

MIDSUMMER CHARITY BALL

To celebrate Founders Day, The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers held a Charity Ball at The Marriott in Canary Wharf. The evening was a great success and enjoyed by everyone. At the beginning of the evening, The Master of the WCHCD, Alan Parker and his wife Christine greeted over 100 guests to a champagne reception. This was followed by a four course meal. Later in the evening there was dancing to “Good Company”. The band had been sponsored by ComCab. Tony Norris, a Liveryman of the Company, did a guest spot and sang for the guests.



Court Assistant Graham Woodhouse was pleased to introduce the recipients of the Annual Charity Award. This year, the Award was presented to Mr. Patrick Hicks, Secretary of The Cabman’s Shelter Fund & Mr. Nicholas Bell, son of William Bell, who is sadly no longer alive. William Bell had been a strong supporter of the Cab Shelters and helped campaign for funding when the GLC was disbanded to get funding for the shelters.

Cab shelters were first introduced by Captain Armstrong in 1874. He lived in St John’s Wood and was editor of the Globe newspaper. One snowy night he sent his butler out to find a cab to take him to his office. After an hour his servant returned with a cab. Captain Armstrong enquired as to why it had taken so long to find a cab and was told that although there were cabs on the rank, it had taken the servant time to locate the drivers. Due to the inclement conditions, the drivers had taken shelter in a ‘grog shop’ drinking

cocoa with a nip of rum - to keep out the chill. On the way to his office, Captain Armstrong considered this. It had never occurred to him the plight of cab drivers in such foul weather or what they did to seek refuge from the elements when not actually working.

He persuaded some wealthy friends to donate funds for the erection of a shelter next to the rank in Acacia Road, St John’s Wood. The London Cabman’s Shelter Fund was born. 47 were to be built over the next 75 years, at ranks all over central London; today only about a dozen survive. The Cabman’s Shelter Fund was started by two taxi drivers. Peter Raymond (secretary) and Patrick Hicks (chairman), 29 years ago. These two taxi drivers initially approached the GLC for funding; they received the funding to start restoring the shelters. Unfortunately when the GLC was disbanded by the Thatcher Government, the funding stopped. They then approached London Heritage, where they teamed up with William Bell.

Bell campaigned for funding from Corporate Companies and Dignitaries. When the shelters were refurbished or rebuilt they organised for dignitaries such as the Duke of Westminster to open the Grosvenor Gardens shelter and the Prince of Hanover to open the Hanover Square shelter.

Graham said: “We would like to acknowledge their efforts by presenting Mr. Patrick Hicks and Mr. Nicholas Bell, on behalf of his father, the Charity Award.”



IT WAS MAGIC ... THANKS TO YOU!

The Central London Branch of the charity Families Need Fathers organised a Father’s Day boat trip along the Thames recently. This is now an annual event and we were really grateful to the LTDA at Heathrow for allowing us to take a collection on the Friday before Father’s Day this year – even though it was Friday 13th June. No real disasters there except for my sunburnt face! But it was no oil painting before.

We pushed the boat out (ha, ha!) and booked a Harry Potter (very) look-alike entertainer. The kids loved him and it made the day really special for them. Knowing we had the Heathrow collection booked, and suspecting the cabbies’ generosity we dared to commit to this expensive entertainer.

Mike is a cabbie who we helped fight the system and remain in his home with his two daughters. He was the one who approached you on our behalf.



Soon after setting up at the feeder-park barrier early that morning, another ‘satisfied customer’ appeared – Barry. He told me that he’d read about the planned collection and though he didn’t normally work the airport on a Friday he came especially to see me because I’d helped him get to see his boy ... 20 years ago! Both Mike and Barry stood and helped out with the collection during the day. We got quite a few, “I wish I’d known about you 20 years ago,” comments.

These are the sort of children and fathers we have to help, week in and week out. The money we collected at Heathrow allowed us to bring these guys together, to make something special for them and their children on Fathers Day. On behalf of them, we’d like to thank all the

cabbies who chipped in.
*Steve Stephenson, Secretary
Central London Branch
Families Need Fathers*

