

## ALAN'S LAST TRIP *by Johnny Rowlands*

It's such a sad thing for me to write about my friend Alan Hooker who died on 1st August 2008 after a brave fight against cancer. I have known Alan for 30 years and when he was a young man in the mid-60s, and I even younger, he was a regular in the Pont Street cab shelter when it was run by a man called Harry Carpenter.

On opening the shelter door Alan would say "Giss a cup of tea, Harry." Harry's response would be to send him out of the shelter with, "You can come back in when you can talk proper!" Alan's great friends who also used the shelter were Patsy Emrick and Brian Moody, both very saddened by his passing.

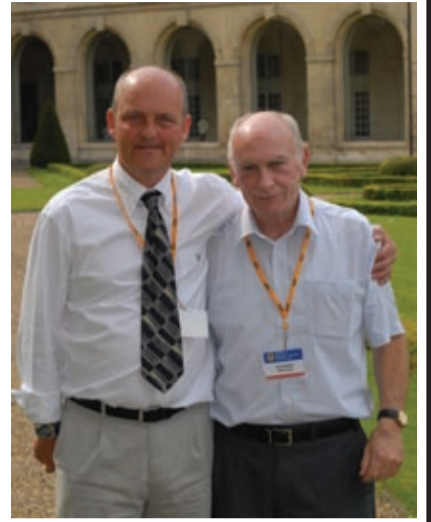
I spent many years with Alan at the Pont Street shelter as well as Heathrow Airport and accompanied him on numerous outings organised by the London Taxi Benevolent Association for the War Disabled (LTBAWD) to Worthing, as well as this year's 5-day Normandy trip. Alan served on the committee of the LTBAWD for many years and together with Doug Sherry organised both the 1994 and 2008 trips to Normandy.

Alan was born in Islington on the 9 March 1940; twenty years later he signed on the Knowledge when the Public Carriage Office was in Lambeth Road and passed out as a London taxi driver on 30 June 1961. The notable points of his career as a cab driver was picking up Alan Ball on the night England won the World Cup in 1966 and being fined £10 at Bow Street Magistrates Court in 1983 for overloading!

Alan leaves his beloved wife Christine and his son Richard of whom he was so proud. A fellow guest at a hotel told Alan that Richard would turn out to be very bright; Richard was only three years old! Richard was an A star student at school and when he was accepted into Cambridge University Alan was the proudest of proud fathers, and why not. Richard left Cambridge with honours and now works for Merrill Lynch in the City.

Alan will be missed by many people in the trade - he was on Radio Taxis for many years and also worked at Heathrow Airport – but especially by the committee of the LTBAWD. He was a great friend to me and I will miss him more than most.

Alan's funeral was held on 13 August 2008 at the Enfield Crematorium and the large number of people who came to say their last farewells was testament to the mark Alan's passing has left on the trade. May his dear soul rest in peace.



Johnny Rowland (left) with Alan Hooker in Normandy

## A GREAT BRITISH EXPERIENCE

**The Regent Street Festival 2008: A Great British Experience will be taking place on Sunday 7 September 2008. Taxi drivers should note that as one of the most anticipated annual free outdoor events takes place, Regent Street will be closed to traffic from 12 noon to 8pm.**

A warm welcome will be extended to visitors on the day and around 600,000 people from all over the world are expected to enjoy the event. Showcasing British content from the eccentric to the classically quintessential, from traditional marching bands to organic British food stalls, the Regent Street Festival will also have a familiar British icon, the London taxi on show. The Royal Academy of Music is bringing a fantastic selection of musicians

including string and brass ensembles and singers to entertain the public for free. Scottish pipe bands, dance groups and even a veteran car display will all appear on Regent Street on the day.

Regent Street has an outstanding collection of international retailers with no less than 31 flagship stores, many of whom will be participating by offering an assortment of 'British' themed in-store activities, promotions and added value incentives. Habitat is hosting a fantastic two week photographic exhibition, Love London, by Barbara Chandler opening 3 September 2008. Godiva will be selling British Blackberries and selected fruits covered in its delicious Belgian chocolate. Austin Reed will host traditional afternoon tea, whilst Bose will host a stylish James Bond-themed afternoon.



### Regent Street Festival 2008 - A Great British Experience

British 'cover bands' will perform live in store at Zavvi. Regent Street retailers and restaurants will be offering a celebratory 10% festival offer throughout the day.

There is also an opportunity to enter the Great British Experience on-line photographic competition with the finalists having their images shown in a Regent Street exhibition in 2009. Visit [regentstreet-online.com](http://regentstreet-online.com) for more details.

Heddon Street and Swallow Street, Regent Street's Food Quarters, will all be taking part in the festivities by offering a selection of traditional British 'specials' such as Fish and Chips from Fishworks, Sausages and Mash provided by The Living Room W1, sensational curry dishes from Veeraswamy and the Absolut Ice Bar will be displaying ice sculptures on Regent Street and serving vodka from a real ice bar!

For the most up-to-date festival information please visit [www.regentstreetonline.com](http://www.regentstreetonline.com)



Regent Street Festival 2005 - An English Country Garden

Regent Street Festival 2006 - A Walk Through Spain