

CONSERVATION AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY

This article is not about conserving taxi drivers on the Cab Guiding Course! A group recently visited the British Library where there is a large purpose built conservation centre. There is a small exhibition in the British Library Centre for Conservation which is open to the public. It gives an insight into how books deteriorate and the range of solutions available to preserve them for the future. The screens also show visitors how the teams assess each individual item and also the way in which items are preserved. It is also possible to arrange a tour of the areas where the conservation work is carried out. Our group was given strict instructions on what could be touched or not, some of the items being repaired are irreplaceable.

In the bright airy studios, the light flows in through windows in the roof which has been specially designed to maximise the light to help conservators at work. Staff treat damaged or deteriorated items in order to either repair or maintain them. This department uses the skills of a large number of



conservators, who have a wide range of skills. Our group were shown how items are repaired, how gold leaf is applied to the spine of books and also how items are cleaned.

The Conservation section at the British Library is one of the largest departments of its kind in the world. When an item needs repair or maintenance work the Conservation team work out a plan which can involve several different routes to repair. This is then priced in terms of hours, rather than financial costing, as the department's budget is worked out in this way with a certain number of hours being available

each year. Those in the department where the item originates are then able to decide how they wish the item to be treated. We saw books being cleaned which is a painstaking task which can take many hours with different types of rubber and foam. We also saw bindings being repaired and this is also carried out by hand.

Conservation may not sound the most exciting department to work in but the skills take a long time to learn and it is quite fascinating to see the experts at work. One thing is for sure it is not the job for anyone who does not have a good deal of patience as it can take many weeks to clean and maintain just one volume. However, the work being carried out means that the valuable treasures can continue to be available to anyone who wishes to see them at the British Library.

The next Guiding Course starts on 8th September 2008. If you would like more information you can contact Graham Woodhouse on 07968 791117 or email info@cabguide.com



NEW ROAD TAX DISCRIMINATES AGAINST BIKERS

Under new emissions-based rates of road tax announced in the Budget, vehicles that produce less than 100g of CO₂ per/km will pay nothing - unless they are motorcycles. Despite emitting less than 100g per/km, many motorcycles will next year pay double according to the Environmental Transport Association.

The new rates discriminate against motorcycles despite the fact that CO₂ emissions for motorcycles of all types are already below the average level for petrol and diesel-engined cars. A 125cc commuter bike currently pays a vehicle excise duty of £15 - the rate in 2009 will more than double to £33.

Andrew Davis, director at the Environmental Transport Association said: "A doubling of tax for motorcycles that produce less than 100g of CO₂ per/km makes a nonsense of the revised rates of vehicle excise duty - it appears that motorcycles are subsidising the new zero rate of vehicle excise duty for the lowest-polluting cars. At a time when we are struggling to meet emissions targets and high petrol prices, a case must be made for motorcycles that produce less CO₂ than cars and use far less fuel."

TAXIWISE CALLS FOR SUMMER OF SAETY

As British Summer Time began, Taxiwise took the opportunity to remind the travelling public to stay safe. Hazel Crawford-Upton, spokesperson for Taxiwise said: "With more people out and about enjoying the sunshine it's important to remind people to check that they are getting into a legitimate taxi before catching a lift home. It's all too easy for people to have a couple more drinks than usual and then simply get into the first vehicle that pulls up offering to take them home. Make sure you play it safe, take a note of the license number plate and only hail a hackney carriage or book a cab in advance."

Alongside the police and other safety campaigners, Taxiwise advises women to recognise the dangers associated with bogus taxi drivers in order to get them home safely.

For more information about Taxiwise, visit www.taxiwise.com.

