

MARKET TRENDS

As this issue of *Classic Car Buyer* goes to press, the 2012 auction season is starting up, with the Coys event at Birmingham's NEC producing some good results among the out-and-out sporting machinery. At, arguably, the other end of the scale spectrum, Anglia's January 21 event – full results next week – seems surprisingly full for a sale taking place in January, and here's the usual 'something for everyone' selection.

On a similar theme in the west of England South Western Vehicle Auctions are making an impact with sales that, though smaller than Anglia's in terms of numbers, are certainly not lacking in variety or quality. We will, of course, continue to bring you all the hot news of what's sold for what at auction throughout 2012.

FANCY A TAXI?

Production of the traditional 'FX4' shape London taxi (branded L11 Fairway Driver at the end) finished in 1997, and numbers in the capital are now dropping fast, though you do still see them, and are likely to be around for a little while yet. Drivers are being encouraged to update to the new TX series cabs, even though many Fairway Driver owners have, in the past five years, invested in expensive emission control systems to enable their cabs to meet the stringent new air quality standards for the capital.

Obviously, this means a large number of serviceable – albeit mega mileage – ex-London taxis are coming on to the market at present. This hasn't, though, led to a total price collapse as often happens with increased supply, since the improved availability has also bought the possibility of using a taxi for private motoring to the attention of more people.

What's more, due to the high standards of maintenance and tough tests they have to pass

every year, direct ex-London taxis are usually in pretty good condition. They're also extremely sturdy built, which means they can give plenty of years private service, and of course they're designed for easy repair. And don't forget the famous 28ft turning circle...

We suspect that anything with genuine London provenance will be more desirable with collectors in future than a 'London' taxi that actually worked somewhere like Burnley or Bournemouth. There are a couple of ways of telling these. The first, obviously, is things like London area advertising, fares charts and so on, and of course a London-area registration mark. The other is that whereas 'provincial' spec taxis usually have manual transmission, genuine London cabs are almost always automatics.

The major mechanical components are pretty-much unobtainable; Nissan sourced engines and transmissions really will do 500,000 miles given reasonable care.

Prices seem to start at around £1000, rising to £3-4000 for something really special. In many ways, an ex-taxi makes an excellent substitute family car/people carrier, though there are a few drawbacks to be aware of. These include a relatively low top speed (c75mph), not particularly good fuel consumption (30mpg average) and a front passenger seat is a £300 extra that'll eliminate most of your luggage space; the taxi 'boot' was intended more as a locker for the driver. And finally, while the central partition shuttling passengers off from the drivers might seem attractive, the novelty does wear off.

Overall, a purpose built taxi is really a commercial vehicle that's designed to carry people as its payload. But having said that, they've still got plenty going for them...



Our Editor-in-Chief's ex-London taxi; complete, unusually, with working taximeter!



London advert inside Identity II as a genuine London cab...