

PEDICABS REVISITED ... *By John Kennedy*



I'm sure many of you have seen the front of the well respected "TAXI" newspaper and were probably jumping for joy thinking that at long last Transport for London have seen sense and decided to remove pedicabs/rickshaws from the public highway.

Well, sorry to spoil the party, but I'm afraid this is old news for at the recent hearings (March 2009) of the opposed bill committee of the House of Lords it was public knowledge that Transport for London were scrapping the idea of a licensing regime hence the change to the bill which seeks to introduce a "voluntary registration scheme". Yes a VOLUNTARY registration scheme that will give the pedicab/rickshaw operator/rider an air of respectability. Couple this with the Westminster City Council pedicab ranks (up to 30 bays) sorry "pedicab waiting areas" and hey presto we shall have a worst case scenario for the working taxi-cab driver.

A pedicab/rickshaw industry with ranks, some with registration plates, the majority not, members of the public duped into believing that these objects are in fact regulated/licensed because some will have registration plates. Chaos is about to reign even further on the streets and roads of the capital and people who state they represent you think it is a good idea to allow a bill through parliament that will become a "stepping stone to licensing". To make matters worse still nobody at Transport for London nor the Department of Transport is prepared to take a pedicab/rickshaw and crash test one to see if it is suitable for the carrying of fare paying passengers, nobody is even the slightest concerned with regards to the use of these objects by people with disabilities, nobody was prepared to inform the opposed bill committee of the serious sexual assault/rape back in 2004. It seems our whole system of governance is prepared to turn a blind eye to the unsuitability of these objects to be allowed to carry fare paying passengers on the public highway.

Presently pedicabs/rickshaws can be ticketed under section 54 of the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act where it is an offence to have a stage carriage being "drawn or driven upon any footway or kerbstone". So if the Metropolitan Police wish to move or at the very least ticket these objects powers exist that allow them to clear the exits of theatres and pavements of these death traps. I am led to believe that recently some Police Community Support Officers have been doing just that and ticketing the riders that happen to block the bus lane but more importantly the footway/kerbstone outside Hamleys on Regent Street.

Now I read the article in "TAXI" newspaper and was interested to read in the final paragraph and I quote "A Bill is currently progressing through parliament which, if successful, will allow local authorities to issue tickets to pedicabs, licensed or unlicensed which cause obstruction. The pedicab industry is fighting desperately to prevent the Bill from progressing and they are considering a 'pedal in' to defend their 'human right' to block the streets". So it seems we should sit back and allow the passage of this bill and subsequent formation of pedicab ranks in the West End and possibly other boroughs, then hope when HM Government get around to it they decide to listen to the LTDA and then ban pedicabs from their newly granted ranks with their VOLUNTARY registration plates. Sorry Bob, I've read the opposed bill committee record and it seems Westminster City Council wish to work with the pedicab industry and see this VOLUNTARY scheme as a stepping stone to a licensing regime. The point you raise about ticketing also needs clarifying because it seems only those who "register" for the VOLUNTARY scheme will be liable for fixed penalty notices and we shall have to rely on the Metropolitan Police yet again to do what they could do NOW if they had the will or the wish to ticket those that obstruct the pavements.

I like many other taxi-cab drivers have decided to petition against the London Local Authorities and Transport for London (no.2) Bill if it manages to proceed to the House of Commons after a third reading in the House of Lords. Many taxi-cab drivers are seeking support of trade bodies like the LCDC and the newly formed but rapidly growing RMT London taxi branch and will be urging them to petition against this bill. For instead of making it easier for a ban to come in to affect this bill will certainly become a "stepping stone" to further chaos upon the streets and roads of the capital.

Pedicabs/rickshaws are not a safe secure method and mode of transport in a modern first world city like London, they offer no protection from impact and for this reason alone they should be confined to the Parks of the capital where the chance of impact and serious injury is dramatically reduced. The 3rd Way is the only Way and with your help, support and assistance we at www.ltpr.blogspot.com can start a campaign to do just that and place the pedicabs in the parks where they belong.

John Kennedy, founder of London taxi cab public relations.

DRIVING SHEEP ACROSS LONDON BRIDGE

If you fancy getting out of the cab and driving some sheep over London Bridge for a change, here is your opportunity! Celebrating its 800th year of completion in 2009, London Bridge was the first stone bridge across the River Thames. The old bridge was opened in 1209 by King John and to commemorate the anniversary, The Lord Mayor's Appeal is holding an Anniversary Fayre on London Bridge on Saturday 11 July. The Bridge will be closed to traffic between 10am and 4pm. Visitors will be able to wander the Bridge freely and enjoy a whole host of fun activities and entertainment. One of the organisations with a display will be The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers.

Amongst the activities taking place is a Sheep Drive. As Freemen and Liverymen of the City of London, one of the ancient rights is that of being able to drive sheep 'tax free' across the Bridge. Shepherdess Katy Cropper, who won One Man and his Dog in 1990 and is the only female winner, will be on the bridge with her sheep. The Right Honourable Lord Mayor Ian Ludler

will take part in the first drive of the day. Any Freemen of The Worshipful Company of Hackney Drivers can get further details of entry from The Lord Mayor's Appeal Office, 22 Melton Street, NW1 2EP telephone 020 7728 2680 or email sharon.pickersgill@LMA09.org and non Freemen can also take part if they pay their groats for the privilege. Groats are the name of an English silver coin worth four pennies.

Also on the day there will be demonstrations and exhibitions about the work of the mysteries, crafts and guilds of London. There will be a particular theme of London life at the time of the Bridge's opening including medieval education, health, entertainment and crime and punishment. Admission to the event is free, but any money raised through donations will go to the Lord Mayor's Appeal and the two nominated charities, St John Ambulance London and The Lord's Taverners.