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**CENTRE OF LONDON?** Pages 20 & 21

**TAXI**

6<sup>th</sup> August 2024 #570

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record completed jobs.

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### TAXI NUMBERS FALLING NATIONALLY

The latest Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Statistics from the Department for Transport show that as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, in England and Wales, there were 313,008 licensed taxis and PHVs. This represents an increase of 8.2 per cent in the total number of vehicles. This increase has been driven by a 10.5 per cent increase in the number of PHVs. Meanwhile, only a fifth of these licensed vehicles, 56,400, are taxis, which have seen an overall 1.4 per cent decrease in numbers from 2023.

Within London the figures show that the number of licensed taxis fell by a steeper 2.1 cent from 2023 figures, whereas outside London, numbers fell by a lesser 1.1%, suggesting a more challenging environment for the capital's taxi drivers and more worrying trends for Londoners.



### CALLS FOR E-SCOOTER LEGALISATION

A coalition of councils, transport groups, environmental campaigners and e-scooter scheme operators led by the national charity for shared transport, Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) has called on the government to "urgently" legalise e-scooters and accelerate the move to greener transport.

In an open letter to new transport secretary, Louise Haigh MP, and her ministers, the group argues that a new legal status is the only way to address the many issues caused by "entirely unregulated" privately-owned e-scooters being ridden on public roads.

The letter goes on to argue that legislation would provide shared e-scooter trials in England with a long-term future, help the UK meet its net zero and air quality targets, improve public health and unlock investment. But would regulation really fix the problems and are they really safe to be used on our roads?

### CRASHES CAUSED BY TIRED DRIVING INCREASE DURING SUMMER MONTHS

Research from National Highways has found that there are 59 per cent more fatigue-related deaths and serious injuries on the country's motorways and major A roads in summer than any other time of the year. The research also shows that one-in-eight overnight deaths and serious injuries involved fatigue, more than double the amount at other times of the day. In summer, it suggests that fatigue is a factor in 10 per cent of all deaths and serious injuries on its roads, compared to 7.5 per cent the rest of the year. Be careful out there.



### VRS LPG CONVERSION FIRM CALLS IN ADMINISTRATORS

LPG conversion company, Vehicle Repowering Solutions Ltd (VRS), has gone into administration. In a statement, VRS noted that during COVID the company took on loans and built-up debt which "proved too difficult to repay". They also cited supply chain issues, increasing costs, dwindling support from local authorities and problems with cashflow as further challenges. The company is now closed with no contact point or further information available, leaving drivers with converted cabs still under warranty and those who more recently invested in the conversion, high and dry. The statement noted that previously approved VRS servicing agents will be able to provide cabbies with the details of the relevant parts suppliers if required. According to VRS, people owed refunds and those who have paid deposits will be contacted by the administrators or relevant grant awarding authorities "in due course".

This shock news comes very soon after four VRS converted cabs were taken off the road in London and had their licences revoked by TfL, upon discovery that they had been fitted with third generation systems not approved by TfL passed off as earlier TfL-approved second-generation systems instead, without the vehicle owner's knowledge. These owners who were due to seek compensation from VRS having been left without vehicles, unable to work and with few other options open to them, may now be left with no one to seek redress from.

### ROAD CLOSURES

- Between 10.00pm and 5.00am each night from Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August until Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> August, the A4 Great West Road will be closed overnight between Chiswick Roundabout and the junction with Ealing Road. Signed diversion routes will be in place. This is due to urgent National Highways work.
- Until Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August, Lille Road/Old Brompton Road will be closed in both directions between the junctions of Seagrave Road and Eardley Crescent for Thames Water works.
- Until Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August, there will be two separate directional closures of Whitehall for works by Westminster City Council. Work will take place Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 6.00pm, and Saturdays between 8.00am and 1.00pm, starting on the southbound carriageway from the junction with Trafalgar Square, before moving to northbound from Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August, from the junction with Great Scotland Yard. While the closures are in place, all traffic including some bus services will be on diversion.





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# London's Most Prolific Bilker

We have now collated dozens of reports from cabbies who have been bilked by this individual from a plethora of pick-up points across central London.



## Steve's comment

**W**e all know that bilkers are rare, it happens, but on the long list of cabbie problems it's pretty near the bottom. However, every few years a regular bilker starts to operate, and I cannot remember a more prolific and regular bilker ever, than the one pictured above.

## Dozens of reports

We have now collated dozens of reports from cabbies who have been bilked by this individual

from a plethora of pick-up points across central London. The only real common denominator in his nefarious activities seems to be that he always asks the cabbie to wait for him somewhere

The most common pick-up points we've been told about are from the Marylebone or Kings Cross area, and he frequently travels to the Pimlico Road, Holbein Place, Ebury Bridge Road area. His favourite destination seems to be the Lister Hospital, where he walks through and runs out the back entrance. He has a London accent, is overly chatty and friendly. He also a variety of excuses as to why you should wait for him - he's a doctor picking up medical

supplies, he's collecting an online order, or he has to run in and change for an important meeting.

## Aggressive

On the occasions where he has been identified or challenged, he gets aggressive, pulls out his phone and starts filming and will then allegedly accuse the driver of racism. Worse still, from stories we've been told, with female cabbies he has reportedly refused to leave the cab, tried to gain access to the driver's area, became aggressive, intimidating and threatened violence. He needs catching and stopping!

## Report it

If you have been ripped off by this individual, even if you never reported it, please let us know via [info@ltda.co.uk](mailto:info@ltda.co.uk) or if you pick him up. The Police are collating all reports under the reference CAD 2015 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul 2024.

Here at the LTDA we also have recent crime references shared by other victims that will enable the Police to link up his numerous crimes. Once he has been identified and prosecuted there are several civil options available that we at the LTDA will be only too happy to pursue. **LTDA**



# What Does the Future Hold?

In the near three decades I've been a cabbie, the end of the purpose-built London taxi has been predicted many times, yet it's still here, it's had a few names of course but it has remained.

## Top rank

**V**oices of concern are growing louder and louder within the trade that LEVC, and with it the TXE, could either become a very different beast or no beast at all.

Issues with parts availability are growing amongst fleet owners and drivers alike. There are also major concerns about the fact that insurance companies are now either just stating that a TXE is too expensive to insure or giving a ludicrous quote to insure one, as repair costs escalate waiting for the all too often illusive parts.

## Confusing statements

Concerns were further exacerbated with LEVC teasing (although not in London) on a new vehicle, the L380, but it soon became clear it was not for the 'taxi' market and clearly not currently suitable for the London taxi market.

In a statement, LEVC's CEO, Alex Nan commented: *"Start of sales in China for our innovative new L380 luxury MPV marks one of the most momentous occasions in LEVC's history. Our brand is rapidly accelerating its transition from manufacturing the world's most advanced and iconic taxi, to becoming a leading e-mobility technology company..."*

He went on to say, *"the innovative SOA technology - developed alongside Geely - is spearheading our exciting new strategy that will see the business take a global approach, growing our footprint across the world, with multiple new models based on the SOA platform leading the way."*

None of the questions posed on social media asking for clarification on the meaning of this announcement were answered but rather avoided with 'watch this space' or 'we have something coming in two years'. European press releases cleared up what that meant, stating that the L380 will launch in the UK in two years.

## The London taxi market

Clearly the London Taxi market, even with all the Euro 5s seemingly now doomed to exit the trade by 2027, is not going to generate



"Do we in the trade need to have a grown-up conversation about, what if?"

enough business to outweigh the millions lost each year by LEVC. We know that of the approximately 10,000 TXEs sold, 85% are in London. The optimist might think or hope the new vehicle teased by LEVC is meant for the large parts of the UK that do not have the conditions of fitness that we have in London. The pessimist will read the press release that LEVC is 'transitioning from a taxi manufacturer to a leading e-mobility solutions provider' or read how the L380 'propels the company into an entirely new market' with a bit more concern.

The L380 is currently on sale in China priced between £41 and £51,000. No doubt once it comes over here, and if it had the conversion to meet the conditions of fitness, it would have an eye watering price tag. Already, we know it has no turning circle, (interestingly only Coventry and London still require that), it's probably too long and at 3.5 tonnes will be unsuitable for Albert Bridge and quite a few other London roads.

## Two good reasons

Falling driver numbers will also impact sales and won't sustain a strong enough market. Our driver numbers are down for two very good reasons. First, the stress of driving in London with the lack of access coupled with arbitrary speed limits on major roads and all the financial penalties for a momentary lapse in judgement,

enforced by people who will say, 'just don't do it, you're a professional.' Well so are they, yet no doubt they will also make errors. Luckily for them the delete button on their laptop can easily rectify any they make. I bet they wouldn't be so flippant if they had a camera over their shoulder fining them for every minor mistake made or sacking them when they had made four minor mistakes.

The other reason numbers are falling is the cost of owning and driving a vehicle and the big unknown of what the future holds. In the near three decades

that I've been a cabbie, the end of the purpose-built London taxi has been predicted and feared many times, yet it's still here, it's had a few names of course but it has remained. It might be time for LEVC to finally put the rumours to bed and state its aims, to give our trade some much needed answers.

Is the L380 another attempt like the failed VN5 Van to branch out alongside the taxi or a complete departure? Is the TXE Taxi absolutely part of LEVC's portfolio going forward or do we in the trade need to have a grown-up conversation about, what if?

## Technology advances

Autonomous taxis are once again being spoken about in the media, and once again drivers are asking me whether I've changed my stance on them not hammering in the final nail in our coffin. No is the short answer, not least because the last update from Tesla as reported in the last issue of TAXI, is that they are once again delaying further testing of their 'taxi'. Others have of course also stopped all autonomous vehicle testing and future rollout plans. Let's be honest if Tesla can't make it work, all the others are really going to struggle.

What I would be more (but not really) concerned about is artificial intelligence (AI) and potentially losing our core customer base to that. It's scary how quickly and easily AI has made such advances in such a short time. How long before lawyers for instance will no longer be required? Could AI with full and easy access to the law and prior judgements be better placed to represent you? How long before AI can do the job of many professionals we see in our cabs?

Clearly with many still partially working from home for large parts of the week doing their job from a laptop, they are probably easily replaced, so I'd be more worried if I was one of those. ■ LTDA

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# Do Not Disturb

I've heard it all this week, from a bilker 'aided and abetted' by a leading hotel to dodgy QR codes out to scam cabbies trying to charge up.



## On Point

**T**his is one of those stories you may want to put in your memory bank for the next time its pouring with rain or mad busy on the streets, and the doorman at a certain hotel is out begging cabbies to pull in and take people staying there.

### Failed payment

One of our members dropped a fare of at Brown's recently. The fare was around £30. The first attempt at paying by card was unsuccessful and when the customer tried the next time, the credit card company demanded a signature, which was duly supplied.

Our member politely asked if the customer could just wait a few seconds whilst the payment went through. The customer did so but the circle on the screen went round and round, and they ended up walking into the hotel.

Our member wishes and accepts that they should have demanded the fare waited until the payment had cleared before leaving but at the time they thought if they changed position, they may get the signal. Unfortunately, as they did, the payment came up as rejected.

### Asking for help

As you will know they were now facing going around the block to get back to the hotel, so

because of the traffic in Berkley Street, they decided to call the hotel instead. They informed Browns that their client checking in's card payment had failed and they said they would be back to take payment again. The concierge claimed they did not know of anybody checking in but would make enquiries and after taking the cabbie's number promised to call our member back.

After no call back as promised, our member made several further attempts to contact what was now a bilker. They were astonished to be eventually informed by the hotel that they knew who the bilker was but did not want to call their room as it would 'disturb them'. I'll repeat that. They did not want to disturb the bilker (guest). During that call, and with our member now struggling to contain themselves, the concierge continually repeated that they would call them if they had any news.

With this the member went back into the hotel and after asking for the manager, they were basically shooed outside and told again, we will call you if we have any news.

### Still out of pocket

As of today, our member is still £30 down and Brown's Hotel have done absolutely nothing to help. I would go as far to say they have basically aided and abetted the bilker.

As I said at the top you might want to keep this in mind the next time you drive past Brown's.

## Fake QR codes

I've been made aware of fake QR codes being stuck on electric charging points in the Southwark area, and possibly elsewhere. These have reportedly been found on some char.gy points. The company sent out an email warning customers and letting them know how to spot these fakes and not get ripped off.

The first step they say is to identify whether the QR code is genuine or not. See image below.



**X** This fraudulent QR code has no char.gy logo or charge point number within it



**✓** Our char.gy logo and the charge point number are located within the QR code

Drivers are then asked to report any fraudulent QR codes they come across as soon as possible by contacting the company on support@char.gy or 0800 086 9606 (Option 1). They also advise that if unsure, you can always charge your vehicle without scanning the QR code, by using their app or website instead. You can type the charge point number into the app or the Find a Charge Point page on their website www.char.gy, or by typing in the direct web address displayed on the charge point.

So, keep an eye out as this may be a scam that spreads to other charging points and you risk giving away your personal data and card info, potentially ending up out of pocket and even being the victim of some bigger fraud.

## Toilet access

London Zoo have been in touch as they had been made aware that they used to offer cabbies access to toilet facilities. They noted that they hadn't been able to do this in recent years due to staffing changes, but they can now offer this again as they've recently renovated security

facilities at the East Service Gate, where many cab drivers drop off or pick up visitors to the Zoo. Cabbies are now welcome to use the toilet in the new reception waiting area at this gate. So anyone finding themselves in that area can pop in and make use of the facilities, but please leave them as you find them! **LTDA**



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# Boring But Important

When it comes to your enhanced DBS, one thing is for sure, if it hasn't been completed by the time of your licence expiry, TfL will not issue you with a temporary licence.

## Knowledge is power

Following on from my previous article on this subject, we are still receiving calls from members who are experiencing a variety of issues when applying for their Enhanced DBS online.

### Follow the guidelines

Being told 'sorry, you are not licensed and so you cannot work' would bring a shudder to anyone and would obviously result in financial hardship and stress for both you and your family. This can be simply avoided by following TfL's guidelines, and applying through their dedicated provider, First Advantage | Know Your People, when your licence is due to be renewed. I know some drivers will say they didn't receive their licence renewal pack from TfL to complete the DBS process within the required time, but you don't need to have received any correspondence from TfL to start it. You can go online and start the DBS application up to four months before the expiry of your taxi licence.

### A recent case

Here is an example of how things can go wrong. One of our members contacted the LTDA in a panic as his licence was due to run out very soon. He explained that TfL had rejected his DBS certificate, which had been fully completed, as he had not entered the correct information on his DBS application form.

In a similar way to my previous DBS name issue of 'Dave' instead of 'David', he had submitted his first name as 'Terry' on his DBS application form. His passport showed his first name was spelt 'Terence' but on his driving licence his first name showed 'Terry'. He had been driving for years with that name on his driving licence and had never thought about the different spelling. His actual given birth name is 'Terence'.

As we do, we immediately asked him to attend Taxi House, where we helped him correctly



fill in a new DBS application form, showing that his real name is 'Terence', but he is also known as 'Terry'. He submitted the new DBS application which sailed through the Police record checks. The Police checked both first names and his new DBS certificate was accepted by TfL, with just two days to go before his licence expiry date.

It's very important that all names - both present and past - as well as any alias, such as variations like 'Terry' are declared in the correct way on the DBS application. This can also be a major issue if the applicant does not declare any middle names or previous names that they may have changed.

### Here to help

We have an experienced team at the LTDA, who have dealt with the many complicated scenarios facing drivers when applying for a DBS and renewal application. Why should you have all the stress and worry, wondering if everything has been done right, just give us a call and we will be happy to advise or even complete the licensing process with you here at Taxi House. We are here

to help take all that unnecessary stress and worry away from you, so you can continue to work.

### DBS Update Service

Turning now to the DBS Update Service. It became mandatory for drivers to sign up to this back in February 2024 meaning that all new and renewal TfL driver applications must be registered for the update service.

This is a simple process that can either be done using your E-reference number within 28 days of applying or within 30 days of receiving your DBS Certificate. It costs £13 per year and means no more trips to the Post Office to get your documents verified as it's done automatically. Although you must also always keep the actual Certificate that the Update Service relates too.

TfL will now not issue a licence unless you are signed up to the Update Service. Upon subscription to this service, you will be given a C-reference number, this will only be shown on the website and not in any subsequent emails. It's crucial that you make a note of this as TfL will require proof of your subscription.

LTDA

### Kirby's PCN Hotspots

#### YELLOW BOX CAMERAS

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

#### CAMERA PCN ENFORCEMENT

- Harrods (Brompton Road) Over-ranking/Zig-Zags
- Tottenham Court Road
- Sopwith Way (Chelsea Bridge) Do Not Enter
- Cornhill (coming from Leadenhall Street)
- Bath Street EC1 No Motor Vehicles 24/7
- Wilton Road, Victoria Station Over-ranking
- Edgware Road W2 Red Route
- Borough High Street Red Route
- Tower Bridge Road Red Route
- Park Plaza Westminster Bridge Hotel, No Right Turn
- Lower Belgrave Street AM/PM Timed School Restrictions
- Great Suffolk Street (The old Café) When using J V Bright's or the toilets, Private PCN's are being issued for over-staying the short grace period or non-payment of longer stays.

#### 20MPH MOBILE CAMERAS

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

**\*\* New speed limit. A40 through Acton. Due to ongoing HS2 works the limit has been reduced to 20mph through this section and cameras are live \*\***

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

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# European and World News Round-up



2,000 drivers have staged a protest over Uber's random lock-outs in New York City...

## International correspondent

**Just when this columnist wanted to lean back in his office chair for a breather, all hell broke loose.**

Having just recovered from the opening of the Paris Olympics, the news that the 'City of Light' is now boasting 1,000 wheelchair-accessible taxi minivans (how many wheelchair-accessible taxis are there in London, I wonder?), almost pales into insignificance now the Paris authorities gave the green light for air taxi flights during the Games.



## Autonomous taxis from Geely daughter Zeekr

Tesla's Elon Musk has announced the launch of his own robotaxi in October – yes, this year. Earlier, his competitor Waymo of The Alphabet Group announced testing 'less than a handful' of its Chinese Zeekr robotaxis in San Francisco. Zeekr, like LEVC, is part of Geely Automotive. These minivans are not yet fully autonomous but will eventually get the sixth generation hardware, which is still to be tested. Waymo currently uses the Jaguar I-Pace in its commercial taxi operation, retrofitted with the fifth generation driver system.

Tests with the Zeekr minivan, which is larger than the Jag, herald the next phase of the company's autonomous vehicle technology. However, the U.S. Commerce Department said it plans to issue rules for connected vehicles in August, and expects to impose



Waymo starts testing its Zeekr-robotaxi in San Francisco. Photo: Waymo.

restrictions on software made in China and other 'hostile' countries. The Waymo-Zeekr vehicle does not contain any software or sensors made by Zeekr, Waymo assures. The minivans are designed and developed in Sweden, with prototypes manufactured in China. The Waymo Driver,

which contains hardware and software, is integrated into the base vehicles in the US. At the moment, the Waymo One commercial ride-hailing system runs in Phoenix, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Austin. But Waymo is testing elsewhere in wintry conditions too.

## Boost for Uber and Lyft in driver classification

Uber can always be relied upon to make news. On 25<sup>th</sup> July, the California Supreme Court ruled that Proposition 22 will remain. Prop 22 was adopted in November 2020, after an intensive lobbying campaign where Uber, Lyft and several other app companies spent no less than £155 million to have their workers classified as independent contractors, which is similar to US taxi drivers by the way. This decision – which can be appealed – is a major boost for Uber and Lyft, which have fought hard to maintain a business model that depends on paying drivers the lowest possible amount,

guaranteeing their greatest possible availability, giving them no or minimal social benefits as well.

## Asset-light business model

Both apps use the same mantra as justification. Uber said in a blog: *"Whether drivers or couriers choose to earn just a few hours a week or more, their freedom to work when and how they want is now firmly enshrined in California law, ending misguided efforts to coerce them into a labor model they overwhelmingly do not want."* Uber and Lyft built their entire business models on the assumption that they wouldn't have to pay for health insurance, sick leave and other services that full-time workers are entitled to. Their socially asset-light models, which rely on app workers using their own cars to carry passengers, are the companies' goal to keep capital expenditure low and growth fast and wide. It's no surprise that after the decision both Uber and Lyft shares jumped to record highs.

In the EU, where Uber is

facing several court cases in different countries over driver classification, and noting the EU-adopted the EU-wide Platform Workers Directive (PWD) a few months ago, quite a few countries are expected to classify platform workers as employees, threatening Uber's rosy, anti-social modus operandi.

## Drivers take to NYC streets again

*"Time and again, drivers are paid less than half of what Uber and Lyft riders pay, while those prices and these companies' profits continue to rise,"* driver Alejandro Partida said during a Rideshare Drivers United Facebook Live event. *"The California Supreme Court's decision makes it clear that California lawmakers must take action. Rideshare drivers deserve workplace protections just like any other worker, from a minimum wage to job security, unemployment protections, and health and safety."* His New York City colleagues share that opinion. An agreement between



New York City and the apps included a formula through which drivers were paid for waiting time. Guess what Uber does? It logs drivers out from the app. Drivers receive no jobs and have no income. They are often frantically trying to get back on to the app, but either fail to do so or only can after hours trying.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July, over 2,000 Uber and Lyft drivers took to New York City's Town Hall and Uber's local HQ. It was the biggest local anti-app demo ever, claimed the organisers New York's Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), who insist Uber must adhere to the wage agreements made with local authorities. They introduced a payment formula including waiting time.

Enjoy your summer! **TAXI**



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# A Passage Through Time: Camden Continued

If you thought you knew Camden, think again, as we delve into its origins and history.

## Footprints and Foundations

In my time of driving a cab, I have spoken to many taxi drivers through the decades. As Forest Gump once said, *"Life was like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get"*. This analogy replicates the cab trade as a whole. Taxi drivers are individuals whose characters differ immensely from one another. And upon speaking to fellow drivers, it is apparent that their world views and interests are diverse.

The consensus of opinion is that the main attributes of many cab drivers focus on charity and sports. As a London historian, I have encouraged numerous drivers to acquire more knowledge about the city where they ply for hire. It is said that knowledge is power, which I endorse. Reading is the key to the door of self-improvement. Books provide the reader a process to further one's curiosity. Even if you are not the reading type, take that leap of faith and give it a go. The book I recommend is, *A Traveller's History, London* by Richard Tames. But for now, we continue our passage through Camden's early history.

### Prime development

By the 1840s, many of the bucolic villages, which enclosed St Pancras Parish, were being absorbed by the march of bricks and mortar. Housing estates built for the well-healed were constructed beside the main highways of Camden. Village London was disappearing, as an urban dwelling reemerged in its place. The wealth of the estate landlords - the Earls of Camden and Southampton - increased significantly during this house building initiative. The construction of medium and large residences proved popular with the middling classes, who largely consisted of white-collar workers. The metamorphosis continued unabated as the last vestiges of rural Camden slipped away into the distant past. By the 1890s, there were a few farms and coaching inns. The



new development of Camden had emerged. Only a few street names remain that give clues to the rustic setting of days gone by. Greenland Place, Chalk Farm and Cintelowes Road were named after an old manor house and are now lost in the mists of time.

### The early shopkeepers

As the population of Camden increased, their consumer needs would have to be fulfilled. The early houses that had occupied the High Street had their front gardens and lower floors removed and converted into shops. From 1805, the basic needs of residents were catered for by general traders involved as grocers, butchers, bakers, smiths and a shoemaker. This area proved a profitable trading ground for shopkeepers. Their clientele consisted of businessmen and professionals who had the means to keep the traders busy throughout the year. The spread of retail was growing at a rapid pace, Park Street - now Parkway - was full of shops on both sides. To keep the

houses in a good state of repair, local tradesmen were needed. Plumbers, painters, builders and nurserymen also had shops on the high street.

### Camden New Town

Due west of the high street, the landlord, the Earl of Southampton, developed neat laid-out terraced houses in Mornington Crescent, Albert, Arlington and Delancey Street. The place names represent family connections to the landlord and his country seat. The eastern side of the high street was a later expansion to the area. The new road to Tottenham (now Camden Road) was not constructed until 1820. It took another 30 years for the houses to be built on either side of the roadway. They were mostly large properties to attract the well-to-do. The residences were adequate for a large family and a staff of servants with their own living quarters. A mews at the rear of the house catered for a coachman and his family. The stable for the horse and coach was situated below the small lodgings.

### Camden Square

The most prestigious development of this neighbourhood is Camden Square, with detached and semi-detached villas encasing a large landscaped garden at its central point. This created an ambience of the countryside in a municipal setting. The aristocracy arrived to take up the new residences. The convenience of a coach ride to the commercial city was in easy reach for a banker and stockbroker. To encourage the sale of houses in Camden Square, estate agents referred to the new location as Camden New Town. This moniker gave an upmarket advertising that disassociated this location from the lower classes that resided in the eastern side of Camden. Present day residential values in Camden Square are around £5 million.

■ TAXI

If you are considering a tourist guide course or have any questions on London, please contact me via: [journeythroughtime@hotmail.com](mailto:journeythroughtime@hotmail.com)

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# Part Shortages

We often presume things are taxi only problems and we blame LEVC, TfL or our own garage. It never occurs to us that it could be a wider problem...



Deborah Meaden  
@DeborahMeaden

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anyone appalled at the lack of car parts causing huge delays in even the most basic of repairs... like brake disc pads? what is causing it?

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## Cab you drive

One of the things that the garages and fleets are all moaning about is the shortages of some spares. It's particularly bad for late TX4s, and some Euro VI parts like injectors or hoses are rarer than the proverbial rocking horse poo!

### Shortages

The shortages of TXE spares seem to come in waves, one minute there are no Erads, next minute they are available, and the waiting list is for track rod ends or similar. Because we are so insular in this trade, we all naturally presume this is a taxi only problem and we blame LEVC, TfL or our own garage. It never occurs to us that it's a wider problem, but it is!

"My theory is that it's the failure of the 'just in time' supply chain..."

### Not just taxis

I ran into an old acquaintance at a car auction in Northampton recently. As we chewed the fat, he asked me how bad the spares situation was in the 'taxi trade'. I gave him the facts as I know them, until he asked me how many cabs are Kias, which is when I realised he was talking about minicabs and not black cabs.

To cut a long story short, the private hire business is having the same parts supply problems that we are, with some model Kias being off the road for weeks on end, as main dealers are unable, not only to get parts, but even to

supply a date as to when they will.

On the way back to London, I called a few traders and someone I know who now rents out private hire vehicles. They both, after initially playing it down, confirmed that there is a parts supply issue for various models from a few different manufacturers. Apparently its such a problem with body panels and parts, that its leading to insurance loss adjusters writing cars off at quite low repair estimates. The time and problems associated with getting parts causes significant extra costs in loan cars, storage charges, and admin costs, so writing the car off is a comparatively quick, easy, and an increasingly cost-effective way of dealing with claims.

### What's behind it?

There are loads of theories as to why so many car manufacturers,

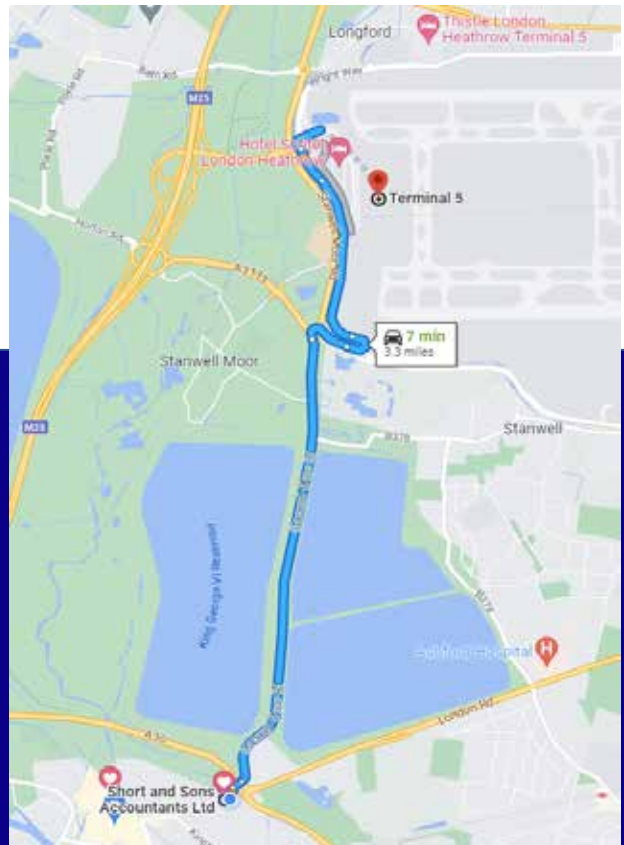
based in various corners of the World (which rules out the Brexit theory), are struggling to supply parts, but its now becoming a talking point with even non-car celebrities and social media personalities, like Dragon's Den star Deborah Meaden, who recently spoke out on X questioning the reasons behind this.

My theory is that it's the failure of the 'just in time' supply chain operation where manufacturers and parts supply companies no longer want to keep expensive parts in stock, preferring to order them only when the part is requested by a garage. But if everyone in the supply chain is doing the same thing, and they probably are, parts are now being made to order, which takes time and causes delays. Either way, it's a major problem for a lot of people including the cab trade!

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# What's On? West End

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

## Under the spotlight



### Hello, Dolly! - London Palladium

The West End has recently seen the revival of some beloved musicals, but this might be the best yet. Dolly Gallagher Levi (Imelda Staunton) is a strong-willed matchmaker who loves to get involved in everyone's business. Today, she will be getting engaged... but her fiancé-to-be has no idea. In fact, he's due to propose to another woman. But Dolly has everything planned and in hand.

Everything about this production is magnificent. The huge cast, sumptuous staging, gorgeous costumes and a lush orchestra. The show flies by, an effervescent and euphoric joy of really exceptional theatre courtesy of the performance at its helm. Although all the cast are magnificent, this truly is Staunton's show. We're only two thirds through the year, but I think we can call it now - this is the performance of the year! Describing her as a powerhouse feels inaccurate as it doesn't quite do justice to the effortlessness of her performance; the seeming ease with which she inhabits the role of Dolly. Every move and gesture is intentional, but never feels insincere. She embodies Dolly wholeheartedly, a woman with a heart of gold who wants to help people and who is also finally open to being helped herself. Her magnetism is scene-stealing and impossible to ignore. It's heartfelt but never schmaltzy.

It's proof that the very best of things aren't old-fashioned, they're in fact timeless.



*Hello, Dolly!* runs until 14<sup>th</sup> September.

### Kathy & Stella Solve A Murder! - Ambassadors Theatre

Who'd have thought a musical about a murder would be the perfect summer watch? Written by Matthew Floyd Jones (half of the incredible musical parody duo Frisky & Mannish) and Jon Brittain, this is a big-hearted and joyful love letter to friendship. Kathy (Bronté Barbé) and Stella (Rebekah Hinds) have been best friends since primary school - united by a love of hating everyone else and consuming as many true crime stories as possible. Now in their late-20s, they co-host Hull's least successful true crime podcast. When they inadvertently get caught up in the murder of a local celebrity, they realise that solving it could be their ticket to the big time.

It's the tone that makes watching this such a delight. A carefully balanced blend of one liners and dark comedy alongside the gags, there's also a sprinkling of thoughtful reflection on the complicated nature of the true crime genre. It's knowing and considered, but also so skilfully written that it remains light and joyous and more than a bit bonkers. The songs are massive earworms too, with *Part of the Story* and *If I Didn't Have You (I Would Die)* being two of the standouts. The seven-piece cast are extraordinarily talented. They're all powerhouses, with the ensemble playing a huge array of different parts.

Think *Operation Mincemeat* meets *Only Murders In The Building*. It would be near-impossible not to have a bloody good time watching this!



*Kathy & Stella Solve A Murder!* runs until 14<sup>th</sup> September.



## What else is on?

### ■ *The Wizard of Oz* - Gillian Lynne Theatre (until 8<sup>th</sup> September)

JLS's Aston Merrygold and *Ru Paul's Drag Race UK* winner The Vivienne star in this adaptation of the classic musical.

### ■ *Fangirls* - Lyric Hammersmith (until 24<sup>th</sup> August)

A joyful celebration of fandom, friendship and feminism. Harry is the most famous boybander on the planet, and his biggest fans will do anything it takes to meet him...

### ■ *The Hot Wing King* - National Theatre (until 14<sup>th</sup> September)

Summertime in Memphis, Tennessee and the annual chicken wing competition is about to come to town. Will Cordell, his partner and their friends finally get the win he deserves?

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# SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW

## LONDON?

### Shifting the Thames to pass through Peckham

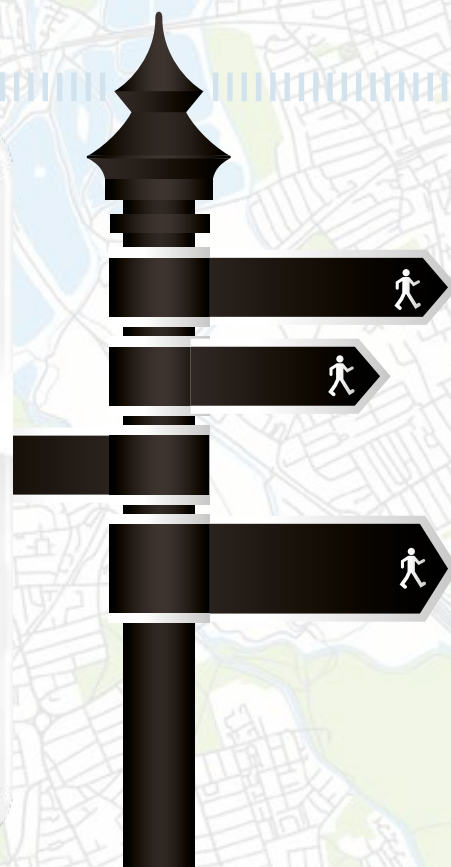
Over the centuries there have been some peculiar schemes dreamt up in a bid to 'improve' London. But did you know that one of those ideas was to cover the River Thames in order to create a new highway and shift its flow through Peckham?

The scheme was the brainchild of renowned architect and artist William Walcot. In 1933, Walcot envisaged that the Thames would have its flow shifted from central London, with its waters diverted through a new canal to South London, taking in major areas such as Peckham. The reclaimed land would then be utilised as a major east-west highway. This idea was in response to issues surrounding London's traffic problems.

The area in front of the Houses of Parliament would be converted into a garden area and roundabouts would be built where today you would find the Tate Modern and the Royal Festival Hall. Other proposed changes included the demolition of all south-facing train stations, replacing them with one single terminus, complete with a rooftop aerodrome.

The river itself would run on a new course via a grand canal, following the route of the now defunct Grand Surrey Canal. The embankments were to be lined by markets and warehouses alongside numerous docks. Downstream, the river would cut straight across the bottom of the Greenwich Peninsula, which replicated 18<sup>th</sup> century plans to 'straighten' the Thames.

Ultimately, the idea was shelved, although the building of the South Bank, which was cleared for the Festival of Britain in 1951, came pretty close to seeing one or two aspects of Walcott's plans come to fruition.





## One of the most profound thoughts in history occurred at Russell Square

**S**outhampton Row, a set of traffic lights and a neutron-induced nuclear chain reaction - three things that you would rarely see in the same sentence. Yet, here we are. Did you know that the idea for atomic energy was actually conceived at a pelican crossing in Southampton Row, Bloomsbury?

Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard (1898-1964), was waiting to cross the busy junction by Russell Square when, as he stepped off the kerb after the lights had changed, had a eureka moment, and worked out a method to smash neutrons into atoms and start a chain reaction. The Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and journalist described the moment:

*"In London, where Southampton Row passes Russell Square, across from the British Museum in Bloomsbury, Leo Szilard waited irritably one grey morning for the stoplight to change. A trace of rain had fallen during the night; Tuesday, September 12, 1933, dawned cool, humid and dull. Drizzling rain would begin again in the early afternoon. When Szilard told the story later he never mentioned his destination that morning. He may have had none; he often walked to think. In any case another destination intervened. The stoplight changed to green. Szilard stepped off the curb. As he crossed the street time cracked open before him and he saw a way to the future, death into the world and all our woe, the shape of things to come".*

This proved to be one of the most important moments in history as it led to the development of both nuclear energy and, of course, nuclear armaments and the potential for mutually assured destruction. However, if you venture to this location today, there is no recognition for Szilard.

## The geographic centre of London

**E**verybody knows that the Knowledge of London is unique, with every street, square, lane, place and avenue needing to be committed to memory. There are literally tens of thousands of roads and buildings that make up the capital's sprawling metropolis, with the routes that are the essential construct of the Knowledge made up of roads within a six-mile radius of Charing Cross.

Charing Cross itself is considered to be the centre of London, defined as such in 1663, with all mapping distances taking place from a singular point - that being the statue of Charles I. There is also a plaque signifying the very same thing, but did you know that Charing Cross is not the geographic centre? That honour falls to a housing estate down the road from The Old Vic.

Pearman Street is a turning point that sits between Waterloo Road and Westminster Bridge Road. It is sited right in the middle of the Frazier Street Estate - this being the dead-centre of London - but how do we know this?

The honour for the discovery falls to the world famous cartographic company Ordnance Survey (OS). Via computer technology, OS digitally balanced a map of London on a pin, which identified this small street as London's most central point.

There have of course been other claims for London's central point, including the London Stone on Cannon Street and an anonymous iron bench in front of King's College London. But only one has the honour of being scientifically discovered via a map and pin.





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# A Volunteer's Unforgettable 80<sup>th</sup> D-Day Commemorations Experience (Part One)

**TAXI spoke to Callum Reid, 27, about his visit to Normandy, alongside his good friend and World War II veteran Don Turrell. Here is his unforgettable account...**

**I**n June of 2024, I had the profound honour of accompanying my good friend, Donald Turrell, as his companion/carer on a trip to Normandy, with the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans. It was an unforgettable experience and filled with moments of deep reflection, gratitude and connection.

On 5<sup>th</sup> June, the convoy of London taxis started the day by heading to the Memorial Museum at Pegasus Bridge. A police escort allowed us to navigate the traffic seamlessly and, upon arrival at the bridge, taxis were met with applause and cheers from the public. The veterans were rightly treated like celebrities!

Seeing all these men and women of the allied forces reunited once again, in many cases for their last time, was an incredible experience and a sombre moment.

After lunch at Colleville Montgomery, we headed to St. Manvieu War Cemetery.

There are over 2,000 people buried in St Manvieu, with Commonwealth war graves and German ones. St Manvieu is located 8km west of Caen, in an area where heavy fighting took place in The Battle for Hill 112. This was one of the most decisive battles of the Second World War and cost 10,000 lives. This site is known as 'Death Valley,' a place where Don fought and saw many of his friends die.

Pvt. William Carr, Pvt. Thomas Freeburn and Sgt. Robert Bremner, who were all members of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Regiment, were killed on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1944. Don volunteered to collect their bodies, remove their dog tags, and bury them in temporary graves. We were able to visit the graves of each of his pals where he spoke profoundly about the loss and how so many young men missed out on living a long life.

St. Manvieu also holds a particular significance in my life. Sgt. James Dargie, my great

**"We were able to visit the graves of each of his pals where he spoke profoundly about the loss during war."**

grandfather, was killed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1944 by direct mortar fire in The Battle for Hill 112. He left behind a wife and four young children - my grandma being the second oldest at eight. Shortly before Grandma Sheila passed away in 2018, she told me the story of how a little girl had come up to her in the street in Aberdeen and told her that her dad had been killed in France. Grandma ran back to the small family flat on Wales Street, where she was greeted by the sight of her mother in a hysterical state, clutching onto a brown telegram and surrounded by neighbours trying to console her. Grandma spent her whole life telling herself that her father must've managed to escape and that he couldn't have passed away, until she visited St. Manvieu Cemetery back in the early 2000s with my grandfather, my dad and uncle, where she was able to see his headstone and accept the loss of her dad.

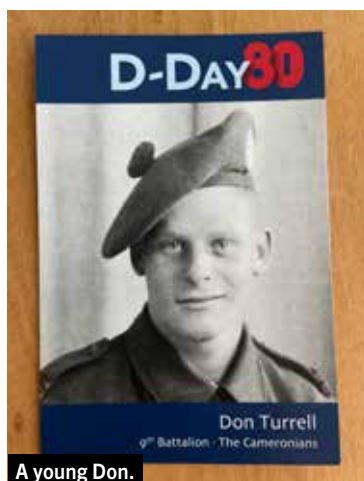
In 2019, I travelled with a friend to take part in the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary D-Day commemorations and to visit Sgt. Dargie's grave for the first time. That was when I met Don.

Some five years later I had the chance to introduce my now close friend, Don, to my great grandfather in a cemetery that means so much to both of us. It was an incredibly emotional experience. I feel fortunate to have shared it with him.

Don was born in Battersea, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1925, to a Scottish mother from Dunfermline. He was 17 when he volunteered for the army and joined the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Regiment.



Don Turrell in uniform.



A young Don.



Don, with companion Callum.



Don Turrell at Museum Pegasus. Credit: Robin Savage.



Don Turrell at Pegasus Museum - credit Robin Savage.



Don, Doug, and young Dylan.



Callum & Sgt James.



Callum & Don at St Manvieu.



From left: Doug, Callum, Don.



Callum and Don, at Don's 99th birthday party.

Like many teenagers around that time, he lied about his age in order to fight for his country and the freedoms we all continue to enjoy 80 years later.

He was 18 by the time he landed on Sword Beach, a few days after 6<sup>th</sup> June. After being told to expect a dry landing, he disembarked from the craft into water that was up to his neck. He can vividly remember the bodies from the previous days' fighting bobbing around in the water with the tide. Those who were of a shorter stature or unfortunate enough to land in deeper water succumbed to drowning as they were weighed down by their gear.

Don shared many more personal stories with me about the realities of the ensuing fighting in Normandy. By sharing these tales which he's kept a secret for so long, he has found closure of some of these traumatic events.

Our morning, 80 years to the day of some of these events, consisted of a visit to Ranville War Cemetery where commemorations were held for all those lost in conflicts both past and present.

At Ranville War Cemetery, a pipe band, which had travelled across from the Netherlands,

performed a melody of various bagpipe renditions for veterans. It was a sombre moment watching these heroes brought to tears by the power of music and the memories sparked by these sounds. Despite being wheelchair bound, you could see Don tapping his feet and clicking his fingers to the sounds of his Scottish Cameronian days.

On the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> June, after a full day of remembrance, we went down to Café Gondree. This was a joyous evening watching D-Day veterans sharing a beer beneath the setting sun, against the backdrop of this historical café. They shared stories and experiences with all who wanted to listen. There was a particularly poignant moment where a small boy called Dylan, who was only about 5, came across to the veterans to get their signatures and a photo.

Every veteran I had the privilege of meeting on this unforgettable trip mentioned the importance of remembrance, and the duty of future generations to carry this on.

**Callum Reid**

**Part two of Callum's story will appear in the next issue.**

### 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 75<sup>th</sup> 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 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. [www.taxicharity.org](http://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](http://www.taxicharity.org/shop)

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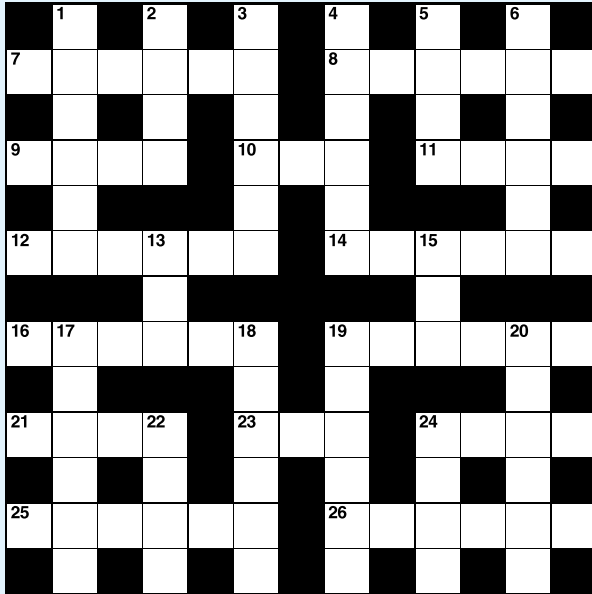
Email: [cs.taxis@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cs.taxis@yahoo.co.uk)

Unit 22, Redburn Industrial Estate, Woodall Road, Enfield, EN3 4LE



# Puzzler Page

## Crossword



### ACROSS

- 7 Ten-year time period (6)
- 8 Speech-maker (6)
- 9 Sagacious (4)
- 10 Peg used in golf (3)
- 11 Go about listlessly (4)
- 12 Famous relic in Turin (6)
- 14 Aerosol outlet (6)
- 16 Fashions (6)
- 19 Get rid of (6)
- 21 Followers of Attila (4)
- 23 Lick up like a cat (3)
- 24 Source of roughage (4)
- 25 Shiny silver metal plating (6)
- 26 Slim (6)

### DOWN

- 1 Fixation (6)
- 2 \_\_\_ and hearty, strong in body (4)
- 3 Provided with chairs (6)
- 4 August, serious (6)
- 5 Tree on which dates are found (4)
- 6 Browbeat (6)
- 13 Brown \_\_\_, Brownie leader (3)
- 15 Form of Buddhism (3)
- 17 Irascible (6)
- 18 Vendor, dealer (6)
- 19 Circuitous route (6)
- 20 Small in quantity (6)
- 22 Berry used to flavour gin (4)
- 24 Generated (4)

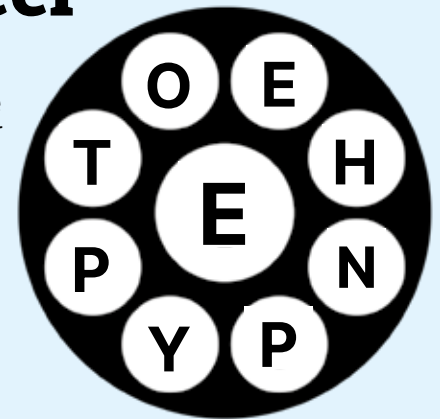
## Sudoku

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.

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

## 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
		>		^
			<	5

All answers to puzzler on p30



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● **Tx4 for sale, Ascotts serviced, 63** plate, renews in October, Not fleet, £5,500. Gunmetal grey, 218k miles, call Roy for photos - 07932 094 229

**CABS WANTED**

● **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

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

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

**CABS FOR RENT**

● **A Better Deal. Euro5&6 vitos for** rent, full backup, prices starting from £200 please call – 07956 211 478

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

● **TXE Vista Plus, grey, reg 22 plate,** rent for £320 pw, AA recovery, call Martin 07939 238 501

● **Thinking of part-exchange. All cabs** wanted any condition: plated or not, cash, same day collection service– call Roy 07956 293 748

● **TX4's for rent, no adverts, based** north west London (Kingsbury) RAC backup, from £240 per week. Call - 07956 422 658

● **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 – 0795 897 3944

# 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

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

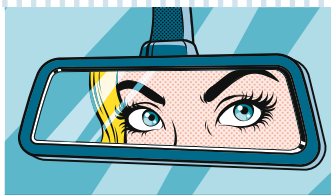
## The Direct Debit Guarantee



- 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:





# Seaside Blues

We do like to be beside the seaside, Mr Meg and I, which is why last week we took a spin to Brighton for the day. However, the taxi stayed at home...

## A woman of words

**I** can't say our trip to Brighton went swimmingly, after Mr Meg had brought along his palm tree sprint Speedos and planned to brave the water.

Me? I don't like getting wet unless it's a warm bubble bath with essential oils. I held the towel for him to protect his modesty while he got changed on a busy beach.

It could have been the freak gust of wind, or the guy who bumped into me holding a cardboard tray loaded with hot coffees, but I dropped the towel before Mr Meg had pulled up his budgie smugglers. His bottom hasn't seen the light of day (ever) so it was a case of 'I see a pale moon rising.' People had to

shield their eyes from the glare.

He did not see the funny side of his little accident and sulked for a while. I offered him a homemade cheese and pickle sandwich to cheer him up. That worked because he said he'd seen them on sale at the beach café for £9, but with less cheese.

As he lifted the sandwich to his lips, an enormous seagull dive bombed him and made off with it. I won't say what he called the greedy bird - only that it rhymes with 'mucker'. It reminded me that a couple of years back I read that a seagull swooped in and nicked a sandwich of a fella sitting on a bench on the promenade in Torquay. This man was so outraged that

he called 999 and reported the thief to the coppers.

Mr Meg settled instead for a banana from the picnic bag. He ate it under a towel that was draped over his head.

Then it was time for his swim. I suggested he wear his sandals to the water's edge because the beach at Brighton is stony and shingly and not feet friendly. He laughed off that idea in a tone that suggested he's a real man and sandals are for wimps.

Midway to the sea he started to limp, and squeal from the pain of the sharp stones underfoot.

Then he started to yelp and shout, "Ouch Ouch Ouch! Ouch Ouch!" And finally, "Meg! Meg!"



*Fetch me my sandals!"*

When he was in the water he swam into a used baby's nappy that attached itself to his head. And then he got stung by a jellyfish.

He crawled back up the beach to where I was sitting and called for the first aid kit.

"What first aid kit?" I asked. "You mean to say you didn't bring one?"

"You should have brought it if you wanted it!" I snapped back.

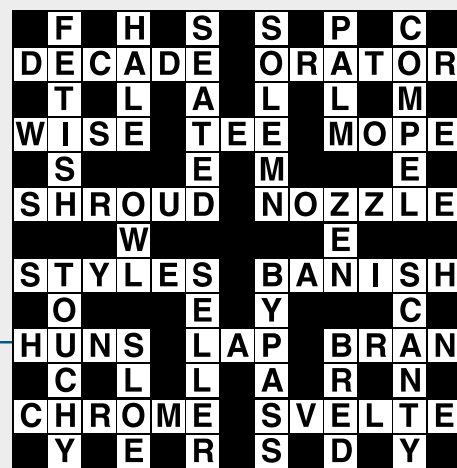
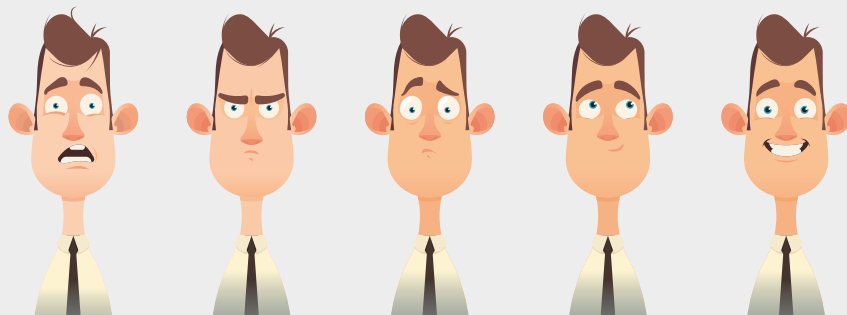
"Do I have to do everything?" was, for me, the final straw - especially when, limping back to the car, he saw how much it cost to park for five hours at the seafront.

"£23?!" he yelled. "£23 to get my bald patch covered in poo, my feet shredded, my leg bitten, my sandwich swiped and to display my backside to a few hundred people?"

We won't be troubling Brighton again for a while. **TAXI**

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## PUZZLER ANSWERS



## Crossword

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### Sudoku

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

### Futoshiki

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

### Wordwheel

**SOLUTION:** PHENOTYPE

**All words:** Hone, honey, hope, neophyte, note, open, peep, pent, phone, poet, pope, teen, thee, then, they, tone, type, PHENOTYPE.

**Word targets:** Excellent: 15, Good: 13, Target: 9, Kids: 9



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