

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PURPOSE BUILT TAXIS



Back in 1948, Carbodies launched the FX3 purpose built taxi. Carbodies was an established coach builders, known throughout the automotive industry for the fine quality coach building which it offered to companies such as Humber, Singer, Daimler, Jaguar, Ford and Rolls-Royce.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE "BLACK CAB"

In 1948 the FX3 began to be built at the Carbodies factory in Holyhead Road, financed jointly by Mann and Overton, Carbodies and Austin. Early models were



TAXI SHINES DOWN IN WORTHING
For one man, his FX3 is a labour of love. Derek Pearce, seen here with his immaculate FX3, attends the annual outing made by The London Taxi Benevolent Association For War Disabled to Worthing, bringing his taxi with him. This photograph was taken by cab driver Mark Cooper, who drives on the outing. Derek said: "This is a 1949 Austin FX3. It is now the oldest and most original one left in existence – and it's condition is one of the best – even if I say so myself!"

powered by a petrol engine. Later in 1952 a Ferguson diesel engine was made available. At the time when the FX3 was being built, the factory supplied the taxis in just one standard colour – black. This is where the traditional "black cab" comes from; then few of those buying the taxis were prepared to pay extra for a special colour. For the next thirty years, black was the standard colour chosen by purchasers.

The FX3 did not have a door on the drivers nearside. Instead there was an open space with a floor platform which was useful for carrying luggage. The FX3 soon became a popular model. The FX3 was replaced by the Austin FX4 introduced in 1958, though the older taxis continued in use for many years. The partnership with Mann & Overton and Austin began the success story of the purpose built cab. Over the following decade, thousands of taxis were produced, in the main part for the London taxi trade, although several hundreds were sold in the provinces. In turn the FX4 ceased production in 1997 and was replaced by the TX series.

Phil Warren is a well respected cab trade historian, who drove a radio cab, an Austin petrol-driven FX3 on ODRTS, now Dial-a-Cab. He recalls: "In the 1950's and early 60's, probably half a driver's work revolved around railway stations and the early air terminals. Boat trains provided a huge amount of work, mostly at Waterloo Station serving trains from Southampton's Atlantic route, St Pancras for boats docking in



Liverpool, Fenchurch Street for passengers from Tilbury - though some of these trains terminated at St Pancras and Victoria Station where the Continental side of the station catered for those passengers. The trains were served by huge numbers of taxis ranking. Massive amounts of luggage were catered for. Many FX3's had roof racks and these virtually commanded their own price, especially at Waterloo where employees of the Savoy Hotel would wave £1 notes around like confetti to hire two cabs, one for passengers one for their luggage."

Carbodies had originally been founded during 1919. During World War 2, the company was involved in making bodies for military vehicles and aircraft components. After the war a contract was secured from the Austin Motor Company to make taxi bodies. At the same time bodies were being built for Ford, making the bodies for the convertible Consul, Zephyr and Zodiac. Since then the company has become known as LTI Vehicles and the production of the purpose built cab still continues at the factory with today's TX4 model range.

NEW CAB, NEW REGISTRATION

As the new 57 number plate began in September, more cabs are now being seen on the road with the new registration.

The new system of changing registrations twice a year was introduced to help vehicle dealerships across the country deal with huge demand when the old system meant only one change each year. Demand for the new TX4 has been constant since its launch last October. Many more

taxi drivers are now choosing to put personalised number plates on their taxis making their vehicles unique to them. There are lots of other options available to drivers and proprietors when ordering their taxi which will personalise their vehicle – your taxi is your office, make it unique.

SMOKE FREE ENGLAND

As England followed in the footsteps of Wales and Scotland, on 1st July it became illegal to smoke in the workplace and public places across the country. This has had an impact on the taxi trade as drivers are now responsible for ensuring that their passengers do not light up in the back of the cab. It also means drivers cannot light up in their work place, the front of their vehicle. Two taxi drivers were amongst the first to be fined in

Scotland earlier this year when the law came into force there. In other areas, some people have also been fined under littering laws as they have dropped cigarette butts on the pavement.

Don't forget to display the correct Smoke Free stickers in your taxi – don't get caught out with a fine for failing to display the relevant stickers. For more details log on to www.smokefreeengland.co.uk



providing a safe, secure environment for you and your passengers