

'TAXI SAFARI' TO WOBURN SAFARI PARK

by Ray Levy

On 25th May 2010 the London Taxidriers' Fund for Underprivileged children took 280 'special needs' and disadvantaged children on an outing to Woburn Safari Park. I must start by extending grateful thanks from the Committee to all the wonderful drivers, and their helpers, who enabled the children to experience a brilliant day they will cherish forever. Thankfully the mini heat wave had ended the day before and the weather was perfect, being cooler, yet still dry and sunny. The children receiving this



special treat came from the Carlton Primary School in Kentish Town and we must thank the staff there for the most welcome refreshments provided to us in the morning.

A buzz of excitement filled the air when the children arrived, as for many of them it was their first ride in a black taxi, let alone the treat of going On Safari. Once the children had been allocated to their taxis, the convoy finally departed and we were glad to be accompanied by Sergeant Peter Morrell and his team of the Metropolitan Police (Safer Transport Command) and the City of London Police, Sergeant Jack Warner and PC Steve Adams. We were later joined by Chief Inspector Anspin and Inspector Bonner, both of the Bedfordshire Police and we are deeply grateful to them all for ensuring the convoy reached our destinations safely.

As soon as we arrived at Woburn, half of the convoy headed straight for the Road Safari, whilst the others went straight into the Safari Lodge Restaurant to enjoy a great lunch. At 1pm it was then the turn of the Road Safari group to go for lunch, whilst the children who had eaten were taken on the Road Safari, which worked very well. The rest of the afternoon was left for everyone to sample what was on offer; the great Foot Safari where the children get closer to the smaller animals, the Swan pedal boats, the Great Woburn Railway, the Avery and the Mammoth Play Ark for indoor fun. Some chose to go back round the Road Safari again, as it was possible to go round as many times as you wanted to see the animals.

At 4.30pm it was time for tea and as the weather was so nice, we were all able to sit outside on the steps of the Amphitheatre where everyone received a goody bag. After tea we were then treated to a breathtaking bird display before the convoy, carrying some very tired and weary children, left for home.

We must extend sincere thanks to our main Sponsors, Bartle Bogle Hegarty Ltd (BBH) and Lovells, LTDA, Martin Cordell & Co, Dial-a-Cab, Quotax, Radio Taxis and Michelin for their contribution in making this wonderful day possible. We also thank the anonymous donor who kindly enabled the drivers to receive free diesel vouchers. We are grateful to the RAC and St. John's Ambulance for joining us and also to London Communications for their help. We appreciate the coverage that the press and media gave us and, in particular, Hannah Pettifer of ITV Anglia who joined us on the outing and quickly rushed back to make sure we featured in their evening news.

We are deeply grateful to Woburn Safari Park for their help and hospitality and Alastair Crawford and all the staff in the Safari Lodge Restaurant. Going to Woburn Safari Park this year was extra special, as this May saw them celebrating their 40th anniversary and we send hearty congratulations and thank them for their continual support.

We were a little upset at the very low number of taxi drivers who joined us on the day, but over the very many years that the Fund has taken many thousands of children to a variety of destinations, there have been instances of plans going awry. We pride ourselves on the fact that whatever problem arises it is not insurmountable and, on this occasion, the ingenuity of the committee and the kind assistance of others, combined to ensure a fantastic day was enjoyed by all. We are most grateful to the drivers who did come, for not only giving up a day's work, but putting themselves out to ensure the children had a fantastic day. Here I must thank Martyn Oakley, a Chelmsford licensed taxi driver, who travelled from Chelmsford to join us. Without the drivers and helpers the day would not be possible. We also

thank Ford's Welfare Department at Dagenham for the loan of their mini bus, Bob Collins for driving it and Dave at Davian Coaches, Enfield, for his help and kindness.

What a brilliant, superb and magnificent day and we now look forward to our legendary outing to Southend-on-Sea on Tuesday 13th July 2010.

Images taken on the Woburn outing can be seen in the photo gallery of our website at www.ltfuc.org.uk

