

LONDON VINTAGE TAXI ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES INSPIRING SHOW TURNOUT

by Mark Cooper

It certainly wasn't the weather forecast but the forthcoming 50th, 60th & 75th Anniversary celebrations of three of the most famous and recognisable London Taxis which inspired members of the London Vintage Taxi Association to exhibit 16 gleaming examples of their pride & passion at the Uxbridge Autoshow on Sunday 19th July.

Whilst a few blustery showers deterred the more faint hearted visitors and exhibitors, determined members drove their Taxis from as far afield as Manchester and Dorset to provide a dazzling display of highly polished coachwork and glistening chrome. Although allocated a large corner pitch, the Taxis still had to manoeuvre as only Taxis can, in order that they could all be exhibited within the confines of the display area. With two marquees erected to protect members, guests and the stock of Taxi related wares and regalia from the elements, the stand attracted a steady stream of visitors, with both regalia sales and new membership applications exceeding expectations.



By mid afternoon the skies had cleared and the association was invited to parade all of the Taxis present in the main arena. With a few hand gestures, discernable only to fellow Taxi drivers, the Associations' magazine

editor Bill Munro swiftly arranged the Taxis into date order, and then via the public address system treated the assembled crowd to an informative condensed history of the London Taxi trade, giving short but very concise narrative of the production and development of each of the Taxis in turn.

On returning to the pitch, the Chairman enlisted the services of a Metropolitan Police Traffic Officer, Kevin Tregaskis, who is based at Alperton. He just happened to be manning a display of vintage Police vehicles nearby, to judge which Taxi was the best presented in each of three categories, for the purpose of prize giving. Having made his selections, the Officer announced the registration number of the best pre war Taxi... which belonged to the Chairman! Laughter and cheers of impropriety quickly followed and only died down to allow the Officer to announce the registration number of the winner of the post war category... which belonged to the Association's Secretary! The roars of laughter erupted again with even greater intensity and when the Officer was informed as to whom the Taxis he had chosen belonged, he could not help but join in with the laughter. After awarding the third and final prize for the best FX3 to Mo Abed Alaziz, the Officer did go on to commend each and every participant for the standard of the presentation of their vehicles, which was sincerely echoed by the Chairman.

If the achievements by the Association and its members at this event are an indication of what they are capable of, then the displays and celebrations planned to take place in Coventry, the manufacturing home of the London Taxi, to mark the 50th, 60th and 75th anniversaries of the Austin FX4, FX3 and Low Loader respectively will be a spectacle not to be missed. The celebrations weekend will take place at the Coventry Motor Museum on Saturday 26th September, & The Heritage Motor Museum, Gaydon on Sunday 27th September.



ONE TRANSPORT AND HEATHROW AIRPORT

Following recent events at Heathrow Airport and at Mountview House, Taxi Globe asked Radio Taxis Group for a statement. The spokesperson for RTG said: "The portrayal of Radio Taxis Group (as owners of One Transport) as the enemy within, by elements of the trade is both disappointing and untrue.

BAA had informed the management company, One Transport (OT) that they were speaking to Addison Lee, to potentially run Private Hire at the airport. It became obvious that unless OT did something to prevent this, the taxi trade would be at risk of eventually losing the whole airport. For the record, contrary to the misinformation which has been spun in elements of the trade press, OT is not a car company, nor it does not own or run any cars at all, it is, however a nationwide on line personal transport management & booking platform, for both taxis and for cars and its managers consequently had some difficult choices to make.

"BAA are aware that the taxi trade pays for its presence at the airport through the feeder park fees, however no revenue at all is earned by the cash strapped BAA from the multitude of Private Hire companies that use the airport property on a daily basis. Add to this the astonishing fact that Private Hire currently undertakes a whopping 24% of the work out of Heathrow with the taxi trade's share having reduced to a paltry 2%; it was obvious something had to be done, if the trade was not to be further damaged.

"OT's plan was to do what it does best, to truly and impartially manage, so that the 24% of pre booked transfers from the airport would satisfy BAA with revenue, while at the same time ensuring that travellers who want a taxi get a taxi, not a car and that the touts (who still play a massive part at Heathrow) would lose out. One Transport's plan was, without prejudice, to benefit the trade and the strategy was to prove that an organisation, wholly owned by the taxi trade (RTG) could do a better job than Addison Lee with whom they were in competition with and thus save the airport for our industry.

"BAA however, enforced a strict "non disclosure agreement" until they themselves announced the scheme and regrettably did not give One Transport the opportunity to speak to the trade, as the fact that OT had intended to work with the trade, would have been revealed. Since that time not one member of any organisation or newspaper has asked, what really happened? They have been very happy to assume the worst and jump on the finger pointing bandwagon. Indeed the so called action at Mountview House which it is "claimed" by "driver's organisations" to have had over "60 drivers attend," (CCTV clearly shows that less than a handful of drivers actually attended) no-one had the decency or good sense to ask if they could talk to the management to find out the truth of the situation.

"Radio Taxis Group management profess "pride in the Group and in its integrity to the industry, no matter what the "Nay Sayers" and those who dislike them think." One suspects that while the trade argues amongst itself Addison Lee must be laughing their heads off."