

CAB

Trade News

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NATIONAL MONTHLY PAPER OF THE LICENSED TAXI TRADE

MARCH 2010

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By PETER J ROSE

Secretary UNITE Cab Section, London Branch

Cab trade news has mentioned these enterprising taxi drivers before but this time it's serious!

It's well known that London cab drivers are a sociable lot, ask any passenger. But these boys and girls have taken the use of social networking service Twitter to a whole new level. What started as a group of taxi drivers socialising during the course of the working day, arranging tea, lunch and dinner breaks between themselves, a few of them started sharing traffic information as well as the best place to find a job during recession hit Britain.

The network soon became a tool for drivers looking out for one and other, any driver in trouble could send a message over the system, letting their followers know where they are and could get help pretty quickly. Twitter also became a useful tool in the recent 'take

back the work' campaign, involving taxi drivers targeting certain venues at certain times. Twitter has also been very useful in keeping the new West End night ranks full of available taxis; drivers will let each other know when cabs are needed on the new ranks.

So It wasn't long before a couple of enterprising drivers recognised that if it could help fellow cab drivers to find work, it would also be possible for potential passengers to find an available taxi for a pre booking or indeed, instant hiring. Richard Cudlip and Karl James set about creating tweetalondoncab.

To use the service potential customers first need to start 'following' the group over the Twitter network, once they start following the group will follow them back. This makes for a very intermit service and has produced a lot of customer loyalty. Of course this has loyalty has taken a lot of commitment by the participating taxi drivers, as numbers are relatively few at the moment, but growing all the time.

Sooner or later they had to attract the attention of

the Public Carriage Office, especially after GLA Chair Darren Johnson was found out trying to attract the attention of any passing illegal minicab last Christmas time. The boys and girls tried in vain to supply a real licensed taxi to get him home after a Christmas party, all to no avail. It would seem Mr Johnson prefers the un-licensed variety. Something that caused him much embarrassment in the days that followed.

The service continues to grow so much so that Richard, Karl and UNITE member Dawn Cooper met with TfL officials recently about incorporating tweetalondoncab into the Safer Travel at Night scheme. The response from TfL has been most encouraging and the group are now looking for more drivers to join them, so that they can push on and take back even more work which has been lost to the private hire trade.

So if you are into your social networking sites why not give these guys a look? You've got nothing to lose, except work and you may make some new friends.

TIGER TIGER UPDATE

Following the lat issue of Cab trade News 'Time to Tame TIGER TIGER'. UNITE the Union will be part of a trade delegation to look at the problem on site.

The meeting will consist of representatives from Westminster Council, Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police, Safer Transport Command. From the taxi trade their will be delegates from UNITE the Union Cab Section, the LCDC and LTDA. The meeting will take place in the evening so that the trade can show the authorities exactly what it is up against at the venue.

UNITE will also be highlighting the problems down the road at the Pep-C nightclub, see last issue. Where we are certain illegal minicab hiring's are taking place.

A full report will be in the next issue of Cab Trade News.



Mini-cabs still touting for business outside Tiger Tiger.

— CTN *Newsdesk* —

WORKERS RALLY AT FACTORY GATES AS FEARS GROW OVER JOB LOSSES

Workers at LTI's Coventry manufacturing plant gathered outside the factory gates as fears grow over the future of the plant.

The Coventry factory, which is the home of the 'iconic' black cab appeared to be under threat when its workforce discovered that the cabs presses had been put up for sale on internet.

Workers led by UNITE the Union Convener Martin Stribbling, unanimously voted on a 'failure to agree' motion which could lead to industrial action. They are demanding that the management be completely honest about future plans for manufacturing of the 'London Black Cab' and to stop playing games with the workforce.

LTI now known as the London Taxi Company has already entered into a joint venture with a Chinese based firm to sell taxis on the international market. LTI is now sourcing many components for its UK manufacturing operation from the Chinese plant. The Coventry workforce fear that eventually all the manufacturing of the taxi will move to China, something that has in the past been rejected by LTI who have stated to

this paper, that they wish to keep the London taxi as a British Product, which the company sees as its main selling point.

LTI told a local newspaper that the company that put the presses up for sale on the internet had acted to soon or 'jumped the gun' by placing the advert, and had done so without the company's knowledge. The company also told the newspaper that the approach to the firm had only been an 'inquiry' with regard to any future sale and that they had only sort advice and the sale had no deadline.

This development comes on top of the TX4 under bonnet fire issue of two years ago which is still unresolved and the global recession which has dented sales and increased competition from ECO City and its Mercedes Vito London Taxi.

The factory has a fifty year history in the city with some of the workforce having been employed there for the whole of their working life. The company also employs many apprentices which is a bonus in today's economic climate. The loss of the factory would be yet another blow to a region that has lost many manufacturing jobs in recent years.

A STOP ON LONDON YELLOW BADGE NUMBERS?

By PETER J ROSE

Cab Trade News has learned that the Carriage Office has received a substantial representation from London Suburban or 'yellow badges' about stopping the number of new drivers coming out in those areas.

One proposal could be to adopt a 'one out, one in' policy whereby drivers would have to wait until space was made on the ranks by another driver surrendering their badge.

Limitation of numbers is nothing new to the taxi trade around the country. Many areas have workable limits whereby demand is met by supply. The only danger with this system is that when licensing authorities feel they are losing income from taxi licensing, there tends to be an increase in the number of private hire licences being issued, sometimes negating the

supply and demand taxi model.

Some areas have also seen taxi drivers sharing radio circuits with private hire as circuit operators look to increase their fleets.

The issue of putting a hold on taxi numbers is a new one for the London taxi trade as the Knowledge, the test all London taxi drivers must pass before they can ply for hire on the streets of the Capital, has always been seen more as a qualification followed by the right to operate a taxi, rather than something that is done without the prospect of a job at completion.

This idea or proposal to limit driver numbers in suburban areas will obviously have to be looked at very closely. With much thought given to the impact it would have on the main All London Fleet.

CAB TRADE NEWS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE!

Cab Trade News the national taxi paper produced by drivers belonging to the Cab Section of UNITE the Union is now available to read online at the UNITE the Union Website.



Please Visit: www.uniteunion.com/sectors/passenger_transport/cab_section.aspx
UNITE the Union
 Britain's biggest transport union and the trades oldest Cab Section.

SUPPORT THE MUSIC FUND FOR CUBA

By CTN REPORTER

Last year Jim Kelly and Mike Hedges both UNITE members and London taxi drivers completed the Cuba Cycle Challenge in aid of the Music Fund for Cuba. The challenge involved cycling 350km over 5 days in hilly terrain in the Cuban countryside.

The Music Fund for Cuba is a UK based charity that raised money for their performing arts and educational equipment for Cuban children. Cuba has one of the highest literacy rates in the world and we got to see this first hand with a visit to the Abel Santamaria School for visually impaired children in Havana.

The school had 102 children attending with 52 teachers in the school. Despite all the equipment in the school being ancient and the school having to cannibalise typewriters, Braille machines and other vital equipment we were treated to an amazing show that was put on by the children. The school also reserves places for children from other South American countries.

The shortages that we saw in the school and throughout the country are caused by the illegal blockade of Cuba by the United States. We also visited a polyclinic to see the incredible health

system that is in Cuba. Cuba has the same life expectancy as the USA despite a vast gulf in resources. It is worth mentioning that Cuba had the quickest response to the Haitian earthquake disaster immediately sending doctors.

We are taking part in the Cycle Challenge this year. The route has changed with the cycling taking place in the Western part of Cuba. In fact it will be harder this year. Last year we raised over almost £10,000 between us and we would like to exceed that this year. The money is essential in buying vital equipment that is needed for Cuban children as well as restoring the Teatro Miramar community theatre.

If you would like to donate to Jim and Mike this year then you can do so by going to www.justgiving.com/jimmike or sending a cheque c/o The Regional Secretary, Unite, Woodberry, 218 Green Lanes, London N4 2HB. Please make cheques payable to Unite L&E and write 'Music Fund for Cuba' on the back of the cheque.

Further information about last years ride and the Music Fund for Cuba can be found at www.musicfundforcuba.org.uk

— CTN *Newsdesk* —

TAXI FARES TO INCREASE BY 2.3 PER CENT

Transport for London issued the following press release after the TfL Board meeting on 3rd February 2010:

"Transport for London's (TfL) Board today approved an average taxi fare increase of 2.3 per cent for the 2010/2011 financial year, the lowest since 2004.

The fare rise aims to find a balance between maintaining income levels for drivers who face disproportionately higher costs in order to work than average Londoners, while ensuring passengers still get a fair price for the high quality and unique service provided by the Capital's taxi drivers.

TfL's Board approved the new fares following consultation by TfL with the drivers cover rising operating costs. The Board also approved a new deal on licence and testing fees for taxi and private hire drivers, including a freeze on some fees.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: "The Capital is blessed with wonderful cabbies and we've deliberated long and hard to come up with an increase we think is fair to everyone during these tough economic times. I hope this increase will allow cabbies to meet the annual increases in insurance and fuel costs.

But also help those with older cabs bring their vehicles in line with our desire to improve the air we all breathe in this great city by driving the type of clean, green taxis that will achieve that aim."

John Mason, Director of Taxi and Private Hire at Transport for London, said: "The new fares take into account an agreed increase in the costs of running a black cab and balances this with setting a fair price for those who want to travel by taxi. We are trying to work with the drivers and operators to help keep them out on the road and providing Londoners with the excellent service they are renowned for around the world."

Taxi fares are reviewed annually and calculated by TfL based on a cost index that has been used since 1981. They will come into effect from 1 April 2010.

The 2.3 per cent increase for the next financial year includes a 1.9 per cent increase based on the 2010 cost index, which takes into account the rise in average national earnings and an increase in insurance rates which have risen

19.5 per cent on last year; plus a one-off 0.4 per cent to remedy a calculation error from 2007 which the taxi trade chose not to introduce last year due to the economic downturn."

There were a number of other decisions taken at the Board meeting. In relation to the Heathrow charge we asked for this to be increased from £2 to £3. This would be in line with the increases made at Heathrow since the last time the Heathrow charge was raised. Unfortunately the Board listened to the radio circuits and London Travelwatch and only increased the charge to £2.40.

Why the radio circuits would get involved is ridiculous as they can charge anything they like for the charge. If it was set at £3 then they could make a rule saying their drivers could only charge £2.40. They are penalising every non-radio driver by their actions.

As for London Travelwatch it must be asked what business is it of theirs to get involved in this. None of their members have any experience with taxis and their website only tells people how to complain about drivers. Surely we as a drivers representative organisation know our trade better than the members of Travelwatch.

The Board approved a 40 pence extra to be charged only if London retail diesel fuel prices reach the threshold level of 146.1 per litre between 10 April 2010 and 1 January 2011. This would require a 34 per cent increase in fuel prices during the year. We asked for the threshold to be set lower to enable a 20p extra to be charged if necessary. During the last fuel rise we lost a lot of money as we never reached the threshold, we believe a 20p threshold would give us greater flexibility.

To get a 20p extra increase we would have to change the current 40p extra on the meter to a 20p extra but this has been refused again. Why the PCO insists on the 40p is unknown but it has no effect on the passenger or the fare so we think this is unreasonable. We will keep trying.

There was also a decision to bring taxi receipts under the same rules as for advertising on taxis. We think this is ridiculous as the judgement on this is based on very few complaints out of the many thousands of receipts issued. There will also be a limit of 12.5% on credit card transactions.

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THE MORE FOR MEMBERS CAB SECTION BENEFIT BOOK IS HERE! – SEE DETAILS ON PAGE 11

CTN

Comment

REGULATION, REGULATION, REGULATION!

By FRANK HULL

There can be no doubt that it is in everyone's interest to have a taxi industry that is provided by straight and honest people who provide vehicles with the very highest of safety factors driven by reasonable and safe drivers.

There can also be no doubt that the taxi trade in the UK does provide the safest taxi service worldwide. It is surely the most regulated worldwide. We have regulation, regulation, regulation and sometimes regulation for what seems to be merely for the sake of regulation. Many of these regulations seem to have appeared on the agenda to divert attention from some other political problem. It seems to emerge randomly from any quarter i.e. a member of a dubious occupation such as member of parliament, some unknown and unemployable town councillor, even from birds with grand sounding titles. However; to whichever group they belong they will have something in common. That is of course, they know nowt about running a taxi business for a living! These regulations are put into place often without the input of the taxi trade. This has all been made possible by the complex taxi laws in this country.

At times those in power in the world of UK taxis seem to take a break from this stressful regulation process and to this end they sometimes introduce de-regulation/ delimitation. This may be a break for them, but for the trade it is just another regulation that hits the taxi driver in the pocket.

Over the years certain authorities have de-regulated or de-limited without regard for the existing drivers or for those who will take up these new taxi licences. They fail to provide those extra rank spaces that will be needed for these new taxis and by this failure contribute to that common malpractice of taxi drivers across the land. We of course are referring to over-ranking.

This is a nation-wide problem but we here mention two licensing areas Chelmsford and Cambridge where this condition is having a serious effect on hard working law abiding taxi drivers. In Chelmsford the drivers have taken co-ordinated action to try to stop the council from issuing more licences without success.

In Cambridge the police seem to have spent much of its time of late in issuing pricey parking tickets to taxi drivers who follow a practice inherent in the UK taxi trade and especially to those licensing areas where there are too many taxis and too few ranks. Cambridge is a prime example of this.

However, unlike the Cambridge police force other constabularies recognise the benefit of having a good working relationship with their local taxi trades and instead of tickets issue friendly warnings. No doubt these forces have in mind the benefits they gain from a friendly taxi trade when they need help in combating real crime!

In the licensed taxi trade, at the moment, there is a feeling in the air that perhaps these aforementioned regulator types are at work with dark thoughts of turning two trades into one. We advise them now that the taxi and private-hire trades are both individual and legally different trades. We here in the Cab Section will fight to protect our status.

If you want to Unite with us to these ends, please fill in the application form on page 11.

Frank Hull is a member of UNITE's Cab Trade Committee.

SOUTHAMPTON ROW OVER STICKERS

By CTN REPORTER

Earlier this year an unpleasant row broke out in Southampton when a few drivers displayed stickers on the cabs stating the driver was English speaking. The white and red stickers on the cabs back window also displayed the flag of St. George.

The stickers were declared racist by councillors and anti-racist campaigners. Perry McMillan, chair of the city cab section of Unite condemned the stickers which he said had upset their ethnic minority drivers. "Surely all drivers speak English, if they don't what's going? We hope licensing officers will investigate this and satisfy the trade that this not the case."












Campaign group Show Racism The Red Card demanded the stickers be taken down. Chair of the Southampton Hackney Association said half of their 128 members were from Asian backgrounds and declared such stickers should be taken off, adding that without ethnic minority drivers the taxi trade in the city would collapse.

Currently, as everywhere, a person wishing to become a cab driver must have a British driving licence, undergo a medical and criminal record check and have a working knowledge of the licence area. A council spokesman said "people should contact the council if they saw such stickers on cabs."

See Page 6 for Branch reaction

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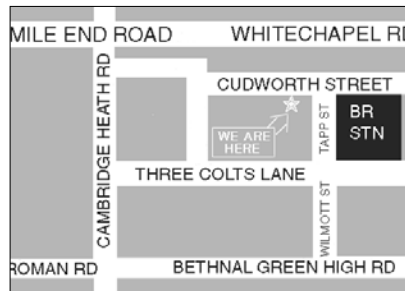
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Street Legal

By ELLIE REEVES

SNOW AND ICE BRINGS MISERY TO WORKERS

The recent spate of snow and ice across the UK have brought misery to thousands of workers. As well as freezing cold conditions, transport chaos and increased heating bills, the snow and ice has also proved perilous for many, with stories of people slipping in treacherous conditions. But what happens, for example, if someone slips on ice at work, or in the works car park, causing them an injury? Whether they can claim compensation depends on the circumstances and whether an employer could have known the conditions would be icy.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers to ensure that the surface of every traffic route in the workplace is suitable for the purpose for which it is used and that surfaces are not slippery or have no substance on them that exposes employees to the risk of slipping. Of course if it was impossible for the employer to make the car park safe – by gritting it for example – because the ice was some sort of freak occurrence, then an employer may have a defence against any compensation claim against them.

However, at this time of year ice is predictable; slipping on ice is therefore a foreseeable hazard and employers have a duty to ensure that walkways are safe. But what of the roads? In one case a widow brought a claim against the Department of Transport after her husband died in a car accident having lost control of his vehicle when negotiating a slight bend on an 'A' road due to frost on the ground. Although it had not been salted over the previous evening, if it had been salted the accident would probably not have happened. The widow made a claim for negligence. However, the Court of Appeal held that the Highway Authority could not be taken to have assumed a general responsibility to all road users to ensure that all or any trunk roads could be salted in freezing conditions. It is the primary responsibility of motorists to take care for their own safety and that of their passengers and other road users.

However, a recent Thompson's case – *Crelin v. Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council* (Liverpool County Court January 2009), was decided after an amendment to the Highways Act to ensure that "insofar as it was reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice". In that case it was an icy morning and the Claimant was driving to work. He turned off at the main road, down an access road into the workplace car park. The main road had been treated with salt and grit but the access road had not; his car lost control and he was injured. The Council said that they had a reasonable system in place, they had gritted all primary roads in the area with short access over the secondary roads and they had not started treating them yet. The Judge accepted that the Council had a policy; however, no work had been done to grit roads between 5:15am when the last action on the primary road had been completed and 8:15am. The secondary roads had not been treated at all. The Judge found that the 3 hour gap without action was too long and that in the circumstances the Defendant should have started on the remaining network by then.

However, it seems that if a Defendant shows a reasonable system in place the Judge is likely to be sympathetic in accepting that not all roads can be gritted at any given time and sometimes an injured person will not even be able to see that the road had been treated with salt or grit in a reasonable period before their own accident. Further, where Highway Authorities have a winter maintenance plan in place and can produce evidence of implementation of that plan, then Claimants may struggle to succeed.

The Code of Practice for Maintenance Management "delivery in best value and highway maintenance" revised in 2005 give detailed recommendations for when roads should be treated before ice falls and how much salt should be used and what system should be used, but acknowledges that economic resources to cover all possible areas with ice and snow is just not possible.

In conclusion, until the summer is here extra care should be taken whilst driving in ice and snow as it can be difficult to get the Highway Authority to assume responsibility!

THE LONDON TAXI COMPANY DELIVER FIVE STAR SERVICE AT MILLENNIUM CHENGDU

When the five star Millennium Hotel Chengdu in China opened its luxurious doors for the first time recently there was only one choice when it came to a gift from its sister hotels in London - the iconic London Taxi.

With Millennium Hotels in some of London's most prosperous locations such as Grosvenor Square, Sloane Street, Kensington Road, the new complex in Chengdu was presented with a gift that truly represented the capital. The London taxi is globally recognised as the world's finest taxi and offers the performance and comfort levels befitting the five star accommodation.

The two TX4 taxis given to the Millennium Chengdu, one in the traditional black colour and one in the special Champagne, take pride of place in front of the hotel gates. Services which can be offered thanks to the taxis, such as private airport pick-ups and one day tours to Chengdu's famous tourist destinations, help to enhance and promote the five star experience on offer to customers.

Mr. Shaun Hammond, general manager at the hotel said: "The London Taxis which are in use at Chengdu enhance our hotel's international popularity, whilst also acknowledging the prestigious Millennium hotel which we have in London."

"We are extremely excited to have received the gift of two London Taxis as they provide a very unique experience for all of our customers. The advanced features of the taxis make for a smooth and comfortable ride. The DVD players in the back of the taxi make it possible to show our guests what Chengdu has to offer when on their journey, whilst the integral wheelchair ramp makes the taxi easily accessible to all."

Matthew Cheyne, International Market Development Director for The London Taxi Company, said: "Producing our taxis in China has given London Taxis a more global appeal and we are thrilled to see two of our TX4s in use at the Millennium Hotel Chengdu."

For more information please visit www.londontaxis.co.uk or www.lft.co.uk

ALL-ELECTRIC TAXI A REVOLUTION IN PASSENGER TRANSPORT



The E Vito taxi will look the same as the Diesel version.

A revolutionary all-electric taxi with the potential to transform the way people use public transport was unveiled in the West Midlands recently by Regional Minister Ian Austin MP.

The 'E Vito taxi' – a prototype developed by a consortium including automotive engineering specialists Zytec and technology experts Penso – can transport up to six passengers in comfort over a range of almost 75 miles from a single six-hour full charge and is licensed for use in London.

Speaking at the demonstration event in Lichfield, Staffordshire Austin said: "The black taxi cab is an iconic vehicle that many of us will have used at some time."

"It's exciting that such a widely used method of transport has become the first vehicle to incorporate this innovative 'market-ready' technology – which could potentially be introduced in time to serve the many thousands of tourists visiting London for the 2012 Olympics.

"This is just the sort of innovative technology and advanced skills that the West Midlands needs to bring the new industries and new jobs to our region and build a stronger economy for the future."

The West Midlands is home to the largest cluster of automotive businesses in the UK, responsible for 28 per cent of all automotive output (£13 billion) and over 60 per cent of the industry's research and development. It's therefore perhaps unsurprising that the E Vito's advanced technology has been developed within the region.

Neil Cheeseman, programme manager at Zytec Automotive, said: "The range and performance of the E Vito make it perfect for inner city transport: not only does it deliver a significant reduction in CO2 emissions but also significant costs savings (a full charge costs less than £2.50) which can be passed on to users in the form of reduced fares."

"The Zytec electric drive system used in the E Vito taxi is suitable for a variety of passenger car and light

commercial vehicle applications. Today's demonstration highlights that the E Vito taxi is both viable and relatively simple to put into production."

Zytec is one of the world's most experienced developers of power trains for electric vehicles and works closely with vehicle manufacturers on several production programmes.

The E Vito taxi meets all of the legislative requirements of the Public Carriage Office and incorporates the 38kWh Valence Li-Ion battery power pack installed in a weatherproof enclosure beneath the vehicle floor, so the internal space of the taxi will remain unaffected by the electric conversion, not compromising luggage space and also improving vehicle stability.

The vehicle, is capable of up to 75 mph, powered by the innovative 70kW Zytec electric drive system, driving the front wheels through a custom designed Vocis/Graziano transmission. The vehicle not only generates zero tailpipe emissions but also very low noise pollution.

The E Vito taxi programme has been part-funded by a £2.5 million grant from Advantage West Midlands whose Advantage Niche Vehicle Research & Development Programme brought together the necessary expertise from Zytec, Penso and fellow consortium members: Vocis/ Graziano, Valence Technology and Mercedes Benz UK – which provided the Vito platform that underwent the electric transformation.

Julia Chance, programme manager for Cenex which delivers the Advantage Niche Vehicle Programme, added: "The companies in the consortium behind the E Vito taxi are among 56 businesses involved in the Advantage Niche Vehicle Programme."

"Collaborative projects like the E Vito Taxi, Westfield Sportscars' recently launched iRACER (an electric racecar) and hydrogen fuel cell-powered vehicles from Microcab are creating and safeguarding jobs as well as highlighting the UK's expertise in low carbon vehicles on the world stage."

Mark's Mélange 72

MARK EDWARD TAYLOR

THE HEIRARCHY OF LONDON FOOTBALL



Which is the best football team in London? We all have our favourite side, but imagine taking a non-partisan view and considering all the London clubs' history, fan base, honours won, or lost, European adventures, global branding, plus any other factors which come to mind and placing the teams in hierarchical order.

A Pantheon of London football teams, if you like. We all know in which orifice Chelsea should stick their blue flag; however this article would like to move the debate away from tribal chants and deliver a pecking order of the capital's clubs.

Londoners can feel very proud of football in their city. Thirteen professional sides ply their trade in the top four flights of the English leagues. No other city in Europe comes close to having so many top sides. Can Paris, Madrid, Milan, Rome, Berlin, Munich, Moscow boast such a wealth of talent and choice?

On planet Earth only Buenos Aires comes close in having so many top teams based in the same city i.e. Boca Juniors, River Plate, Independiente, Racing Club, Velez Sarsfield and a few others, but enough of Argentina, I hear you cry dear reader, get back to the London clubs. Indeed, with such a wealth of super sides, why oh! why do we keep coming across the ugly phenomenon of the born and bred Londoner who supports Manchester United?

There are a few cockneys following Liverpool and Leeds too. These glory hunters are traitors to their city. And notice, cockney whites (that's London Leeds fans) are somewhat thinner on the ground than they used to be. Plus, vocal London scousers do not seem to have the same presence as a few years back. Yes, its twenty years since Liverpool last won the title. In the meantime Chelsea and Arsenal have both finished champions.

RIVALS

Following one of the capitals clubs usually comes down to a few simple factors. Geography, family, friends, and going to the game. Let's illustrate; you are born in the East End, your dad takes you to the games from the moment you can walk. You are a Hammer for life.

You're born in Edmonton, start going to Spurs games with a few school mates. Tottenham have you. Born in Bermondsey, raised in The Den. Born in Surrey. Now?...Chelsea or Palace?...Born in Shepherd's Bush, QPR...no

question. London has been home to many immigrant communities for hundreds of years. Immigrants who love football may latch on to the glamour teams, which can explain why Man U. has such a large following.

Tottenham have attracted a Jewish fan base and the Arsenal crowd at the Emirates stadium are the most cosmopolitan in the Premiership. The Gunners have always had a strong Irish following with north London's large Irish community.

This is never cut and dried as many an Irishman has strayed following Spurs with many Jews advocating a preference for N5 rather than N17. Terraces can be fickle places.

Why not follow a successful team in your newly adopted city? This leads me to own-up as a West Ham supporter. I feel quite proud of the very few Black, Asian and Chinese supporters I regularly see at Upton Park. West Ham has had some problems in the past.

Sections of the terraces were infiltrated by far right racist groups. Whereas historically, on the playing field, West Ham along with West Bromwich Albion, have been at the forefront of developing black footballers. The ethnic minority supporters at West Ham have probably had to be pretty thick-skinned, however they have admirably identified with their local team.

Hopefully the ethnic minority support will grow. West Ham have not won a trophy for thirty years, although they have, a World Cup pedigree, a knack for developing young players and a massive fan base. They are the team of Essex in addition to east London.

The hierarchy begins with Arsenal. This club has big support in the city, hosting matches at the 60,000 capacity Emirates stadium. They began in Woolwich and moved to Highbury. They have done the double a few times and spent a whole season undefeated. A truly invincible London team.

Second are Chelsea. Recent seasons have seen Roman Abramovich's money make Chelsea a global brand. They have won Championships to add to their sole title in 1955. Should this pantheon have been written in 1983? Chelsea would be further down the pecking order. They finished 18th in the second division that season with gates well under 14,000.

Tottenham Hotspurs are third. Fifty years ago they would have been number one. They have a glorious history. They have done

SOUTHAMPTON UPDATE

By STEVE FRICKER

Secretary UNITE Cab Section, Southampton Branch

English Speaking Driver stickers began appearing on a number of taxis in Southampton and a member raised the issue at a Cab Section meeting.

The discussion that followed raised some interesting questions. Was this a protest against the Licensing Department of the Council or was there something more to it? The Union decided to take the matter up through official channels and placed the item on the order paper of our consultation meeting.

It is certainly true that a perception has grown up in the trade that there are drivers who can't speak English and don't know where they are going and that perception has grown especially over the last year or two and was recognised, at least in part back in 2006

In August 2006 the council gained agreement in principle to start driving assessments for new drivers and in July 2007 agreement in principle was reached to introduce NVQ/BTEC qualifications for new entrants to the trade. Unfortunately Council Officers did not bring forward firm proposals for discussion until March 2009 in a letter to the whole trade, and that letter was riddled with inaccuracies. After a consultation period these proposals were finally implemented in August 2009 with NVQ/BTEC being required for those who had been in the trade for less than 3 years. This together with new best practice guidance from the DfT, that taxi drivers should have sufficient grasp of the English language to communicate adequately with their customers, should have been sufficient to deal with this issue.

At the consultation meeting, as luck would have it, a rep from one of the other organisations present had apparently displayed one of these stickers in his taxi and he was pressed to give reasons, but declined. So the Union put forward the view that the delay in bringing forward these proposals had led to the situation whereby people had been able to enter the trade simply by passing a topography test and a face to face meeting with an enforcement officer. After a debate which included a councillor describing the sticker as ugly it was agreed that they should be removed. Union Chair Perry McMillan said surely all drivers speak English? If they don't what's going on. We just hope that licensing officers can now investigate this and satisfy the trade that this isn't the case.

In some quarters these stickers were described as racist, and undoubtedly there were racist undertones but in getting drivers to take them down council officers told others to remove charity stickers from their cabs which prompted a protest from the Union, its like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut said Perry McMillan, and a statement from the Deputy Leader of the Council that there is absolutely no way they will be taking down any charity stickers.

The Southampton Cab Branch feels vindicated in bringing this issue to consultation. The result we believe is the correct one, they have been removed and we hope that the measures introduced in August 2009 will enable the trade to work together in harmony in this multi-cultural city.

the double but alas, a top flight title cannot be remembered by most of us. A change in fortunes; and they could usurp The Blues of west London... that's a long way off....

Fourth in the hierarchy are West Ham. They've been mentioned already, although it's worth noting, should they ever get their act together, they could be second. Their status is on a par with Spurs and Chelsea. It's unlikely they would ever challenge The Arsenal. They will have to be content with the odd victory over The Gunners and keep dreaming.

Fifth place is where it gets contentious. After the big four the following teams are supported by true football fans. The Melange column salutes them. And fans are what it is all about. Crystal Palace has the potential to command huge gates. Their catchment area is enormous. Although they yo-yo around and their off field shenanigans can beggar belief; Palace from the deep south, so far south they can have a local derby with Brighton, are the capital's number five. Providing they stay in business.

Six; Charlton Athletic from the Valley, cup winners in 1947, finalists in 1946, Premier League stalwarts for a long while but now languishing in the third tier of football. Fulham come in at seven. A great club whom we all love. Never won a thing. Cute ground on the Thames. They have the demeanour of Chelsea's likeable goofy brother. This season, their foray in the Europa League could boost their standing tremendously. Eight, Queen's Park Rangers... where do we begin? They could have it all, but keep messing it up. One day, ... the money, the location, the celebrity fans, history of good football and that 2nd place in 1976 may all come together again....



FA cup semi-finalists in 1900, 1903, 1937 and finalists in 2004, Millwall, take ninth spot in the pantheon. Like Arsenal, they have played on both sides of the Thames. This helps broaden your fan base and gives some interesting travel plans for the supporters. Beginning as Millwall Dockers, then Millwall Athletic, they are now just plain Millwall. Formerly frightening, now progressive.

Cabbies love to see Griffin Park. Clearly visible from the M4 elevated section as they journey in or out from a Heathrow fare. This is home to number ten, Brentford, a club who had a purple patch in the 1930's finishing regularly in the top six of the first division. Leyton Orient take eleventh in our pantheon. Sandwiched between three of the big four, their only season in the top flight saw them promoted with Liverpool in 1962. The O's lasted one season; Liverpool went on to win everything. Barnet at 12 are relative newcomers to the football league. They still have images of a sloping pitch and Stan Flashman, the king of ticket touts, cheering an FA cup giant killing. Propping up the table of London clubs is Dagenham & Redbridge, an amalgam of what are bizarrely called non-league clubs; they also include; Leytonstone, Ilford and Walthamstow. The Melange column wishes them well and hopes they have a long and fruitful time in London football.... C'mon you Dagers!

Now imagine a league of all the London sides... a championship of these teams playing their strongest sides home and away. Would the final table look like the above list? Doubtful... local rivalries, unpredictability and teams raising their games show us just why football is the world's best sport... keep following your local team.

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TOYOTA PRIUS RECALL

Further to Notice 02/10, you will be aware that some Toyota vehicles are subject to a manufacturers recall campaign. Toyota GB has now announced a further voluntary recall for the Toyota Prius model as a potential fault with the braking system has been identified.

The recall is being taken in response to reports of inconsistent brake feel during slow and progressive braking on bumpy or slick surfaces when the anti-lock braking (ABS) is activated.

Toyota has identified the problem and the recall will consist of a software upgrade in the anti-lock braking system which will eliminate the problem. Toyota has advised owners that the cars are safe to drive as at no time will drivers be without brakes.

Given the information available to TfL we do not believe it is appropriate or necessary to place a "stop" notice on affected models but it is imperative that anyone using the affected models as private hire vehicles are aware of the issue and take appropriate action. We will, however, continue to monitor the situation very closely and may take further action if necessary.

Whilst Toyota will be writing directly to affected model owners in due course, we strongly recommend all drivers/owners of

private hire vehicles licensed by TfL to either make contact with your local Toyota dealership or the **Toyota Customer Relations line on 0800 1388744** (Mon-Fri: 8.00am-8.00pm, Sat: 8.00am-4.00pm, Sun 10.00am-4.00pm).

Toyota Model affected by the Recall

Prius, third generation
(August 2009 – February 2010)

Further and more detailed information is available to the Toyota recall website: www.toyota.co.uk.

You can also contact our Private Hire Vehicle Licensing team on 020 3054 3189 or email them at TPH.PHVvehicles@tfl.gov.uk

The Taxi and Private Hire team will be writing to all affected owners to ensure that they have their vehicles checked by Toyota as soon as possible.

Should you experience any adverse or unusual braking performance you are advised not to operate your vehicle until it has been checked by a qualified Toyota technician at a Toyota approved service centre.

John Mason, Director Taxi and Private Hire, 10 February 2010. For previous Notices visit tfl.gov.uk/pco

TOYOTA PRIUS RECALL

Personal Comment by Peter J Rose

The above notice was the second one to be issued by the Carriage Office regarding the recall by Toyota of their Prius model.

As Secretary of the London Cab Section of UNITE the Union I have received many phone calls regarding the apparent unfairness seen between the private hire trade and the taxi trade in the Capital.

Drivers want to know why the Prius is not being taken off the road as was the TX4 over the fire situation a couple of years ago.

Driver members that have taken time to contact me regarding the 'lack a stop' on these vehicles by Transport for London, which they see as yet another case of 'One rule for us (taxi trade), and another for them (private hire trade)'.

To many this is seen all too often! Addison Lee and the lack of will to reprimand them over the letter sent out to their drivers instructing them to disregard the rules regarding the M4 bus and taxi lane, being the most recent. The Carriage Offices apparent refusal to see a line of minicabs lined outside

many of the Capitals late night venues as an illegal rank is yet another case where they seem to be powerless to act.

This one over the Toyota does seem to me to be a little strange? Two PCO notices to inform the trade that the Carriage Office will be doing nothing regarding the recall, sorry, 'monitoring the situation' regarding the recall. While at the same time telling the taxi trade of their intention to extend the private hire 'One strike and you're out' to operators of Satellite offices or Clipboard Johnnies, via a not very well distributed press release.

I can't help feeling a little bewildered by the recent event of the Head of the Carriage Office venturing into the world of the 'blogger'. By posting a comment on one of these sites he would have seemed to disregard the whole machinery of Local Government and his own office. Can we expect a rebate? Strange, PCO notices to tell us about doing nothing, press releases when they are, and comments on a blogsite instead of dialogue. Is the world going mad?



Your Letters

Dear Cab Trade News,

A few weeks back I wrote a short letter (Published in Cab Trade News) regarding the assault on my person by a group of touts, as reported by Danny Freeman in his column a couple of issues ago, the main instigator was arrested and is being dealt with. I personally would like to thank the Police officers for their speed and professionalism in dealing with this matter.

Also I would like to thank Danny and Unite as well as my colleagues for their continued

support. While I am in the thanking mood, a great big "thank you" to Unite Shop Steward Dave Eashun who recently represented me in a "parking ticket" case against Hounslow Borough council. The ticket was thrown out in seconds due to Dave's expertise.

Anybody that is not in a Union or organisation should certainly think about joining one in this day and age of CCTV and cameras. I went for Unite and feel I made the right choice. – Be lucky out there. – *M. Shulton, UNITE the Union Cab Section Member.*

T H E A T R E

By Tony Benson

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED Garrick Theatre

Douglas Carter Beane's satire from Broadway, directed by Jamie Lloyd, has Hollywood firmly in its sights. It seems that the movie industry will not knowingly countenance gay actors becoming stars; they may play gay parts provided that, in real life, they stay in the closet.

This comedy, in truth, doesn't have much of a plot, but it is side-splittingly funny. The main character is Diane, a top Hollywood agent, a lesbian who wants to make a movie out of a hit Broadway play about gay lovers, and she desperately needs her fast-rising client, Mitchell, to star in it. Alas, Mitchell is gay – though till now very discreet – but he has fallen for Alex, a bisexual rent boy, and wants to "come out". To achieve her aims Diane must do two things: A, she must persuade the writer to turn his play into a hetero-sexual romantic comedy, and B, at all costs, she has to keep Mitchell's sexual tastes under wraps. How she achieves this is the driving force behind the play.

Oddly enough, even in these supposedly enlightened times, keeping the sexual preferences of film stars a secret still matters. Thus, Tom Hanks played a gay lawyer in "Philadelphia", and Sean Penn played California's first openly gay elected official in "Milk". For these performances they both won Oscars. Had Hanks and Penn really been gay they would never have landed those great roles. Rock Hudson, in spite of the ridiculously macho name he was given, was forced into marriage to keep the hetero illusion alive. Hollywood still lies about the sex lives of its stars.

Tamsin Greig is a knockout as the ruthless loquacious Diane: she confides in the audience with asides and conspiratorial winks. A magnificent performance deserving of all the awards going this year, while Rupert Friend as Mitchell, Harry Lloyd as Alex, the rent boy, and Gemma Atherton as Ellen, Alex's girl friend, who is bribed to emulate Mrs Rock Hudson, are first class. If you're not easily offended, put "The Little God" on your list.

HELDENPLATZ Arcola Theatre

German writer Thomas Bernhard's final play is set in 1988 Vienna where an intellectual Jewish family have gathered for the funeral of their patriarch, Professor Schuster. Fifty years earlier the family had fled to England, refugees from Hitler, but now see that nothing has changed in Vienna – irrational hatred and decadence still reign supreme.

One of the daughters of the Professor is horrified when she is spat upon in the street. Perhaps, she reasons, it wasn't an anti-Semitic attack... maybe she was mistaken for someone else... but the reality dawns on her that this is still the Vienna of 1938. The play is mainly set in the dining room of the Professor's third-floor apartment overlooking Heldenplatz, the square where Hitler had addressed a mass rally. The Professor's neurotic widow can still hear the roaring crowds and the Zeig Heils.

An interesting, if wordy, play directed by Annie Castledine and Annabel Arden, and performed by an excellent cast of ten headed by Clive Mendus as the Professor's brother, Barbara Marten as his housekeeper and Jane Maud, as Anna, his elder daughter.



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