

Chapter 8

Magnificent and mundane: transporting people and goods to the country house, c.1730-1800¹

Jon Stobart

In recent years, there has been growing interest in animating the country house, a practice which has a number of overlapping elements. One builds on a much older interest in the social life of the country house, given particular momentum by the work of Mark Girouard in the 1970s which emphasised the relationship between its architecture, contents and use.² What particularly caught his attention were the public lives and consequently the lavish spending of the elite, but this has since been complemented by a plethora of studies which examine the motivations, decision-making processes and changes of mind that lay behind particular decorative schemes or purchases of furniture.³ A second element of this animation is a focus on the house as the centrepiece for practices of polite visiting and increasingly of tourism – activities which encompassed both the country and metropolitan residences of the elite.⁴ And a third has explored the more mundane processes of household management, including both the strategies and accounting procedures followed by owners' wives, and the daily drudgery of servants as they cleaned, cooked and washed – duties which are now recreated in sanitised form by live interpreters working in a variety of country houses.⁵

¹ I would like to express my thanks to Mark Rothery and especially Peter Edwards, whose helpful comments have refined and strengthened the arguments.

² M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

³ See, for example, R. Wilson and A. Mackley, *The Building of the English Country House, 1660-1880. Creating Paradise* (London: Hambeldon, 2000); A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); J. Whittle and E. Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household. The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); J. Stobart and M. Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴ A. Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: Four Centuries of Country House Visiting* (London: National Trust, 1989); Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England. The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.91-9.

⁵ Whittle and Griffiths, *Gender and Consumption*, pp.26-48, 212-21; P. Sambrook, *Keeping their Places: Domestic Service in the Country House* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 2009).

All of these activities involved the movement of goods and people to the house, making the country house a nexus for consumption. A huge variety of objects came in from London and other towns – everything from paintings and books to sugar and candles – whilst supplies of fruit, vegetables and game were taken from the country estate to houses in the metropolis (see also Chapter 9).⁶ Visitors arrived and left, as did many owners; tradesmen came with goods and craftsmen to carry out work, and servants were dispatched on errands. This constant ebb and flow has attracted increasing attention as historians have sought to count the number and map the geographical spread of suppliers. Others have highlighted the status that accrued from travel and the symbolism and cost of elite transport including coaches, horses and livery.⁷ However, rather less attention has been given to the ways in which these costs fitted in with broader patterns of elite expenditure and especially to the more mundane aspects of travel and transport; that is, the mechanisms by which these things moved to and from the country house.

This chapter forms an attempt to fill something of this lacuna and thus give a more rounded picture of the priorities and practices that characterised elite transport and travel. Its purpose is twofold. Firstly to highlight the magnificent: the ways in which money was lavished on coaches, horses and liveried servants in order to display wealth and rank, and the processes of supply that brought these manifestations of conspicuous consumption to the country house. And secondly to examine the day-to-day costs of feeding horses and maintaining vehicles, and of hiring coaches, paying tolls and transporting goods to and from the house. The relative importance of these various outgoings, and the rhythms of spending over the life course of an individual are set within the context of overall spending on the country house, thus situating transport and travel in the broader framework of elite lives.

The analysis focuses on three Midlands families: the Leights of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, the Newdigates of Arbury Hall in Warwickshire, and the Purefoys of

⁶ Stobart and Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, chapter 8.

⁷ Wilson and Mackley, *Building the Country House*; J.D. Williams, ‘The noble household as a unit of consumption: the Audley end experience, 1765-1797’, *Essex Archaeology and History*, 23 (1992), pp.67-78; J. Stobart, ‘Gentlemen and shopkeepers: supplying the country house in eighteenth-century England’, *Economic History Review* 64 (2011), pp.885-904; Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, 100-07; P. Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), chapter 4 and 9; P. Edwards, ‘Decline of an aristocratic stud’: Edward, Lord Harley’s Stud at Welbeck 1721-1729’, *Economic History Review* 63:3 (2016), pp.870-92; J. Styles, *Dress of the People. Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp.295-301.

Shalstone House, Buckinghamshire. The Leigs were amongst the wealthiest landowners in Warwickshire, with estates worth £6795 in 1749, rising to £13,643 by 1786 and £19,000 by the early nineteenth century.⁸ They were raised to the peerage in 1643, but suffered a series of demographic misfortunes in the eighteenth century: Thomas, fourth Lord Leigh died young (in 1749) and his son, Edward, only reached his majority some 14 years later; Edward died unmarried in 1786, following a long period of mental illness, and the estate then passed to his unmarried sister, the Honourable Mary Leigh, who split her time between Stoneleigh Abbey and her Kensington residence, Grove House. None of the eighteenth-century Leigs were active in political life. In stark contrast, Sir Roger Newdigate inherited Arbury Hall in 1734 and ran the estate for the whole of his long life, dying in 1806, the same year as Mary Leigh. He was MP for Middlesex (1741-47) and then for Oxford University (1750-80), attending parliament on a regular basis and actively defending the ancient privileges of the University. He was also a Captain in the Warwickshire militia, a renowned man of letters, a pioneer of the gothic revival and active in developing coal mines on his estate – the production of which helped to raise estate income to a peak of about £15,000 per annum in 1789. The Purefoys were of more modest means. Elizabeth was widowed in 1704, but continued to live at Shalstone House for the remainder of her long life (she died aged 93 in 1765) along with her son Henry. The family were not titled and lived rather unassuming lives, occasionally visiting London or Bath, but otherwise contenting themselves with county society and fairly modest pursuits.

Anatomy of spending on transport and travel

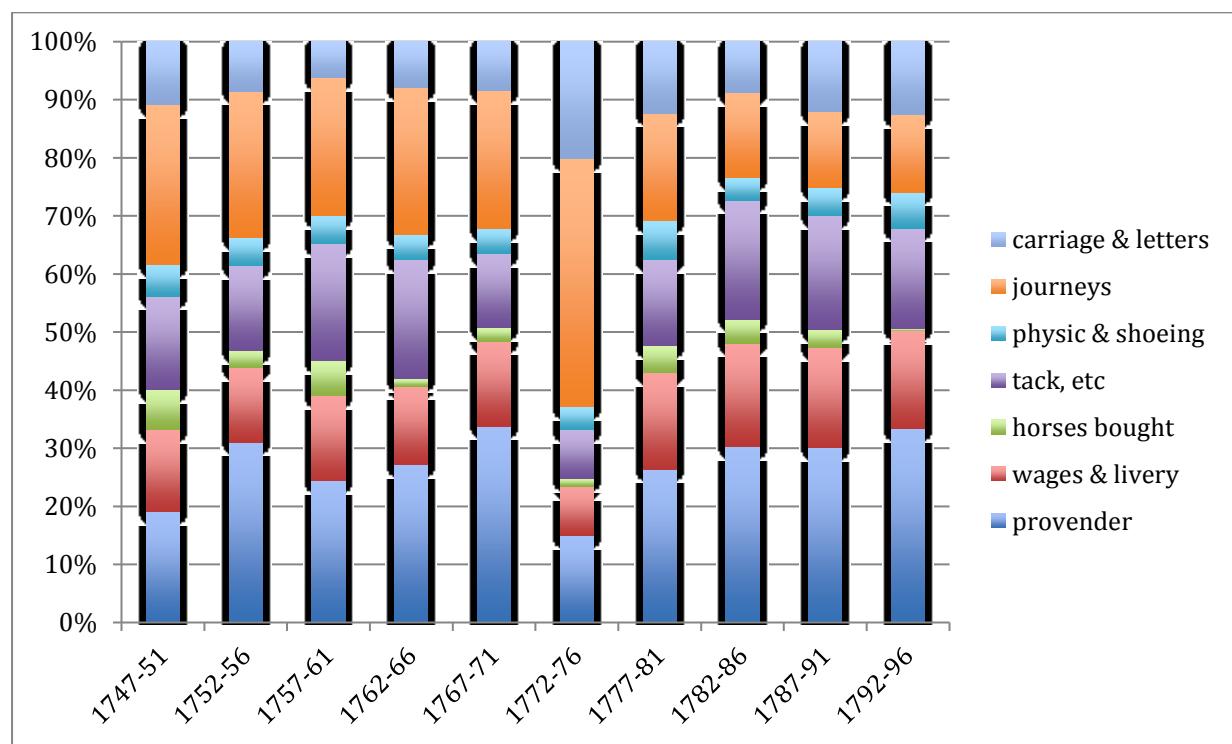
Spending on travel and transport formed a significant proportion of Sir Roger Newdigate's outgoings. In the period 1747-96, his account books record a total of £21,906 of spending in his categories of stables, journeys and carriage of goods and letters – more than twice the amount he spent on silverware, furniture and book combined, and about 15 percent of his overall expenditure.⁹ This impressive sum reflected the continued importance of travel as a marker of elite status; it was an outlay of time and money beyond the means of most people

⁸ MacDonald, 'Leigh family', pp.149, 151, 153; Stratford Central Library and Archives (SCLA), DR18/31/16-37 – Rentals of Real and Devised Estates 1762-1806.

⁹ Warwickshire Record Office (WRO), CR136/v/156, Accounts 1747-62, CR136/v/136, Accounts 1763-96. These are the headings used in the accounts, which do not distinguish between personal and estate costs in relation to journeys and carriage.

and thus signalled both wealth and leisure. It also reminds us of the level of mobility necessary for life in a country house, especially when combined with a career as an MP.¹⁰ There was a broad balance between four main categories of spending: the hardware of coaches and tack, feed for horses, wages and livery, and the cost of journeys (tolls, hiring coaches and horses, and overnight accommodation) – Figure 1. Perhaps surprisingly, the purchase of horses accounted for less than 5 percent of this spending – a modest outlay that is only partly explained by Newdigate breeding his own horses, the costs of which were modest, rarely amounting to more than £2 per annum.

Chart 8.1. Spending on transport and travel by Sir Roger Newdigate, 1747-96 (five year average as percentage)



Source: WRO, CR136/v/156, Accounts 1747-62; CR136/v/136, Accounts 1763-96.

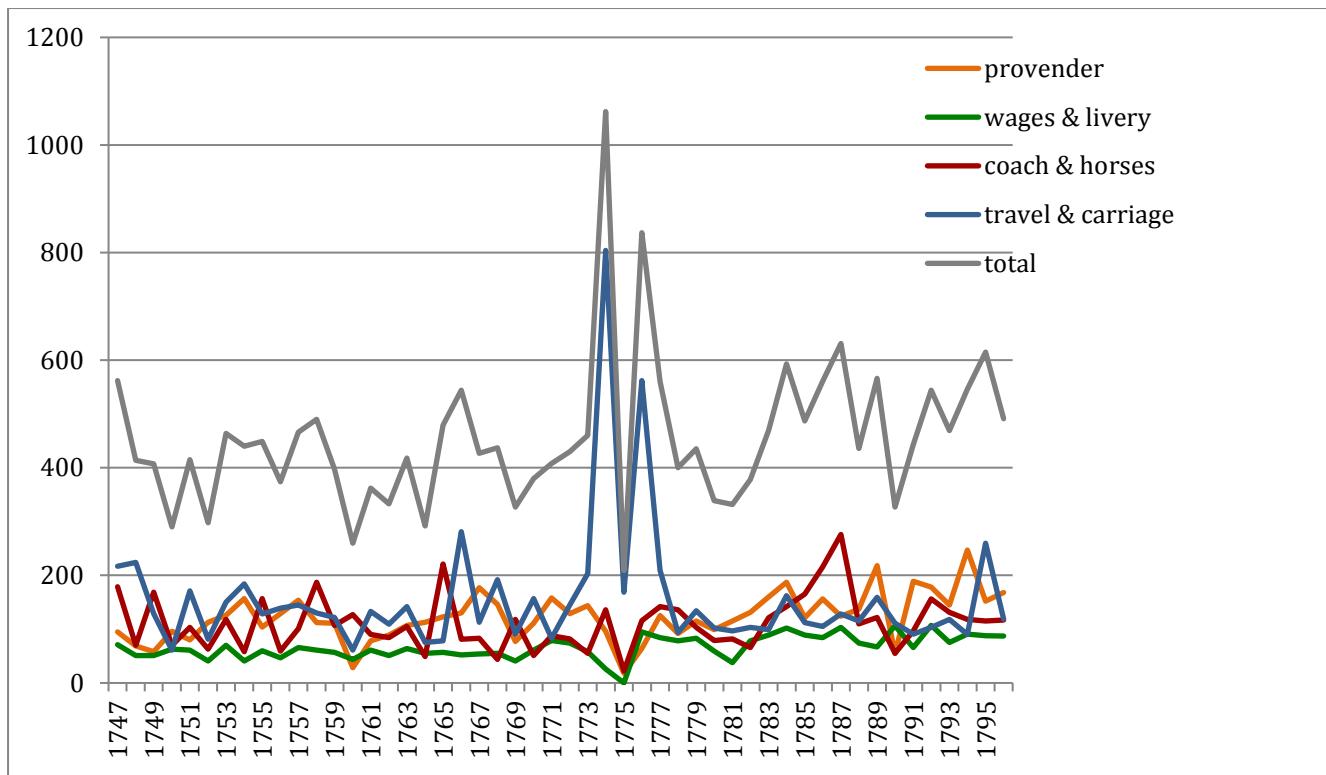
Overall spending rose over the years, from an average of £400 per annum in the 1750s and 1760s to £480 per annum in the 1780s and 1790s, an increase that appears to have been largely driven by greater spending on wages, livery and feed. These certainly grew as a

¹⁰ Whittle and Griffiths, *Gender and Consumption*, pp.191-6; Edwards, *Horse and Man*. For comparisons with everyday spending at Audley End, see Williams, 'Noble household'.

proportion of expenditure, whilst spending on journeys declined – a reflection of Newdigate's retirement as an MP in 1780 and his increasing age which made him less inclined to travel long distances. In this respect, his second Grand Tour in 1774-75 appears to have formed something of a watershed; the 18 months spent away from home explains the very different pattern of expenditure during this time and generated a huge spike in his spending on journeys and the carriage of goods (Figure 2). Indeed, what is most striking about Newdigate's spending on travel and transport is its volatility. Peaks in spending often coincided with large journeys, including tours of the southern counties in 1748 (costing £98 9s), Yorkshire in 1766 (£165 12s), East Anglia in 1768 (£68 13s) and Lincolnshire in 1773 (£44 18s 9d). However, there were also other large periodic outlays: the carriage of five loads of goods from his London house in Spring Gardens, following the loss of his Middlesex seat in 1747 (£84 11s 11d), and the purchase of new carriages in 1747, 1755, 1758, 1765, 1786 and 1787, for a combined total of about £644.

This conspicuous spending on coaches and travel was, to some extent, discretionary; less easily controlled was the outlay on feed: oats, hay and straw. Overall spending on these rose from an average of around £100 per annum in the 1750s and 1760s to around £150 per annum by the 1780s and 1790s, but this masks considerable variations year on year: from as little as £55 in 1790, up to £247 in 1794 and down again to £152 in 1795. It is hard to know exactly what caused these vicissitudes, but they appear to have been linked to changes in quantity rather than price, although the latter did vary slightly year on year. Newdigate's shifting need to buy in feed probably reflected variable harvests because there is no indication that the number or quality of horses fluctuated this dramatically over the years, at least judging from the price he paid for horses. Another unavoidable and growing outlay associated with his stables was the rising tax burden. The £6 that he was paying on two carriages in 1747 had risen to £13 14s 4d by 1783, when he was also paying £4 4s on his coachman and postillions and £3 10s in horse tax; ten years later, he was paying £28 on his carriages, £6 10s on his horses and £4 4s on his servants, a total of £38 14s or the equivalent of two coach horses.

Chart 8.2. Spending on transport and travel by Sir Roger Newdigate, 1747-96 (£)



Source: WRO, CR136/v/156, Accounts 1747-62; CR136/v/136, Accounts 1763-96.

The magnificent: coaches, horses and livery

These taxes were targeted on luxuries and reflect the role of transport and travel as a prop to elite status. Coaches, horses and liveried grooms spoke volumes of the wealth and taste, but also the rank and title of the landowner; indeed, the coach was the *pars pro toto* of an elite lifestyle and emblematic of the economic and social standing of the landed classes.¹¹ As a very public statement of status, its presence on the streets of London and the spa resorts was more telling than appearances in lanes around the house itself. There was thus a need for carriages to be both fashionable and well presented, an imperative which required regular and substantial spending and which, for the very wealthy like the Verneys, involved owning different vehicles for town and country or for different seasons. Sir Roger Newdigate does not appear to have made this distinction, but he invariably owned both a coach and a post chaise (generally a lighter vehicle). As Edwards shows for William Cavendish (see chapter 8), carriages were replaced regularly over the years and, continuing an earlier trend noted by

¹¹ Thompson, *English Landed Society*, 1; P. Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.139. More generally, see Edwards, *Horse and Man*, chapter 9.

Whyman, the cost rose steadily from £54 10s (in 1747) to £109 (1786) for a post chaise, and from £85 5s (1755) to £188 10s (1787) for a coach.¹²

Unfortunately, we know little about the appearance and decoration of these vehicles, although Newdigate complained bitterly during a dispute about an overdue bill from a London coach maker called Leader that it was an ‘enormous charge for a very plain chaise & harness’.¹³ This is probably the jaundiced eye of an unhappy customer rather than a completely accurate depiction of the carriage. Certainly, the detailed descriptions contained in coach makers’ bills indicate that the Leigh family’s coaches were ornately and fashionably decorated in a manner befitting their rank and station. In 1757, Thomas and James Cope, of Long Acre in London, presented a bill for a post chaise supplied to the Honourable Mary Leigh, sister of the future fifth Lord Leigh. She was 21 years old and it seems likely that the coach was part of her coming out onto the social scene. It was described as ‘stone colour with ornaments on the Pannels of China figures, coats of Arms and Cyphers; lined with light colour Cloth’.¹⁴ Seven years later, her brother was supplied with a new crane-necked chariot by the same makers, perhaps again in connection with his coming of age and inheritance of the family estate. They described the coach as having ‘neat ornament^l mouldings, painted with a glaz’d ruby colour, and the arms and dignity in very large mantles, and all the framework gilt, and the roof, back and sides japan’d’.¹⁵ As Whyman notes, the family coat of arms was an essential part of the decoration as it made clear the rank as well as the wealth of the family;¹⁶ but these descriptions also hint at gender differences in decorative style: Mary’s Chinese figures contrasting with her brother’s more obviously showy combination of japanned and gilt work. Such important symbolic capital required considerable and regular outlay to maintain its condition and thus its ability to communicate the right status messages – a need compounded by the considerable wear and tear that was inevitably experienced as these vehicles carried their owners around the country on roads that were frequently rutted and uneven.¹⁷ This

¹² WRO, CR136/v/156, Accounts 1747-62, CR136/v/136, Accounts 1763-96; Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, pp.100-03.

¹³ WRO, CR136/B/2627[1], Letter, 20 May 1799. See also CR136/B2627[2], Letter, 10 June 1799. Newdigate bought all his carriages from London makers.

¹⁴ SCLA, DR18/5/3738.

¹⁵ SCLA, DR18/5/4350.

¹⁶ Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, p.101.

¹⁷ D. Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters: Trade and Travel before the Turnpikes* (Chichester: Philimore, 2005).

brought two imperatives: first, the coach needed to be sturdy and practical as well as looking good, especially if was to be used for travelling rather than simply making social calls in London, and second, it required regular maintenance work. The cost of particular pieces of work could be quite modest, Mary Leigh paying John Hatchett 5s for cleaning and a total of £3 1s 6d for japanning, varnishing and polishing the coach in 1793.¹⁸ But new harnesses were more costly, the same bill recording a charge of £30 for ‘4 New harnesses & bridles made of the best Neat Leather & strong Silver plated Furniture’ along with other pieces of polished ironwork, including bits and cribs. Cumulatively, these kinds of bills added considerably to the cost of owning a coach. Between the purchase of his new post chaise in 1747 and his new coach in 1755, Sir Roger Newdigate paid his coach maker just over £171 for repairs, new glass and the like.

Outlay at this level makes any disappointment felt in the end product more understandable: when fault was found, it was the cost that irked as well as the way that perceived shoddiness undermined the coach as a status symbol. Newdigate may have bemoaned the plainness of his coach, but Elizabeth Purefoy centred her complaints on the poor quality of the glass in her carriage, which ‘broke & flew in severall pieces’ when she tried to open the window, and of some harnesses, the brass buckles of which were ‘of such small substance as will break like Glassee’.¹⁹ These were brought together in the complaints made by the wealthy industrialist, Michael Hughes, about his new carriage. It was not only ‘plain, mean and paltry and this much inferior to any Gentleman’s Carriage’, but also poorly made, ‘for the Springs, altho’ the Carriage since I had it has not run more than 30 Miles … have already given way and must be replaced’.²⁰

Another consequence of the expense of carriages was to encourage attempts to defray costs. Like others, the Leigs paid down their account with Thomas and James Cope in instalments rather than settling in full, as they did with many of their principal suppliers.²¹ Sir Roger Newdigate, like John Verney, traded in the carriages that he was replacing, receiving £6 18s for his old landau in 1755 and £10 for his old coach ten years later (roughly 10 percent of the

¹⁸ SCLA, DR18/5/6054.

¹⁹ Eland, G. (ed.), *Purefoy Letters, 1735-1753* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd, 1931), No.292, 13 September 1743; No.300, 19 July 1750.

²⁰ Letter to Messrs Chamberlayne & Co., 23 October 1809, quoted in Barker and Harris, *St Helens*, p.155.

²¹ Stobart and Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, chapter 7.

cost of his new carriages – the price of fashion, but also wear and tear).²² Henry Purefoy went a stage further, dipping his toe into the extensive market for second-hand carriages that developed in both London and the provinces, perhaps because he lacked the means to buy new.²³ In early 1745, he wrote to his coach maker, Henry Lake, that his mother was looking to exchange her current large coach for a smaller lighter model. Unsurprisingly, he expressed a desire to ‘have the Doors & coach pretty near the fashion they make them now’ – after all, a second-hand coach was a false economy if it failed to measure up to the required standards of taste or fashion. At the same time, though, practical issues were paramount. Purefoy described the old coach as being ‘little ye worse for wearing’ – reflecting the imperatives found in newspaper advertisements for second-hand carriages – and rejected one offered by Lake as too heavy, noting that ‘Wee must have a very light one to travel in, otherwise wee need not change our own’.²⁴

The precise saving that Purefoy might have made by purchasing second hand is unclear, but would certainly have run to tens of pounds – enough to pay his coachmen and grooms for a year, or to purchase two or three goods coach horses. Both men and animals formed considerable additional costs, especially when they had to be clothed and fed (see also Chapter 9). A post chaise usually required two horses whilst the bigger and heavier coaches needed four or more often six.²⁵ Given that each of the families considered here were running two or more carriages at any one time, they must have owned at least five coach horses and more likely seven; the Leigs certainly had more, especially when Mary and Edward Leigh were running separate carriages in the 1760s. In addition, there would have been horses for riding as well as others for drawing wagons and carts, most owners preferring to have different animals for each of these tasks, not least because different physical and behavioural characteristics were required for each task. Coach horses needed to be large, strong and of a good gait, and needed to match in terms of colour, action, size and conformation, giving the full ensemble of coach and horses an elegant appearance.²⁶ Riding horses were also intended

²² WRO, CR136/v/156, Accounts 1747-62, CR136/v/136, Accounts 1763-96; Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, p.104.

²³ Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, 104; J. Stobart, ‘Clothes, cabinets and carriages: second-hand dealing in eighteenth-century England’, in B. Blondé, P. Stabel, J. Stobart and I Van Damme (eds) *Buyers and Sellers: Retail Circuits and Practices in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp.225-44.

²⁴ Eland, *Purefoy Letters*, No.293, 23 February 1745; No.294, 9 March 1745.

²⁵ Edwards, *Horse and Man*, pp.220-25; Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters*.

²⁶ Edwards, *Horse and Man*.

to create an imposing and authoritative image, but they also needed to be matched to their rider's needs and abilities – not everyone wanted a fine, mettlesome stallion. Henry Purefoy, for example, wrote to a local grazier, offering ‘a very pretty Gelding I bought for my own riding, hee being too airy for mee’ and later complained, after been thrown from his horse, that ‘mares when they go to horse are Resty and gamesome, & not fit for mee’.²⁷

The need for economy sometimes forced dual use of horses, an imperative which again shaped Henry Purefoy’s behaviour. He enquired about a saddle horse that might also be used occasionally to pull carts and made reference to ‘the coach horse I ride’,²⁸ but the elite kept designated coach and saddle horses if they could. Whilst his accounts do not tell us about the intended purpose of the horses that he bred, Sir Roger Newdigate distinguished coach, saddle and general-purpose horses in his purchases. The price difference was considerable: broken-in coach horses cost him between £15 4s and £19 (a price which remained fairly stable over time), whereas the price of saddle horses was more variable and could be as little as £5 10 for a modest mount – again reminding us that not all members of the elite strove for costly thoroughbreds. Over a fifty-year period, he spent a total of £720, sometimes acquiring colts and foals that required breaking (costing up to £5 apiece) and sometimes breeding from his own mares, although the latter was never a major source of livestock and the Arbury Hall stables were a far cry from the large-scale and hugely costly stud that had been run by his grandfather Sir Richard Newdigate.²⁹ The accounts make occasional reference to purchases of horses at the fairs in Rugby and especially Northampton, a renowned source for powerful draught animals. More generally, however, no location is given, making it difficult to judge the balance between fairs and private transactions as a source of animals, although Edwards argues that coach horses were usually acquired at the former and saddle horses from the latter.³⁰

Purefoy, with less disposable income, was still keen to acquire good horses. In the summer of 1736, he wrote to his friend the Reverend Richard Dalby asking him to buy a coach horse belonging to Mr Buzwell, ‘if hee may be had for 12 guineas or 13 pounds as you was

²⁷ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.286, 30 April 1740.; No.289, 13 December 1749.

²⁸ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.284, 8 July 1739; No.287, 11 June 1740.

²⁹ P. Edwards, ‘Horses and elite identity in early modern England: the case of Sir Richard Newdigate II of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire (1644-1710), in Pia Cuneo, ed., *Animals and Early Modern Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

³⁰ P. Edwards, *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.73-6.

mentioning', adding that 'upon consideration wee think hee will match Ruby well enough'.³¹ The imperatives of economy were being balanced with the desire to have matching horses for the carriage; importantly, they were being fulfilled via a private transaction, Purefoy being cautious about buying at fairs. That said, he was sometimes unlucky when reaching private bargains, writing to a neighbour and complaining that he had been misled about the quality of a horse bought at Banbury which 'I mistrusted & questioned ... but you & Pratt [a local farrier] & the owner of the mare said she was not surfeited but entirely sound'.³² This incident throws up two important aspects of horse buying. The first is that not all gentlemen were experts in horseflesh: whilst Purefoy could be disparaging about the judgement of others, he appears to have been uncertain of his abilities in assessing the qualities of particular animals – hence his reliance on his neighbour and the local farrier. This was not unusual, of course: some landowners engaged a specialist stable master to assess potential horses and haggle over prices as well as managing their stables. Purefoy was probably unable to afford such a luxury, but there is no evidence that Sir Roger Newdigate had such a servant either, so he may have been confident of his own skills or looked to friends or perhaps his coachman for advice. The second point is the need to exercise care: it was all too easy to end up with poor or sickly animals, especially when buying from an unknown source, as Purefoy again found to his cost in 1748 when acquiring a coach mare for his mother.³³

Of course, buying the horse was only the start of the expenditure. Feed was an ongoing expense and one that, for Sir Roger Newdigate, outweighed the recorded outlay in purchasing horses by a ratio of nearly 9:1 (around £6106 over the 50 year period, compared with £720 on horses – see Figure 1). If the landowner had pretensions to large-scale stud breeding, the cost could be crippling unless sufficient hay and oats could be produced on the estate and there was, of course, the opportunity cost of tying up land that might be put to more profitable use.³⁴ In addition, there was a need for tack, especially when riding was a particular passion or a significant element of the owner's identity. This does not appear to have been the case for Newdigate, Purefoy or Edward Leigh; but it was for true of Edward's father, Thomas,

³¹ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.273, 4 June 1736.

³² Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.283, 20 June 1739.

³³ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.290, 22 February 1748. On the hazards of horse buying, see Edwards *The Horse Trade*.

³⁴ Edwards, 'Decline of an aristocratic stud'. As he makes clear, it was possible to make large profits if the stud was successful, but it was an extremely risky business.

fourth Lord Leigh. In 1739, he purchased for his wife a ‘Leopard Skin Side Sadle & Housing Trimed with Gold fringe & Lace’ and ‘Fine Leopard Housing & bags, Trimm’d with Gold fringe & Lace, very Rich’.³⁵ These were exotic luxuries that cost Thomas a total of £49 7s – almost as much as Newdigate spent on his 1747 post chaise and just as potent as a symbol of wealth, status and taste, especially when combined with the ‘Four Sett of Housing & bags with yr Lordships Crest & Coronet’.

The conspicuous consumption of coach, horses and saddlery was made complete by the addition of liveried servants. John Styles has argued that servants had a variable and ambivalent attitude to livery, but for their masters it was a key component in public expressions of rank and title.³⁶ Sir Roger Newdigate spent almost as much on livery as he did on clothing for himself and his wives across the period of the account books.³⁷ Much of this outlay was for dressing his coachman and postilions, spending on whom often ran into double figures. In 1755, for instance, he purchased leather breeches, a frock suit, a hat and a box-greatcoat for his coachman and groom, at a combined cost of over £20. Sixteen years later, a new set of livery for his coachman, groom and two postilions cost £45 3s and in 1790, ten years after he had retired from public life as an MP, he was still spending handsomely, the tailor’s account for livery coming to £62 17s 6d.³⁸ This level of spending was at least matched by Mary Leigh who was laying out around £25 per head to clothe her coachman, grooms and postilion in the 1790s.³⁹ Significantly, she went to the same London tailors, Fell & Son of St Martin’s Lane, that her brother had used for his own clothing in the 1760s, whilst the hats came from Davies and Lees of Conduit Street, ‘Hatters to her Majesty’.

Like all livery, the clothing provided by Sir Roger Newdigate and Mary Leigh was showy. Colours were often used to mark out the family by which the servant was employed and trimmings made for an ostentatious rather than fashionable display. These were not clothes that spoke of sartorial elegance or gentlemanly good taste; rather they communicated rank, wealth and service. The detail contained in Newdigate’s account books is limited, but the frock suits and jackets bought in 1750 were scarlet and laced. Bills presented to Mary Leigh by the Fells give more detail. In 1795, they supplied four dress livery laced suits, three claret

³⁵ SCLA, DR18/5/2331.

³⁶ Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp.295-301.

³⁷ The actual figures were £3629 for personal clothing and £3047 for livery.

³⁸ WRO, CR136/V/156, Accounts 1747-62; CR136/V/136, Accounts 1763-96.

³⁹ SCLA, DR18/5/6051, DR18/5/6098, DR18/5/6099.

frock suits, two scarlet laced jackets and waistcoats, and six striped waistcoats. Rather less showy, but no less expensive were three duffle jackets, seven drab colour surtout coats, a drab coach box coat, six drab frock suits, seven Russia drab frock coats and waistcoats. The total bill came to £141 12s, with a further £84 8s of livery for the Stoneleigh servants, to which was added £9 2s 6d for the livery hats and velvet postilions caps supplied by Davies and Lees.⁴⁰ And yet this spending was not unthinking extravagance; rather, it was tempered with economy and prudence. The Fells' bill included 9s 6d for 'Ripping to pieces a Claret colour frock Suit & Greatly altered for a new Postilion & made to his size', and there were similar charges for altering another suit, two jackets and three waistcoats. Although some servants retained their livery, it is clear that employers could extend the useful life of clothing beyond the employment of a particular servant.⁴¹

More importantly, perhaps, liveried servants formed a vital component of the magnificence of travel for the titled elite. Coaches, horses and livery comprised what de Vries refers to as a 'consumption bundle'; that is, a set of objects which, when deployed and displayed collectively, carried additional meaning.⁴² As an ensemble, they were central to elite status, both as a highly visible display of rank and status, and as the key mechanism for a level of personal mobility that marked them out from other social groups. Yet travel and transport were also fundamental to elite lifestyles and elite spending at a more mundane level: moving people relied on everyday costs as well as expenditure on big ticket items, whilst most goods went to and from the country house by other means.

The mundane: transporting people and delivering goods

In addition to the cost of coach, horses and servants, Sir Roger Newdigate spent an average of just over £100 per annum on journeys. Even if we remove the exceptional costs of his 1774-75 Grand Tour, the figure was a hefty £90 per annum, reflecting the cumulative cost of turnpike tolls, hiring horses, overnight accommodation and the like (see also Chapter 9). These costs were incurred on at least three different types of travel, all of which fed into and facilitated his elite lifestyle. First, there were extended leisure trips, comprising not just his Grand Tour but also a number of journeys within England, both of which were well beyond

⁴⁰ SCLA, 18/5/6098, 6097.

⁴¹ Reference to servants retaining clothing

⁴² J. de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution. Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.31.

the means of most people and served to mark elite status. For example, his 1748 tour of southern England lasted for about two months and involved over 600 miles of travel. Some nights were spent with friends or acquaintances, but there were numerous overnight stays at inns.⁴³ Quite apart from the ability to devote so much time to leisure travel, the total cost recorded for the journey (£98 9s) accounted for nearly one quarter of his spending on transport and travel that year. Second, there were regular excursions made to spa resorts and to a variety of towns for the races. The journey to Bath in the 1770s and 1780s cost around £12 10s; trips to Buxton in the early 1780s accumulated bills of between £3 4s and £10 10s, depending on the length of stay, and visits to Warwick and Rugby races in the 1750s involved laying out anything from £2 13 6d to £7 19s. Thus, even a modest leisure trip to a neighbouring town could easily cost more than a maid's annual wages. Third, there were the journeys necessary for Newdigate's role as magistrate and an MP. These sometimes took him to Warwick for the quarter sessions or to Oxford, but mostly he went to London, sometimes meeting the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University whilst there. The recorded cost of these journeys varied hugely, mostly reflecting the duration of the visit and whether accommodation as well as travel was included. Other cost factors included the time of year and thus the time taken for the journey, and the number of people travelling. Details are not always recorded, but on January 1767, for instance, the accounts show £12 for Newdigate's own travel, plus a further £2 15s 6d for transporting his cook and three maids down to London.⁴⁴

In addition to these longer trips, there were numerous shorter journeys and costs for sending servants on errands. For Newdigate, these were mostly incurred in Warwickshire. In London, he appears to have walked a great deal from his house in Spring Gardens: for the short journey to and from Parliament, but also around the city streets and to a variety of retailers and craftsmen. Whilst walking was not unusual, the distances he covered were exceptional, his diaries indicating some round trips of several miles.⁴⁵ Of course, he also used his carriages and, for most elites in London, a coach was necessary both to achieve this level of

⁴³ WRO, CR1841/7, Lady Newdigate's tour in the south of England (1748) gives a detailed account of the trip, but does not always record details of where they stayed overnight. See J. Stobart, 'From magnificent houses to disagreeable country: Lady Sophia Newdigate's tour of southern England and Derbyshire, 1748', in A. Capen and B. McDonagh (eds) [forthcoming].

⁴⁴ WRO, CR136/v/136, Accounts 1763-96. Similar patterns and costs are seen for William Chatsworth – see Edwards, 'Decline of an aristocratic stud'.

⁴⁵ See Stobart and Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, chapter 8.

mobility and to signal their status to the metropolis. Judith Baker, visiting London in the 1770s and 1780s, appears to have been geographically constrained by her reluctance to hire a coach. As a consequence, her shopping trips remaining focused on the streets close to her lodgings.⁴⁶ In contrast, the Purefoy's 1749 trip was undertaken in their own coach, which was lodged at an inn near to the Wood Street house of their friend and agent, Peter Moulson.⁴⁷ From this base, they spent several days visiting shops in St Paul's Churchyard, Cheapside, Fleet Street, Long Acre, Holborn, Piccadilly and elsewhere. The following day they went sightseeing, beginning in the City with visits to St Stephens, the Bank, Southsea House and the Guildhall, and then travelling north to Moorfields and on to Westminster Abbey. Some of these shops and landmarks might be reached on foot, but Henry was not the most athletic of men and his mother was 76 years old, so they must have hired coaches (or used their own) for many journeys. They would certainly have needed to do so when visiting friends in Pall Mall and when travelling to Ranelagh House, the Tower and Greenwich in the following two days. Such practices were well established in the early seventeenth century, with horses often being returned to the country residence rather than expensively stabled in London (see Chapter 9). By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, even longer-term residents appear to have mixed ownership and hiring. Mary Leigh incurred significant bills as a young woman, paying George Wright a total of £495 over the period 1759 to 1772 for hiring coaches, horses and coachmen.⁴⁸ The destinations to which she travelled on these occasions are not recorded, but other bills note trips as far afield as Cheltenham, but most journeys were in and around London.⁴⁹ As an older woman and by then living in Kensington, she was still hiring carriages as well as using her own coach: an account for £169 4s 6d with the London hackney man, Richard Smith, was settled in July 1804.⁵⁰ Some of these costs are recorded in the account book for Grove House, payments for coaches appearing on average once a week during the months she was in residence. The cost was generally very modest, either 1s or sometimes 2s, although it is unclear whether these were the tolls charged on a journey into London or the cost of hiring a coach. Some were undoubtedly the latter, as the accounts

⁴⁶ H. Berry, 'Prudent Luxury: The metropolitan tastes of Judith Baker, Durham gentlewoman' in P. Lane and R. Sweet (ed.), *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp.130-54.

⁴⁷ Details of the trip are contained in Henry Purefoy's diary. See Eland, *Purefoy Letters*, pp.359-60.

⁴⁸ SCLA, DR18/5/3857, 3908, 4253a, 4215, 4336, 4512, 4964, 5017.

⁴⁹ For example, see: SCLA, DR18/5/4663, 4712.

⁵⁰ SCLA, DR18/5/6816.

occasionally record ‘coach for the cook’, but trips to see her man of business, Joseph Hill, in Temple Bar or Queen Street, and those to visit family and friends were more likely to have been made in her own coach. Visiting was an important part of Mary Leigh’s social life – her accounts also record payments for packs of small visiting cards – and, as Whyman notes of the Verneys, arriving by coach would have made this an important and symbolic occasion.⁵¹ Given the wider importance of coach ownership in London society, these visits would have provided the ideal opportunity for Mary to use her coach and show off her expensively clothed servants.

The regular and substantial nature of her bills for equipage and tack indicate that Mary Leigh made good use of her coach. She paid 32 such bills over the course of her life, covering repairs, renovations and cleaning of her coach, and a wide range of new harnesses, collars, bars and the like. But there were also whips, saddles, reins and bridles; crppers, martingales, nick straps, curbs and body rollers, and combs, sponges and brushes.⁵² The significance of these is twofold. First, it questions the extent to which saddlery was an entirely masculine domain as Vickery suggests.⁵³ Men might have engaged more enthusiastically with the equipage of coach and horses, but it was necessary for any wealthy landowner to spend time and money on these items. Whilst it is unlikely that Mary spent much time in the saddler’s workshop, she was clearly linked into this world through her demand for its products. Second, and more important for the present discussion, this spending confirms that Mary was using her own coach and horses on a regular basis – sufficiently to necessitate repairs and renewal. Viewed this way, these bills equate to those for cleaning and maintaining the house; they speak less of a fetish for leather and more of the prudent spending of a responsible owner.

Whether owned or hired, a coach and horses made members of the elite geographically mobile. Thanks to the network of carriers that enmeshed the country with an increasingly dense web of inter-connections, goods were equally footloose.⁵⁴ Carriage was a significant enough area of spending to merit a separate entry in Sir Roger Newdigate’s account books, an average of about £34 being laid out each year. Unfortunately, it is mostly impossible to know

⁵¹ SCLA, DR18/31/656, Day Book for Grove House, 1793-98; Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, p.100.

⁵² SCLA, DR18/5/5941, 6027, 6054.

⁵³ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.124.

⁵⁴ On the development of the carrier trade, see D. Gerhold, *Road Transport Before the Railways. Russell's London Flying Wagons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

how this broke down into payments for particular journeys or consignments. Bringing his artistic and bibliographic treasures back from Italy was exceptional in terms of complexity and cost: his accounts indicate a total bill of a shade over £331 for freight, duties and brokerage, to which was added a further £89 for ‘package, embarkage &c’.⁵⁵ More generally, however, his payments for carriage reflected dozens of separate transactions each year, with arrangements for delivery being made for each consignment of goods and personal belongings.

These arrangements come into much sharper focus in the letters written by Elizabeth and Henry Purefoy to their various suppliers, each of which ends with careful instructions about how the goods being ordered should be delivered. For goods coming from London, they generally used the Buckingham carrier, Mr Webster and his successors William Eagles and Mr Jones, who each in turn operated out of the Oxford Arms on Warwick Lane off Ludgate Hill. From there, they transported a remarkable range of goods for them – anything from groceries and textiles to books and lottery tickets. However, the Purefoys also drew on the services of Eagles’s father, the Brackley carrier, Mr Palmer, the Oxford carrier who called at Northampton, and Zachary Meads, whose route is not specified. On rare occasions, they even had goods dispatched by stage coach, Elizabeth requesting that a pound of bohea tea be sent from her London grocer via the Bath coach as she was staying in the resort for her health.⁵⁶ Given the complexity of London’s retail and transport networks, the Purefoys were understandably careful in giving precise instructions about where their chosen carrier could be found and the days in which they would depart. The wine merchant, Peter Moulson, with whom the Purefoys developed a very close relationship, was thus informed that Meads ‘sets out from George inne Smithfield on Mondays and ffriday mornings, whilst Eagles departed at 4 o’clock each Tuesday morning.⁵⁷

The retailer was clearly expected to assemble the goods, but responsibility for their safe delivery to the carrier’s London base is less easily apportioned. The arrangements and costs are not explicit in the Purefoy’s correspondence, although Henry exhorted his stationer when ordering a range of paper to ‘charge the carrier they don’t come to any Wett’, suggesting that

⁵⁵ WRO, CR1236/v/136, Accounts 1763-96; CR136/b/2638b, Books, marbles, medals, casts &c purchased from Italy, July 1774 to Jan 1776

⁵⁶ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.534, 19 August 1742.

⁵⁷ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.124, 11 January 1743; No.119, 3 February 1739.

the retailer was expected to deal directly with the carrier.⁵⁸ More systematic evidence can be drawn from the account book for Grove House, Mary Leigh's Kensington home, which records regular payments for the carriage of hampers of groceries, at the rate of 1s 6d per hamper.⁵⁹ The supplier of these is not noted, but her chief source of groceries at this time was Francis Field, whose shop was on Holborn, some 3½ miles distant. It may have been Field who organised the delivery of these hampers, but the actual work of moving them across town was probably in the hands of porters.

These arrangements reveal something of the complex nature of what might seem to be relatively straightforward transactions with London suppliers; placing an order was really only the start of a complex series of relationships that brought goods to the country house. Moreover, there were significant flows moving in the opposite direction. The Purefoys used the same carriers who brought goods from London to return items that they found wanting, Henry, for instance, sending back quilting 'carriage paid', via Webster, the Buckingham carrier. More frequent were the gifts that they sent to their agents in London, especially Thomas Robotham and Peter Moulson, with whom they stayed when visiting London in 1749. These were usually fresh foods: hares from the estate, pigeons, hog puddings, cheese, a chine, turkey or goose. They helped to cement friendships and the letters announcing their dispatch invariably noted that they came 'carriage paid'.⁶⁰ Mary Leigh was engaged in similar practices, although her largesse stretched to venison, which was especially important in denoting favour and was given most often Joseph Hill, thus signalling and reinforcing their professional and personal relationship.⁶¹ This came to Kensington as part of regular consignments of vegetables and fruits from Stoneleigh Abbey and was sent on via local carriers at a cost of between 8d and 1s per delivery.⁶² More generally, the Grove House account books record a plethora of payments for goods being carried from London inns to Kensington. In 1790, for example, three hampers were brought from the Bell Inn, Wood Street in January; two hampers and three deal boxes were sent from the same address in February; a case followed in March; 5 boxes and a trunk, then three boxes and a hamper, and

⁵⁸ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.423, 12 October 1751.

⁵⁹ SCLA, DR18/31/656, Day Book for Grove House, 1793-98 - see entries for 14 January and 21 June 1792.

⁶⁰ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No. 162, 1 February 1735; No.189, 8 April 1739; No. 119, 3 February 1739.

⁶¹ On the significance of gifting venison, see Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, pp.23-33.

⁶² SCLA, reference to goods from Stoneleigh and account book.

finally a box, hamper and package came in July.⁶³ The overall cost of these journeys was 17s 6d – insignificant in Mary’s annual expenditure that ran into the thousands – but they reflect both the enormous flows of goods that criss-crossed London on a daily basis and the huge, but often neglected, importance of carriers in allowing both trade and daily living to function effectively.

The geographical mobility of carriers meant that they were in London more regularly than some provincial landowners, especially those without a London house. They were called on to undertake a variety of roles beyond simply transporting goods; they carried valuables, chased up enquiries with tradesmen and paid shopkeepers’ accounts. A single example will serve to illustrate the way in which these various duties were to be executed. In April 1750, Henry Purefoy wrote to the carrier William Eagles asking him to enquire after ‘my Ring that I gave you in a little box to deliver to Mr Chabbert a Goldsmith over against Brownlow Street’ – there had clearly been some delay and Purefoy was anxious for news concerning its whereabouts.⁶⁴ In addition, Eagles was to call at Richard Budd, a stationer in Chancery Lane, and settle an account for £ 14s 9d on his behalf. He was instructed to get a receipt, on production of which Eagles would be paid when he returned to Buckingham. For his trouble, Eagles was allowed to ‘drink sixpence’, which seems scant reward for effectively advancing money to Purefoy in this way. Budd’s account was relatively small, but the carrier paid others that were considerably larger, meaning that he could be tens of pounds out of pocket.

Carriers were thus trusted to carry goods and undertake financial transactions safely and honestly, but shopkeepers were equally careful to ensure that the items that they dispatched were safely packaged. We have already seen something of this in the hampers of groceries being carried to Grove House. These containers were often itemised on bills and their cost explicitly passed on to the customer: North, Hoare, Nanson and Simpson, for instance, charged Mary Leigh 7s 6d for three hampers to contain £38 14s 10d of groceries, whilst Field and Lewis added 3s 2d for a hamper and stone bottle (the latter being a substantial item containing 9 quarts of finest salad oil).⁶⁵ Such packaging contained and protected the goods within, something that was necessary for all manner of objects, but especially important for fragile items such as china. Wedgwood’s concerns about the safe movement of his wares is generally seen in terms of transportation from the factory to his London showrooms, most

⁶³ SCLA, DR18/31/656, Day Book for Grove House, 1793-98

⁶⁴ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.192, 5 April 1740.

⁶⁵ SCLA, DR18/5/6093, 6058, 6046.

famously manifest in his support of the Trent and Mersey Canal. However, the need for similar care when dispatching goods to his customers is manifest in the charge for crates inevitably contained in his bills and those of provincial china dealers like M. Backhouse of Coventry.⁶⁶ Despite this, mishaps were quite common, Henry Purefoy writing in 1749 that a box of china had arrived safely, except for one plate which ‘was put up under the cover of the Dish, & no straw being upon it, it was broke’.⁶⁷

In many ways, packing and transporting small items like these was relatively straightforward. Something of the complexity and costs of moving furniture from London makers to provincial country houses is apparent from the lengthy bill presented by William Gomm.⁶⁸ This contains a total of £21 18s 6d on packaging – a modest sum in relation to the £818 19s of the overall account, but still a substantial figure, equivalent to 24 chairs or two of the best large chests of draws. Chairs and presses were protected by matting and deal boards across their backs, whilst strong packing cases were used for dressing tables, commodes and the like. Particular trouble was taken over the communion table, costing £31 10s, which was covered in a blanket and placed in a large packing case. The benefit of this care is apparent from the safe arrival of most of the furniture, although it is telling that Gomm allowed £1 6s for ‘2 Mahogany Chairs in the room of two broke in the Carriage & allowing for the Wood that could be used’.⁶⁹

Suitably protected and in the safe hands of a reliable carrier, goods were thus highly mobile, at least for wealthy landowners who could afford the costs of packaging and transport, and the time to organise safe transit from shop or workshop to the country house. If the work was sometimes put onto the shoulders of others – carriers being asked to settle accounts or stewards and housekeepers charged with dealing with suppliers – this did nothing to diminish the huge logistical effort required to make goods and people geographically mobile in a way that made the country house such an important nexus of consumption.

Conclusions

⁶⁶ SCLA, DR18/5/5684, 5961.

⁶⁷ Eland, *Purefoy letters*, No.138, 18 June 1749.

⁶⁸ SCLA, DR18/5/4808.

⁶⁹ SCLA, DR18/5/4808.

The magnificence and symbolism of the coach and horses often dominates analyses of elite transport. It was such a costly undertaking, such a showy piece of conspicuous consumption, and such an important public statement of rank and title, that it too easily blinds us to other, more everyday, aspects of travel: horse feed and vehicle maintenance, turnpike tolls and accommodation, carriage hire and carriers' bills. And yet, as with the country house itself, the magnificent and mundane were two sides of the same coin; they were mutually inter-dependent. A coach was useless without well-fed horses to pull it and would have lost much of its cultural impact were it to appear in public in a dilapidated condition. Moreover, coach ownership implied journeys, the cost of which – as Sir Roger Newdigate's accounts make clear – could easily exceed those of the vehicle and equipage.

Whyman has suggested that the coach was both useful and symbolic because it conferred freedom on its owner; freedom from the constraints of space which allowed the elite to conceive and operate on a geographically broader stage.⁷⁰ A corresponding freedom from the tyranny of space derived from the ability to order goods over long distances and secure their safe delivery to the house. This was vital to the geographical reach of the elite and thus to their status as tasteful and discerning consumers. The motivations for buying goods in London were complex and varied, but undoubtedly served to extend choice and underpin status; but choosing and buying the right things from the right places was of little value if they could not be carried home. Cost was an important factor here; another was the level of organisation required to order and deliver goods over great distances. Together, they helped to differentiate the supply patterns of country house owners from the middling sorts who relied much more on shops in their local towns.⁷¹

When we think about the country house as a nexus of consumption, we should therefore recall that, not only was a significant proportion of that consumption concerned with transport and travel (in the forms of bills from coach makers, saddlers, tailors, farriers and innkeepers), but also that it was underpinned by a dependence on transport services in the form of carriers. Their importance was out of all proportion to the size of the bills they presented because, without them, the country house quite simply could not have functioned.

⁷⁰ Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, p.105.

⁷¹ J. Stobart, A. Hann and V. Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption. Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.49-55.