

PCO ANSWERS READERS QUERIES

Taxi Globe recently received an email from a reader whose husband is a taxi driver. She was questioning the fact that she had seen a vehicle for sale on a well known website complete with its PCO licensing discs and whether this was legally allowed. We asked the PCO what the situation is regarding this. Their spokesperson said: “Private hire vehicle owners are perfectly within their rights to sell on a private hire vehicle (PHV) with its licence disc intact, if the vehicle is to continue to be used as a PHV - the owner who has advertised his or her vehicle on the Gumtree website is doing nothing wrong. However, there are certain conditions imposed on the licence holder which must be met when a vehicle changes ownership.

“The licence holder must find out if the purchaser wishes to use the vehicle as a PHV. If they do not wish to do so, the seller must remove the licence discs, complete the relevant section on the back of their paper licence, and return the licence and the discs to the Public Carriage Office, who will then cancel the vehicle’s licence. If the purchaser intends to use the vehicle as a PHV, the seller is obliged to contact the PCO to let them know the licence has changed hands. They must provide a signed declaration to the PCO confirming the following:

- The DVLA has been notified about the change in ownership
- The vehicle is covered by a valid insurance policy
- The vehicle passed a second MoT six months after it was licensed (if applicable)

The seller and purchaser must complete the relevant section on the back of the paper licence regarding transfer of the licence. The new owner must return the licence to the PCO so the vehicle record can be updated with the new owner’s details, at which point a new paper licence will be issued. In this scenario, the original licence discs remain on the vehicle.”

WHAT IS A TAXI?

The same lady had previously complained to the PCO about a search engine website which shows private hire companies under a taxi heading. In this case the ph company was Addison Lee. The PCO replied to this complaint saying: “It is an offence under the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998 for a private hire operator to use the words taxi, cab, or any word closely resembling either of those words, in an advertisement for their private hire business. In the event that we become aware of a London private hire operator using such words in their advertising material, the PCO will always take action to ensure the operator is aware of, and complies with, the law. Operators refusing to comply with the law can face a fine of up to £2,500.

However, on closer examination, it is often not the operator who is using the word ‘taxi’. While private hire operators may allow links to their websites to be picked up by search engines using the word ‘taxi’, it is actually the search engine provider who is using the word taxi in their listings. In the example of Addison Lee, they do not advertise their services as taxis anywhere on their website.”

BECOMING MASTER BY ANDREW OVERTON

It is a great honour to be elected as the new Master of the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers. Although I am not a taxi driver, I have been involved with the taxi trade for 39 years and I enjoy my work, meeting lots of wonderful people. My family has been part of the taxi trade now for over a hundred years; Mann & Overton was founded by my grandfather in 1899. Then in 1906 our family business began selling taxis around 1906 as the Conditions of Fitness began for motorised taxis. Sadly, Mr Mann died in 1908 so it has really been a bit of an Overton affair ever since.

Back in those early days the growth of the taxi trade was quite remarkable, especially when the motor cab took over from horse drawn hackney carriages.

In 1903 there were 10,000 hackneys, all horse drawn. By the time of the outbreak of war in 1914, 7,000 of these had been converted to motorised taxis, so it was huge period of change. There were, of course, many makes and models in those early days and most of them European. So it is surprising to think that the fleet of London has only doubled in a hundred years. The wars, of course, caused big drops in the fleet size and our present fleet of just over 20,000 has, in fact, grown from only 4,000 in 1945.

This trade has many talented and dedicated people who over the years have seen through many changes and challenges to keep our trade strong and maintain drivers earnings. I have no doubt that this is still the case and indeed we are honoured to have so many of them as members of our Worshipful Company. Just as the trade accepted change in the past, so we will in the future. I am delighted to be going on The Magical Taxi Tour to Disneyland Paris this year in my role as Master. This is the 15th annual trip which has brought happiness to so many children and I feel privileged to be a part of this year’s trip. The Magical Taxi Tour charity is just one part

of our Company and the trip puts London’s taxi trade in the minds of so many who are suffering from debilitating illness and their families.

On the road to becoming Master I have sat on various committees that the Company has and become involved in many different aspects of the Company. Livery Companies stretch back even further than my own family’s involvement in the taxi trade and that makes being Master even more special. The membership is far reaching with all sorts of different people being involved, although the majority of members are indeed licensed taxi drivers. The City plays an important role in London life and the taxis that transport passengers around not only the City but the rest of the capital are an important part of everyday life. That is why I am so delighted to be Master this year and I look forward to meeting those from other Livery Companies during this time. I also look forward to processing at the Election of the Lord Mayor and taking part in the Lord Mayor’s Show. For me The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers shows all that is good about the trade, from charitable events and endeavours, through to the Education Committee and the Cab Guiding Course and not forgetting the social fellowship one gains from belonging to such an organisation. With the future of the Company in the hands of my Wardens and Court of Assistants, supported by our excellent Clerk, I am sure the Company will continue to prosper for years to come.

If you would like to know more about the Company, please do not hesitate to contact our Clerk, Mary Whitworth, on 01494 765922.

