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TAXI

25th June 2024 #567

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**CITY VOTES FOR TAXI
ACCESS AT BANK**

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Manson Group, St Albans

Published on behalf of the LTDA by



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DRIVERS SOUGHT FOR LTCFC ANNUAL TAXI OUTING

The London Taxi Drivers Charity for Children is still looking for cabbies to support their annual outing to Hertfordshire Zoo on July 10th! The more taxis they have, the more children they can invite to enjoy this fantastic experience. Join them for a fun day out as they embark on a heartwarming journey. The taxi convoy will assemble at Isle of Dogs ASDA, 151 E Ferry Rd, London E14 3BT, at 7:30 am.

If you want to find out more or are interested in putting your name down please contact Claire on 07956612307 or John on 07973313148.



CAMPAIGNER SAYS UBER LICENSING IN YORK 'BAD' FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

City of York Council's decision to relicence *Uber* after a six-year ban has been met with criticism from taxi and private hire drivers and disability campaigners. Local campaigner, Flick Williams, said *Uber* had been *"quite clear that if they were granted a licence there would be no option to book a wheelchair accessible taxi"*. Prior to the decision being made there had also been protests by the York City Taxi Association.

COUNCIL CALLS FOR ACTION ON CROSS-BORDER HIRING

Crawley Council has said it will be urging the Department for Transport to look again at the issue of cross-border hiring as the current licensing regime leaves them powerless to take action against drivers routinely working out of their licensing area. The Council's call comes as it struggles to deal with complaints about *Uber* drivers licensed by TfL picking up at Gatwick Airport, while local drivers licensed to work at Gatwick lose out on work.

ROAD CLOSURES

Millennium Way
Until 8.00pm on Friday 5th July, Millennium Way will be closed northbound between Edmund Halley Way and the O2 car park 1 access. This is to allow the removal of bridge structures.

Farringdon Street
Until September 2024, Farringdon Street will be closed due to major gas main replacement works. Cadent Gas are carrying out these essential works. Farringdon Street will be closed northbound between Ludgate Circus and Charterhouse Street. Traffic will be diverted via Fleet Street, Fetter Lane, New Fetter Lane, Holborn Circus and Charterhouse Street. If you need to travel through the area, be aware that long queues and significant delays to your journey are expected, especially on the diversion route.

HS2 A40 works
Until late October, the A40 Western Avenue will be reduced to two lanes in each direction between Hanger Lane and Alperton Lane. Additional overnight lane restrictions and some directional closures will also be needed. This is while HS2 continue work to build a new High Speed rail line between London and Birmingham.

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June's LTDA Lottery winner was Martin Gardiner. Mr Gardiner was thrilled to find out he had won the lottery. When asked if he had any plans for the money, Martin told us that he would be looking to take his wife on a nice holiday.

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Uber's Latest Tactic

Failure to recruit black cabs onto their app is now turning into resentment and vindictiveness, in the form of complaints made to TfL about cabbies on ranks.

Steve's comment

A few years back, I don't think there was a single cabbie who did not hear or utter the 'U' word at least once every day. Nowadays, *Uber* barely get a thought from any of us, that is unless we meet one of their so called, five-star drivers, coming the wrong way up a one way street or find them parked on a taxi rank or blocking a taxi only charging point.

Sneaky as ever

Just because we no longer give them much thought, does not mean that they no longer have their eyes on our business or that they have given up on stealing a good chunk of what you earn. As far as I am concerned, the company is just as nasty and sneaky as ever.

As was blatantly obvious to everyone before they even started, their attempt to recruit cabbies onto their app has been a dismal failure. Despite all the hype, incentives and massive recruitment drives, they have secured only a handful from our ranks. This failure is now turning into resentment and vindictiveness from their recruitment team in the form of complaints made to TfL about cabbies on ranks.

Malicious complaints

Not surprisingly when their recruiters approach cabbies sitting on ranks they have been subject to a bit of old-fashioned cabbie banter. What did they expect, a warm welcome and a handshake? Breaking every health and safety rule, they walk along a moving rank without



a hi vis, completely incognito and importantly, without the permission or authority of Network Rail to be on their premises. They pop up at a cabbie's window and start singing their own praises. They then have the barefaced cheek to complain when their chosen target, often in shock or surprise, tells them where to go.

We have now responded in no uncertain terms, on behalf

of several members, to these totally unfounded and malicious complaints. I have made it very clear to TfL that the complainants are deliberately antagonising our members, accosting them and being, at best, a nuisance and at worst intimidating. Under these circumstances it is perfectly acceptable for our members to tell them to go forth and multiply. If they don't like it, don't poke the bear! Of course, if after reading

this you do find yourself in this situation, try not give them the satisfaction of rising to the bait!

What's behind it all?

I have never really understood the reasoning or logic as to why they would even try to recruit cabbies, apart from the obvious that the recruitment was unlikely to be successful, where was the customer demand? Our customers use our apps, their customers are more price conscious and choose to use their app to get what they perceive to be a cheaper ride. The only thing that made any real sense was that it was part of their worldwide policy of having taxis on their app and they, or certainly their American bosses, wanted uniformity.

However, last week I heard something that made a lot of sense, if it's true, about how they were making overtures to try to secure the *Taxicard* contract. The rumour is that the app company had committed to renting space in a call centre (the demographic of *Taxicard* customers means that most still phone for cabs), which is a very expensive proposition and which, at first glance, seems crazy for an app-based operator. They would, of course, also need a wheelchair accessible fleet, hence their attempt to recruit cabbies. Even though *Taxicard* is a multi-million pound account, the theory goes that money is not the primary reason they would want it, it's the credibility, respectability and recognition that they want. Is it true? Who knows, but it's certainly one of the more plausible theories, I've heard!

The trade giving back

On a happier note, last week, I took part in the Albany Taxi Charity outing, helping convey a great bunch of kids with additional needs to Hastings for what was a fantastic day out (see page 21).

If you have never volunteered for one of these charity days, I can thoroughly recommend it, it gives you a real perspective on life, you meet a great group of cabbies, and it makes you feel like you have given a bit back. Be lucky.

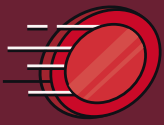
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Bank Junction Win

After seven years, the City of London finally voted to restore taxi access to Bank Junction. There's more to do to get this over the line, but it's a huge win for the trade!

Top rank

I recently wrote how we were approaching the final hurdle in trying to regain taxi access to Bank Junction. That hurdle was faced last Thursday when the Court of Common Council voted on either moving to implementing a trial restoring taxi access or slamming that door firmly shut and once again sticking two fingers up to our trade.

How we got here

Before I discuss the outcome, let me give you the quickest of refreshers on how we got to that vote. Ever since the restrictions were announced, we've been working hard to get taxi access restored, building relationships with councillors and local businesses like *The Ned* and lobbying the City of London Corporation for change at every possible opportunity.

Promises were often made to us, only for one after another, after another, to be broken. Then came the plethora of false accusations thrown at us and the constant moving of goalposts to prevent a decision ever being made on the future of taxis.

The debate

The run up to last Thursday's vote was met with the usual cries from the opposition that letting us back in would lead to the end of the world. We witnessed multiple anti-taxi campaigns and these campaigners stooping to several new lows, including bringing in a Green Party councillor from Bedford (some 50 miles from Bank Junction as the crow flies) who is a wheelchair user, who was woefully attempting to explain why taxi access is not needed whilst also making some unsubstantiated claims about taxis.



bus routes and a pandemic that has left the City a ghost town for the majority of the week? Independent traffic modelling we commissioned before the restrictions and pandemic, showed maintaining taxi access on all routes would only add a few seconds to a bus journey and that was with a fleet 30 per cent larger than today and the City working at full force. Today, even those quoted few seconds would be unlikely.

Also, and again with a massive spoon of irony, the same people who claimed buses will be affected also stated buses should be taken out of Bank, presumably so we can picnic every day. You couldn't make it up.

The biggest lunacy behind this call to not allow taxis to go through Bank Junction is that currently ALL day, every day, taxis can and do go through it. When further changes were made and Threadneedle Street between Bartholomew Lane and Bank Junction was made pedestrian and cycling only, that closed the only possible access route to Cornhill for traffic. That access now relies on traffic coming from Princes Street THROUGH Bank Junction, when previously it had only skirted the Junction.

And guess what? Since that change, as well as at all those times that the restrictions were

either lifted because Cannon Street was shut, the world did not end, buses didn't slow to a complete stop, taxis didn't kill or injure anyone, and all of the other accusations levelled at us failed to materialise as well.

Success

Well as you will all know by now, despite numerous attempts to stop us and a very heated debate, our cause was successful. The Council voted for an experimental scheme restoring taxi access. In the end, it wasn't even close, with 57 in favour vs 21 against. This is something we would not have anticipated a year ago, even though we knew the facts were on our side. But, over the last few months, we've seen the taxi trade, disability charities and campaigners, businesses and politicians coming together to make the case and it was a strong one.

We must give a huge amount of credit to Deputy James Thomson, who led the *Cabs Across Bank Campaign*, which brought this all together and made sure that we were given a fair hearing within the City. Having a Councillor driving this from within made a big difference and we were very happy to supply him with all the evidence and support he needed to help get this over the line. We must also thank Alderman Timothy Hailes, whose original motion made this all possible, and all the other longstanding supporters of ours within the Court of Common Council.

What's next?

It's been a long fight, but it doesn't end there. The Corporation has set out a timetable to introduce this experimental scheme giving taxis access and we won't actually be able to go through the Junction until Spring 2025. We will need to keep up the momentum, no doubt dodge a few more hurdles and keep a very close eye on the goalposts over the next few months. For now, let's celebrate a huge win on taxi access and hope it's only the beginning.

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A Fair Increase

Far too often, misguided local politicians seem to sell hard-working people and small businesses down the river, all for the sake of virtue-signalling ideology that ends up costing us all.

M4 musings

It's been two months now and most drivers I speak to seem satisfied with the recent tariff adjustment. I'm not in the habit of asking my customers if they're happy with the price but I certainly haven't had any complaints or a reduction in tips.

A reasonable adjustment

Our industry is rather short of the data that other businesses use to assess this sort of thing and it is still early days, but initial signs indicate the adjustment to have been reasonable.

Demand for taxis is affected by lots of different factors. Price is obviously an important one but there are plenty of others, like weather, convenience, general and localised economic activity, the list is endless. What is certainly true is that had the Tariff not been adjusted in line with the Cost Index, it would have been drivers left alone to absorb the increased costs, along with all the other higher prices elsewhere in the economy.

I've also taken quite a lot of taxi journeys myself since April and I think the rise is similar to other industries and products. Indeed, some stuff in the supermarkets seems to have gone up significantly more than our tariff. And I'm not only thinking about olive oil...

As always, everyone has a different opinion on this, but the current status quo is that whatever figure the Cost Index produces is either applied to the tariff that year or is lost forever, so it really was a question of use it (or in this case take it) or lose it.

Costs from councils

Regardless of what the Cost Index says, one thing that definitely affects how much our customers pay are the myriad changes to the roads across London, most of which make journeys in vehicles longer in both distance and time.

You don't need to be Stephen Hawking to work out that a taxi



journey that is longer in distance and/or time will cost more. Councils and activists always say they are trying to improve conditions for people 'who want to walk or cycle', but rarely admit that they believe the best way to do this is to make journeys in vehicles longer and less efficient,

and therefore less desirable.

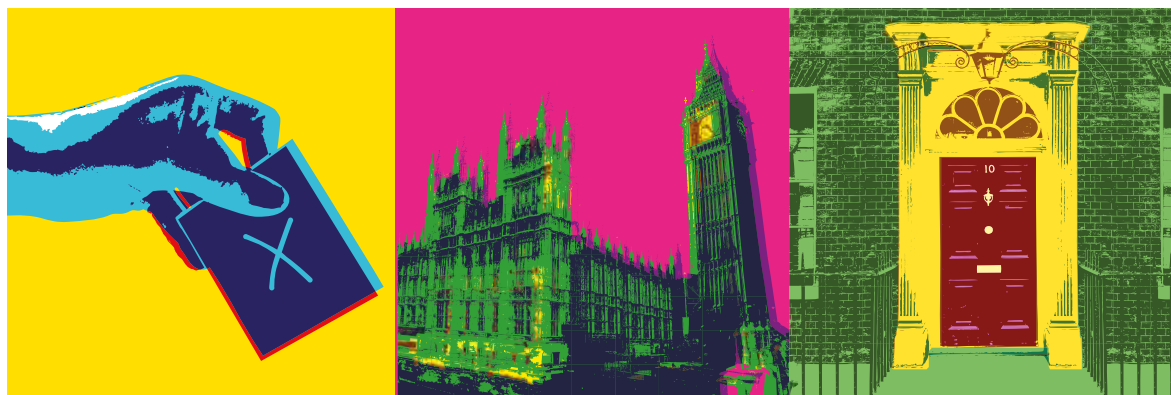
This, as a side effect, makes taxi journeys less competitive and costs us business, and therefore costs drivers money. On top of all the other hoops we have to jump through to keep ourselves and our vehicles licensed, this seems to me to be like a breakdown

in government's responsibility to promote good conditions for business.

Get a grip

If you ask me national government needs to get a grip on local authorities. Take Lambeth for example, who are very keen on climate policies and have spent £25 million on LTNs since 2019 (according to *The Times* newspaper) but were recently granted £50 million in 'exceptional financial support' by the government.

Far too often, misguided local politicians seem to sell hard working people and small businesses down the river for the sake of virtue-signalling ideology that ends up costing us all, and it's time it stopped. I'm not holding my breath...



The General Election

I am finding it very hard to be interested in the upcoming General Election. We are told that no matter which party wins, the 'tax burden' (UK government tax receipts as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product) will remain, as now, the highest since the end of World War II.

Labour is talking about a lot of grand plans but have been careful to caveat that these are contingent on increased growth, and their ideas for achieving this seem pretty thin, not to mention quite difficult to understand.

The Conservatives on the other hand have been coming up with as many random policies as they can and floating them in the press relentlessly, in the hope that some magic combination of unlikely promises will shift the dial.

So far nothing has worked and nor does it look likely to, especially since the late and dramatic entry into the fray of Nigel Farage, back for yet another attempt to be elected to

the House of Commons. Eighth time lucky? He might be a reasonable bet to be elected in Clacton. Love him or hate him, after all this time it's difficult to deny he gives voice to a set of beliefs that are sincerely held by a small but significant section of the UK population; that's democracy.

Ultimately, Reform are not going to win the General Election. Unless something very dramatic changes, that will be Labour.

Most of the time British politics seems to boil down to a pendulum between the two main parties, historically somewhat weighted towards the Tories, but always swinging back towards Labour for a while, and that appears to be where we are now.

My personal hopes are unambitious, that whoever comes in takes sensible charge of the economy, looks after small businesses and doesn't pass any stupid laws. Seems reasonable to me, will they manage it? Good luck out there.

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New Balls, Please



With Wimbledon fast approaching, we are expecting another busy tournament for taxis, with several new systems in place that should encourage more cabs to work the event.

News from the Suburbs

Yes, that's right, it's that time of the year where Wimbledon Village goes in to overdrive, between Monday 1st July and Sunday 14th July, 14 days of tennis fever hits the village, for this year's 2024 AELTC tournament. The pubs, restaurants and coffee shops will be bursting day and night and hopefully the cab trade will be at a high, taking punters to and from the courts.

Changes for 2024

There have been several changes that should encourage more cabs to work there this year and help things run smoothly.

Firstly, the fixed share price to and from the local stations has been increased to £3.50 per head. This has been the first increase for many years and is welcome.

Morning (AM) arrangements

Wimbledon Station AM will run in the same way as previous years and there will be local marshals in attendance to assist with loading. Setting down will be at Marryott Road.

Southfields Station AM will run with a slight alteration in that the set down will be at the junction with Wimbledon Park Road and just short of Victoria Drive, adjacent to the bus stop, likewise local drivers will marshal Southfields. The road restrictions at the junction with Albert Drive will be in place at discretion of the local authorities.

Afternoon (PM) journeys

For the return journeys there are considerable changes this year. Firstly, all ranks start at 3pm.

Somerset Road PM has moved further down the road towards the junction with Church Road, as the buses will not be loading as they were in previous years. The rank will start at Gate 11 in Somerset Road with ranking space for 14 cabs. This will be marshalled by local drivers along with TfL compliance.

Central Ranks PM will be situated in Wimbledon Park Road adjacent with the bus stop, just before the



junction with Victoria Drive. This will enable cabs to turn off the rank with greater ease and there will be no need to enter the park. Ranking space will be for ten cabs. Again this will be marshalled

by central drivers to assist both passengers and drivers with negotiated share prices into town and other destinations. Likewise, the shared fare back to Southfields Station will still run from this rank.

Again, this will be monitored by TfL compliance.

As usual, this year Sector 7 will be able to service the PM ranks ONLY to help with the volume of work.

Good luck out there. **LTDA**

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How To Best Avoid Music and Sporting Ticket Scams

Live music and sports fans have been warned to watch out for these scams over summer.



"Be wary of any tickets offered for sale on social media. Alarm bells should also ring if you're asked to pay for tickets by bank transfer."

14

Money matters

According to *Action Fraud*, £6.7m was lost to ticket fraud last year. The national fraud and cybercrime reporting service has warned people to be alert of fraudsters trying to catch out those who are looking for tickets for popular and sold-out events.

Last year, more than 8,700 people reported to *Action Fraud* that they had been a victim of a crime, losing, on average, £772 each.

The warning comes ahead of events such as Glastonbury, Wimbledon and, at time of writing, Taylor Swift's sell out Eras tour.

Swifties – Taylor Swift fans – have often been a key target for scammers, especially since tickets for her current tour went on sale. According to Lloyds Bank, 90% of Taylor Swift concert ticket scams started on *Facebook* or *Facebook Marketplace*, with victims losing around £332 each.

Using calculations based on its own customer data, Lloyds estimated that Taylor Swift fans alone have lost more than £1m to criminals over the past year.

A search on *Facebook* revealed

that dozens of unofficial groups have been set up, many with tens of thousands of members, specifically for people looking to buy and sell tickets for Taylor Swift concerts. Likewise, *Facebook Marketplace* has various listings for tickets at venues all over the country.

How do ticket scams work?

These are a type of 'purchase scam' – where someone is tricked into sending money via bank transfer or the Faster Payments service to buy goods or services that don't exist.

Most ticket scams start on social media websites such as *X*, *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Tickets are often offered at discounted prices or for sold-out events.

There are often two waves of fraud; the first when tickets go on sale and the second around the time an event takes place. In general, once they have parted with their money, consumers either receive fake tickets or nothing at all.

How to stay safe

Wherever possible, only buy tickets from the venue's box office, the promoter, an official agent or a reputable ticket exchange site.

Official ticket agencies include

See Tickets, *Ticketmaster* and *Ticketline.co.uk*, while genuine ticket resale sites include *Stubhub*, *Viagogo*, and *Seatwave*. Under rules laid down by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), these resellers must include certain information about tickets such as the original face value, any viewing restrictions, and if multiple tickets purchases will be seated together or separately.

Other legitimate options include *Twickets*, which only allows tickets to be sold at face value (plus fees), and *Ticketswap* which caps prices at 20 per cent above face value.

If you are tempted to buy from a company you haven't heard of before, check it is a member of the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers (STAR). STAR offers an approved alternative dispute resolution service to help customers with complaints.

Be especially wary about deals that look too good to be true and be sure to *Google* reviews of any company you are thinking of buying from.

Social scammers

Be wary of any tickets offered for sale on social media. Alarm bells should also ring if you're asked to pay for tickets by bank transfer. If you buy tickets from a

person or organisation you don't know, pay with your debit or credit card – this helps to protect your money should something go wrong. *PayPal* is another option that's usually safer than paying by bank transfer.

Bear in mind that not all tickets can be legally sold or transferred. For example, the resale of most football tickets is illegal in a bid to combat hooliganism. The only exception is if the tickets are sold through the club's authorised service which is usually a partner such as *Viagogo* or *StubHub*.

There aren't any laws governing the general resale of tickets for most other sports, concerts or gigs, despite pressure on the government to clamp down on touts. However, some organisers, sporting associations and artists have their own rules.

For example, Wimbledon tennis tickets cannot be sold, transferred or advertised for sale or transfer. If you're caught trying to sell Wimbledon tickets, the tickets will be voided and you won't be able to get tickets in future Wimbledon ballots. ■ TAXI

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SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

LONDON?

Bob and Eltham

Most people have heard of comedian Bob Hope, from stage and screen to music hall and variety, Hope epitomises the American sense of fun and humour of his era. It's safe to say that Hope was (and still is) regarded as the greatest American entertainer of all time. But did you know that he wasn't actually American, he was British?

Born on 29th May, 1904 in Eltham, London, Leslie Townes Hope, as he was christened, remained in a terraced house in Craigton Road, until he was four-years-old. His father was William Henry Hope, a stonemason from Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, and his mother Avis (née Townes), was a light opera singer from Barry, Vale of Glamorgan. In 1908, the Hope family emigrated to the United States aboard the SS Philadelphia, eventually settling in a town near Cleveland, Ohio.

Hope's entertainment career began in 1915, where he won a prize for his Charlie Chaplin impersonation. He even had a very brief boxing career, fighting under the name of Packy East, winning three out of his four bouts. In 1920, Hope and his brothers became US citizens when their British parents became naturalised Americans.

He eventually signed up for dancing lessons, forming a partnership with dance school friend, Lloyd Durbin. In 1925, film comedian Fatty Arbuckle noticed the pair and found them work with a touring troupe called Hurley's Jolly Follies. 12 months later, Hope founded an act called The Dancemedians, with George Byrne and a pair of tap-dancing conjoined sisters called the Hilton Sisters. It was eventually communicated to Hope that he was funnier on his own.

In 1929, he informally changed his name from Leslie to Bob, naming himself after racing driver Bob Burman. His feature film debut came in 1938's *The Big Broadcast*, appearing in a further 63 films before retiring in 1998. Hope was renowned for his entertainment work for the armed forces, with tours being funded by the United States Department of Defence. He was also highly revered in the world of golf, even having his own classic.

Bob Hope passed away from pneumonia in 2003, two months after his 100th birthday. His body was temporarily placed in a mausoleum until the Bob Hope Memorial Garden had been built after his death, where he was eventually buried.

A blue plaque is sited at the location of his childhood home in Eltham.



Mary Shelley's links to London

The name Mary Shelley is one which rolls off the tongue at the very mention of gothic horror. She is generally considered one of the greatest writers of any generation, with titles to her name such as *Frankenstein*, *Matilda* and *The Last Man*. But did you know that she was a Londoner and, on a clear day with the wind blowing favourably, she may have even qualified as a Cockney (although that is perhaps a stretch).

Born in 1797, Shelley was birthed in Somers Town, near St Pancras. Her mother tragically died 11 days after her birth, leaving her to be brought up by her father, William Godwin. Although she had no formal schooling, Shelley was taught by her journalist father, excelling in literature, Latin and French. She first met her future husband whilst still a teenager, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. He was estranged from his wife and had struck up a friendship with her father, becoming a regular visitor to their house.

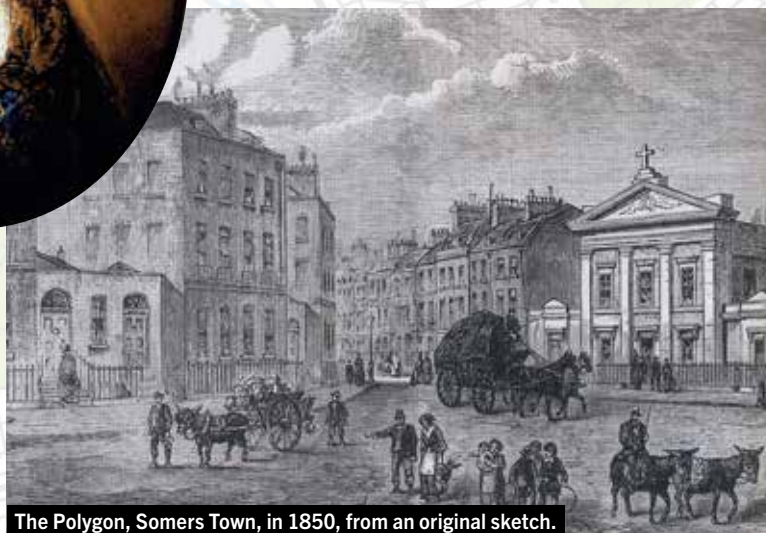
In a rather gothic twist, more akin to one of Shelley's novels, she and Percy began secretly meeting each other at her mother's grave in St Pancras Churchyard. In June of 1814, the couple eloped to France, taking Mary's step-sister, Claire Clairmont, with them while leaving Percy's pregnant wife behind.

After moving, they then crossed to Switzerland, before a lack of money forced them to return to London. They ended up living back in Somers Town before moving to Nelson Square in Southwark. Just prior to the birth of her second child, Shelley and her husband moved



to Windsor and then on to Geneva. It was there where she wrote *Frankenstein*, the novel which is widely regarded as the birth of the science fiction genre.

During her later years, she resided in various cities across Europe and writing numerous novels, before settling back in London. Shelley died in 1851 from a brain tumour at her home in Chester Square. Although she wasn't recognised as such during her lifetime, she is now rightly regarded as one of the greatest novelists in history.



The Polygon, Somers Town, in 1850, from an original sketch.



Hanging hay under bridges

The much-peddled story that Licensed London taxi drivers must carry a bale of hay in his or her boot seems to be as old as time itself. As most taxi drivers probably know, this was due to an old law not being repealed, with the bale of hay edict dating back to the days of horse-drawn taxis. But did you know that it isn't only taxi drivers that needed to have a bale of hay handy?

Believe it or not, there is an ancient bylaw which involves a bale of hay that is very much still in practice. And it involves bridges. In fact,

we saw it in action in 2023 underneath the Millennium Bridge while abseilers worked on the structure.

The bylaw states a bale of hay must be dangled beneath a bridge – the reason for this is that it acts as a warning to those operating boats, telling them the bridge which they pass under is being worked on. It's brilliantly simple as an age-old law, although you would think that a group of people dangling from a bridge while working may be warning enough.



The Double Life of Secret Agent George Blake

Born in the Netherlands in 1922, George Blake lived a quiet and seemingly unremarkable life...



"Over the next nine years, via clandestine meetings in darkened cinemas, deserted railways stations and quiet street corners in Belsize Park, Blake divulged everything he knew to his handlers."

That evening, during the prison's weekly film screening, Blake snuck back to his cell and broke the window. He then squeezed through the hole, dropped down onto a porch and jogged to the perimeter wall.

His team on the other side were ready and waiting. They tossed the ladder over and Blake scrambled up and down. He fractured his wrist upon landing but he was free, and whisked to a safe house.

Catch me if you can

Before long, police sirens were blaring across London as authorities hunted the fugitive who, unbeknownst to them, was less than a mile from Wormwood Scrubs. The safe house he was hiding in was located at 28 Highlever Road.

Over the next few months, Blake was located at a number of other safe houses across London, including Hampstead, Croydon and St John's Wood, where he was sheltered by a radical reverend named John Papworth, a man who ran St Mark's Church on Hamilton Terrace.

Reverend Papworth also financed the camper van in which Blake, concealed in a hidden compartment, was eventually smuggled out of Britain via a ferry to France.

Once on the continent, he was driven to East Berlin, then Moscow where he remained for the rest of his life, eventually dying there in 2020 at the age of 98.

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

18 Rob's history trips

After serving with the Royal Navy and Dutch Resistance during WWII, George Blake was posted to South Korea in a diplomatic role, although in reality he was undercover. His task: gather intel on the neighbouring communist nation.

Behind enemy lines

Shortly after the Korean War erupted in 1950, Blake was captured by the Korean People's Army of the North and ended up being held prisoner in Pyongyang.

Whilst there, Blake witnessed the relentless bombing campaign wreaked upon the country by the US.

"10,000 were dying on my right and 10,000 were dying on my left," he'd later say. "I felt I was on the wrong side..." and it was this conviction which led him to offer his services to the Soviets.

In 1953 Blake was released and flown back to Britain where he was granted a hero's welcome, but little did the cheering crowd know they were in fact embracing a fully-fledged KGB agent.

Spy games

Blake took up residence at 108 All Souls Place and promptly landed a role with MI6. His job was to recruit East Berliners as double agents. The Soviets couldn't have wished for a better gift.

Over the next nine years, via clandestine meetings in darkened cinemas, deserted railways stations and quiet street corners in Belsize Park, Blake divulged everything he knew to his handlers.

In doing so, he betrayed the identities of several hundred MI6 agents working behind the Iron Curtain, not only destroying operations there, but also condemning an estimated 40 of his colleagues to execution.

He also provided details of Operation Stopwatch, which was a plan to build a secret tunnel beneath Berlin for the purpose of tapping thousands of Soviet phone lines.

Exposure

Blake was finally unmasked in early 1961, thanks to intelligence provided by a Polish defector named Michael Goleniewski and, once found out, he was recalled to the MI6 HQ, which in those days was located at 54 Broadway.

Although suspicious, Blake attended as requested and, once apprehended, he was carted off to 2 Carlton Gardens for

an interrogation which lasted several days.

Blake eventually cracked. After a trial at the Old Bailey he was found guilty of espionage, leading the judge to hand him a 42-year prison sentence.

At the time, this was a record for the British justice system, and even the Prime Minister at the time, Harold Macmillan, noted in his diary that he believed this to be a 'savage sentence'.

Blake was thrown into Wormwood Scrubs to begin what looked set to be a very long life behind bars... but he wasn't done yet.

Prison break

Early on in his stretch, he befriended three Irish anti-nuclear protesters: Sean Bourke, Michael Randal and Pat Pottle.

This trio considered Blake's sentence to be "inhumane" and, after they were released, hatched a plan to break their pal out of the Scrubs.

To do this, a pair of children's walkie talkies were purchased from Hamley's, one of which was smuggled to Blake to aid communication.

The three men on the outside also crafted a rope ladder - the rungs of which were formed by knitting needles - and the date of the audacious escape was set for 22nd October, 1966.


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TAXI is the membership magazine for the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association (LTDA). It is circulated to 12,000 taxi drivers in London every fortnight.


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The meeting will be held at:
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It's a Funny Old Game

We are told it has never been busier, yet cab sales are slow, and the fleets have cabs against the wall! What's going on?



Cab you drive

20

I know I have said it before, but this is a funny old game. A few months back cab sales were booming, you couldn't rent a cab anywhere and the doom and gloom merchants moaning was off the scale.

Fast forward six months, even the most ardent doom and gloomers are reporting having never been busier, yet cab sales are slow. Just 57 licensed taxis were sold in May, and the fleets have cabs against the wall! It often makes no sense, and I have given up trying to understand it.

Crazy prices

Whilst on the subject of anomalies, here's another thing I find strange. With the prices of early TXEs now sitting at around £30k and with ERAD solutions now available from three different aftermarket suppliers starting at about £1,500, the TXE is now a great choice for drivers with old end of life cabs. It shows as they are beginning to sell. The bigger question is why is the price of old diesels with only two or three years left holding up so well?

I sold a late Vito to a driver who wanted to trade a 13 plate TX4, it had just under three years left and was not the best cab I have ever looked at, but with average mileage. A while

DYNAMO	184
LEVC	8,348
TX2	52
TX4	4,136
VITO	2,034
TOTAL	14,754

back the accepted trade figure of £2k per plate left would have seen me offer around £6k. As it happens though, I had but a few enquiries from out of town and I could see a quick flip. So, I offered him £8,000 thinking it was a good offer. I was stunned

to learn later that he had sold it privately for £13k! That's over £4k per plate, and for a far from prime example, but as they say, there is one born every minute!

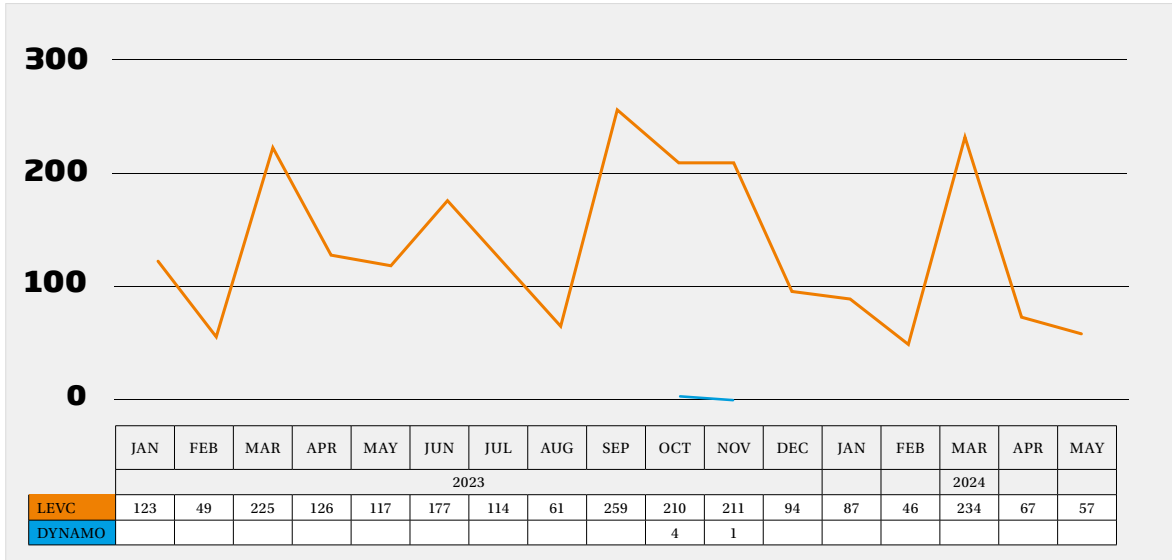
Conversion delays

As the HJS Euro V to Euro VI conversion hits the buffers yet again and with no firm date in the pipeline for it to be approved, the price of EU V Vitos has slumped. The few drivers who paid top money for them, banking on the conversion being approved and getting a 15-year life span, are getting a bit nervous, and understandably so.

I understand the latest delay is due to the cab failing its 10,000-mile final testing at Millbrook due to a faulty diesel particulate filter, apparently a newly fitted genuine Mercedes part.

Unfortunately, as we all know, as far as TfL are concerned a fail is a fail. Hopefully a solution can be reached sooner rather than later.

TAXI



"...as we all know, as far as TfL are concerned, a fail is a fail."



The Albany Taxi Charity Update

The charity recently completed its annual outing to Hastings with a fab time had by all. They're always looking for new volunteers able to give up their time to make it possible.



Below are just a few examples of comments received from those who attended, which demonstrate what amazing work the Charity does and the impact it has on the lives of the children and families it supports.

Karim and I have thoroughly enjoyed our recent trip on the Hastings taxi run. Our driver, Mike, was exceptionally courteous and kind to us throughout the journey. His professionalism and friendly demeanour made the trip even more enjoyable. This experience was not only pleasant and amusing but also educational for Karim. He gained valuable insights into marine life when we visited the aquarium and learned a lot from the interaction we had. Overall, it was a wonderful and enriching experience for both of us.

Regards,
Moussa

Thank you to all the taxi drivers who give their time to take our children to Hastings for the day. My son enjoyed the whole day from beginning to end and it will be a day he remembers forever.

Sharon

I cannot express enough how brilliant the whole day was. Our taxi driver was an absolute super star and the event itself was not only an amazing experience for Oscar but a wonderful comforting day for me. A massive thank you to everyone involved.

Alison

I want to say a big thank you to taxi driver number four. He waited till the end for us to go home. He was very patient and friendly. We had a lovely time, it was a great day. Thank you Albany!

Michelle and Ryan, Charlton Park Academy

Can you help?

The Albany Taxi Charity is always looking for volunteers to assist with this important work, including drivers for outings. If this is something that you feel you are able to offer or you would like to be a part of future trips, please contact Angela on 07734049735.



On Monday 10th June 2024, the Albany Taxi Charity held another successful trip to Hastings. This year marks 52 years since the Charity began, and 32 years for the Friends of the Albany Taxi Charity.

Hastings trip

The group met at Charlton Athletic FC before setting off down to Hastings for the seaside outing.

The itinerary was slightly different this year but the same fun was had by all and the town of Hastings was as welcoming as ever. In previous years, the trip went to the Azur Marina in St Leonards, which has now unfortunately closed down. Luckily, the PowderMill Hotel, in Battle, kindly stepped in to host the group.

The Charity was delighted to have 52 amazing London Taxi Drivers who made this all possible plus nine committee members and 12 outriders attending on the day, making sure everything ran smoothly. They were also joined by Jayne Torvill OBE, the Charity's patron, Lord Brett from the Lion Club and entertainer Mr Bubble as well as volunteers from the Friends of the Albany Taxi Charity.

The group came from four schools - Charlton Park, Willowdene Greenvale and Bexley Snap - in all 174 children, carers and parents made the trip and a wonderful time was had by all.

About the Albany Taxi Charity

In 1972, a group of London Taxi Drivers arranged to take children with additional to the seaside, and that summer 36 brightly decorated taxis left Crispin House, Bermondsey in convoy to Margate. 72 children attended that day, and due to it being such a success it was decided to make it an annual event. The drivers met in the Albany Arms, Albany Road, hence the name of the charity. This quickly grew into an amazing convoy of over 100 taxis.

In 1992, the Charity decided that there could be two trips a year, one to Margate and then another to Hastings, our first trip to Hastings was organised by Bob Baylis, Gina Sexton and George Payne and the 1066 L.V.A. Publicans who raise funds at their pubs throughout the year, too sponsor this event.

The Albany Committee is made up mainly of working cab drivers that give their time completely free with no recompense. The charity has now grown to take children from Chernobyl, Russia to Margate.

Besides the outings the Albany Charity has supported individual children and schools providing an interactive floor, specialised wheelchairs, and many sensory gifts.



Entertainment Corner

Our resident film critic takes us through the month's biggest releases to recommend to your passengers.

Reel talk

Amazon Prime



The Boys: Season 4 (18) 📺

22

Four seasons in and you pretty much know what you're likely to get when you click the play button on *The Boys*. Prescient social commentary? Check. Relatable human drama? Check. Gory, superpowered mayhem? Triple check. All of that and more is present and accounted for in these new, compelling episodes, with the focus once again on the dysfunctional titular team as they strive to figure out how to take head-popping supe and VP-elect Victoria Neuman (Claudia Doumit) and the terrifying Homelander (Antony Starr) off the board for good.

The new arrivals are a big reason why *The Boys* still feels clever and fresh. Sage (Susan Heyward) is the smartest person on the planet and makes for a riveting screen partner as Homelander's most fearless ally, while hateful conspiracy theorist Firecracker (Valorie Curry) gets more intriguing as the season progresses. As for the boys themselves, the character drama excavates new depths for Butcher (Karl Urban) and co. that poses hard, but worthwhile questions. With season 5 billed to be *The Boys'* last hurrah, here's hoping the journey towards those final answers continue to be this good.

★★★★☆

The Boys season 4 is now streaming on Amazon Prime weekly.

Sony Pictures Releasing



Bad Boys: Ride or Die (15) 📽️

In an era of legacyquels, few have been more unexpectedly welcome than the return of the *Bad Boys* franchise. Directors Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah brought Miami cops Mike Lowery (Will Smith) and Marcus Burnett (Martin Lawrence) back in style with 2020's *Bad Boys For Life*, and both duos are back at it again in this fourth instalment. This time round, the mission had Mike and Marcus hunting to expose a conspiracy when their late captain is framed for a series of crimes.

It's a solid enough framework to build a film around, with plenty of moments dedicated to what *Bad Boys* does best: hilarious back-and-forth banter between Mike and Marcus (after a near-death experience, Marcus' new outlook on life is the precursor to a lot of laughs), and frantic, over-the-top action. In that regard, *Ride or Die* can lay claim to having the most crowd-pleasing scene of the year so far, as Reggie (Dennis McDonald) – who first debuted in *Bad Boys II* – finally gets his due. That scene alone is worth the price of admission, but there's plenty of energy and emotional investment from all involved powering this movie. *Bad Boys 5*? I wouldn't say no!

★★★★☆

Bad Boys: Ride or Die is in cinemas now.

Inside Out 2 (U) 📽️

It's been nine years since we were introduced to a young girl named Riley and the emotions that govern her mind in *Inside Out*, which still holds up as one of Pixar's strongest releases. And while its sequel doesn't reach those heights, it's a clever and colourful examination of self love through the eyes (and in the brain) of a 13-year-old going through puberty, building on an excellent foundation to entertaining effect. Indeed, that p-word announces the arrival of Anxiety (Maya Hawke) and other emotions that Riley will need to learn how to balance.

The voicework across the board is as impressive as ever. Hawke brings the requisite amount of manic energy to Anxiety, and, as Joy, the returning Amy Poehler is allowed moments of vulnerability alongside all the peppy positivity. This is a consistently funny movie too – a giant ravine in Riley's mind called 'Sarchasm' is especially inspired – with the sharp writing and bright animation combining to showcase emotions and feelings in easy to understand ways. That's the real magic of these movies, and why (assuming Pixar are up for it) I'm already excited to return to Riley's mind in another few years.

★★★★☆

Inside Out 2 is in cinemas now.



Disney Pixar

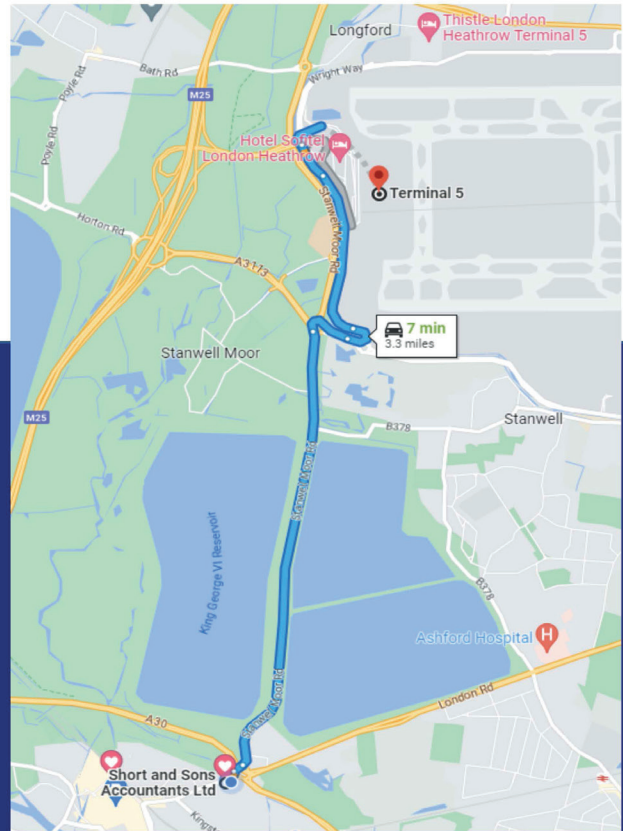
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Veterans Commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day

The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans was delighted to take a group of heroes to Normandy for the anniversary of Operation Overlord. Here's what happened...



Taxi Charity's trip to Normandy.



Volunteer cab drivers in Normandy.



Les Underwood at the British Normandy Memorial.



Chairman of the Taxi Charity Colin Mills.



Veteran Don Turrell with his companion Callum Reid.

On 4th June, London taxi cabs drove a small group of WWII and modern veterans, as well as a team of volunteers, carers, companions and medics, across to France for D-Day commemorations.

The five-day itinerary

included commemoration services at Pegasus Museum, Ranville Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, the village of Grangues, as well as visits to the Grand Bunker and Abbaye aux Dames, Caen (the Abbey of Sainte-Trinité).

The trip was led by London

cabbie and Taxi Charity Chairman, Colin Mills, who said: "What an honour it was to lead this group of veterans and volunteers, as we came together to remember the events of 80 years ago. With us were veterans who had landed on the beaches, protected the Channel,

taught signalling to the troops, and transmitted messages to the beaches. They enjoyed applause and thanks everywhere they went. We are proud to support veterans from all conflicts and, joining the Normandy veterans, were those who had served after WWII in Korea and Kenya, as well as



Taxi Charity trip to Normandy for D-Day 80.



Taxi Charity volunteer drivers.



younger vets who had served in Afghanistan. None of this would be possible without the generous team of London cab drivers who kindly donated their time to make this trip a huge success – you are all amazing.”

London cab driver, Daren Parr, who has rowed the Atlantic and climbed Kilimanjaro to raise funds for the charity, said, “This was my first European trip with the charity and is something I will never forget, creating memories I will cherish forever. It was a real privilege being around these living legends. Getting to talk with and listen to their stories was a real treat. I was hanging on every word, asking questions and getting a unique insight into a big part of our history.”

WWII veteran Marie Scott, who transmitted messages to the beaches, said: “What an amazing experience. I am fortunate to have travelled to Normandy on several occasions and always thoroughly enjoy my time away with this special charity, but this really was the best time ever. The charity has given me so many incredible experiences over the years, but on 5th June I had the honour of speaking at the commemoration service at Pegasus Museum, in front of fellow veterans from England, Canada and America, as well as personnel representing all the services.”

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



Taxi Charity Ambassador, Johnny Gallagher, with Veterans on Sword Beach.



D-Day veteran Peter Smoothery.



Distinct Distillers is generously donating £2 to the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, from the sale of each bottle of its commemorative D-Day 80 rum.
www.distinctdistillers.co.uk



Taxi Charity Veterans on Sword Beach.

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. In 2024, they took a group of veterans to Normandy for the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

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

www.taxicharity.org

The Taxi Charity online shop has 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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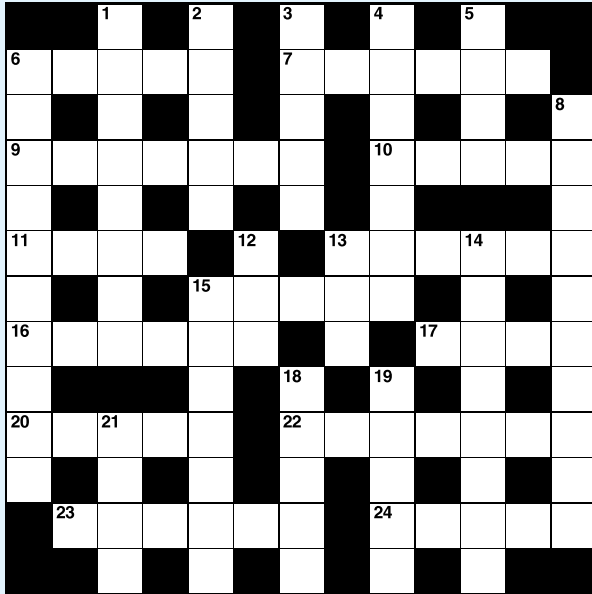
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Puzzler Page

Crossword



ACROSS

- 6 Gain knowledge (5)
- 7 To an excessive degree (6)
- 9 Boat's anchoring point (7)
- 10 Encourage (3,2)
- 11 Requirement (4)
- 13 Dual sound (6)
- 15 Exudes (5)
- 16 Contacted by phone (4,2)
- 17 Black-market hawker (4)
- 20 Tools for breaking rocks or ice (5)
- 22 Miscreant (7)
- 23 Nuptial (6)
- 24 In texture, like toffee (5)

DOWN

- 1 Famous French emperor (8)
- 2 Without illumination (5)
- 3 Chalet (5)
- 4 Goes back to a previous state (7)
- 5 Toil hard (4)
- 6 Citrus-flavoured boiled sweets (5,5)
- 8 Lack of funds (10)
- 12 Affected dandy (3)
- 13 Dry (of wine) (3)
- 14 Declared null and void (8)
- 15 In the fresh air (7)
- 18 Wicked deeds (5)
- 19 Hen noise (5)
- 21 Hump, schlep (4)

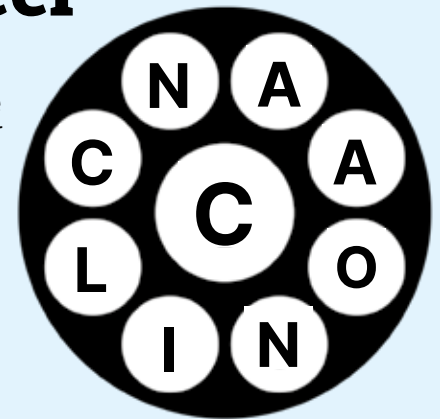
Sudoku

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.

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

Wordwheel

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

	3	1		
			∨	
				>
	<			>
			∧	
			∨	
		<		

All answers to puzzler on p30

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Puzzler
BY THOMSON

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JD TAXI COMPANY

TXE's available to rent now
inc brand new 24 plates

- Different payment options available
- 3 weeks payment holidays
- Breakdown cover
- Best rates

Call 02073838383 / 07956399369
Info@jdtaxico.com

CABS WANTED

● Looking to sell your TX4 or Vito? London based buyer, quick collection & payment, call James – 07931 964 857

● All de-commissioned good quality TX4s wanted. Instant decision, cash paid. We come to you. 07973 335 739

● Euro 5 about to be decommissioned, Cabs wanted, TX4's and Vito's. Top Price paid. Call John 07702 554 934

● All cabs wanted. Tx4, euro 4, 5 & 6 also TXE wanted We come to you, any condition, very quick decision. Cash paid instantly. 07702 554 934

● De-commissioned your tx4's and Euro 5's? Earn more by selling outside London. We pay cash, collect, and drive away. Definitely still buying. John 07702 554 934

CABS FOR SALE

● TXE vista comfort plus, 70.000 miles, 72 plate, £50.000. Contact James 07956 581 593.

● Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history. Non-fleet cabs, trade sales. New stock daily. Cabs

also wanted. Finance Paid
07957 465423

CABS FOR RENT

● London plated taxis to rent, all with aircon. All well maintained, serviced and Full Backup From £220 per week. Call 07738 162 518

● Tx4 15 plate to rent good clean cabs to work £250 per week, hornchurch area, call david - 07437 748270

● TXE Vista Plus, rent from £340 per week, pick up from Harrow call Krupali - 07929360 081

● TXE's available for rent, from £320 per week. Call 07951 843 663

● Rent Taxis, Euro 6 and also LEVC Cabs from £250 - £335. We also do repairs on cabs, call Nick 020 7700 1045 / 07951 661 430

● TX4s for rent, full backup available, garage facilities, £240 per week - 07387889206

● TXEs, TX4s and Vitos available from £260 per week contact Sabri – 07958973944

● Vitos 113 & 114, also tx4s for rent 07872 504 604

CABS FOR RENT

London plated
taxis to rent

All with aircon, well maintained,
serviced and full backup from
£220 per week.

Call
07738 162 518

CABS FOR SALE

De-commissioned your
TX4's and Euro 5's?

Earn more by selling
outside London.

We pay cash, collect
and drive away.

John
07702 554934

Get in touch



James Martin



james.martin@cplone.co.uk



01727 739 185

LTDA APPLICATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Mobile _____

Email _____ X _____

Date of Birth _____ Badge No. _____

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

Suburban badge sector numbers _____

Have you ever been a member of the LTDA before? (please tick) Yes ☐ No ☐

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

If Yes how many points do you have?

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

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

Please tick if you **DO NOT** wish to receive information from the LTDA and other related organisations in the future ☐

I understand that my application for membership of the Association must be approved by the Council of Management and that until this is confirmed I am not eligible to vote in relation to any form of Association matters. I agree that all benefits prior to approval of membership shall be at the discretion of the Council of Management.

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

Signed _____ Date _____

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LTDA Basic Direct Debit Instructions

Instructions to your Bank/Building Society to pay Direct Debits:

Please complete parts 1 to 5 to instruct your branch to make direct payments from your account. Then return the form to LTDA, FREEPOST, London, SE1 1PP

To the Manager of _____

Bank/Building Society Address _____

Service User Number

9 1 4 4 2 8

For Office use only

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

2. Name of account holder _____

3. Account Number

4. Bank Sort Code

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

5. Signature _____

Date _____



This guarantee should be detached and retained by the payer

The Direct Debit Guarantee



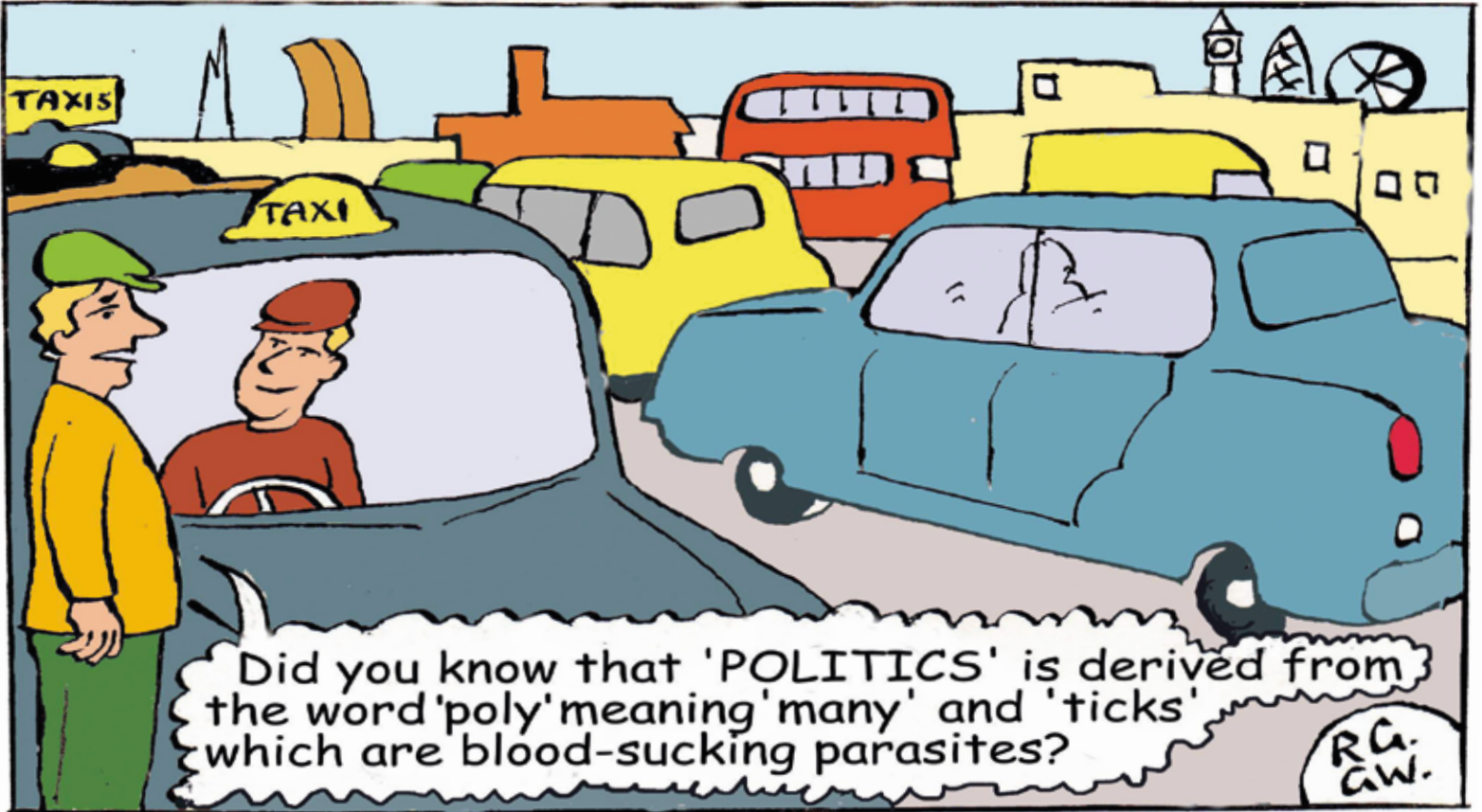
- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit LTDA will notify you (10 working days) in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you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

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



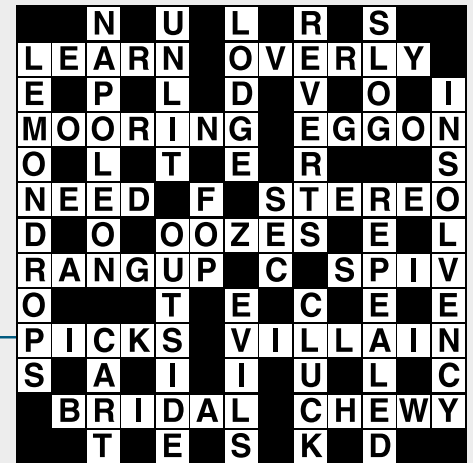
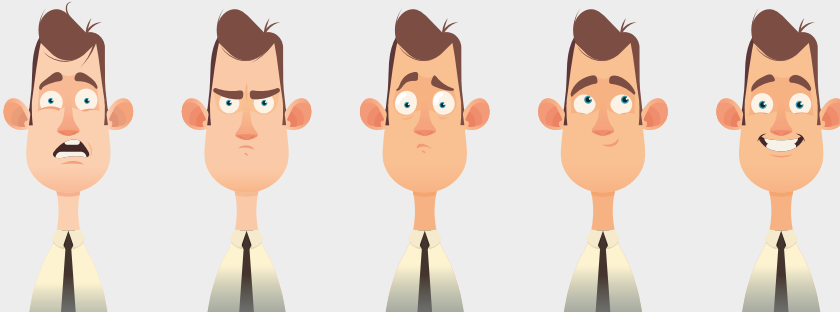


Cabbie's Cartoon



30

PUZZLER ANSWERS



Crossword

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Sudoku

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

Futoshiki

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

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: CANONICAL

All words: Calico, canal, cancan, canon, ciao, clan, cloaca, coal, coca, coil, coin, colic, conic, conical, icon, laconic, CANONICAL.

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



NEED TO RENT A CAB?

**TX4s
AVAILABLE
TO RENT
FROM £240
PER WEEK**

**TXEs
AVAILABLE
TO RENT
FROM £335
PER WEEK**



**FACING A
NASTY BALLOON
PAYMENT?
WE CAN HELP.
CALL US FOR AN
INSTANT QUOTE
AND GET CASH
NOW!
ON ALL
TXEs**

LOOK NO FURTHER

**CONTACT US TODAY OR CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE TO
SEE HOW WE CAN DELIVER YOU THE BEST DRIVING EXPERIENCE IN LONDON TODAY**

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LIMITED STOCK**

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