 winners!**

Congratulations Micky Harris!

May's LTDA Lottery winner was Micky Harris. When asked if he had any plans for his £5,000 winnings. Mr Harris told us that he would be donating some to the charities he supports through his *Unify* app and some might also go towards a Greek cruise he is planning.

If you want to be in with a chance of winning the LTDA Lottery, sign up today using the QR code, right.

ENTER LTDA LOTTERY BELOW

SCAN ME!

LTDA LOTTERY

The first prize in our lottery is **£5,000 - every month!** But you won't win it if you're not in it. **Tickets cost £5 each per month.** And even if you don't win, you'll know that proceeds from the lottery contribute towards promoting and supporting the trade.

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



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Our business loans offer a more practical alternative to managed overdrafts or credit cards. When these lines of credit are exhausted, businesses often find themselves without the necessary funds for day-to-day expenses and contingencies.



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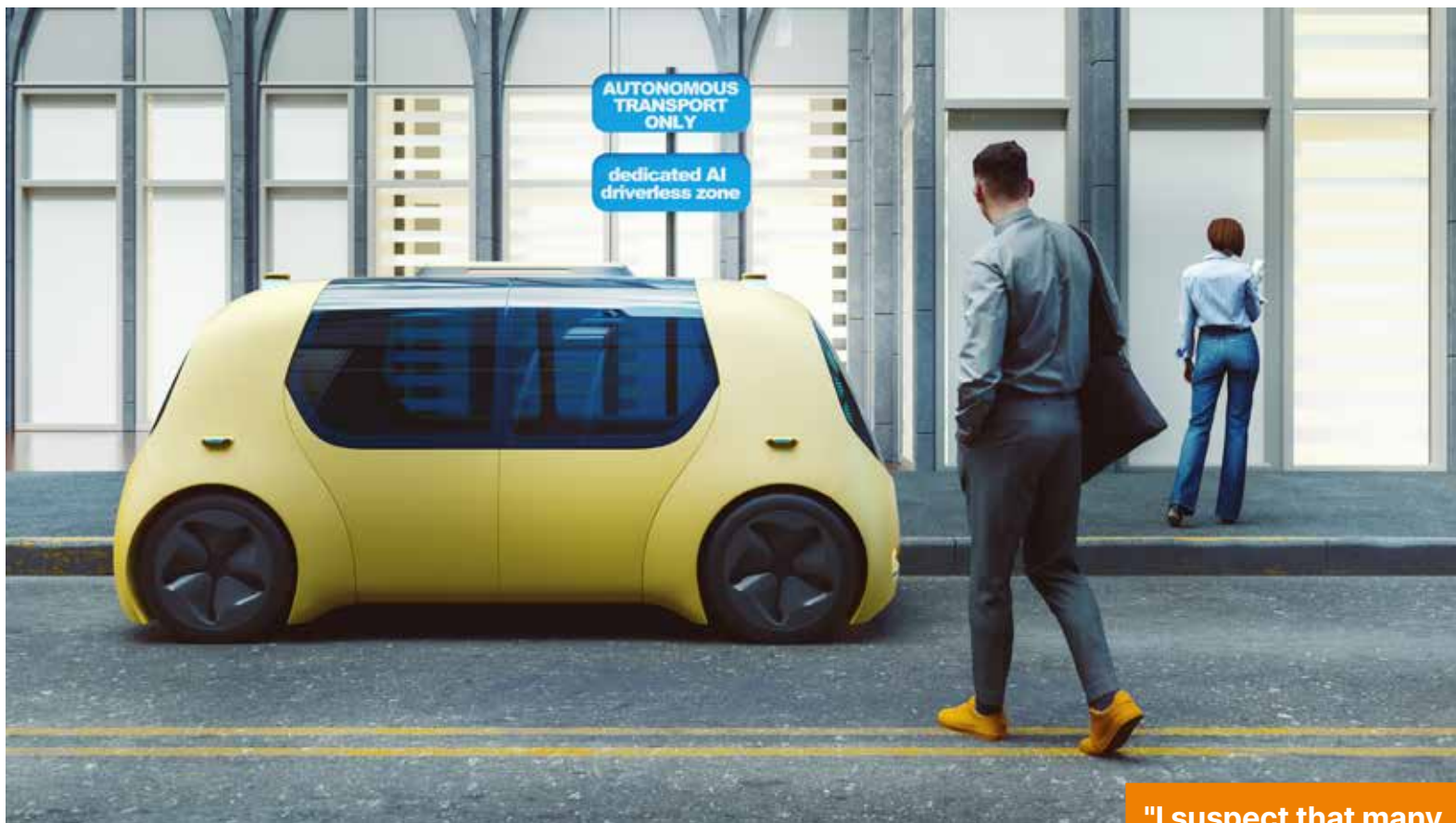
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We Won't Be Replaced Any Time Soon



Despite all the headlines and general media excitement, it's far more likely that robot lawnmowers will take over long before robot cars!



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Steve's comment

I go to a lot of conferences and talking shops; in fact, if there is a possibility it could impact on our members' business or ability to earn a living, I try to go.

All talk

It sometimes becomes clear, after scouring the agendas for these numerous events, that I am wasting my time or, more likely, that I am in for a very boring morning, afternoon or, God forbid, a full day.

In recent years, self-driving or autonomous cars, along with EV charging, have been the subject of many of these events. There is obviously a circuit of these events around the world, where the same speakers are constantly rotated and regurgitate the same stuff.

I suspect that many of the cheerleaders for autonomous cars are funded by vested interests. Interestingly, they seem to move their prediction dates for when we

will all be out of work, replaced by technology and robots, according to what their paymasters (those who own these systems) tell them.

The 'future'

I rarely ask questions. Over the years, I have realised that any answers are just taken from a standard block of responses that can be fitted to any question anywhere in the world – but, recently, I could not help myself.

At a recent event, the rabidly pro self-driving car speaker went into a long diatribe, quoting surveys of the general public and how massive percentages of those questioned would trust self-driving technology, and are waiting for the day when they can rush out and buy a car that will drive them and their families. "Trust me," he said, "the public want this technology; they trust it and will buy it!"

I asked him where he lived, "California," was his response. Did he have a house? "Yes." Garden? "Yes." And did he have a robot lawnmower? "No, a gardener."

I then asked him to account for the fact that robot lawnmowers have been around for about

10 years, were cheap, worked brilliantly, and saved hours of labour – yet the vast majority of people still buy the old-fashioned technology and cut their own grass.

I also pointed out that a recent survey by a gardening company I had seen indicated that this was because people don't trust robots to cut their grass. Yet there he was, telling us that, within a few years, those very same people will trust a robot to drive their kids and families around. Could he account for that?

He obviously couldn't because he laughed and quickly moved on with yet more fascinating (to some) predictions and projections.

No time soon

What I have learned from attending this event, and all the others, is that – despite all the headlines and general media excitement that surrounds every press release and announcement on self-driving cars – it's far more likely that robot lawnmowers will take over long before robot cars!

"I suspect that many of the cheerleaders for autonomous cars are funded by vested interests."

Legal update

We are still seeing far too many members coming into Taxi House with licence suspensions or revocations as a result of trying to deal with TfL themselves. If you get a 'fitness to be licensed' letter or a complaint from TfL, and you are in any way unsure, please speak to one of the team here BEFORE responding yourself. Please, help us to help you! ■ LTDA





Medical Support When You Need It



Some of our members have tried out this service and have had really positive experiences, which I want to share, for those who might be looking for a better option.

Streets ahead

We know many drivers have struggled to get their medicals completed in recent years, particularly since everything went virtual in the pandemic – and getting past reception staff to actually see a doctor in-person when you are ill, well forget about it.

For cabbies, time is money. We often don't have time to waste sitting on hold or queuing in the GP surgery, only to be fobbed off.

At the LTDA, we've been collaborating with a company called 4 Armed Health, which is offering our members a range of discounted medical services that includes TfL medicals, including an eye test, Fit to Drive cardiac assessments, and a virtual private GP service.

Some of our members have tried out this service and had positive experiences, which I want to share for those who might be looking for a better option.

A member's story

The first member, Paul, had been feeling unwell for a few days and wanted to see a doctor. He remembered the offer, so contacted 4 Armed Health. This was at 8.30am on a Wednesday. They asked him a few questions (nothing too invasive at that stage), then apologised that they couldn't fit him in until 10.15am that morning. The driver was confused by the apology and delighted that he would be getting seen so quickly. He then received a text and email message confirming the appointment. A few minutes before the virtual appointment, he even received a reminder via text. Then at 10.16, his phone rang and the first thing he heard was a doctor apologising that he was slightly late (unheard of). He was given the option of a voice or video call, whichever he felt most comfortable with.

The doctor then asked him to describe what was wrong and took his time asking lots of questions, and looking to understand what was going on. Our member said it was extremely thorough and even

checked his wider medical history, really taking the time to talk.

In the end, the member was told it was viral and there was no need for antibiotics. However, the doctor was very reassuring and made it clear that, if anything changed – or the member felt worse – he could call back and speak to someone. He told me he would strongly recommend the service, which took all the stress out of the process and, he felt, offered great value for money.

Another good experience

In April, another member, Rob, had been feeling unwell for a few days and getting worse. He phoned the 4 Armed Health GP Service at 11.35am. He spoke to a call-centre person, who was extremely helpful and polite. She told him that a GP would call him at the oddly precise time of 12.48pm. He then received a text message and an email confirming his telephone consultation.

At 12.48pm on the dot, the GP

rang him on his mobile, as arranged, and discussed his symptoms in detail. A short while later, at 1.06pm, he received a private prescription, which was sent to his phone and could be filled at any pharmacy. He popped down to Boots the chemists and picked up his medication. In his words it was, "a brilliant service. I would recommend to all. Kindly thank 4 Armed Health on my behalf"

LTDA

4 Armed Health
Diagnostic and Screening Services

Your health, our promise

In partnership with the LTDA, we offer members a unique one-stop solution to support London Taxi drivers' medical needs and well-being.

- Virtual Private GP service:**
 - ✓ 24/7 access to a GP (phone or video)
 - ✓ Unlimited time and number of appointments
 - ✓ GMC registered doctors
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 - ✓ Confidential, only shared with GP on request
- TPH/204 Medical Forms:**
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 - ✓ Choose a convenient date and time (appointments available usually within a week)
 - ✓ Vision test included
 - ✓ Competitive pricing
- Cardiac Assessment (Fit-to-drive):**
 - ✓ DVLA group 2 medical standards of fitness
 - ✓ Testing conducted and reviewed by our experienced cardiac team
 - ✓ Results available immediately and forms completed on the day of your appointment.

TPH/204 Medical Forms (Your full GP medical records needed)	Price
Virtual GP Service - (Includes you & immediate family)	£99
Group Discount: Medical Form + Year Access to Virtual GP	£8 a month
Exercise Tolerance Test	£155 (20% saving)
Echocardiogram (LVEF Reading)	£395
Group Discount: Exercise Test + LVEF Reading	£325
Stress Echocardiogram	£495 (30% saving)
	£495

To register for the GP service, scan the QR code and use the discount code "LTDA20". For further information on our services, visit our website or call Millie - 0207 846 5656

02078465656 | info@4armedhealth.com | www.4armedhealth.com
2 The Heights, Bumbles Green Lane, Nazeing, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 2SG



COMCAB'S 50TH BIRTHDAY

Celebrating ComCab's 50th Birthday. Let's take a look back at where the journey began!

50 years ago in May 1974, a small, dedicated team backed by 64 London Taxi Drivers formed London Wide Radio Taxis, the organisation that would eventually become ComCab.

They operated entirely on manual practices including paper dockets and voice radio dispatch until the early 1980's when they transitioned to VDU's and computer aided dispatch.

In 1982 the company became Computer Cab Company Limited and now covering all across Central London and the Suburbs they serviced the London Taxicard Scheme for the very first time in many boroughs, little did they know back then, they would be the sole contracted supplier up until this very day, something they are extremely proud of.



Computer Cab led the way into the corporate clientele and introduced the Club Class taxi concept in the 90's - a fleet of specially built Fairway Gold Taxis with luxurious interior, with air conditioning throughout and an in-built carphone with its own meter! This was a real hit with corporate customers.

Always one step ahead, in 1995 Computer Cab commissioned the first GPS based auto dispatch system of its kind, Mobistar, and the company was renamed ComCab.

The system was upgraded to Advantage system in 2007, this allowed for features to be later introduced such as "Futures" giving drivers the opportunity to plan their day their way. A huge benefit for drivers who like to schedule their work.



ComCab became a lifeline for customers, particularly Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride during the Covid-19 pandemic. ComCab ensured Drivers and customers were safe by providing free Taxi sanitising equipment which killed 99.9% of bacterial and fungal infections and viruses. Drivers who wanted to keep on working were grateful for the opportunity and went above and beyond during the peak of the pandemic.



ComCab worked with TfL to deliver essential food packages to the most vulnerable Londoners plus arranged for a prescription delivery service for Taxicard customers and worked with charities to provide transport for NHS Staff from home directly to their place of work. ComCab drivers and staff were outstanding during this crisis and were awarded the 'Exceptional Contribution Award' at the 2021 Fleet News Awards.

ComCab continues to go from strength to strength particularly since they were acquired by Addison Lee in July 2021.

There have been many acquisitions throughout the years and changes in ownership, but one thing remains the same, the drivers are the heartbeat of the company; to be a driver on ComCab means you are part of the ComCab family, and this is something that will never change.

Here's to another 50 years of ComCab – Happy Anniversary!



To celebrate 50 Years of ComCab why not join today and benefit from 0% Commission in your first 5 weeks! Plus the first 50 new drivers to sign up will receive a £50 voucher. Be Lucky!

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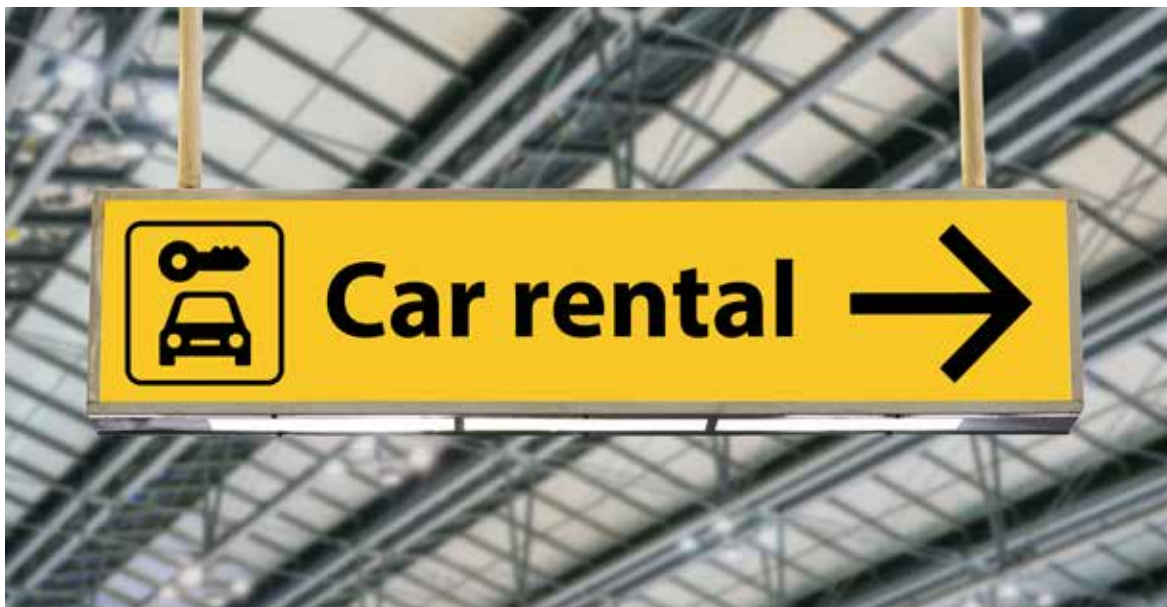
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A Spot of Consumer Advice

I write today with a bit of consumer advice; it's nothing to do with driving a cab, but might be relevant to anyone who is going away this summer and planning to rent a car.



On Point

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My wife and I booked a week in Spain last month and, as the apartment was a bit out of the way, I decided to hire a car. I booked online and paid up front, which was perhaps my first mistake.

On arriving at Valencia Airport, we took the shuttle bus to a company called *ClickRent*, which website *Do You Spain* had passed us onto. Apart from having to wait 45 minutes to speak to an employee, and spend another 25 minutes to get all

the paperwork done, everything seemed OK, until I saw the car. It was a scruffy-looking vehicle, more dust than dirt, but having been there for more than an hour already, I was resigned to taking it. I walked around it and looked for any obvious damage. To be honest, the car looked fine, so off we went.

On returning the car, one of the employees took the keys from me and immediately asked if I had videoed the car when I picked it up. I was rather taken aback by this and answered no. I later thought to myself that he probably knew the answer before asking, as the staff would have seen what I did when I picked up the car.

He then went straight to the front

wheel and pointed at it. He then walked around the back bumper, bent down and wiped away the dirt to show me a very small scuff. I found this all pretty suspicious as he didn't even hesitate, just went straight to those two places. His answer to my efforts to persuade him that I was neither responsible for those two bits of damage nor had I even noticed them, as they weren't immediately obvious, was "don't worry, insurance will do it".

Although I have no proof whatsoever, I suspect he knew exactly where to look, as he had seen them before. Could it be possible that was the reason the car was unwashed when I picked it up?

I wish to be very clear with my

readers that I did not cause this damage to the car. The scratch on the wheel was obviously older than the one week I had had the car. A new scratch on aluminium would be brighter and more obvious. The scuff on the bumper had to be there before I picked it up, as the man taking the car back had to wipe away the dust to see it.

I made every effort to return the car in the condition in which I picked it up. I was respectful and drove the car as if it was my own.

The outcome of all of this is that I have been charged a shocking €550 for damage that I did not cause.

On my return to the UK, I emailed *Do You Spain*, outlining the details, but, unfortunately, they just suggested I go through my insurance. They made no comment on my complaint, and I even gave them the opportunity to provide a comment or reply to this article, but heard nothing back.

Many of you may be thinking just do as they say and go through the insurance, and you will get your money back. But how do I explain to the insurance company where, when, or how this damage happened? No insurance company would pay out if you cannot supply this information.

I am sharing this simply to make you aware of what can happen, and to make sure you don't get caught out like I did. Oh and always take a video of your rental car! Be lucky.

ULEZ around the Country

I have been asked by a couple of members to remind readers that, when you get those once-in-a-lifetime roaders around the country, you should be aware that some councils have copied Mayor Khan and stuck a ULEZ zone, or something similar, in their cities.

We are exempt in London, but we most certainly are not in the smaller cities around the UK, and you can get caught out. After receiving PCNs, some cabbies have appealed on the grounds that we are exempt here, so we expect to be there, but these appeals fall on deaf ears, and it ends up costing the cabbie.

The towns and cities with such zones to look out for include: Bath; Newcastle; Birmingham; Bristol; Portsmouth; Manchester; Bradford; Oxford; and Sheffield. In Scotland, Glasgow and Edinburgh also have low-emission zones. I've never heard of a cab going north of the border, but you never know.



DBS Update service

Just a reminder to everybody that we are now required to join the DBS Update service when renewing our licences. I've said it before that, once we've done this, it takes away a lot of the issues we see at the LTDA when cabbies come to renew. It's £13 a year, by way of a standing order, and if any member needs assistance, or isn't 100% sure, then please give us a call and we will guide you through the sign-up process. It's important to note that you need to sign up next time you renew, and not now. **LTDA**

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Mechanical Issues

Through our relationship with *Fleetwood Assessors*, we've got you covered if something goes wrong with your taxi.



Knowledge is power

The LTDA often receives calls about taxis that are experiencing mechanical problems or warranty issues, which our members have been trying to deal with themselves. Too often, however, they find themselves being fobbed off, which is totally unacceptable.

There are lots of complications you could be faced with at any time. Some drivers who have had a bad experience when using services from taxi garages, or even the main dealers, find themselves at a loss. These problems are especially worrying when you own your own taxi, which costs you a lot of money.

Experienced partners

We have, for some time, been teamed up with *Fleetwood Assessors*, and their main man Chris. They have been servicing the taxi trade for decades. Some drivers may even know Chris, or may have used his services before. Technology is great when it works, but it doesn't always resolve the problem, and you cannot beat the experience and knowledge that Chris and his team have gained over many years on the shop floor in the motor industry.

Fleetwood have been dealing with vehicle problems within the taxi trade for a long time and are willing to use their experience to help LTDA members find a resolution to the many issues that drivers have with insurance companies, main dealers, warranties, bad body repairs, and much more.

Chris has been in partnership with the LTDA for quite a while now, and has helped resolve many drivers' issues and saved our members many thousands of pounds. Whether it's with a 21st-century LEVC cab, Mercedes Vito, or a TX4, they solve problems, I am pleased to say, with outstanding results. Chris has built a great rapport with many of the motor industry companies and is highly respected throughout the industry.

Services

Fleetwood Assessors can assist in all accident circumstances, regardless of whether the accident was fault or non-fault, with services offered at a discount to LTDA members. They can also help with and provide advice on mechanical or other issues with cabs.

Fleetwood's services include:

- Accident damage assessments
- Consistency reports
- Desktop reports
- Low-velocity impact inspections

- Repair costing
- Salvage valuation
- Total loss negotiation
- Vehicle valuation
- Total loss post-inspection report
- Mechanical faults

Fleetwood Assessors are proud of their association with the Black Cab Trade, and have more than 25 years' experience supporting drivers. They have excellent knowledge of *Transport for London* and the Conditions of Fitness, which is extremely important when involved in an accident or vehicle dispute. They have built up good relationships within the industry, over many years, which is beneficial when dealing with these types of incidents.

See more details of the services *Fleetwood* can offer on their website: www.fleetwoodassessors.co.uk or you can email them on info@fleetwoodassessors.co.uk. LTDA members will receive all these benefits at a discounted rate.

Taxis are not cheap, and to have a qualified, independent engineer speaking on your behalf on all the above is priceless, particularly when you compare it with the cost of a cab and protecting your investment.

Another bonus is that LTDA members' families can also take advantage of this offer. For full details, see the Members' section of the LTDA website. ■ LTDA



Kirby's PCN Hotspots

YELLOW BOX CAMERAS

- Upper Woburn Place/Endsleigh Gardens
- Eversholt Street/Churchway
- All along Piccadilly
- Park Street/Green St W1
- Vauxhall Cross
- Shepherds Bush Green (Westfield)
- Hans Road (rear of Harrods)
- Victoria Street/Palace Street
- Bayswater Road/Westbourne Street
- Bayswater Road/Brook Street
- Bayswater Road/Hyde Park Street

CAMERA PCN ENFORCEMENT

- Harrods (Brompton Road) Over-ranking/Zig-Zags
- Tottenham Court Road
- Sopwith Way (Chelsea Bridge) Do Not Enter
- Cornhill (coming from Leadenhall Street)
- Bath Street EC1 No Motor Vehicles 24/7
- Wilton Road, Victoria Station Over-ranking
- Edgware Road W2 Red Route
- Borough High Street Red Route
- Tower Bridge Road Red Route
- Park Plaza Westminster Bridge Hotel, No Right Turn
- Lower Belgrave Street AM/PM Timed School Restrictions

20MPH MOBILE CAMERAS

- Vauxhall Bridge Road/Neathouse Place
- Harrow Road/Hermitage Street
- Bayswater Road

● Aldwych, No U-Turn across the solid white line. This is police enforced and endorsable with 3 points.

● Great Suffolk Street Car Park, please be aware when visiting either JV Brights or the toilets at this location PCNs are being issued for over staying the short grace period or non-payment of parking.

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- ☒ Minimal downtime
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- ☒ Replacement hire taxi available

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Cover Breakdown

Before your renewal date or when purchasing a new policy, double check and be sure to clearly tell the breakdown company the model of the taxi you drive.



"One driver said the premium for his [insurance] policy had doubled."

electric model. They rang around to all the usual taxi insurance companies, only to find the prices were astronomical. Their first quote was on the TX4, as the insurance company wasn't aware they had sold it. That was £3,000. When they gave the new vehicle registration, they nearly fell off their chairs. Both have full no claims bonus, three points each on their licence, and the quote was... £7,770! And to think they were trying to reduce their expenses. They decided to go down a different route and tried on GoCompare Taxi. They found an insurance company that would cover them for £2,200.

What a difference. I asked them to make 100% sure they know it's a taxi and they said they checked and have it in writing.

I don't have any more details, but, from what I can tell, there are other options and I recommend exploring every avenue when renewing your insurance. If expenses continue to rise at the current rate of knots, it seems our life as cabbies will only get tougher. Good luck out there. **LTDA**

12

Airports & beyond

I have written before about Automobile Association (AA) recovery, and how disappointing it was the way the AA suddenly stopped insuring London taxis. At the time, some drivers were left in very difficult situations, thinking they were covered when they weren't, but not finding this out until they needed assistance.

RAC

I, along with many other members, moved over to the RAC last year.

When my renewal was up in February, I made sure to check (and double check) that they covered my taxi. The call operator went off for some time. When he came back, he said he would have to call me back so he could go off and clarify with his manager. I got the call back a while later to say that "my make and model was covered". At the time, I found it strange that he referred to my make and model rather than just referencing my taxi, so I asked him to expand on this. He said that's what he was told and didn't know what, if anything specific, that meant.

Check you're covered

In April, I had to call out the RAC. I had a flat battery and had tried everything to restart it. When the engineer arrived, he said I needed a replacement battery, so he went on to supply and fit one.

We got into a conversation about cabs and the different types of taxis. He said that the RAC was not covering LEVC TX taxis, as the three-tonne weight of the vehicles had been causing problems. The operator's words suddenly made sense – that's why I was told that my make and model of taxi was covered, because others aren't.

I've tried to get some more information on this, but I was told that each driver needs to check whether their taxi is covered. I am writing this as I don't want any drivers to be caught out, especially after the previous fiasco with the AA, which I know saw some drivers left in the lurch.

So, before your renewal date or purchasing a new policy, double check and be sure to clearly tell them the model of taxi you drive.

Increasing expenses

As we all know, the cost of everything has gone through the roof these past few years, and that goes for the expenses related to driving our taxis. I have had so many calls from drivers recently, complaining

about the substantial increase in the cost of insuring a taxi.

One driver said the premium for his policy had doubled. I also had a call on Friday from a married couple, both taxi drivers. One had sold their vehicle so they could cut expenses by sharing their cab. They now drive a LEVC TX between them.

The cab they sold was a TX4 and they had expected to pay more on insurance for the



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European News Round-up



Focus this month is on transport for the Paris Olympic Games and the annual ERTA meeting.



International correspondent

Paris taxis in the lead at Olympic Games

In about two months, athletes, spectators and tourists will be making their way to Paris for the Summer Olympics (26th July-11th August). They will be stretching the city's taxi service to the full, as public transport and taxis will be playing a major role in making these Olympics move. Unique for these Games, many of the venues are in the centre of Paris, causing daily changes to restricted roads and areas.

Local cabs will be playing a major role in this Olympic

spectacle. "Taxis – not PHVs – will have unique access to the reserved lanes and special areas for Olympic events," said Armand Oudin, CEO of Paris's largest dispatch centre, *Taxis G7* (20,000 taxis), during the annual European Radio Taxi Association's (ERTA) conference, held in Turkey on 23rd and 24th May.

He added: "Because of the daily changes in road and area closures, the situation will be very complex for our taxi drivers. We will update them on a daily basis and support them with extended dispatch teams and specified meeting points inside the Olympic areas. That is particularly important for our 300 wheelchair vehicles, which have a special dispatch service."

Similar challenges across Europe

Apart from regulatory struggles and (often) a lack of checks on the taxi and PHV industry, themes that unite the international taxi industry are competition with often lightly 'regulated' platforms, marketing taxi services to a younger target group, and sustainability. When it comes to platform competition, there are cities such as Copenhagen, where *Uber* gave up after it had to operate according to taxi rules – eg, with taximeters and seat contacts, Finland's Tampere "no competition worth

speaking of" and Paris, where taxis seem to have gained the upper hand and PHVs operate according to strict rules. On the other hand, cities such as London, struggle with *Uber* and co, usually because of a lack of regulatory controls. In Ireland, *FreeNow*, for instance, introduced what were seen as illegal 'technical' booking surcharges, unchallenged by the national regulator. As happened in Glasgow, taxi numbers dropped in many ERTA cities when *Uber* appeared on the scene. Nowadays, many taxi operators compete successfully with the likes of *Uber* and *Bolt*.

Discovering a challenging customer group

With job totals well up on 2019 levels, and operating 650 cabs – often working at or above capacity – tightly regulated *Glasgow Taxis'* regular surveys show a strong appreciation of the brand, advertised as 'Glasgow Taxi – Your city's friend'. Similarly, Vienna's *Taxi 40100* (1,700 taxis) uses surveys, and its own in-depth research, to fine-tune and pinpoint its approach to a younger client group more used to apps, and to compete successfully with local platforms. *Taxi 40100's* motto: 'Start from your own local strength and knowledge, and do not try to match the marketing budget of the apps.'

Glasgow benefits from the use of classic London-style cabs (all wheelchair-accessible), but is hampered by there being only one supplier in the e-taxi market: the *London EV Company* (LEVC), which offers a



very expensive £86,000 cab. The second-hand cab market has dried up. Other cities in Europe have a much wider choice of (more affordable) vehicles, using separate production models for wheelchair-accessible work. A major headache for the Scottish city is the 2025 deadline for electrification, which threatens to exclude 350 cabs from the fleet. More about this and other aspects of ERTA in my next column. Next year's ERTA will be held in Amsterdam.



Opportunity to talk taxishop for two days

At the end of May, taxi companies and operators from all over Europe traditionally take the temperature of the sector at the two-day European Radio Taxi Association (ERTA) meeting, brainchild of *Taxa 4x35*, in Copenhagen, *Taxi Stockholm* and *Taxis G7*, and continued by Geoffrey Riesel, former CEO of London's *Radio Taxi Group*. Twenty years after its creation, the group – a unique forum for taxi operators and companies – is still very

much alive and kicking, and offers operators a unique hands-on chance to exchange day-to-day experiences with international colleagues. It offers a more practical outlook and room for exchange of business practices. ERTA is a great opportunity to talk taxishop for two days.

At last year's meeting, in London, Riesel handed over the chairperson reins to Hedy Borreman, CEO of Amsterdam's dispatch centre *TCA*, while Vinny Kearns, CEO of *NXT Taxis* in Dublin, became interim co-chairman. Kearns stepped down after the meeting in Turkey. Usually, about 20 European countries crowd the ERTA table, but this time only 20 taxi experts represented nine countries: *Glasgow Taxis* was there for Scotland, joining Germany, Finland, France, The Netherlands, Ireland, Austria, Denmark and newcomer *eCabs Malta*.

Uber and Lyft not leaving Minneapolis

Uber and *Lyft*, operating in lockstep managed to get the city of Minneapolis into dropping its minimum-wage proposal, didn't leave the city at the start of May as they threatened. Instead, they accepted a more moderate state proposal for

a minimum hourly wage of \$15.57 (£12.19). Meanwhile, the state of Massachusetts is studying a similar proposal, whereas California is revisiting the (in)famous 'Prop 22', which, after a public vote, classified platform drivers as 'independent contractors' instead of as employees. ■ TAXI

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Cows, Castles and Lightning



Statistics can be used to manipulate any number of narratives, but should not detract from the need for cyclists who cause the deaths of other road users to face tougher penalties.

Man in black

Every now and again, while enjoying a soak in my tub of watery delight, I peruse the internet for random news stories (no, not the *Daily Sport* variety). In fact, I've gone down a few news-related rabbit holes over the years and emerged slightly more baffled than when I entered.

One of my recent quests was to find out how many bouncy castle-related deaths there have been worldwide. The answer, according to the University of Georgia, is 28 fatalities across the globe since 2000. There have also been 479 injuries reported over the same period. In the UK, however, there have been no reported deaths in more than five years.

What, you may ask, has this got to do with taxi industry. Well, apart from wishing to impart my substantial knowledge of

the world of bouncy castles, I wanted to highlight the absurdity of 'whataboutery', statistics and how simple numbers can manipulate a narrative.

Government proposals

When the government recently announced that it would be bringing in tough new penalties for causing death by dangerous cycling, there was some wailing and gnashing of teeth by a few high-profile members of the cycling community. The usual comparisons between car-related deaths and cycle-related deaths ensued, with facts and figures thrown about like confetti in the wind. One of the more bizarre comments, however, came from cycling legend, Chris Boardman.

The 55-year-old Olympic gold-medal winner, who is also the government's Active Travel Commissioner, said on *BBC Breakfast* that the new laws would fix a problem that doesn't really exist, or at least pales into insignificance when looking at

the bigger picture of fatalities and injuries on the roads.

Boardman said: *"30,000 people are killed or seriously injured on our roads every year, and there are less than three involving a cyclist."*

He added: *"Everybody should obey the laws of the road – why not – but I'm frustrated that something that is so good for society, and joyous, is getting so much focus in a negative way, when I'd rather be sitting here talking to you about how we save five lives a day."*

"There's absolutely no question that everyone faces penalties for their behaviour on the road and has a duty to look after others. The point is, what impact will it have when you're in the same realms as lightning and cows? I don't have a problem with it, but there are other things I'd like to be talking about that would do a lot of good."

On the surface, it's hard to argue against Boardman's logic when you consider that his own mother was killed in an accident involving a motor vehicle. This must, however, be tempered with the

fact that every person killed on the road is a tragedy, no matter how those deaths occur. Boardman's comments, comparing the number of deaths caused by dangerous cycling to those caused by lightning or cows were in my view ill-thought out at best and completely crass at worst.

Lightning has no will, no thought process and is an irresistible natural force – it doesn't choose to strike. There are actually 300,000 lightning strikes in the UK every year, contributing to two deaths per annum.

As for cows – on average there are six bovine-related deaths each year. However, cows weigh 500kg and are highly protective mammals; nobody should expect them to behave like a human, especially when entering their territory. As for exercising an equivalence between cycle-related pedestrian deaths and lightning strikes and bovine killings, if you ask me Boardman's comments fail to recognise two important factors: free will and competence. A cyclist





"It should be of no consequence to the cycling community whether this legislation is added to the statute books. It will only affect those who actually cause harm to someone while cycling."

has the choice to cycle safely or dangerously. Unless a fault lies with a pedestrian's actions, resulting in their demise, the cyclist, logically, would be at fault. This would primarily be down to the choices they have made when riding the bike. Worse than that, though, as I see it, the Active Travel

Commissioner appears to have dismissed those deaths attributed to cyclists with wanton abandon; The DfT statistics on this also do not include any one who might have died from injuries sustained in a collision but who died 30 days or more later, so there are likely more deaths than are currently being accounted for. For example, we've all read about the tragic recent case of a pensioner killed in London who died sometime after she was hit by a cyclist in London.

Stats, stats and more stats
According to Office for National Statistics figures published in September 2023, 1,711 people – including 91 cyclists – lost their lives on the UK's roads in 2022.

That figure is an utter disgrace; every single death is an absolute tragedy, yet the only road users who currently do not face what I would deem as to be 'adequate justice' are cyclists.

As far as I am concerned, the new new legislation will bring some accountability to what is becoming an increasing problem. It should, in theory at least, be of no consequence to the cycling community whether this legislation is added to the statute books or not. If the problem is as inconsequential as Boardman suggests, then the legislation will make no difference to those who choose to use pedal power. The only people that it will affect are those who actually cause harm

to someone while cycling.

So, what is the relevance of the stats surrounding bouncy castle deaths? Nothing, other than – despite there being no deaths in the UK for half a decade (three fewer than pedestrian deaths attributed to cycling each year) – legislation dictates that operators could be prosecuted if someone gets killed or injured on their bouncy castle; ergo, there is accountability for something that will probably never happen.

Rights, responsibility and accountability go hand in hand. It is right to focus on motoring-related deaths, but not at the expense of cycle-related fatalities; everybody has the right to adequate justice. ■ TAXI



A Passage Through Time: A Final Visit to Soho's Streets

Regent Street's creation in 1819 "*split the glitterati of Mayfair from the literati of Soho*" and set the seal on how this most bohemian area of London was to develop.

Footprints and Foundations

For many years, I have been assisting cab drivers who want to further their knowledge of London's historical past. For those who took that leap of faith, there was no looking back. Passing their examinations to attain a tourist guide course qualification has been extremely advantageous, and they are now conducting cab and walking tours throughout the streets of the capital. I am still in contact with most of the drivers, who continue to seek advice. As I have said in the past, to enhance your understanding of the place where you spend many hours plying your trade will make your day more interesting. Alas, it is now time to depart Soho and move on to pastures new. This will be the concluding article on Soho, before I move on to the famous location of Camden.

Concluding thoughts

Our visitation into Soho's evocative bygone days has revealed a rich tapestry of heritage. From a rural backdrop, where flora and fauna created vistas from the countryside, to an urban landscape that captured the imagination, this West End quarter has continually evolved over 300 years. When Regent Street was built in 1819, it split Mayfair from Soho. It was said, at the time, that this thoroughfare separated the glitterati in Mayfair from the literati in Soho. Industry and bespoke artisans have always gravitated to this location and the workshop of London is deeply entrenched here. In addition to the dexterous influence, there was a plethora of creative minds, whose works instilled a freedom of expression.

The sound of music

Music of all genres has long-filled the Soho atmosphere with a beautiful noise. From the renowned classical musicians, jazz, '60s pop and street buskers, all have provided entertainment



for the attentive visitor to this neighbourhood. Soho's bohemian atmosphere encouraged the innovators of music to live in these thoroughfares. Here, Mozart, Haydn, Wagner and Strauss composed and played their famous recitals; music

"Fast-forward to the 1960s... Soho offered the spirit of youth, an abundance of possibilities, and excitement."

publishers and instrument makers soon flourished among these doyens of music; and the popularity of the violin made Soho a major centre for the manufacture of stringed instruments.

The swinging sixties

Fast-forward to the 1960s, a post-war period of transformation. Adolescents were breaking away from the

strict moral code of traditional parents and their hand-me-down values. This moment in time was a parting of the ways. Soho offered the spirit of youth, an abundance of possibilities, and excitement. The coffee bars were the nurseries of rock 'n' roll. Here, new-age bands were formed over a cappuccino. The popularity of *The 2i's Coffee Bar* in Old Compton Street became an epicentre for musicians waiting to be discovered. The list is long of those who frequented this place, among them Bruce Welch and Hank Marvin, of The Shadows, who teamed up with Cliff Richard, and the late Adam Faith, the archetypal showman of the Swinging Sixties, who recorded *What Do You Want?* At 90 Wardour Street, famed performers took to the stage at the Marquee Club, including The Yardbirds, Manfred Mann, The Who, Jethro Tull, The Police, The Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix.

Thespians and film

Theatreland has been a part of Soho since the 18th century. The world's best-known plays and musicals have been performed in these thoroughfares and I am

certain many of you will have enjoyed an evening at some of the theatres along Shaftesbury Avenue: The Lyric, Apollo, Globe, Sondheim (formerly Queen's) and Palace theatres continue to play to packed houses. The film business, too, has occupied the streets of Soho since the early 1900s. Picturehouses and production companies formed the bedrock of the British film industry in this area. As a fledgling cab driver, I remember seeing young boys in cloth caps pushing trolleys laden with canisters of film between these production houses, as many of the famous blockbuster movies were edited on the cutting-room floors of Soho. Today, the buildings are still here – including Film House, Cinema House, Hammer House and Twentieth Century House – providing evidence of a once-thriving film industry.

Past and present

Soho's insalubrious pastime has always been linked to vice and the criminal world. Prostitution and pimps dominated the seedy back streets, once referred to as the Latin Quarter. Here, unsuspecting visitors seeking carnal pleasures were conned out of their hard-earned cash. By the 1980s, a major clean-up campaign by Westminster Council was instigated. This led to licences being granted for erotic clubs and bars. Law and order was finally in place and a much-reduced red light area made Soho more attractive to the public at large. Today, Soho maintains a bohemian presence where individuals can express themselves without physical or verbal abuse being directed at them. This is reflected in the ever-present LGBT community, whose shops and clubs are located here.

Next month: Camden

I hope you have enjoyed our walk through Soho. Please join me next month as I reveal the rich heritage of Camden. **TAXI**

If you are contemplating a guiding course or have questions about London, please contact journeythroughtime@hotmail.com

Not All Heroes Wear Capes

Suzanne Sullivan shares the story of an LTDA member, who went out of his way to reunite a passenger with his lost bag and much-needed medication.

The lovely actions of one of our members was recently brought to my attention.

Mohamed Muhydin picked up a customer from T2 going to The Mercure, Talbot Square. His passenger had been on a long flight from Australia and was very weary but had a short chat with Mr Muhydin. He dropped him off and had then planned to work town.

Work was slow, so he decided to head towards Heathrow. Low on fuel, he stopped off in Hammersmith to fill up. As he did so, he noticed a bag in the back. Opening the bag, he identified his passenger from Australia's passport, medication and £6,500 in cash.

Our member remembers thinking, thank goodness he hadn't had another passenger in between. He immediately

Mr Muhydin and grateful customer.



Hero driver Mohamed Muhydin.

drove straight back to the Mercure in Talbot Square to find the customer. Mr Muhydin spoke to the concierge who contacted the customer. He was completely stressed that he had lost his bag but had fallen into a deep sleep after a long flight.

The man was completely over the moon, as the money was a lot to lose, but the really important thing was his medication. He needed that more than anything and had said he didn't even know where to start to get it.

The passenger was so very grateful and couldn't thank the driver enough. He said he had heard how amazing the black cab trade were and this restored all his faith in human kindness.

The passenger – Mr Walker – gave Mr Muhydin a reward, but our member was just very pleased that he could be of service. Well done! **TAXI**

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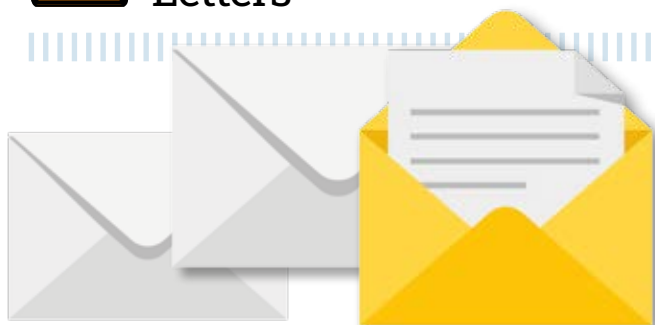
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TAXI and LTDA Member Mail



Subject: The Untouchables

20

Dear TAXI,

I wrote this 14 years ago, but it still feels relevant! I will say there has been an improvement recently; last year the Met only fined 900 cyclists for red-light jumping, a massive reduction on previous years.

LONDON ACCORDING TO DAVE

The untouchables – who are they?

Here are my 20 definitive facts about them:

1. They are a minority, but are rapidly growing.
2. They are a group within a group.
3. They are sometimes seen as intolerant.
4. They have a brother in high office.
5. They seek to have more brothers in the corridors of power.
6. They give out their literature at tube stations under the guise of other parties.
7. They target the young with 'join us, it's cheaper and more healthy', and give financial aid.
8. They neglect to speak of the fatalities – 108 over five years at the time of writing.
9. They are a source of embarrassment to some of their own.
10. They have a mission to proliferate themselves and their pathways across the capital and have exemption from existing laws.
11. They have a common bond with the capital's black cab drivers – a hatred of bendy buses.
12. They often wear Lycra and can suffer with numb 'bits and pieces' syndrome.
13. They jump traffic lights!
14. They go both ways up one-way streets!
15. They ride on pavements!
16. They ignore speed limits!
17. They are unlicensed, uninsured and untested!
18. They are untraceable!
19. They are unstoppable!
20. They are the untouchables!

David Heath (ex-W27)

Subject: Attempted theft – watch out!

Dear TAXI,

After changing money at a money changer, I got back into my cab and immediately got a puncture. I pulled into Palace Court to change the tyre. After about five to ten minutes, when I had all my tools and tyre out of the boot, I noticed a man looking into my boot for where I put my money. I chased him away.

Five minutes later, another man tried to distract me. All this time, the money was in the driver's compartment of the cab, which was locked. He tried to get me to unlock the cab, but I refused. He pretended to be of help with changing my wheel, but I'd already realised he was in on the scam.

Both men spoke Spanish and were fairly short. The first was around 40 years old and slim and the second, fat and about 50 years old.

No property was taken; however, I recovered the object used to puncture my tyre. Please see picture below.

I hope you can warn other people and the rest of the community about this scam.

Kind regards,

Julian Longley
Badge Number 55453



Roger Lewis

16th December 1942 – 3rd May 2024

Martin Cordell and Co's Paul Mitchell reflects on the life of 'The Gentleman Cabbie', who went from Covent Garden market trader to London cab driver and never stopped championing the taxi trade.

Roger Lewis was born in 1942 in south-east London during World War II. A life-long Millwall supporter, Roger was brought up on both sides of the river by his parents and grandparents – a proper Cockney.

Roger started out well at school and gained a place at a grammar school, going on to begin his early career in Covent Garden market as a salesman. There he met a friend who had recently become a licensed taxi driver. He was something of a snappy dresser and had money in his pocket – two things Roger admired and aspired to have. So, without wasting too much time, he started out training to become a licensed cabbie.

On the Knowledge

Roger had a passion for the greatest city in the world, so it was no hardship for him to get on his moped and get started learning the Knowledge. He fixed his board between the handlebars and attached his blue book so he could learn his runs for his routes.

He especially loved it in the summer, wearing his straight-leg Levis and Fred Perry polo shirt; no helmet in those days. However, it was not so great on winter days wearing an oilskin, football socks and scarf.

It wasn't too long before he was making an appearance once a month at the public carriage office at Penton Street, Islington. There were to be found four examiners, all ex-police sergeants: Mr Wicks, who had the best Knowledge of anyone at the time; Mr Rance; Mr Miller, who had lost a leg pursuing bank robbers; and finally, the infamous "Scotsman", Mr. Findlay. He could make the hardest of men crumble and shuffle their feet with apprehension. He took no prisoners, but, if you stuck in and learned the routes, he would help you achieve your goal.

Soon Roger was moving forward with the Knowledge



and was making fortnightly appearances in Penton Street.

Out in record time

Roger started his Knowledge on August 1968 and by April 1969 he had his badge and licence number: 16320. It meant he had achieved his goal in just nine and a half months – a record at the time.

At 27, Roger was qualified and ready to make a living. He purchased his own cab for £1,871 and was soon living the good life.

Trade unionism

He was passionate about the cab trade but felt it had its shortcomings. He wanted to make changes to improve things for all the licensed taxi drivers.

He was interested in trade unionism and took a correspondence course at Ruskin College on the subject. At the time, there were four divisions of a newly formed group called the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association. His branch was the south-east and he was quickly elected chairman and started attending monthly council of

management meetings. He was 32 years old and the youngest member in the meetings. At the next election, he stood for treasurer and was elected. He then spent many sleepless nights working on a sickness benefit scheme to support drivers.

During this time, he also started the monthly lottery for the drivers and introduced a credit union for the London taxi trade that supported taxi drivers to get a loan to buy a vehicle at a reasonable interest rate.

Roger also represented the trade at meetings with government decision-makers. Once, in 1978, when the trade hadn't had a tariff increase for five years, the Home Office, responsible at the time, was refusing to negotiate with the representatives of the trade. Roger decided to take matters into his own hands: one Sunday afternoon, he drove to Whitehall to express the trade's disgust at this poor treatment. The word soon spread and that part of London was brought to a standstill as other cabbies joined his protest. It was all taken

"Roger achieved his goal of becoming a cabbie in just nine and a half months – a record at the time."

in good humour and led to a meeting with the Home Office, at which it was agreed that it would be in the public's interest to increase the tariff by two per cent, with regular increases in line with inflation.

Credit union boss

After he left the LTDA, he became Chairman and CEO Great Britain of the Credit Union. However, he later decided to go back to driving a cab, as he wanted to spend more time at home.

During that time, he was having his accounts prepared by Martin Cordell & Co. Chatting to Martin Cordell, he explained that he was moving to Scotland, as he was getting married. Martin suggested that, with his financial background, he should start a new branch of Martin Cordell & Co in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Within a short time, Roger gained 1,000 new clients. He went on to helping new and existing clients in the cab trade for more than 20 years.

Passion for the trade

Roger was involved with the taxi trade in one form or another from 1968 until his retirement 50 years later.

He also found time to write a book called *Tales from the Ranks and Beyond* and you can find him on YouTube as 'The Gentleman Cabbie', discussing his life and times.

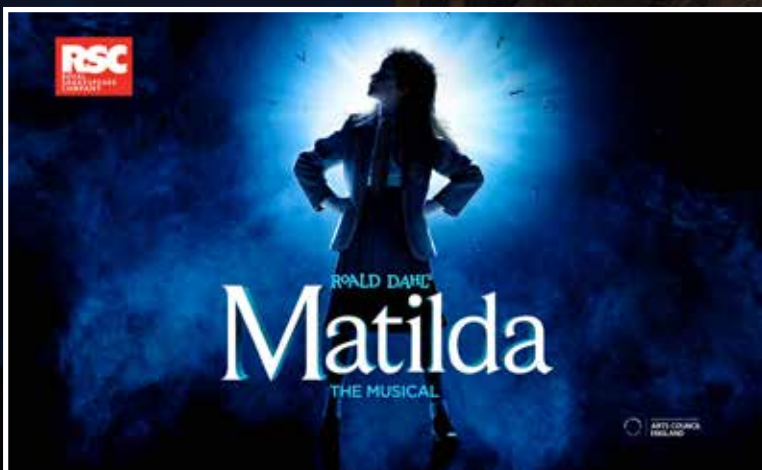
Roger Lewis cared deeply about the taxi trade and always had its best interests at heart. He will be remembered for his important contributions and greatly missed by all who knew him. Rest in peace, Roger. **TAXI**



What's On? West End

Charlotte reviews some of London's best shows to catch this month, recommending top nights out for you and your passengers.

Under the spotlight



Matilda the Musical – Cambridge Theatre 📍

As you enter the Cambridge Theatre, there's a library of booster seats. It's a sight you rarely see in theatre, especially the West End, and is an excellent indicator of the clientele for the show. *Matilda* is tailor-made for families and is the ideal production for a child's first visit. Booster seat in hand, young mouths will be agape at seeing the gorgeous letter-inspired set design that surrounds the stage. It feels like magic, which is what *Matilda* is all about really.

It's a tale of literal magic, but also a piece about storytelling and love. Clever but underappreciated, Matilda Wormwood is isolated from her family, who refuse to understand her. She finds an ally when she starts school, in her tender-hearted teacher Miss Honey, but also finds a new foe – the terrifying Miss Trunchbull.

Adapted from Roald Dahl's book of the same name, Dennis Kelly and Tim Minchin's *Matilda the Musical* plays out like a big-budget pantomime. Told with witty but accessible wordplay, joyous choreography, and movingly heartfelt moments, this is one for all the family. While the show does drag a tad in the second half, there's a lot of fun to be had here.

★★★★☆

Matilda the Musical runs until May 2025.

Between Riverside and Crazy – Hampstead Theatre 📍

Mere weeks after finishing a sold-out run of *King Lear* at the Almeida, providing an extraordinary performance as the eponymous character, Danny Sapani could easily have taken a break. Instead, he's thrown himself into something that is thematically very different, yet, ultimately, very similar. Here he plays retired NY cop Walter 'Pops' Washington. It's the mid-2010s, and he's impatiently awaiting a settlement for the injury that ended his career, while also ignoring letters from the landlord, who wants him out of his rent-controlled apartment. A recent widower, Walter's home has become a haven for all manner of waifs and strays – lost souls who view him as 'Pops', one of whom is his son Junior (a mesmerising Martins Imhangbe), who holds onto all manner of resentments towards his father.

Walter is in the eye of the storm. There's what he could do and what he should do. But Walter is going to do whatever Walter wants. At times, those things are baffling, frustrating, heartbreaking and hilarious. Sapani is wondrous in the role, beyond captivating as Walter's stubbornness continues to wreak havoc. Written by Stephen Adly Guirgis, who won the 2015 Pulitzer for the drama, it's an honest love story to New York and the misfits who reside within it. A warm, rich and cinematic play that's funny, profound and a little bit weird. Well worth a viewing!

★★★★☆

Between Riverside and Crazy runs until 15th June.



What else is on?

■ *A View from the Bridge* – Theatre Royal Haymarket (until 3rd August)

Dominic West takes the lead in this new take on Arthur Miller's classic play, a story of illicit love and barely repressed passion.

■ *Babies* – The Other Palace (until 14th July)

A new pop-rock musical by rising stars Jack Godfrey and Martha Geelan, starring *Heartstopper*'s Bradley Riches, exploring the transformative journey of nine year 11 students as they become 'parents' as part of a school project.

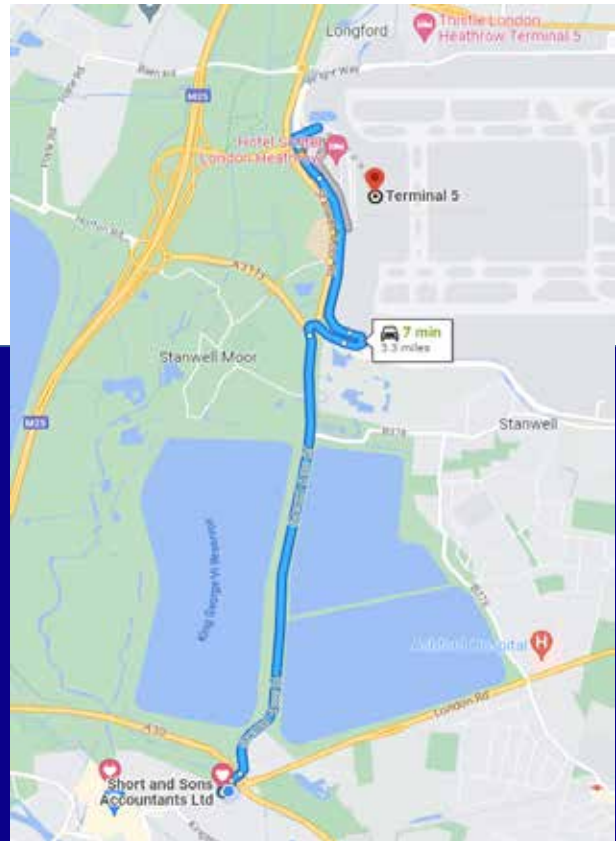
■ *Passing Strange* – Young Vic (until 6th July)

A young musician sets out on an electrifying musical odyssey to find himself and his place in the world, swapping his middle-class LA upbringing for punk rock and protest in 1980s' Amsterdam and Berlin.

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Heroes Meet Minister for Veterans' Affairs at Admiralty House

On 21st May, Taxi Charity volunteers took four veterans to meet government minister, Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP and Akshata Murty, the wife of the current Prime Minister.

Volunteer drivers, Dave Hemstead, Martin Birkbeck and Ian Grey, as well as Colin Mills, the Taxi Charity Chairman, drove veteran Wrens Christian Lamb, 103, Pat Owtram, 100, Marie Scott, 97, and Dorothea Barron, 99, to Admiralty House in Whitehall for the meet and greet.

TAXI asked the drivers who attended for their thoughts about the day.

TAXI Colin, tell us about the visit?

Colin Mills: There I was, standing in Admiralty House, surrounded by naval history, and witnessing living history, as four of our Wrens were captivating Ms Murty and the minister with stories from World War II. But my favourite memory of the day was on the journey home, as I was chatting to Dorothea and she was recalling the moment, at Biggin Hill last year, when she sat in a Spitfire during a Taxi Charity visit. Her daughter, Kati, said that if she ever did that again she would need to wear trousers to protect her modesty when climbing into the plane! Dorothea replied: *"I am proud of my legs anyway. We used to wear woollen underwear that came down to your knees, and if it was cold, we used to cut out the gusset, slip it over our head and put our arms into each leg and it was nice and warm."* I don't think they would do that today!

TAXI Dave, what did you make of the day?

Dave Hemstead: It was a very enjoyable day, in splendid surroundings. All the drivers enjoyed taking the veterans and being welcomed as guests to this event. Every member of staff was polite and welcoming, and the four veterans thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. We were served sandwiches, and the lemon drizzle cake was lovely! I had three pieces to make sure! As you can imagine from a Grade I-listed building, we sat in a very special room to 'take tea'. Akshata Murty and Johnny Mercer were polite and charming, treating the ladies and drivers with the utmost respect. However, the former never gave



Veterans, cab drivers, Akshata Murty and Johnny Mercer.



Ian, Colin, Martin and Dave at Admiralty House.



Ms Murty with Dorothea Barron.



Marie Scott with Ms Murty.



Johnny Mercer with Dorothea Barron.



Christian Lamb with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Ms Murty.



Taxi Charity Chairman Colin Mills with Mr Mercer and Ms Murty.



Ms Murty with Colin Mills.



Pat Owtram with Ms Murty.

us the heads up that, the following day, her husband was going to call a General Election! Marie appreciated the doggy bag that they provided, and she enjoyed the sandwiches she had taken with soup later that day.

TAXI Martin, how did you find the whole experience?

Martin Birkbeck: It was an absolute pleasure to be involved in this event. I really enjoyed the day overall. The surroundings, the people and food were all great. I have been volunteering for the charity for many years and it continues to amaze me when I hear of all the wonderful opportunities they provide for veterans.

TAXI Any other thoughts Ian?

Ian Grey: It was lovely to see the veterans have a nice day out, and the history and architecture of the building was fantastic. The walls were adorned with the most incredible art, one of which was particularly fascinating. It was a painting of Martha Ray, who is best known for her affair with John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, with whom she had nine children. A sign by the painting grimly explained that she was murdered by a jealous suitor at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, in 1779.

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

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. It is the only Forces charity that focuses on providing fun and entertainment, and 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.

The charity received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2021 and celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2023 – a remarkable milestone for a small, niche charity peopled by enthusiastic volunteers.

To fund and facilitate its work, the charity is wholly reliant on donations, grants and sponsorship. www.taxicharity.org

The Taxi Charity online shop has some new D-Day 80 commemorative merchandise. As well as pin badges and windscreen stickers, key rings and T-shirts are also available. www.taxicharity.org/shop



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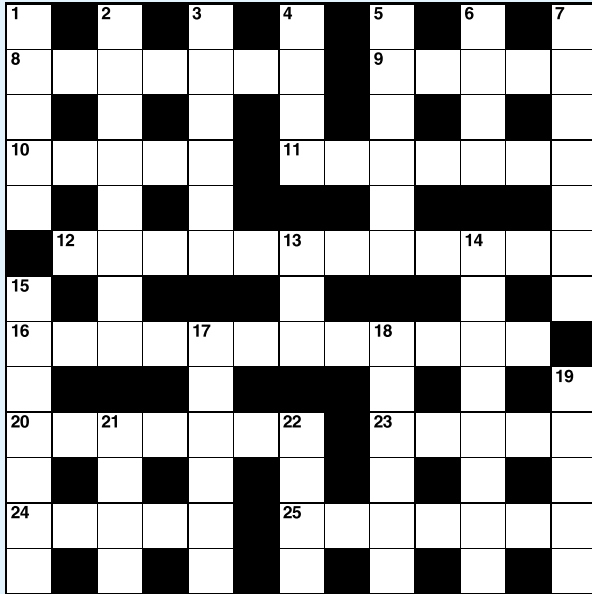


www.ltda.co.uk



Puzzler Page

Crossword



ACROSS

- 8 Irregularity (7)
 9 Celtic language (5)
 10 In a ___, very quickly (5)
 11 Biochemical catalysts (7)
 12 Regular source of hilarity (8,4)
 16 Indifferent to criticism (5-7)
 20 Yerevan's country (7)
 23 Abdomen (5)
 24 ___ Arterton, actress (5)
 25 Away from work, vacationing (2,5)

DOWN

- 1 Dixieland stringed instrument (5)
 2 Coloured paper thrown at weddings (8)
 3 Deep ravine (6)
 4 Kind (4)
 5 Line going from side to side (6)
 6 Former name of Thailand (4)
 7 Say softly (7)
 13 Fluid in pens (3)
 14 On the next page (8)
 15 Free, on the loose (2,5)
 17 Dorothy's home state in *The Wizard of Oz* (6)
 18 Astronomical cloud of dust and gas (6)
 19 Pam ___, popular poet (5)
 21 ___ the word, say nothing (4)
 22 Eager, expectant (4)

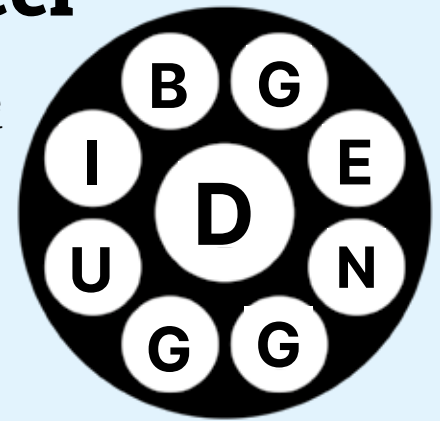
Sudoku

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	5
				8		4	1	
		5			6			
			4	2		6		
8	5		3				4	
		6				3		
	3		6		8			2
6	2			5				3
1						5	6	

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 13 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.

∇				
		>		>
		^		
∇				∇
	>			
	∇		^	
	>			

All answers to puzzler on p30

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Suburban badge sector numbers _____

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Do you currently have points on your DVLA driving license? (please tick) Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes how many points do you have?

Do you have any motoring or other prosecutions pending? Yes ☐ No ☐

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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.

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Signed _____ Date _____

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4. Bank Sort Code

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





A New Lorra Lingo to Learn

When it comes to communication, a musher is generally on it. However, modern lingo can, in this case, struggle to transcend the generations...

A woman of words

I am the GOAT, according to a fare I accepted in Upper Street yesterday. Not because I occasionally (always) have a few whiskers on my chin, but because I waited patiently outside a *Tesco Extra* while she nipped in to buy a litre of rosé wine and a pack of Doritos. GOAT means 'Greatest of All Time', in case you didn't know. Oddly, it's a description Mr Meg never uses about me.

This young girl told me she was 19, and on our trip to Clerkenwell she taught me a whole new language. One you don't speak, but type.

My lesson started when I asked if she knew what ONG meant, because I'd got a text from my teenage godson that said the

Yorkie Easter egg I'd sent him was "*fantastic ONG*".

My fare informed me that ONG means 'I swear'. "*But why?*" I asked, befuddled. "*What do you mean, 'why?' It just does!*" came the explanation. She laughed and said if she had been messaging me, in answer to my question she would have put IYKYK, which is 'if you know you know'.

I'm NGL (that one means 'not going to lie'), I felt 200 years old hearing about this new lingo.

Then there's OMW, the lie that *Uber* drivers tell passengers all the time. It means 'on my way'.

I do like a good WhatsApp chat and a bit of quality texting. Not the dopey ones from mail order companies that message to say they have your order, followed by one saying they are grateful for your order, and another that says they will soon dispatch. Then you get a series of pings saying that they have dispatched, it should

be with you soon, what did you think of their service and would you review and recommend them? All that just for one tube of hair-removing cream.

You may have thought that last paragraph was TL;DR which means 'too long; didn't read'. The mini Megs have frequently replied to me with that abbreviation, but I thought it was something to do with TFL's status updates. Now I know what it means, I am very annoyed with them, JSYK. That's 'just so you know'.

FWIW (that's 'for what it's worth'), I am not going to be switching to abbreviations in my mobile chats. This is because, IMHO ('in my humble opinion'), I don't want to dilute my quality gossip and opinions by shortening them in any way.

My young fare left the cab in Clerkenwell and bade me a cheery farewell. I said, "*TB!*",



and explained that it was short for 'tatty bye', and I'd just made that one up.

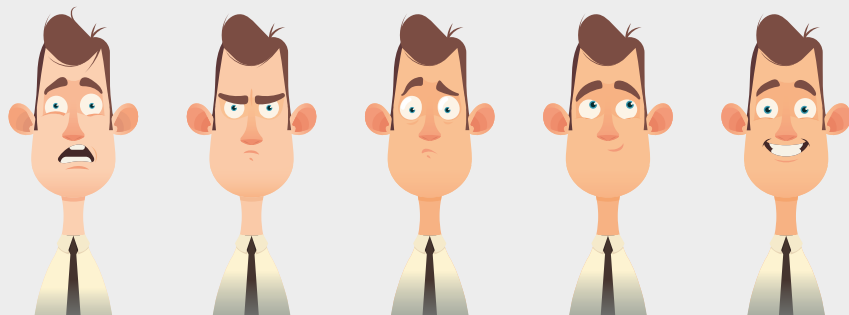
"*IJBOL*", she giggled, unironically. I looked that one up to discover it stands for 'I just burst out laughing'.

I decided to send Mr Meg a text to tell him what time I would be home. I wrote 'Dear SO, I am OMW, JSKY. Love from the GOAT'.

Translated that means 'Dear significant other, I am on my way, just so you know. Love from the greatest of all time'.

Three letters came back. 'WTF' I had to look that one up, too. **TAXI**

PUZZLER ANSWERS



B	C	C	T	Z	S	W
A	N	O	M	A	L	I
N	N	N	P	G	A	I
J	I	F	F	E	N	Z
O	E	O		A		P
	S	T	A	N	D	I
A	T					R
T	H	I	C	K	S	K
L		A		E	R	A
A	R	M	E	N	I	A
R	U	S	G	U	E	R
G	E	M	M	A	O	N
E	S	S	G	A	F	S

Crossword

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Sudoku

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

Futoshiki

3	5	4	1	2
∇				
1	3	>	2	5
∧				
5	4	1	2	3
∇				∇
4	>	2	5	3
∇			∧	
2	>	1	3	4
				5

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: DEBUGGING

All words: Bend, bide, bind, budge, budgie, bugged, debug, deign, dine, dune, dung, edging, gibed, guide, nude, nudge, DEBUGGING.

Word targets: Excellent: 14, Good: 12, Target: 9, Kids: 9



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