

RETIREMENT AFTER 60 YEARS OF SERVICE

London Taxi driver Charlie Green has decided to call it a day having spent 60 glorious years working throughout the capital. Born in Stepney, London in 1925, Charlie joined the cab trade having spent five years (1942 to 1947) in the army. As a second generation family member to become a taxi driver, Charlie thought his keen eye for detail, razor sharp wit and profound interest in human nature would make him ideally suited for a career in the taxi industry. He went on to study and pass the Knowledge in 1948, and soon found himself sitting behind the wheel of a Chinese upright courtesy of cab firm London General at 1 Brixton Road, SW9.

Having served the London cab trade with great pride and passion, Charlie often looks back fondly on the memories of his role. Over the years, he delighted thousands of UK and international passengers with his fascinating observations, which were always rich in history and featured a humorous twist. One of Charlie's earliest passengers was former Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, who he picked up from the Houses of Parliament en route to the PM's home in Hyde Park Gate. Other famous passengers included international singing star Dame Shirley Bassey, actors Robert Newton and Rex Harrison and comedians Tony Hancock and Benny Hill amongst numerous others.

"The streets were so quiet back then compared to the hustle and bustle of today's busy transport network. Getting from A to B was so easy," said Charlie.

"I first started out driving a Chinese upright, a vehicle which had no side windows for the driver or suspension. It certainly made for an interesting ride on the cobbled streets of the capital. I then drove an Austin 6 taxi and a selection of vehicles within the TX series, before finally driving a Fairway."

Having never owned a taxi, Charlie worked for a number of garages throughout the region including firms such as Feldays in Bethnal Green and finally Frank Tingley Motors in Cable Street, Stepney. It was here that Charlie made the difficult decision to finally take retirement. "I spend most of my time now trying to stay active and mobile. I've always remained young at heart, which is why I've continued as a taxi driver for so many years. However, the main reason for not retiring before now is that those in the trade would always say that you shouldn't retire too early because your wife will drive you mad. I wouldn't have wished to do anything else but be part of the world famous London taxi service and will miss all those within the industry greatly. I would like to let my ex-colleagues on the Barbican City Hotel cab rank and café in Smithfield Meat Market, who I used to see on Sundays, know that I am still alive and kicking!"



TWO VISITS TO ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Throughout the year, The Master of The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers attends a number of events. This year's Master, Andrew Overton, began his year with an Installation Dinner in September and soon after he and his wife led the convoy of taxis on The Magical Taxi Tour. In the past few weeks Andrew has attended services which have touched him personally and here he tells of two.



MEMORIAL SERVICE IN THE CITY

On 3rd November 2008, as the Master of The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers, accompanied by the Clerk, Mary Whitworth, I attended the Royal British Legion Memorial Service held in the garden of St Paul's Cathedral. The service takes place each year where the Lord Mayor and his Sheriffs and other City Officers place wreaths at the base of the tree next to the Cathedral. Then all of the 108 Livery Company's Masters go forward in order to place a small cross with poppies in the ground in remembrance of those fallen in conflict. The service is conducted in the open air with a military band and members of the Legion in attendance. Andrew said: "It was a very moving experience and special to be holding this service outside whilst the City all around busied itself with normal life. The service ends with the last post resonating out above the traffic noise as we remembered."

CENTENARY SERVICE AT ST PAUL'S

The Centenary service of the Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor took place in the presence of her Majesty the Queen and Prince Phillip the Duke of Edinburgh on 13th November at St Paul's Cathedral. This service also enabled the Queen to dedicate a small Chapel within the cathedral to the Knight Bachelor.

Knights of course date back many centuries and the term Bachelor comes from the French meaning soldier. Today, most people who are knighted receive that honour later in life for achievements within society rather than for valour on the battlefield. The Bishop of London who conducted the service was quick to point out that although their past reputation may have been to



rescue damsels in distress, he thought that was an unlikely requirement in this day and age and that members of the society would do well to consider helping today's youth who were in trouble or distress. He was keen to make the point that with all the members experience they were well placed to consider that London currently has over 40,000 youngsters on probation and there was a real need for their help.

Andrew commented: "The service was quite magnificent and the attendance of the Queen a great honour."