

## CAB GUIDE COURSE VISITS NATIONAL GALLERY

Students on the Cab Guide Course, run by The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers enjoy visits to various Museums and Galleries during the course. Recently the current course students group went along to the National Gallery together with course tutor Graham Woodhouse to meet James Heard, Adult Learning Manager at the Gallery. He took the group on an interesting tour of the Gallery, choosing some paintings to talk to the students about in depth. During the time the WCHCD has been organising Cab Guide Courses, students have visited many museums, giving them a behind the scenes look at famous tourist attractions and also some which are not so well known. This gives students the opportunity to talk to their passengers and point out little known facts which enhance their visits.

Sitting majestically across the top of the world famous Trafalgar Square, the National Gallery is a popular destination with Londoners, tourists and visitors to London - around 4.5 million people visited last year alone. Within its walls there is the national collection of Western European painting from around 1250 onwards. The National Gallery is unusual in comparison to other galleries such as the Louvre because it came into being when the British Government bought just 38 paintings from banker John Julius Angerstein in 1824. One of these paintings, The Raising of Lazarus by Sebastiano del Piombo became the founding collection of the National Gallery in 1824. The painting has the accession number NG1, making it officially the first painting to enter the Gallery.

There are masterpieces on display from Reubens, Van Gogh, Turner, Leonardo Da Vinci, Monet, Rembrandt and many more. These pictures belong to the public, so entrance to see them is free. The present building, which is the third to house the National Gallery, was designed by William Wilkins from 1832–8. The façade onto Trafalgar Square is more or less the same today as it was then, with its columns to the left of the main entrance are from Carlton House, “re-cycled” due to economic constraints at the



time. The Sainsbury Wing, an extension to the west by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, is a notable example of Postmodernist architecture in Britain. Today much of the National Gallery has been restored to its original splendour, with ceilings uncovered when they had been filled in

during the 1960's when the fashion had been for lower suspended ceilings. Much of the original plasterwork was discovered behind these partitions and is a work of art in their own right now they have been restored.

100 Pall Mall was home of the National Gallery from 1824 to 1834. This was Angerstein's former townhouse. The collection briefly moved to 105 Pall Mall when subsidence was found at 100, then in 1832 construction began on a new building by William Wilkins on the site of the King's Mews in Charing Cross, which then became Trafalgar Square. Just before World War II, the paintings were evacuated to various locations in Wales, including Penrhyn Castle and the university colleges of Bangor and Aberystwyth, before being returned to Trafalgar Square in 1945.

A Highlights tour is available in eight languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. Rooms within the National Gallery cover paintings from 1250 until 1900. Whether it is a famous painting such as The Haywain, Sunflowers or The Ambassadors that visitors enjoy or some lesser known, but still beautiful works, there is such a wide range of art that everyone will find something they enjoy and can learn more about. There are special exhibitions and lectures, guided tours and holiday events for children and adults. Open daily 10:00am-6:00pm. Friday 10:00am-9:00pm closing commences 5 minutes before time stated.

For more details about the next Cab Guide course, dates and content please contact Mary Whitworth, The Clerk, who will be delighted to help you. Anyone looking for more details about The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers can also get information from The Clerk. Her telephone number is 01494 765922.

## 'NOT A DROP; NOT A DRAG' CAMPAIGN STEPS UP A GEAR

A survey by road safety charity Brake and Direct Line shows more than 9 out of 10 drivers (92%) support the introduction of a new anti drug drive law to enable prosecution of anyone driving on impairing drugs, similar to the law on drink driving. At the moment, a prosecution can only be brought against a drug driver if the police also have evidence the driver was driving badly. Drivers are also overwhelmingly in favour of a lower drink-drive limit, with more than 7 out of 10 (71%) agreeing that the current limit of 80mg alcohol per 100ml blood should be cut. More than half of drivers (55%) support Brake and Direct Line's calls for a low limit of 20mg alcohol per 100ml blood or lower. A further 16% favour a limit of 50mg - the maximum limit recommended by the European Commission.

Following a change in Ireland's laws from December 2009, Britain and Malta are the only remaining European countries with a drink-drive limit higher than the EU-recommended 50mg alcohol per 100ml blood. Increasing numbers of countries are setting a 20mg or zero-tolerance limit, including many of the countries with the best road safety records. Cathy Keeler, deputy chief executive of Brake, the road safety charity, said: "It's

time for bold action by policymakers to demonstrate they are listening to public concerns on drink and drug-driving. Our drink-drive limit and drug-drive laws are hopelessly out-of-touch with public opinion and the weight of evidence showing just how dangerous it is to mix drink or drugs - or both - with driving. We desperately need a solid legal foundation for the clear messages of the government's THINK! road safety campaign: don't drink any amount of alcohol and drive; don't take any impairing drugs (whether legal or illegal) and drive. The message is: Not a Drop, Not a Drag."

Andy Goldby, Director of Motor Underwriting at Direct Line Insurance said: "Drink or drug driving is one of the most serious crimes a driver can commit and one that needs to be tackled with real conviction. If we are to make any headway into achieving our goal of the safest roads in the world, we need to ensure that the right laws, limits and learning are in place here in the UK. Unfortunately, drink and drug driving is only one of the social problems that we need to address to make our roads safer. However, as our research suggests any increase in penalties, or decrease in the alcohol limit has the overwhelming support of British road users."