

2020-05

Inns and Elite Mobility in Late Georgian Britain

Maudlin, Daniel

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/13608>

10.1093/pastj/gtz050

Past and Present

Oxford University Press (OUP)

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

Inns and Elite Mobility in Late Georgian Britain

For the elite of late Georgian Britain, c. 1760 – 1837, mobility was profoundly shaped by the everyday experience of staying at inns while on the road. Collectively, as essential stage-stops for travellers and horses, inns enabled long journeys, while individually inns were the sites of the countless small-scale travel-related mobilities that were acted out in yards, parlours and bedchambers. Alongside road-making and coach-building which both reached peaks of activity and improvement in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, the unprecedented number of inns built and operated in the same period was fundamental to increased mobility across all social ranks.¹ However, not all inns were the same and different inns served different social ranks. Elite travellers stayed exclusively at ‘principal inns’, those inns at the apex of a socially-ranked hierarchy of public houses and hostelries. The principal inns built in this boom period were very different buildings from the common inn or alehouse. As a group, they were the largest, most efficient, most fashionable and architecturally ambitious – predominantly classically styled – buildings of their type built before or since. Located on every major road, every port and in every market and county town, they were everywhere. Moreover, by the late eighteenth-century, elite inns were highly similar to each other, serving not just high-quality food and drink in refined spaces but similar food and drink in spaces that were very much the same from one inn to the next. A picture emerges, therefore, not of individual instances of style or luxury but of an extraordinary visual, spatial and material coherence across elite inns nationwide; this

¹ John Chartres, 'The Eighteenth-Century Inn: A Transient 'Golden Age'', in Beat Kumin and B. Ann Tlusty (eds.), *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002), 205-227; Geoffrey N. Wright, *Turnpike Roads* (London, 2008), 17.

consistency distinguished the experience of elite mobility from the experiences of everyone else on the road in late Georgian Britain.

I. Nodes in a Network

Mobility is the quality of movement in people and things. Mobility may be observed at different spatial-scales from the trans-global to crossing a room.² It can also be considered at different human scales from mass migrations to journeys undertaken by the lone traveller.³ Here, I am focussing on the relatively small-scale, everyday mobilities associated with travel and the movements of late Georgian travellers within the British Isles. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain experienced many mass migrations – from the countryside to the proto-industrial cities of northern England, from Highland Scotland to North America - but it was also a boom period for travel and the individual traveller. In this period an extended and improved network of major highways or ‘great roads’ allowed more people of all social ranks to be on the move more often. At its peak immediately prior to the widespread opening of passenger rail services in the 1840s, better roads and better vehicles had enabled travel to become routine, unproblematic and unremarkable. Travellers of different social rank and different modes of transport moved constantly around the Britain Isles for different purposes: wagoners with their slow-moving mule or oxen-driven wagons, the goods freighters of early modern Britain; tinkers, travelling barbers, soldiers travelling on foot; merchants, lawyers, judges, landowners, politicians and polite tourists travelling on horseback or by coach.

² See Kimberley Skelton, *The Paradox of Body, Building and Motion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Manchester, 2015); Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern World* (Abingdon, 2006); John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge, 2007)

³ Josef, Ehmer, ‘Quantifying Mobility in Early Modern Europe: the challenge of concepts and data’, *Journal of Global History* (2011), 6, 327-338.

One regular traveller, the essayist and commentator Arthur Young, argued that the growing numbers of people on the move was evidence of Britain's progress as a 'prosperous and elegant nation', representing 'the grand chain of prosperity we do not think of: Good roads, and convenient accommodations for travellers are necessary to every embellishment of life; the possession of them implies a State of prosperity and elegance'.⁴ Of these inns or 'accommodations' were the essential nodes in a national travel network that through the long eighteenth century had improved in both speed and reliability on historic routes and, with the making of new roads, expanded out to the edges of the British Isles. As argued by Young, better, longer, faster roads brought greater prosperity and brought the different parts of a recently united Great Britain closer together (although these new connections also brought new disputes).⁵ Journey times between A and B became exponentially shorter; faster journey times enabled more journeys and longer journeys made the world seem at once both larger and smaller: in 1675 travelling from London to Chester took four days; by 1790, this had dropped to one day.⁶ At the close of the coaching era in the mid-nineteenth century, the travel writer 'Nimrod' marvelled at what had been achieved in the preceding century:

EVEN at the present wonder-working period, few greater improvements have been made in any of the useful arts, than in those applied to the system of travelling by land...the fairy-petted princes of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments were scarcely

⁴ Arthur Young, 'A faithful Account of the Inns, in a Tour to the North', *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 20 December 1769.

⁵ For a full account of the eighteenth-century road network in Britain and its economic and social impact see Jo Guldi, *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012).

⁶ Mike Parker, *Mapping the Roads: Building Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2013), 50.

transported from place to place with more facility or despatch, than Englishmen are at the present moment.⁷

The thirteen 'great roads' that fanned out from London - the Great North Road from London to York and Edinburgh; the Great West Road from London to Bristol - followed very ancient routes dating to prehistory. However, it was only in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that this network was developed and extended to a degree that England before the union with Scotland could be considered a 'joined up realm'.⁸ This early modern English network was 'effective and extensive'.⁹ Yet, it was not until the advent of privately funded turnpike roads in the mid to late eighteenth century that improvements to road surfaces enabled routine travel to become a realistic prospect throughout the British Isles. The great roads were all turn-piked by 1750 and, nationally, the setting up of turnpike trusts for other new, longer and better roads reached a peak between 1750 and 1770. Greater speed was achieved through the combination of better road surfaces, new coach-building technology, such as the introduction of steel-sprung suspensions in the 1660s, and a more sophisticated organisation of teams of horses.¹⁰ Increased mobility was achieved, therefore, not only

⁷ Nimrod, *The Chase, the turf and the road* (London, 1850), 1.

⁸ Mark Brayshay, *Land Travel and Communications in Tudor and Stuart England: Achieving a Joined-up Realm* (Liverpool, 2014), 112.

⁹ Dorian Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport, 1700 - 1990* (Cambridge, 1995), 39; Dan Bogart, 'Neighbors, networks, and the development of transport systems; Explaining the diffusion of turnpike trusts in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Urban Economics*, 61 (2007), 238–62.

¹⁰ Brayshay, *Land Travel and Communications in Tudor and Stuart England*, 112.

because the road network was extended to the geographic edges of the British Isles but also because of the increased speed of movement within that network.¹¹

Intimately linked to roads, horses and coaches, well-placed, well-laid out and well-equipped inns were fundamental to the efficient working of this network. Inns were the grease on the axles of late Georgian mobility providing horses, coaches, drivers, stabling, hay, a smithy, farrier, coachbuilder, food, drink, accommodation and a warm welcome at precisely the points where tired horses and travellers needed them to be. It is difficult to estimate how many inns were operating at the peak of road travel in late Georgian Britain in their totality. John Chartres suggests that there were some 6-7000 inns in England at the start of the eighteenth century rising to 19 – 20,000 towards its close; a significant increase from an estimated 3600 inns at the time of the muster rolls survey in 1577.¹² Put simply, inns were everywhere because they were needed everywhere: essential nodes in the travel network of eighteenth-century Britain.

Inns were essential because, by necessity, travel was broken up into short intervals or 'stages'. A stage was defined by how far a horse or team of horses with carriage could (reasonably) travel without break. Increasing in length through the eighteenth century as roads, coaches and the management of horses improved, a stage was between ten and twenty miles as, for example, set out in an *Account of Distances between the Stages on the Great North Road from York to Edinburgh* published in *The Wanderer*, 1804:

York to Boroughbridge 18

¹¹ James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635 (Early Modern Literature in History)* (Basingstoke, 2012), 112.

¹² Chartres, 'Eighteenth-Century English Inns', 207.

Boroughbridge to Leeming Lane 12
Leeming Lane to Catterick Bridge 15
Catterick Bridge to Greta Bridge 14
Greta Bridge to Brough 18
Brough to Penrith 12
Penrith to Carlisle 18
Carlisle to Longtown 10
Longtown to Langholm 14
Langholm to Hawick 22
Hawick to Selkirk 11
Selkirk to Bankhouse 15
Bankhouse to Middleton 12
Middleton to Edinburgh 13¹³

Making stage stops at inns was an ancient convention with its early modern origins in the 'post house' network established in the sixteenth century for the passage of government communications and the private hire of 'post horses' between stages.¹⁴ Like the great roads, inns, therefore, also have deep roots in British history.¹⁵ There is, for example, a Roman inn

¹³ Anon, *Gleanings of a Wanderer in Various Parts of England, Scotland and North Wales, Made During an Excursion in the Year 1804* (London, 1805), 168.

¹⁴ Brayshay, *Land Travel and Communications*, 104; Paul Harrison and Mark Brayshay, 'Post horse routes, royal progresses and government communications in the reign of James I', *Journal of Transport History*, xviii (1997), 116-33.

¹⁵ J. Chandler, 'Accommodation and Travel in Pre-Turnpike Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 84, (1991) 83-95; J. Pennington, 'Inns and

underneath the A1(M) near Welwyn in Hertfordshire.¹⁶ The great roads of England, in particular, are punctuated with examples of late medieval, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth-century inns. However, the great majority of historic inns on these major roads and elsewhere are -or appear to be 'Georgian'; that is, of (predominantly) late eighteenth to early nineteenth century construction and classically designed.

Inns enabled travel within a network that by the late-eighteenth century extended from London to the towns and cities of England and Wales, to the busy central belt of Scotland, north to the Highlands and westward by sea to Belfast before connecting with the turnpike to Dublin. In large cities such as London, York or Bristol, inns were the busy termini for the great roads; marking their presence in London place-names long after their demise, such as The Angel, Islington, and The Elephant and Castle, Southwark.¹⁷ Large numbers of inns also clustered around the wharves of busy port cities such as Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow serving inbound and outbound sea and river travellers. Inns in market and county towns connected one place to the next and were the stage stops by which travellers worked their way along the great roads. Filling the gaps between urban centres, substantial wayside inns

Taverns of Western Sussex, 1550-1700: A Documentary and Architectural Investigation', in Kumin and Tlusty, *The World of the Tavern*, 116-36; J. Hare, 'Inns, Innkeepers and the Society of Later Medieval England, 1350-1600', *Journal of Medieval History*, 39, 4 (2013), 477-49.

¹⁶ Welwyn Roman Baths, Welwyn Hatfield Council, www.welhat.gov.uk/romanbaths (accessed 14 November 2017).

¹⁷ For the number and geographic extent of inns in late Georgian London see Richard Horwood, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster the Borough of Southwark showing every house* (London, 1792-9).

existed solely to serve the through traffic (The Talbot Inn at Ripley on the London-Portsmouth Road; The Newcastle Arms at Tuxford, The Swan at Ferrybridge, or The Greyhound, Boroughbridge, all on the Great North Road; or, The White Hart, Okehampton, 'a place supported entirely by its high road' on the Exeter –Truro turnpike across Dartmoor).¹⁸ Inns could also be found at ferry crossings for rivers (The Hawes Inn at South Queensferry, Midlothian, at the crossing point across the Firth of Forth and north or The Passage Inn at Shirehampton for ferries across the Avon near Bristol). By the early nineteenth century, new roads were also connecting the centre of Britain to its geographic extremities and each new road was lined with inns. In Highland Scotland, for example, the military road initially built north from Perth through the Cairngorms to Inverness under the auspices of General Wade in the aftermath of the first Jacobite Uprising, 1715 -6, was by the late eighteenth-century, lined with King's Houses or inns. As reported by English traveller Henry Skrine in the 1790s, these were 'built originally at a great expence by government, which still allows annually a considerable sum for their repair and maintenance'.¹⁹ A stone tablet over the entrance to the former King's House at Dalnachardoch, strategically located at the junction of Wade's Stirling and Inverness military roads near Aviemore, is inscribed:

HOSPITIUM

IN PUBLICVM COMMODVM

GEORGIUS III REX

CONSTRIVSSIT

¹⁸ Henry Tufton, *A Tour Through the South of England* (London, 1791), 124.

¹⁹ Henry Skrine *Three Successive Tours in the North of England and Great Part of Scotland* (London, 1795), 145.

AD 1774

REST A WHILE

[Loosely translated: ‘George III had an inn constructed for the convenience of the public, AD 1774. Rest a while’.]²⁰

While open to the public, King’s Houses like Dalnachardoch primarily benefited British Officers travelling on the military roads between the Lowlands and bases such as Fort George on the Moray Firth.²¹ As a programme, the King’s Houses are testament to the great importance placed upon a good inn by society’s elite. Their presence suggests that in remote, sparsely populated regions the British government - a body that was in most of its executive parts constituted from members of the British elite - deemed it necessary to finance, construct and operate its own inns rather than have its officers and other elite travellers sleep in inappropriate accommodation.

Meanwhile, on the better-travelled great roads many busy inns extended their activities beyond their immediate site through the provision of travel services. For example, inns sold tollgate tickets.²² From the mid eighteenth century, most inns also operated post-chaise services.²³ A post chaise was a private hire carriage with driver. Like the inn-hired

²⁰ The translation is an approximation due to the lack of grammatical clarity in the eighteenth-century Latin.

²¹ John Kerr, *The Living Wilderness: Atholl Deer Forests* (Perth, 1996), 115-6; Daniel Maudlin, *The Highland House Transformed: Architecture and Identity on the Edge of Britain, 1700 - 1850* (Edinburgh, 2009), 31-5.

²² *House of Commons Reports from Committees: sixteen volumes, Miscellaneous; expired and expiring law; fourdrinier patent; etc, Vol. 16* (Session 31 January – 17 July 1837), 210.

²³ Chartres, 'Eighteenth-Century English Inns', 218.

post-horse of the sixteenth century, post-chaises operated on the stages between inns, returning to their home inn once passengers had been deposited at the next inn *en route*. In this way travellers leap-frogged their way along a route, taking a single post-chaise from one inn to the next. Famously, on Monday 21st October 1805 the Royal Navy defeated the combined French and Spanish fleets off Cape Trafalgar, south-west Spain. The news of victory, and Nelson's death, reached British shores with the landing of dispatch officer Lieutenant John Richards Lapontiere at Falmouth in Cornwall on Monday 4th November. Travelling via Exeter and Salisbury, Lapontiere delivered his dispatch to the Admiralty in London thirty-eight hours later on Wednesday 6th November. He travelled the 271 miles from Falmouth to London using post chaise services at inns, making twenty-one stage stops.²⁴

Equally, post-chaise services provided daily transport for those staying at an inn for an extended period. For example, four directors of the Great Western Railway stayed at the Golden Fleece in Thirsk, Yorkshire, for a week in 1835, hiring post-chaises daily while planning the new line that would open in 1842.²⁵ Overseen nationally by the Association of Post Masters and liable to heavy taxation, post chaises (vehicle and driver) were either owned-and-operated by an inn, a consortium of inns along a particular route or by an independent operator in partnership with a group of inns. On a major route, several services ran in competition with each other, using different inns in the same town as their stage stop. The 'posting book' for The Golden Fleece, Thirsk, details its post-chaise business from 1835

²⁴ Lapontiere's journey is now memorialised as the 'Trafalgar Way' and his route way-marked with interpretation panels located at the stage stops: 'The Trafalgar Way Story Competition', *The Moorlander*, 5 October 2018, 3.

²⁵ North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYCRO)/Golden Fleece Papers/Z.7/Posting Book, 2.

to 40 giving an insight into business at a typical principal inn on a great road. At this time, just prior to the opening of the Great Western Railway, The Golden Fleece owned a range of different carriages (enclosed, four-seater) and gigs (open, two-seater) suitable for different distances and different customers. Three drivers (Bunyan, Bains and Whitby) operated these seven days a week. The inn also hired out 'saddled horses' in the post-house tradition. The Golden Fleece ran up to six journeys per day depending on the distances involved.²⁶ As might be expected, the majority of journeys itemised are between Thirsk and the next stage along in either direction on the Great North Road; for example, on Thursday 5 March 1835 Bains took a single passenger, 'a stranger', by carriage eleven miles to Easingwold, the next stop on the road south to York, for 12s. 6d, while Bunyan drove '2 Officers' the ten miles to Northallerton, the next stage north, for 11s. 3d. Busy post chaise services operated by inns like The Golden Fleece highlight that, by the early nineteenth century, elite travellers did not need to use their own carriages on long journeys within the British Isles: private carriages and gigs were increasingly for local journeys and grand coaches with emblazoned arms reserved for display in and around town. That they were able to do so shows the reliability (in terms of efficiency and quality) of the British network of principal inns and their post-chaise services. By contrast, by reputation at least, British tourists travelling on the roads of continental Europe for the Grand Tour thought it necessary to travel with their own specially made, long-distance touring coaches.²⁷

Many inns were also closely involved with 'diligences' or the public stage coach. Catalysed by the proliferation of good turnpike roads, these increased in number exponentially through the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with the number of

²⁶ NYCRO/Golden Fleece Papers/Z.7/Posting Book, 2.

coach services increasing eightfold between 1790 and 1836.²⁸ The main distinction between a post chaise and a diligence was that the former was private and went where and when the traveller wanted, while the latter was shared with other travellers and worked to a fixed schedule. For instance, an advertisement from the *York Herald*, 1826, topped with an engraving of a fast-moving coach and horses, proclaims, 'Cheap and Expeditious Travelling, from the George, Stamford To Norwich – The Union....leaves the above every morning at half-past seven after the arrival of the York Highflyer'.²⁹ Diligences also charged per journey rather than the per mile rate offered by post chaises. Where a post-chaise only operated between inns on one stage, the stagecoach travelled entire routes stopping at a series of inns to change horses (operators kept on average ten horses at each stage/inn) and to relieve and refresh passengers, using the same coach throughout.³⁰ As with the post chaise, stage coaches were privately owned and operated along the great roads by both independent operators and inn partnerships.³¹ For example, 1787 excise records for Yorkshire show that Godfrey Hirst, innkeeper of The Golden Lion in Northallerton owned a public stage coach line in competition with thirty other operators in the county.³²

It follows, that the transient 'Golden Age' of the British inn as identified by John Chartres was brought to an end by the opening of passenger service railways in the mid-

²⁸ Gerhold, *Rise and Rise of Roads*, 38-41; Dorian Gerhold, 'The Development of stage coaching and the impact of turnpike roads', *Economic History Review*, lxxvii (2014), 818–45.

²⁹ *York Herald*, 20 November 1824.

³⁰ Nimrod, *The Chase, the turf and the road*, 32.

³¹ Gerhold, *Rise and Rise of Roads*, 40.

³² NYCRO/'Publick Stage Account', John Crowder of New Street, York, Collector of Excise Duties, 1787-91/Godfrey Hirst Northallerton, 24 December 1787.

nineteenth century; without travellers making regular stops wayside inns had no purpose and urban inns lost half their purpose and much of their income.³³ Testimony by Henry Gray, Chairman of the Association of Postmasters to the 1837 Parliamentary Committee on Taxation of Internal Communication, expressed fears that business would be threatened:

Gray: When the railways come into operation....there will be a great many chaises thrown out of employ from the railroads coming into operation.

Committee: Have you taken into consideration what will be the effect of the railroads on your business when completed on those lines of road through which your business extends?

Gray:I should say to the postmasters and innkeepers on that line of road it would be utter ruin.

Committee: Annihilation?

Gray: Yes.³⁴

Gray's fears were well founded. The Black Boy, Chelmsford, a major inn on the London Road in Essex since at least the sixteenth century and substantially rebuilt and classically-remodelled in the late eighteenth, was forced to cease trading in 1857 and subsequently demolished due to a rapid decline following the opening of the railway in 1843.³⁵ Similarly, of the six principal inns in Chippenham, Wiltshire, only The Angel survived the opening of the Bristol-London railway in 1850.³⁶ If not demolished, many inns like The Golden Fleece

³³ Chartres, 'The Eighteenth-Century Inn: A Transient 'Golden Age'.

³⁴ *Reports from Committees*, Committee on Taxation of Internal Communication, 7.

³⁵ Essex Record Office, <http://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/chelmsford-then-and-now-38-high-street-black-boy-inn> (accessed 9 October 2018).

³⁶ Jeremy Shaw, *Georgian Inns of Chippenham* (unpublished report, 2014), 12.

in Thirsk limped into the twentieth century as sleepy provincial hotels. Yet, inns were also closely involved in the early development of the railways. Gray also saw opportunity for post-chaises to convey persons in 'bye places to get to the railroads'.³⁷ Later, when the Great Northern Railway from London to York opened in 1852 major inns such as The Clinton Arms, Newark, were used as drop off and collection points for goods and parcels(continuing the post-house tradition).³⁸ At about the same time, however, a further blow for innkeepers was the 1838 Judges' Lodgings Act whereby county courts were obliged to build/provide private accommodations for circuit judges. In many county towns, these new lodgings took an intermittent yet not insignificant and reliable source of income away from inns that had until that point provided accommodation and fine dining to the large travelling retinues associated with the courts. For example, The Crown, Aylesbury, was demolished soon after the opening of new lodgings; The King's Arms, built within the court complex at Derby was abandoned; and, The Argyll Arms, Inveraray, once home to the 'finest wine cellar in Scotland' subsisted as a rundown tourist hotel.³⁹

II. Elite Mobility in late Georgian Britain

The late Georgian elite were great travellers, their lives characterised by a constant to-ing and fro-ing between people and places. Elite travellers were those members of what is loosely described as polite society when on the move; that is, a specific social group or class of traveller comprised of those wealthy, privileged and educated individuals who occupied the upper social ranks of Georgian Britain. Members of that group identified with each other through the performance of politeness or civility; that is, public demonstrations of the cultural

³⁷ *Reports from Committees*, Committee on Taxation of Internal Communication, 7.

³⁸ *Daily News*, Saturday July 17 1852.

³⁹ Information supplied by Inveraray Museum, Inveraray, Argyll.

trappings of civilization – later called ‘high culture’. These ranged from language and manners to practices such as dancing, playing a musical instrument, drawing or the demonstration of what that group considered ‘good taste’ through the appreciation of a particular canon of literature, music, art and design.⁴⁰ If seemingly coherent from the outside, within that group members varied widely in their relative wealth and status. They ranged from the great aristocratic landowners and the county gentry, Anglican clergy and military and naval officers (often sons of the former), to educated professionals such as lawyers or doctors and, increasingly, wealthy merchants, traders and industrialists (leading to what was perceived by some at the upper end of the group as the ‘debasement of gentility’ in this period).⁴¹ Here, mobility was itself a mark of politeness wherein regular travel was itself a polite practice connected to sociability as well as connoisseurship in art, architecture and landscape appreciation.⁴² Assize court judges, for example, served on circuits or regional groups of county courts, such as the ‘Norfolk circuit’ that comprised Buckinghamshire,

⁴⁰ Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: manner and civilization in early modern England* (New Haven, 2018), xiv – xv; J. Tosh, ‘English Politeness: Conduct, Social Rank and Moral Virtue’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 263; P. Corfield, *Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1991); M. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Ca., 1996); P. Langford, ‘The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12, 6 (2002), 311-13; L. E. Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *History Journal*, 45 (2002), 869-98.

⁴¹ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783 (The New Oxford History of England* (Oxford, 1998), 68.

⁴² Daniel Maudlin, *The Idea of the Cottage in English Architecture, 1760 -1860* (Abingdon, 2016), 124-8.

Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Judges and the attendant retinue of clerks and lawyers had to travel regularly (from home not in a continuous circuit) to attend court sessions in each of the six county towns: Aylesbury, Bedford, Huntingdon, Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich. And, both elite men and women travelled constant for reasons of sociability; they visited each other's houses, gathered for the season at fashionable resorts such as Bath, Harrogate or Sidmouth and, they travelled as tourists, travelling to visit natural and historic sites as well as for the pleasure of travel itself.⁴³

Elite travellers did not travel alone. The ability of elite travellers to move effortlessly around late Georgian Britain, to be mobile, was highly dependent on servants. Elite travellers travelled with a range of servants, from lady's maids and valets (or more often footmen when on the road) who dealt with luggage, organised rooms and helped them dress/undress to horse-and-carriage related servants such as the coachman (a high-ranking position) and postilion (an assistant who helped to steer the horses). The precise numbers and types of servants involved in elite travel varied extensively depending on the length of the journey, its purpose and the relative wealth of the traveller. One deciding factor on the number and type of accompanying servants was whether the traveller used their own transport or a post-chaise service, if the latter then the servants connected to driving were not needed and the traveller

⁴³ See Adrian Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: Four Centuries of Country House Visiting* (New York, 1989); Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel, and the Rise of Tourism*, (Cambridge, 1990); Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c. 1690-1820* (Cambridge, 2012); Jon Stobart (ed.), *Travel and the British Country House: cultures, critiques and consumption in the long eighteenth century* (Manchester, 2017); Guldi, *Roads to Power*, 182.

need only bring their lady's maid or valet/footman.⁴⁴ Broadly speaking, by the late eighteenth-century good, well-staffed inns and reliable post chaises meant fewer travelling servants were needed and so their numbers were in decline. Moreover, large liveried retinues had also fallen from favour in the later eighteenth-century as politeness superseded magnificence as the preferred demonstration of status.⁴⁵ For instance, the high-status display of liveried 'running footmen', athletic young men who ran ahead of the main party to clear the way and announce arrivals, was the vogue of the early-to-mid eighteenth century but had largely fallen from fashion by the end of the century (also because coaches were then moving too fast for them to run ahead).⁴⁶ Large retinues were increasingly only seen when an elite household was making a seasonal move from one residence to another and then the size of the company was often more to do with the numbers needed to do things when they got there than to make a display. In his 1779 memoir, the footman John Macdonald recalls the five-day journey of Lady Anne Hamilton from the country estate of Bargeny, Ayrshire, to Edinburgh in 1756:

...we set out for Edinburgh with the coach-and-six, the butler, the first cook, and two footmen on horseback, and a horse in hand for my master; when the roads were bad and deep with snow, Lady Anne took to her [sedan] chair, Mr Hamilton rode alongside of it, and the two ladies and lady's maid got up behind the servants.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Anne French, 'Stewards to Scullery-Maids', in Giles Waterfield and Anne French (eds), *Below Stairs: 400 years of servants' portraits* (London, 2003), p.41.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ J., Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1956), 54; R.C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2010), 107.

⁴⁷ Sir E. Denison Ross and Eileen Power (eds), *Memoirs of an Eighteenth-Century Footman: John Macdonald, Travels (1745 – 1779)*, (London, 1927), 37.

On arrival in Edinburgh while the domestic servants occupied the Hamilton's townhouse, the travel-related servants were lodged at Boyd's Inn and Livery Yard in the Canongate for the season.

As sightings of large liveried retinues declined, the more common sight in late Georgian Britain was of an elite traveller accompanied by a single favoured maid or footman - not in livery but dressed genteelly. The maid or footman took on a role closer to that of the gentleman's gentlemen in the early twentieth-century, providing companionship and conversation as well as unpacking the luggage and getting their master dressed. Social barriers were sometimes relaxed in these intimate one-to-one relationships. Eighteenth-century footmen Matthew Todd recorded in his journal that he often sat next to his employer in the post-chaise until nearing their destination (at which point they could not be seen by others to sit as equals). They also shared meals at inns (while, by contrast, he served 'at table' when visiting other houses) and they shared rooms (Todd sleeping on a pull-out or truckle bed, in a chair or at times on the floor). For some servants like Todd, travel appears to have created an alternate social space in which the strict ordering of Georgian society was temporarily softened. Indeed, while at inns Todd also states that he joined his employer and other elite men at the card table and in games of billiards.⁴⁸

III. Elite Mobility and the Principal Inn

Like most other travellers, elite travellers and their servants needed inns as the essential stage stops between places. Given the choice, they stayed exclusively at elite inns. Broad attempts to quantify inns fail to differentiate between types of traveller and the

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Trease (ed.), *Matthew Todd's Journal* (London, 1968), 13, 35.

different inns built and operated to serve them.⁴⁹ Some inns were humble premises, little more than alehouses with rooms provided for poor, low-status travellers, such as wagoners and drovers, and were to be avoided.⁵⁰ Other inns, however, were large – multi-storied, multiple bedchambers - and luxurious, often newly built and fashionably, classically designed. It is these buildings, predominantly constructed – or at least refronted - between the mid eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries, that we recognise today as the iconic British 'coaching inn'. These inns were distinguished from taverns and alehouses in the late Georgian period not necessarily by their size but by their position at the top of a social hierarchy of licensed premises (with taverns in the middle and the alehouse or common public house at the bottom).⁵¹ The term widely used in eighteenth-century written and visual sources - travel writings, itineraries, travel maps, travel guides - to describe these premier inns is 'principal inn'.⁵² For example, it is used with an expectation of familiarity in this characteristically (for a late-Georgian written account) brief description of Hawick in the Scottish Borders from *The Gleanings of a Wanderer*, 1804: 'Hawick cannot be said to be a place of any great

⁴⁹ Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200 – 1830* (London, 1983), 6.

⁵⁰ For early modern life in the common alehouse see Mark Hailwood, *Alehouses and Good Fellowship in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2014).

⁵¹ Clark, *English Alehouse*, 6-7; J. Hunter, 'English Inns, Taverns, Alehouses and Brandy Shops', *The World of the Tavern*, 77.

⁵² See, for example, *The Travellers Guide Through England, Scotland, Wales & Part of Ireland: Giving the Exact Post Stages Between Town & Town, the Principal Inns & the County in which Each Town Stands with the Distance of Each Place from London* (London, 1805); *Leigh's new pocket road-book of England and Wales: containing an account of ...and principal inns* (London, 1833).

importance, or possessing the least beauty. The principal inn is a large building, and contains some good apartments'.⁵³ Similarly, intended for the polite tourist, the 1780 guidebook to the house and gardens at Stowe, Buckinghamshire, states: 'On the road for London to Stowe are the towns of Uxbridge, Chalfont, Amersham, Great Missenden, Wendover, Aylesbury, Winslow and Buckingham, which last is distant from London 57, Oxford 25 Miles. Here are four principal Inns, the Cobham Arms, the White Hart, the Cross Keys, and the George'.⁵⁴

Two foreign visitors remarked upon the elite clientele of British principal inns. In 1785, the German gentleman student-traveller Carl Moritz wrote in his journal, 'I was now again in Windsor, and found myself, not far from the castle, opposite to a very capital inn [the famous Castle Inn] where I saw many officers and several persons of consequence going in and out'.⁵⁵ While, in 1806, Benjamin Silliman, the librarian of Yale College in England on a book-buying trip, observed on arrival in Liverpool that, 'The Liverpool Arms is the resort of the nobility and gentry, as well as of men of business, and is, I presume, a fair specimen of this kind of establishments in England'.⁵⁶ Marking out a similar world of polite inn going, the ledger from The Golden Fleece, Thirsk, gives a day-by-day account of the travellers who chose to stay at one particular principal inn when moving along on the Great North Road in the early nineteenth-century. The names and ranks listed in the ledger confirm that the

⁵³ *The Wanderer*, 24.

⁵⁴ *Stowe: a description of the Magnificent House and Gardens of the Right Honorable George Grenville Nugent Temple, Earl Temple, Viscount and Baron Cobham* (London, 1780), 7.

⁵⁵ Carl Moritz, *Travels in England in 1782* (London, 1886), 99

⁵⁶ Benjamin Silliman, *A Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland And of Two Passages Over the Atlantic in the Years 1805 and 1806* (New York, 1810), 64.

named, registered guests at a principal inn were members of late Georgian polite society. In April 1835, for instance, while most guests are recorded as the genteel 'Mr.' or 'Mrs/Miss' such as as in 'Mr Temple', 'Mr Whithead', 'Mrs Anderson', 'Miss Elsley', or 'Miss Brown'. Guests also included titled aristocrats such as 'Earl Stewart', 'Lord Faldland', 'Lord Harvey Bentic', 'Lady Johnstone' and 'Lady Travilant' as well as the working elite such as judges, 'Lord Judge Park', military officers, 'Colonel Coxtan', Anglican ministers such as the 'Revd. Hawkins' and professionals such as 'Dr Ninkins'.⁵⁷ Here, the numerous entries for 'Miss' or unaccompanied (often unmarried) female travellers stands out, suggesting that the physical and social security offered by principal inns and their post-chaise services enabled wealthy women to travel independently (with a maid but without a male or older female chaperone).

Extensive field surveys of surviving British inns indicate that by the early nineteenth century there were so many new or recently remodelled principal inns spread throughout the British Isles that an elite traveller would have had a reasonable expectation of locating one whenever and wherever needed. Out on the open road, large and luxurious, high-status wayside inns were essential stopping-places between urban centres too far apart to cross in a single stage (The Duke of York on the northern outskirts of London at Bentley Heath; The Pelican on the Great West Road between Hungerford and Newbury; or, The Downshire Arms at Banbridge outside Belfast on the Newry turnpike) (Figure 1). In town there was often more than one principal inn as in Devizes, Wiltshire, where The Bear and The Black Swan face each other across the market square (with one in particular always considered the better, the most exclusive, of that group: in Devizes it is The Bear). In a busy town like Chippenham in Wiltshire - thirteen miles east of Bath and ninety-six miles west of London on the Great West Road - boasted twenty-four inns. At least six of these were classed as 'principal' with

⁵⁷ NYCRO/Golden Fleece Papers/Z.7/Posting Book.

one very grand inn at the top, The Angel, while the other smaller and less sumptuous premises jostled for position below: The White Hart, The Bell, The Bear, The George and The Borough Arms.⁵⁸ In terms of numbers, towards the end of the pre-railway coaching era *Leigh's new pocket road-book*, 1833, recommends 1,315 named principal inns on the 'direct roads' of England and Wales. The actual number was probably greater still as *Leigh's* excludes many well-known principal inns (The Golden Fleece, Thirsk, is omitted in favour of the lesser Three Tuns suggesting a process of selection by the editors of *Leigh's* perhaps based on paid content).⁵⁹ Numbers also fluctuated as inns rose and fell in status. However, the overall total of recognised principal inns rose into the nineteenth century not only as the established elite expected new inns but also because the conception of polite society and thus who was an elite traveller expanded with principal inns targeting 'Commercial Travellers' alongside the traditional appeal to the 'Nobility and Gentry'.⁶⁰ As an indicative number 1315 is a fraction of the 20,000 plus generic 'inns' identified by Chartres as operating in this period. Yet, it is nonetheless a relatively large number of inns operating solely to serve elite travellers.

'Principal inn' was not a legal term, rather it was designated through the consensus of an inn's users; that is, by elite travellers. The prevailing judgement of this group was disseminated through word of mouth and via elite publications such as itineraries like

⁵⁸ John Jeremiah Daniel; *The History of Chippenham* (London, 1894), 82; Andrew Swift and Kirsten Elliot, *The Inns of Wiltshire in old photographs* (Bath, 2010), 95-9.

⁵⁹ See *Leigh's new pocket road-book of England and Wales*. The names of principal inns are given at the end of the descriptions of the towns and cities encountered on different routes (such as London to Holyhead).

⁶⁰ *Whitehall Evening Post* 9 May 1758; *New Daily Advertiser* 28 May 1776.

Leigh's, travel maps, published travel writings and journals and newspaper reports like Young's 'Account of the inns' in *Lloyd's Evening News*. Indeed, the inclusion of information on inns in a publication was considered worth highlighting in its subtitle: as per *The Travellers Guide Through England, Scotland, Wales & Part of Ireland: Giving the Exact Post Stages Between Town & Town...and the Principal Inns* (London, 1800), or, to give it its full title, *Leigh's new pocket road-book of England and Wales... containing an account of ... principal inns* (London, 1833).⁶¹ A published itinerary like *Leigh's* is a pocket book containing lists of places and distances organised into routes and stages. In these, the principal inns are named in brackets after the town or just by name where a wayside inn is required between towns. For instance, in *Duncan's Itinerary of Scotland with the Principal Roads to London*, 1820, for a journey through the Highlands from Edinburgh to Fort William stops were recommended at The Lochearnhead Inn, Liansgarston Inn, Luib Inn, Crianlarich Inn and the King's House, Glencoe.⁶² Travel maps were also a popular companion for the elite traveller. A travel map shows the road as a line from top to bottom of the page (usually split into two or three narrow cells). The line of the road is labelled with towns and/or the

⁶¹ *The Travellers Guide Through England, Scotland, Wales & Part of Ireland: Giving the Exact Post Stages Between Town & Town, the Principal Inns & the County in which Each Town Stands with the Distance of Each Place from London* (London, 1800); *Leigh's new pocket road-book of England and Wales*.

⁶² *Duncan's Itinerary of Scotland with the Principal Roads to London, copious observations on each road, and an appendix* (Glasgow, 1820), 43.

best inns.⁶³ Maps 11 and 12 in Cary's 1799 *Survey of High Roads from London*, for instance, depict the road from Colnbrook (west London) to Maidenhead via Windsor. Here, the names of the principal inns on that section of road are listed in a box at the top of the strip (Figure 2).⁶⁴

Travel writings, whether in the form of private diaries or published accounts, such as the *Torrington Diaries* or *A Tour in England and Scotland in 1785 by an English Gentleman*, were also a good source of information. These use a common ranking system for inns based on a shorthand of 'good' to 'poor'.⁶⁵ John Byng, Viscount Torrington, for example, briefly describes a stop at The George, Buckden, Bedfordshire, as follows: 'glad after a cold, and dusty, ride to stop, for breakfast at the George in Buckden, a good inn'.⁶⁶ Arthur Young recommends thirteen principal inns on the Great North Road between London and Carlisle ranking them as 'middling', 'good', 'very good' or even 'exceedingly good':

⁶³ D. Maudlin, 'A Narrow View of Nature: the world as experienced through early modern spaces of travel', *Picturing Places*, British Library (BL Online, 2017), www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/the-natural-world-through-early-modern-strip-maps

(accessed 18 October 2018).

⁶⁴ John Cary, *Survey of the High Roads from London to Hampton Court, Bagshot, Oakingham, Binfield, Windsor, Maidenhead, High Wycombe, Amersham, Rickmansworth, Tring, St Albans, Welwyn, Hertford, Ware, Bishops Stortford, Chipping Ongar, Chelmsford, Gravesend, Rochester, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead, Ryegate, Dorking, Guildford, Richmond, on a Scale of one Inch to a mile, etc* (London, 1790), maps 11-12.

⁶⁵ *Torrington Diaries*, 60; Anon, *A Tour in England and Scotland in 1785 by an English Gentleman* (London, 1788).

⁶⁶ *Torrington Diaries*, 17.

Stevenage. Swan. Very good and very civil. †

Dunstable. Bull. Very good. *

St. Neot's. Cross Keys. Exceedingly civil. †

Stamford. George. Exceedingly Good.*

Grantham. George. Very good, uncommonly civil.*

Bawtry. Crown. Middling, but cheap.*

Doncaster. Angel. Middling.**

York. George. Middling.**

Ferrybridge. White Swan, Very good.*

Brough. Swan. Pretty good. †

Richmond. Kings Head, Good.*

Penrith. New George. Exceedingly good.*

Carlisle. Bush. Good.** ⁶⁷

What is significant about these accounts in terms of elite mobility is that 'middling' or 'good' are rankings for inns within the class of principal inn; and so, we see how in the mind of the elite traveller hostelries outside of that class were beyond the pale and not considered at all.

IV. Establishing and Enforcing Exclusivity

⁶⁷ Young, 'A faithful Account of the Inns'; added symbols denote * extant working inn, ** demolished, † extant structure re-purposed.

Whether considered ‘good’, ‘middling’ or ‘exceedingly good’, a principal inn became and remained so through an ongoing dialogue between the inn-goer and the innkeeper. While the elite traveller chose which inn to stay at (or to recommend), the qualities that put an inn on the right list - service, comfort, design— were the outcomes of choices (not least financial) made by the innkeeper and their family. Albeit an inherited ‘choice’ in many cases where inns had been principal inns for centuries, in which case the choice or decision was whether to remain so in the eighteenth century through costly rebuilds and refittings. The decision to run an inn targeted exclusively at elite travellers was not straightforward. While potentially lucrative there were serious social implications to be considered. The innkeeper occupied a difficult social position. They were often the owner of the building, or at least the legal tenant, so it was their ‘house’ and they were the head of their own household. However, as the head of a hospitality business serving the social elite they had a similar operational role to a steward in an elite household. In the eyes of the elite traveller, therefore, even though an innkeeper might have been a person of substantial means with other business interests, landholdings and a prominent figure in their local community, they were no more than another high-status servant: to be spoken to with respect and friendliness but not by any means an equal. This perception of status was compounded by the fact that many innkeepers were former stewards, valets, footmen and cooks. This was not only because of their transferrable skills and experience but symptomatic of the wider workings of aristocratic patronage. For instance, John Macdonald tells how the Earl of Loudon’s head cook went on to own the inn at New Mills ‘near the Earl of Loudon’s house’ while Macdonald himself was instructed by the Hamiltons to marry Jane Stuart, the innkeeper of the principal inn at Girvan, ‘for by doing so you would soon make a fortune’.⁶⁸ Macdonald declined. Matthew Todd,

⁶⁸ Denison Ross and Power (eds), *Memoirs of an Eighteenth-Century Footman*, 37.

however, ended his career as the innkeeper of The Golden Fleece and later The White Hart, both in York.⁶⁹ And so, in their dealings with elite travellers innkeepers had to strike a careful balance between the performance of politeness and the performance of servility. If too conspicuous in their wealth or overly friendly with the polite, especially aristocratic, clientele they risked censure. John Byng, later Viscount Torrington, wrote of the innkeeper at Welwyn: 'the only mischief of these establishments may be the lifting up the consequence of these gentlemen and by that means, promoting a levelling disposition'... 'Mr. B our landlord is become a fencible which adds not a little to his swaggering vein'.⁷⁰ This attitude among elite travellers towards innkeepers is particularly evident in the journals of British gentlemen travelling in British America, later, the United States, such as Charles Janson who found the familiar manner of American innkeepers particularly offensive.⁷¹

Principal inns rose and fell in popularity and status. New inns vied with old established inns. To remain in business innkeepers had to work hard to continue to appeal to the elite traveller and their tastes. To this end, innkeepers advertised extensively in newspapers, directly addressing elite travellers - 'Noblemen, Gentlemen and Ladies'; 'Nobility, Gentry, Merchants' - with the promise of 'quality' food, drink and

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Trease (ed.), *Matthew Todd's Journal* (London, 1968), 159.

⁷⁰ *Torrington Diaries*, 60.

⁷¹ Charles William Janson, *The Stranger in America, Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country, on the Genius, Manners and Customs of the People of the United States : with Biographical Particulars of Public Characters : Hints and Facts Relative to the Arts, Sciences, Commerce, Agriculture, Manufactures, Emigration, and the Slave Trade* (London, 1807), 85.

accommodations.⁷² Innkeepers also recognised the marketing power of itineraries and travel maps, perhaps paying for inclusion in a popular title or printing their own trade cards featuring itineraries and/or route maps as well as a host of associative imagery suggestive of good accommodation, food and drink. For example, the 1792 trade card for The Bell, Gloucester, depicts the titular Bell and the name of the innkeeper - Payton - flanked by the Classical figures of Bacchus (god of wine) and Ceres (goddess of wheat, so representing beer or bread) over a table of distances and a vignette of a fast-moving coach passing the milestone '105 miles to London' (Figure 3).

Above all, innkeepers used architecture, the image of the inn itself, to sell their business. A highly visible, fashionable street frontage could act as a powerful culturally coded signboard directed at the elite inn-goer. Elite travellers were attracted to inns that appeared to reflect their own tastes. Given the Classical culture that permeated polite society it follows that, like the invocation of Ceres and Bacchus in the trade card for The Bell, fashionable design meant Classicism, or more specifically, Neoclassicism in the peak period of new inn-building in late Georgian Britain. Neoclassicism was the particular, stripped-back, interpretation of the architecture and design of Ancient Rome that was fashionable from the later eighteenth to early nineteenth century.⁷³ The importance of matching the design, the appearance, of a building to the social status of its primary intended occupants was not simply canny marketing but a central pillar of classical design culture. Indeed, the

⁷² *Whitehall Evening Post* 9 May 1758; *New Daily Advertiser* 28 May 1776.

⁷³ On Classical culture in eighteenth-century polite society see: Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1997); Elizabeth McKellar and Barbara Arciszewkas (eds.), *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture* (Aldershot, 2004).

architectural writings of the period – builder’s dictionaries and handbooks, theoretical treatises and design folios – all stress the importance of the Classical principle of *decorum* or ‘the fitness of a habitation to its inhabitants’.⁷⁴ In the language of eighteenth-century classicism, *decorum* meant that the decoration and ornament of a building – not its size – must be of an extent and grandeur appropriate to the social status of its intended occupants or users; broadly, the higher the social status, the more classical decorative elements that were appropriate: columns, cornices, pediments, pilasters, etc. As a principal inn was a high-status building, a high level of classical decoration was deemed appropriate. The rear entrance to The Bear in Devizes is framed by richly carved, two-storey Corinthian-style columns as might be expected supporting the portico of a country house. Facing the car park and smoking area, these appear somewhat incongruous today but would have been entirely appropriate in the late Georgian period as it was the entrance used by elite travellers dismounting in the yard.

A late Georgian, classically designed inn with neat and regular rows of sash-and-case windows arranged around a prominent central doorway can still be found in most British towns. Often these were built as direct competition to a long-established Tudor or late medieval inn located next door or just across the road. The grand neoclassical front of The George in Grantham, Lincolnshire, for example, went up in the 1780s across the road from the ancient, timber-beamed Royal and Angel; while The George at Buckden on the Great North Road through Cambridgeshire was rebuilt in the 1790s as a Neoclassical box to better compete with its old rival, The Lamb. Former principal inns can also be found on the geographic edges of Britain. Here, adhering to the principle of *decorum*, while a principal inn

⁷⁴ Anon, ‘The Builder’s Dictionary’, *Rudiments of Architecture* (Edinburgh, 2nd ed. 1778; reprint 1992), 49.

can be readily identified by its design, its size is not a clear indicator of status. This is because elite travellers journeying through remote places required and expected suitable places to stay even if they were the only elite traveller that day or week (principal inns in remote areas were often operated at a financial loss by landowners or the government, like the Highland King's Houses).

Just as elite travellers sought to stay exclusively at principal inns, innkeepers strove to ensure their inn remained exclusive (not least, because the continued custom of wealthy, elite travellers depended upon it). Most directly, staying at a principal inn was expensive and so easily excluded those prospective inn-goers who could not afford the bill. As observed by Benjamin Silliman of the Liverpool Arms, 'for all this there is a price'.⁷⁵ An overnight stay at The White Hart, Okehampton, Devon, in 1778 cost £1 12s 2d for 'Dinner, Lunch, Beer, Supper, Servant, Tea, Hay & Corn, Fire & paper'; that is, one night was roughly equal to three weeks' wages for a labourer or one week's wages for a clerk.⁷⁶ Moreover, while bills itemise food for the traveller's horse and servants they do not cover additional costs for service – the small army of waiters, chambermaids, cooks, ostlers and stable boys who were not paid wages but relied entirely on tips. Here, the keeper of a principal inn used architecture as much to deter as to encourage. Where classicism was a visual language that directly appealed to the classically-educated polite traveller, like Latin, the detail of its grammar was most likely unintelligible to the uneducated common traveller although the overall statement of privilege, wealth and social exclusion was probably abundantly clear and familiar from other restricted, privileged spaces fronted with classical design from court-houses to country-

⁷⁵ *Silliman, A Journey of Travels*, 62.

⁷⁶ British Museum (BM)/Heal, I.168, trade card for White Hart, Okehampton, 28 November 1778; D,2.2458, trade card for Sheffield Tontine Inn, 1795.

houses. As a last defence, inn staff could also physically bar those who they thought the wrong sort from entering. During his tour of England in the 1780s, Carl Moritz had money but was nonetheless refused entry to a principal inn at Eton, near Windsor, and redirected to the common inn or alehouse.⁷⁷ This was because, though a gentleman in Germany, he arrived on foot and had no servant with him so it appeared to the staff at the inn that despite his money he was not the right sort. This should not have so surprised Moritz as the existence of a top segment of commercial hospitality was not unique to Britain.⁷⁸ The social distinction of foot versus horseback directly corresponds to the French *auberge a pied* and *auberge au cheval* and Moritz himself would have been familiar with social stratification from his experience of upper-rank, classically designed German inns such as Zum Goldenen Löwen (The Golden Lion) or Zum Römischen Kayser (The Roman Emperor) in Frankfurt.

V. The Organisation of Interior Space for Increased Mobility

Collectively as a network of stage-stops, inns enabled long-distance mobility. Individually, each inn was also internally organised in order to achieve the most efficient execution of a specific set of small-scale mobilities: the constant flow of coaches, horses and people in and out again. Touching the road, never setback in grounds, an inn was always physically connected to the wider infrastructure of travel: urban streets and open roads, tollgates, tollhouses, bridges and harbour quays. The Golden Lion on the Great North Road in

⁷⁷ Moritz, *Travels in England*, 97.

⁷⁸ For European inns see Tlusty and Kumin, *The World of the Tavern*; B. Ann Tlusty, *Bacchus and Civic Order: The Culture of Drink in Early Modern Germany* (Charlottesville, VA., 2001); Beat Kumin, 'Eating Out', in Beat Kumin (ed.), *A Cultural History of Food in the Early Modern Age* (Oxford, 2012), 165-83.

Northallerton, North Yorkshire, provides a good example of a large inn connected to the surrounding streets of a busy market town and the road network beyond (Figure 4). At an inn with an enclosed yard, horses and vehicles entered and exited through the same entrance. The Golden Lion, however, made use of purpose-built service lanes that ran/run parallel to the main street. This allowed traffic to enter through the entrance on one road and move in a straight line through the inner yards and various service points inside the inn before departing via the other road. . A similar linear-plan can be found at many large inns (The Castle and Ball at Marlborough in Wiltshire; The George at Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire; The George, Stamford, Lincolnshire).

A large inn was not one building but a complex site with a range of open and enclosed spaces each with their own associated activities, the whole carefully organised in order to facilitate fast, efficient travel: 'consecrated to circulation and movement... speed, and perpetual circulation'.⁷⁹ The 1817 'map' or site plan of The Black Boy in Chelmsford, Essex, shows the extensive range of service buildings and open spaces located behind the main inn building or 'house' that fronted the of a large inn (Figure 5).⁸⁰ The plan shows how the service spaces occupy six times more ground than what we might think of as the inn itself. It also shows the extraordinary range of workspaces behind the scenes of a large inn, including multiple stables, coach houses, ostler's room, a forge, washhouse, granaries, hog sty and

⁷⁹ Urry, *Mobilities*, 33. Urry is describing the twentieth-century motel but the point applies equally to its eighteenth-century forebear.

⁸⁰ Essex County Record Office (ECRO)/ D/DDwP40/1, *Map of the Black Boy Inn and Brewery*, 1817.

workshops.⁸¹ These back spaces correspond to customers' bills which show that, besides food and accommodation, travellers were charged for the goods and activities associated with those spaces, including 'Horses Hay and Corn', 'Grass', 'Horse's Shoeing' 'Carriage Greasing', 'Blacksmith and Saddler', as well as 'Post Horses and Chaises'.⁸²

The 'house' as indicated in the plan of The Black Boy stood in front of or adjacent to the yard(s). At most late Georgian inns the space inside the house follows a straightforward standard arrangement of rooms modelled on a fashionable private house of the period. The front and rear entrances lead to a central hallway, the hallway is lined with doors that open into one or more parlours to the front, kitchens and offices to the rear and there is a staircase that leads to the bedrooms upstairs. Observing classical design rules, the rooms are symmetrically arranged around the hallway and each is 'regular' (square or rectangular) in shape and 'well-proportioned' (where the ratios between length, width and height accord to tables of proportion as set out in builder's manuals of the period). Similar spaces can be found at older inns operating, and perhaps classically-refronted and –refitted, in the later eighteenth century; but, the layout is often more haphazard and the rooms less regular as the shapes and numbers of rooms had evolved over time.

⁸¹ On 'front stage' and 'back stage' see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1956); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London, 2nd ed. 1996).

⁸² BM/Heal,I.158/*Trade card for Elizabeth Buchanan at the Crown, Penrith, Cumberland*;
BM/Heal,1.325/*Trade card for The George Inn, Grantham, Lincolnshire*;
BM/Heal,I.507/*Trade card for Thomas Dobson at the King's Arms, Patterdale, Westmoreland*.

Most buildings are to some extent sites of mobility, spaces designed for movement (a notion that, Kimberley Skelton argues, was explicitly stated in early modern architectural treatise and which early modern elites were specifically aware of).⁸³ Like most houses, the spaces inside an inn – a public house - were designed to facilitate the movement of people along hallways, through doorways and across rooms.. As in a private house, once inside an inn the traveller performed a range of movements - from walking down halls and across rooms to lifting a glass from table to mouth and taking the stairs to bed - that engaged their body with the spaces they entered. . As with the horses in the yard, these physical, bodily movements were facilitated by the careful organisation of space. However, the sensory qualities of designed enclosed space also invited movement, ‘the thrills of flowing space’: doorways want to be walked through, hallways and corridors want to be walked down, stairs want to be climbed up.⁸⁴ The spaces inside an inn, and the experience of the elite inn-goer, were further enlivened by the constant movement of the inn’s staff or servants between tables, through rooms and down corridors, working not just to the daily rhythm of breakfast, lunch and dinner but to arrivals and departures.

However, inns were also unlike domestic interior spaces as while all interior spaces may be considered in terms of mobility, the rooms at an inn were specifically made to facilitate the dynamics of travel, moving people and their stuff in and out in specific ways. The ‘house’ at an inn was always connected travellers back to the business of travel either

⁸³ Skelton, *The Paradox of Body, Building and Motion*, 7-9.

⁸⁴ Peter Blundell Jones and Mark Meagher, *Architecture and Movement: the dynamic experience of buildings and landscapes* (London, 2015), 98-9; Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Architecture and Embodiment: The Implications of the New Sciences and Humanities for Design* (London, 2013), 137.

physically or by direct line of sight. For instance, if the front door of an inn was predominantly used by locals arriving on foot, travellers arriving on horseback or by carriage entered through a traveller's entrance in the yard (as at The White Hart, Welyn, Hertfordshire). Once inside, from the hallway as in any fashionable house of the period the traveller could move directly upstairs to their bedchamber or through a side door into a parlour.. However, on taking the stairs to bed, especially at larger inns with yards, the traveller would find the first-floor arranged around the inner yard and the rooms accessed via a circulation corridor or open gallery that wrapped around and overlooked the yard (with bedchamber windows on the exterior wall facing away from the noise). As at The Angel and Royal in Grantham, therefore, the first-floor corridor provided a good view of arriving and departing coaches and allowed a constant flow of travellers to and from their rooms, down to the parlour or out to the yard, to waiting coaches and the open road.

Back downstairs, the parlour was the principal daytime space for elite travellers. Like the bedchamber, the parlour is distinguished as the space in which the traveller stopped moving. However, even when sitting – stopping - for a meal, the parlour at many inns is distinguished from a domestic parlour by the presence of a long, low window that enabled seated customers to see the road and/or yard. Many also possess a prominently positioned, wall-mounted 'tavern' or 'parliamentary' clock so no one would miss a connection.

Accounts by travellers such as Byng and Silliman are striking in that while the parlour at a principal inn would appear to have been an uncomplicated static space for eating, drinking and relaxing in good company, for the late Georgian elite traveller it was in practice a shifting arrangement of smaller spaces, a constant dance of tables and chairs. Here, not driven not by travel but the inn-goers desire for greater privacy. Unlike a domestic residence, an inn was a licensed 'public house' in principle, on entering an inn from the street the visitor did not cross from public to private space but from one form of public space into another.

However, the public space of an inn was distinct from that of the street or town square as it was, as we have seen, a restricted, semi-public space controlled by the judgement of the innkeeper and the consensus of the inn-goers.⁸⁵ As such, while a town's inns served to subdivide public space and in a town with several inns different social ranks had their own inns, like an elite coffee-house, the exclusive space of a principal inn was only public in so far as it was a shared space for polite society..⁸⁶

As a semi-public, sociable space for the shared use of elite travellers and the local elite in most British towns travellers could - in principle - sit, drink and dine in the parlour with fellow inn-goers of similar rank (the provincial equivalent of the metropolitan tavern or coffeehouse). However, travel accounts suggest that inns were not only exclusive in who they let in but also that once inside many elite travellers did not always relish the idea of mixing with the local elite or other polite travellers seeking the more private company of their friends or just themselves. For example, on arrival at an inn in Bedfordshire, John Byng recounts his 'gloom' at the prospect of having to take afternoon tea with a 'gentleman and lady' he met on the road on their way to their seat in Lincolnshire'.⁸⁷ Benjamin Silliman, by contrast, made friends with gentlemen in the parlour of the Liverpool Arms, Liverpool. Yet, he noted, English travellers often dined alone (unlike at American taverns where it was standard

⁸⁵ For discussion of Habermas in context of public and private space in the eighteenth-century British town see, Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, 1680-1830* (Abingdon, 2007), 111.

⁸⁶ See Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580 – 1800: the Origins of an Associational World* (*Oxford Studies in Social History*) (Oxford, 2000), 50, 268, 282.

⁸⁷ *Torrington Diaries*, 37.

practice to share tables).⁸⁸ Therefore, the moveable tables and chairs within a parlour allowed for inn-goers to either mingle, to be public and sociable or to turn inwards and be determinedly anti-social. Individuals and parties travelling together could also make use of private parlours entirely away from other inn-goers, as Silliman describes was the case at the Liverpool Arms:

One room is considered as common, and, for occupying that, no particular charge is made. Besides this, there are several parlours, where anyone who chooses it may be as completely retired as in a private house, his food being served up for him without the danger of intrusion...But a separate charge is made for this room.⁸⁹

Furthermore, where multiple parlours allowed, passengers on the public stage coach were also kept away from independent travellers in a separate room where, unlike private diners, they were served at a communal table where 'everything was paid for in common' (often in timed sittings to manage the high volume of traffic).⁹⁰ Overall, the varied patterns of use within the parlour(s) at a principal inn suggest that inn-going was underscored by a complex, nuanced and shifting set of relationships between public and private space in which the desire for the latter often outweighed the sociable benefits of the former in the elite traveller's priorities.

Beyond the view of the polite inn-goer and the semi-public rooms of the main 'house' there was a further private world; a world of work-spaces only open to the innkeeper and his servants. Connecting kitchens, sculleries and cellars were the hidden fluid spaces of corridors, backstairs and tunnels designed for the efficient, unseen, movement of food, drink,

⁸⁸ Silliman, *A Journal of Travels*, 35.

⁸⁹ Silliman, *A Journal of Travels*, 62.

⁹⁰ Moritz, *Travels in England*, 181.

crockery, linen, bedding and firewood as constantly carried back and forth by the inn's army of servants. It is worth noting that the eighteenth-century term 'servant' meant something closer to what we think of as an employee rather than specifically someone in domestic service, so the workers or employees at inns were known as servants. However, that distinction notwithstanding, the daily operations of a large inns were actually very similar to those at a large, high-status household and so the number, range and hierarchy of people who worked at a principal inn – after all a high-status public house - was quite similar to the servants in domestic service at a great house. A busy inn on a great road employed a large brigade of servants. Waiters and chambermaids worked front of house. Cooks and kitchen staff worked behind the scenes. Smiths, farriers, wheelwrights and grooms as well as the who ran the post chaise service worked in the yard. The innkeeper taking the role of steward. As at a pre-Victorian country house, building plans and site surveys suggest that while well-supplied with hidden workspaces, corridors and access-ways, the servants at inns were not provided with their own sleeping quarters and either slept in their work-space or commuted to work from a residence elsewhere in town. From front to back, house to yard, the spaces inside an were made for and defined by mobility: the multiple, small-scale movements of horses, people and vehicles in, out and through.

VI. Consistency as a Distinction of Elite Mobility

The experiences enjoyed by elite travellers inside principal inns were the product of built environments that had been carefully curated to meet their needs (or demands). Elite travellers expected physical comfort (a positive relationship between the body and its physical surroundings) - or even luxury (arguably the conspicuous over-consumption of comfort) - but also the emotional comfort felt in the experience of familiarity (for the refined sensibilities of the late Georgian elite this predominantly meant a material world of

classically-styled things spaces and things).⁹¹ Whether these elements had been successfully balanced or not awaited the judgement of the elite inn-goer. Did it accord to the principle of decorum? Or, more simply, was it there sort of place? Interior spaces devoted to comfort, luxury and refined elite tastes – and direct exclusion - isolated elite travellers in ‘an alien world entirely distant from that of the mobile poor’.⁹² However, what is particularly distinctive about principal inns in terms of elite mobility is that by the late eighteenth century, for the first time in British history, an elite traveller could reasonably expect to remain in that environment throughout almost any journey within the British Isles. Even far beyond the busy great roads, by the late eighteenth century travel writers such as *The Wanderer* were able to report that the universal standard of the British principal inn had extended as far as the southwest of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands where ‘the inns are in general very decent’.⁹³ Therefore, the ultimate distinction of elite mobility in late Georgian Britain was the consistency of experience offered by the national network of principal inns.

On entering a principal inn the elite traveller, and their accompanying footman or maid, was immediately immersed in an interior environment carefully constructed to make them feel at home: good food, good drink and a comfortable bed for the night but also spaces that looked and felt right. As in the parlour of *The Swan*, Bedford, shown here, the extant historic interiors recorded in field surveys indicate that time spent inside a principal inn was played out in a world of classically decorated fireplaces and doorways, plasterwork, painted

⁹¹ On comfort, taste and luxury in the eighteenth century, see: John E Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore, 2001); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2005).

⁹² Guldi, *Roads to Power*, 181.

⁹³ *The Wanderer*, 168.

surfaces, mahogany chairs and tables, willow pattern china plates or punchbowls and fine-stemmed glasses (Figure 6).⁹⁴ The Swan, built in 1794 by the sixth Duke of Bedford, also features a grand classically carved and proportioned staircase salvaged from nearby Houghton House, seat of the Countess of Pembroke, destroyed in the same year. This sort of physical evidence that hints at the former grandeur of surviving inns is supported by Benjamin Silliman's unusually detailed account of the Liverpool Arms, where:

...even the bed rooms are elegantly furnished, and the beds are perfectly clean, as is the whole house; all the accommodations necessary for dressing completely are furnished in the bed room, and a system of bells, extending to every part of this vast house, brings a servant instantly even to the third or fourth story [sic].⁹⁵

Where written sources are absent and period furniture and tableware has been lost - the parlour of The Swan being a rare exception - 'Innholder' probate inventories can shed some further light into the interiors of Georgian inns in doing so document a hierarchy of inns and inn keeping through the things they provided for their guests. For example, the 1754 probate inventory of a common inn in Fairfold, a market town on the London -Gloucester turnpike, reveals that the facilities offered by innkeeper, Edward Panting, extend only to 'pewter dishes', chairs and 'table boards'.⁹⁶ By contrast, the extensive 1738, mid Georgian, inventory

⁹⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century England*, 117-53; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, 151-8; J. Pearce, 'A Late 18th-Century Inn Clearance Assemblage from Uxbridge, Middlesex', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 34 (2000), 144-86.

⁹⁵ Silliman, *A Journal of Travels*, 62.

⁹⁶ Gloucestershire Archives (GA)/ 1754/9B/ Edward Panting, innholder of Fairford Inventory, 7 March 1754.

of Godfrey Appelt, keeper of Fairford's principal inn, The Bull, includes a large amount of silver tableware including salt cellars and a punch ladle, linen table cloths and napkins and 'In the Parlour' numerous tables and chairs. The bedchambers at The Bull, including the 'Paradise Room', were also well-supplied with 'Feather Bed and Bedstead', 'Bolster Pillows' linen sheets, blankets, quilts, curtains and 'vallens' as well an assortment of tables, chairs and presses.⁹⁷ The contrast in the relative degree of comfort, indeed luxury, offered by Panting and Appelt accord with the broader mapping of rank to goods in eighteenth-century Britain with, for example, the gentry and high-status professions owning more silver and linen than yeomen and tradesmen (who owned more pewter).⁹⁸ Comparison of Panting and Appelt also shows how, at its most polarised, in the same British town the visual, spatial and material experience of the elite traveller staying at the newest and most fashionable, Neoclassical, principal inn would have contrasted profoundly with the experiences of other travellers staying at nearby common inns and alehouses. This was because in a still largely pre-industrial age of regional craft production, common spaces and things were not just simpler but more regionally-accented in their forms and decoration than those occupied and used by the elite (which more informed by universal – or at least pan-European - standards of (elite) taste).

The material and spatial history of inns concerns the interactions between people, spaces and things (walls, floors and doors as well as plates, glasses and bowls). Material Culture Studies approaches the analysis of spaces and things in two ways. In terms of symbolic communication or the visual representation of ideas through the shape and decoration of objects. And, in terms of materiality or the immediate physical impact of size,

⁹⁷ GA/1738/67A/Godfrey Appelt, innholder of Fairfold Inventory, 28 February 1738.

⁹⁸ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, 168.

shape, weight, texture when an object is handled, a room entered.⁹⁹ For the late Georgian inn-goer, materiality and representation would have been equal, simultaneous, formative sensory-cognitive experiences. Not only did polite spaces look distinctly high-status, the visual impact of painted classically proportioned spaces and mouldings, communicating messages only elite observers would understand. They also made distinct expensive sounds such as heels on polished floorboards or the echoes in high-ceilinged rooms. They felt cultured in the smoothness of mahogany chair rails or the ridges of cast-metal door handles, in the infusion of sunlight through large sash and case windows and in the warmth from well-tended hearths (unlike a common inn fireplaces were not just located in the parlour but in the bedchambers too, with a surcharge for firewood).

When these experiences are placed in the context of what we know about the (Classical) education, values and tastes common to the members of late Georgian polite society we can reasonably infer what time spent inside a principal inn would have meant to the elite traveller. The specific and consistent nature of the material world of principal inns suggests not only that rooms like the parlour at The Swan were popular because they were exclusive and reasonably comfortable physically but because they fitted within 'the background of beliefs, values, and practices' that provided 'a horizon of meaning' to the lives of elite travellers.¹⁰⁰ They were emotionally comfortable. They were familiar. They were

⁹⁹ Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, 'Introduction', in Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (Oxford, 2010), 2 – 5; Frank Trentmann, 'Materiality in the future of history: things, practices, and politics', *Journal of British Studies* 48:2 (2009), 283-307.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Maudlin and Bernard L. Herman (eds), *Building the British Atlantic World: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture 1600 -1850* (Chapel Hill, 2016), 6.

appropriate. They encouraged the elite traveller to access an inner personal social imaginary that was born of and contributed to the wider *sensus communis* of their cultural group; a social construct recognised, shaped and maintained through the associative power of fixtures, fittings and furniture. These 'material signposts' written in the familiar language of classicism directed the elite traveller via to the familiar world of politeness and elite good taste they knew from the similar elite spaces they habitually occupied.¹⁰¹

The familiarity and consistency experienced and expected from one inn to the next is further evidenced by the lack of evidence in written sources such as travel writings, journals, diaries and guides (in which detailed descriptions of principal inns are rare). Here, to paraphrase Cynthia Wall, we must account not only for the personal agenda of the author but also for the eighteenth-century narrative convention in which the description of interiors was considered disruptive for readers who, it was expected, shared the same cultural frames of reference.¹⁰² A similar concept, the 'humility of things', is articulated in Material Culture Studies whereby, as Daniel Miller writes, 'objects are important not because they are evident...but precisely because we do not "see" them'.¹⁰³ Therefore, the very lack of descriptive accounts of principal inns demonstrates that they were everywhere and much the

¹⁰¹Maudlin and Herman, *Building the British Atlantic World*, 6; Bernard L. Herman, *Townhouse: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City* (Chapel Hill, 2005), 5; Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (Aldershot: 2010), 332.

¹⁰² Cynthia Wall, 'A Geography of Georgian Narrative Space', in Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (eds), *Georgian Geographies: Essays on space, place and landscape in the eighteenth century* (Manchester, 2004), 114-31.

¹⁰³ Daniel Miller, *Materiality* (Durham, North Carolina, 2005), 5.

same as each other. They are unremarked upon because they were unremarkable. As Arthur Young observed, the national network of principal inns was the ‘great chain of prosperity we do not think of’.¹⁰⁴ By the same argument, Silliman's unusually extensive description of the Liverpool Arms quoted throughout this paper suggests that the size and luxury of a British principal inn was unfamiliar and, therefore, remarkable to that American visitor.¹⁰⁵ Equally, descriptions of the damp sheets and poor food experienced at ‘bad’ inns or common alehouses are, by contrast, quite common in travel writings of the period. For instance, while not once describing the interior of an inn he likes, John Byng gives lengthy descriptions of ones he does not such as The White Hart alehouse:

...at last, we did arrive at the White Hart Alehouse, Bell-Bar... It appeared to me like an old hunting evening at an inn; but wanting hope, and comforts... Our horse being well we climbed to the garret where F slept in a truckle bed, and I rowled about upon a feather bed covered with blankets. The rain and the wind continued during the night and heavily in clouds brought on the morn; when I was hasty to rise and seek better quarters, but no one of this drunken alehouse was awake, till at length Mr M. stagger'd forth to receive the reckoning.¹⁰⁶

The unhappy detail of Byng's account of The White Hart suggests that, like the Liverpool Arms for Silliman, a common inn fell outside of his common frame of reference. He remarked upon it because it was an unpleasant shock to someone accustomed to staying at consistently, reliably, elegant and well-equipped principal inns when on their many travels throughout the British Isles.

¹⁰⁴ Young, *An Account of the Inns*.

¹⁰⁵ Silliman, *A Journal of Travels*, 62.

¹⁰⁶ Byng, *Torrington Diaries*, 59.

Conclusion

Elite mobility in late Georgian Britain was a distinct experience because of the national network of principal inns, a distinction that lay not in the efficiency, quality or elegance of any one inn but in their consistency as a group. Inns were the essential spaces of travel in a pre-railway age as horses, coaches and travellers needed to make periodic stops and so travelled in stages. Each inn was a stage stop. Collectively, located throughout the British Isles, inns were the vital nodes in Britain's early modern travel network. Individually, a good, well laid-out inn increased the speed of travel along a particular road or route as it was organised spatially to enable the fastest, most efficient flow of horses, coaches and travellers in and out. Inns enabled mobility but not all inns and not all travellers were the same. Late Georgian Britain was a strictly hierarchical, socially ordered society. Principal inns, the exclusive domain of the elite traveller, enabled elite mobility. Principal inns did more than separate elite travellers from the common herd: the coherent, commonplace, material world of the British principal inn allowed the elite traveller to move from country house to townhouse, courthouse to spa without ever having to leave the self-contained world of polite society and the socially appropriate spaces it built for itself to occupy. At their peak, immediately prior to the opening of the railways, principal inns afforded elite mobility the unique quality of consistency.