

# RETIRED CAB GOES TO CANADA

## by Russell Glenn

After moving away from London I found that I missed the shape, sound and smell of the London cab, so I purchased one that had been parked up locally. It was not the most reliable vehicle ever and broke down so often it became an embarrassment! One evening I had left the broken down cab in Cranham Woods high up on the Cotswold escarpment of Birdlip, I was woken at home by a large police officer and had to try to convince him that I had left the cab due to mechanical problems. Even though the old meter was in pounds, shillings and pence he took some convincing. I tried to explain that the cab was long out of service but my cockney accent went against me and the fact coppers never believe any one! The truth was that some poor soul had decided to hang himself on a tree in the woods, a not uncommon occurrence in this place. The police seemed to think that I had driven this bloke out and then left the cab?? So a few days later it was recovered and returned home.

I felt that some sort of cloud was against the thing so AMY 990H was dismantled for spares, funnily enough that was when we found the reason for the breakdowns!

Every time I ascended a long hill the cab would expire, and later you could bleed the fuel system and it would run perfectly. When I removed the fuel tank I found lots of old rags inside and I presume they had floated around under pressure and blocked the vent pipe. So the master plan was put into action, if you want a London cab ask a cabbie!

A few weeks later at a family party I asked my Uncle (actually great uncle but he looked too young) Sid Brown to keep an eye out for me. Sid hailed from Peckham and a few weeks later when he called in for his service he asked the boys at the garage what was about. Just the thing for me, a London cab, YMM249H. She was missing a few bits, the cab had been kept as a spare cab due to the older type engine the BMC 2.2 and then used as a runabout till being parked up in the railway arch. A few odd parts had been removed and then the coat of dust had covered the cab. A phone call from Uncle Sid and I borrowed a trailer and a Triumph 2.5 to drive down to collect the cab. Now the boys at Roytones in Wyndham Road are top class - I got the full SP on the cab. She was mechanically sound but the head had been repaired due to cracks, a common problem. The engine had been rebuilt some time before that but the repair to the head had failed causing excessive smoke, they gave me a list of the few bits needing work and helped me push her into the light!



The back of the cab

had a few additions not recognised by the PCO - 1 dead mummified cat, 7 pigeons and layers of dust. She was towed up onto the trailer; a small amount of money changed hands - well worth every penny - and off to my parents house in Wandsworth. We got a few strange looks on the way as the hire sign was missing, as well as the driver's seat and door. As many years have passed, I can also own up to something as we drove along towards Clapham Common by the old cab shelter my mate forgot the trailer!! A large bang and when we looked behind half of the concrete traffic island was no more just dust, no one noticed so we kept moving. After a short break at my parents' house we drove off, along the M40. Roger applied some power and we shot up to 60MPH the fastest that old cab ever went then we noticed that passing car drivers and passengers were staring at us. We thought nothing of this until unloading the cab in Cheltenham and finding the dead animals absent, oops! During the following month the brakes were overhauled with new seals, some new tyres fitted the missing bits replaced and a service carried out and then we drove the cab back to London for the LVTA meeting at The Taxi Driver of the Year Show in Crystal Palace. This time Roger was a passenger although I let him drive and he avoided Clapham!



In the picture you can see the local gang of youngsters assisting me. My friend John Talbot took the picture, 2 of the children are now strapping great big lads, my Nephews Neal and Paul Partridge. The others were from a neighbouring house and I still see them about with their families.

We kept this old cab for many years and even drove to Scotland for a holiday albeit very slowly. This led to a few odd and funny and confusing situations that seem common with these vehicles. After starting my own business the old girl was left on blocks in the garage still with her Halda meter in L.S.D and original adverts, it seemed a shame to not use the cab. So I advertised it in the LVTA magazine. One caller was a Canadian chap by the name of Murray Jackson but he was after a 2.5 cab if possible. One evening long after I had forgotten about the advert a phone call came

through with a sort of old fashioned accent this was Lorne Bradley in Navan Canada.



Lorne owned a coach and school bus business and had wanted a retired London cab for his 50th birthday he was well past that age! I sent Lorne a few pictures but they were not of good quality but he seemed to want the taxi as it was old enough to import into Canada. I mailed him copies of the history and we came to an agreement. I would sell Lorne the taxi on the basis he looked after it, carried out some bodywork repairs and used it for charity whenever possible and the terms of my sale were that he paid for the shipping to Canada but did not pay me for the cab until it arrived at his house and he was happy with it. So some weeks later a lorry arrived and YMM 249H was driven for the last time. I was inconsolable for days it was like losing part of the family. Funnily enough I received several phone calls from friends who had seen it on the transporter and thought it stolen.

After a long sea journey the cab arrived in Canada. I had written a small pamphlet detailing how to operate the cab and all the quirks (lift the bonnet to turn the heater on) and Lorne arrived and drove his taxi home. He said that on the journey he had a police escort most of the way due to traffic slowing down to see the taxi. Lorne kept the cab many years and carried out the bodywork and used her for the local shows and charity work. We kept in touch and he even came over to England with his wife and took us out for dinner. Lorne was taken ill and sadly passed away. His son in law and daughter could not keep the cab in the business as they were busy expanding it. I was asked to help choose the new owner.

Murray Jackson came into the picture once again and took ownership. He kept in touch with me. A few years ago he found that driving the old cab with no power steering or power brakes plus that slow old engine was too much hard work and asked me to look him out a more modern cab.

