

STOPPING AT CASH MACHINES

Last July, the PCO launched a trial period to allow to stop and wait while passengers use a cash machine on Red Routes at night. Since then the trial has been operating successfully and as a result Transport for London (TfL) has started the process of formally incorporating it into the traffic management orders governing the Red Routes.

PARKING IN THE CITY

From 15 June 2009, the City of London Corporation will make changes to the parking controls in the City. The changes are being implemented to improve the flow of traffic in the City, particularly for taxis, buses and emergency service vehicles. A single controlled parking zone will cover the whole of the City between 7am and 7pm from Monday to Friday and between 7am and 11am on Saturday. All single yellow lines in the City will operate at these times. Double yellow lines will, however, continue to prohibit waiting in their location at any time.

When waiting is prohibited (during the controlled period on single yellow lines and at all times on double yellow lines) waiting solely in order to load or unload will however be permitted for up to 40 minutes (except in locations where loading and unloading is also prohibited; these areas are clearly indicated by traffic signs and road markings). The maximum stay period in pay and display parking bays will be increased to four hours.

THE CATO STREET CONSPIRACY *By Alan Fleming*

Cato Street, just off the Edgware Road, is a street we pass by and never give it a thought. But it was here in 1820 that a group of conspirators plotted to assassinate all the government ministers. They also included in their plot the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool.

The conspirators were members of a group known as Spenceans, named after a very fiery radical speaker Thomas Spence, a schoolteacher from Newcastle. Some of them had been involved in the Spa Field Riots in Islington on December 2nd. Prior to this on November 15th 1816, hundreds gathered to hear Henry Hunt speak. He was nominated by the people to take a petition to the Prince Regent. The petition was in protest at the high prices and high taxation, and oppression, nothing changes does it? But he was denied access to the Prince. Then on 2nd Dec 1816 10,000 people gathered at Spa Fields to protest at the way Hunt had been treated. However the meeting degenerated into a riot.

The Spenceans wanted reform and spoke out against the government all around the country. They were becoming very popular and were a constant worry to the government. One of the group, Arthur Thistlewood, came to dominate the group. They were very angry about the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 as well as with the economic depression and the political incompetence of the government. Henry Hunt, one of the group, was to speak at St. Peter's Field, Manchester. Thousands gathered to hear him speak but the meeting ended in a bloodbath. Magistrates ordered The Manchester and Salford Yeomanry to charge them and arrest the leaders, 15 people were killed and 500 injured. So the group had plenty to be angry about as the government were denying them the freedom to air their views and so started to hatch their plans. One of the group, George Edwards, suggested that the group could exploit the political situation and kill all the Cabinet ministers. The plan was to assassinate a number of cabinet ministers, overthrow the government and set up a Committee of Public Safety to oversee a radical revolution, similar to the French Revolution. According to the prosecution at their trial, they had planned to form a provisional government their headquarters were to be in the Mansion House down in the City of London.

At the time the government were in crisis due to the death of King George 3rd on January 29 1820. In a meeting held on February 22nd they planned to invade a cabinet dinner at the home of Lord Harrowby Lord President of the Council, armed with pistols and grenades. Thistlewood was convinced the act would create a massive uprising against the government. One of the conspirators James Ings, a coffee shop keeper and former butcher, stated that he would cut off the heads of all the cabinet members and take two heads to exhibit on Westminster Bridge. Thistlewood spent the next hours trying to recruit more men for the attack. Twenty-seven men joined the effort.

One of the plotters, a Jamaican called William Davidson, had worked for Lord Harrowby. He went to look for more details about the cabinet dinner. A servant in the house told him that his master was not home at all. When Davidson told this to Thistlewood, he refused to believe it and demanded that the operation commence at once. A gang member John Harrison rented a small house in Cato Street as the

base of operations. However, what they did not know was that George Edwards who had suggested killing the Cabinet was working for the Home Office, and was spying on them. In fact some of the other members had suspected him, but Thistlewood had made him his right hand man. The group had been set up as it was a government plot to discredit the movement as they were becoming too popular. Edwards had presented the idea to the group with the full knowledge of the Home Office, who had also put the advertisement about the supposed dinner in The New Times. When he reported that his comrades would be ready to follow his suggestion, the Home Office made ready for action.

Arrest and trial

On February 23rd Richard Bimie, a Bow Street magistrate, and George Ruthven, another police spy, went to wait at a pub on the other side of the street with 12 Bow Street Runners. Bimie and Ruthven waited for the afternoon because they had been promised help from a squad from the Coldstream Guards, commanded Lieutenant Fitzclarence, the late King's grandson. The group had all arrived whilst the Bow street runners waited in the pub opposite. Then at 7.30pm, the Bow Street Runners decided to go into action and arrest the conspirators themselves. In the ensuing brawl, Thistlewood killed a police officer, Richard Smithers, with a sword. Some conspirators surrendered peacefully, while others resisted forcefully. Davidson failed to fight his way out. Thistlewood, Robert Adams, John Brunt and John Harrison slipped out the back window but they were arrested a few days later.

Eleven men were later charged for the plot. During the trial, the defence argued that the statement of Edwards, a government spy, was unreliable and he was therefore never called to testify. Police convinced two of the men, Robert Adams and John Monument, to testify against other conspirators in exchange for dropped charges. Most of the accused were sentenced to be hung drawn and quartered for high treason on April 28th. All sentences were later commuted, at least in respect of this medieval form of execution. Brunt, Davidson and Ings, Thistlewood and Richard Tidd were hanged at Newgate prison on May 1st 1820 the death sentences of Charles Cooper, Richard Bradburn, John Harrison, James Wilson and John Strange were commuted to transportation for life.

The group for Parliamentary Reform had become very popular around the country and were becoming a threat to the government. The government had to do something to thwart the objectives of the group. This is why the Home Office ordered George Edwards to infiltrate the group, and set them up. It was him on home office orders who infiltrated the group and actually encouraged them to kill the Cabinet. It was all pre-planned and worked to the letter. So it would seem that even back in the distant past the government had its dirty tricks department. In the House of Commons Matthew Wood MP actually accused the government of purposeful entrapment of the conspirators to smear the campaign, for parliamentary reform. So there you are James Bond 007 has been around for a very long time.

Alan Fleming is now working with Taxi Drivers & Owners Legal Protection Ltd. So if you are looking for the best legal representation in the trade perhaps you may consider joining the new legal insurance scheme, which is run by Alan and Dave Cohen. Dave can be contacted on 07956 894 701, Alan can be contacted on 07831 092 123.