



The Cabbies' Shelters Project



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Introduction

There are thirteen green huts dotted around central London. These cabmen's shelters were built by the Cabmen's Shelter Fund (established in 1875) and were once part of a much larger network. The shelters were built to provide cabbies with "good and wholesome refreshments at moderate prices", which is what they have been doing ever since. The surviving shelters, all Grade II heritage-listed, are easily missed. Slightly oversized garden sheds lost in the rush of today's traffic. Step inside and you will find a tiny kitchen at one end and bench seating for about a dozen customers at the other.

These seemingly modest buildings belie the fact that they are sites of navigational expertise. The cabbies that use them are experts at getting around London. It takes an average of four years to learn 'The Knowledge' (a prerequisite for a black cab licence) and, in the process, taxi drivers' brains adapt, enabling them to store a detailed map of the city. The shelters are also conversation hubs, alive with the exchange of anecdotes told and stories overheard as cabbies go about their business of transporting Londoners and visitors from place to place.

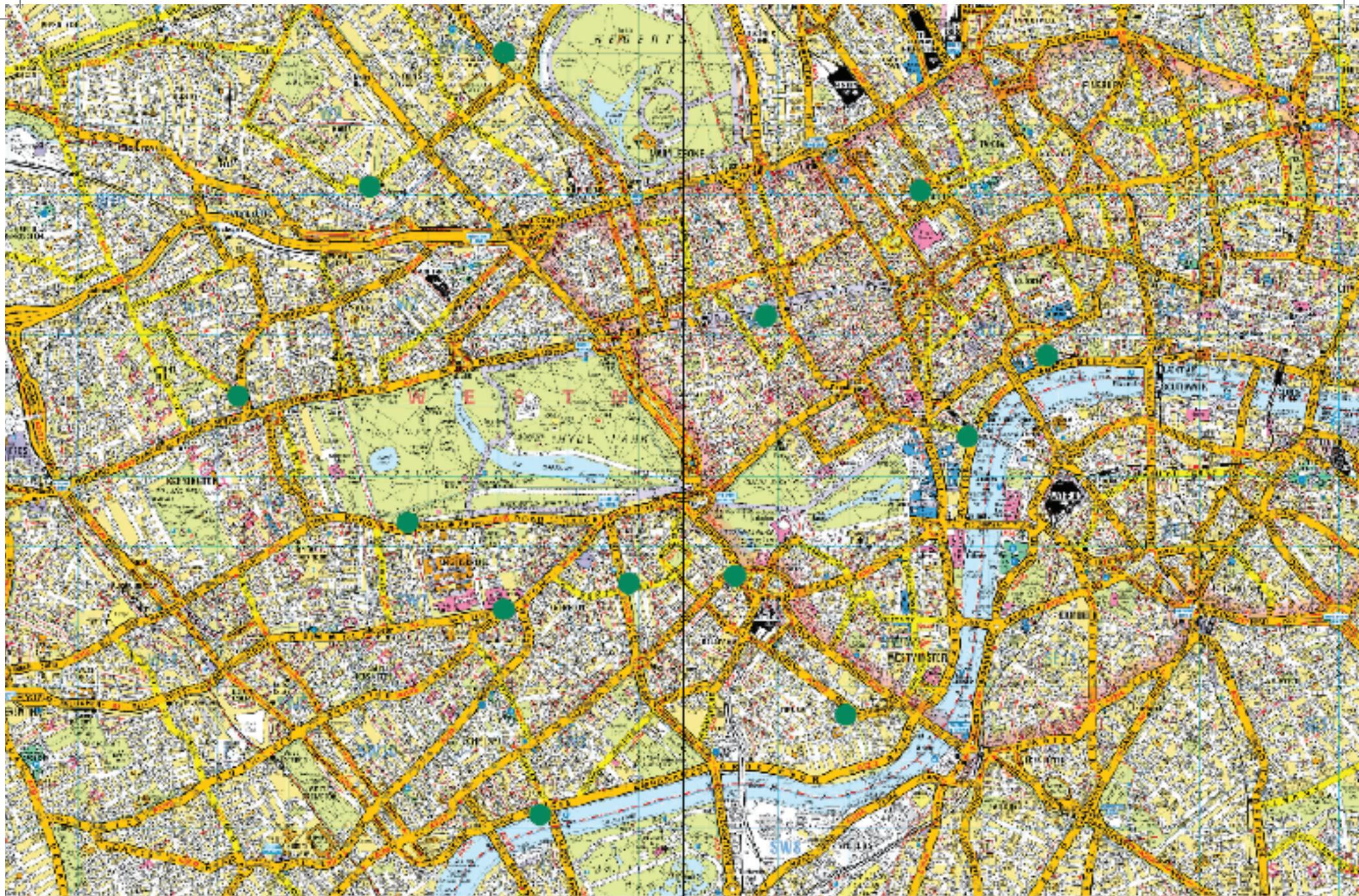
The Cabbies' Shelters Project taps into this rich vein of London life and heritage. Kathy Prendergast, Emma Smith and Victoria Turnbull have created new artworks in response to these unique and distinctive buildings and the knowledgeable communities that use them. This publication touches upon their different commissions and approaches. In addition, the project has produced a Learning Resource for Explorers, an oral history collection



(soon to be accessible at London Transport Museum) and two websites (www.cabmensshelterfund.com and www.cabbieshelters.org).

Cabbies' Shelters has involved an enormous number of people who have contributed in many ways. In particular, it would not have been possible without the support of the Cabmen's Shelter Fund, the shelter keepers, London Transport Museum, the London Vintage Taxi Association and a wonderfully enthusiastic crew of volunteers. We are also grateful to Martin Parr for giving us permission to use his photographs. Thanks to all!

Danielle Olsen
Sarah Wang



Map of surviving shelters

Albert Bridge, Cromwell Rd, Embankment, Grosvenor Gardens, Hanover Square, Kensington Gardens, Notting Hill, Pimlico, Pont St, Russell Square, St John's Wood, Temple, Warwick Avenue

A Brief History of London's Cabmen's Shelters

(with thanks to the Cabmen's Shelter Fund for access to their records)

In the nineteenth century London's cab drivers were legally required to stay with their horse and carriage while at a cabstand, come rain or shine. As a result it was difficult for them to get hot meals or shelter, apart from finding a nearby public house and getting someone to guard their cab (for a price).

To help alleviate this problem, and in an attempt to lower the cabdriver's temptation to drink on the job, the social reformer, the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury and a group of fellow philanthropists, took it upon themselves to set up the Cabmen's Shelter Fund. Between 1875 and 1914, the Fund built about 60 shelters in London. Because the shelters stood on a public highway, the police stipulated that they had to be no larger than a horse and cart.

Despite their basic design and relatively diminutive size, these shelters managed to cater for about a dozen men at a time. Offering drivers a dry (in every sense of the word) place to rest and eat, these basic canteens each had a working kitchen, seats and tables, and a selection of books and newspapers - most of which were donated by the publishers or other benefactors. Gambling, drinking and swearing were strictly forbidden.

It is not known who designed the first cabmen's shelters (all of which have long since disappeared) but in 1877, it was reported that a new shelter (erected in Palace





Yard) was designed by “Messrs Gibson and Maitland, the architects who gained first prize in the Alexandra Palace in October 1875, for the best model of a Shelter”. By 1879, the architect George Aitchison had been elected onto the Committee and was Honorary Architect to the Fund. Among the shelters reported to have been built to his designs were those at Paddington Station, Putney Station, Kennington Church and Holland Park. No examples of Aitchison’s shelters have survived but the shelter photographed at the turn of the century in front of the Law Courts in the Strand (see photo on page 11) probably reflected his influence.

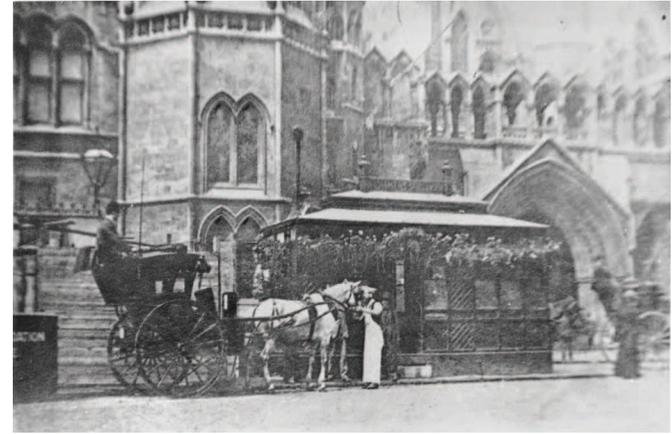
In 1881 the committee launched a competition for an improved shelter design, offering a prize of £ 10. The successful entrants were the firm of Harvey and Clarke of John Street, Bedford Row and the first shelter to be erected to their winning designs was that in Northumberland Avenue (since replaced). Maximilian Clarke was duly appointed in 1884 as Honorary Architect to the Fund, jointly with Aitchison. Clarke was responsible

Above: Interior of a cabmen’s shelter. The Illustrated London News, 1890 April 19th, p493 Mary Evans Picture Library

Top left: High Street Kensington Shelter. 2012.
© Martin Parr / Magnum Photos.

Bottom left: High Street Kensington Shelter.
Tracy Tucker. 2012. © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos.





for the form of the cabmen's shelter as it is known today.

In earlier years, the shelters attracted celebrities. Sir Ernest Shackleton, the polar explorer, frequented the Hyde Park Corner shelter, and the artist John Singer Sargent favoured the shelter near the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly Circus. The Piccadilly shelter was nicknamed the "Junior Turf Club" by the aristocratic revellers who patronized it in the 1920s and smuggled in champagne despite its teetotal regulations. Other nicknames include the All Nations (opposite Gloucester Road), The Bell and 'Orns (in Thurloe Place), The Pier (by Albert Bridge) and The Chapel (St Johns Wood).

Many shelters were bombed during World War II and others fell victim to street widening schemes after the war, but it was probably the advent of the motor car that put most of the shelters out of business. The automobile and radio dispatching gave drivers much greater mobility, allowing them to stop almost anywhere for meal breaks. Once key to London's infrastructure, now only 13 of these shelters remain. If you would like to support the care and maintenance of those that survive, please visit www.cabmensshelterfund.com

Above: Cabmen's shelter outside the Law Courts, Strand. 1900. © City of London

Left: St Johns Wood Shelter. Andrey Markovic & Emma Markovic. 2012. © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos.



Acacia Road cabmen's shelter.
© City of London



Pimlico Shelter. Alf Loureiro. 2012.
© Martin Parr / Magnum Photos.

Hippocampus by Kathy Prendergast

The hippocampus is the part of the brain that has a role in storing memory and spacial coding and when a prospective cabbie learns The Knowledge, their hippocampus enlarges. It is a tantalizing thought that memory can occupy space and can have volume and weight.

For the Cabbies' Shelters Project I wanted to concentrate on the idea of the city as an organism, the cabbies as ferrymen and the cabshelters as locations of navigational expertise. To trace the 320 routes of The Knowledge along the streets and roads of London is also to trace the information that enlarges the hippocampus. My idea was to see what this would look like. Was there a visual equivalent between the map of London and the cabbies' brain? Is this information a reflection of the inside or the outside, microcosm or macrocosm?

I have made a drawing in translucent ink showing the criss-crossing, overlapping and layering of the routes and the connections between them. The drawing is a tracing of journeys through the city and visual evidence of the data absorbed by the cabbies' brains. I want the completed drawing of the undertaken journeys to refer to both the city as an organism and the synapses of the brain and the possibility that they could be the same thing.

Levi Strauss states of the town or city:

**'It is at one and the same
time an object of nature
and a subject of culture; an
individual and a group; reality
and dream; the supremely
human achievement.'**



Hippocampus -
drawing of The Knowledge

Prospective cabbies learn The Knowledge from the 'Blue Book' and use the A-Z map as their framework to learn the routes. In The Knowledge schools a large scale A-Z map covers the whole wall and Stanfords, London's biggest map shop, sells the specifically named Knowledge maps. Yet there is no map where there is an actual visual representation of The Knowledge. So this started a conversation with the Geographers' A-Z Map Company where we have collaborated to produce a limited edition publication using their expertise to superimpose the drawing and to plot the existing cabshelters which are a social and historical hub of cabbies' working lives.

monologue for cabman

Kevin Barry's story 'monologue for cabman' replaces the booklet 'Index to Streets' which accompanies the usual A-Z premier map. It is both an interior and exterior journey of a cabman through the city. Kevin Barry is a master craftsman in conjuring a sense of place where the city or terrain become a main character of the story.

The artwork and story are packaged as a usual folded map produced by Geographers' A-Z Map Company.

LONDON

HIPPOCAMPUS



CITY IN THE MIND

CITY IN THE BLOOD

CITY IN THE BONES



AN ARTWORK BY KATHY PRENDERGAST

monologue for cabman

by Kevin Barry

avenue to gillinham close - i cut me hand by leytonstone high road
- come around the close earlshoff road - i was opening a can of
drink - the blood splatters and the blood is all over - a vicious hot
summer day coming into evening the window is rolled and the arm
is out and the blood in tiny drips spatters the jesus out of matcham
road - driplets or droplets - to the high road - go selby road - by
the plough and harrow to langthorne road - by the st patricks rc -
the cut is after taking a slice from the inside of my thumb - oh
mother - and it sings is the only way to put it - the high pitch note
a sharp cut pain has - the longest evening of the summer and this
year - the eyes are watering inside me head - all i can do is carry the
tune of the cut under my breath as i go - hello - this frail arm raised
for me - this old dear she waits for me - hello - veined in the eyes
- carrying a bag of bottles - clinkety clink she like her drink - and a
talker right off i take her for - a talker - says she, this is brutal heat
and seven o clock in the day - no respite, missus, i says - and it is
worse it's getting she says - she is irish from a long time ago - as
myself - beef to the heels off the ox mountain county sligo now
this is a big boned boy and handsome was how my mother would
say for fattish - she says - the old dear - she says there's a show
tonight in hackney i'd pay good money to see - the empire, i says?
- no she says the dog and feathers joe malone from kiltimagh - in
the county of mayo i says - beautiful singer she says the tears'd
stream down your face and the heart would give out on you and
which way you taking me for dunedin road anyhow, driver - by the
leyton library, i says - that'll do, she says, come up ruckholt road -
exactly i says - i were propositioned once, she says, in the leyton

library - that weren't today nor yesterday i says - cheeky, she says,
he was an indian gentleman he had lovely knees - knees? i says - it
was summer it was shorts he was in lovely a brown a agreeable a
knees - steady, love, i says - very agreeable gentleman, she says,
handsome as a dove - steady, i says, or shall i open another window,
dear, get some air in - cheeky, she says, anyhow i had cyril at home
and he's wanting his tea since the legs went he's useless for himself
can't heat a tin of beans - what's happened cyril and his legs, i says
- he's fallen out a window, she says - nasty, i says - ground floor,
she says, not like it was sky breaking news but he's done himself in
well enough leg-wise - the hand slips in the bag the screwing of
the cap the little nip she takes, like a bird - so it's not like i can run
away to mumbai she says not with cyril at home wanting his beans
- wouldn't be just, ma'am, i says - he was trying to adjust the drapes
on the runner, she says, he was always a holy fool was cyril - anyway,
she says, this was a what, she says, 1976 - montreal olympics, i says
- pig heat that summer and all, she says - i tell you now exactly
where i was i says i was on a moped i was learning me routes i was
straight off the ox mountain plonk me in piccadilly circus you could
have told me it was the face of the yellow moon - i don't sleep so
hot if there's a moon, she says - i've come down adelaide road the
one-way - i know how you feel, love, i says, on the full moon nights,
i says, what i haven't seen in the back of this cab - go on, she says
- oh i have seen the nuttiest things, i says, i have seen a notorious
midget from kentish town attempt to sell chinese cultural artefacts
to a vicar from the city of lagos in nigeria, he's anglican by the collar
- now, she says - and i wouldn't mind, i says, but when the vicar
won't buy, the midget, he comes over shirty - they can do, she says
- no call for shirty, she says - but here, she says - are you sure, she
says a are you sure it was a midget? - how'd you mean, i says -
sometimes she says sometimes what you take for a midget can be

a jockey – hmmm, i says – here we go, i says, dunedin road – still my blood sings and drips and the air above and the sky thickens the summer even at its height is turning – orient way temple mills depot and the hackney marshes – she don't want to tell me a midget from a jockey – i know a jockey – how many years have i carried the fancy how many times charring cross station for kempton park? – me hands could do it and me eyes closed – nose bring me there by the feel even – midges about and all – thick in the air – midges, midgets – the words go skewy and all over at the rough tip end of a nine hour shift – i had a jockey try have it off with his missus or ladyfriend back of this cab one time – i said, here – i said, give over now a i said what you do in the sanctity of your own bedroom, that's a private and blessed business, and the best of luck to you with it all, but let's not, friend, not here, not in the light of day, not with the traffic heavyish – chatsworth road is having one of its dreary moments – it can do – i'll take clifden road for churchill walk – there's a regular there who wants taking from churchill walk – poor sam – poor sam is an old greek lad – he is originally green lanes – and he's taught me a bit of greek has sam – here he come now, the long face on, that'll be his tomatoes he's worrying about – he's taught me that hasappis means butcher – in the greek – and malaka means wanker and what more would you need, i says, in this line of business, and sam got a laugh out of that and it's not often sam gets a laugh in – hello sam – well, he says, the latest, he says, these toms, he says – it's a write-off, tony, he says, it's a disaster season – now this is a man who is quite frankly obsessed with his blooming tomatoes – he says, first they've bolted and now they've got the yellow wilt – nasty, i says – knowing sam and his toms this twenty years gone the last words you want to hear from the man's mouth is yellow and wilt – they've a thirst on now, he says, and there is not a sea would quench it – the trail of blood is microscopic or so i imagine and you could not see

it with the naked eye but maybe you could sense it from high up if there was a sensor above the sky that mapped by the heat of our blood these trails we take all over the town say that there are tiny red dots to mark on the map the heat of our blood as we move – pedro st to redwald road – and the river – the lea – for the air of a river the word is riverine – its atmosphere or trapped feeling – sam the greek he says the worst thing that can happen in the line of tomatoes is if they've come in too soon – like much in life, sam, i says – patience, i says, is the virtue required but sam is not for talking, not tonight, the year is screwed on sam if his toms have come in early, and watery, this summer there will be no alignment of the stars for sam – i am thinking of love by st john-at-hackney-gardens – in fact i am no longer married to doreen – good luck sam i says but he hardly has the eyes up from the shoes tonight poor sam and his toms though he adds the usual tip his twenty per cent never let it be said for the old boy from green lanes – a gentleman, one of the sad – hot as it is the year is turning the grasses yellowing it comes around us quick the turn of year and a quiet hour can creep down on you out of nowhere and the sky and nothing and the road just slides up of its own volition and eats away the last of the daylight for its darkness – the exasperating fact is that despite all of my best efforts – the gymnasium? the twenty mile sunday hikes? the bloody pilates? – i aged quicker than doreen – dalston lane by the three compasses – and for all those years and our monday nights – our nights out – i'm sat with her – in bistro or in bloody wine bar – and i'm thinking i could do better, you know, they'll take her for me mother or for an auntly type but then, one dark sudden morning, i wake up, i look across the pillows, and doreen, at fifty three, an april morning, is fresh as a watered plant, she is positively girlish, and me, i've turned into the most horrendous old bum-face – into my father, essentially – face like the sole of a farmer's boot

and the back of me head so wide you'd play handball off if – sat in me cab with a breezeblock for a noggin – i'll keep going tonight – sandringham road by the argos – an argos always remind me of doreen – it is as well that i let the streets eat me up tonight – my mother would always say if you have morbid thoughts the thing to do is stay busy – and this was a woman who never stopped going – this a woman who'd be ironing sheets at four in the morning – tonight i'll let the streets eat me up and chew me down and spit me out again – the town is filling up with its people and lights – and i have a bad five minutes re: the doreen situation – it is when you see people who are young and alive – i get an unpleasantness rising up in me sometimes – a sourish feeling – in the vicinity of balls pond road – balls pond road to essex road by the hope and glory – i haven't taken a drink in fourteen years – i'd have been on the soda water in the wine bars with doreen and her acting glamorous on white rioja – and i do not wish to sound odd nor superstitious nor sectionable nor in any way batty but there are secret forces beneath these streets and they send up their airs and dark energies – we might as well be out in the open about this – beneath the streets and tar – upper street the stations of the cross the stations of my life – and these airs or feelings might be made of a sorrow or sadness that has lingered for years in a place or has been trapped there – i'll pick it up clearly sometimes as i drift past and i can smell from a great distance off danger in the night – the word for the atmosphere of wolves on the air is wolverine – a blessed arm rises for me and thanks be to jesus that it does before i go off again down that dark tunnel and into those black thoughts – wolves – hello, she says, i'm for the bohane gardens but take it easy, driver, and take it nice and slow, coz i've had a bit of a feed tonight – mr ottolenghi has done very well for himself, i says – what that man can't do with a chickpea, she says – immense, i says, and he's a perfect gent and

all – and we drift together and banter and we move – and the air of the city moves through its night graces its warm embraces its secret traces its melancholy faces its dank its dark and hidden places and all of its motley races and all of its nutjobs and all of its hard cases – by clondesley place i am almost light hearted – her words – she tells me of her life and loves – her words and scent fills up the cab – and how it is the secret in life to remain at all times cheerful – i couldn't agree more, missus, i says – miss, she says – and our eyebrows rise together to meet in the rearview – i give her my card and my heart is going like the two-thirty at kempton park – often it's around here i'd be, i says, often it's around this patch of the woods for me, i says, should you find some night that a cab is hard to find – thank you, she says – and she taps the number into her phone under cabbie, brackets, irish, with an x alongside – cheeky – and she gives the card back to me – copenhagen street – cartwright gardens – i was youngish around here one time – friday nights i'd meet doreen by goodge street station – tottenham street, again, my second time today – ghosts of fitzrovia – the cut sings and i bite through the new scab and there is blood, again – riding house street for charlotte street for

Kieran Bartlett, A-Z Maps

Founded in 1936 by Mrs Phyllis Pearsall MBE, Geographers A-Z Map Company Ltd is the largest independent map publishing company in the UK, producing iconic products such as the London A-Z.

Long before the invention of electronic navigational aids, our maps were helping the people of Great Britain find their way, and despite the encroaching digital age, our industry still continues to flourish because of the support and loyalty of our customers.

From the beginning with just two members of staff based in a rented room in London, we have now grown into a thriving business of 43 employees which includes a digital cartography, sales, marketing and copyright departments along with an on the road team of sales representatives, all producing over 300 maps, atlases and guides.

We love working with people who are enthusiastic about maps and are always looking for ways of developing working partnerships, with one of our most dedicated and engaging markets being the incredibly talented and hardworking Knowledge students of London.

Over the years we have had to re-shape our business to reflect the ever-changing marketplace and have always looked to create new and ground breaking products. We have developed a range of products specifically designed to assist the students in learning The Knowledge of London to enable them to obtain the much-coveted green badge, allowing them to be a licenced hackney carriage driver. Through ongoing interaction with Knowledge pupils over the years, we've been learning the

history of the London black cab and it was because of our relationship with this sector that we were delighted to work alongside the Cabbies' Shelters team to produce a product that, in the usual ethos of A-Z, is both attractive and informative. The London A-Z is the preferred choice for anyone who wants to navigate around the labyrinth that is the city of London so any product that carries the iconic A-Z logo has to not only be factually correct but also must be easy to read, a challenge faced by our draughtsman to fit 38,000 streets into one publication.

To create this unique piece of artwork we've worked closely with the artist Kathy Prendergast, who is responsible for adding the 'runs' which every rookie black cab driver must learn to gain their accreditation. Our maps have been the product of choice for all fledgling cab drivers for many years and we hope to work with them even more closely in the future.



Acknowledge by Emma Smith

Acknowledge is an epic tale, based on oral history interviews with cabdrivers and shelter licensees. The work is presented in two forms: a recital of script and song that will be premiered at St. John's Wood Shelter through a series of intimate performances, and a film that will be screened at London Transport Museum.

To acknowledge is to recognise and express gratitude for. This project pays tribute to the significant, yet often invisible, service and knowledge of the cab driver. To acknowledge is to confess or admit. This project explores the evolving history of the relationship of cabbie and passenger; the stories that are shared between strangers in the intimacy of the cab and the extraordinary experience of Londoner's lives that cabbies bear witness to. To acknowledge is to accept knowledge of. This project has been developed in collaboration with cabbies through the recordings of oral histories recorded for posterity and shared with the public through the work. To acknowledge is to greet through words and gestures. The work is performed in the social setting and context of St. John's Wood Shelter, aka The Chapel, into which the public are invited for the first time.

³⁰ “You meet really a lot of interesting people you know. I’ve had some funny characters in my cab and funny things happen to me. I’ve got so many untold stories.

Some people make a really big impact on you and you’ll remember those people for life – someone that got in your cab and what ever conversation you had, and you remember where you are, some streets you go down and you think I remember when I had that person in the back of my cab and this happened, or we had a good conversation, or we stayed ten minutes after, or twenty minutes after having a chat. You never know what’s going to happen to you every day in this job. Every day is different.”

Extract from oral history interview
with driver Kerrie Chapman

³¹ “You gotta sort of read people. You do have to learn that – it’s a very big part of the job – being able to read people or humour them or say what they want to hear, you know, not what you wanna say – let them, how can I say it, you know what I’m saying: say what they want to hear kind of thing to make them happy. Humouring them I suppose.”

When I was doing The Knowledge, one of the examiners he said to us all, he said just before we got our licence and everything he said you ever get anyone whose being problematic or complaining or griping or something, he said, try not to get involved. At the end of the day they’re in a cab 10-15 minutes of your life – it’s best to keep ya mouth shut and once they’ve gone you’ve forgotten in ten minutes. ... Even if it’s a £20 fare, over the course of a year or a lifetime it ain’t going to ruin you is it? It’s just one experience that’s how I look at it.”

Extract from oral history interview
with driver Joe Dorkins



Acknowledge Song Book

Songs for the performance and film
have been developed by Emma Smith
in collaboration with cabdriver and
musician Mark Bird.

All are invited to contribute their voices
to a public singing of the following songs
at the launch event:

12 September 2014.

Call Me a Cabbie

By Mark Bird and Phil Nelson

Well I love driving around, the busy streets of London town
I'll take you anywhere you wanna go
So sit back, and relax, we'll tell a few stories and have a good
laugh

Call me a cabbie, I'm so proud to say
I've got the Knowledge of London town
Yes I know the way

Any place you gotta be, you know it's all the same to me;
Your journey's mapped already in my head
Forget that crowded tube or bus, no pushing and shoving
In me put your trust

Call me a cabbie, I'm so proud to say
I've got the Knowledge of London town
Yes I know the way

When you're in a hurry, and you're running late;
It's ok, don't worry, I'll get you there in time this way
Bethnal Green to Balham, or Baker Street to Soho Square;
It's ok, don't worry, I'll get you there with time to spare.

If you let me drive you around, the busy streets of London town
We'll chat and try to put the world to rights
But if you want some peace and quiet, you can read a newspaper
or take in the sights

Call me a cabbie, I'm so proud to say
I've got the Knowledge of London town
Yes I know the way

Call me a cabbie, I'm so proud to say
I've got the Knowledge of London town
Yes I know the way

Calling Runs

By Mark Bird and Emma Smith

Each street reminds you
'f conversations that you've 'ad
Of all the famous people
And the punters who are mad

Paula Yates and Shirley Bassey
Calum Best and Michael Sheen
Denis Healey, Robert Hardy
Judy Dench and Hughey Green

Baker Street to Halkin
Redcliff Square to Clapham South
Theatre Royal to Grovesnor Gardens
Centre Heights to Capital House

Jeremy Paxman and Bob Geldof
William Hague, Cynthia Payne
Timothy West, Tara Fitzgerald
Norman Lemont and Michael Caine

Wandworth Bridge to Brockwell
Surrey Hall to Greenwich View
Hackney Wick to Canonbury Station
Melbourne Place to Meleods Mews

Passengers

By Mark Bird and Emma Smith

I've been driving a taxi for nigh on thirty years
Seen happy punters, grumpy punters, punters close to tears
Cabbie worldly wisdom gauges people's frames of mind
The knack of judging moods you'll acquire over time
If ever stuck in gridlock, try to keep your head
You're always gonna get there, when all is done and said
If punters criticise your route don't start a free for all
The scenario's catch 22, don't end up in a brawl

You get ones who've got the hump
Who just want a to b
One's who get real furious
Or just spew up their tea
Whatever... it's not worth it
Just ten minutes of your life
Best to keep your mouth shut
And don't give in to strife

Famous people in your cab
I've had quite a few
I give them due respect and, watch my p's and q's
I'm name dropping shamelessly, I'm not afraid to say
Clint Eastwood once a well known fare
He really made my day

Let's hear it for our passengers
On street or road or junction
If they didn't hail our cabs
We would cease to function

Let's hear it for our passengers
On street or road or junction
If they didn't hail our cabs
We would cease to function

This job can mix psychiatry with marriage therapy
Save someone from a suicide
Or meet a train at half past three
On the way to Barking, or a trip to Waterloo
The cab is a confessional, a counseling room for two
Some will pour their heart out
Spilling all their woes
Some punters even stop to buy
Girl cabbies a red rose

If you've heard it then I've seen it
Money, girls and guns;
Gorillas, coffins, giant fish
Just some of my runs
I've had women giving birth
People comatose or ill
Merry pranksters full of mirth
Those in trouble with old bill

Let's hear it for our passengers
On street or road or junction
If they didn't hail our cabs
We would cease to function

Let's hear it for our passengers
On street or road or junction
If they didn't hail our cabs
We would cease to function

Let's hear it for our passengers
On street or road or junction
If they didn't hail our cabs
We would cease to function

The Chapel Shelter

By Mark Bird and Phil Nelson

I'll see you at the Chapel shelter
I'll see you at the Chapel shelter
I'll see you at the Chapel shelter

In these days of dark recession,
where the credit crunch does bite
There's a special, green hut haven,
with a constant welcome light
This hut is situated, somewhere in St. John's Wood
And cabbies come from far and wide,
'cos the vibe is very good.

Jeannie's out of Dalston,
and she runs 'the Chapel hut',
From nine a.m. on weekdays, until it's time to shut.
A place to flee the rat race,
leave 'doom and gloom' behind.
Where the food's not dear, but well prepared,
And the cabbies can unwind.

The conversation's witty;
the jokes are sometimes blue!!
But Jeannie doesn't take offence.
Give the girl her due.
The shelter stands beside a park,
and when the cab-rank's free,
The hut shines like a lighthouse
in a stress filled traffic sea.

I'll see you at the Chapel shelter
I'll see you at the Chapel shelter
I'll see you at the Chapel shelter

When no-one's getting in your cab,
and days are pretty dire,
This place is an oasis in a desert of 'for hire'.
We can all get pessimistic,
when times are truly testing,
But the cab game isn't really dead;
instead it's only resting!

Your mood might be unhappy,
and life can get you down.
But half an hour inside the hut,
your day's been turned around.
It's easy to abandon hope,
like the cynics want you to!!
But the shelter restores optimism,
there inside of you.

These green huts, if they disappear,
may never be replaced.
Some say 'that's a pity', I say 'a disgrace'!!
Once they're gone, forever gone,
and never seen again,
Never seen again. Sixty four once up and running,
Just thirteen remain.

I'll see you at the Chapel shelter
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The artist would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this project and in particular:

Mark Bird
Victor Rayburn
Phil Nelson
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The Chapel Shelter and Call Me a Cabbie songs have been generously contributed from Tales of a Sherbert Shelter; a musical by Mark Bird.

Special thanks go to St Johns Wood Shelter for hosting the performance.

Service by Victoria Turnbull

Service was a research project that investigated the lives of cabdrivers and shelter-keepers. Looking at the physical nature of the shelters – the materials, the construction and the activities in the space – was a way of exploring the history of the shelters and the people who are connected with them. Understanding the lives of cabdrivers, the history of how they have worked and the changing conditions in London gave context to the shelters and how they came to be where they are.

I co-lead Service with artist Shaun Dolan and teachers Nicola Frankcom and Melissa Hind at Chelsea Community Hospital School. We worked with students aged between 4 and 17 at Royal Brompton Hospital, Collingham Child and Family Centre, St Mary's Hospital and Chelsea and Westminster Hospital as well as many other teachers, nurses, play workers, physicians and other medical staff.

The four hospitals that participated are all within walking distance of many of the cabmen's shelters and many of us had passed them on buses, in cabs and on walks between hospital, home and school. At the start, our questions were basic: What is a taxi cab? What is a cabmen's shelter? What would it look like? What is it for? Over workshops spanning a year, we got to know the different shelters quite well, and their food and hospitality. We created a temporary Cabbies' Shelter in the hospital for patients, families, teachers and medical staff and invited a local cabbie, Mark Bird to join us. Colin Evans, a cabdriver and trustee of the Cabmen's Shelter Fund introduced us to some more cabdrivers who took students and staff out of hospital to visit the London

Transport Museum. Maureen, the shelter keeper at Temple shelter invited us to have a look inside.

We made models and drawings of the shelters – how we imagined them to be, now and in the future, and how they actually are. From the drawings, models, research and discussions, we have created a Cabbie's Cup. The disposable paper cup is printed with seventeen different logo designs created by students and teachers at Chelsea Community Hospital School and shares our ideas about the cabdrivers, the shelters, their history and London.

As part of this project, I have written and illustrated an activity book about the cabbies' shelter – a learning resource for explorers. This was devised with teachers, gallery educators and artists from Chelsea Community Hospital Schools, St Aidan's Primary School, CET and the London Transport Museum. It is available for download at www.cabbiesshelters.org.

THE HISTORY OF
OF THE SHELTER
IN 1880 FOR THE
GABRIEL'S SHELTER FUND
WAS DONATED BY THE
HERITAGE OF LONDON TRUST
AND CONSENT ASSISTANCE FROM
THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER
AND THE HERITAGE
TRUSTS OF THE CITY OF
LONDON, THE HERITAGE
TRUSTS AND
THE SEVEN BARRONS OF
LONDON TRUST





Cabbies' shelter menu



Plans, designs, puppets and cups



Model making



Model making



Three quarter pint tea mug. Used in the Warwick Avenue cabmen's shelter. 1935 - 1945. © Museum of London.



Cabbie tea cup 2014

Cabbies' Shelters Project
12 September – 18 October
www.cabbiesshelters.org
@cabbiesshelters

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