



## **The London Cabbie Shelter Challenge 2025**

### **A Brief History of the Cabmen's Shelter Fund**

The Iconic Black Taxi Cabs are a symbol of London life but not many people know that a less familiar landmark is associated with the history of the Hackney Carriage trade in the Capital city and that is the Cabbie Shelters of which today only 13 remain and of those 13 only 11 are active. These Shelters are run and managed by the Cabmens Shelter fund, which is a registered charity. The trustees of the fund control the issuing of licences for the Shelter keeper and make sure all the current regulations are in place. These Shelters, which can look like a green garden sheds, are often overlooked by residents and tourists alike but today they are Grade 11 listed buildings and are protected by English Heritage. The Grade 11 listing means that every shelter must conform to a standard of refurbishment that includes the colour of green exterior, the wood panelling and the interior. They must also comply with modern standards of food hygiene and all licensees have the necessary qualifications to operate a food outlet. The shelters are only open to Licensed Cab Drivers but the public can buy Beverages and food from the Shelter window. Of the three shelters that are currently inactive two are about to be re-sited in Hanover Square and Brompton Road Shelter (Nicknamed the Bell & Horns) Chelsea and the Northumberland Avenue/Embankment is currently being refurbished.

Chelsea Embankment is restricted use because because the authorities feel it is too dangerous for cabs to park in and around this area.

The 13 Shelters are listed below:

1. Chelsea Embankment near Albert Bridge (Private restrictive licence)
2. Embankment Place
3. Grosvenor Gardens, Victoria
4. Hanover Square (Due to open 2 months)
5. Kensington Park Gardens Notting Hill
6. Kensington Road (north side) All nations
7. Pont Street
8. Russell Square (North West corner)
9. St Georges Square, Pimlico
10. Temple Place
11. Thurloe Place(opposite V & A Museum) The Bell and Horns
12. Warwick Avenue(Next to The underground Station)
13. Wellington Place, St John's Wood. (The Chapel) Musicians and Historians welcome

**The Cabmen's Shelter Fund dates back to 1875 when the first Shelter was opened in Acacia road, St John's Wood on a cold wet February in 1875. A month earlier in January 1875 the fund had been founded and had as its President the Earl of Shaftesbury along with many distinguished members of the Aristocracy and Members of Parliament. The Fund grew that year with 13 Shelters being established and even the then Prince of Wales, who donated £21 and the Duke of Westminster, were major contributors. However the idea of supplying the Hackney Carriage Drivers with a suitable refuge from the wind and rain goes to Capt G C Armstrong who in 1870 found it impossible to hire a Hackney Horse & Carriage in really bad weather. This was a problem because drivers would seek shelter in cafes and Ale houses and would as a result often be very drunk when their services were required.**

**Capt Armstrong explored the idea that if suitable Cab mens Shelters were set up at strategic locations that this would encourage drivers to be available and sober when required.**

**The issue of drunkenness was a major concern and all the early Shelters were Temperate. The idea of the setting up of a fund and a committee was eventually formed to oversee the running of the Shelters and an attendant was appointed to each shelter. The wages of the shelter keeper were paid by issuing tickets to the Cab Drivers at a 1p a day or 4p a week. This was not popular with many cab drivers and it was terminated in favour of free entry with a slight increase in the price of refreshment. The Shelters had strict rules and even the size of the shelters was restricted to being no more than the size of a horse drawn four wheeled cab. The following years saw the Shelter fund grow and by 1900 there were 43 Cab Shelters in London. This was to peak at 61 but started to decline over the following years due to WW1 and the rise in motorised taxis which were becoming more popular. In fact the last horse drawn cab was taken out of service in 1947. The advent of the Motor Cab and the resulting traffic congestion of the 1950's onwards saw a drastic reduction in the number of shelters due to one way schemes and the implementation of parking meters. The shelter fund was at one stage in danger of being wound up but a donation by the then Transport and General Worker's union, now Unite, of £3,500 saved it at that time. It continued to limp along just paying its way until the then London Mayor Ken Livingstone and Dave Wetzter gave a grant of £20,000 to begin to refurbish the shelters. These Shelters continue to need refurbishment today and the trustees are grateful to any charitable donations which enable us to achieve that. The Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage drivers have continued to support the fund and with good management the Shelters will continue to be part of the Cab Trades History. I am sure the Licensees of any of the Shelters would welcome all cab drivers who wish to eat or even grab a mug of tea at any of the stated shelters.**



**Follow the QR Code  
Sponsor  
The Challenge Team**

