

DRIVE IN AT ABACUS BY THOMAS THE TAXI

In the early hours of a Thursday morning, drivers from the London Taxi Drivers Forum descended on the bar Abacus, in Cornhill. Their aim was to give the illegal touts a tough time. This bunch of touts has become more and more aggressive. They now crowd the entrance and intimidate customers making it almost impossible for them to reach licensed taxis that are legally ranking up outside. The City of London and the PCO/TfL have placed the rank so far back and the wrong way round that a customer leaving this bar would have great difficulty recognising the fact that these taxis are in fact for hire, as they would not be able to see any For Hire signs.

TfL/PCO has made it increasingly easier all over London for mini scab drivers to plague the entrances of every Club, Bar and night venues, by relaxing the enforcement of regulations and parking laws. If you were in any doubt, a trip along the Haymarket



would show the extent to which these touts are taking liberties. Tiger Tiger has a 24 hour bus lane, double yellow lines, a bus stand and a traffic island which is impassable with the illegal ranks of touts,

sometimes double parked. What makes this extremely unpalatable is the fact that a car bomb was left here, disguised as a mini cab, and still no one takes any notice of the goings on at this establishment. To add insult to injury, there is a licensed taxi rank pushed down the street which is unusable as there is a fence between the rank and the pavement. It would also be impossible for wheelchair users to acquire a taxi from this rank, as we also see at Victoria Station.

Well done to Stef and the drivers of the LTDF who put themselves out on a regular basis to take work away from this wild bunch of marauding bandits outside Abacus. You have to have a bit of bottle to do this, so it's not every driver's cup of tea, but the numbers of disgruntled drivers are growing. Most of our critics said this "Take the work back" action wouldn't last but they have been proved wrong by drivers like Stef and his mates from the forum.

WCHCD MASTER JOINS THE WAR DISABLED OUTING TO WORTHING

The Master of the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers, Andrew Overton and his wife, Carol, were invited to attend the 61st outing of The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled to Worthing on Tuesday, 16th June, which they were honoured to do.

This year's outing started as usual with the morning stop at South Holmwood and then, with the sun shining, the onward trip to the Worthing Assembly Rooms. With over 400 attendees, this is a major occasion and the Worthing Town Mayor was delighted to welcome everyone. As a special guest this year, Joanna Lumley and her Ghurkha veterans were very much the focus of attention. During the speeches, all paid tribute to Joanna and her team for their efforts and huge success in their campaign for Ghurkha rights of settlement.

The Master was honoured to be sitting next to Dame Vera Lynn, the Patron of the War Disabled Benevolent Association who, despite her advancing years, is still

as bright and interested as ever. Indeed, it was quite moving to see the enormous affection displayed by the old soldiers when greeting Dame Vera and the obvious reciprocation of that affection from her.

The post-lunch entertainment after a walk on the promenade, involved the Jive Aces who in their yellow suits put on the most spectacular performance imaginable and had the Chairman's wife and several other ladies acting as a backing group. We also were entertained by 'Kaz' who styles herself as the new forces Sweetheart. The day's proceedings in Worthing wound up at six o'clock with the veterans and their wonderful drivers heading back to South Holmwood for a stop on the way home. The selfless commitment of the drivers who do this year in, year out is quite amazing and the shining example of Harry Joel, the President of the Association, who has been on every trip since 1948.

BUS LANES AHOY! by Alan Fleming

In my last report on the bus lane campaign by the PHV industry, I wrote about the fact that it was illegal for them to have telephone numbers and operators name on the vehicle. I said that it was claimed by TfL and PCO that this had been amended and that I was not convinced of this. However, since then I have done some more research and I am now more convinced of this. I wrote to the Mayor explaining that this was unlawful due to Sect. 31 of the Private Hire Vehicles Act London 1998.

His reply was that the 1999 Greater London Authority Act created the 2004 The Private Hire Vehicles (London PHV Licenses) Regulations and it came into force on 8th March 2004. I read the Act and Regulation 8 regarding signage was still in force. Now this Act does give powers to TfL to amend regulations at their discretion. And I

was informed by the Mayor that on the 15th October 2007 that the TfL Board had amended Regulation 8 regarding signage. Further that PHVs are now allowed to have name and telephone number on the car. I then acquired all the TfL Board meeting minutes for 2007 and found nothing in those minutes about amending Regulation 8 of the above Act. From my research I discovered that there is no meeting recorded for the 15 October 2007.

There may have been an unscheduled meeting of the Board where the amendment to Regulation 8 was approved. If this is the case then what the Board have done is to allow private hire to ply for hire in London. We cannot blame the Mayor for this, as this was done under the previous Mayor, our old friend Ken Livingston. As this Act gives powers to TfL to change the regulations they must take

into consideration the decisions of the Courts. They cannot ignore the common law which are the judgments laid down by the Courts. The government could have overridden the Law Lords in the 1998 Act and also the 1999 Act but they did not. The reason being that they took notice of what the Law Lords had laid down. What that Funny Lot have done is ignore those judgements made by the Courts which say that the name and telephone number on a car is unlawful because it is plying for hire. I will of course be asking for minutes of this phantom meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

So what we now have is a situation where it is allowed in London, but banned elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It seems to me that the previous incumbents on TfL did not have any common sense at all. And if they were advised by their solicitors



that they could make this amendment it doesn't say much for them either. However, looking at what has happened under the present administration regarding Leicester Square where PHVs were allowed to ply for hire, it wouldn't surprise me if this lot were just a bad.