

## MARTIN NOBLE MBE *by Derek Leone*

On 22nd December 2009, at the age of 77 years, Martin Noble sadly passed away. He retired from the committee of the London Taxi Benevolent Association For War Disabled due to failing health at the start of the year. Martin was Appeals Officer for 35 years and in that time he raised £150,000 pounds for the charity. For many years, he was on Radio Taxis.

Martin's passion was the railway system and he travelled extensively all over the network be it on the main line or the underground. It was in 2000 that Martin's hard work for the London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled was rewarded. He was invited to Buckingham Palace on 16th June 2000 where he was awarded the MBE for his service to the charity. It was a very proud

moment for Martin and he would wear his medal to any function that he was invited to.

During the past year, the War Disabled charity has lost three valuable friends, Doug Sherry MBE, Alan Hooker and now Martin Noble MBE. Sincere condolences go to Estelle on this very sad occasion from The President, Chairman, Officers and Committee of the London Taxi



Benevolent Association for War Disabled.

## MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR THE DISABLED (AND THAT'S JUST THE DRIVER!)

When we think of taxis for the disabled these days, it is usually about passenger space, swivel seats, ramps and the like. But what about disabled taxi drivers? Not many of them around, but one is Allan Wells from Swindon. "It was an accident on a farm way back in 1976," explains Allan, "when I shattered my leg. I effectively had no more use of my right leg, and I was forced to find a new career. It was tough but having worked on a farm all my life I thought that being a cab driver would get me sat down and handling the passengers would be easier. Little did I know what was ahead of me!"

Allan continues: "Managing the types of people you get nowadays can be a bit tough but nothing as difficult as driving a cab when you can't bend your leg! You certainly don't have the legroom up front. And as for using the accelerator or the brake pedals, that was impossible. If it hadn't been for me getting hand controls fitted the job would have been impossible. Over time my other leg has suffered as well because all the pressure has gone on to that leg. All my mates around Swindon have been brilliant – as I fell out of my taxi they would be there to let me fall into their arms, pity there's not more women drivers in Swindon! In fact, I've teamed up with another driver on my cab, I work nights and he does the days, and we're running our cab at around 70-



Allan Wells from Swindon and Mercedes Senior Technician-Adam Swann

80,000 miles every year. It's a great job if you keep your sense of humour about you."

"I heard about this new Mercedes taxi coming out in London. It seemed to be well liked by quite a few of the drivers I knew worked in London, so I thought I'd head down to KPM in Bethnal Green to have a look. It was great! Hallelujah! It had so much more legroom, it was so comfortable for me as a driver that I just had to have one. I ordered my Mercedes Vito Taxi and took delivery last August. And frankly it has been one of my best decisions. In the first 4 months I had the Mercedes Vito Taxi, we clocked up 20,000 miles and my improved comfort in the driving seat has been so remarkable that the pain in my left leg

has started to reduce. That is worth a fortune to me, I'm happier to work longer hours.

"Then, there are the running costs of the Mercedes. I thought it was going to be quite expensive, but it hasn't proved to be. I am saving a heck of a lot of money on the running costs of my previous cab, and it's not just the fantastically improved quality and reduced down time you get with a Mercedes, I haven't had a set of tyres yet and my first service was only due at 20,000 miles. And as for the fuel consumption, the Mercedes is such a big improvement on my last cab: my partner and I must be saving thousands of pounds a year. I've also been delighted with the service I get from Rygor, the local Mercedes Garage. There were a lot of other drivers in Swindon who said the Mercedes garage was going to be expensive on both labour and parts, but my early experience of Rygor has been really good. I decided to get cruise control fitted because we sometimes do long journeys – nobody could believe that, fully-fitted, using Mercedes parts was considerably less than £400! Trading up to a Mercedes Vito Taxi has to be one of the best new year resolutions a taxi driver can make – it has certainly been my best move in years! During the snow, it has been great at road holding too. Without the change to this taxi, I would have had to give up cab driving, I just love my Mercedes."

## MBE FOR SOUTHEND TAXI CHARITY CHAIRMAN

Brian Houssart, President of the Southend Taxi Drivers Charity Fund for Under Privileged Children in Need, has been awarded an MBE for his charitable works. The charity was founded back in 1972 when the original objective was to take 250 local children on an annual outing day. Today this has grown into several events for local

children and the charity shares links with The London Taxidrivers' Fund for Underprivileged Children, who have an annual outing to Southend. David Lessman, Honorary Chairman has congratulated Brian on behalf of LTFUC. He says:

"The two charities have forged very close links through our Life President Bill Tyzack, himself

holder of the British Empire Medal, and Brian has been unstinting in his support for the LTFUC. Not only does he bring a large contingent of children to our annual Party at the Grosvenor House, but is always on hand when we visit Southend, giving valuable assistance to the wheelchair-bound. I know he will accept this honour on behalf of his

Charity, and on behalf of my fellow trustees, I wish him well."

Brian and his wife, Heather, who is the charity's Secretary, would like to thank all of their supporters who have appreciated the work they carry out for the charity. "We shall continue devoting ourselves to the aims of the Charity and look forward to the challenges ahead," he said.