

COVER STORY

STEVE MCNAMARA Page 5

**THE TALE OF THE GOODMAN'S
YARD BODYSNATCHER**

ROB LORDAN Page 12

THE YELLOW LIGHT & THE APPS

STEVE KENTON Page 20

TAXI

10th September 2024 #571



EXPLOSION OF FITNESS TO BE LICENSED LETTERS LINKED TO COMPLAINTS

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Inside...
10.09.24

- 3 | News
- 5 | Steve McNamara
- 6 | Paul Brennan
- 8 | Sam Houston
- 10 | Emma Lunn
- 12 | Rob Lordan
- 16 | Cab You Drive
- 20 | Steve Kenton
- 24 | EXCLUSIVE:
Taxi Charity
- 27 | Puzzler
- 30 | Cabbie's Cartoon
Puzzler answers

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LEVC LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE SCRAPPAGE SCHEME
LEVC's dealership in Brewery Road has launched an exclusive £5,000 scrappage deal aimed at helping taxi drivers in London and the North West transition to zero-emission vehicles.
The limited-time offer is designed to make it easier for drivers to replace their ageing diesel cabs with a TX electric taxi.
This comes amid concern over falling driver numbers in London. With this scheme, LEVC is hoping to make the switch to a TX more accessible to drivers. They are offering a £5,000 part-exchange payment, available when purchasing a new zero-emission capable TX. It applies to any diesel taxi, including models like the TX4, Vito, and Peugeot E7, even those outside London. With limited stock, the offer is available until the end of September 2024.



OBITUARY
Dave Flack 13th May 1948 – 3rd August 2024
The family of Dave Flack, would like to let all of his colleagues know that he has sadly passed away after a fight with cancer.
He was a cabbie for nearly 40 years, and this was a job he really loved. He was frequently ranked outside the Le Meridien Hotel on Piccadilly. Dave had a service at Forest Park Crematorium on the 19th August.
He will be sadly missed by many, not least his wife, Chrissie and children, Scott, Kelly and Daniel.



RAC PREDICTS FUEL DUTY INCREASE AT AUTUMN BUDGET
A 5p cut in fuel duty is widely expected to be scrapped in the upcoming Budget, with the RAC claiming drivers are "not gaining any benefit from the cut". The RAC argues that retailers have failed to pass on lower petrol and diesel prices to motorists, choosing instead to boost their own profits. Ahead of the Autumn Budget, RAC head of policy, Simon Williams said: "We've reached the conclusion the Chancellor has no option but to put fuel duty back up to 58p a litre in October's Budget." The Prime Minister has refused to rule out such an increase and warned that the Budget will be "painful".

LONDON NOT 'THE MOST EXPENSIVE PLACE TO GET A TAXI'
Taxi Calculator has revealed that London is not the most expensive place to catch a ride as a small town in the North West took the spot and London second. Crewe a small town in Cheshire has taxis that cost £2 more than the standard rate in London. *Taxi Calculator* works out their prices, by calculating the cheapest and most expensive tariffs of a taxi ride of 8 kilometres in the day tariff.



TFL HIT BY CYBER ATTACK
Transport for London's (TfL) computer systems were targeted in a cyber-attack last week. Luckily, no customer data was compromised at the time of writing, although the attack was ongoing. TfL staff were however asked to work from home if possible due to the incident which mainly impacted the transport provider's backroom systems at the corporate headquarters. The regulator was also forced to temporarily restrict access to customer journey history for pay as you go contactless customers, as well as limiting access to some live travel data via apps, TfL Go and the TfL website, including next train information and the TfL JamCams.

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, MR DAVID LESSMAN!

David has been a member of the LTDA for an impressive 48 years. He has been lucky enough to win the LTDA lottery previously during that time. He will be looking to book a nice holiday with his winnings. We wish him all the best!

ENTER LTDA LOTTERY BELOW

SCAN ME!

LTDA Executive, Anthony Street, hands David Lessman his cheque for £5000.

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.

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Explosion of Complaints

It's so much easier if the LTDA is involved from the beginning, rather than bringing us in to try to sort something out at a later date, when things may have escalated.

Steve's comment

For some reason that has yet to be explained or figured out, we are seeing an explosion in the number of complaints made to TfL about cabbies, with some of these being dealt with by way of a 'Fitness to Licensed' review regardless of whether the complaint has been investigated first or how serious (or not serious) the matter is.

Handle with care

Firstly, I cannot emphasise enough that if you receive one of these, even if you know nothing about the incident, please do not reply yourself, speak to us, and allow our advisers to help you.

The same goes for any communications from the police or the courts that you are not sure about, it's so much easier if we are involved from the beginning, rather than bringing us to try to sort something out at a later date.

An unfounded complaint

Just recently, one of our members took a fare at about two in the afternoon to Kensington Church Street, it transpired that a female passenger, who was far from sober, refused to pay the fare. The passenger was standing on the pavement shouting at the cabbie, when she was spotted by two police officers. The moment they came over our member got out of the cab. Up until that point, he had not moved from the driver's seat. He told one of the officers what had happened, whilst the shouting passenger was being spoken to by the other officer.

Our member was thanking his lucky stars that, for once, the police were there when you needed them, that is up until the point he was told that the woman had alleged that he had sexually assaulted her and that he was being arrested.

What should have happened next is that he should have called us the moment he got to the police station, but because he was totally innocent, had not set foot outside the cab during the time of the alleged incident and



so to him the whole thing was obviously a farce, he decided to do the interview on his own.

He gave a full and frank interview and was subsequently released under investigation, which is when he decided to call us.

LTDA on the case

Within hours, our legal team had secured the CCTV from where he had stopped the cab, which clearly showed he had never left the vehicle until the police arrived. We also secured CCTV from the pick-up point 11 minutes prior to him arriving in Ken Church Street.

We timed the trip several times and 11 minutes was at the lower end of what we achieved, proving he could not have

stopped anywhere enroute. As it turned out we wasted our time, because when we eventually the alleged victim's statement, she had detailed how the driver had constantly touched her leg throughout the journey! It transpired that the officers who took her statement were not the arresting officers and had presumed that the 'cab' driver was a minicab driver and had not questioned the drunken woman's recollections of her leg being groped.

Case dismissed

As soon as we advised the police, that, short of being a rubber armed contortionist, our member could not have carried out the alleged assault, the

"Within hours, our legal team had secured the CCTV from where he had stopped the cab, which clearly showed he had never left the vehicle."

matter was discontinued.

There is no guarantee that we would have learned the impossibility of the alleged assault had we represented our man during the first interview, and got the whole thing dropped there and then, but we might have. That's why any member must always, that's always, call us if you are arrested, no matter how farfetched or ludicrous the allegation! **LTDA**



A Pivotal Point

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to see we are approaching a pivotal point in how we as a trade go forward, not least when it comes to the vehicle we drive and the costs we face to do the job.

Top rank

My last article on the need to have a grown-up conversation about the vehicle we drive certainly struck a chord. I have probably received more correspondence on that article than any other. I was expecting it, I also welcome it.

Mixed bag of views

I thought it would be more of a mixed bag, perhaps with a few more 'we can't get rid of the 'purpose-built vehicles' (PBV), but to my surprise those responses were few and far between. To be clear, it's not about us getting rid of the PBV, rather will the PBV still be available?

The correspondents were very much of the opinion that a serious discussion needs to take place. There were various views given as to why this is needed. For most, it was simply clear to them, as it is to me, that *LEVC* is in a precarious position.

For others, it was very personal. Below, is one extract from a letter I received from Tony, that summed up how many others feel. He outlined how he feels knowing his current taxi will soon be forced off the road.



As you will see, Tony, a cabbie for over two decades, who loves the job, fears he simply can't afford to continue in the trade, and is set to be one of the growing numbers forced out.

Waiting for work

The other common theme was people waiting weeks for warranty work to be agreed or it simply being refused, as only head office and not the dealers, can now approve the cost. There were also many stories of people waiting for parts for many weeks. All this of course leaves drivers off the road and out of work.

Small market

It's not *LEVC*'s fault the cab is expensive, we know they aren't making money from it. The

reality is, it probably should be much more expensive and for it to survive into the future on its own merit, raising the price is probably their only option. The market for purpose-built taxis is relatively small, especially when compared to the broader automotive industry. *LEVC*'s attempts to expand beyond London have faced challenges, as many cities around the UK do not have the same regulatory pressures to adopt low-emission vehicles or do not have the same tradition of purpose-built taxis.

Stalling demand & competition

When London was a vibrant market for taxis, with steady driver numbers and drivers confident that their market was in good order, feeling safe making the significant outlay required to purchase a new taxi, *LEVC* could be sure its market was strong. Those days, according to *LEVC*, are no longer here, and driver numbers are only heading in one direction.

In addition to competition from traditional automakers, Geely (*LEVC*'s parent company) must contend with the rise of Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers, who are rapidly expanding their presence in global markets. As Geely needs to cut costs to compete with other Chinese competitors, how much longer will they be prepared to bail out *LEVC* and the TXE? It certainly will not be a long-term deal.

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure out that we are approaching a pivotal point in how we as a trade go forward, not least with the vehicle we drive

"They told me they are ready, willing and able to supply cabs to London and the UK."

and the costs we face to do the job. *LEVC* or any purpose-built taxi manufacturer will not be a viable business if it cannot sell its vehicle all over the UK – the London market cannot and will not (for some time at least) sustain any such business.

What comes next?

Of course, while I loved hearing from my fellow cabbies, I was hoping to hear from *LEVC* jumping at the bit to tell me why I was wrong and not to worry, as all is actually right in the world, but I didn't.

Sadly, instead, I saw a statement they put out, basically confirming all I've just said, after their books showed them losing £100 million in 2023. They blamed inflation, high interest rates and fewer people passing The Knowledge, all of which are contributing to the decline in the number of taxi drivers. They aren't wrong but it's a pretty bleak picture.

I may not have heard any positive news from *LEVC*, but I did however hear from *Allied Vehicles*, who are producing a taxi based on the Ford Tourneo. They told me they are ready, willing and able to supply cabs to London and the UK. The only catch is that there is no turning circle. I will write a bit more about them next time as I've been invited up to Glasgow to take a look at the cab.

There are a couple of options on the table – limited changes to the conditions of fitness whilst making them more standard across the UK or the government needs to do a lot more to make the PBV more affordable by removing the VAT or offering interest free loans on their purchase. That way, Tony and many other drivers, might feel they can then afford to remain in the trade they love. **LTDA**

New message

To

Subject

I write in reply to your piece in TAXI regarding the future of our trade. Especially regarding the vehicle, we will eventually be forced to drive. I'm 59 years old and have been licenced for 25 years. It's the best job I've ever had and will have. However, from my point of view, in two years when my cab is forced off the road, the position [available taxi] going forward will make my exit from the trade inevitable.

Send

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A Decent August, The Evolution of Twitter & Cycling Safety

I read a thing in the newspaper saying there are fewer tourists, but I don't believe that myself, London has been heaving this Summer and it's been great to see.

M4 musings

Looking back on it now, August seemed pretty good to me, and for our trade, with some properly busy days, especially in the evening rush. I'm hoping this leads us into a good September.

Demand

It's always worth remembering that even if we feel busy, there are fewer taxi drivers than there were five and ten years ago, so it does not mean the overall size or turnover of our collective business has increased. But there is demand out there, and plenty on the street, not just apps. I read a thing in the newspaper saying there are fewer tourists, but I don't believe that myself, London has been heaving this Summer and it's been great to see.

Demand also held up pretty well at the airport, August is usually a quiet month but wait times have been better than in some previous years.

Once we get through August, September is often busy at the flyers, so fingers crossed we have another good one out there.



Is cycling today scary?

I used to ride my bike to school. I saw a conversation about this somewhere and it made me think back. I was never scared on my bike. I had a couple of scrapes for sure, including once cycling into the back of a parked car because I'd put my head down to pedal as fast as I could...But I was never scared, and I cycled around everywhere between the ages of about 10 and 17.

Lately, we are told that the biggest barrier to more people cycling is fear of drivers, and I don't dispute that people say that, but is it true?

When I first started riding to school, my mum used to tell me to ride on the pavement, but I

actually wanted to ride on the road because it was quicker, so I did. As the cars went past, sometimes they were a little close, but no-one ever hit me, and if I knew I was in a stretch of road and a car couldn't get by, I moved over to the left. Likewise, when I became a motorcycle courier, I made it my business to be aware of all other road users and understand where they were trying to go, it was in my best interests after all.

There's no doubt that London now is a very different place from those times I just described.

The recent changes in the Highway Code have given pedestrians and cyclists much more priority and while we may find that challenging, there's no denying many Londoners do support the changes and there are visibly many more cyclists on the roads. But the transition has been difficult for drivers, especially for us who are selling transport for a living.

When you get behind a cyclist they might be doing anything from less than 10mph to 20 or 25, and you have to judge the right moment to overtake and be able to give them the now requisite 1.5 metres.

There's also patchy awareness of the rule at junctions, where people cycling or on foot have priority if they are crossing. This can lead to uncertainty on both sides as some pedestrians stop and others don't.

Ultimately, the rules are clear, and although they take some getting used to, we have to adapt, as this trade always has, to new conditions on the ground, whether we like it or not.

We've been around through all the changes in the last 350 plus years, so I'm betting we'll be able to get used to these latest ones and still make a good living.



X (Twitter)'s evolution

Let me start this part by saying that not everyone goes on X/Twitter of course, but I wonder, of those of us who do, whether anyone's noticed what I have, which is that it's definitely different since Elon Musk took over. The platform was never great, I'm not a lover of social media in general, but it was undeniably a place to pick up news and insight from all over the world. Every subject under the sun, so the old Twitter was somewhere I spent a bit of time, though I stopped actually 'Tweeting' years ago.

I've written before about how disastrous Twitter was for the cab trade in the early days, I think it's much better now, and the few drivers who do put their head above the parapet are generally a lot more savvy and sensible about what they're prepared to say on the platform to members of the public and to each other. But lately, the stuff it sends me on the so-called 'for you' feed is mostly nothing to do with anything I've shown an interest in and is, shall we say, a little bit more 'political' than I would have expected (or wanted). I'll stick to the people I follow for now thanks.

You hear a lot about algorithms and AI but in my opinion none of the internet giants have this right. Whether it's Amazon sending me an advert for a fridge because I bought a fridge last week or YouTube sending me clips of people eating hamburgers, I think that stuff still has a long way to go.

As someone born before the coming of the internet, it has definitely improved life in some areas and made it worse in some others, the problem is that I think we're still a long way off working out which is which...

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Credit Card Cashback

If you spend a lot of money on Amazon this new credit card could be for you, if not, there are other cashback cards you might want to consider.

Introducing the Amazon Barclaycard



Money matters

10

Amazon and Barclaycard have teamed up to launch the Amazon Barclaycard which allows cardholders to earn between 0.5% and 2% cashback on spending. New customers of the co-branded credit card also receive a £20 Amazon gift card as an introductory offer. So, is it worth going for?

How does the Amazon Barclaycard work?

The Amazon Barclaycard offers 0% interest on purchases for the first six months. After this, the card has a representative APR of 28.9%, with the credit limit and interest rate subject to customers' financial circumstances and borrowing history.

You'll need to use either the Barclays app or the Barclaycard app to manage your Amazon Barclaycard account.

Steve Weston, head of everyday money management at Barclays, said: "We're delighted to introduce the Amazon Barclaycard, the perfect credit card for anyone who loves to shop at Amazon and wants to be rewarded for doing so on their everyday spend. This partnership highlights

our commitment to deliver compelling offers for customers as part of our strategy to grow our UK credit card business."

How much cashback can I earn?

How much cashback the card pays depends on where you spend your money. All cardholders will get 1% rewards on all Amazon purchases. As well as shopping on Amazon, this includes services such as Audible, Kindle and Prime Video.

Amazon Prime members will get 2% cashback on spending during designated shopping event days such as Prime Day, Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Away from Amazon, you'll get 0.5% rewards on everyday spending at other retailers for the first 12 months, and 0.25% after that.

You won't earn rewards on transactions such as balance transfers, money transfers, cash withdrawals or buying currency – although this is the case for most reward or cashback cards.

How do I get my cash?

There's one potential catch with the Amazon Barclaycard. Rather than paying cashback in cold hard cash, rewards can only be redeemed for Amazon gift cards.

You'll need to earn at least £5 in cashback to transfer the money

to an Amazon gift card which will be linked to your Amazon account. You can then transfer gift cards in multiples of £5, and the cards will be available to spend within two hours of transferring them. Amazon gift cards are valid for 10 years.

Should I get the Amazon Barclaycard?

Whether the Amazon Barclaycard is a good option for you depends on where you do most of your spending. The reward gift cards can only be spent on Amazon – so you'd need to be a regular Amazon shopper to benefit. The £20 gift card you get on signing up is a useful perk, as is the increased cashback you get on Amazon and Amazon Prime purchases.

However, at the moment, only new Barclaycard customers can apply for the Amazon credit card. This means existing Barclaycard customers, or anyone who has held a Barclaycard in the past six months, won't be able to take advantage of the card, although Barclaycard has hinted that this might change in the future.

What other cashback cards should I look at?

Arguably, there are better cashback cards available for some people. Chase's debit card offers

1% cashback on most spending, equalling the cashback Amazon Barclaycard customers can earn on Amazon and doubling what they earn elsewhere.

However, Chase caps cashback at £15 a month and the cashback is only available for the first 12 months. On the plus side, because it's debit card (not a credit card), the Chase card will be easier for many people to get.

Another option is the Amex Cashback Everyday credit card. This offers 5% cashback for the first five months, with a maximum cashback of £125.

After this you get up to 1% cashback on spending. However, you need to spend at least £3,000 on the card each year for the cashback to kick in. So this card is suited best to high spenders or anyone planning a large purchase.

There are also several cashback cards with decent rates, but an annual fee too. For example, the Santander Edge credit card charges £3 a month. Cardholders get 2% cashback (up to £15 a month) on all purchases for the first year. This means you can earn up to £180 in cashback in the first year, which reduces to £144 after the £36 annual fee is taken into account.

From the second year onwards, the cashback rate falls to 1% and continues to be capped at £15 a month. **TAXI**

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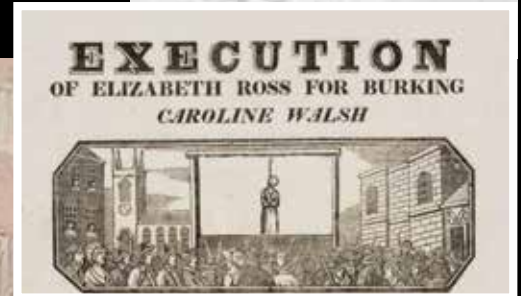


The Goodman's Yard Body Snatcher

Caroline Walsh went to Goodman's Yard on 19th August. She was seen entering number 7, but nobody saw her leave...



Rosemary Lane 'Rag Market'



www.murderpedia.org

12

Rob's history trips

In the early 1830s, 2 Red Lion Square was home to an elderly woman named Caroline Walsh who, despite being 84, still managed to scrape a living on the streets of London by pedaling small items of haberdashery. Her neighbours were Edward and Elizabeth Cook, plus their 12-year-old son, Ned. Her association with the family did not end well for poor Caroline...

An unsavoury couple

Edward and Elizabeth were a most unsavoury pair: Elizabeth being a known drunk, who sold hare skins (which, it was rumoured, were in fact taken from local cats she had killed), and her husband being a violent bully, who was reputed to dabble in bodysnatching, which was known as 'burking' at the time.

In August 1831, the Cooks moved to 7 Goodman's Yard and invited Caroline to join them as their lodger. Caroline was reluctant, but Elizabeth in particular insisted. Caroline finally relented and went to Goodman's Yard on 19th August.

She was seen entering number 7, but nobody saw her leave...

Caroline's granddaughter, Ann Buton, was aware of the Cooks' badgering and wasn't happy with it; so much so that she'd advised her grandmother against any involvement with the pair.

Caroline goes missing

When Caroline hadn't been seen for several days, Ann went to Goodman's Yard, only to be told by Elizabeth that her grandmother wasn't in. She then pestered Ann for money to buy alcohol, which led the pair to retire to a pub nearby called 'Browns', where, over gin and beer, Ann questioned Elizabeth about Caroline's whereabouts.

Drunk and offended, Elizabeth unwisely blurted out, "*You seem to think that we have murdered the woman,*" followed by, "*You we think we have destroyed her at our place?*"

Following this encounter, Ann spent several hours scouring the streets for her grandmother, and when she returned to Goodman's Yard she found Elizabeth was now sporting a black eye; a result of her brutish husband beating her for being drunk.

Over the following weeks Ann returned to Goodman's Yard several times only to be fobbed off every time. She also inquired

around the local hospitals and workhouses, before finally heading to Lambeth Street police station to report her grandmother as missing.

The investigation

As a result, an officer named James Lea stepped in to investigate. On the 28th October, he and Ann returned to Goodman's Yard where Elizabeth was questioned about the 19th August.

Elizabeth claimed that another of Caroline's granddaughters - Lydia (Ann's sister) - had brought the old lady to Goodman's Yard, after which they'd had a supper of coffee and cold meat together. Everyone - including Caroline - then retired to bed at 9.00pm.

The following morning, Inspector Lea headed to the docks where Edward was working. When questioned, he claimed supper that night had consisted of tea and a hot meal, and that they'd gone to bed at 11.00pm.

Ned gives evidence

These inconsistencies were enough for Inspector Lea to arrest the couple, and their son Ned, who attended Aldgate Charity School, was also taken in.

The Cooks' trial took place at the Old Bailey on 6th January

1832, and Ned proved to be the main witness. He stated that an elderly woman had come to the house for coffee, after which she was offered a bed. Then, during the night, Ned said he heard his mother get up and as his father stood guard at the window, Elizabeth throttled Caroline to death, after which her body was dragged down to the cellar.

This was corroborated by another boy who lived in the same block. The boy kept pet ducks in the cellar, and when he checked on them the following morning, he'd spotted Caroline's corpse in a sack, although he'd dared not mention it to anyone at the time.

Ned spoke again to say that although his mother had told him she'd taken the old woman to hospital, he'd seen her leave the building at around 10.00pm, with the sack containing the body slung over her shoulder, leading Elizabeth to cry out in court, "*Good God! How could I have borne a son to hang me!*"

It would seem Elizabeth had, technically, taken Caroline to a hospital but it was for the purpose of selling her body to a medical school.

Further witnesses claimed Elizabeth had sold items of clothing at Rosemary Lane Market (which was held close to the Tower of London), and when shown in court, Caroline's relatives confirmed that these had indeed belonged to her.

Consequently, Elizabeth Cook was found guilty of 'burking' (bodysnatching) and sentenced to death, making her the only woman in British legal history to receive such a sentence for that crime.

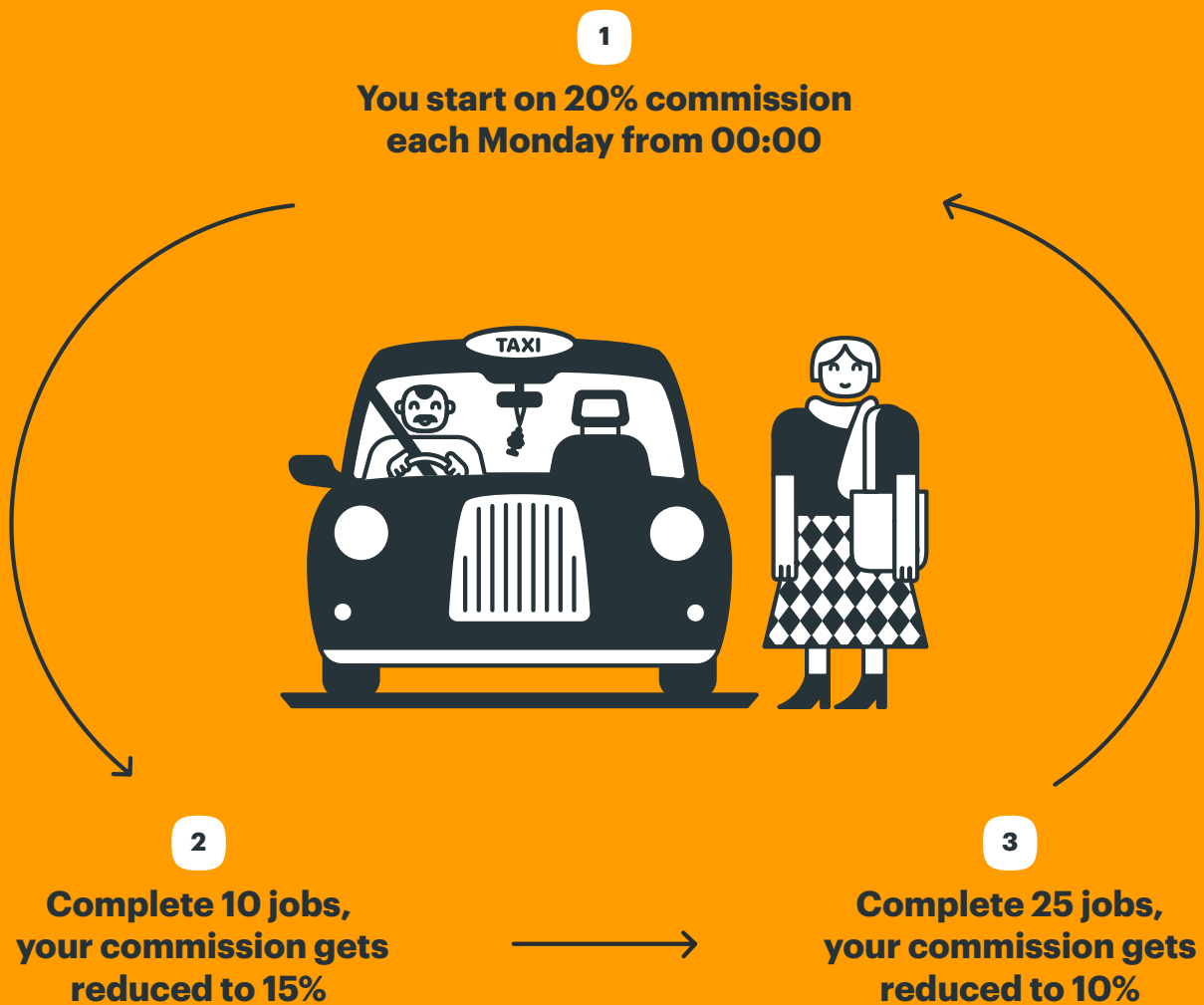
She was executed in public, outside Newgate Gaol on 9th January 1832.

If you wish to learn more, you can visit my YouTube channel, robslondon. ■ TAXI

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13

Need to know



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The Next Battle

Many musers with an old diesel coming to end of life are now choosing a used TXE over a new one, in order to keep the finance figures as low as possible.

Cab you drive

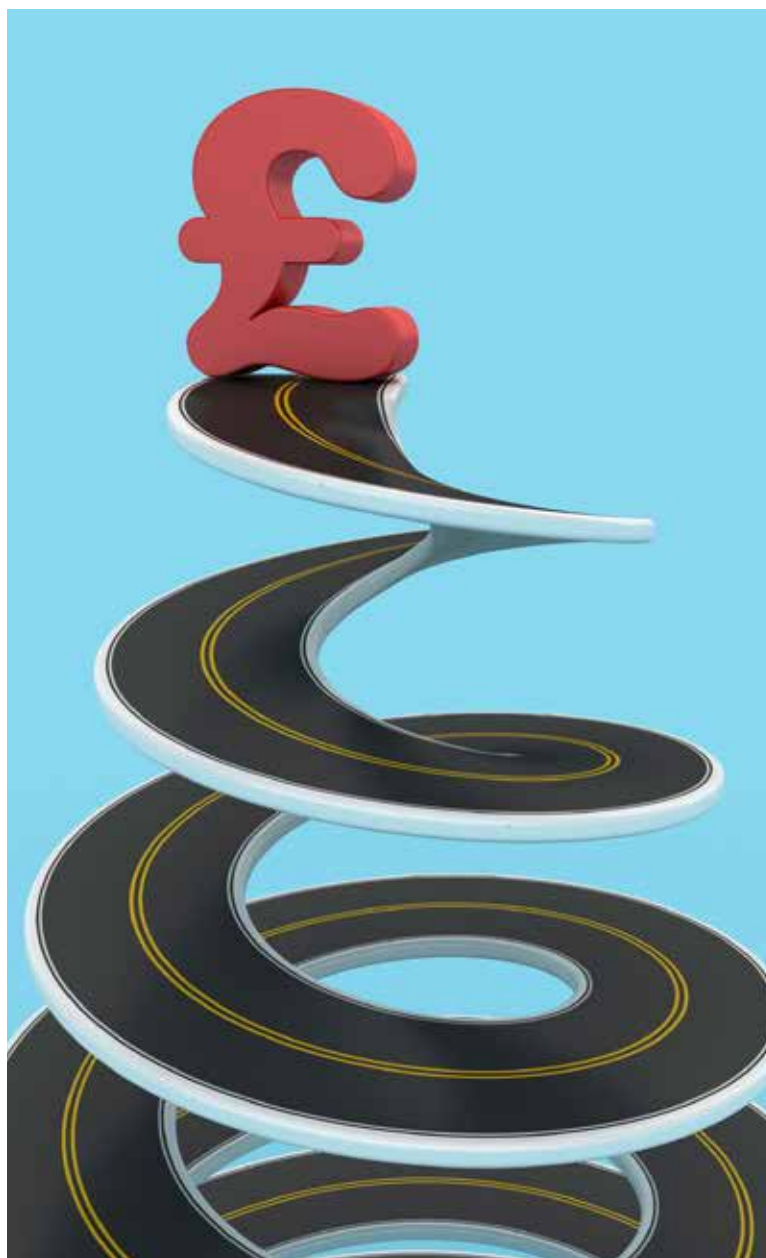
Following on from the good news that taxis will be exempt from the new tolls at the Blackwall and new Silvertown tunnels, it's looking increasingly likely that next battle will be trying to secure an exemption from pay-per-mile road pricing!

Pay-per-mile on the horizon?

The Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) has reportedly written to the Chancellor, the Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP urging her to introduce a pay-per-mile scheme for electric and low emission vehicles to help make up the shortfall in revenue lost from duty on fuel.

As usual, the RAC, once the champion of the motorist, but now an apologist for the war on the motorist, has also urged the Chancellor to get moving on this scheme and to act sooner rather than later to replace income lost from fuel duty as we transition to electric cars.

The CBT quoted support from the public, but in reality, their survey was responded to by the usual suspect lobby groups and those with an anti-electric car agenda, not realising that a similar, and much more expensive scheme will also be brought in for petrol and diesel cars in this government's apparent quest to tax all and sundry.



The taxi market

On the taxi front, August sales were a slight improvement on the poor sales figures seen this year, with 52 new cabs joining the ranks, a similar figure to last August. Unfortunately, it did little to halt the decline in the size of the fleet down to just over 14,600, the lowest it has been since the pandemic.

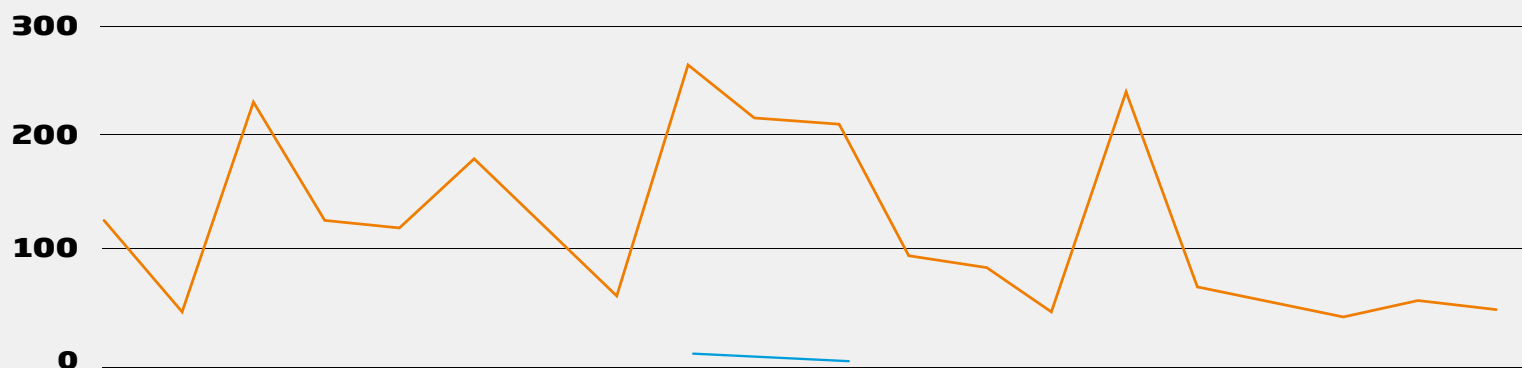
The only reason the numbers haven't fallen any lower is because of a growing second-hand market for TXEs. Many musers with an old diesel coming to end of life are now choosing a used TXE over a new one, in order to keep the finance figures as low as possible.

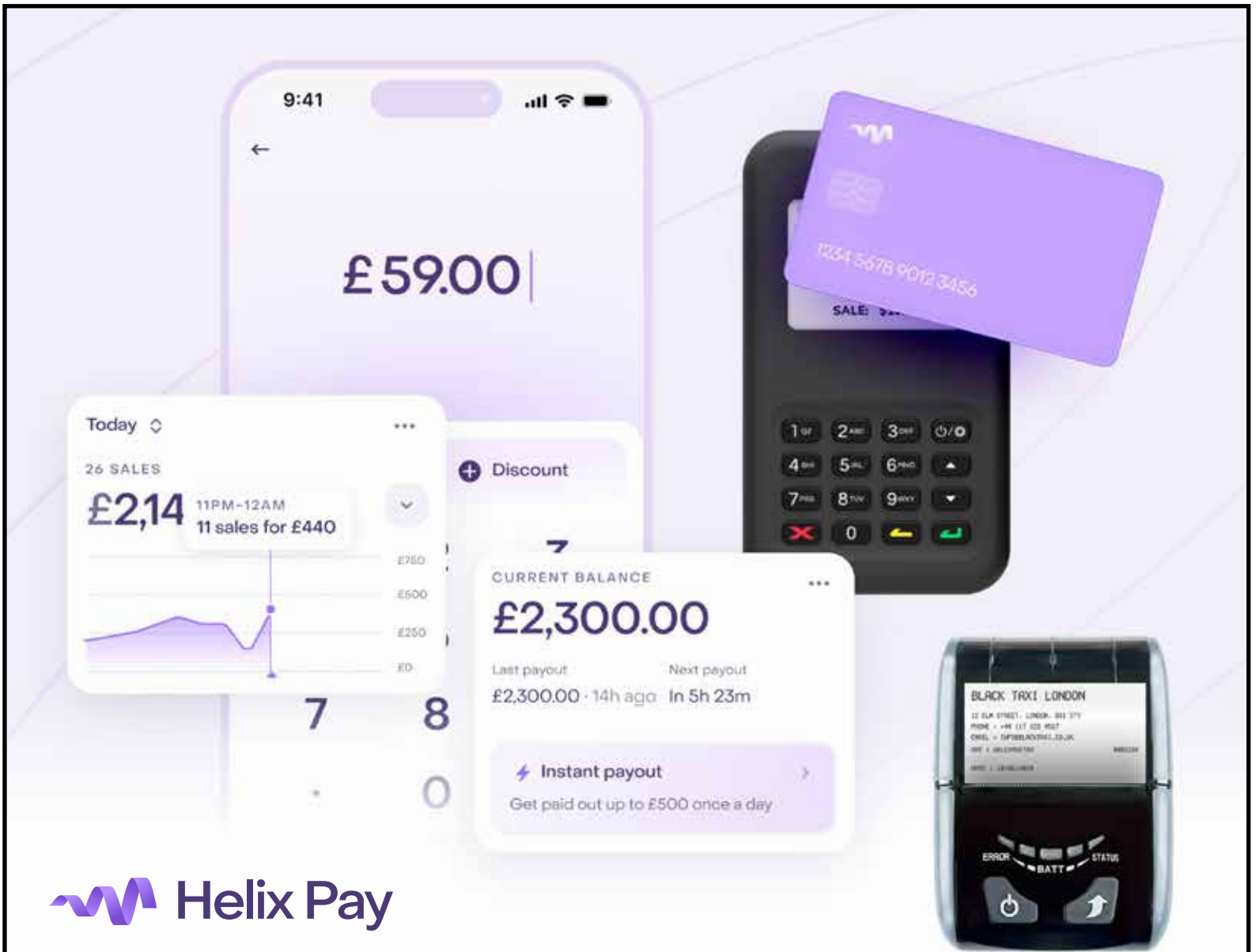
Having said that, I recently bought back a TXE that I had sold only six months ago. The driver who bought it said the experience of working the cab was so much better than his old diesel, that he had decided not to retire in three years as planned. Instead, he was buying a new cab in partnership with his brother-in-law that they were going to double.

Fortunately, I was able to flip that cab in a few days, ending what turned out to be my best week in ages.

TAXI

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| DYNAMO | 184 |
| LEVC | 8,437 |
| TX2 | 51 |
| TX4 | 3,980 |
| VITO | 1,963 |
| TOTAL | 14,615 |





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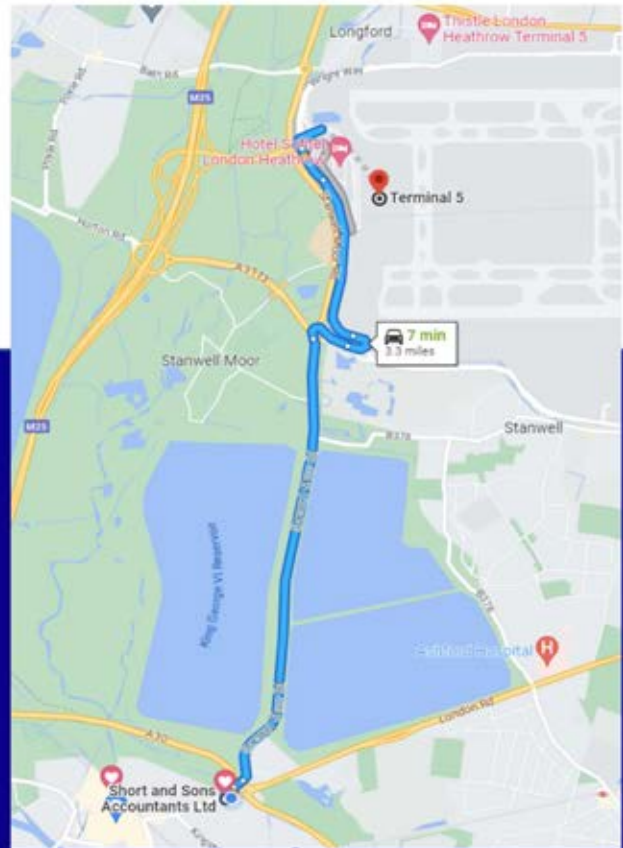
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The Yellow Light & The Apps

The yellow light should indeed prevail; it is part of our USP but hailing a cab and using an app shouldn't be viewed as mutually exclusive.

Man in black

Trying to hail a cab after a recent gig got me thinking about things. The street hail will always be our USP - our bread and butter if you like - but love them or hate them, there is a very real need for the apps nowadays. As the saying goes, there's more than one way to skin a cat...

Hail Bruce and hail the London taxi

As you are well aware by now, I love my music, listening, occasionally roadying and of course playing. Again it is no secret that my instrument of choice is the bass guitar, I do play other instruments - but the bass is my first love.

Now I'm quite fortunate, due to my ad-hoc work in the music industry, I've been lucky enough

to meet numerous wonderful people from within the rock and heavy metal world. As a result, I've made some very good friends along the way. It's due to these links that I was privileged enough to be given a "triple A" pass to Iron Maiden's frontman, Bruce Dickinson's, solo gig at the Kentish Town Forum earlier this year.

The chap who I accompanied, former Atom Seed and Skunkworks bassist, Chris Dale, is a bit of a legend in the music industry. He is a highly regarded plank-slapper - he is also the king of humble (he's going to kill me for this). I've also got his son, Archie, to thank, as it was, he who I replaced as Chris's plus one - incidentally Archie is a bit of a musical genius in his own right (and an all-round wonderful lad).

The gig, which was in support of Bruce's album, *The Mandrake Project* (which reached number three in the album charts), was fantastic - the backing band were

something to behold, and a great time was had by all.

Post-gig we were relaxing, chatting with numerous well-known faces from the music and entertainment industry, as well as Bruce and members of his backing band. Come 1.30am we decided to leave and a few of us congregated outside the venue but continued chatting.

Before you know it, it was gone 2.30am. Since we all resided in different areas, a couple of people decided to get a PHV home. I of course opted to wait for the yellow light of one of our friendly neighbourhood knights of the road. I waited and waited and waited. Thirty minutes later, I was still waiting. I strongly believe that the "For Hire" light is important, it's part of the taxi industry's USP, however when there is a dearth of taxis in a given area, what is a customer, in this case me, supposed to do? I decided to reach for the phone and use one of the apps



to procure one of London's finest and within five minutes I was on my way out of dodge and heading for bed.

The following day, I decided to park my taxi at a friend's place in Islington, as there was going to be an event on, which would have rendered most of London impassable (by way of a change). After parking my vehicle, I again attempted to procure a taxi, in the pouring rain, only this time there was no way that I was going to wait thirty minutes. After ten minutes of getting soaked and looking like I had just undertaken a training session with American Olympic swimmer, Mark Spitz, I again used an app. Five minutes later, a taxi arrives and not long after I'm enjoying a beer while watching a Stranglers gig on YouTube.

The yellow light

Now there are those who decry the use of apps by both the public and those operating in the taxi industry, proclaiming that the yellow light should prevail. Contrary to what one or two people think, I actually agree with that ethos, the yellow light should indeed prevail, it is part of our



"You don't have to sacrifice one working format to employ another."

hire arm, this is unsurprising given that they are all transport logistics companies as opposed to merely app-based work providers. For some, this is a bone of contention. There are drivers who refuse to work on platforms which may have a relationship with the private hire industry. While the ethics behind this may suit some taxi drivers, there are thousands of taxi drivers who simply aren't bothered by this relationship.

So which dog is top dog? Is it the taxi driver, the app provider or the consumer. Well they say the customer is king, so the answer is pretty straightforward – the customer is and always was, top dog. No consumer, no work, no work, no income. The consumer goes to where a service and coverage can be provided, regardless of good will and affection for an industry.

Coverage is key

Even to the untrained eye, it's clear that the taxi industry has a problem, with around five times as many drivers leaving the trade as there are entering. With just 14,634 taxis licensed and available on the road, this problem becomes exacerbated. While the central area has an abundance of taxis working the streets, a short distance outside of the centre there is a coverage issue.

Whether it be driver numbers, cab numbers, cabs not able to pass through some areas due to restrictions such as LTNs, it all adds up, and from a customer perspective, reliable apps with good coverage are now essential – in some cases a lifeline. Ultimately, we must be in no doubt, if the taxi industry cannot provide a service, private hire will.

Of course the flip side to this is the fact that every driver is a sole-trader, captain of his ship and master of his own destiny. No driver should be vilified for his choices, nobody else is going to pay your bills for you. It's your choice as a small businessperson. But ask yourself this question, as small businesspeople, can we really afford to pick and choose where our customers come from, or should we embrace every tool available to the industry in this modern era? **TAXI**

USP but the two things (hailing a cab and using an app) aren't mutually exclusive. You don't have to sacrifice one working format to employ another.

Apps are nothing new, it's nothing more than a modern-day advancement on the radio circuit, which in turn has its grounding in rank phones.

There are numerous app providers who have a taxi service operating on their platform – *Gett*, *Freenow*, *Comcab*, *TaxiApp*, *Unify* and *TaxiNow* to name but six, with some more successful than others. There are also several work-related functions attributed to some of the credit card providers, including *CMT* and *Taxiworld* – even taxi fleet operator *Sherbet* now have their own work facility.

The reason for this expansion is generally customer driven – there is a need, a public demand, and the taxi industry is a public transport service (take note Mayor Khan) so needs to meet that need.

With around 48 million taxi journeys taken every year in London, it is estimated that around 25% of all journeys are procured via app-based technology – which would

work out as 12 million jobs per annum or 32,900 per day – that is an awful lot of customers.

App history

Although telephone ranks have been around for nearly a century, it was the 1950s that saw the first London taxi radio circuit established. In 1953, Radio Taxicabs (Southern) Limited, a licensed hackney carriage owner-driver co-operative was formed. In 1973, that same circuit became Radio Taxicabs (London) Limited, demutualising in 2004, as Radio Taxis Group Limited.

2005 saw the company acquire Xeta, who were a private hire circuit. The following year, One Transport was developed. This was a nationwide ground transport management system, which was eventually acquired by Gett in 2016. Gett, who have been in operation in London since 2011, were recently purchased by Pango for a reported £135 million (\$175mn). They are considered one of the big three in London, alongside *FREENOW* and *Comcab* and boast the second largest account in London – the London Underground account.

1975 saw the development of

Computer Cab. Initially offering drivers work via a voice dispatch system, it eventually moved onto the state-of-the-art Mobistar system. They eventually became part of the Confort Delgro transport family, before being sold to private hire company *Addison Lee* in 2021. Nowadays, *Comcab* operate both via a multi-display unit and an app, they also still possess in their arsenal the biggest account in London – the Taxicard account.

FREENOW are an amalgam of several entities. Initially founded in Germany, as Intelligent Apps, the company behind the development of *MyTaxi* in 2009, saw itself acquired by *Daimler* in 2014. In 2016, *MyTaxi* merged with licensed London taxi app, *Hailo*. The merger between the two made *MyTaxi* the largest licensed taxi e-hailing operator. 2019 saw a rebranding of the company after a €1 billion deal between *Daimler* and *BMW* – thus transforming the company from a taxi app provider into a fully integrated multi-mobility platform, now *FREENOW*.

Now, unlike the remaining smaller apps, all three of the above have links to a private



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A Volunteer's Account of Supporting a Veteran for the 80th D-Day Commemorations (Part Two)

TAXI continued our conversation with Callum Reid, 27, about his visit to Normandy, alongside his great friend, 99-year-old World War II veteran, Don Turrell.

TAXI Hi Callum, so where were we...

Callum: I was about to tell you about a special visit we made during the trip.

Don's fighting in the war came to an end on 10th July 1944, when he was severely injured and subsequently evacuated, and he shared the story with me. Don was fighting in a treeline around the small village of Éterville, where his company were pinned down under heavy machine gun fire.

The sound of the German moaning minnies (mortar bombs) caused Don to take cover in the roots of a tree along with the rest of his company, who were spread throughout the section of forest. After the raining onslaught had ceased, Don cried out to see if anyone would respond. One gentleman faintly responded and attempted to lift himself off the ground before

succumbing to his wounds.

Upon realising the severity of the situation and of the catastrophic injuries sustained to his left ankle, Don used his rifle as a crutch to limp his way round to where a supporting division was stationed in order to report what had happened. Further German attacks began on that location too and Don witnessed a Half Track vehicle get hit by mortar fire and its passengers being thrown to their deaths, before he was swiftly evacuated back to the Normandy coastline.

This was the end of Don's fighting in the war but not the end of the battle with his injuries. He spent three years in hospitals around the UK having operations to remove shrapnel from various places in his body and improve the functionality of his foot. Even now, he still has shrapnel in parts

of his body that cause him pain and discomfort.

Friend of the Taxi Charity and Photographer, Robin Savage has located and taken photos of veterans in the places where they were injured. We can't be sure exactly where Don was injured due to the passage of time and the growth of nature. However, Robin scoped out Château d'Éterville and talked with the owners, who kindly opened their home to us. They explained that the Château had been used as a hospital during WWII and pointed out the evidence of conflict which could be seen in the bullet holes on the side of the buildings all around the grounds.

After we said our goodbyes to both Robin and the wonderful French family who owned the Château, we headed for a quick photo opportunity at Sword beach

Photoshoot for Don.



24



Château d'Éterville



Callum holding a Bren gun alongside Don.

with the other veterans then onwards to the ferry terminal for our journey back to old Blighty.

On arrival back in Portsmouth, the majority of those on the trip headed straight home. However, Don and a couple of other veterans had an extra night in the hotel as they were due to attend the Southwick Revival 1940s weekend event. They were treated like celebrities at the event and, rightly so, received a shoutout and standing ovation from all those in the Ballroom tent. I wheeled Don to a stall which had a collection of WWII rifles and guns. This brought back lots of memories for him and he couldn't believe how heavy they were from what he remembers of carrying them all those years ago. He even had me dress up in webbing with a Bren gun for his own amusement! This was a great little bonus to such a wonderful week.

The three-hour journey back to Frinton on Sea, and thus reality,

was a more silent affair than the outbound journey. I said goodbye to my friend, Don, and gave him a big hug as we both wiped a tear or two from our eyes. The departure signalled the end of my week's annual leave.

A further four-hour journey back up to Leeds for myself, then straight into bed ready for work the following morning was a tough gig.

Accompanying Don to Normandy for the 80th anniversary of D-Day was a profoundly moving experience. Witnessing the ceremonies and visiting the historic sites provided a deeper understanding of the immense bravery and sacrifice of those who fought. The trip reinforced the importance of remembering and honouring our history and I am incredibly grateful to the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans for making this journey possible. The onus the charity places on veteran wellbeing and care is industry leading. Veterans such as Don

would not be able to make the trip back with other charities due to the level of care required.

The realities of providing 24/7 care for a 99-year-old gentleman has been one of the most challenging and exhausting jobs

I have ever done. It has given me a greater appreciation of the work that carers do across the UK for all those who need support. That being said, this has been one of the most fulfilling weeks of my life and the impact that the trip has had on Don has been a delight to see.

This trip was more than just a commemoration; it was a heartfelt tribute to the courage and resilience of all those who fought for our freedom. It was a privilege to share this experience with the last remaining veterans and to be part of such a significant event. The memories, connections and stories made during this trip will remain with me forever.

Callum Reid

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. 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, which are available at: www.taxicharity.org/shop

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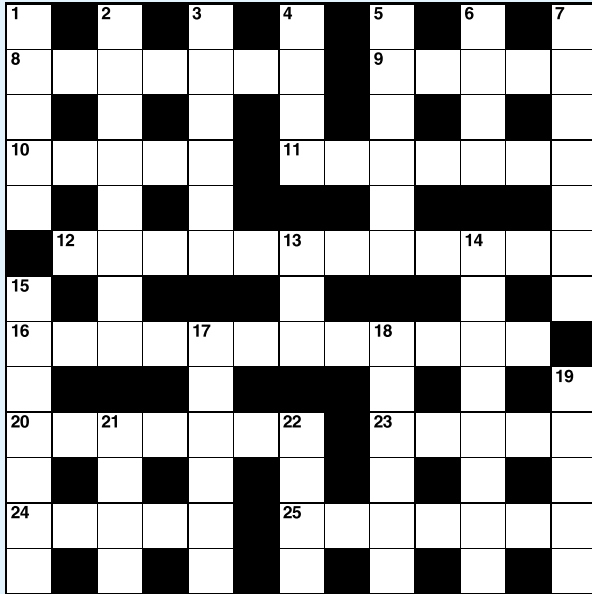
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Puzzler Page

Crossword



ACROSS

- 8 Even more poor (7)
- 9 Representative (5)
- 10 Market value (5)
- 11 Perspired (7)
- 12 Small, round, red salad item (6,6)
- 16 Singer who had a very short career (3-3,6)
- 20 Brass-band instruments (7)
- 23 Labours (5)
- 24 Cornish river (5)
- 25 Shade of green (7)

DOWN

- 1 Familiar (5)
- 2 I don't know! (6,2)
- 3 Hesitate (6)
- 4 Points in history (4)
- 5 Manage, cope (4,2)
- 6 Liquefy (4)
- 7 Crafts workshops (7)
- 13 Evergreen tree with red berries (3)
- 14 From the US (8)
- 15 Brew (7)
- 17 Beliefs, values (6)
- 18 Concept, idea (6)
- 19 Famous racecourse (5)
- 21 Batters, dashes into (4)
- 22 Injure with a dagger (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.

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

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | > | |
| | | ∇ | | ∇ |
| 2 | | | | |
| | | ∧ | | 2 |
| | | | | |
| 3 | | | > | < |

All answers to puzzler on p30



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- Cabs for sale. Main Dealer service history. Non-fleet cabs, trade sales. New stock daily. Cabs also wanted. Finance Paid 07957 465 423

CABS FOR RENT

- Vitos 113 & 114, also tx4s for rent 07872 504 604
- TXE comfort plus models no ads from £310 a week full back up .Based in E17. Ring Tarik 07968 623 209
- TXE's available for rent, from £310 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 - 07932 740 902
- TXEs, TX4s and Vitos available from £260 per week contact Sabri - 07958 973 944

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 _____

29

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

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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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:



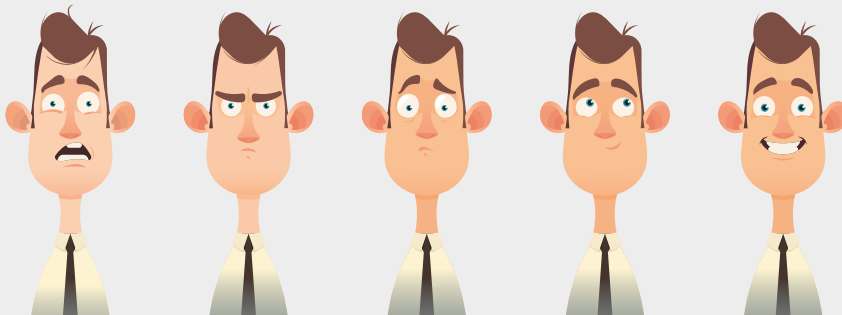


Cabbie's Cartoon



30

PUZZLER ANSWERS



| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | S | D | E | M | M | S |
| N | E | E | D | I | E | R |
| O | A | T | A | K | L | U |
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| N | C | E | D | I | | |
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| C | O | R | N | E | T | S |
| O | A | A | T | I | C | C |
| C | A | M | E | L | A | V |
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Crossword

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Sudoku

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

Futoshiki

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| 1 | 5 | 3 | > | 2 |
| | ↓ | | | ↓ |
| 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| | | ↑ | | ↓ |
| 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 | 4 | > | 1 |
| | | | < | 5 |

Wordwheel

SOLUTION: POPULARLY

All words: Alloy, ally, apply, loyal, opal, oral, orally, pall, pallor, payroll, play, plural, polar, poplar, popular, pray, pupa, pupal, rally, royal, POPULARLY.

Word targets: Excellent: 18, Good: 15, Target: 11, Kids: 6



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